

# TRANSCRIPT: WHAT'S YOUR GIFT?

## INTRO —

Welcome to *Imprint*, a podcast about creating a home and life you love. I'm Natalie Walton, an interior designer, stylist, and bestselling author focused on an holistic approach to homes. Each week I'm sharing insights and interviews about the creative process to help you enhance both your interiors and well-being, as well as provide you with the tools and resources to make considered and sustainable choices with all that you create.

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## NATALIE —

Hello everyone, I hope you are all well, welcome back to *Imprint*. It's so good to be with you today. I'm really looking forward to sharing today's episode with you which is such an important topic. Not only if you are a creative or one in the making, but for each and every one of us, because it helps answer the question - Why are we here? And what is our purpose? And you can go a step further and ask what are we meant to do with our gifts? And does it matter? The short answer is yes, your life and what you do with it matters. So today it's time to get clarity on what makes you special and unique. Now don't dismiss this idea as fluff. It's actually key to creating a life you love, it's the foundation to every decision you make in terms of your career, your home and how you manage your time.

And it underscores so many decisions you have to make every day. So what's your gift? We are all born with a gift and we are given it for a reason. I don't have your gift and you don't have mine. So I'll give you an example, recently I was reflecting on my children and their interests and what they're good at now. To be honest, this was after I received a school report for each of them and it made me think that as a parent, I really want my children to be happy. Actually, I don't really like the word happy, I think it's a bit of a misnomer. Happiness is a fleeting state, but contentment is something that I strive for. It's a state of being satisfied with your life. I like to think of it as being at peace with where you are at right now.

Contentment is an acceptance of where you are and when we focus too much on happiness, we can often end up feeling its opposite, which is of course sad, depressed, or anxious. In researching today's topic I came across a study about a group of researchers who went to a remote group of nomads in the Himalayas of Eastern Bhutan. It was to an area where no outsider had been to before. They had to travel through wilderness to find a small settlement of about 200 families. The aim of the research was to identify a range of human emotions by people who had no access to electricity, internet, phones, printed media, nothing. When the villages were shown a range of expressions they recognized most, there was one emotion that was different to all of the others and that was contentment. Their guide said "in our culture, this emotion is very special".

It was considered the highest achievement of human wellbeing, and was what the greatest enlightened masters have been writing about for thousands of years. Isn't that beautiful? And that's why I think reaching for contentment is actually much more important than happiness. So how does this relate to your gift? Well, I believe that when we are living within the realm of our gift, we are much more likely to find contentment. This is not about gaining monetary wealth, although this is often a byproduct of pursuing your passion and embracing your gifts. And it's not about seeking praise or global recognition, instead it's about finding contentment within yourself. So what is your gift? Let's have a look at some of the ways that you can recognize your gift. The first step is awareness. We all have a unique gift and the more that you tap into this and recognizing it in other people, it will help you to recognize it in yourself.

So take a look around at the people in your family and your friends. And as I said earlier, you know, when I was looking at my children's school reports, I could really recognize within them what were their unique gifts. And one of my children, one of my sons, he is very technically minded and not all children are like this - he is quite analytical with his brain. And I want him to be able to embrace this gift that he's been given, because I certainly haven't been given that gift. Now, one of my daughters is incredibly musical and she's just naturally gifted with music. She's actually naturally gifted with a lot of things. It's just amazing for me to watch. It's actually completely changed my perspective on people's ability to do certain things, because I used to think that people were good at something because they practiced it a lot, but I can really see in her that some people just have a true, unique gift. When she did ballet, it was like she had been practicing for years. She was just so flexible and she just had a natural grace and it was really amazing to see because I certainly don't have the grace that she has but I could see that within her. And I could see that that was a gift. Similarly she's like that with music, she can pick it up really quickly. She's got a beautiful singing voice and these are her gifts.

My son doesn't have those gifts, he's very different and the certain types of things that he has a knowledge of has way surpassed mine. I remember even when he was about seven, I felt that he had surpassed my knowledge of things like electricity and the way that water works and he would have these engines and he would have these discussions with me. And I really didn't really know what he was talking about, but I could tell that he was really interested in this and passionate about this. And I feel that as a parent, you really want to harness this within your own children, what are their unique gifts? I feel that the pursuit of those not in a competitive way but just the enjoyment of those, making sure that these things are present in your life - that is important. And I really want to encourage my children to engage with the things that they find enjoyment with and make sure that that is part of their lives. And when I started to think about that, I thought we all have this even as adults and yet we can become very distanced from that. As we grow older, we can get so caught up into the grind of daily life, but I don't like using that expression because I think grind is such a negative word but we can just get so caught up into the rhythms and the repetition of daily living that we don't always notice the things that light us up.

And it's so easy to get caught up in all the minute day-to-day details of life rather than connecting with the things that bring us joy. So that was something that was really important to recognize that my children had these gifts and that I would have gifts too. And it sounds silly to even say, but I don't always think of myself as having gifts. I do what I do and I do what I enjoy, but I don't think of myself as having a gift with any particular thing but it really helped me think about it in a different way. And I thought that's why it would be really interesting to share this idea today because you might not think of yourself as having a gift, but you do what you are into and what you enjoy doing is going to be different to me. And it's so important that we connect with the thing that we really love doing, and that brings us enjoyment.

And that is that sense of contentment in our life because ultimately when we do that, that is where we find our sense of purpose within life too. And as I said, we all get different amounts of enjoyment out of different tasks. For example, my husband loves chatting to people at the local farmer's markets and it's a kind of an 'in' joke in our family that dad loves a good chat and he is very different to me in the sense that I'm not really someone to kind of just chat to random people, whereas my husband can easily do that to anybody. I much prefer more in-depth conversations with, I was going to say friends, but it's not always friends- it's people that I meet on photoshoots that I haven't met before and I love obviously chatting to people on the podcast. That's a whole part of the podcast is having those types of conversations, but I really enjoy getting an understanding of someone and learning about their life and the lessons that they've learned. And I really like that kind of in-depth conversation, whereas my husband loves a casual conversation so we have a different gift and a different enjoyment out of these two different ways of communicating in contrast.

I really love tidying and organizing our home and my husband really doesn't understand why I do this. I really think that he would be quite happy to just leave everything exactly how it is no matter if piles were accumulating around the place. As soon as something comes into our home, I start to go through our collections to edit what we already have. I start taking collections to the charity shop or donating to a friend. It really is because I realize that my gift is having a heightened sense of awareness of my environment and how it affects me and my family. I am really sensitive to my environment and it affects me if things are out of order. And I have to sometimes watch that because it can be a sense of frustration within me when I feel that that it's not the way that I want it to be but I just feel such calm and contentment when my home is in order. Whereas my husband, not that he's a messy person because I honestly don't think I could have married a messy person, but he is quite content, for instance, if he makes lunch to leave things out while he continues working, he could leave it to wash those things later in the day. Whereas I like things to be washed and packed away before I continue on because I just don't like having that around me so we are very different in that way.

So my gift, like I said, is having this finely tuned awareness of my environment. Whereas my husband's gift is about fostering community within our community. He's not on social media, he doesn't engage with online communities in any real way. He's all about connecting with people where he lives, which I think is beautiful, but I just don't get that same enjoyment that he does. It feels uncomfortable for me in some ways, which is probably another story for another day. Now we can all have elements of someone else's personality, but there are some foundations of who we are that really feel like home for us. They feel natural for us and they are where you gravitate towards no matter what, when you have that feeling of contentment with an activity or with what you're doing, that is really when you are working within your gift, within the thing that is unique and special to you.

So that first step is all about creating awareness that we all have a unique gift. The second step is to really tune into your gift if you are not sure, what is your gift? There are a few different steps you can take to find out. First of all, reflect on how did you enjoy spending time as a child? When were you at your happiest and most content, would you make things, draw, read, go exploring? It can really help to journal on this idea so just start writing in a notebook and let your subconscious flow and see what comes up for you. Ask yourself, when was I content as a child? When did I feel that sense of contentment? And remember when you felt, not only at that sense of contentment but a sense of bliss or a sense of flow in your activity that you sort of lost a sense of time.

Now, your gift isn't hard work, it's something that comes easily to you. You want to connect with those moments when you've been, like I said, lost in the moment and experienced a state of flow. Another thing that you can do, secondly, is to consider how do you enjoy spending your time as an adult? There's a great exercise in Julia Cameron's book called *The Artist's Way* that's about going on a date with yourself. If you were to go on a date with yourself and I really encourage you to try it, what would you do? What would you like to do? These are some of the things that if I was to go on a date with myself this weekend, I might go to the movies because I love going to the movies and getting lost in other worlds. I love visiting art galleries and I love the way that art expands my mind and how other people can create things in ways that I had never even considered. I also love sitting in a cafe or at the beach with a notebook and honestly, just imagining all the things that I want to do in my life. That just gives me a huge sense of joy. I don't know if anyone else enjoys doing that but I just like envisaging the things that I want to do in my life and thinking about how I can make those things happen so I really encourage you to think about what you would like to do if you had a free morning on the weekend and you were to go on a date with yourself.

Now, I know often when I ask people, you know, if you had a spare hour, what would you do? And people say, do yoga or go for a walk or maybe have a bath and they're all beautiful things to do, but this is something that's a little bit more proactive than that. It's not just about having a break or nurturing your body. It's about trying to engage your creativity in some way, trying to connect with that part of yourself that is part of the bigger world.

The third thing that you can do is to ask your family and friends, you can probably easily think of some areas where others have a gift. Similarly, others can identify your gifts and really it's because they're not living in your fears and all the things and the voices in your head that hold you back. So what I mean by this is, as I mentioned with my children, I can easily see for them what they have gifts with. But for me I had to really think about for this exercise, what are the things that I have a gift for? And I don't tend to see that within my myself. I think that we become conditioned as adults to not think of ourselves in that way. And there are probably a whole host of reasons - you don't want to get too caught up in vanity or ego but at the same time, I think it's actually really valuable to connect with and recognize what your gift is. And that can really help you when you are thinking about the next stages of your life, of your career, what you want to do with your home or how you want to spend your time. Ultimately when I was looking at these school reports and I was thinking about their gifts and then thinking about my gift and I was actually at a little bit of a crossroads with a direction that I should take with my career and I thought what is it that I really want to do? And where do I want to spend my time and energy? And I will share more on this in an upcoming episode, but I needed to connect back with the things that brought me joy and a sense of contentment and that felt just good for me. And I think part of it is that I've just finished this book and there's so much time and effort that goes into creating a book, I need to recoup my energy after that, but now I'm looking at the next chapter and thinking, okay, what is the next thing for me? And so going through this exercise, I found it really helpful. And I hope that you do as well.

The third step in this process of trying to work out what your gift is to really make sure that you don't squander your gift. The first one was to create awareness that we all have a gift and the second one was to tune into what yours is. The third one is to make sure that you don't squander it because once you've identified your gift, you have to recognize that you have been given it for a reason. So it's time to explore ways you can incorporate your gift into your life. It doesn't always have to be for profit. It can just be for yourself or helping others in some way within your community, within your group of friends or family. So if you love helping others to say for instance, declutter and organize their homes or style them for resale, taking the steps to pursue what you really love is important. And you've really got to think about this is the gift that you've been given and finding ways to connect with it and engage with it on a consistent basis.

Connecting with your gift can help you feel a huge sense of contentment with your life and help you reconnect with your life and re-engage with your journey in a beautiful and powerful way. And when you connect with your gift and others see you living in alignment, it encourages them to connect with their gift too. Now, excuse the pun but it really is the gift that keeps on giving. So before we go, I just want to recap, first of all, you need to create awareness that we all have a unique gift. Now, this is a little bit like the kind of the red car syndrome, which is when you buy a red car, then all of a sudden on the road, you start to notice all the other red cars - your brain actually starts to look for evidence to support your choice or your decision. And so that's why it's so important to think the right types of thoughts, be very intentional with what you think. So if you start to think I have a gift and you start to look for that, you'll find evidence to support that.

Secondly, you really need to tune into your gift so consider how you played as a child. Then look at how you enjoy spending time as an adult and ask what you would do. If you went on a date with yourself and ask your family and friends. The third step is to make sure that you don't squander your gift. You've been given it for a reason. Your life will expand in all of the best ways so take action today.

I'd love to hear from you about what is your gift. You can send me a DM on Instagram @nataliewalton and maybe just put in the first words, 'GIFT' in capital letters so I can find it easily. The final thing I'd like to say is that if you are ready to explore your love for interiors, head over to my website, as I have a bunch of free resources on how you can connect with your creativity in a meaningful way. I look forward to connecting again with you the same time next week. Thanks for listening to *Imprint*.

All of the links and info for this episode are at [nataliewalton.com/podcast](https://nataliewalton.com/podcast). Don't forget to subscribe so that you can get a direct download of the latest episode and I really appreciate when you take a minute to rate and review, as well as share the love with someone who might benefit from this episode or on social media. If you'd like to access a range of free resources, come visit my website [nataliewalton.com](https://nataliewalton.com). Thank you to Yaga Media for producing this podcast. And I would also like to acknowledge the people of the Bundjalung nation, where it was recorded and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I look forward to connecting again soon. I'm Natalie Walton, and you've been listening to *Imprint*.