

Andrea Sooch ([00:00:00](#)):

So, I played this diehard, ice-cold Russian mob boss.

Bryan Smith ([00:00:05](#)):

Right.

New Speaker ([00:00:06](#)):

Which is- Is it my personality? No. But is it me? Oh, hell yeah.

Bryan Smith ([00:00:14](#)):

Brian Smith here and welcome to the DreamPath podcast, where I try to get inside the heads of talented creatives from all over the world. My goal is to demystify and humanize the creative process and make it accessible to everyone. Now, let's jump in.

Bryan Smith ([00:00:29](#)):

Andrea Sooch is on the show today. Andrea is an actor, a certified drama therapist, and a social worker. She's also an adjunct professor at Fordham University School of Social Work. Andrea had a recurring role as Riva, a Russian mob boss on T&T's Claws, starring Niecy Nash and Dean Norris, and has appeared in numerous other TV series and films, including The Blacklist with James Spader, John Wick: Chapter 3 with Keanu Reeves, Comedy Central's Broad City, Gotham, HBO's Boardwalk Empire, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, and The Shield. Andrea was born and raised in Hungary where she got her master's in teaching and then attended the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Austria. She moved to New York in the early nineties where she attended the American Musical and Dramatic Academy.

Bryan Smith ([00:01:19](#)):

Since that time she transitioned from model to actor to drama therapist, and I found her journey into these disciplines fascinating. Not only because of the crossover between drama, therapy, and acting, but also because I have personal experience with psychodrama, a form of therapy she's trained to do, which we talk about during the interview. Going into this conversation, I thought I would take a more biographical arc, but we ended up talking about many things outside of her career, like how the pandemic has affected us both personally and how it may end up transforming our culture, that made this interview fairly unique and wide-ranging. So, let's jump right into my chat with the lovely and talented Andrea Sooch. Andrea Sooch, welcome to the podcast.

Andrea Sooch ([00:02:02](#)):

Thank you so much. I'm very happy to be here.

Bryan Smith ([00:02:05](#)):

Yeah. So you are East Coast, right? New York.

Andrea Sooch ([00:02:08](#)):

Yes. Actually I'm in New Jersey right now. I'm hiding out in this heat wave.

Bryan Smith ([00:02:13](#)):

Yeah. So how are things going over there on the East Coast with the COVID situation?

Andrea Sooch ([00:02:18](#)):

Oh, you're not- Are you on the West Coast?

Bryan Smith ([00:02:20](#)):

I am in Seattle area, yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:02:22](#)):

Oh you are, okay. So, the city is different. I'm very lucky to be here in Asbury Park, which is gorgeous. It's New Jersey, it's the Jersey Shore. We do have a house here and I'm here since mid-March. And I have been back to the city early July for an appointment I had. And it was a very different New York than I remembered. So, it's a lot of fear on the streets. It's really weird how when passing a person and it's like a caution. Everybody's wearing a mask, which is really good. It also is challenging to breathe because I was breathing in my own carbon monoxide. So it took me like a day or two to get used to it. So it's different. It's definitely different, you know? I mean that's life, we calibrate and adjust.

Bryan Smith ([00:03:13](#)):

Exactly.

Andrea Sooch ([00:03:14](#)):

So, hopefully we can get back to hugging people and sitting together and laughing. Not just yet, but I really hope that

Bryan Smith ([00:03:22](#)):

I've been reading a book called The Great Influence, from I think 2015, but it talks about the Spanish flu of 1918 and the parallels between that virus and this one are quite remarkable. But if history is any guide, these things play out and there's a vaccine or a treatment or something, or the virus just goes away. But yeah, I think we'll get through this.

Andrea Sooch ([00:03:48](#)):

I just love the way you think, because that hope is everything.

Bryan Smith ([00:03:54](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:03:55](#)):

And my grandmother, my grandmother was born back in Hungary during the great influenza.

Bryan Smith ([00:04:00](#)):

Oh really?

Andrea Sooch ([00:04:01](#)):

Yeah.

Bryan Smith ([00:04:02](#)):

Oh yeah. That was- That had to be scary for everyone on the planet at the time.

Andrea Sooch ([00:04:08](#)):

Can you imagine, you're just coming out of a world war?

Bryan Smith ([00:04:11](#)):

Ugh, no. Yeah. And then to think also that the most effected demographic were young, healthy people in their teens and twenties, so they fared worse out of everybody because their immune systems were more robust. It was just a weird dynamic where the immune system worked against you. So, a lot of young people died and they died within 24 to 48 hours. It wasn't this prolonged illness, but we are digressing quite a bit from your story, Andrea. And, so you've-

Andrea Sooch ([00:04:49](#)):

No, because it's very current. People are scared. People are dying. It's not okay. We all- Somebody coughs or sneezing, what happened to God bless you? It's not exactly what we think, why somebody sneezing in the room that God bless you, right?

Bryan Smith ([00:05:06](#)):

Yeah. It's a whole new world where somebody sneezes and we look at it as an assault.

Andrea Sooch ([00:05:14](#)):

Right. Yeah, yeah. Like it's a nuclear weapon. So, hopefully it will calibrate. And as you said, it will be a vaccine and we deal with it the best we can. It's no two ways about it that, it's not an easy time. A lot of people are lonely. A lot of people are depressed. Domestic violence is going up. People are locked together, conflicts are heightened. So I mean, I think it is very, very timely that you asked about that and the parallels between the 1918 epidemic and this one, because the emotions must be very similar.

Bryan Smith ([00:05:48](#)):

Yeah, the feelings of isolation and fear. And also, what I noticed in the book -I mean, not to go back too much on this book- but the parallels politically too, how there were politicians who refused to accept that this was real, and they would continue to have rallies and parades. And this was 1918. So, it's such a prescient book, because it just shows that we haven't changed at all.

Andrea Sooch ([00:06:19](#)):

I have to read this book.

Bryan Smith ([00:06:19](#)):

Yeah. It's called The Great Influenza, but we- And it's kind of a deep dive into science. And I know you come from a science family and, at least your dad's side, so you probably have the aptitude that I don't have to understand some of these concepts in the book. But they really go into the science and the medicine of the virus and the antigens and antibodies and all of that. But yeah, it's a scary time for us all. And I would imagine that your background in therapy and connecting with people through psychodrama has probably helped you make sense of this situation and maybe process it with a little more emotional sophistication than other people might be able to do.

Andrea Sooch ([00:07:07](#)):

Thank you for that. I don't know how- You gave me a lot of credit, so thank you. And In the meantime I removed my glasses and they might look prettier, but I see you as a big blur, but it's a very handsome big blur, so...

Bryan Smith ([00:07:19](#)):

{laughing} Thank you, Andrea.

Andrea Sooch ([00:07:19](#)):

So, if I absolutely give up on seeing you, then I will put it back in. So, I am trained in drama therapy, and psychodrama and drama therapy are siblings. Kind of like Danny DeVito and Schwarzenegger in that movie Twins. So, they are similar and they different in many ways. It is an action method. It is a great form of therapy because it's embodied and it hits really deep and really quickly. So, I really like it because there is no time to overthink it. Like what I usually do when I'm like going to regular therapy. So it's like, boom, it's embodied, it's quick. So, I really like it.

Andrea Sooch ([00:08:02](#)):

I don't know if it helps me to deal with the situation better. I also consider myself incredibly lucky, because I do have a country hideout. So, I'm not in New York city and I wasn't in New York city at its worst. So, I think it's just really lucky. And it has nothing to do with emotional sophistication it's just like the circumstantial situation was in my favor. And also I have a partner, so I don't live by myself. So, I think that the great thing, what people were doing probably instinctively is, connecting a lot more to others. Via zoom, social media, I've seen tremendous support towards each other. I've seen more live meetings. And really, I think that people are brilliantly calibrating this loneliness and this need to connect as much as they could given the circumstance. So, I really enjoyed having zoom meetings with our friends.

Andrea Sooch ([00:08:59](#)):

We had zoom dinners with our friends, we hooked it up to the TV and then they were sort of on the big screen having popcorn. And so we did the best we could, but that was a huge issue, that loneliness and isolation. The other thing, what I saw that really came out of the concept of hope and under hope, meaning that we do trust that there is a certain control I can have over my future. It doesn't matter how small that control is.

Bryan Smith ([00:09:26](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:09:27](#)):

So, what I mean is that, even if that control is that I'm going to take a shower now, or I'm going to walk around the block, or I will call somebody on zoom.

Bryan Smith ([00:09:37](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:09:37](#)):

Or, I will watch a funny movie and that's control. So under control, I don't mean the big picture that I have control over the elections or this to ensue, but whatever I can have control over, I take control over. And that's very empowering.

Bryan Smith ([00:09:52](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:09:53](#)):

So, I was trying to do a lot of those when I was feeling the blues, when I was feeling a little down. Science calls it "micro goals," which just means that something I can accomplish by five o'clock.

Bryan Smith ([00:10:03](#)):

Hmmm, nice.

Andrea Sooch ([00:10:05](#)):

So, in the end it gives me a feeling of accomplishment that: Okay, I did it. I said, I will do it. Then I did it. So, I was creating these little micro goals for myself, like wash up the dishes. That's a big one. I really don't like that. But washing the dishes or meditate, do 10 sit ups, do something creative. And then I could get creative by how to be creative.

Bryan Smith ([00:10:26](#)):

Nice.

Andrea Sooch ([00:10:26](#)):

Do I read at home? Do I check out [intelligible]? So, I really, really very, very consciously when I woke up, I made this little- I call it- I have three lists every morning I have a: to-do, to-did, and the ta-da.

Bryan Smith ([00:10:44](#)):

What are those?

Andrea Sooch ([00:10:46](#)):

{laughs} So, the to-do is those micro goals, those little laundry list. And I encourage, when I'm working with somebody or, I'm using- I never tell a client to do something when I'm not doing on myself. So, I'm always the guinea pig. So, find at least three to five things, what you will do today, micro goals. So there's a to-do list. It's kind of like... Gives me a... Puts an address to the GPS.

Bryan Smith ([00:11:13](#)):

Okay.

Andrea Sooch ([00:11:14](#)):

Does it make sense?

Bryan Smith ([00:11:14](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:11:14](#)):

And then the to-did list, what I did from the day before, hence the name. And that gives me a feeling of accomplishment.

Bryan Smith ([00:11:22](#)):

Okay.

Andrea Sooch ([00:11:23](#)):

And the ta-da list is a simple gratitude list, but that list is not with the brain it's with the heart. So, what I mean is in my practice, I'm working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. So, how I phrase it, but I think it really, I like this phrase: it's what makes your heart smile.

Bryan Smith ([00:11:42](#)):

I like that.

Andrea Sooch ([00:11:43](#)):

So, it's not the big thank yous of the universe, you know? So, it's not the time to thank God and my mother for living. It's the time to give gratitude that, Oh my God, the coffee was yummy. That flower is gorgeous, it makes my heart smile every time I look at it. Or I connected with a friend, or the pizza was yummy, or I'm just sitting here by the lake and I'm just enjoying the wind on my face. So, something that harvests a positive emotion, because when we are harvesting positive emotions it changes our biochemistry. So, all of a sudden this happy hormone starts to flood into our system: endorphin, dopamine, oxytocin. And that enhance actually wellbeing physically.

Bryan Smith ([00:12:31](#)):

Is this list, these three lists, are they handwritten lists that you create?

Andrea Sooch ([00:12:37](#)):

I'm older, so I do enjoy, you know. I always buy a pretty journal, and I do enjoy open the journal and write by hand. But if somebody wants to do it electronically, I think it's kind of very personal who wants what. There are also apps, like Gratitude 365, when you can even take a picture and then write a gratitude list. So it's... I think it's how- Whatever floats your boat. But the bottom line is that we all have a negativity bias, because this is how we survived. Right?

Bryan Smith ([00:13:14](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:13:14](#)):

Like, even now we have to look out for the bad stuff that's happening, so I can dodge it, or go against it, or so I survived. So, we tend to highlight the negative and take the positive, either for granted or not even noticing it because, of course, there's a nice flower.

Bryan Smith ([00:13:34](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:13:34](#)):

Of course it's pretty. So, what it does is to give the positive an equal chance, it's not ignoring the negative. So, think about it this way. Like, let's say I'm sitting in this room now, right? And I have a flashlight, where do I shine that light? Because I can notice that it's a hot mess, right?

Bryan Smith ([00:13:57](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:13:59](#)):

But I can notice that it's a beautiful picture on the wall. I can notice that: Oh, I like that poster. That book is really awesome. Or I'm talking to Bryan and how much fun is that?

Bryan Smith ([00:14:10](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:14:11](#)):

The big myth is that this form of science, which is positive psychology, ignores the negative. No, please do not ignore the negative, negative saves lives. It's very important to see that the train is coming and it wants stuff for you. So, notice it and act accordingly. So, it's not about ignoring the negative, but it's noticing the positive and give it an equal chance. Just notice that it's there.

Bryan Smith ([00:14:36](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:14:36](#)):

So, the ta-da list is kind of like an exercise that works that muscle, that your brain starts to search for those things too.

Bryan Smith ([00:14:46](#)):

That's an interesting concept. I've been reading and listening to a lot of Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way* is a book that she wrote, and she has this exercise that she's been talking about for decades now called morning pages. And morning pages, I've tried this over the last couple of months and it's wonderful. I wish I was more disciplined to do it every day. But morning pages is a pen and paper -she's militant about that pen and paper, no computers- first thing in the morning, before you look at social media or news or anything like that, and you write out the, almost stream of consciousness. The polluted stuff that's circling around as a narrative in your head, the stories that we tell us, and it doesn't have to be creative. It doesn't have to be clever or wonderful. It's actually pretty awful, probably in terms of something you would never want to show to anybody else. So, it's not designed to be looked at by others.

Andrea Sooch ([00:15:47](#)):

Yeah.

Bryan Smith ([00:15:48](#)):

But it's a connection. What you're doing is you're getting rid of things that are not helpful and you're opening up channels that are helpful. Like you're unclogging those creative pathways in a way. And what you're talking about sounds to me like you're really becoming aware of... It's almost like a meditative thing where you're, you have this awareness that you didn't have before as to the positivity around you and you're taking time. I mean, what I hear is self care.

Andrea Sooch ([00:16:20](#)):

Absolutely. And it is a kind of, it is a form of mindfulness.

Bryan Smith ([00:16:22](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:16:23](#)):

But, the silver lining of COVID for me, especially in early April when it was at full-force and it was total stay at home orders and sheltering in place orders, that I didn't calibrate yet how to do what I do online. So, I had a lot of time. I never in my life had two hours to stare at the ocean, or walk around a lake and literally smell the flowers. I felt like I'm coming from another planet and every single leaf, I was just like, "Ah, my god it's so beautiful. Look at that." You know? So like a little kid, and it was something naively innocent about it that gave me that smile in my heart,. Something that I really couldn't put words to. But it was just like this smile in my heart, that positive feeling that I felt that it generates this... So, that was very interesting to me. I was taking pictures of clouds and posting it on social media. So, I apologize everybody, and thank you for liking it. But it was really just because I wanted to share it, I didn't try to be the guru or the master, but I just like, "Oh my God, it's so beautiful." I just want to share in case somebody else enjoys it. And it became second nature.

Bryan Smith ([00:17:51](#)):

To recognize that?

Andrea Sooch ([00:17:52](#)):

Yeah, it became second nature to notice it.

Bryan Smith ([00:17:56](#)):

I've noticed with my consciousness over the last couple of months that I've really started to understand how little we need materially to get by, and how much I depended upon leaving the house and doing things. Just distracting myself with restaurants and shopping and consumerism and all of those things that are fun, but you don't really need them at your core. What you need is a can of chicken noodle soup, put it on the stove or the microwave. And you don't have to make a huge production, meals don't have to be this huge production, or they can be a huge production and be fun, but at home. And so you start to understand what you really need as a human being to survive and thrive. And so that's a gift, I think that we have a silver lining to this whole thing.

Andrea Sooch ([00:18:52](#)):

It's so interesting that you say that because again, in April, I'm calling my mom, my mom is back in Hungary and the lady was born in 1944 in a bomb shelter.

Bryan Smith ([00:19:02](#)):

Oh...

Andrea Sooch ([00:19:02](#)):

So, she was growing up the tail end of the war. So, her value system is very different. So I said, "How are you mom?" And she said, "I'm great. I have two potatoes and an onion. I'm fine." I'm like, "What?! How can you say that?" But in her mind it was total safety because what you said, right? I mean, she had two potatoes and an onion, so she was okay for another two days.

Bryan Smith ([00:19:30](#)):

Right, yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:19:30](#)):

Yeah. So, I think it's a huge paradigm shift and it really, it was like a sledge hammer to start to question our own values and our own importance of those values. Yeah... So, it's very, and I don't, I'm very mindfully not rushing into saying it that it's a good thing, because it's definitely not a good thing that people are dying. And the deadly viruses out there and small businesses are going belly up and I can't hug my friends. So, it's not a good thing, but definitely exposed a lot of sides. What probably are food for thought. That when we go back, when this vaccine is coming and when we can go back to life, as it was, would we go back exactly to life as it was? Or did it bring in other values that that will be calibrated into this new normal?

Bryan Smith ([00:20:30](#)):

Right. I think the work from home situation is definitely going to change the paradigm moving forward. Even if we wipe this virus out, people now understand that being physically present is not necessary. Period. And a lot of the things that we, as much as I love to be physically present and face to face with people, the travel time associated with commuting to work and coming back. And I think there's going to be a re -as you say- a recalibration of what our values are and how we want to spend our time.

Andrea Sooch ([00:21:04](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And there are some issues. I have two professions, I do work as an actor and I do work as a therapist. I also teach in universities in social work programs. So, of course, all education is online now, and the tricky part was that we have field training. I know you are a lawyer, right?

Bryan Smith ([00:21:25](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:21:25](#)):

Yeah. So it's kind of like, the field experience is much needed.

Bryan Smith ([00:21:30](#)):

Absolutely.

Andrea Sooch ([00:21:30](#)):

I don't know what is it? So, for a social worker, it's a, we call it field placement for a doctorate's residency. So, I don't know how in world they call it, but that is absolutely right now.

Bryan Smith ([00:21:44](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:21:44](#)):

So now, there's the calibration that, how do we provide the experience, the hands on experience to our students so when they graduate, they feel ready? And again, a lot of calibrations came in that remote placements like hotlines and remote work ad agency. And so it's like a huge, huge calibration is the word that keeps on coming into mind. But it's like an evolution, like how do we do things differently yet effectively? One place where I don't see it, but probably it would all work out like in the acting world. Like, when can we go on a set when there are 400 people on a movie set and we'll be around each other in a room when they are 20 people crammed in, in this intimate scene? But when he's holding the boom, when he's holding the camera, then the other one is pulling the focus. So, when and how will that happen? And that I miss a lot.

Bryan Smith ([00:22:44](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:22:44](#)):

I miss that a lot.

Bryan Smith ([00:22:46](#)):

And that seems to be in, I've never been in that world, but my impression is that it's almost an irreplaceable thing that you just can't have have it any other way. Technologically, and just from an art standpoint, there's no other way to do it.

Andrea Sooch ([00:23:02](#)):

I really don't know enough on the technical end. But so we were shooting, like I was shooting a couple of things on Zoom, which has a whole different experience. But I mean if you and I, we have a scene, it's not the same that I see you on Zoom, you know?

Bryan Smith ([00:23:17](#)):

Right, right. Not at all.

Andrea Sooch ([00:23:18](#)):

It's not. So it's a lot of, I was taking a really good green screen class, that's why you see the green screen behind.

Bryan Smith ([00:23:25](#)):

That's nice.

Andrea Sooch ([00:23:26](#)):

Actually, I just had a green screen class. So, we heard that might be, we might see more of those projects working with green screen. So, I'm sure that people are so inventive and I'm sure that the industry will come up with a lot of things, but right now Broadway is closed. Film productions are closed. A lot of actors are out of work. So, that's kind of like something that I really, really miss, to go to the theater as an audience. And as an actor of being on stage, sharing that gift, that story with so many people who are next to each other. And the group mind, and the group energy that-

Bryan Smith ([00:24:05](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:24:05](#)):

Cannot be- I can't see to be replaced when you go to a stadium and thousands of people scream because of that song you like, or that ballplayer hit it, right? Or, you know... So that, that's something that I really miss.

Bryan Smith ([00:24:19](#)):

Yeah. It's really sad to think about Broadway. Television is one of those things where you can go on Netflix and, there's- The content is everywhere. And Hulu and HBO Max, Disney+, there's just, there's tons of television content. So, I think that people that are into television and film have not really felt the impact yet of that void, but the Broadway folks, the people that go to Broadway shows, or even more importantly, make their living off of set design and being on stage and acting in Broadway shows, that has completely been eviscerated in New York.

Andrea Sooch ([00:25:02](#)):

It's devastating. And, I would add to the, you know, in television too, actors are unemployed.

Bryan Smith ([00:25:09](#)):

Oh, currently. Yeah. Because they're not shooting right now. Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:25:13](#)):

Things are not shooting. And this pandemic unemployment assistance is ending the end of the month. We can't go back to work because there is no work there. I'm, again, I'm lucky because I'm standing on two feet.

Bryan Smith ([00:25:26](#)):

Right. And you have your therapy and psychodrama.

Andrea Sooch ([00:25:29](#)):

Yeah, I have my therapy and the teaching and the private clients and whatnot. And I do a lot of little creative projects, like with the Hungarian cultural consulate. I'm Hungarian, as you probably hear, I'm not from here. So, they had this idea to do classic Hungarian poems in English.

Bryan Smith ([00:25:48](#)):

Oh, I saw those online, that you were doing...

Andrea Sooch ([00:25:51](#)):

Yeah. Those are fun, right? And then we went a notch up with Adam, my partner, who is- I'm doing it with. Because we kind of created this little visual etudes, poetry etudes, but it's all shot on my cellphone, editing on iMovie.

Bryan Smith ([00:26:08](#)):

That's so cool.

Andrea Sooch ([00:26:09](#)):

So it's like- There is- It's a no budget project and we love it, and we enjoy it. So, again, I consider myself incredibly lucky and it makes my heart smile. It's one of the points on my ta-da list, that I had the luxury of being out of the city where I'm in nature. And also I have this little creative project that keeps my creative juices flowing and I can still teach online. And, so I don't feel it as much as a Broadway actor who was in a Broadway show for the past 15 years and boom, it's gone. And our health insurance is there. The pension, the health insurance, and you take this seriously, but it's not- Residuals are dwindling down, so it's not the same. So... TV and film actors feel it a lot. So, trust me, it's not just a stage actors. Probably you are correct because that's most noticeable for everybody, for the audience and the actors. But imagine that you don't have new content on Netflix or Hulu.

Bryan Smith ([00:27:13](#)):

Yeah. Then it'll start to sink in for the audience and the subscribers. Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:27:18](#)):

So, hopefully that isn't coming soon.

Bryan Smith ([00:27:24](#)):

And one thing I've learned over the last year and a half doing this, interviewing creatives, is that very few actors and filmmakers are making millions of dollars per year. They are working actors and they are hustling. Every job that they get is a hustle. And so there, I think there's this disconnect between the viewer and the actor in terms of the viewer thinking that, "Well, if you're on television, you must be in Hollywood and just have it made." And that's not the case from what I've seen.

Andrea Sooch ([00:28:01](#)):

It's not the case, at all.

Bryan Smith ([00:28:04](#)):

So, when you lose your job, I mean, you could, even if you've been on 150 episodes of whatever series, you could be homeless. I mean, it's that profound of an impact.

Andrea Sooch ([00:28:18](#)):

Well, hopefully everybody in the industry knows that it doesn't last forever.

Bryan Smith ([00:28:24](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:28:25](#)):

So, I think that we all, when we have something steady and we have a series 10 episode or a hundred episode, you bang that money because most likely the show will end, or they write you off, or they kill you in the show and you get a script and: Ooh, and they shoot her in the head, like, wow. {laughs} So, I think that whoever is in this industry, kind of learned that up and down, ebb and flow nature of the business. But now it's ebb, like it's ebb, ebb, ebb, because there is nothing going on. And it's not just the actor, as you said, it's the set designer it's the writer. It's everybody who is involved with it, costume, props, everybody. So, that's kind of different than scary to me.

Bryan Smith ([00:29:16](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:29:17](#)):

And that's one area that really, when I think about it, I need a lot of positive emotions to like: Okay, so how can- Well, and the reason I'm saying it, because I do challenge my thoughts. Like I challenge my thoughts when I'm thinking about this, I challenge my fear that it's temporary and it's local.

Bryan Smith ([00:29:36](#)):

Okay.

Andrea Sooch ([00:29:38](#)):

So, under temporary, meaning that it not last forever and local, meaning that it's in this one area of my life, not everywhere.

Bryan Smith ([00:29:47](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:29:48](#)):

So, when I [intelligible] and have- Don't see it as this big doom, hundred percent everywhere, all of it. Then I immediately have more hope. And when I have more hope then I have more mojo to come up with those micro goals, come up with those creative projects. What makes me happy? How can I spend this data? I feel that I accomplished something and I enjoyed it. And that's just like super important.

Bryan Smith ([00:30:18](#)):

Yeah. Well, it sounds like you read a lot of philosophy and you're a student of how to look at the world. And I, the person that's helped me a lot is Eckhart Tolle, in terms of looking at what's important. Like, what is a crisis and what is not a crisis, and really sifting your way through those mini crises that may be, as you say, compartmentalized in the workspace. That they don't affect your family, they don't affect your future. But yeah, it's important to really look at the world that way. I think otherwise we'll drive ourselves nuts.

Andrea Sooch ([00:30:56](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. You know, it's so interesting, because have you seen this show called Hannah?

Bryan Smith ([00:31:02](#)):

Oh yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:03](#)):

So, have you seen season two?

Bryan Smith ([00:31:05](#)):

No, I just, I saw-

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:07](#)):

Oh, I hope everybody watches it, it's awesome.

Bryan Smith ([00:31:07](#)):

I know it's on Amazon now, right? The season two was now up.

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:11](#)):

Yes.

Bryan Smith ([00:31:11](#)):

Okay.

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:12](#)):

Yes. So, you will see how they play with the concept of reality and how brilliant it is.

Bryan Smith ([00:31:20](#)):

Hmm, yeah. That's a great show. Good movie too.

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:23](#)):

Oh my God. It's a great show. So, we just binged it like literally, we binged the whole thing in like a week. 'Cause it was just so good. But that's true. I call- So, somebody said that The Matrix is a documentary, so it was like, depending on which program do you plug in.

Bryan Smith ([00:31:44](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:44](#)):

This is how we experience life. And it's so much easier said than done, but when you think of it, it's so true.

Bryan Smith ([00:31:53](#)):

Well, now I'm going to definitely watch that season two.

Andrea Sooch ([00:31:56](#)):

And it's like a folie à deux, it's like an illusion that two people buy into or, what is the fine line between a complete delusion and choosing to accept your reality? That makes me happier. Well, it's for everybody to calibrate and find out. This word calibration, I think it's like our central theme today.

Bryan Smith ([00:32:20](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:32:20](#)):

But it's like, do I choose to look at the news and do I have friends who list on Facebook every crime what happened in the past week? Why do you do that? Like, what's the benefit of that? It can be dangerous. Yes, we get it. But what do you want to inspire yourself down into a complete dark spiral or do you want to find the things that work? And again, both are important, so let's do both. So, those are just like, it's such a cliché, but it's a cliché because it's true, that you can really influence your thoughts and how you feel.

Bryan Smith ([00:32:59](#)):

Well, one of the podcasters I've listened to for a long time is Tim Ferriss. And he has written a few books, like Four Hour Workweek and Four Hour Chef. And he's kind of a self help type of guy, but he does some fascinating interviews with people trying to deconstruct their success. And one of the things that he's tried to do emotionally, and also from a time management standpoint, is to completely remove himself from the news cycle. So, he does not follow news typically. And his idea of getting up to date on the news is, let other people do it and talk to them at the water cooler. This is back when we had water coolers and there was an actual workplace, but you can hear people's perspective on the latest politics and the outrageous things that are happening, but you don't have to be sucked into that narrative because it really is an awful reality to, as you say, be posting all of the latest, outrageous things that have happened, just post them on Facebook. And it's not a healthy place to be. And it really is distracting from what is important, what is truly important, which is our own path forward and the things that we can do to be happy and find peace and really be fulfilled in life. And it's not- Social media is kind of the antithesis of that existence. And I'm sorry, we're not even talking about your career here, but we're-

Andrea Sooch ([00:34:29](#)):

It's okay.

Bryan Smith ([00:34:31](#)):

-Still fascinating.

Andrea Sooch ([00:34:32](#)):

I'm sure that the listener who will listen to it is the listener who has to listen to it. You know, so I truly believe that we find the podcast and the project that kind of resonates something that we need to discuss or disagree with or think about. I would never admit to it that we don't have a TV. We have a Firestick, so I don't watch the news.

Bryan Smith ([00:34:53](#)):

Yeah, I don't either.

Andrea Sooch ([00:34:54](#)):

And again, it might be like I'm putting my head in the sand, maybe I do, but I feel good.

Bryan Smith ([00:35:01](#)):

Yeah, I have friends that, and relatives that are apolitical. Whatever chip they put in their brain, they've chosen to have a reality that does not include politics at all. And I don't get it because I'm very political and I get fired up probably more than I should about politics and the elections that are coming up. But if you look at people that chose to not have politics as part of their reality, they're a lot happier. Blissful ignorance, I guess

Andrea Sooch ([00:35:33](#)):

I think it's so important, but how to say it doesn't have to be important for everybody. You know? So, I see kind of like the world as a big orchestra and everybody plays an instrument and all instruments are equally important and together they make a beautiful sound, but I'm not going to ask the violinist learn the oboe track.

Bryan Smith ([00:35:59](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:35:59](#)):

Or I'm not going to ask the drummer to play the piano solo, like politics is not my gift and not my passion and not my interest. And it doesn't take away the fact that it's incredibly important. I'm just not good enough at it that I could be as useful to the world than with other things, what I know much more about.

Bryan Smith ([00:36:22](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:36:22](#)):

So, I'm not saying that something is more important than the other, or it's very, very, very important, but I think that in that orchestra, that's not my instrument.

Bryan Smith ([00:36:36](#)):

As you may have noticed, there are great resources and advice mentioned in all our episodes. And for many of them, we actually collect all of these resources for you in one easy place: our newsletter! You can go to dreampathpod.com/newsletter to join. It's not fancy, just an email about each week's episode, featured artists, and resources to help you on your journey. Now, back to the interview.

Bryan Smith ([00:37:01](#)):

I've toyed around with this concept of highest and best use, and everybody has a highest and best use. And it's not- I didn't come up with the term. It was a financial advisor who was trying to convince me to hire him. He knew I was an attorney and he was like, "Hey, you could figure this out, how to trade stocks and buy bonds and invest in your 401k. You're smart enough to do that, but is that your highest and best use?" And ever since I had that conversation, I've thought a lot about it, because I think that's true. We all have gifts and strengths and weaknesses and various aptitudes that make us either suited for politics

or science or teaching or trial work like I do. And why try to do something that does not fit in with that highest and best use? It's a struggle.

Andrea Sooch ([00:37:53](#)):

I completely agree with that. Many people ask me, what do I think success is? And I think success is when you're lucky enough to make a living of your highest and best use of your life and your time.

Bryan Smith ([00:38:06](#)):

I like that.

Andrea Sooch ([00:38:06](#)):

Because, again, it's so subjective that, what is success? Is it having an award? Is it having to see what is regular? Is it yes, yes, yes? It is? It is? It is? But also when I wake up happy in the morning, that's success. And it changes by day on by circumstances that, what do I think success is really? It's not always the same. I don't know about you.

Bryan Smith ([00:38:34](#)):

Yeah. Well, I think our ideas of what success is evolves over time. And usually it's a function of age and maturity, because when we're in our teens and twenties, I think we all look at maybe money and stardom and notoriety as being a big part of what success means. And then later in life, we seem to just have a more mature understanding of what happiness is and what fulfillment is. And that whole, like the whole concept of fulfillment. Do you feel fulfilled? If you would've asked me that question when I was 24 years old, I don't think I would have been able to answer. I probably would have had to look it up in the dictionary. Like, what do you mean fulfilled? I don't get that. You mean happy? But yeah, over time I've really looked at, like you say, do I get up in the morning and am I excited to do whatever I'm doing? Is this my highest and best use? It sounds like you have found that there is a tie in, at least what I've read and seen online of your work. That there's a connection between psychodrama and acting.

Andrea Sooch ([00:39:43](#)):

Yeah, of course. I mean, it was a connection from the get go. Brecht was involved. Peter Lorre was involved. I mean, Moreno, he was a theater guy who invented psychodrama. I just want to clarify that my degree is in drama therapy. So, I do know about psychodrama, but that's not my primary degree. So, my primary degree is in drama therapy. But, of course, watching TV is drama therapy. I mean, when you watch TV, don't you identify with one character or don't you hate one character? Why do you think it is?

Bryan Smith ([00:40:20](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:40:20](#)):

I mean, every story is something that brings up a part of me that is either a shadow, or desired best self, like in hero. So it's- When I was in the show called Claws.

Bryan Smith ([00:40:37](#)):

Oh yeah. I saw you in that show and I was very impressed, very impressed with the recurring role that you had in that show.

Andrea Sooch ([00:40:45](#)):

It was so fun. So I played this diehard, ice-cold Russian mob boss,.

Bryan Smith ([00:40:51](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:40:52](#)):

Which is- Is it my personality? No. But is it me? Oh, hell yeah, totally. Riva is such a part of me. And I see as actors, we all get that character. And one of my favorite acting teachers, Tim Phillips, says that one of his clients used to say that, it's you bent. That role is you bent, like it's on your spectrum.

Bryan Smith ([00:41:18](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:41:19](#)):

It's on your spectrum. So, I totally see Riva in me, on a bad day when somebody pisses me off, or when I feel used or something. Absolutely. But is it my personality? No. So, how much fun is to play the parts which are in you somewhere, but you can't really do it in your everyday life. And then in the psychodrama session, how much fun is to let that part come out and how I have a conversation with that part, how do you help me? How do you hurt me? How can we work together? How can it go away when I don't want you here? You know? So it just like really an amazing tool. And you know how I look at it, like professional performance and performance as therapy is the same thing. It just like, where do you put the dial? Right? Because it's a calibration between also the audience's role. Like in professional performance, we do it for the audience. And a performance as therapy, we do it for the participant.

Bryan Smith ([00:42:22](#)):

I watched that a psychodrama, you posted about it on Instagram, the history of psychodrama. And I watched that on Amazon. And I didn't realize how far back it went, that discipline.

Andrea Sooch ([00:42:36](#)):

Oh, you watched it?

Bryan Smith ([00:42:36](#)):

Yeah, yeah. I went and got it on Amazon, but it's the reason I'm so fascinated with psychodrama is- Well, first of all, I love the way that you've talked about it. And I think it was you online that said it allows you to be your own screenwriter in a way, because you have this, maybe this narrative, this story that is a trauma of some kind that's in your psyche. And it's been the same trauma with the same outcome and the same emotions for perhaps decades. But if you go in through psychodrama and you play it out with actors, maybe not professional actors, but people in the room who were part of the exercise you become, and that group becomes, kind of the screenwriter for how that can play out differently.

Bryan Smith ([00:43:24](#)):

And that can be therapeutic. And also I have experience with psychodrama, because in a lot of the seminars that I've been to- Because trial work is all about story. How do you find the story of your

client's accident or case? And to do that, you have to do a deep dive by stepping into their shoes, into their skin, through role reversal.

Andrea Sooch ([00:43:47](#)):

Absolutely.

Bryan Smith ([00:43:49](#)):

And so I've done psychodrama workshops that have blown my mind where people are, I mean, this is going to sound weird to my listeners, but there are people just sobbing on the floor in the fetal position, because they've tapped into something. And this group has tapped into something that has not been touched in years or decades. And then they come out of it and they are like a brand new person, they're just having a whole new lease on life. And I'm not overstating it when I say that it's a very, very powerful form of therapy. But also not just therapy, but just finding the story. Really, what happened here and what is going on emotionally that is blocking you for whatever reason, why can't you get past this? And so I love that you do that type of work and that you integrate it into your, the acting. It doesn't seem to be a big distinction or separation between acting and the psychodrama.

Andrea Sooch ([00:44:51](#)):

No, it's not. In my mind, it's not, but those jobs are completely separate.

Bryan Smith ([00:44:56](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:44:57](#)):

So, in a professional performance I never even say that I do drama therapy and psychodrama, and most people know if they know me, but if it has nothing to do with other, in my two separate jobs, but it has everything to do each other as a human being. And now that you say, I do have a lot of colleagues who do psychodramatic work with trial lawyers because, as you say, storytelling for opening arguments, closing arguments, and then they're all, it's like super important. And I know that some places do have psychodrama workshops, which is like, awesome. But also this new concept that is, I think it's Tara Brach with radical forgiveness. And I don't like the word forgiveness because, in my mind, it means that: Oh, I forgive you for what you did. It's not forgiving the person, it's taking away the charge.

Bryan Smith ([00:45:50](#)):

What do you mean taking away the charge?

Andrea Sooch ([00:45:58](#)):

Taking away the power of my emotions about it.

Bryan Smith ([00:45:58](#)):

Okay.

Andrea Sooch ([00:45:58](#)):

Taking away. Like, if I'm engaged at an eight, if I forgive, it means that I let go the importance of that. I take my power back. It's never about forgiveness. As I now understand it, it's not about being okay with

what happened or making it okay, what that person did to me. It's about taking my power, that my whole life is not around that event. And probably I'm not making sense. So, let me tell you a little story. It's not my story, it's like a classic story about that. When two prisoners of war are talking and one says that, "Well, can you forgive our captors?" And one says, "No, never." And the other one says, "Now they still have you in prison, aren't they?" You know? So that's what I mean that lessening the charge, like my activation by it.

Bryan Smith ([00:46:55](#)):

Got it.

Andrea Sooch ([00:46:56](#)):

That doesn't make that event okay, at any level.

Bryan Smith ([00:46:59](#)):

Yeah. And Eckhart Tolle talks about that in a new earth about how you can't really control what happens around you, but you can control your reaction to what happens around you, which is not a new concept. I mean, Eckhart Tolle didn't come up with that. It's a very Buddhist concept, I think, but that sounds like what you're talking about is you're taking control over your own reaction to it. And also the importance that you place on it in terms of how it's gonna affect you emotionally.

Andrea Sooch ([00:47:28](#)):

I don't know originally who came up with it, but many people contributed to Viktor Frankl in his work, the Man's Search for Meaning, when he says that between- That that gap is where your power lies between the stimulus and the response. But I just read that actually it wasn't him originally, but I couldn't, I don't remember now who it was. I don't know if I- If you know that my partner just wrote a book on hope.

Bryan Smith ([00:47:57](#)):

No, I don't think so. Is that- And that's not the book that you wrote the foreword for it, is it?

Andrea Sooch ([00:48:01](#)):

No.

Bryan Smith ([00:48:02](#)):

Okay. That was the three female you wrote a forward in that book, about the three female heroes, right?

Andrea Sooch ([00:48:08](#)):

Yeah. The heroes, yeah.

Bryan Smith ([00:48:10](#)):

So, tell me about the book about hope.

Andrea Sooch ([00:48:13](#)):

Okay. So that's called Learned Hopefulness and it's a book on, how can hope be learned? It can be. And it's really, I read it a couple of times obviously, 'cause my partner wrote it. So, I read it as he was writing the chapters, and then I read the advanced reader copy, and I read the copy. And I find it incredibly helpful, because it lists the latest research on it. So it's not like: Oh, it works. It's like- And it works because, and boom, boom, boom, 150 references. Yet you don't have to read all the 150 books, because he gives you the skinny. And then he gives you exercises. How to- It's a muscle. It's like when you go to the gym, like how to work that muscle that you notice the good stuff. How to work that muscle that you believe that you have control over your future. It doesn't matter how big or small, like how can you form that habit.

Bryan Smith ([00:49:14](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([00:49:14](#)):

That it becomes second nature.

Bryan Smith ([00:49:17](#)):

I like that, because it provides sort of an objective scientific approach to a problem that, if someone is feeling hopeless and they go in for therapy or they're talking to somebody about their inability to have hope, I think there's a danger of being in this territory where there's nothing tangible to grab onto. But if you have lessons and you're saying: Look, this is actually a very teachable thing, let me show you how to do it. Here's some exercises on how to do this. You're probably gonna reach people that are really otherwise cynical about therapy and the whole concept of changing the wiring of your brain that way.

Andrea Sooch ([00:50:00](#)):

You're right.

Bryan Smith ([00:50:00](#)):

So yeah, it sounds like a practical guide.

Andrea Sooch ([00:50:03](#)):

It's a practical guide. And by the way, he's a therapist with 35 years of clinical experience. He's the guy with me in the psychodrama video.

Bryan Smith ([00:50:11](#)):

Okay. Yeah, yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:50:12](#)):

Yeah. And you know, this stuff really works. I do use it with my private clients. I use it in my own life. So, what I would like the listener to take away from this whole thing that: yes, there are things you can do to be a happier person. And it's a bumper sticker because it is true. And every cliché is true somewhere. That's what they become clichés, right?

Bryan Smith ([00:50:34](#)):

Right. So, you- Now, I would be remiss if I didn't ask you some questions about how you got into acting. And I know that you really have a fascinating upbringing in the arts and science, because of your parents. And you traveled in the Hungarian choir, and you were a professional violinist, but after that stage in your life, how did you find acting as your calling and your highest and best use?

Andrea Sooch ([00:51:05](#)):

One of the stories I was sharing in that forward, that I knew it since I was four, I just didn't pronounce it. My mom took me to the audition because she noticed that I have a talent for music. I had a talent for performance. I was reciting poems, I was singing, I was dancing around. So, she noticed it and she took me to that audition. So, at six years old, I was in this choir and it's not just singing. I mean, we were like reciting lyrics as it was a poem. We were doing little cute duets, like the Dat duet. So, it was a very active form of performance. And then I started to, I was trained in opera, so I was an opera singer. I sang in La Scala. I did the Stockhausen opera in La Scala.

Andrea Sooch ([00:51:54](#)):

And then I noticed that that's not for me. It's- I don't like it. You know? So it's like, and if I don't like singing in La Scala then what would I like as an opera singer? So I went towards musical. I adored musical; Okay, check. So, from that again, I knew I loved performing. I knew I loved to be on stage. I knew I have tremendous respect to the audience, tremendous because without the audience.... You know what I'm saying? So, I learned how to respect the audience tremendously. And that just grew and grew and grew.

Andrea Sooch ([00:52:27](#)):

So, when we were doing the Wizard of Oz, 16 shows a week, we did not drop one of them. We did not drop that 15th show, because that audience 5600 of them were sitting out there like this, waiting for that rainbow song. And if I was dead, I still pulled it 200% and everybody else did on stage. And that's what I adore about Broadway, you know? And, they are just soldiers of the art, they just like do everything for the audience. And I have tremendous respect for that. So, it was just like- And then he merged the story, what I said, and I didn't know if you have time.

Bryan Smith ([00:53:07](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:53:07](#)):

So, when it really hit, I was 16 and my mom is a pianist, right? Piano teacher. It was an actress who she was coaching. Her name was Zsuzsa, Susan. So, my mom was helping Susan to get ready for this musical. I Love My Wife, which is an American and the Hungarian theater did it, of course, in Hungarian songs- In Hungaria and everything. And my mom helped Susan to learn the songs. So, in exchange, we got two tickets for the show. And we got two tickets for the show, not only to see the show, but then we could go backstage and we could go up to her dressing room. And she was sitting in her dressing room, it was a little theater, she was very good burgundy bathroom sitting by the window, just beautiful girl. She was kind of like Marilyn Monroe, but very lanky. And she was putting on her fake lashes and my mom's talking to her and I'm sitting there, and that was like- You know when you get that gut punch, but screaming, "That's what I want to do."

Bryan Smith ([00:54:09](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:54:10](#)):

So, that was the gut punch.

Bryan Smith ([00:54:13](#)):

Nice.

Andrea Sooch ([00:54:13](#)):

And then, check this out, it was in '82- So now, you did the math, yeah. I was born in '66. So in '82.. '84- Whatever, it doesn't matter. So, two years later or three years later, getting my first engagement as a dancer/singer, it's like a variety show and it's opening night is December 6th. I think it was '84, but I'm not sure December 6th. So, I'm sitting in front of my station, I'm putting on my fake lashes and I'm like, "Oh my God."

Bryan Smith ([00:54:44](#)):

Full circle.

Andrea Sooch ([00:54:47](#)):

It was the same theater. And I was in the same room in the same chair.

Bryan Smith ([00:54:52](#)):

Oh my goodness. Wow.

Andrea Sooch ([00:54:54](#)):

It didn't even dawn on me until that moment.

Bryan Smith ([00:54:58](#)):

So, that gut punch that you felt, it sounds like that's an opportunity that really your parents are 100% responsible for. In other words, some people don't really get to that point where they even are in a position where they're going to feel that gut punch, because they aren't taken to a play or taken backstage and given those experiences. So, what are your thoughts on, on how to find that gut punch, so that you know what your calling is?

Andrea Sooch ([00:55:34](#)):

It finds you. I truly believe it finds you. 'Cause I didn't know. And yeah, my mom took me there, but you know, it could have been a trip with the school, or it could have been a scene on TV, or it could have been anything else. And my father said that it's great that you jumping around quoting, and dance around and sing around, but please have a real diploma. So, he made me, that was our deal. He made me to go to teacher's college. So, I did the two things parallel. I was playing at this theater every night and I was going to teacher's college.

Bryan Smith ([00:56:10](#)):

The backup plan.

Andrea Sooch ([00:56:10](#)):

And what a blessing for this, because look what my second leg is now. You know, my second calling and that I knew when I was six, as I entered elementary school. And that was my first grade teacher, Auntie Margaret, who looked like a supermodel. I mean, it was like ridiculous. She had like miniskirt and Texas hair and cat eyes and everything. And she was so smart and she was so sweet, and I looked at her and that was the gut punching in teaching. So the teaching gut punch came first.

Bryan Smith ([00:56:43](#)):

So you've got multiple callings, basically.

Andrea Sooch ([00:56:46](#)):

Yes. I think I really have this two main things, but then, they feather out to so many other things. So, I really, I knew it, but I didn't know it. So, those who think you don't have a calling, I would invite you to go back to this early childhood, and just go back and think about what was something you really enjoy doing. Because many gut punches are hiding in there. They came out when we think back or look back or...

Bryan Smith ([00:57:15](#)):

So, what was going on in your forties that resulted in a midlife crisis? 'Cause that's the way I've heard you describe it online, but I don't know that I've really understood what was happening. That was a crisis in that stage of your life.

Andrea Sooch ([00:57:30](#)):

I think I became too needy with the acting and modeling thing. And whenever we're needy, it's not sexy and it's not desirable. So whenever I entered an audition, it was like, gimme, gimme, gimme, instead of like: Hey, let's have some fun, this is what I have. So, anxiety took away the playful, interesting flavor. So, that was one. And then also it was one year when my father died, my husband died, and I watched 9-11 happen from my window.

Bryan Smith ([00:58:06](#)):

Oh my goodness.

Andrea Sooch ([00:58:08](#)):

That was a little too much.

Bryan Smith ([00:58:09](#)):

Yeah, pretty heavy.

Andrea Sooch ([00:58:12](#)):

Yeah. So I stopped eating. I dropped two sizes, so I lost- I was a fit model. I don't know if you know what it means, but it's kind of like a live mannequin. Like, they try on the clothes on you and you give feedback, so you have to be a perfect size. And for my height, I was a perfect eight. So, I dropped down to a four. So, I lost all my clients. So, I literally had no money to pay my rent. My friends were feeding me. I was going back and forth between Hungary and New York. I didn't know what to do. My mom was devastated. You know, my father just dropped dead, he wasn't sick or anything. Then my husband got a

stage four cancer diagnosis and he was gone in eight months; boom. You know, and then in the midst of all this time, like looking at it on my window and the towers are like sandcastles. So- And that blew the fuse.

Bryan Smith ([00:59:04](#)):

Yeah. But that would blow anybody's fuse.

Andrea Sooch ([00:59:07](#)):

Yeah, yeah. But it really blew the fuse and it blew the fuse for a long time. And then, again, this whole- And there was research on it that it can go two ways, people- And actually the research was done on 9-11, I wasn't part of this research as a participant. I already- If the researcher is [inaudible]. So, they looked at people that some people got PTSD, which is post traumatic stress disorder, and some people exhibited PTG, which is post traumatic growth, meaning that they like, "Shit, I almost died. I'm not going to do things I don't want to do. I'm going to open my own restaurant, or I'm going to do my lot that I enjoy my life." She's sort of hooks into a higher purpose and you start to do things that really matter. What- How did you call it, your highest calling?

Bryan Smith ([00:59:52](#)):

Highest and best use, yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([00:59:54](#)):

Highest and best use, because we realize that life is so short. It can go like this {snaps} and I'm gonna make every moment worth living. So, I think it was a little bit of a combination of this, for me, and noticing that I really love acting and I love performing. I don't have enough control over my life. So, how can I have enough control over my life? And for me, since I had a degree from Europe in education and psychology, that was like a no brainer that I'm going to go back to grad school. And, I pick up that leg and I'm going to stand on two legs. And then I did go back to grad school. And, as you hear, this is my third language. So it was like super scary. Like, can I pull this, my third language with all these papers and reading the books, and reading academic stuff, and writing the papers and doing this and doing that.

Andrea Sooch ([01:00:55](#)):

And I'm like: You know what, if I don't, I just drop out. What- I'm going to do it. So I did it. And this I like to talk about for many reasons, because those of you who listen, I'm sure at least a handful of people were faced with similar issues. And I just want you to know that there is life after, and there is a way out of it. And I just want you to know that if you allow it, you can totally get out of this jam. And it was a lot of moving parts. What I needed to do, I had to stop the poor me victim gang.

Bryan Smith ([01:01:32](#)):

And it sounds like you turned those traumas into an awakening.

Andrea Sooch ([01:01:36](#)):

That's what posttraumatic growth is, yeah. But I didn't invent it like it's happening to people. Right? So, be the one who it's happening to, don't be the one who curls up. I curled up too, in a ball for like almost

a year. So, that's okay to have this grieving period and to- That's another new thing about depression, the newest research. This is the default mechanism of humans to conserve energy.

Bryan Smith ([01:02:01](#)):

Really?

Andrea Sooch ([01:02:02](#)):

It's not helplessness that's learned. It is hope that's learned, because we all- What do you do when something- You just conserve your energy and you just shut down.

Bryan Smith ([01:02:13](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([01:02:14](#)):

According to Martin Seligman, who became famous with learned helplessness, he came up three years ago and he said, "I was wrong. It's the default mechanism."

Bryan Smith ([01:02:25](#)):

I'll have to look into that. 'Cause I've heard a lot about learned helplessness, but I haven't heard your partner's book, Learned Hope?

Andrea Sooch ([01:02:35](#)):

That's the new one on that. A lot of interesting things out there. And, if there is something that the listener or the audience gets out of it, it just like don't give up. There are ways out, there are so many great books and podcasts and coaches and therapists that will be there to assist you with getting over this hurdle. That just don't give up, because it would be such a shame.

Bryan Smith ([01:03:08](#)):

So, what practical advice would you give to a room full of young people? Maybe high school age, college age people that are wanting to get into acting. And I'm putting aside the COVID situation, which we hope will resolve and we'll get back to normal in terms of shooting and production schedules. But what advice would you give them in terms of film school, drama school, or no school at all, just jumping right in and going to auditions, just practical advice for how to get their foot in the door in that industry?

Andrea Sooch ([01:03:42](#)):

So, I think the first thing, what I would say that, do it for the right reasons, do it because you love to do it and you enjoy it. And you would just be not you, if you could not act or make movies or write. Don't do it for the fame, and you're going to be this and that, because that's not guaranteed. The only thing that is guaranteed, that if you love to do it, you will enjoy the work. And no matter how, if it's self taught or schools, I mean, of course schools has it figured out, because they do it for decades. You have to have the skills or else when this opportunity comes and, if somebody can pull it, that's an issue. So, skills are very important. And it's kind of like a thing that no matter how sweet somebody is, if you're not skilled and if you're not good... It's...

Bryan Smith ([01:04:36](#)):

You'll find out pretty quickly if that's the case.

Andrea Sooch ([01:04:40](#)):

You know, and in this industry, I think excellence is at the very, very high point of value. And if it stops being fun, either find a way how it can be fun again. There are so many ways to do a creative project in your living room. I'm doing it now with the poems. So, when I know that I'm not enjoying it anymore, I press the reset button and figure out, why? Can it be fun again? And if I ever get to the point that it's not fun, I'm going to take a hiatus from it.

Bryan Smith ([01:05:14](#)):

Well, I think that's great advice in life just general, no matter what profession you're in. If you're not having fun, you really got to look at why that is and how you can fix it so that you are having fun. Talk about clichés. We've talked about clichés a lot on this interview, but they say, if you enjoy what you do you never work a day in your life. And I think that's what you have to gravitate toward. Now, there are practical considerations. Of course, we all have to make money and put food on the table and save up for retirement. But I really have, over the last 20 years, looked at fun and joy. I would say joy more than fun as kind of my guiding light in whether I still want to do trial work or podcasting.

Andrea Sooch ([01:06:02](#)):

That's a luxury again, you know what you and I we do, because many the pushback usually what probably both of us is getting, then how do I put food in the table?

Bryan Smith ([01:06:13](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sooch ([01:06:13](#)):

Okay. So I don't know how you're going to put food on a table, so I can tell you how I put food in the table. When I came here with \$200 in my pocket and I thought I had a lot of money. Not speaking the language, going to a school where my third language, and now I'm talking about the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, because that was my first, this is how I came to the States. I got a scholarship there. Right?

Bryan Smith ([01:06:34](#)):

Yeah. I saw that you were literally blown into the studio, weren't you?

Andrea Sooch ([01:06:41](#)):

The building and I was just like, "Yeah. Oh my God." I tried to audition. And probably that's what they took me. 'Cause again, if I would have went in like {sucks in breath} it's not the same, let me sing this Hungarian song for you. It's like entertainment. Like how dare she do this? So, anyhow, I mean, it might sound like a lot of fun that you move across the pond with no family, with 200 bucks in your pocket, going to acting school in English that you don't speak, and being graded on Lady Mac in British English, but it wasn't that much fun. So, I did a lot of jobs I didn't want to do. Right? A lot of waitressing, lot of crappy, like cleaning stuff. And then I was like: How can I do something that pays me money that actually helps me, because we always learn what we teach. So, I went back to the actors work program

and I got trained how to teach English as a second language. So, I was teaching English as a second language to a kitchen workers. Every bus boy in Hell's Kitchen was speaking with a Hungarian accent.

Bryan Smith ([01:07:58](#)):

That's great.

Andrea Sooch ([01:07:59](#)):

All of them.

Bryan Smith ([01:07:59](#)):

That's great.

Andrea Sooch ([01:08:00](#)):

That was kind of the first thing I enjoyed that I got paid for it. So, I started to figure out how to do jobs that I enjoy or I don't hate, or however you want to put it right? And then again, it's like noticing the good thing that more and more doors opened. Right? Then I got a second company where I was teaching English as a second language for Russian cleaning ladies. And then they spoke with a Hungarian accent, so all of that stuff. And then I was like: Oh, I was modeling at home, back in Europe, can I do that? So, I started to go to modeling agencies, then I started to do- Get little jobs then- So as soon as I started to think about it, that how can I do something that I don't hate or enjoy? I started to see more of them. So, that's another bumper sticker that whatever you pay attention to grows, but it's again, it's very true.

Bryan Smith ([01:08:59](#)):

Yeah. There's an intentionality to what you're doing.

Andrea Sooch ([01:09:03](#)):

Yeah. So, just paint, just put it in the computer, that what can I do what I like, right? What is something I can do that at least I don't hate?

Bryan Smith ([01:09:13](#)):

So, what are you looking forward to right now? I know that production is shut down across the board. I've heard through the grapevine that a few things are starting to light up in Los Angeles area, but what are you looking forward to from, professionally right now, from an acting standpoint.

Andrea Sooch ([01:09:30](#)):

From an acting standpoint? Okay. So my big- I really, really enjoyed working on Claws. It was wonderful. I loved the team. I loved the recurring part of it, the security of it. Everybody becomes like family. Like it was really, really awesome. So, professionally, the big dream would be to get a serious regular part or get a recurring type of show guest star. The big, big dream would be to all this in a production, American production that shoots in Hungary because it's so many. So, if I would be a series regular on a hit TV show, which I just adore and some episodes shooting Hungary, like right now, that would be like a, something that I would really, really make my heart smile. But other than that, everything that I gladly give my name to prestigious, fun, great people, great stories. Something that I am just proud and

honored to be part of, with a great juicy role, which is fun for me, and I can like sink my teeth in and have fun with it. And the people, the people are the most important part of it.

Bryan Smith ([01:10:48](#)):

Well, that Claws cast, I mean, what a cast that was. Dean Norris and all those wonderful actors.

Andrea Sooch ([01:10:55](#)):

Everyone.

Bryan Smith ([01:10:56](#)):

And such a fun premise too, you know, didn't take itself too seriously...

Andrea Sooch ([01:11:03](#)):

And we were shooting in New Orleans, and when you shoot- And very few people were from New Orleans, so it was like being in camp: Hey, you want to go and get something to eat? Hey, listen to some music. It was just amazing. It was so much fun. And I just loved them to pieces. And with many, many cast members we're still in touch and we texting or meeting up if we are in the same city. So, that was an amazing experience, but other shows- So, that was like my longest experience with the same team. But other was like on The Blacklist when we had this flashback scene with the young Katarina Rostova, and I was playing her mom and we're still in touch. I mean, I just love her to pieces, Lotte Verbeek; like awesome people, TV- You become family so quickly, because the work is so intense and the connection, the bond is so strong. And I just adore, I adore that connection. What a TV show or a film set establishes so quickly.

Bryan Smith ([01:12:06](#)):

Is it different on television than film, in terms of that bond, because of the longer- The season long character arcs, and everybody's just there together for a longer period of time. Where, do you find that same collegiality in films too?

Andrea Sooch ([01:12:24](#)):

I haven't done enough film. So, hopefully when you ask me in a year, I can say that. One film I was on for 90 days, I was standing in for Meryl Streep.

Bryan Smith ([01:12:37](#)):

Oh... Wow.

Andrea Sooch ([01:12:37](#)):

Which was amazing. 'Cause she was my third ignite moment. What I was writing about her in the book, like when I saw Meryl Streep on Out of Africa, that was another gut punch that I want to be on the screen. And then I had this opportunity to stand in and rehearse for her. It was- I had a chance to rehearse the lines and the whole blocking. So, it was really cool. And I got to be in the same room with her and watch her work, which was just a priceless experience. And what a wonderful person, oh my God, just an amazing human. And so, for me, she is the actress who is on the pedestal for me, just having this experience. So, that was an experience that we really established with this team and family-like feel, but I wasn't an actor. I was crew, but it was lovely. So, I don't know enough about how is he to

be an actor on a long- With so many days on a film, because I never had it so far. The most I had like two days, three days.

Bryan Smith ([01:13:42](#)):

With John Wick- The John Wick part was a couple of days, or the John Wick 3?

Andrea Sook ([01:13:46](#)):

It was two days, yeah. It was- The first day we ran out of time and so I was there for two days. It was wonderful. Just really wonderful, that the time wasn't enough for me to see if it would be the same experience, when I'm in New Orleans for a year.

Bryan Smith ([01:13:59](#)):

Right.

Andrea Sook ([01:13:59](#)):

Or flying in and out. But probably it is. I always won the cast and crew lottery, meaning that I never had a bad experience so far on a film or a movie set or a TV set. So I'm just really, really grateful. And I just love this work. I love this work so much. So, I really hope that the industry will get back to so we can have fun again soon and produce a lot of movies that makes lives more beautiful and cheerful.

Bryan Smith ([01:14:32](#)):

I was at Sundance this year as a member of the press with press credentials, and so I was on the red carpet asking questions as they were going into their movie premiers. And one of the questions- I didn't know what I was doing on the red carpet, by the way, I'm not a big press person, but for some reason they let me in. And one of the questions I would ask repeatedly of actors that I knew had done television and film was what do you prefer? Television or film and why? And every single person said basically the same thing: It doesn't matter. It's about the story. And especially with the way content is available. Now, when you go onto Netflix there's not a huge distinction between movies and television series. It's all in the same kettle. And so, I don't think actors are looking at it differently these days. So, at least based upon the interviews that I've done. Are you leaning toward film? Is that something that you have ambitions for to do more work in, or does it matter to you?

Andrea Sook ([01:15:35](#)):

It doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is really, it's the story. It's the role and the people.

Bryan Smith ([01:15:42](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sook ([01:15:43](#)):

For me, the people. It's like Claws would not have been the same if the cast and crew and the creative team wouldn't have been so fun to be with.

Bryan Smith ([01:15:56](#)):

Yeah.

Andrea Sooch ([01:15:56](#)):

It's all about the people. It's a lot about the story and it's a lot about the role. So this is how I see it. And the stage too. I was touring for two years with The Wizard of Oz, with Mickey Rooney as The Wizard.

Bryan Smith ([01:16:15](#)):

Mickey Rooney. Oh, fun.

Andrea Sooch ([01:16:21](#)):

And Eartha Kitt as the Wicked Witch.

Bryan Smith ([01:16:21](#)):

Wow.

Andrea Sooch ([01:16:21](#)):

Can you imagine the stories over pizza?

Bryan Smith ([01:16:26](#)):

{laughs} Yeah, what a cast.

Andrea Sooch ([01:16:29](#)):

We live together, we work together. It was family for two and a half years. I mean, we've been renting rooms, houses together. It's just amazing. So, if the team is not good, the experience is not the same. So, that's also how casting is so brilliant, because we all come along- Like, I don't know how they do it. It's... Everyone was perfect for the role, and we all came along. So it was just really, really cool. So that's an experience that will be in my heart forever.

Bryan Smith ([01:17:04](#)):

Well, it's been a lot of fun talking to you and I appreciate you taking time out of your day. I know that you don't have shooting going on right now, but you are a busy person with your practice and your coaching and your teaching. And so thank you for talking to us. I learned a lot. I'm looking forward to hearing what listeners think about your story.

Andrea Sooch ([01:17:28](#)):

Thank you so much. It's been such a pleasure. Thank you, Bryan. Who's awesome.

Bryan Smith ([01:17:34](#)):

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