DAILYGOOD
News that Inspires

Linda Cruse: Marmalade and Machine Guns
by Awakin Call Editors

She's visited 40 countries in 15 years, with just one suitcase.

Inspired by the "power of one," Linda Cruse's all-encompassing friendliness, explorer's spirit, and desire to serve has brought her to every continent amid its catastrophic moments of crisis-- from the earthquake in Nepal to the tsunami in Thailand, two super-typhoons in the Philippines, and the Pakistani earthquake.

She's been described as a cross between Florence Nightingale and Indiana Jones. Yet her life didn't always hold such high sights and intentions. In 1996, while driving on a motorway in the middle of the night, Linda suddenly went blind.

"I thought I might die, and I made a vow to myself; if I survived, I would change my life," she recalls.

A couple hours later, her sight returned. Yet the unexpected episode chiseled a question mark across her life's intentions. The single mother of two later learned that temporary blindness can be caused by stress. A trained nurse working in pharmaceutical sales, her life had become a vigorous treadmill. So she stuck to her vow, and reorganized her priorities in new and unexpected ways.

What follows is the edited version of an Awakin Call with Linda Cruse. You can listen to the full recording of the interview here.

Audrey: Let’s introduce Linda a bit. She grew up with parents who had an adventurous spirit; instead of going to the beach during school vacation, they would zig zag across the country, stopping and talking with different folks and meeting people along the way. She is originally from UK but she visited 40 countries in 15 years with just one suitcase!

So great to have you with us, Linda. I know you are also in the midst of a full day in a full week. You were just in Boston and now you are in LA. Next week you are headed to Nepal. It is such a gift for us to get to share space with you for this hour and half. Thank for taking the time to just pause and share your story.

Linda, can you share a bit more about how you got started on your current journey?

Linda: I married when I was very young, when I was in my early twenties. At the time I was in a career I absolutely adored. I was a nurse and was a nurse for 10 years. It was a joy every single day; I felt that spring in my step to go to work.

As life happened, I got divorced at a very young age and I was a single mom with two young children. At that time I realized that in order to be the single mom that I wanted to

be and to be able to give my children all the things that they needed, the money I made as a nurse, in those days, was not going to pay the bills.

So I started to look for a job that paid me more money. And at that time the pharmaceutical industry was looking to engage nurses. As I looked at the job description, it ticked all the boxes. It came with company car, good salary, regular holidays and no night duty. I thought, "I can do this. This actually will suit me fine."

But there was no call from my heart or my soul to do this job, but I took the job because it fulfilled all the financial requirements that I needed.

I found myself unhappy most days, but I could see that my children are happy and I could pay my bills.

And so I carried on until one day when I was driving from a conference, and it was a dark winter night. I was on that highway and I went blind. I really don't know how I ever stopped that car. Whether it was intuition or an angel, I sat there on the shoulder just wondering what had happened to me. I was scared; I was angry; I was frustrated. I thought my life was over and I would never see my children again; I'd never work again. And that fear and panic... It was way before the time of mobile phones. I sat there in the dark and cold, with myself.

Of course in those very dark moments, I started to pray to God whom I hadn't thought about in a very very long time. I said, "If my sight returns, I promise that I will find my purpose and my passion."

And I sat there really in that heart searching, soul-searching moment, I was praying with all my soul that I would get my sight back. And I was lucky. My sight did return. It was something called hysterical blindness or stress blindness, which comes on due to overloaded stress.

So, I had this incredible wake-up call that catapulted me into the next major stage of my life.

When I went home to my two gorgeous children, I shared with them that I realized that I had become a very over-stressed and very negative and unhappy person. And that, for me to succeed in changing myself around, I really needed their help. They were so dependent on me and there was no way that I could just leave them and quit my job and do something else. So I needed to do something only I could do, and that is to change myself. And so I set forth doing that.

I invite people to practice this exercise because, we are such creatures of habit and we don't realize day by day, if we are happy or not happy, or if we are expressing positive vibrations or negative vibrations. What I found I was doing, I was having the most negative conversations all the time with family, friends, and work colleagues. It was constant banter of negativity. It was like, "Oh gosh! The weather is really bad today. Oh my goodness me! It's going to be worse tomorrow." It wasn't that horrible. I had become the most negative person because I put myself in a job, that for me was meaningless. And so I had just immersed myself into being a very negative and miserable person. A very tough moment.

Audrey: So, What steps did you take to begin? How did you know you even wanted to go to volunteer and do relief work? I mean, you can do so many things when you volunteer.

What prompted you to decide to go in that direction?

Linda: It was a very interesting process for me because I realized that the only person we could ever change is yourself. I literally asked my children to help me. I said to them, "I need to find out what my purpose is, what my passion is. But to start I had to change this negative person and lose her for good. There are three words that we are going to eliminate from my vocabulary. They are no, not and don't." Can you imagine that with teenage children? The funny thing was they were team players. They said, "Ok mom, we'll help you." We had this swear book. Whenever we said the three words we were not meant to say, no, not and don't we had to put a pound in the swear book. And I tell you what; we had a very good holiday that year.

I switched the news off for quite sometime. I stopped watching the news because I was regurgitating every single thing that came in the news. All the bad news. And when the news came on, I filled it with dance music or the comedy show, and just put in the positive where the negative was. I actually looked at the circle of people I hung out with. As they say, you become whom you have coffee with. I found the group of people that I attracted, they were also very negative people. So I started to look to actually communicate and hang out with positive and happy people. That also helped me.

I really worked on it every single day. Simultaneously I was looking to really find that my heart was pulling me toward. It really was to help people again. When I reflected on my nursing, I thought do I really want to help someone in safe England, where we have good social services, good social security?

And I thought no, my heart is pulled to go to places in the world where they don't have financial security or social security. Where they are really living on the edge. So it was one day, when my son came to me and said, "Mom, I really want to join the army." My daughter came and said, "I want to go to university." I sat them both down and said, "Is it time for me to leave home now?" Because I realized my kids have found their dream, they have found their passion, they have found their purpose and they were about to embark on it.

And I then realized what my purpose was. And it wasn't being in England. This is how I came to that point of selling everything I own in the world; my house, my car, my books, my paintings and really leaping onto the sublime with the full sense of passion and purpose. My heart and my soul were pulling me stronger than anything that was stopping me. So that is exactly what happened. And here we are, 15 years later. I still at the moment own nothing in the world apart from one suitcase.

Along the way I had the incredible honor to meet the most influential and powerful humanitarians, those volunteers that join me, and celebrities and the well known business leaders that I have met in the front lines. All great humanitarians.

Audrey: Learning about your work, it really is about brokering relationships between all these different people. Between humanitarians who are very influential or regular volunteers who just want to help, or businesses who want to help, grassroot communities and NGO's that have their own perspectives and position in those communities. Could you share about one of the places where you worked and a little bit about how this way of brokering relationships has come about and how it evolved?

Linda: I found in these 15 years that we have to listen to our hearts and souls. Whether we actually go and help in any situation. Whether it’s in our local schools or whether it’s in

a disaster area or the lady next door who has got two young children and desperately needs a break.

I will tell you a story regarding my first visit overseas to a major disaster area. It was during Asian tsunami in 2004. I was actually in Uzbekistan, which was one of the Russian former states. When I saw this incredible disaster unfold on the computer screen, I realized that I had to go. What I saw was waves that are 100 foot high, 240,000 dead, affecting 40 countries. All I knew was that I had to go. There was nothing else that could fill that sense of purpose.

And when I got there, it was as if a nuclear bomb had gone off. It really was, in a sense, complete and utter disaster. Resorts crumpled like matchboxes, cars thrown on top of roofs and glass everywhere. I knew that I had to get to the largest survivor camp, which was full of 5000 Thai survivors. As I got closer, I did feel rather overwhelmed by the sense of destruction and death. So, I got out of my car and I walked to the edge of the cliff to take a good deep breath and tried to calm myself down. As I looked over, and looked at the sea, I wish I hadn't come because, all I could see was a sea full of dead bodies. I walked back from the edge of the cliff and I collapsed.

As I sat there having my panic, my nursing matron appeared in front of me. And she stood there very severe in her starched white apron, and she looked at me at said, "Nurse, this is not about you. You are here to serve. You are here to contribute." As I saw her there, it took me back to my old nursing days. And it took me back to that sense of complete and utter service and contribution. Never fear if you panic, when you are about to do something. Take care of yourself and reboot. Leave your mission as a back server. Something will always come to you to help you over that hurdle.

Because I am a nurse, I went to help in the first aid tent. It was quite extraordinary, the level of all trauma and grief that were there. But what worried me most was that a number of children had been orphaned. There was one little girl particularly who kept pulling on my trouser leg. Eventually I said to the doctor, "Do you know anything about this girl?" They said she has lost every pillar of her life. She lost her parents, her brothers, her sisters, her teachers and her religious leaders. And this little girl continued to pull on my trouser leg and she took me to an area where the children had been penned.

Now, the great and the good arrive almost immediately. The UN helped the children.

But so did the nasty, the sex traffickers and the child kidnappers.

So I looked at this area where there are these amazing volunteers from all over the world that had arrived. They were taking care of the children. They had given them art to do. The paintings done by the children were black. It was the grief that was coming out in this really untold way. As I was there, I had a text message from my father. My father is a magician and in fact I am a magician. What I realized was that these children had to smile again. Because whatever happened, the sun does rise the next day. We have to overcome whatever situation we are in.

As I thought of magic, I wonder if we can get a magician to come out to this disaster area and volunteer. Mostly, when I talked to people about some of the things I do, they do say to me, "Linda you are crazy!" Never mind! I called back to London and I asked the magic circle if they would send out a magician. Because I knew that if a magician came, he would start to heal the heart and souls of those children, through smiles, through laughter and through relaxation.

And the magician came and he stayed for six weeks. He was an incredible volunteer. He had no skills at all to make a difference in this terrible disaster. But he was as useful as the docs were and as the nurses were. As he came and made people happy and smile ad start to recover emotionally and psychologically. Incredible thing!

And really, when I think about how that psychological recovery started, it is something I have taken through my entire humanitarian career. Because my main focus is to help people, to help rebuild their lives. And when I am there, I am looking to see how I can get people to earn money as quickly as possible. Especially when you had everything taken away from you, you need a means of earning a livelihood. And there are people who lived in this area and worked in the hotel industry. And every single thing is gone. Hotels were washed away and they were not going to be rebuilt.

Audrey: How did you do that?

Linda: With another set of volunteers! This time it is the volunteers who came from the business world. I said to them, "I need you to come and help me solve the problem. You have skilled people in marketing, accounting. You have incredible business skills. Will you come with me to the front line? Will you talk to the people, look at the geography? Will you actually look to see if there is any market opportunity for these people to rebuild their lives?"

So these great volunteers came from Bangkok and they came for just a weekend. They traveled to the areas the tsunami hit. They were superstars because they have a certain set of skills that I don't have. They were able to look at the situation, find a market opportunity and come up with a 10-year business plan and having people to earn money immediately. These people were not educated. They couldn't relocate. So they came to them and said, "We have an idea. Where the waves hit it still left acres of rubber trees. All the people need to actually harvest this rubber is a coconut shell or a knife. For the cost of about $200 to get a full community back up and running and earning money."

When I asked the community if they thought that this is a good idea, they came back and said, "Our grandparents were used to this kind of work. Of course it is a great idea. And it is easy for us to do." In four months they earned three times the money they have ever earned in the hotel industry. That is gift the business leaders gave me as volunteers! Another great example!

You know 10,000 volunteers came from all over the world. We have from 18 years old to 80 years old. We had the huggers. We have people come just to literally hug people. We had people come to clear up the glass from the beaches. We had 600 tons of debris on the beaches that the volunteers moved. We had pouring of love, unconditional love and compassion. We are one world. And these people self-organized.

Audrey: They self organized!

Linda: So organized! I am a big believer in 'never be a burden especially when you are in disaster area.' And make sure you go with a tent or food. But actually what normally happens is that people actually want to feed you. They want you to buy a meal from them. You give them purpose. They want to take care of you. They will open up their homes. You become a community within that disaster. And that stops them from feeling abandoned and forgotten. That's a very big thing also.

Let me move quickly to what I am doing in Nepal after the earthquake that happened there last year in April and May. It's been 8 months now. The people in Nepal are forgotten. They had a massive disaster. The community I am working in, 95% of the homes have been destroyed and their livelihood gone. And no one has gone to that village to help them and now it's 8 months on.

In these areas of disasters, once the candles are gone, we think people are ok. We think that they have survived and somehow they will rebuild their lives. But in communities where they have no social security, no financial security, they have no ability to do that. They will sit there having lost their job, livestock, lives of children in the earthquake, and they have no idea how to replace it. It may only cost $60 to replace a goat. They don't have that money to do that. Or $50 to replace the shed to be able to have a shelter from sunshine. They don't have that.

Always, we need to give them a hand up, not a hand out. We need to give them ability to go back to being independent and self sustained. Given them human dignity. And that comes from having economic empowerment. These are the big things at the moment.

Audrey: Speaking of magic, I am reminded of a story that you wrote in your book. When you were in Thailand and you brought the magician, it was a great hit in the refugee camp. There was another group of folks in Thailand who were kind of removed from mainstream society there. You managed to break those walls and bring the magic into their community as well. Can you share a little bit about that?

Linda: Yes. I think magic always evolved to breakdown barriers, to make people curious, to even stop conflicts. I think during very serious situations in Nepal during the Maoist time, when these two gangs were about to fight, I would get magic hat out. Because it's fun.

Audrey: In the middle of two armies you bring magic hat!

Linda: Yes! Because people actually don't want to fight. We want to be having fun and we want to be curious. We want to be interested in something. Actually as long as you have an open heart and positive energy, and obviously we were going there to help, they really welcomed us into their hearts and their homes.

I think that takes me onto something else, fear. You know if we project fear, then of course we will attract it. I have been in so many, what would seemingly be a dangerous situation. I don't feel any fear. Because, I am enjoying that one purpose of helping people. I never had any moments where I have had an issue, really.

That's the reason that I worked in Pakistan which is a quite complex and difficult area to work in; It was also the Pakistan earthquake. But still, as along as you wear their dress, if you dress as they do, you start to behave and become like them. This is their dress in their country. And they will learn to not make a big show of what you are doing. Instead of taking a big armored vehicle to the front lines with the bells and whistles going, you take a taxi and you go as a normal citizen to help in the remote area.

And it doesn't matter whether you are here in US or in Europe. Wherever you go to help a different community, just for a moment think about who they are and where they are coming from. Whether it's a homeless shelter or whether it is an indigent community that has their way and their own ritual, be curious about it, understand and become one of them as you enter their community. All of this stuff that you bring as your

gifts, as well as understanding where they are coming from.

Audrey: I think it's really interesting that you mention that you never really had a problem. I mean you have brushed death multiple times. You evaded rape. You got a cut on your face and you stitched it up yourself. You suffered from hypothermia! I think you faced some pretty extreme conditions. And it is pretty remarkable the way you look at it- everything always worked out anyway!

So what enabled you to keep bouncing back and running headlong onto these circumstances? Knowing that you might be facing certain extreme situations?

Linda: I mean, to be really honest with you, it is the faces of the people that I am helping. Always, when you close your eyes and the you can see them as children, elderly, moms and dad of the families who I know have been forgotten, All I know is that I need to get up the next day and to move forward to help them. I believe we have to take care of it ourselves, because it actually is just not about us. When we are born into a privileged society where we have a level of education, a level of social security and financial security, it is so great that when we can use our gifts and skills to help other people.

I have a beautiful family in the UK. When I am there, I really look to see whom in my local community I can help. Whether it is an elderly person who hasn't gone to super market in a while, Let’s go find out how he is? Let's go and find out if he needs something. It's always the quiet ones, that's what I found out with my nursing. The ones that are shouting they're usually ok. It's the quiet ones; it's the one that sits quietly in the corner that you don’t notice for few days. They are the ones that we should be on alert for and find out what is happening. That is always what drives me forward. At home and abroad is to know that there is small bit of difference that I can make to that person the next day in some way.

There is always something in such a small way that each of us in our own way can bring to that person to uplift them just at the moment. You would never know the ripple effect that has on people.

Audrey: Great! Is there a particular moment that really made an imprint in your mind when you connected with someone in that way? I am sure you have many many moments, but are there one particular moment that you really hold dear your heart or one that is particularly memorable to share?

Linda: I like to show the diversity of where I work. I did have the most amazing moments with His Holiness Dalai Lama, up in the high Tibetan areas. It was helping an amazing charity. I realized that many babies were dying because they weren't aware of something.

Tibetan nomads, even if you begin to imagine their lives, they really only have what they stand up in. They usually own only one set of clothes, they just literally have what they carry on them and around their waist, what they need for their day-to-day life. Around their waist hangs one knife. This knife is something that they use to cut their Yak meat when they are having their food. What these Tibetans high up in the Himalayan areas were doing is that they were also using this knife to cut the umbilical cord of their child. Inadvertently they were killing their own babies because the knife was very very dirty.

When you are looking to add value or change someone’s life, all it took was for me and a group of volunteers was to go up to this area, and share this one piece of knowledge that

is so simple to help save lives. Really very extraordinary. And again people travel far and wide to share this message. And just seeing the smile on the Grand dad's face or the mother's face, when they knew that they understood the reason why their babies were dying, is extraordinary. We also managed through this amazing charity, to embolden the religious leaders, who helped us to convey the message of using a clean knife. When they do their religious rituals over it and encourage them to take this knife in its place until it is time to use it to cut the umbilical cord. All you are trying to do is share joy and happiness and the continuation of life in a happy and positive way. We all have the ability to do that every single day of our lives.

Audrey: It's beautiful! Do you ever feel called to do service rooted in one place?

Linda: I am actually a global citizen. No doubt. I see the world as my home. While I don't own a home currently, I have millions of places I can sleep all over the world. I never feel homeless.

But I suppose because my children live in England, I go there. Of course a very large part of my heart is with my children and my six grand children. It is really fun when I am with my six grand children in UK. I actually want to encourage people more and more to know that we are all so connected.

It doesn't matter whether you live in the Amazon jungle or the Sahara Desert or a mansion in Colorado. We all have the same values. We all want our children to be happy and healthy. We all want to be educated. We all need to really care for each other more. I have children that work in the world, which is 80% of the world that lives on less than $2 a day.

Herein lies another message. Poverty doesn't equal no happiness. The people that I am with on the edge and on the front lines, in the evening, they do have the ability to dance and sing and drum and share stories over that lovely cup of chai.

Sometimes we get lost in the material world where we have the commercial and material expectation. I also encourage people to really get back to basics about what is important in your life and what brings happiness to you and your loved ones. Many many years ago, I said to people, "Don't buy things, buy experiences". Things will get old, break, disappear or you loose them. If you spend your money on experiences whether that's having a family holiday, family vacation, or traveling to another part of the world or it's a day in the park having a picnic with your family, that will make some happy memories for the rest of your lives. And that's what traveling so much has taught me.

Your values and who you are can change in time, when you see different levels of happiness and what brings happiness. When I noticed a young boy in Egypt who was playing with no shoes and wearing a raggedy t- shirt and a parallel short, my son who was also seven year old, gave away his brand new trainers and his Nike T- shirt. He said, "If he doesn't need one, I don't either. Look how happy he is!" So traveling is very important. At least moving out of your own environment and going to see how the people live. That could be just to a suburb in your own town.

Kozo: Beautiful!

Audrey: I'd love to know more about how you nurture people's self sustainability. I know when you go to these places, you mentioned that it's really

important to help these people find their own way of earning their livelihood after their work has been destroyed or their jobs or the hotels they have been working in, after the tsunami, have been destroyed. You forge these deep relationships with people and then in a way, you sow a seed and nurture the conditions for them to grow. And once they are strong enough to grow on their own, you let go. So how do you distinguish between teaching a person to fish vs. giving them a fish? Sometimes it's not all that clear.

Linda: Very, very true. Of course you have to remember that the places I go to are absolutely destitute. They have nothing. When people are like that, absolutely at the rock bottom, you become more open to what do they need, what do they want. So these very authentic conversations happen. Whenever I go to any community, I sit with the people and talk about their lives and their rituals. What they want to do. What are their skill sets? What is the soil like? What would grow there? What they would really like to introduce into the community? Often these very marginalized remote communities never have many chances.

I have a saying called- "Build back better". They already have a hand to mouth existence. We go in to see how we can build back better. This is what we do in the village that I am going to. We can replace their livestock, which is what they wanted to do. They would like to become the center of milk collection and distribution. We need to raise $5000 for the chiller and generator to operate. We know that if we can replace the livestock and arm them with chiller, which can then give them this credibility of being the center of milk distribution, we will get the milk companies to buy that milk. It will really make the vibrancy of that community return.

We have always engaged with the village leaders, youth leaders, and women. I always talk to the teachers. The teachers are the most honored people. I'll tell you the secret. The person who knows most things that go on anywhere in the world is the hairdresser and the barber. Every single person shares their secret to the hairdresser and the barber. If you really want to know what's going on, go the hairdresser or the barber. That what I do in the third world countries. Exactly the same in the US or the UK. We all share stories to that independent person who is doing our hair. You do have to immerse yourself in their world. Basically, we need to understand who they are to really help them from inside out with a hand up. And it's a process.

What can happen when people go to an underdeveloped area is that they want to change people, which is something I am completely against. There was a very small Islamic community in Thailand, when I was there to help them after the tsunami. Some beautiful missionaries had come in, but they had one goal. That was to convert this Islamic village to a Christian village. To me, that is not allowed. That is absolutely not allowed. We all have our own beliefs and our own rituals and our own systems. And we can share with them unconditional love and compassion. But we cannot go in and change people's belief systems, unless that is something that they want to do. So, when I see that happening, it makes me quite cross and it is something I will always raise awareness about. We should all have that freedom of choice to be who we are and to believe in what we wish to believe in.

Kozo: Linda, like you said, you sit with people who live off $2 a day and some people have lost their everything. They have lost their home, they lost their community, and they lost their livelihood. But I also know that you do work with business people and large organizations like Nestle. I am wondering how do you straddle that divide? You seem to kind of effortlessly float across that divide and I am wondering how you do that and what your experiences are doing that and what transformations have you seen on the other

side, on the side of large corporations or business people?

Linda: It's a very good question. For me, I have devoted my 50 years to ensuring that the big companies on the private sector and business leaders are engaged in making a difference in the front lines. It was Prince Charles who taught me this model. If we don't engage them we are actually missing out on the greatest jewels.

Business leaders have so many great skills to bring to the table. What I have leant is that we just need to facilitate that. They often feel that they often are used as a cash cow. Their only use is to give money. Actually they are worth much more than that. We need to say, in this situation on the front line, can you please share your marketing skills or your accounting skills, your communication skills. Can you please help us to help this poor fisherman who has lost everything. He replaced his boat. He wants to learn now how to market his service better. He wants to know how to make a sign. He wants to know about health and safety.

Very few charity workers would have come up with that incredible financial impact for that community. It takes a skill that we actually can share with them. It took a big business brain to do that and they also did a 10-year business plan for it. I've seen this over and over again. We need to build the bridges. Often I work with Wall Street charities, large charities and the private sector to bring them together. Because, there is suspicion, there is mistrust. We need to know that we each have very good skills. And be alert for each other. Also even in the charitable world, the business world, we waste a lot of money. A lot of the donations that are given to big charities go straight down the toilet and doesn't reach the people.

They want to have that accountability; they want to have transparency; they want to have that rapport. That’s something I have done from the day one. I show exactly where the money has gone. I show the effect it had on the people and I show a video. I show before, middle and after. I show the uplift through the business intervention of how someone can just completely rebuild his or her life.

But I have also shown the private sector how well it works by volunteering. For example KPMG helped do some volunteering. They were giving their staff a day a month for 6 months. KPMG is an accounting firm and they have some very highly qualified people there. But they decided to be empathetic and allowed their staff to volunteer one day a month for six month. But a very strange thing happened. After the six months, the global chair of KPMG came back and said to the amazing staff, the productivity of the company went up because their staff volunteered. Contribution is the greatest human need. If people volunteer, they feel good about themselves and so even a hard accounting and highly qualified firm like KPMG, their productivity went up when their staff started to volunteer. So real service, contribution is the greatest human need. And it has incredible knock-on effect in every area of our life.

Kozo: Wow! I hope all the other corporations and large businesses are aware of the rise in productivity in KPMG for having their workers volunteer.

Linda: It is a very serious thing that few companies know. And I have had many great experiences where companies are starting to engage in a serious way and allow their staff to volunteer more. University students and college students, they are looking for companies, which are very committed to making a difference in the world by allowing them time to actually volunteer.

You know that's how I got to meet with Richard Branson of Virgin. He is a great humanitarian. It is something that is encouraged right through his whole company at Virgin, to ensure that the staff doesn't just give lip service. The roll up their sleeves and engage. He leads from the front. He is a very big humanitarian. I met him in Johannesburg in a very difficult slum area. And there he was leading the way and leading the team and the staff. That's what companies need to do. They need to stand up and recognize that -- what I call, "Corporate social opportunity". Companies don't need to think that helping out is a responsibility any more. It is an opportunity. Allowing your staff to get out and help and volunteer is actually an incredible opportunity for the company. Whether it is productivity, whether it is having your staff coming in with a big smile on their face because they are contributing. It's a win-win situation.

Kozo: You know there is another study that I heard about. They took two groups. One group did exercise five times a week and another group did volunteer work one time a week and they found that the group that did the volunteer work one time a week was healthier and probably would live longer than the group that did exercise five times a week. You have so much life in you, Linda. I am wondering if you feel that vitality coming out through your volunteer work, through being of service.

Linda: Most definitely. I never need to take a holiday because everyday is a joy. There is this.. I think it's driven by passion of course. That's why another thing that I will say to people is, "If you are not living your passion, get out." Because if your are not in an environment or work situation, that is filled with passion or satisfaction....That's why I do feel completely full of energy, vitally and life and I feel joyous. Because I feel such gratitude and appreciation about the position that I've been in and to be able to make a difference to hundreds of thousands of people's lives.

Never ever feel you don't have anything to offer. Because I tell you, I have the huggers, I have the people with circus skills, the people who take the ball around the magician, the actors, the business leaders, the moms, the dads, You all have something to offer. We get connected with that passion and that heart vibration and that's where the magic is!

Audrey: I am curious Linda, amidst all this activity, do you have a personal practice? How do you stay grounded?

Linda: Yes I do of course. I have been so lucky because I have lived in the countries that have really engaged in being your best and being spiritual and really engaging with nature and environment and appreciating whether it is the warmth of the sun or the goodness of the flowering along the wild paddy field. I've learnt the ritual of every religion known to man. From Islamic religion, Buddhism, Hinduism, from Christian, from indigenous communities, from Native American Indians, I have learnt from refugee camps and I tell you what, I do wake up and bless that morning. I will light incense, I will light a candle, and I'll say a prayer. I will carry something with me that reminds me of opening my heart, remembering my family. I'll take pictures of my children and grandchildren and my grand parents. It's just remembering constantly to be in touch with the wonderful and the magic of our beautiful world. I have rituals when I wake up and I have rituals when I sleep. Most of them start with thank you and end with thank you. It is about gratitude and appreciation and joy. My day is full of these rituals.

We must learn from the indigenous community. They do have a much happier existence generally, than we do. Because they have understood how to gauge and live their

day-to-day life. I now know that there is a very, very easy way to live our purpose and passion and to have a sense of joy and happiness every single day. And I am a very ordinary person. I came from a very ordinary background. My family was very ordinary. And this is what I managed to do. Anyone can do it, anyone.

Kozo: Linda, Nayantara's question came through. She says, “I am so impressed by your ingenuity and bringing inspiration and self-nurturing. We are lacking in the way we nurture many of our suburban youth who find no reason sometimes to work or even live. What do you suggest we can do to inspire them to find their passion? These youth are also silent forgotten ones in a sense."

Linda: I think what we have to do is build those bridges. We have to create a safe, fun and interesting environment for people to come together. So if you are aware of an area or a suburb where people are really lost and are purposeless and passionless, and you are keen to connect with them, start to do research about what really excites people in that area. I tell you what. It comes through something like sport. it could be football, basketball or it could be hockey, something like that. Do research about what really excites them. And that is just the first platform to get to know them. You have got to create the platform to level the playing field where you are looking, dressing, acting and eating the same. It is from that level playing field that you start to understand people’s purpose and passion. And sport is a real leveler and also people are fanatical about it. I would encourage you to do massive research in the area you want to help. Equally start to build a bridge on something that has a very common denominator like sport and start really in-depth conversations from that about what people's passions are and what they would like to do. and then the magic happens. Then you can start to link them and connect them with companies or big organizations that can help them to grow.

Kozo: Beautiful, Linda. I know you have to leave right at the end of this. How can we as ServiceSpace, how can we as a community, how can all our volunteers, how can we share this view? How can we help you out and what can we do?

Linda: Thank you for asking. It can be as part of my communication team. For example, you heard me mentioning places in Boston. I would love to have that on your website, so people can know that if they come, they have the ability to see us and also to have an amazing experience and to donate.

Many of you, bright young things out there, you are great social media, can you join me on Facebook and on Twitter? Look at what we are doing one day and be part of our community. Actually, if you are able come on the front-lines with me, come and be the change. Sign up for front line experience.

If any of you out there are part of the business world, I would love you to connect with me. I would love to engage your organization. I would love to bring together a think tank of the most creative, innovative leaders to come together and help solve problems. If nothing else, if you want to buy a goat for Nepal go on to Wandaid.org and buy a goat. I promise you I'll show you the picture when I get to Nepal in a week's time. There are so many beautiful things you can do.

And the last thing is smile at the next person you see, great big smile and give them joy. That would help me too.

Audrey: I'm smiling right now just listening to that.

Linda: Wonderful! Wonderful!

Audrey: Thank you so much Linda for having the time to join us in the middle of all these travels. Waking up at 5 am to make sure that you can get everything done on time and it's been a real gift to get to hear all your stories.

Linda: My pleasure.

Audrey: As Mish mentioned, your spirit is really infectious and it really comes through in the way that you talk and the way that you speak. There is an open heartedness that I feel listening to you. So thank you, for bringing the magic to our call, Saturday morning or afternoon or evening, depending on where we are in the world.

Linda: Oh! that's my great pleasure. It's been great talking to you. Thank you for letting this happen and thank you for helping us with WandAid.org and getting the word out. Because we need you as much as anything else. We are one big gorgeous wonderful team. Thank you so much.