

Bonnie Tsui: The idea is that the ants have been working all summer and fall is coming, and what does the grasshopper been doing? Grasshopper has been fiddling away the summer making music and the fall is coming and there is no food for the grasshopper. And the grasshoppers hungry and he comes in he asks the ants for some food and the ant say, no, because you have fiddled away. There's a time for work and there's a time for play. This is this moral of this fable. And I laugh at that because the grasshopper is clearly an artist. The grasshopper is producing something for the world, actually has been doing that work for the whole summer. People who have been listening to this music, this is my interpretation, by the way. And then the fall comes and what is recognizable to everybody, the ants, as work is having collected the food and stored it for winter and being prepared for that. But another aspect of this story that I think is funny is that they don't recognize that what the grasshopper has been doing is work, this creative work, music.

Bonnie Tsui: And so there are these different facets of that story that I think are so perfect for this time, where we are as a culture, we say that we value artists, and writers, and creative makers, but we don't really recognize their work or compensate them as such in the same way that we do doctors, lawyers. We recognize work in different ways and we still prioritize and place a greater value on certain kinds of work.

Shelby Stanger: There's a lot of stories floating around right now on productivity and doing more. But lately, I've been interested in the art of doing less, sometimes even nothing at all. That means more downtime to read, line the grass, take a hike, go surfing, swim in the water, or just stare at the clouds or even out the window. This is not easy work for me but I always feel refreshed and my mind feels so much more clear when I take the time to not do anything.

Shelby Stanger: Today's guest Writer Bonnie Tsui thinks it's time we start questioning the desire to always increase our productivity, and instead work more on the art of lying fallow. I'm Shelby Stanger, and this is Wild Ideas Worth Living. Like the fable she shared about the grasshopper and the ants, Bonnie believes that doing nothing is a kind of work. It allows us to refuel our creative juices, and to mentally process and solve problems. She recently wrote a whole article about doing nothing for the New York Times, I found it really inspiring. The wild thing about doing nothing, well, there's much more than nothing that's actually happening.

Shelby Stanger: You're doing something really important, so don't feel guilty about it. We're going to dive deeper into this a little later in the show but first, a little about Bonnie. Her first book, American Chinatown, A People's History of Five Neighborhoods, won the 2009-2010 Asian Pacific American award for literature, and was a San Francisco Chronicle bestseller. She's been the recipient of the Lowell Thomas Gold Award for travel journalism, and she's the current recipient of the National Press Foundation Fellowship. She lives and serves in the Bay

Area near San Francisco, California, and she's a contributor to The New York Times and California Sunday Magazine.

Shelby Stanger: So before we dive into her theories about doing nothing, I wanted to talk to Bonnie about her background as a writer and a swimmer. She has a book about swimming coming out next year. I'd love for you to tell us a little bit about your background as a writer and as a swimmer.

Bonnie Tsui: Sure, absolutely. First of all, thanks so much Shelby for having me on the show. I'm really excited to be here. We talked a lot before the show about a lot of these things that we're talking about today. So I'm really excited to be here. First of all, I guess to introduce myself, I'm a journalist and an author. I guess I like to describe myself as a generalist these days because I really do follow where my curiosity has been taking me and I've been a longtime contributor to The New York Times, I've written for them for almost 20 years now, I can't believe it, for many sections. So Sunday review, travel, the magazine, the International edition, and even real estate and this now defunct section called circuits, it was a technology section. I don't know if you remember it but my first story for the Times was a big feature on handheld GPS devices in the outdoors. And I don't know if, many of our listeners may not be old enough to remember them, but they were larger than your phone and it just makes me laugh to think about that we used to cart these around on mountains and stuff.

Shelby Stanger: That's so interesting. Well, I had a giant one in my car because I go left when you say to go right, but ...

Bonnie Tsui: But that is actually where I got my start.

Shelby Stanger: So then how did you get into swimming? You're writing a book on swimming right now and it incorporates some of the guests we've had, like, Kim Chambers and some other people, how did water become such an important theme in your work and why is swimming so important to you?

Bonnie Tsui: Well, I think, of course, it starts with my parents and having grown up in water, and swimming on the swim team, and becoming lifeguards, and just having the family connection to water where we as a family, we would spend time at the pool, we would spend time at the beach, and that was where, from a very personal standpoint, my parents eventually got divorced when I went to college, but all of my memories and perhaps this is upon reflection looking backwards, but the times in which we felt most whole as a family is water. And so I think that can't help but affect how I think about water and how I feel in water, whether it's swimming or surfing, or being at the beach, or any kind of immersion. And so I think that is in essence where my origin story with water comes from.

- Shelby Stanger: And your parents who had met in a swimming pool, that's so interesting, in Hong Kong.
- Bonnie Tsui: Yeah. And so, over the course of my life, I look at the arc of my work and I do find that the stories ... and I would just keep coming back again and again to swimming in places, when I would go to a new place I'd find a place to swim or I would find a place to immerse myself somewhere and then realizing, oh, this is something that I've been doing not even thinking about it.
- Shelby Stanger: I think it's so interesting though that your first book was about being Asian, which was such a good book, and then you transition to swimming but really they're connected.
- Bonnie Tsui: Oh, sure. I mean, I think that the first book, American Chinatown, it was about how my family's first entry into this country were through these gateways in New York and San Francisco that were again, like it's a personal story, but it is a much bigger story for a whole population of immigrants to America. And they came through China towns, and it was their place of safety where people spoke the language, where there were services and there was a supportive community. And we all look for that and that's so relevant today.
- Bonnie Tsui: And so with swimming, again, it's it's this personal impetus, this personal story, it starts with something that is so meaningful to me and yet it blows out to be something that is relevant to pretty much everyone because swimming, whether or not you call yourself a swimmer, it is part of your story. If you ask anyone about water and swimming, they may hate swimming, they may always have wished that they were a better swimmer, they may swim every day, they may seek out water wherever they go. There are varying ways of answering that question for them but they will always have an answer.
- Shelby Stanger: You said even growing up as a kid you felt at home at the pool and part of it was the pool you swam at had kids that were different colors than just white.
- Bonnie Tsui: Yeah. I grew up in a town in Long Island that was pretty white and I never felt very at home in the schools that I went to because there were not a lot of kids of color. And then the swim team, the club team that we swam on for 10 years was in the next town, and it was very racially diverse and we saw brown bodies and black bodies and all different kinds of backgrounds, and they came from all over Long Island, and that was our home, that was where my brother, my cousins, and I spent ... it was a different way the world could look to us and we found our community that way. And because of the history of race in America, and specifically as it comes to segregation in pools, it was a big deal to share a body of water with someone who was not your skin color. And so, that persists now, and it's all really loaded and these are some of the issues that I tackle in the book. But the history of swimming ability and who we think is a swimmer

and who was not, I mean, that is very much tied to the history of race and segregation in America.

Shelby Stanger: What else are you writing about swimming? Why is it so, besides being such a great equalizer and feeling like home to you, what else about swimming has been so attractive to you?

Bonnie Tsui: People could ask me after that, what's your next book going to be about? And if I learned anything about writing books is that you have to really want to write the book independent of money and everything else because books are not efficient ways to make money. They take up a lot of time, from a time perspective, from a dollars per word perspective. You have to want to be doing this book for something other than that. And certainly we all have to put a roof over our heads and feed ourselves but having having this internal compass that tells you that you have to do this book no matter what, it's going to scratch you and scratch you until you bring it out into the world, then you know it's a book that it should take the form of a book, because a lot of ideas you have could be an article, could be an essay, it doesn't have to be a book.

Bonnie Tsui: But when I started thinking about, okay, if I ever do another book, I think it'll be about swimming, but what about swimming? What form could that take? I mean, swimming, obviously, is a huge topic. And so it took me a few years of sort of being on the back burner and just really worrying it a little bit to figure it out, to figure out what form it would take. And so, what I ended up doing was calling it *Why We Swim*. And then the book structure is like five different ways that we can answer that question thematically. And in order to answer that question, I visit and spend time with all kinds of swimmers and all kinds of communities around the world.

Shelby Stanger: You have Kimberly Chambers, who was one of the guests on this year's episode in your book.

Bonnie Tsui: She is a singular human and such an extraordinary person and swimmer and I felt really privileged to be able to spend time with her. And she figures very prominently in the section on the book on wellbeing and so health and sort of recovery, and just finding a new life through swimming. I mean, she didn't discover, as you know, that she had this superpower to be a long distance swimmer until after she almost lost her leg in an accident. And so, her story is really a great example of these big characters in the book. Another is an Icelandic fisherman who survived a six kilometer swim in the dead of winter and that's part of the survival section on the book.

Shelby Stanger: So he survived? So he was out for a six miles swim, he was in a boat that capsized?

Bonnie Tsui: He was in a boat that capsized and everyone else died and he swam six kilometers over six hours in, again, 41 degree water to shore off of the coast of Iceland. And it turns out his body fat is like more like a seals, it's two three times normal human thickness and so it was able to keep his core warm. And he said all these, he's been in the British medical journals, and he's had movies made about him, and he's just an extraordinary person as well.

Shelby Stanger: That's 3.7 miles. I mean, I swam one mile in 68 degrees water the other day, it was freezing all day.

Bonnie Tsui: Oh, yeah. And he came out of this swim not showing any signs of hypothermia, he was just a little dehydrated.

Shelby Stanger: He sounds like a really fascinating fallow.

Bonnie Tsui: Absolutely fascinating.

Shelby Stanger: It's so interesting because we did our first podcast of the year was about mindfulness in swimming and we interviewed a group of kids, they swim every day before school to the buoy and back after doing a mindfulness exercise, and this summer, they're swimming the English Channel. And I'm injured right now, I can't run because I got injured by a sting ray, embarrassing, but now it's healed enough where I can swim, and I only swam the other day because I couldn't run. But I went to the pool because I was scared of the sting rays, embarrassing. And I was like, how the heck am I going to swim back and forth 66 times to get to a mile staring at this black line. And I asked the guy next to me how he does it and he's like, just jump in. And the mindless chatter will go away. And he was so right. After lap 66, I felt amazing. The thoughts were gone. My troubles dissolved in this chlorine pool.

Shelby Stanger: And I don't know, it's really cool because I think for you now your recent story in the New York Times, which is about lying fallow is about resting. And I find that my brain rests really well when I swim.

Bonnie Tsui: Yes, I think that, that is absolutely why swimming is kind of a modern day cure for all of this connectivity we have. It's the one of the last places we can escape connectivity. And when you're underwater, no one can find you, you're escaping the rings and pings of life, and it is a blessed break from that.

Shelby Stanger: Do you swim in the ocean, or do you like the pool, what's your medium?

Bonnie Tsui: I take it however I can get it. So, this morning, when I'm sort of back in my routine this morning where I go to the pool in the morning, first thing after I get the kids when they need to go to school or camp or whatever. And I go to the pool and I swim, and I have a regular workout that I do when it's just maintenance, meaning it's maintenance for my body and my mind. And so there

are other times where I'll swim with the Masters swim team, or I will go for an open water swim, or I'll go surfing. But I have a default swim now that I do and I just do it without thinking about it because I want to let my brain float, and be free, and untethered, and just go.

Shelby Stanger: The fact that you just said you let your brain float is so beautiful. I mean, there's something about water that's just so healing, it's unlike running, I love running, I love what it does to my serotonin in my brain, but there's something about swimming that's more calming and relaxing than anything else. And you're writing a book on this.

Bonnie Tsui: Yes. And Shelby, you and I have talked about water being the great equalizer. And for all bodies it buoys us. I mean, it can take away a lot of the not just the literal weight, but the proverbial weight from our brains and bodies. And there's nothing that does that for us. And it allows us the freedom ... I think about this a lot actually, I just saw this morning at the pool, I see people who are 70-80 years old swimming in the water, turning underwater, diving underwater, swimming underwater to the ladder in a way that is not any different from the way they did when they were seven and eight. That they are just enjoying the way that the water feels in their bodies when they're just spiraling around and goofing off. And all you have to do is go to a family swim at a pool any day of a week and you will see unfettered joy, and that's what we get from that.

Shelby Stanger: When we come back, we'll talk to Bonnie about lying fallow, what it means, what it is, and why we should all let ourselves do it a little bit more.

Shelby Stanger: Summer is the best time to get out and try something new or different. For me, I enjoy being near the water or in the mountains. Did you know that REI offers classes and guided trips all over the country. From paddling to climbing, hiking and camp outs, there's something for everyone. What better way to spend a weekend than rock climbing in Colorado at sunset, or taking a moonlight hike in the Smoky Mountains, or even going stand up paddling on a camping trip in San Diego. REI will provide the guides and connect you with the gear you need to create an epic summer moment. Experience more with REI and register at rei.com/events.

Shelby Stanger: Back in July, Bonnie came out with an article in The New York Times titled, "You're Doing Something Important When You Aren't Doing Anything." This idea of doing nothing, of lying fallow, it's one that really interested me, especially as a creative person who has to constantly come up with ideas from nowhere. So, what is lying fallow and why is Bonnie preaching it's importance?

Shelby Stanger: So swimming we talked about a little bit, it's sort of a form of resting in a way it's an active form of resting. But you wrote this great piece in The New York Times that was the most shared article in The New York Times over the weekend about the art of lying fallow. What does lying a fallow mean?

Bonnie Tsui: Lying fallow, I see it as an active way of resting. So we talked about active rest, and it's active input versus output. We prioritize productivity up the wazoo these days, and hustle culture, and just like if you're not producing, you're not worth anything. I mean, this is just sort of messages that we're told day in and day out. And so with fallow time, I find as a creative person that you really just need to build into your daily work life, or your weekly work life, or your monthly work life these cycles of like, it should be a part of your work cycle that you have time to rest but also, like we said, it's an active rest. It's that you're reading, you are getting experiences and stimulation from other places that will just amplify your ability to be a creative person and make work that is meaningful later on.

Bonnie Tsui: And it is not wasted time, it's not a vacation, it's not the weekend. I think that if we are able to figure out how to integrate that into our work lives, not just our weekend lives, that that is a healthier way to be, a more balanced way to be and will remind us why we do the work that we do and why it's important.

Shelby Stanger: So there was that great quote in your story in the New York Times by Ian Sohn, President of the digital advertising and marketing agency Wundermen in Chicago, he wrote in defense of his vision of a healthy and humanistic workplace. He said, "I never need to know that you're working from home today because you simply need the silence. I deeply resent how we've infantilized the workplace, how we feel we have to apologize for having lives, how constant connectivity availability, or even the perception of it has become a valued skill, the idea of just doing less."

Bonnie Tsui: I thought what Ian said in that post was so ... He really said so eloquently what we all feel and want to have be normalized in work. I think that we shouldn't have to explain that we need a day to be quiet, or that we need to be working from home on this day, or just switching gears and doing something else because we're not feeling whatever the work that is we're supposed to be doing that day. And I think that what Ian is saying is that he wants us all to trust that we will each do what needs to be done in order to be happy to do the work that we need to do. And it's really simple actually, but we don't get that feeling that it's okay to do that very often.

Bonnie Tsui: And so, I've thought about how we maintain that ability for some time, right, because it has only gotten more of a pressure cooker in terms of publishing and media, it is a constant churn, there's a 24/7 news cycle and then outside of that news cycle, there's the social media churn that is always telling you, the message is that you have to be producing at every moment because it's going to be replaced by again and again by something else. And so I kept asking myself, what is it that I want to be doing? Sometimes as writers we try to think about something new to write, we exclaim to ourselves, what hasn't already been written? Everything is already been written about in some way, right?

Bonnie Tsui: And so, what can we contribute to the world? And it's not these constant cycle of hot takes and knee jerk reactions that are designed to inflame various branches of the population, it is what can we offer that is a sustained worldview that is helpful that somehow reminds us of what we are really looking for? And that's connection. And that's meaning. And that is just how to live a productive life. And these are the things that we all come back to when we slow down enough, or unplug enough, or take some time away from this constant barrage of inputs that aren't really useful to us.

Bonnie Tsui: And so, I kept thinking about what made me feel sane and happy in this world and those are the times when I go swimming, I take a break to go swimming or taking time to go walk, or I just stare out the window for 20 minutes. And I started realizing that over the last year that I really gave myself permission to do that. I actually schedule, I look at my day and I have spent let's say in the morning, I go for a swim, and then I spend some time writing, and then I go for a walk with a friend, and then I come back to my desk, and then I think, oh, now because I feel like I'm not in a mindset to write, I will read, I will take this time to do something else because it is not useful to keep running on the treadmill when you're not producing anything and you're not feel inspired to do it.

Bonnie Tsui: And I actually feel like, the more I give myself these little snippets of time to read, or rest, or just think, I am actually more productive, I have better ideas. When I get back to my desk, the writing comes much more easily. And I think paradoxically, after having kids, I have become way more efficient with my time because I know I'd only have a limited amount of it. And so I think, okay, so the pressure is on to make the most of that time and I realized that building in these little brakes actually makes me a more productive thinker.

Shelby Stanger: Yeah. It's so weird, I did the same thing this summer where I have consciously said, I'm going to surf, run, or go swimming. And then I'm going to do my work because then once you've done that, you do your work so fast. And for me, if I have a limited time to get my work done, I just get it done. I know how to do the work. But if I have all day to do it, and I'm staring at my computer and like trying to hammer out ideas, it's just awful, and painful, and doesn't really go anywhere.

Bonnie Tsui: Yeah. And we know this. I mean, we know there have been countless studies on productivity in the workplace, and how many hours you work versus what it is that you are producing in all kinds of industries. And so we know that and yet the culture tells us, we talked about hustle culture, the culture tells us that being busy is really important. Being busy makes you important and makes you seem important. And so we've sort of bought into that. And I can definitely feel like now is the time everyone is starting to push back against it.

Shelby Stanger: What are these principles of lying fallow? Because right now, I think there's this little digital device that we are all guilty of using the phone. And when we're

bored or we have some free time, we look at it. For me, I check Instagram. I've gotten better, because I've done a million podcast about trying not to do that, but it's still there. So for you, what are these principles of incorporating, lying fallow, and as someone with kids, how do you help them incorporate those principles into their lives?

Bonnie Tsui: Okay, so first off, we all are guilty of doing this, right? The phone, these devices, they're very attractive, they bring everything we want into one device and we can read on it, we can talk to our friends, we can live vicariously through all these different apps that we're talking about, and it really satisfies our brains in a way that nothing else does. But when we take a little time away from it, we realize that we feel much more relaxed.

Bonnie Tsui: There is an agitation that comes from being on an electronic device and I see this all the time with my kids. And I'm going to tell you a story actually from the my flight home yesterday, I was flying home from a work trip that I did to Hawaii, I know, I was very lucky to be doing that. But I was sitting in the window seat and I was looking out the window, as I love to do because I think it is one of the greatest joys of modern life that we can look out above 30,000 feet above the earth. And it was the beautiful time of day, 30 minutes before landing, the sunset, and then I feel this tap on my shoulder, and it's the woman who was sitting across from me and she says, "Can you please pull down you window screen?" And I said, "Oh, I'm looking out the window." And she said, "You're looking out the window, I can't see my screen." Meaning her iPad that she was watching.

Bonnie Tsui: And so she got really upset and agitated and her agitation reminded me of my children when they've had too much iPad time. And I thought, this is crazy. Looking out the window, if she had taken the time to look out the window, this is what she would have seen. She would have seen that were coming down over San Francisco, the sun is setting, it is glorious out. We're flying over SFO, the planes are landing on the runway beneath us, we're flying across the bay, we're landing in Oakland and just those inputs, that marvel, that joy, that wonder is the thing that feeds us and makes us able to keep going, just like altering of perspective, profound reminder of who we are and how miniscule we are on this planet. And I wish I could have said to her, you have your screen and I have my screen. I just wish that I had the wherewithal.

Shelby Stanger: Your screen is the world and hers is a little device. But I think that's such an important point because I was telling someone what the podcast was about this morning and they're like, I think so often the reason why we don't lie fallow is because we have these devices, these phones, or iPads, or screens the minute we're bored I go for Instagram.

Bonnie Tsui: Yeah. And it's competing for our attention at every point in time.

Shelby Stanger: And you never feel better after looking at your device, but the feeling you get after lying in open grass looking at clouds or maybe it's the sand looking at waves, there's something so sensory, and beautiful, and stimulating about it that it leaves you feeling recharged rather than zapped.

Bonnie Tsui: Yes, absolutely. You have more energy not less, you have more resources internally to draw on.

Shelby Stanger: You're highly driven, I can tell. You went to a really good college, you're a journalist, you got into the New York Times, how have you had to work against your own ant-like tendencies to make space for doing nothing?

Bonnie Tsui: Oh, yeah, sometimes I lie in bed and my brain just keeps going. And I've had periods of insomnia in my life and I know that it's just like that's where my ant-like tendencies manifest themselves, they won't let me go to sleep because they're just constantly thinking about things. And how I know that I'm pushing myself too hard is when I can't sleep. And so, how I have basically treated my insomnia over the years is to allow myself to have it. Basically, I used to worry about all the time, I used to think like, what can I do? Do I need to take sleeping pills or something? I don't know what was happening. People talk about cognitive behavioral therapy and all this and that helps. But what happens now is that if I have a night where I can't fall asleep, I run towards it. I let it happen to me because I know then the next night I'll be really tired and I'll go to sleep.

Bonnie Tsui: But part of the anxiety of insomnia is that you don't think that you're ever going to sleep again and you're not going to fall asleep. And of course, the more you worry about it, the less you sleep. And it's basically accepting that, okay, this might be a night that I don't sleep that much, and that's okay, and I let my brain go. And actually, that's how I solve it. That's how it goes away. And I feel like this thing with my own ant-like tendencies to work too much or do too much, that's my signal that I'm doing too much. And then when I'm in bed, and I'm unable to sleep, I recognize that's happening, and I accept it. And then I let myself have some time. I let myself have the time to sleep right then. And then I realize, going forward into the next week or two that I have to take a break. I have to give myself more space.

Shelby Stanger: That's really kind to yourself and smart that you're leaning into the acceptance of what might not happen and then it goes away. It's interesting. The hustle culture encouraged us to think doing nothing is failing.

Bonnie Tsui: Yeah.

Shelby Stanger: How do we break that?

Bonnie Tsui: I mean, I admit that I also feel that way. If I don't have something out or I see that other people are doing things because, you know what, they always are.

We live in a world with other people in it and if you are looking for someone to make you feel that you're not doing enough, there's plenty of people out there to make you feel that way. You just can't look for it. You can't let yourself do that. And I think that I know it's easier said than done, but part of it is then limiting your social media diet. Like I try really hard to do that because I know I don't like who I become, what I feel like, I feel less generous when I feel, again, like the effects of going on different social media and then just feeling like you're not doing enough. And that's what it's designed to do to you. And I, again, I am slow in this but I try to recognize it and I try to know that, that's what's happening and try to do something about it.

Shelby Stanger: You're not even on Instagram are you?

Bonnie Tsui: I'm not on Instagram. You know why I'm not on Instagram, it's because I know that if I get on Instagram, I'm going to like it too much, that's why.

Shelby Stanger: It's brutal. Yeah, it's the worst one. What do you do for downtime? You said you swim, you walk with friends.

Bonnie Tsui: I swim, I surf, I take the time with my kids, and of course, that's a particular kind of work and kind of exhaustion too, but it's a way to switch gears. And what I try to do is be as completely focused on the one thing at a time as possible, because nothing feels worse than trying to do everything at once and failing miserably at all of it. So, whether it's playing a card game with my kids or just being at the pool with them, I really try not to do something else at the same time that I'm supposed to be paying attention to them because then nobody wins and I just feel terrible about myself and so do they.

Shelby Stanger: This is good. So like playing a card game, I think is a really cool analog activity to do. That's, in some ways, resting. A board game, maybe it's a walk, maybe it's lying in the grass, or a park, or on the beach in the sand and just watching clouds or waves. To me that's the ultimate rest.

Bonnie Tsui: Yeah. And this week I was sitting on a beach and I was watching the waves come in and I thought, I could sit here for hours because there's something about the sound, I wasn't hearing anybody talking, I wasn't being distracted by too many other people competing for the space that I was in and there was something incredibly replenishing and restful about that. And I think I have heard this term called soft fascination where your brain is taking in the inputs of ... there is some stimulation, it's not that you're sitting in a room that is completely independent of any stimulation. But you've got something that's occupying your attention, whether it's swimming in a pool or watching the waves, and then there is another part of your brain that's just kind of, it's allowing your focus to drift elsewhere in a way that actually your brain is working and making connections without you are thinking about and it's because you have a soft focus on something that is stimulating but not too stimulating. And so your attention is, I

guess, for one of a better word, it's soft, but it's doing something else. Your brain is doing something else, it's making connections in the background. And then you come out of that and you realize you've solved a problem. And I think that, that is really such a great way to recognize that we are doing things when we don't seem like we're doing things.

Shelby Stanger: So any tips on how to actually be a little bit more still and avoid the hustle bustle?

Bonnie Tsui: I mean, I think that you have to be ... it's a very conscious thing. It's like meditation, it's hard, right? You sit there, and you're supposed to sit still, and you're supposed to just feel where you are and where your body is in space. And now, I mean, this is something I talked about in the piece, but it's funny how meditation, which is supposed to be not for anything, really but yourself has become a life hack for being more productive, like everything in our world. But that it's something that you have to actively try to incorporate. And I know it's really hard. It can look different for different people and different professions, but I think that it is just really necessary to allow yourself to take that time to do that because we're just going to continue to burn and burn until there's nothing left.

Shelby Stanger: Any last piece of advice on the art of lying fallow? What can we all do or takeaway from it? What message do you want people to take away from this concept?

Bonnie Tsui: Let yourself do it. I think part of the problem that people run into with lying fallow is that they don't give themselves permission to do it. It's okay to not do something for an hour, an afternoon, a day, what you're "supposed to be doing". And you'll find that if you let yourself do it, the next day, you'll come back to your work and your life remembering why it is that you chose to do that in the first place, and I think that is really essential.

Shelby Stanger: Do you have any mantras or lessons in life that you've lived by that have just helped you maybe about lying fallow or advice you can give to listeners who want to incorporate more fallow time in their life, but also want to live more wildly?

Bonnie Tsui: I think give yourself permission to do it. The world isn't going to give you permission to do it, so you have to take it.

Shelby Stanger: It's hard to give yourself permission to do nothing, especially with the demands of daily life today. Reading a book, wandering through your neighborhood, sitting in a park and people watching, these things are often seen as leisure activities, but they can be so refreshing. So now that we're in the height of summer and it's coming towards an end, I hope you find an afternoon to slow

down, give yourself space to think, to watch, to find inspiration and just get ideas, or as Bonnie would call it, to lie fallow.

Shelby Stanger:

Thank you to Bonnie Tsui for coming on the show. You can find Bonnie's work in the New York Times, California Sunday magazine, or on her website bonnietsui.com, that's B-O-N-N-I-E T-S-U-I .com and you can follow Bonnie on Twitter at Bonnie Tsui. That's Bonnie T-S-U-I. This podcast is produced by REI with help from Annie Fassler and Chelsea Davis. Tune in week after next as I talked to a filmmaker, adaptive athlete advocate, and a previous contestant on The Bachelor about finding love, including self love. As always, we really appreciate when you subscribe, rate, review and make of course a funny name wherever you listen. And remember, some of the best adventures often happen when you follow your wildest ideas.