



God Hears Her Podcast

GHH Ep 163 - Mindful Creativity with Anh Lin

Vivian Mabuni and Eryn Eddy Adkins with Anh Lin

Anh Lin: It was definitely not something I could have just remembered, you know, like off the top of my head, it was buried so deep in my psyche. And the fact that the Holy Spirit showed up in that moment. To remind me, you're not healing this on your own, but I had this plan for you all along. It just made me so grateful and so content with what He has done with my life, despite all the ups and downs.

[Theme Music]

Elisa Morgan: You're listening to *God Hears Her*. A podcast for women where we explore the stunning truth that God hears you. Join our community of encouraging one another and learning to lean on God through scripture story and conversation at godhearsher.org. God hears her. Seek and she will find.

Vivian Mabuni: Hello everybody. I'm so excited for today's conversation with Anh Lin, because shout out to Asian-American women. Any time I get the chance to be able to have a conversation and hear the story of a fellow Asian-American woman, it's always exciting. And Eryn and I welcome you with open arms and to the *God Hears Her* podcast.

Eryn: Yes!

Vivian Mabuni Thanks for being with us.

Anh Lin: Oh my goodness. I am so excited to be here. It's. It's such an honor to speak to both of you, and like you said, we don't see many Asian-American women in this Christian authorship space, so it's...it's such an honor and privilege for me to be here.

Vivian Mabuni: Ahn is a YouTuber, she's an interior stylist and author, and we'll get to hear all about Ahn and your story. And I just thought for our listeners, it would be great just to hear some of your growing up and your spiritual journey. If you could just kick us off that way.

Anh Lin: For sure. Thank you for that introduction. My goodness. I was actually born in Vietnam, and I came to the States when I was about four or five years old in '97. And. And I remember being kind of disillusioned with the American dream that I was being sold already by my mom who had never been



here. So she was trying to like convey this amazing vibrant, highly saturated idea of what America would be like and it convinced our entire family despite knowing that she's never been there. So when we came, we arrived in Pasadena in the middle of winter. So it was gray...

Vivian: Oh.

Ahn Lin: ...it was cold. It was the complete opposite of where I came from in Vietnam, which was this rural district outside of Saigon. So, I spent most of my childhood just seeing my parents trying to rectify their dashed dreams, pretty much. And seeing so much conflict in the home and eventually my dad passing away from cancer and my mom kind of losing her sense of identity and sense of sanity. And just finding myself in such a deeply dark spot, I would say, in high school. At this point, I didn't have God in my life. I was purely just on my own, and that's what it felt like and hung out with the wrong crowd. Honestly, eventually through digging myself deeper and deeper into that pit, I hit rock bottom, and that was when I had this vision of this painting of Jesus that we had in our childhood home. 'Cause my mom's Catholic. And when I saw that painting, I just felt like comfort wash over me from my head down to my toes, and I had never felt that kind of comfort before. And that was when I got really curious about Jesus, and then I brought that vision to the only Christian person I knew in high school. She got super giddy, and I didn't understand why, but she brought me to her family...own church. It was just this small Mexican church, and her brother was preaching, and I just fell to my knees the first time I heard the message preached in a way I could understand. I felt like it was like a coming home moment. And even after that life wasn't perfect, of course, the unraveling of all that trauma, but it was like an experience I couldn't deny, and so I just kept the faith ever since I encountered Jesus, I think senior year of high school.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: I kind of want to pull back the curtain a little bit when you said you hit rock bottom. I'm just so curious to know, you know, what lie did you believe about yourself that maybe you were living out that you didn't realize you were believing that led you into the state of rock bottom?

Anh Lin: Wow where do I begin. Like so many lies, and I think the biggest one of all might have been "I'm trapped." And I carried that lie with me into my marriage. Actually, I thought that it was something I could overcome without digging deeper into it, but the feeling of being trapped had always been so overwhelming for me, because when I was younger and I saw my parents towering over me, screaming at each other and getting violent, I really was trapped.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mmm.

Anh Lin: I mean, where could I have gone?



Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yeah.

Anh Lin: I was just a child. And that feeling of not being able to escape made me feel like I was helpless and powerless in these situations, and eventually I no longer dissociated when I felt trapped, but I started, like, exploding.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mmm.

Anh Lin: I started behaving kind of like an enraged animal, almost, and, uh, it wasn't until I saw EMDR, which is a form of trauma therapy, that my therapist was finally able to get to the root of that lie of "I'm trapped," and I was finally freed and no longer so reactive whenever I was put in that fight or flight mode.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mmm.

Vivian Mabuni: That is so helpful. And I think having a trained therapist is so necessary because even our emotional and mental state affects how we even view God...

Ahn Lin: Mm-hmm.

Vivian Mabuni: ...and our responses to Him and to the people closest to us. So that is great.

Ahn Lin: Yeah, it's all connected.

Vivian Mabuni: It's all connected because we're whole beings.

Ahn Lin: Right.

Vivian Mabuni: So that's incredible. Well, how did you meet your husband?

Anh Lin: Oh, so funny. I met him on an app, and this is not sponsored. Um, it's the Coffee Meets Bagel app.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Oh, I've heard about that app, and I always...

Ahn Lin: Oh yeah!

Eryn: ...wondered if there were success stories.



Oh, there are...there were so many success stories that I don't think they're doing very well anymore.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Oh.

Ahn Lin: Like everyone just got married and nobody uses anymore. [Laughing]

Eryn Eddy Adkins: That's hilarious.

Ahn Lin: I got really lucky, I think. It was my first time downloading any dating apps. I was very hesitant because there was still, like, such a stigma against, like, online dating at the time. I know I sound so old, but I saw his profile the first day of downloading the app, talked to him, and then we moved our conversation to text, and I thought, "Oh, I guess it worked." And so I deleted the app after we went on our first date, because I was like, "Oh, this was a great date." And I find out like he didn't delete his until like a month later or something, and then he had like five different apps, and I'm like, "Oh, is this...the...the culture I didn't know about? But, so for me, I got really lucky. It was like one and done. And he turned out to be such a man of God.

Vivian Mabuni: Well, tell us a little bit about how your childhood and now marriage and even moving into a new season, like how has that informed what your...kind of your day job is now, as far as...

Ahn Lin: Mmm, yeah.

Vivian Mabuni: ...this beautiful intersection of restoration. It seems like there's a...

Ahn Lin: ...a theme in your life and now in your work that makes it so meaningful.

Anh Lin: I mean, as a creative, I've always had a million different interests. And that alone has been really hard to kind of consolidate into like a single niche where I can create content from. I found myself in the home interior design space quite on accident actually. I studied English in college and was meaning to become a teacher, but I got kicked out of my house actually after graduating and coming back because my mom was like so disillusioned with me having a bachelor's degree and...and still, you know, making entry level office job wages. And she's like, I didn't even graduate middle school, and I make more than you. We couldn't see eye to eye. It was just kind of toxic at home, and so we came to a head one day and...and I just got kicked out and I stayed at my pastor's house temporarily for like two weeks. And during those two weeks, I was just like scrambling to find the next place to live. Um, and that was like the closest I ever got to homelessness.



Eventually, thank God, found a girl who was in a very similar situation. We moved in together in Pasadena and that was when I started dabbling with turning our tiny, teeny, tiny, like 400 square foot studio into something livable. And then I didn't think much of it until she had to move away, and I had to move back home and by then, of course, me and my mom had already kind of like settled things a little. So I moved back into my childhood bedroom, and I was just so triggered by everything that I saw. I mean, I hated the walls. I hated the bed. Like everything reminded me of fighting with her. Oh, if you hear that, that's my Corgi, by the way, he's, he's very opinionated. So I spent one full paycheck just converting all of the walls into like fake brick and like this cactus explosion of a wallpaper

Eryn Eddy Adkins: How fun!

Ahn Lin: I hunted, yeah, I hunted for like what are those things those wooden crates In the back of like Target, yeah, to build my own crate bed. Now I know you're not supposed to do that because they spray them. But anyway, I thought it was so fun and like creative. I had this little boho bed I've always wanted.

Vivian: Oh.

Ahn Lin: And the room looked completely different from my...my childhood memories, and that was the first time I realized the impact that our physical environment had on our mental health.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mmm.

Ahn Lin: And so when I was finally able to move out of my childhood bedroom, I did the same to the first apartment I was ever able to pay for on my own. I just snapped a few photos, put it on Instagram and it just took off like the makeover that I did.

Vivian Mabuni: Hmm.

Ahn Lin: Took off. And I thought, "Ooo, this is a fun hobby." And I just kept doing it and kept doing it until, you know, the sponsorships came in and that's when I thought, "Oh, wow, I didn't know you can make money off of this." And then from there on, I just kept like moving, you jump around in LA a lot when your lease ends. So I just kept moving from place to place and making over every single space that I was in. And before I knew it, I was just in the middle of this home renovation, uh, type of niche that I didn't study for that I had no background in and that I absolutely loved.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mmm.



Vivian Mabuni: Mmm. Wow. That is so encouraging to hear. I'm just picturing little and being in that room, being scared, feeling trapped, and then adult and coming in saying, "Okay, there are some things that I can do. I mean I can't change all my circumstances, but with what I have and with where I am, I can move in a direction that is going to help." So your intuition to like, I need to change the walls that...

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yeah.

Ahn Lin: Mm-hmm.

Vivian Mabuni: ...to me, I mean, it's expressing some self-leadership and recognition, and then there was a cost involved here. You were investing a whole paycheck. That's what it was going to require to be able to change the environment, but then, you know, your face just lit up when you started to describe what it was like, and even to go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning in a different environment, even though it was the same room, I'm pulling these little principles, even thinking through EMDR, and recognizing, okay, there are the things that I can do to change. I can't change my past and what happened, but there are some things that I can invest into to help have a different outcome. And so that to me is so powerful.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yeah.

Vivian Mabuni: It really demonstrates that a self-leadership...and I think for listeners who are feeling stuck for listeners who feel like *I'm still in the same room*, there are some things that we can do like practically and internally, but what a difference that can make. It's beautiful.

Anh Lin: Thank you so much, Vivian. And yeah, like you mentioned, no matter what our socioeconomic level is, because I...I started off making \$500 a month and I couldn't even afford tacos for dinner. And on top of that, I had to pay almost \$500 for my little rented room with my roommate, so I had like literally nothing left over to eat with even then I found ways, little ways, to make our tiny little studio feel more like home, you know, and I'm not saying spend all your money on home décor, but in my book I...I give...I give like examples of how you can create nooks like a peaceful nook or a joyful nook just little spaces that you can call your own that when you look at it, you know that you created it just for you and for this purpose, and it just makes you feel more intentional with the way you're stewarding your life.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yeah.

Ahn Lin: So yeah, you don't have to go big in order to feel the impact of. a changed environment.



Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yes. I love the principles that you were bringing out Vivian too, because I immediately thought of how sometimes the only way to experience our circumstances is through it and it's adjusting the mindset.

Vivian: Mm-hmm.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: And I'm just so fascinated, Ahn, by how you submitted to the reality of your life, and you were like okay like this is where my life is so how can I not just exist in it but heal in it, survive in it, but thrive in it also. Were there any practical things that you did to settle into that mindset?

Ahn Lin: Yeah well I...I really do have to give my mom credit for that because I'm reminded of like this, uh, this Instagram post I saw where it says "Your parents might not have broken every generational curse, but they broke some."

Vivian Mabuni: Mmm. Oh that's good.

Ahn Lin: And one of the generational curses that my mom has definitely tried so hard to break, and I think she was very successful at, it is to continue carrying on despite having to start over. So her dad, my grandpa, had his entire assets confiscated by the Communists when they took over Vietnam, and he absolutely lost his mind after that. He kicked out all nine of his children, just went absolutely nuts, and truly never recovered to the day of his death. And my mom saw his life kind of unravels slowly, uh, and then all at once. And I believe she just said to herself, I'm not going to break like that. I'm going to be able to stand up and start over no matter what happens to me. And not to say she wasn't affected by all the trauma and all the restarts that she had to do, but I did get front row seats to seeing her pick herself up every single time she came near death or really close to losing everything.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yeah.

Ahn Lin: And I think having that kind of experience, it became like a subconscious thing for me. I wasn't like going through everything I went through and thinking, "I'm not going to let this break me." I felt broken.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Yeah.

Ahn Lin: I felt like I was already broken many times, but something in me that I believe my mom instilled made me keep going. And it was just this feeling of, well, think of what you got through the last time, you know, if you could survive that, then surely this next hump will pass as well. And I think a lot of it also has to do with this knowledge that nothing really belongs to you anyway. So I...I never



felt like I was entitled to success or entitled to having more or entitled to an abundant life even, even if I was, but I never felt like God owed me anything. And I don't know where that came from. Maybe it came from her too. But I think having that internal kind of like knowledge helped me to just accept my reality without feeling so much shame around it. Like, sure, I'm poor. Or sure, I'm not living up to my parent's expectations or not living up to my college degree or whatever. But like, who cares? You know, I didn't have so much shame around that.

Vivian Mabuni: Wow. Well, I'm thinking of right now, listeners, and myself included, so I'll just put myself in this category, but drawing from your experience and like, how does a person start with creating not just a place where you sleep to really making this home idea? Talk to us about maybe some first steps to take, or from your experience, what's been helpful or practical that's helped you?

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mm-hmm.

Anh Lin: I think what really helped me when I was feeling stuck, especially in that childhood bedroom, was seeing the possibility that was out there. So I allowed myself time to be inspired by other creators and it opened my mind to the possibility of what this place could look like. There was just this experiment that I read and wrote about in...in my book and it's called the "Inescapable Shock Experiment" where...

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Ooo, tell us about that.

Vivian Mabuni: Yeah.

Ahn Lin: ...back in the day, yeah, it's...it's like a super inhumane experiment back in the day, um, where they put like uh two groups of dogs in cages. One group, they shocked multiple times, really sad, and the control group was never shocked. The group that was shocked ended up not even leaving the cage when they swung the door open because in their minds. It doesn't matter if I escape, I'm still gonna be shocked so it actually activated this kind of helplessness in the dogs whereas the control dogs, of course when the cage door open they ran for it and what could happen to us when we're subjected to repeated trauma and stress, especially over a period of time in our childhood, is that it puts our brains into this constant state of helplessness. So even if you are free to do whatever you want, and you have the agency to start over, and you have resources, maybe even to give yourself a life makeover, you might not know how that it's possible for you. So what we could do to kind of heal that mentality is to surround ourselves with people who are for us, people who could support us, who are trauma informed, who could walk through it with us. And most importantly, to show us that there is a reality outside of what we think is possible for us. So for me, that was my therapist, and while seeing her and also like finding new friends who, you know, are supportive for



me, I was able to envision a life that was different from everything that I had known. So finding these people and finding this community challenged my own lies and my own preconceptions of what my life could be like, and a small part of that also was allowing myself to be inspired by creators and...and seeing what other people were doing with their homes. You know, it's...it's healing in that way, and I think that's the best advice I can get is just to find community. It's more healing than you think.

Vivian Mabuni: Yeah.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: How has that played a part in marriage?

Anh Lin: Oh my goodness.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Right, because you're...

Ahn Lin: Yes.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: ...you have the freedom to have a...

Ahn Lin: Oh my gosh.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: ...home with a husband that loves you..

Ahn Lin: Mmm.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: ...but I would imagine there was probably a fight in some ways inside to receive that.

Anh Lin: For sure. Yeah. And the fight was me constantly feeling as though I am trapped, like being in a marriage for me was so different from just being in a dating relationship or even being engaged with him. Because something about it being such high stakes and it reminding me of like my parents' marriage at times, like, was so overwhelming, and I didn't know how to deal with my own sense of overwhelm. I felt like my inner protectors were just kind of going off the rails and...and I didn't have any rein on how I would behave when I felt triggered or trapped, and he didn't understand it either. Obviously, he's not a trained therapist or anything but I think what he did that really helped me was whenever I would go into like these modes of like shutting down or riling up, he would start...he would start googling what to do, and he would immediately implement like the bullet points that they'd tell him like speak slowly, tell her reassuring things.



Vivian Mabuni: That's so sweet.

Ahn Lin: I know. He would just go into survival mode himself and just try to like rectify what's...what's happening.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: So sweet.

Ahn Lin: And him self-regulating...

Vivian Mabuni: Mmm.

Ahn Lin: ...actually helped me to regulate as well, and over time, after maybe like three or four times of like doing that, I decided, you know, this is not sustainable. I needed actual help. Like, I don't know what's wrong with me, but I can't just talk about it. I need my body to stop reacting this way. 'Cause it was out...I felt like it was out of my control. And I think to a certain extent it was. So the EMDR was actually right across the street from where I lived. God is so funny. He just placed me right across the street from the EMDR office, and I walked there every week and just unraveled memories that I thought were not important that turned out to be pivotal in the way my brain had formed. So once I got down to the level of my seven year old, and I envisioned myself hugging her and telling her that, "Hey, you are going to escape this house. You might not be able to leave now, but you're not going to be here forever. And you're going to survive this and life is going to get better. And you are going to be free," I not only felt healed, but I saw myself like leaving that memory, like literally just floating out of the edge of that scene, and on the right side of the corner of that scene, I saw the same painting of Jesus that I envisioned when I was saved in senior year of high school. And seeing that altar in that exact childhood home, it just, it...it was like such a God moment for me.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Mm-hmm.

Ahn Lin: It was as if God was saying, "You can leave this memory because I'm staying here with her and I'm going to save her one day. You don't have to worry about her. I have her covered." It was like...

Vivian Mabuni: Wow.

Ahn Lin: ...an earth-shattering moment for me and that was truly what healed my sense of feeling trapped, and we have not had a meltdown ever since.

Vivian: Wow.



Ahn Lin: Crazy.

Vivian: That is so beautiful. Isn't it amazing how, like when we sleep, our body can repair...

Ahn Lin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Vivian Mabuni: ...and then the neuroplasticity in our brains that we can actually create new neural pathways that we don't have to stay in the places...and the awareness. Darrin and I we speak at marriage conferences and one of the studies that we...we share about is with the Gottman Institute, and they talk about the idea of flooding and how when we're in conflict...

Ahn Lin: Mmm, yeah.

Vivian Mabuni: ...with our spouses or family members, whatever, when we get triggered to fight, flight, flee, fawn, faint, whatever the F words are, [Laughing] but it takes literally...it takes literally 20 minutes for our brains to calm down before we can even be...

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Wow.

Vivian Mabuni: ...rational again 'cause we're just so self-protective at that moment. And even just knowing that ahead of the conflict helps us to know, okay, this...if we call a timeout, it's not that we're running away. It's that we're trying to calm down.

Ahn Lin: Yeah, calm down, self-regulate.

Vivian Mabuni: Like it's the self...self-regulate, so that's really beautiful. And just thank you for opening that part of your heart to us, Ahn, that's really helpful and meaningful and it makes so much sense because I think sometimes we feel stuck in those places, but to know that the Lord is there and was there and will take care of us, that switches everything.

Ahn Lin: Yeah. That was the most meaningful vision I've ever during like an EMDR session, and it was definitely not something I could have just remembered, you know, like off the top of my head. It was buried so deep in my psyche. And the fact that the Holy Spirit showed up in that moment to remind me, "You're not healing this on your own, but I had this plan for you all along." It just made me so grateful and so content with what He has done with my life despite all the ups and downs.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Ahn what would you say to the woman that may feel maybe lost in her thoughts and just feel like distance with God? What would you want her to know?



Anh Lin: I would, first of all, just remind her that there's no shame being where she's at mentally and God can handle her timing, God can handle her pacing, because he's a very patient God. He's a gentle father and he's not going to bulldoze down her boundaries just 'cause He like wants control of her heart or anything like that. He's willing to wait. And through his waiting, He's also moving in her life, whether or not she wants Him to or knows that He is, He's moving. He's actively setting up people that she's going to meet that might help her. He's giving her resources and He's just paving the way, you know, like a good father would for her...for His struggling daughter. If I were a father. and I'm going to be a mother soon, what I envision myself doing if my daughter wants nothing to do with me in like her preteen years or something is I wouldn't just close her doors and not think about her or not talk to her or interact with her. What I would do is to just quietly set things up for our relationship to be repaired. I would put breakfast on the counter for her one day, hoping that she'll notice, you know, I'll set up her clothes for her for her next day's outfit. I would make these small gestures, hoping that when she's feeling better, she could see that she was loved all along. And for the woman who's feeling so isolated and so misunderstood and so unsafe with the idea of God, know that that's the kind of Father He is. He's going to continue being active in your life, loving you in ways that you might not see now, but once you are feeling safe enough for Him to approach you, you're going to see His fingerprints all over the times when you've been hurting. And I think that's when you're going to realize how beloved and worthy and cherished you really are.

Vivian Mabuni: That is so beautiful. Uh, well, Ahn, we would love if you could close our conversation with just praying for the listeners.

Anh Lin: Okay. Let's just take a deep breath and just breathe out all of our anxieties and the things that are weighing us down. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you so much for positioning this person to be listening to this episode right now. I know that it is not a coincidence. I know that you are so active in her life or in his life right now, and I pray Lord that you will make your presence known in the most peaceful, gentle way that you always do. I pray that you will cover them in your sense of protection. You will cover them in your love, your peace, your comfort, and just reassure them, Lord, that no matter what they're going through, that this would be temporary, and your plans for them are so much bigger than the mountain that they're facing right now. I pray, God, that you will give these people a sense of hope, Lord, a light at the end of the tunnel so that they won't be in despair. They'll be bent but not broken, and you will restore them, Lord, after they have suffered for a little while. You will your...yourself restore and heal and set their feet on solid ground yet again. And I pray. All of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Theme Music]



Eryn Eddy Adkins: Amen. We are so thankful for the ways that Ahn has used her creativity to see the possibilities in making things beautiful.

Vivian Mabuni: I agree, Eryn. She definitely has a gift. Well, before we go, be sure to check out our website to find a link for Ahn's book *Forever Home*. You can find that and more at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: And if you've loved this episode or you've been listening for a bit, please leave us a rating and review wherever you're listening from, because we want to hear from you. We'd love to know how you received this episode.

Vivian Mabuni: Thanks for joining us. And don't forget, God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Music]

Eryn Eddy Adkins: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank Dave and Kim for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

Vivian Mabuni: Our Daily Bread Ministries is a donor supported nonprofit ministry dedicated to making the life-changing wisdom and stories of the Bible come alive for all people around the world. *God Hears Her* is a production of Our Daily Bread Ministries.