

Interview of Stuart Norman by Pam Laricchia

The following is a lightly edited transcript from Pam Laricchia's interview of me on her podcast, "[Exploring Unschooling](#)" in the Fall of 2016.

PAM: Hi, everyone! I'm Pam Laricchia from livingjoyfully.ca, and today I'm here with Stuart Norman. Hi, Stuart.

STUART: Hi, Pam.

PAM: Hi. How are you doing?

STUART: I'm really good. Thank you. And you?

PAM: Oh, very good, very good. Thanks. Just as a little introduction, I met Stuart online earlier this year when we were both guests on the [For the Love of Learning webshow](#) for an episode about Attachment Parenting. I'll put a link to the episode in the show notes. At the time, Stuart let us know that he and his family were packing up their home and planning for extended travel, so I'm really happy to chat with him about it now and see what's been going on the last few months.

To get started, Stuart, can you share with us a bit about your family and how you came to unschooling?

STUART: Yeah. I was just thinking about that call that we had all that time ago. We've been travelling about nine months. That's when we were still back in the UK, seems years ago. (laughs)

PAM: (laughs) I bet!

STUART: How we came to unschooling. I think, looking back at it

now, I think it's something that we've always wanted to do but never realized it. That kind of doesn't make sense. So, put it into perspective. My daughter went to an infant school and loved it. It was a little finish school, absolutely loved it. She couldn't wait to get back to school after holidays and things like that, but then we had to look for the next school up, so it'd be like a junior school. I think that was when she was probably six, maybe seven. There was nothing in the area we really liked, but we did find another little finish school some miles away, bit of a trek there, but she started there. That place was for her.

For a while, she loved it, but then, I don't know. It kind of all got a bit serious, really. She started having nightmares and she just wasn't very happy within herself. We talked about it. We talked to the school about it. She just wasn't happy there. They had a kind of a, I don't want to go into the whole politics of it, but they had a warning system and it was like three warnings and you got to be in front of the head teacher kind of thing.

She never had a warning, but she was always frightened of getting a warning. So, there's always fear that was about school. In the morning, she'd just be kind of dreading going in case something would happen and she'd get a warning or something. So, this kind of fear built up and I think that's why she was having nightmares and things and just being generally unhappy about going, really. We kind of looked at taking her out and it's something that we kind of always said that we'd love to do anyway. We kind of said before that, "Oh, wouldn't it be lovely if we were just all together all the time?" Because school seemed to take up so much of her time. Does that make sense? We just enjoyed being a family together.

PAM: Yeah, no. That does make a lot of sense, because for me it was when, I didn't know about homeschooling, that it was possible. When I realized it, when I found that out, all of the sudden, so many things fell into place. It's like, "Yeah. This is what I've been looking for." It makes so much sense.

STUART: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. So, we started looking into homeschooling, and I was lucky enough to have some friends that did it, but it was actually a very frustrating and stressful time, because we, not knowing really much about homeschooling, thought that we had to replicate school at home. How do we do that? We're not teachers. We don't know much. How are we going to do that? How

are we going to structure that? Because we're both self-employed. We tied ourselves up in knots about that.

In the end, you know what we did? We just took her out of school. (laughs) We just said, "Rather than trying to work things out, we'll just let things evolve." In the UK, it's really easy to take your children out of school. It's just a letter to the head teacher. We took her out and we did nothing. We just had that time of deschooling. We just had a nice time. We had fun together. It was really nice. Without that pressure of, "Oh, how do we do this? How do we structure this?" We just let all that go. I think, when I've spoken to people since, that period of deschooling is so important. I don't think we realized that at the time.

To be honest, I think it's more for us and our experiences, more important for us than it was for Annabel. Annabel adjusted pretty quickly, but it was about us adjusting to what her schooling or her education should look like. We thought it should look like, but actually what it could look like. Does that make sense?

PAM: Oh, it does. Absolutely. I mean, I know for me it was so much more work, so much more questioning, so much more figuring things out for me than it was for the kids, because I learned so much just by watching them. Right? Because I had, like you said, I had this vision in my head of what it was supposed to look like, what I had grown up with and was told it should look like. But when I watched them and thought about it and saw what they were doing, it was amazing.

STUART: Yeah. **What has struck me is that how we all talk about learning is natural, and I kind of knew that, but it's been wondrous to see how natural it is. Even when we've been completely hands off, she's still learning. She comes up. "How do you know that? We haven't taught you that." I really see that much deeper now, how innate learning is. We talk about children being sponges, absorb all the knowledge and the learning, but I see it on a different level now, I think, to what I did. I thought it was, "Oh, well, if they're interested in things, they'll learn easily," but it's more than that. It really is innate, learning. It's like all these life skills just get absorbed.**

PAM: I know. It's amazing. I remember having this conversation a little while ago. That that is something that I've found that I

have learned deeper and deeper every year or two. It's, "Oh, look, they're learning from their interests. They're doing this. They're pursuing that." But, yeah. As you see them develop and grow, just as human beings, it's like, "Wow. Look how much they picked up, totally without even consciously pursuing it." They're learning about being people, right?

STUART: Absolutely.

PAM: Yeah. That's so cool.

You touched on it a bit there, but maybe we can talk a bit more about how you got comfortable with the process of unschooling and how you came to trust it. It's part of that whole seeing the learning happening, isn't it?

STUART: Yeah. Sometimes I'll look at it all a bit and I don't trust it. (laughs) I think it's funny. I had a friend that's atheist and she was asking me about Annabel's learning and she said, "Oh, how do you make sure she's up to a certain level?" I can go through this period of time where I'm like, "Oh, yeah. How do we do that?" Suddenly, it seems important, but I think the trust is underlying that. If that makes sense.

It's kind of like, how would I put it? I trust in life. I trust that everything's going to be okay. I trust in that system of life, so I know, even if I have insecure thinking about what we're doing with her, underneath that is the trust. I'm not really putting that very clearly. However insecure my thinking is around, "Are we doing this right? Are we doing that right? Is it the best thing for her?" Underneath that, underpinning that is the trust that it just be okay, because, like we just said, I can see how innate the learning is. I see her progress, life skills she's picking up from just doing what we're doing, everyday experiences that she's having. **However my insecure thinking comes into life. "Oh, perhaps we should be gauging what she can do or perhaps we should be sitting down and doing some maths."** Then, I'm like, "No. That's me. That's not the truth." If that makes sense. It's like, "That's just my insecure thinking. That's not really what's going on."

PAM: Yeah. I think we get to that point because it's not like those things disappear. I had questions and things would come up, no

matter how long you've been doing it, because, as they get older, you're hitting new pockets. You run into people and they're asking questions and it has you asking yourself those questions. Or, your kids are getting older and they're doing something new for the first time, so then you're asking yourself questions again.

But, I think, as you're gaining this trust and this understanding, what happens is you're kind of okay with yourself, that you know you have questions, but you don't push it onto them right away. It's like, "Hey." You know? And that's where you find that trust again beneath it before you start reacting to it. Maybe that's the way.

STUART: Absolutely.

PAM: Does that make sense?

STUART: It does. It's hard to put into words.

PAM: It is! (laughs)

STUART: The trust bit of it is hard to put into words. It doesn't really make logical sense, I suppose. You just to trust in it, as we have with our travelling. That's the same sort of thing going on, really.

PAM: Yeah. Well, that's awesome.

One more unschooling question before we dive into your travel. This follows up what we were saying, because moving to unschooling does have us questioning so much of what we thought we already knew. So, I was just wondering what you think what of the most challenging aspects of your journey to unschooling has been?

STUART: I think probably what we were just talking about. Let it go. Letting go of what I thought schooling should look like, because we are very conditioned to what schooling should look like. I've grown up and also my parents have grown up in, "Oh, well, that's how you learn. You go to school and you sit behind a desk and that's how you learn, and you have to do that in order to learn. Otherwise, you stand still and you don't learn anything and

nobody wants that for their children." **It's letting go. I suppose that's the biggest challenge that we faced. That's why that deschooling period was so important. Like I said, that really kind of goes on when I have that insecure thinking pop up. It's still kind of just, "No. Take a deep breath." But it is that letting go of what I thought was the proper way of doing things and seeing that it can be completely different.**

To the other extreme. I think what we do now is the other extreme of what she was doing. She was sitting behind a desk, spending however many hours a day in that environment learning. Now, the complete opposite to that is her being out in life all hours of the day and just absorbing and interacting and experiencing life first-hand. So, I think the challenge was, and still is to some extent, just that letting go of my preconceived ideas, just realizing that's just me. That's just me and my ideas and it's not fact. It's not what's really going on.

PAM: Yeah. It's just our stuff, right?

STUART: Absolutely.

PAM: I like the way you describe the two kind of extremes from the many hours in school to the many hours out, just living life. It's like night and day for the child, too. Isn't it?

STUART: Yeah.

PAM: You can see them trying to learn and studying and doing tests and stuff at school, but the learning that they're doing when they're living, they're actually using it. Right?

STUART: Yeah.

PAM: It's just incredibly different. Isn't it? (laughs)

STUART: It is and it seems to us that school was kind of like in a box. I'm not ever saying that school is bad, because I think there's a lot of people upset with schooling systems and things, but I think it suits some people, some children, absolutely, and that's fine. So, I never want to go, "It's a bad thing." But it doesn't suit other children, so it's having that option to step out of it if you want to, if the child wants to.

To me, it kind of seemed like school was a bit of a box where inside of it, they're learning inside of that box, but as soon as they come out of that box and live life, there's so much more opportunity, so much more possibility than being inside the box learning. Kind of learning about the things outside the box, but not experiencing. If that makes sense.

PAM: Yeah, no. That's great.

Now, let's dive into your travel experiences. How did you guys decide to travel and how did you go about preparing for it?

STUART: Oh.

PAM: (laughs)

STUART: It's very strange. I still don't quite believe we're doing it. It was similar to the homeschooling thing, that we just had an idea and let it evolve. Again, similar to homeschooling, when we look back, it was kind of on the cards without us realizing it.

How it literally started was we went for a weekend away to Colmar in France, which was a beautiful, medieval town. While we were there, we looked at properties in estate agent's windows and we're like, "We could afford to live here." Because it was absolutely, stunningly beautiful. "We could move and we could live here." Then, we went home to the UK. I don't know. That was kind of the seed, really, that idea.

That idea then kind of evolved into, "Well, we could kind of go anywhere. Why don't we not say we're going to live there? What about if we just saw everything and just kind of went out into the world?" **We've always loved our travel. If me and my wife said, "Oh, what would you want of life? What would be the best thing?" We've always said to just leave it all and just go travelling. That's always been our thing.**

So, yeah, that was the kind of idea. No, I don't remember any time us saying, "Right. This is what we're going to do. This is the plan." **We just kind of had this idea that we could sell everything and sell our house and just go travelling and see if we find**

somewhere to live along the way. At no point did we say, this is what we're going to do and aiming towards that idea. We did just start selling our stuff. I remember my wife gone up into the attic and just having a sort-through as we kind of generally would now and again. That's kind of how our planning of stuff started. Then, she moved out into the rest of the house. (laughs)

PAM: (laughs)

STUART: So, it's very odd, because we just sort of went along with the idea. If that makes sense. We didn't go, "Right. This is what we're doing. From now on, we're doing this." **We just kind of pointed ourselves in that direction and went, "We're going to follow this idea unless something else comes along. If something else comes along, a different idea, that's fine too, and we'll abandon this idea."** We just followed it. We started selling all of our stuff. It kind of started with the stuff that we didn't really use. So, we sold our things at car boot sales, things like that. It was kind of the books that had been read, and the DVDs that we never watch anymore, and the general things that maybe people get rid of anyway. Then, it was the stuff that we use sometimes, but not often, and it was like everything. (laughs) It just got easier, actually, to let everything go. I was quite attached to my books. I like my books and to let them go was quite an effort, but it actually got easier towards the end. In the end, we were like, "Just get rid of everything." Then, we ended up with putting the house on the market.

I think it took about three months or so for us to sell that, so this process kind of started about March of 2015. We spent the rest of that year selling everything, going through everything. Yeah, just pointed ourselves in that direction of travel and nothing else came along that got in the way of that. The house sold and we're out. It was like, "Oh, what do we do now?" (laughs) The idea of it was that we'd have no plan, so purposefully, a bit like our learning with Annabel, we have no plan, structure. We keep it open because, I think, for us, there's that it's very uncertain which we like, but it's also room for opportunity and possibility to come in along the way. Yeah, it seems quite odd. Nine months down the line now having travelled to actually go, kind of, "Oh!" We still look at it and go, "We're actually doing this. We're still following that idea."

PAM: (laughs) That's awesome. It does sound like you kind of started down the same road, the same way you talked about starting homeschooling, like bringing Annabel home. You talked about it for a while and then it's like, "Well, you know, let's just take the next step and see what happens." That's very cool. I know my husband and I a lot of times when we, I mean, we haven't done anything that, well, I was going to say drastic, but I didn't want it to sound negative. (laughs)

STUART: I know what you meant.

PAM: Yeah. It's always, "Well, we can take one step. You know. The next thing and the next thing and if something doesn't pop up and say, 'Hey, change direction!' Next step, next step." Then, all of the sudden you look around and you're halfway to wherever it was, so that's really cool. I can see how that works really well for you guys. That's fun.

STUART: **It is absolutely one step at a time. I think that's why it doesn't... We got to selling our house, leaving our house, we never actually made that commitment and went, "This is what we're going to do!" It was just one step at a time and it's brought us to where we are now. We just don't know what the next step is.** Again, it's like with schooling. It just evolves along the way. At no point, I think, even in homeschooling Annabel, do we go, "This is what we're doing. This is what homeschooling Annabel looks like." It's just the next step. It's just, "This is what we're doing today."

PAM: Yeah. I think we found that attitude or approach, I guess, to be so helpful, because if we look too far ahead, you know... Like you said, that you don't see opportunities because you're looking in one direction ahead. Right? You're not seeing what all the possibilities are.

STUART: Yeah.

PAM: I never thought of it that way, but yeah, that really works.

STUART: I know some families that do have, and it actually works for them, have a structure to their travel and have everything planned out. They'll be travelling for a certain amount of time. They know that time they're going to go back to the UK or wherever. It just seemed to me, I thought, "If we do that, that's not right

for us.” That, for us, doesn’t keep it open to opportunity that might come along the way.

An example, I suppose, of that is where we are now, in Thailand. We thought about being here a month and now we’re looking at staying until February. Again, it’s not until we get to somewhere that we go, “Actually, this place feels like we want to stay here a little bit. It feels like there might be opportunity or possibility here. There’s good things to do. Let’s stay a bit longer.” Whereas, I think, if we were on a more structured plan, there wouldn’t be room for that. We’d be like, “We need to get onto the next place.”

PAM: Yeah, yeah. I can see that. Yeah. That’s what we were saying before. I can see how it can be difficult for some. I feel like I like structure and knowing, so **I like knowing a general direction, but I’ve just had so many experiences where being not so focused and being open to the possibilities brought me so much more than I was first imagining when I started taking those steps that I just, it’s like I can’t not be open anymore, because I imagined I missed out on a lot of things when I was younger by not just paying attention to what was going on around me. I was just following that path that I knew I was supposed to do.**

STUART: **I have a metaphor for it. It’s kind of like if you had a camera with a really good zoom lens on it, which is great because you can kind of see something really in focus and a point far away, which is great, but then you put a wide angle lens on your camera and suddenly you see so much more.**

PAM: Yep. Yeah.

You mentioned you guys are in Thailand right now and thinking of staying until February. I was wondering if you could share with us one of your favorite travel experiences so far.

STUART: Oh. They’re all so different. We actually love just the little experiences. The connecting with someone while we travel, but I suppose the bigger thing that stands out is we spent two months in Australia in the middle of this year. One of the things we do is house sitting. We spent six weeks house sitting and then we got a very little camper to go out and do a bit of a road trip

through Western Australia. That was fabulous. One of the things we done while we were there was went to a place called the Ningaloo Reef. We went out on a boat trip out to snorkel with the whale sharks, which was absolutely amazing. Annabel managed to get in the water. She's never snorkeled before. We were in quite choppy, very, very deep water. One of the crew on the boat, she's a marine biologist, took care of Annabel. She swam with her and made sure she was fine and pointed everything out to her. Annabel got to see the whale shark, too. I think we went into the water about four or five times with different whale sharks, which was fantastic.

PAM: Wow.

STUART: That was kind of one of the bigger experiences that stands out. Like I said, sometimes it's just the little things. Just the little things like, here in Thailand, we might go to a temple in the evening. The monks chanting and things like that. Just little things like that that just make it. It hasn't got to be the big things, sometimes. Sometimes, we'll, if we go somewhere where there's a lot of sightseeing or things to do, we'll touch on some of them. We can't afford to do most of them. (laughs) **It's just the little things sometimes that stand out. The connections, the conversations you have with people. The insights into a local's life. To some extent, that's where the learning is for Annabel, as well. For all of us. We're all learning all the time. It just gives Annabel an insight into things.**

What else have we done? What stand out? We've done a hike on a volcano in Bali and Java. Then, that created interest for Annabel. She wanted to learn about volcanoes. There's been lots of things. I think the whale shark, for me, stands out, and I know for Annabel it was amazing, as well. To just get into the water with something I'd only ever seen on TV programs. It was very environmentally friendly, as well, the trip. The whale sharks aren't pestered in any way. You're not allowed to go within ten meters of them unless they swim to you. There's only ten people allowed in the water at any one time. Very limited boats allowed, there's only one boat allowed around a whale shark at one time. From that point of view, it was very nicely done as well. The information. We went into some shallow water and the girl that was the marine biologist pointed out to Annabel. I think she saw a giant clam and, I think, it's a yellow-finned starfish or something, quite rare. All these sorts of things. It's amazing. You can't get that sort of learning in a

classroom.

PAM: I love your point about how enjoyable, fun, and how much you learn from the big things and just from everyday connections. Right? I think even figuring that out and experiencing that difference in the joy in such a wide range of experiences is great to know, too. Right?

STUART: Yeah. Even things like we went to Java. There were the biggest sites. There were the temples and the volcanoes. They were brilliant, but one experience that we took away and **I know Annabel loved was a couple of women behind the reception in the homestay place that we were in. We got friendly with them and they took us out on their moped, so we went to visit some of their relatives and their little villages, places you wouldn't normally get to see on the tourist trail. Those kind of insights into normal, everyday life and the connections you make with people that we think are important.** Sometimes that's where the goal is.

PAM: Yeah. That's awesome.

As you've been talking about, I'm sure Annabel is learning so much as you travel. I was just curious what she's interested in right now and how she's pursuing it. Is most of her interests during the day related to your travel or does she have other particular interests that she's pursuing alongside it? Just curious.

STUART: That's a hard one to answer, actually.

PAM: (laughs) You guys are so busy, I imagine, out and about and exploring and everything. Yeah. I didn't know if she's enjoying books or movies or if there's certain other things that she's pursuing and then maybe doing it within the context of where you are.

STUART: Yeah. I think she's still pursuing the things that she enjoyed when we're back in the UK. She loves her reading. She loves books. We carry everything we own on our backs. Okay? We try to make that as light as possible. Yet, we're carrying around this huge pile of books. She loves [Horrible Histories books](#). She absolutely loves those and loves history. I'm just looking at the

pile of books now thinking, "We really carry that around with us?"
(laughs)

Wherever we go, we'll find a bookshop. Here, in Chiang Mai, there's some wonderful second-hand bookshops selling english books. I remember in Kuala Lumpur, in the city center, there's a big Japanese bookstore, but one part of it is english books, so we spend hours in there like you would a library, just reading the books. Again, libraries, if we find them.

When we were in Australia, there was a library near where we were staying. We just spent hours in there. She loves her books. That's a passion that she's carried on. It's quite funny. If we go out during the day, she has her little handbag thing and she'll always carry a book. She'll always be with a book at some point, in case she needs it.

She loves to draw as well. Wherever we go, she'll have some paper. She'll just doodle. She likes drawing figures and fashion and all that kind of related to fashion. She draws these figures all dressed up differently. Wherever we are, we'll go and have a meal somewhere. She'll finish and just spend a bit of time doing some drawing afterwards. Those things have carried on. They were passions of hers back in the UK, as well, so that's carried on.

Then, I suppose, there is that interaction with people that she does a lot of things here. If we're going to things. Say we go for a meal. She'll go and ask for the bill. We'll give her the money. She'll go and pay. She's getting used to doing a lot of things herself, which we promote. Sometimes we'll look around and she's disappeared or something. She's gone and asked someone something. I don't mean disappeared as in out on the street somewhere. (laughs) She's getting more independent, I suppose, really. **More confident and going and asking for things and sorting things out for herself. She's kind of pursuing that in a way, as well. She said to me just yesterday, "I want to do more things that I need to be brave for." I can't remember what context that was, but she's going to a zipline course tomorrow and she's quite apprehensive of it, but she loves being in that space.**

PAM: Challenged.

STUART: Yeah. The space where she's challenged and she knows she's

got to be a bit brave. She loves that at the moment.

PAM: That's really cool.

STUART: I don't know if that answers your question, really, but I would say she's pursuing the things that she was interested in back in the UK. That is drawing, reading. She loves writing, as well. She'll spend hours just on her tablet or with paper writing stories. She writes articles and things. She's got this, almost like a company that she invented, called Starlight. She kind of invented it while we were in Australia. It started with Starlight Cruises, which was like holiday company organizing trips. Then, it went to Starlight Hairdressers. There's a Starlight Restaurant. She creates all this material around it, almost like marketing material, saying different programs you can get, and how much it costs, and what you get included, all these kinds of things. She sends us emails. "Oh, do you want to sign up for the Starlight Newsletter? What's new." All this kind of thing. That's pretty cool.

PAM: That's very cool. I love the snapshot of how she's living her life in whatever place you guys happen to be, right?

STUART: Yeah. There's some things, whatever changes around us, there's some things that her passions, the reading, the writing, the drawing, she loves to act as well. Those stay solid.

PAM: You're still you. Yeah.

STUART: Yeah.

PAM: Yeah. Everybody is still their being, their person, yeah. That's very cool.

On your Facebook page, I recently saw someone ask you to comment on an article that they shared and I really loved your answer. The article was titled 'It turns out that travelling makes us far happier than any material wealth ever does'. I was hoping you could share your perspective with us on that.

STUART: Yeah. I see quite a lot of comments like that, because all

of us see travelling. Before we started travelling, we started following a lot of people that travel blog and families that travel and that kind of thing. We see this come up quite frequently. It'll say, like you said, something like, "Travel is the thing that all children need," or "Travel is what life should be like," "Travel is what makes you happy."

I think it's amazing to travel, but I don't think it does bring you those things. I think, for us, we were in a really happy place before we travelled and we felt that freedom. It was actually kind of almost enabled us to look at travelling. I don't think we would have, if we hadn't felt freedom and that happiness, I don't think we would have travelled. It was being in that kind of space that enabled us to look at the travel thing thinking, "We can do this." For us, it wasn't travel that brought us that, if that makes sense.

I think some people go off travelling to find something. To find happiness, to find freedom. Sometimes they find it and sometimes they don't. I know my view is that that doesn't actually bring you happiness or freedom. Sometimes it just looks like that. I think it's the same as, if I liken it to something like, yoga. Take meditation. Say someone is not very content with their lives, but they find meditation. They seem to get happy or content. It can very much look like it's the meditation that's done that, but usually it's just the space that the person has found.

In my coaching with people, I talk more about this, but it's usually the space we've got into. **It's not the actual thing we're doing, if that makes sense, but it can look like that. When somebody travels and they're happy travelling, it can look like it's the travel that's done it. Then, they'll go, "Everyone should travel, because it's what brings you the happiness." In the same way as people who have found happiness through meditation might go, "Well, everyone needs to meditate."** Right?

I can't believe that because, if that was the case, if that was true, then meditation would bring everyone happiness, but it doesn't. Some people try it and they don't like it. If it was true that travel brought you happiness, then everyone who travelled would be happy. I know that's not the case, because I know people who have gone off and travelled and they're not happy doing it. Then, they go back to their former lives. It's never the thing that you're doing, even though it seems like it. That's why I never go,

"Everyone should travel!" That's why I say, as I tell you that for homeschooling, as well. I never say, "Everyone should homeschool." Like I said before, it's a personal choice. What works for one person doesn't work for another person. School in the traditional system can absolutely work for one person, one child and might not the next child. I think it's the same with travel. Does that answer what you was asking?

PAM: Yeah. I think it does, because happiness, to me, is an internal thing. You know what I mean? Like you said, you guys were happy before you did that, so what you're talking about is the coincidence of however they found the space to make that internal shift to feel happy, but they're kind of giving the credit to whatever external thing opened up that space for them.

STUART: Absolutely, because that's what we're used to doing. What we do as humans is we feel a certain way. Then, we look outward and we go, "Well, what was it that made me feel like that?"

PAM: Yeah. Yeah.

STUART: We're used to doing that. We go, "What are the reasons?" Everything we do goes, "What was the reason? There's got to be a reason." We look to the external to see the reason for it. If someone's travelling and they get happy, they look outward and go, "Oh! It's the travel. Therefore, if it's made me happy, everyone should do it, because it will make everyone happy."

It's kind of the same as any kind of business. Someone will come along and they'll do a workshop or a talk or something and go, "This is the way you need to do your business. I've earned millions like it, so you can." Again, it's worked for you, but it's not necessarily how it's going to work for someone else. It just looks that way because we look to the external, but like you said, it's internal. It comes from within. The happiness, the freedom comes from within first. That's what happened with us as a family. It came from within and then we were like, "Oh, so what can we do with that?? We feel happy. We feel content. We can do what we want."

PAM: Yeah. That's brilliant. Through learning about myself through unschooling, unschooling was my external, it gave me the space to do all this. That's why we talk so much about how the unschooling journey, when you get started, and you even mentioned it earlier,

it's our work to do. Right? That happened to be the space that gave me the time and the reason and the motivation to help my kids and to make this lifestyle work for us. That was the space and the motivation to do that work on myself. At this point, I feel like I could be happy anywhere, really, because it's not about the external. Right? It's about my comfort and my joy and happiness with myself.

STUART: Absolutely. One thing that just occurred to me then is the way we live our lives now is like, sometimes I can fall into the trap of, with our travels, "What's the next step going to look like? What's the right thing to do? What should we do?" Then, almost take a step back from that, and go, "Actually, what feels right?" If it feels like a should or a need to do something, we look at it again. Like I was talking about earlier, letting go of preconceived ideas. I often get to that about my travelling. I go, "Oh. We should be doing this. We should be going there." Sometimes, that doesn't feel right. So, I take a step back from that and go, "Does that feel right? The right thing to do?" Again, us in Thailand. As we go into next year, come February, March, the temperatures in Southeast Asia will start rising. There's some places we want to go to that will be getting hotter. I'm like, "Should we stay in Thailand if those places are getting hotter?" My mind just churns these things over, but when I let that go and take a step back from it and I go, "Actually, it just feels good to stay here for the moment. It feels the right thing to do." There's not a right and a wrong thing to do, but it feels like that's the way we're going to do it and it feels okay.

That's what we follow, which is the same now, looking back, to what we've done with Annabel. It was we got tied up in the whole thing of, "Should we take her out of school? Shouldn't we? Is it the right thing to do? You want the best for your children." It was obvious to everyone around me what we really wanted. Everyone was like, "You know what you want." We were like, "Yeah. It's obvious. We want to take her out. That's what feels right." We always kind of check back in with that, the feeling of something. I kind of digressed with that, but that's kind of what we do.

PAM: Yeah, no. It's a great guide, isn't it? You can get so caught up in the what if's and the what should I do's. You can get stuck there for ages. To notice when you're stuck and get back to that letting go piece and seeing how you actually feel about it. That's

always been a really helpful step for me.

STUART: I think if we have paid too much attention to the shoulds and the needs and things like that, we would have never left the UK, because it kind of doesn't make sense what we're doing. Everyone. People will say to me, "So, what's Annabel's future look like? You're travelling. How are you going to do this? What happens if you run out of money? What happens this?" I'm like, "I don't know, actually. That's the fun part of it is not knowing." It feels okay to be doing it. It's worked out so far, so we're okay taking those steps.

PAM: That's awesome.

What tips do you have for unschooling parents who are considering extended travelling with their family? That's one of the great things with the unschooling lifestyle. You aren't tied into school schedules and stuff like that, so I think travel is something that a lot of people enjoy.

STUART: Yeah. We've met a lot of families. There's lots of unschooling families out there doing the same thing. Our trip is we have no end. Some people take a year out or just a few months, a bit longer than they would for a normal family vacation, which is great as well. A tip. **I think, again, a tip would be, you asked me what my challenges were and it's that letting go. I think that's a tip. I think letting go of the preconceived ideas we have around learning, around travel, around how we should live. Again, everything in this is about our conditioning. Our condition of what learning looks like. We're conditioned about what travel looks like. We're conditioned about what living looks like. It's letting go of those ideas and that condition, to a certain extent, as much as we can, just going with life a little bit more, going with the flow of it. Sometimes, something occurs to us, just to follow it a little bit more.**

Like I said before, just taking those steps towards an idea. Just doing that in life a little bit more. Even if it's on the small scale. I can't think of an example, but if you're thinking of taking a month out opposed to two weeks vacation. If that occurs to you, perhaps follow those inclinations a little bit more than you

would have done. I know it ain't easy for me, like when we was first thinking about travelling, all those what ifs came in. It's not like they didn't.

Some people seem to think, "Oh, you were just okay with the travel." No. All those insecurities and the what ifs still come in, but I tend to just not spend my time focusing on them, because if we had have done, again, we wouldn't have left. Several people have said to me, "Oh, you must be brave and courageous doing what you're doing." It's like, "No. Absolutely not. If I'd waited to be brave and courageous, we wouldn't ever have done it." We just took those steps. An idea just occurred to us. We just took those steps. I suppose the tip in all of that is just letting go of our preconceived ideas, following what occurs to you a little bit more in life. It doesn't have to be the travel. It can be whatever. It can be go and have fun doing something that perhaps before you might have gone, "Oh, yeah. I shouldn't really do that." Perhaps follow that a little bit more. Don't listen to the shouldn'ts.

PAM: Excellent. Yeah. That's part of expanding what we're learning about ourselves. As we choose unschooling, we see we've been preconditioned in so many different areas. Right? Not just in education. That letting go and just taking a little extra step, that really helps.

STUART: That's our thing. We don't realize that we've been preconditioned to it. Sometimes you don't notice that. You're not aware of it, because we are so conditioned that it just seems the right thing to do. It seems the way to be. Sometimes it's not until you step out that little bit.

PAM: Yeah, no. That's great.

I noticed, recently, and I liked it, that you started a new Facebook page called [The Nomadic Coach](#). I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about that.

STUART: My background is one of coaching. It kind of went on the back burner a little bit when we started travel, because I wanted, again, when I talk about shoulds and needs tos, that was something that'd I'd fallen into. I'm a coach, so, okay, being a coach, it should look like this. Right? I'd fallen into that trap myself.

I wanted to take a step back from that and go, "Actually, my business, whatever you want to call it, can look like anything I want it to. It doesn't have to fall into a traditional shape or size. It can be anything I want it to be." Purposely, I put it on the back burner, stepped away from it to create some space around it. Again, I just go along with whatever occurs to me. An idea can to me, the name 'The Nomadic Coach'. There's a Facebook page for that. Shortly, they'll be a website as well. When I build it. I can't really say what it's going to look like.

Again, it's like everything what we're doing at the moment. It's one step at a time. At the moment, it's the nomadic coach. I coach individuals, groups. It's not traditional coaching. It's not like life coaching. I don't set goals. It's not about achievements and success. It's more allowing and facilitating and guiding a space for people to find their inner spark and to live their lives how they want. If some idea comes to them, to follow that. It's about getting back in the flow of life a little bit more. We can lead brilliant lives and successful lives by achieving. People have. They have had a lot of success, but it can be really, really hard work. It's almost like swimming against the current in a river or something, against the tide or whatever. You can gain success that way, but it's just really, really hard work.

I'm suggesting that we don't have to put hard work into being a success, but there can be an easier way. **There can be more of an ease about life, which is what we're finding with our travels, with life in general. Less of swimming against the current and more turning around and going with that current and seeing where life takes us. That's not in a, "Oh, just sit back and don't do anything way." It's just going with, what I was just talking about, what occurs to us a bit more.** It's a bit more, I feel, for me, it's bit more organic. It's a bit more natural. It's not such hard work. There's an ease to it. You still have to put hard work in, but there's an ease about it. There's an ease about living that way. I create that space for my client to facilitate that. Again, there's not a, "You need to do this. You need to do that." It's just gaining understanding, really, of who we truly are. We've kind of come away from who we really are, in a way. It's getting back to that. It's almost like a change of direction. It's seeing things from a different perspective. How I see life now is a bit different to how I perceived it, which is really why it led us to taking Annabel out of school and led us to the travel. We let that lead

our lives now. If that makes sense. It probably doesn't.

PAM: Well, it does. I guess because we've been on this journey. We've asked all those same kinds of questions, those preconceived notions. For me, when you were talking about flow and it's not easy, you're working towards things, but also finding and doing it along with your flow. The word that came to me was synergy, synergistic.

When you're putting your effort into things and you're watching and working with the flow of things that are happening around you, it's amazing what happens, the things that come up that you wouldn't have thought of or planned, but because you're open to it and it meshes well with what you're doing. Boom, things just keep moving forward. Is that kind of what you meant? (laughs)

STUART: (laughs) **It's just about embracing life more. I think it's what we do as a family. We just embrace it for what it is. It's not always plain sailing.** You know?

PAM: No. Of course.

STUART: Who says it should be? It'd be pretty boring if it was, right?

PAM: Yeah.

STUART: My coaching is about having that conversation with individuals, with groups, but then discovering that inner spark, who we really are, who you really are, because sometimes we can lose sight of that, I think. We go off down a path of who we think we should be.

PAM: Yeah. Thanks very much for sharing what that's about, because it sounds really interesting. I love hearing how families are supporting their unschooling lives, because I know that's always something of interest for people to hear, how other people are doing it. Thank you very much.

STUART: Oh, you're very welcome. I hope it's of use to people, as well.

PAM: Yeah, yeah, no, exactly. It's such a fascinating topic to me.

I wanted to thank you very, very much for taking the time to speak with me, Stuart. It is 10:30 at night for me. It's morning for you, tomorrow morning for you, isn't it, where you are?

STUART: No, it's today. (laughs)

PAM: Before we go, where's the best place for people to connect with you online if they'd like to?

STUART: You've already made sure they know [The Nomadic Coach](#) Facebook page. We have a page that's just for our travels as well, which is [Normans Running Wild](#), all one word. We have a website as well, which is the same name, Normans Running Wild. Our surname is Norman, that's why it's Normans Running Wild, just to explain that. That's probably the best way, stuart@normansrunningwild.com.

PAM: Awesome. I will put all the links to those websites and pages in the show notes.

STUART: Ok.

PAM: Excellent. I am off to bed, so I wish you a very lovely day and thanks again for speaking with me.

STUART: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

PAM: My pleasure. Thank you.