

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 18: Subway Busking with Brooke D.

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Hey, I'm Julie Rose. Welcome to *Love What You Love*. I'm an author, creator, and enthusiast, and I've always been fascinated by the things that people are super into, because they're always a unique expression of curiosity, and joy, and wonder. So every week I'll introduce you to another fascinating human who's into really interesting stuff.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! It has been a bizarre week here in the Bay Area. I feel like I've been living in *Blade Runner*, you know, with the orange skies, and the dim days, and the Giants baseball stadium filled with cardboard fans. It's been really weird, and getting through days like these - and, frankly, every day of 2020, and probably every day of your life - it takes some courage. And courage is something our next guest knows a heck of a lot about.

Brooke D. is a New York-based musician, poet, author, teacher, songwriter, intuitive reader, and artist. She has a passion for creativity, a knack for risk-taking, and a propensity to sing in the subway. In this episode, Brooke and I chat about a magical guitar, using your voice (even if it's quiet), processing grief, being courageous, and so much more. So find out why Brooke loves busking in the subway and why you might learn to love it too.

Julie: Hello, Brooke! Thank you so much for joining me!

Brooke: Hi, Julie. Thanks for having me.

Julie: I am super excited to talk with you, because you are... You're a polymath! You do so many different things. You're an intuitive reader, you're a writer, you're an artist, and a teacher. I don't know how you find time for all of these things. But you're also a musician, and one of the things I wanted to talk with you about today is... Well, before coronavirus happened, you were starting to really get into busking in the subways in New York City, and I totally want to understand where that comes from.

Brooke: It's interesting that you ask me about busking because I had to, kind of, think about what my origin story was around busking, and I realized that I started doing that when I was in San Francisco when I went to school there. And I was really big in the poetry community there, because I was part of the Creative Writing Department at San Francisco State. So I was going to, like, poetry slam-type things in the city. I was spending time in the mission district. And there was this "open mic" that was run by these poets that had a space called Viracocha in the Mission District. I don't think it's there anymore, which is really sad because it was an amazing space. But they did this open mic and it was outside of the BART Station on Mission. It was at nighttime, and just people gathered around, and you would just, kind of, throw yourself in the middle of the circle when you were ready, and you'd recite your poem or sing your song.

So that kind of began my street performing adventure. In addition to that, I had a friend who was visiting from England who was the first person to ever call it busking to me. We went and sat on Haight Street and sold artwork. I don't think we even sold anything. I think we sang some songs, but that's a very typical place to do that type of thing, Haight Street. I lived there for a long time. That's where it started.

Julie: So there's probably listeners who don't understand, like, what is busking? Can you give us a definition of what you mean by busking/street performing?

Brooke: Basically, in New York it's a really big deal. Many artists find themselves either without gigs, or trying to make rent, so street performing and going out into the subway, or performing on the street, is kind of just a way to be heard. And it's a way to try out new material, to connect with audiences in different ways. It's been going on for ages, it seems. I don't even know the history behind the word 'busking'. But it's something I got back into right before I moved here.

I was visiting New York with the intention of moving here, but I was kind of coming here to test the waters, to see how I felt about moving here and just see what the scene felt like. This was when I still lived in Portland last year. I was feeling really inspired. I was staying in Union Square at my cousin's house. And I had gone out to the jazz clubs; I was feeling really inspired.

So I checked out where I could rent a guitar. I found Guitar Center was right there, and it didn't cost very much to rent an acoustic guitar. Mind you, I was not really very versed in playing guitar. I had played a fair amount but I wasn't great, but I was like, "You know what? I'm going to try it out anyway." So I went and rented a guitar, and I went into Union Square station. I have a lot of stories from busking, but that was, like, my moment of feeling like, "Wow. This is where I belong." And not just because I had a good experience busking and I have a lot of stories to tell from that one day, but just because, like, there's other performers in the subway station. There's this sense of community that happens among musicians that maybe wouldn't happen in the clubs because there's a division that can happen in the music scene.

In busking it's like, "We're all out here. We're all being vulnerable. We're all dealing with the noise of the life of the city." I don't know, it's like, really powerful. You kind of get addicted to the feeling of going out and meeting new people, but also just, like, playing your music and not caring if it's heard clearly or not, but just doing it for the sake of doing it.

Julie: It's just pure expression.

Brooke: Yeah. It's interesting, the day that I went to do it the first time in New York, I sat outside and I was trying to do it outside, but it was cold. It was February.

Julie: Oh, gosh!

Brooke: So it was cold, and I tried to do it outside but then someone set up across from me, and he had, like, a system. I didn't have a system. I was just singing, and I'm pretty quiet. So it was like I was getting beat out, and that's also a very New York thing to have like, "Oh you have a sound system so it's impossible for me to be heard." But I was sitting in front of this Gandhi statue - of course - and I turn around and the quote on the Gandhi statue is, "In a gentle way, you can shake the world."

So that's when I was like, "Oh, I don't have to be loud," and I've always wanted to be loud because as a singer, and as a quiet singer, you look around at the greats like Whitney Houston... You look at these incredible singers and you think, "I don't sound like them so I must not be good."

Julie: So this kind of taught you something.

Brooke: It did, and just that one quote, once I went down into the subway because it was too cold to be outside, I found this tunnel that has really great reverb. I always go back to that one. It's right in front of the 9/11 Memorial in Union Square station, so it also feels

really sacred. And yeah, so even if I was quiet, in the echo chamber you can be heard down the hallway.

Julie: What kind of music do you play when you're busking, and is it different from the kind of music that you record?

Brooke: It's not different than the album that I'm putting out in October, because my sound's kind of evolved many times. I tend to just, like, try different things over time. So playing that first time in the subway with the acoustic guitar, I just realized how much I loved playing acoustic. I've always wanted to learn how to play guitar but I've had lots of mental blocks around it because it's a difficult instrument. The first time I went busking, for instance, I basically only knew, like, four or five songs at that point.

So when you're busking, the different approach you have to it is, "Well, different people are walking by. I can play these songs for hours," and I did. I think for two or three hours I played the same five songs over and over again.

Julie: But you get to practice!

Brooke: You get to practice, and that's the thing that I love about busking. Even when I was doing it in January this year, like, I did it for that. I was practicing not just the instrument that I was learning; I was also practicing performing in front of people that don't care, and some people who do care. That's the really beautiful thing about busking. It's like, whoever hears you, that's beautiful, and whoever doesn't, that's also beautiful, and maybe you changed their day and you don't even know.

Julie: Right, and who needs to hear your message is going to hear your message.

Brooke: Exactly. "In a gentle way, you can shake the world."

Julie: So I want to come back to some of the stories that you have from that first day, but I want to actually go all the way back. You're generally a fairly quiet person, so performing for people, to me that sounds terrifying. You seem like you're an introvert, I'm guessing, so where did this desire to perform come from? And where did the courage to do it come from?

Brooke: That's such an interesting question because I wonder that all the time. I have two sisters and we've been performing since we were little kids. Always loved to play dress up. Music was a really big part of our lives because our parents loved music. So my parents... I have to attribute much of my love for performance, and music, and art to my parents, truly. They were entrepreneurs, and they put us in a lot of different programs. We got to try out a lot of different things, which is very privileged on our part. I'm very thankful.

Part of it's because they were so busy running their own business that they, you know, needed a place for us to go, and also for us to learn about ourselves and figure out what we're good at. So, I've been performing for a really long time and I went to a performing arts high school. So, performing is just a part of my life. But as an introverted person I often struggled with courage, struggled with not being loud. Also struggled with not feeling like I belonged many places. And I still feel that sensation here and there, but in New York I feel that way less than any other place.

Julie: Really? You would think it'd be the opposite.

Brooke: Yeah, I feel very much at home here. Not just physically, but in my self. And I think it's because it's a place where introverts can be left alone. If you want to connect, you can,

and if you don't want to connect you don't have to. I think that's really the beauty of being an introvert here, and also of being an artist because you can be left alone to do your craft.

As far as the courage, I always say, "One bold choice prepares you for the next bold choice." And in the last two years, I really made a lot of bold choices around relationships, around moving to New York, around coming back to music after taking five years off music to build my tarot business. To me, it's like... When it comes to courage, it's something I'm practicing. Courage is not something I will ever be an expert at because I think it's something we constantly have to negotiate with, and what we're really negotiating with is our ego, which really wants to protect us.

As I've developed a deeper relationship with my ego... because I don't think you can kill your ego. Like, there's people who talk about that, and I just haven't had that experience of being able to get rid of a very essential part of being a human. And so, when we talk about courage, it's really connected to us getting out of our own way.

Julie: It's so funny, Brooke, because every time I interact with you or talk with you, like, you say something that lands squarely where I needed it to. [laughs] So, thank you for that.

Brooke: Thank you. I'm still working on courage. When we get out of our own way... The thing that really has happened for me in New York, in the bustle, and the loud, and being in spaces where you're like, "I don't belong here. Why am I here? I don't understand," then you get to be like, "Who am I? Who do I want to be?" And it's kind of like courage is like the shoes you buy before you're ready to wear the shoes. It's like, sometimes we buy those shoes because we're in a place where... And I actually have literal shoes that I bought for that purpose, right before I changed my whole life two years ago. They're red sandals, and I bought them and they made me uncomfortable. Like, just looking at them, I was like, "I don't even wear color. I don't understand." But I just knew I needed to have the shoes.

When it comes to courage, it's like, "Buy the shoes before you're ready for the shoes." This is my image for courage: I'm like a baby kitten. I just pull myself up by the scruff of the neck, like a little baby kitten, and I just toss myself out in the arena. When the baby kitten gets in the middle of the arena, she freaks out. And I'm telling you that because I think a lot of people, especially recently because I've really expanded my creativity in different ways, and sharing more of myself creatively, I'm still throwing myself in the arena and getting scared. But I think because I'm doing it from authenticity and not from obligation, because I'm sharing from, "I had fun doing this," and, "this brought me joy," I feel like it doesn't matter if other people respond.

Julie: So tell me some of the things that happened on that first day that, maybe, gave you the courage to come back and do it again.

Brooke: Okay, yeah, it was an amazing day. First of all, the Gandhi quote, right? That was just too perfect; the universe at work there. So I was playing for a few hours, I didn't even put out a hat or anything. I didn't make money, really, that day. I wasn't thinking about making money. I was just like, "I'm just going to go play." Like I said, I was visiting, so I wasn't attached. I just went out there to try it out. So I was playing for a while and this guy came by and he, like, leaned up against a post, facing away from me. He was just very respectfully listening.

[clip of Brooke D. performing "Listening"]

And when I finished the song he came over to me and handed me five bucks. And I was like, "Wow! Thank you so much. I didn't even expect to make money today. I really appreciate that." And I was like, "Let me play you a song. Do you want to hear a sad song or a happy song?" And he was like, "Play the sad song." So I played this song of mine called "The Call," which is an older song of mine that I rearranged to play on guitar. So I play the song, and I call it, like, the longest voicemail I've ever left. It's about a partner I had in my early 20s who, like, just didn't stop calling me after we split up. And it was difficult, and the song's kind of like, "just let me go so I can do my thing."

So I finish the song and he was like, "You need to let that guy go. You need to be free." He just started going off about, like, what I should do. And in my true fashion, I was like, "Mmm... Actually, I am free. I left that guy eight years ago. This is an old song. Thank you for saying that, but I'm good." So he turns around to leave, and I'm like, "Okay, bye." And he walks back, and he has tears in his eyes, and he's like, "Thank you so much for saying that you're free. It really meant a lot to hear that, and I appreciate you." And he just walked away.

Julie: Oh my! I have goosebumps!

Brooke: Yeah! And I wrote that story in my new book that's coming out, because to me it's like, who knew that setting ourselves free could set someone else free in a minute?

Julie: I feel like I'm going to cry.

Brooke: I teared up at that part too. [laughs]

Julie: Wow, wow. So you did that, kind of, temporarily while you were visiting, and then you made the decision to move to New York. Did you start busking right away again, or what was your experience once you moved back permanently?

Brooke: When I moved back permanently, I would say... like, the first six months of being in New York you're kind of figuring out your rhythms. I was figuring out where to live... My first few months I was living with my cousin who's lived here for a long time. And she's very supportive, and she's like, "Just come sleep on my couch while you figure out your stuff." I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that.

So I came here to, kind of, test the waters. I got two different jobs. I was juggling things. And all I had was that sparkly electric guitar that I'd been playing. I can't really busk with that, and I wasn't really comfortable with guitar at that point. So I didn't start busking again until I moved into the current place I'm in, and the person who I was subletting from, she left her baby acoustic guitar here. She was like, "Yeah, play it. Do what you need to do." And I'm forever grateful she left it because it really reminded me, "Wow, I love playing guitar."

But yeah, when you first move to New York you're kind of like... You have sea legs. You're trying to figure out how to navigate, and what your community is if you find one, and where you're living. It's about grounding yourself, so it took me a minute to get back into busking.

Julie: Had you been writing your new album at that time? And when you got back into busking, were you testing it out? How did that work?

Brooke: Some of the songs on the album are older songs. There's a couple songs that came from the period of time when I was really practicing guitar a few years before that when I still lived in Portland. So there's a couple that are older. Most of them are from the era

when I borrowed the guitar from the person I was subletting from, and then from getting my own acoustic guitar. That's really when a lot of things changed, when I got my own guitar in January. It's actually a really funny story.

I sold my bike in the Bay Area during Christmas, and then I knew I had enough money to buy my own guitar. And I've always wanted my own acoustic guitar, since I was young. For some reason, I never got one for myself. I don't know, you don't know what you want sometimes, and until I had that in my hands I didn't know that that was my instrument. But it truly is my instrument and I'm so happy to have found that because some people never find their instrument. So, I got this acoustic guitar, I picked it up, and a few days after that I quit my job.

Julie: Wow! Okay!

Brooke: Yeah. I quit my job. There were a lot of reasons I quit my job, but I was also like, "Why did I come to New York? I came here to play music, so why am I pretending to be someone I'm not? Why am I not making a bold choice?" Maybe it seems crazy, but I just knew I had to do it. So I quit my job.

I'm also not the type of person to, like, just up and leave a job, but that day I was. And I've been saying, since I bought that guitar, *it's driving, not me*. So, the day after I quit my job I was like, "Well, I'm gonna go busking. I'm gonna go out there and do what I love to do." So I just started doing it, just literally to make some extra money while I was in between figuring out what I'm doing.

It's kind of interesting. I quit my job and a few months later is the pandemic, so I was kind of prepared, oddly, and unprepared as all of us were unprepared. It was actually good that I left the job because I was much more protected health-wise. The job I was in required me to go in and out of the city all the time to just be out and about. So once I quit my job I was at home doing readings more, and I was much more insular. The only times I was going out was to see music or to play in the subway.

As far as the album goes, I started working with a mentor. I call him my guitar mentor. His name is Mark Whitfield. Super, amazing guitar player, and I feel very fortunate that he's my friend. So I started working with him and showing him my music, and he said to me, "You have an album." And I said, "I do?" And he was like, "You do. You have an album and I want to listen to it in my car." And that was the first time that was like, "Oh, I do have an album," and it was all on acoustic guitar, which is like a dream come true for me.

So there was a day when I played the album from start to finish. I had figured out the order. I played it in my room, and I just cried because I was like, "I finally have an album. It's been six or seven years since I released anything, and I'm so excited. What am I going to do? I'm going to go play in the subway!" Go test it out. Why would I *not* go try it? The first track on the album I call the money song. Whenever I play that song on the subway, that's when I get the most money. It's like, interesting. I can tell you, it happens every single time.

Julie: Is it a sad song or a happy song?

Brooke: It's an introspective song. It's about our relationship to the ego, and how to navigate that. It's navigating between the free-spirited side of you, the inner child that's like, "Yeah, I'm doing my thing. I'm being free," and then the voice that comes in and says,

"Actually, you should stop. Don't do that." It's kind of interesting that that's the money song.

Julie: Yeah. It's a little bit deeper than I anticipated subway-goers stopping and throwing money at you for.

Brooke: It must be the chords. I'm not sure. The chords are kind of unique, so I think it stops people because they're used to hearing covers, they're used to hearing a certain thing, so when they hear the chords of this song they're like, "What is it?" That's the money song. I was like, "That's clearly track one."

Julie: Besides the money song, how did people react to the whole album?

Brooke: People weren't listening to it start to finish at that point. And it has a very clear story, which is why there's a book that comes with it, because I realized, "Why am I writing an album about spiritual transformation, and making change, and self-love if I'm not telling the deeper stories around it?"

Julie: I didn't realize that. So you're putting a book out alongside the album?

Brooke: But you can listen to just the album. It's a 21-minute meditation. My goal is to help people stop for 21 minutes and just reflect, ideally. And then if they want to buy the book, they want to read the deeper stories of the album, and read the lyrics, and do the transformation tools in the book, then they're welcome to.

Julie: Where does that come from? Not all musicians would be like, "You know what? I'm also going to put out a book to explain this." Where does that come from? Has that always been the case for you?

Brooke: I mean, it's funny that you say it that way, because I wonder... I wondered this all the time. I've always had a deep love for poetry, for stories, even my first album was called *Stories*, and one of the lines in the title track, "Stories," is like, "everyone has their stories and some of them are hard to tell."

As far as my approach to media and creativity, I've always wanted to write a book that goes along with an album. Initially I wanted to do it as a children's book. This was years ago. I think when I was just starting college, which, I went to school for creative writing for the purpose of songwriting. In my mind I was like, "I'm going for poetry but I want to do this for songwriting." I was like, "I want to write really good songs that are poetic." That was my goal. And then I lost total sight of music for a long time, which was interesting.

Julie: What caused that?

Brooke: Falling out of music? Kind of what I was talking about with the ego. I'd put out a lot of work in my early 20s. I think I'd put out, like, five different EPs and albums, which is a lot, and then I just got into a place... I'd graduated from college, and when you graduate with an arts degree of any kind you're like, "What the hell am I going to do with this?" So I went into graphic design, I went into editing, I did a lot of different paths away from music because I just felt like, "There's no way I can monetize this. There's no way I can support myself doing this." And maybe at that point it was true. This was before we had so many tools. This was before Spotify.

I lost sight of music because... you know, I would call it musical PTSD. I had a lot of experiences with failed bands, failed collaborations, shows that went bad with the sound system, which is always, like, horrendous, and just feeling like my voice didn't

matter, musically. But I also was not... It's not like I was dormant. I was creating my Lady of Lightning page, and creating my other business, so it's not like I wasn't being creative. I just lost sight of my inner child because it felt like in the world I was living in at that time that there was no possible way that I could take the things that I love and turn them into food on the table.

I really was facing that when I got out of college, so I made the sacrifice and I let it go. I would say music is like a limb for me, especially because I grew up listening to it. I didn't lose music completely; I was still writing, I was still doing things. But I just felt like I wasn't confident enough to share for... It was like five years I stopped. So the album is about that process too, of getting back into and hopefully inspiring others to find their voice because I think everyone has their specific voice, and there's nothing wrong with it being quiet. It's okay.

Julie: I love that. So you got back into busking in the subway, and then the pandemic hit hard. Did you feel like you were missing out? What impact did the advent of the pandemic have on your writing and your feeling of creativity?

Brooke: Well, I ended up back in California, by chance. My sister Amy is an amazing singer and artist, and she was playing a show at Yoshi's.

Julie: And just for people who don't know, Yoshi's is, like, a super famous jazz club in Oakland.

Brooke: Yeah, so it was a big show for her. And it was right when the pandemic was, kind of, being talked about more. And she called me the day before I was supposed to come home to sing backup vocals, and she was like, "I don't think I'm going to do the show. It doesn't feel right with all the news that's going on." I was like, "Okay, should I not come?" And my mom was like, "No, you should come home."

And so I ended up staying there for, like, three and a half months. I happened to bring my guitar. I almost didn't bring it home, which that would've been... I don't think I would've survived, just emotionally. The beautiful gift of that time is that I got into contact with one of my best friends. I was trying to record a demo in my shower in my parents' house... because my trajectory didn't really stop. I was like, "I have all this time and space. The world's on fire. I guess I'm going to take care of myself through music as well as, potentially, share it with others."

I know for some artists, like, they had to stop, and there's been moments where I've stopped, and I respect everyone's process when it comes to this time, because whenever people are ready, there will be space for them to create, and there will be people to hear it. But for me, I was doing it as, like, mental health.

So I was trying to record in my shower with, like, the microphone on my sister's laptop, just for fun. I'd had the album and I was like, "Maybe I'll record a crappy version of the album before I can actually record it in a studio." So I contacted my friend Ryan and I was like, "How can I make this sound good?" And he was like, "Why don't you just come down to the studio?" I just went down there and we recorded the demo, and I was like, "I also have an album." And he was like, "Let's record it! It'll keep me sane too."

And because he's one of my really good friends, like I consider him family, I could go into those vulnerable places with myself while we were recording. I could cry after a vocal take and it was okay. So, I would say that the album does have the threads of this pandemic laced in it because I was experiencing the profound grief and reflecting

upon our world and how we process things emotionally. So that's very much a part of this project.

Julie: That recording that you did with Ryan, is that the album, or was that, just like, a practice run?

Brooke: No. That's the album.

Julie: Right on. Okay. Now that you're back in New York, do you have any plans to go busking any time soon?

Brooke: I've really wanted to since I got back. It's just been on my mind every day. There is a tunnel in Prospect Park that is outside, and I have a few friends that have been busking there because it magnifies the sound. Because just playing outside in the wind, in the elements, is like, for just a quiet singer with a guitar and no sound system, it's actually very vulnerable and difficult. So I wanted to go check out that place in Prospect Park because it's open air.

As far as going back out to Union Square, I've just been hesitant. It's just a strange... Like, the city is not dead as much as there's articles about that. It really bothers me that people are like, "New York is dead." And I'm like, "Is it? Or is it just changing, and shedding all of these layers of capitalism and strangeness that we don't need anymore?" Yeah, it's a complicated question for me because I think about busking every day. I just really love it. It's not just healing for me, but I know that it touches people, so I've kind of been using the Instagram Live platform as busking to satisfy the craving I have because it's safer, but I really want to get out there and connect, and hopefully be the calm voice in the storm. It's a very stormy time.

Julie: Yeah, and people definitely need that calming. Every day there's something new to get spun up about.

Brooke: You're right. There's something every single day. Every hour, there's a potential for grief. It's exhausting, it's disappointing, it makes you feel powerless and helpless. So I guess, the book and the album are, kind of, meant to provide the same service that I can provide for people one-on-one or with busking, but reach more people. I think that's the reason why I love books, is because it's like giving someone a reading but you don't have to be with them physically. Readings one-on-one are great, but I can only physically do so many.

I think, for me, everything is about community and that's really why I love busking. It's why I love music, art, poetry. All of it's centered around connection and humans telling their stories. And my goal with everything I do, artistically, musically, every possible way that I can, I'm trying to tell the human story and to help someone else out there feel less alone.

When we were mixing... Because mixing and mastering an album is, like, a really vulnerable process because you're finally taking the thing that you did, and you're magnifying things, and you're hearing yourself again, and it's... Every time I master or mix an album I always want to throw it out the window at that point. Many artists, I think, feel the same because you've just been hearing it so much. I was driving... I was having a hard time emotionally, I think it was a few weeks after George Floyd's death and all this other stuff was going on, so I was in a place; I was feeling frustrated. So I went for a drive, and I was like, "I have to listen to the album anyway, so I'll just listen to the album." And the first song, you know, the song about the ego, I was listening to it. And

I was so... like, in my head I was like, "God, I sound horrible. The guitar sounds so bad." I was just in my head about it.

By the time I get to track two, I'm in tears, because I realized how wound up I was, and how mean I was being to myself. So my goal with the album is, like, hopefully it stops... Track one, yeah, it's very introspective. Track two, it's a little lighter but it also has some sad elements about, like, awakening and having to leave people behind. But then by track three, that's the song that forces people to grieve. It's not forcing, it's really just inviting them to acknowledge all of the losses.

Julie: Which is hard to do because it's so enormous.

Brooke: It's so enormous, and the more and more I teach about grief, the more and more I learn about grief personally, and just witness other people's grief in my work, the more I recognize how little we've been prepared, and how much we resist it, and how little tools we have for processing it.

Julie: What do you think the role of the ego is in grief processing?

Brooke: I think part of the ego in grief processing is also very deeply connected to the patriarchy, which would have us believe that we need to achieve, we need to produce, we need to be constantly working in order to be valuable in our society, and that our feelings go against what we need to do to be productive humans. My thought is, in order for me to keep going, in order for me to be strong, I actually also need to be tender and hurt.

Julie: This has gone completely in a different place. I love it, though. How would you recommend people... Granted, everyone is different in how they process grief, but what are some ways that people can do that?

Brooke: It's so funny that we're talking about this too, and definitely we're diverging from busking, but it's all connected, right? So, I just wrote an article for this magazine called *Chow Magazine*, it's an online magazine. It's about grief and New York specifically. I think the biggest takeaway I've had from it, and the thing I often share with clients around grief is, the biggest gift we can give ourselves in times of grief is permission, because that's the thing that... the ego gets in the way of giving ourselves permission to feel, and to grieve, and to be sad.

Especially now more than ever, we are allowed to be sad. We're allowed to be angry. We're allowed to have all of these feelings so that we can be clear about who we are and how we want to show up. If we don't stop and acknowledge our hurts, we'll just perpetuate them.

Julie: You know, that's why the arts are so important, because they go around the ego and help you get more in touch with what you're actually feeling.

Brooke: Yeah, and that's kind of why I decided to do the book and the album. It's like, we don't know what the state of the world will be this winter at all. That's why the book comes out in October, because the book and the album are meant to be, kind of, companions in this really strange time.

Julie: One of the things we started out talking about was courage, the courage it takes to find your voice and then use your voice. I don't think many of my listeners are going to be super into jumping into doing busking, but if a listener wanted to, you know, feel more

comfortable using their voice, what are some ways you would recommend they would do that?

Brooke: I believe art is really obsession. Whatever you're obsessed about and whatever you can't stop thinking about, that's the thing that is very deeply connected to your voice. So when people ask me, like, "How do you get good at singing?" or, "How do you keep producing?" I'm like, all the things I share are all things that I personally am obsessed with, the things that I can't stop thinking about. I'm so thankful... I'm very supported, not just by my community but also my family. My mom has always been very supportive of us finding our voice and just finding out who we are. So, me and my sisters have been given the opportunity to really find ourselves and be ourselves, and that's not the case for everybody.

So, I think my second recommendation for anyone who wants to get into being more courageous with their art or their expression is: it should be true, whatever it is, true to you. Whatever it is that you create in the world and share, as long as it's authentic, as long as it feels good to share, as long as it helps you process something emotionally, then it has value.

Julie: And not just 'how it's going to be received', because that has nothing to do with it.

Brooke: It's none of our business. How other people view our art, and who we are, and all these things, it's only our business when, of course, we're confronted by them, or... And you know what? There's always going to be haters. Always. If you have an audience of ten, there's going to be haters there. If you have an audience of 10,000 or 1000,000, there's going to be people who are haters.

And yeah, there's a lot of voices, there's a lot of creators, but we are all needed. Especially now, your specific role that you play on a global scale is needed, and we can really easily get caught up in the ego, like, "I want to be perfect." You're talking to someone who wanted to be perfect so bad I just stopped doing music all together because I was like, "I'm not good enough to do this."

So, I guess my advice to someone who wants to get into it and to be more courageous is, knowing that courage is a practice, it's not something you just automatically have overnight, it's something you build upon. And it's very connected to loving yourself, and trusting yourself, and finding out what your voice and your role is on a global scale or in your community, and then doing that and getting obsessed with it. And linked to obsession is hope. Hope allows us to do things that we otherwise wouldn't have the courage to do. To be courageous, we also have to be hopeful.

Julie: I can't believe that an hour has absolutely flown by. Thank you so much for taking the time to share your wisdom and your music. I'll make sure I link to all the appropriate places for people to get your album and your book, because it's very exciting.

Brooke: Thank you so much, Julie, and thank you so much for using your voice and giving us all a platform to use our voices. That's really powerful, and wonderful, and I'm really grateful that we are connected.

Julie: Me too.

[clip from Brooke D.'s "Let's Be Smoke"]

I'm so grateful to know Brooke, and so grateful to have chatted with all of the *Love What You Love* guests so far. It is truly a joy for me to know that doing something that I love, which is podcasting, helps amplify the loves of other people, and then, in turn, introduces that love to my listeners. ["Now I'm getting emotional! I'm a little verklempt!"]

You can find Brooke on Instagram [@BrookeDMusic](#), on Spotify at [Brooke D.](#), and at [BrookeD.Bandcamp.com](#). Her album and book, *Something in the Sky*, come out on October 8th. The first single, "Let's be Secrets," will be released on September 24th along with a music video. I'll include links to everything in the show notes, of course, along with links to Brooke's favorite nonprofits, and some of my own.

Just a reminder that you can find the podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#). If you'd like to support the podcast, leaving a rating or review on [Apple Podcasts](#) - even if that's not where you listen - is a great way to do that. Thank you, thank you, to everyone who has rated, reviewed, and socialized already.

Zeke Rodrigues Thomas at Mindjam Media provided amazing editing assistance. You can find Zeke at [MindjamMedia.com](#). Also, just a reminder that all of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website, so if you have a deaf or hard-of-hearing friend who would like to meet our amazing guests, send them over to [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#). Thanks to Emily White, as always, for the fantastic transcripts. They're easy to read, and she adds links and other goodies. So if the show notes on the website or on your podcast app aren't floating your boat, check out the transcripts.

So y'all, go out there and love the hell out of whatever it is that you love. You need it, and we need it. Thanks for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

Links:

Find Brooke on [Instagram](#), [Spotify](#), and [Bandcamp.com](#)

Brooke's Favorite Nonprofits:

[Arts-For-All.org](#)
[PreemptiveLove.org](#)
[TheArtTherapyProject.org](#)
[InnocenceProject.org](#)

My Favorite Nonprofits:

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