



All Ears English Episode 220:

Find Your Zone of Genius with TEDx Speaker Laura Garnett

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 220: “Find Your Zone of Genius with TEDx Speaker Laura Garnett.”

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel’, from Boston, USA.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Did you know that you are a genius in one very specific way? Today, TEDx speaker and performance strategist, Laurant Garnett is here to show you the formula to find your zone of genius.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Are you trying to find a way to be more spontaneous and more flexible with your English? That’s one thing that a lot of listeners and students tell me that you want more vocabulary words, more ways to say things. Well, if that’s you, then I recommend that you work with a native speaking tutor. That’s the best way to do it guys. Go right now to



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[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, guys. How are you doing today? I am so excited today to bring you our guest. Our guest today is a performance strategist, a speaker and the creator of the Zone of Genius Assessment, a very powerful process that clarifies your unique talent and purpose in order to produce greater impacts and results and fulfillment at work.

She speaks at events and conferences across the country, including TEDx, and contributes to the Inc.com blog, the Huffington Post, and Zappos Delivering Happiness blog. Before she launched her New York-based consultancy, our guest honed her marketing, branding, and mission refining skills at companies like Capital One, American Express and Google. Our guest today is Laura Garnett. Welcome Laura, how are you today?

Laura: I'm great. Thank you so much for having me.

Lindsay: Oh, thank you so much for joining us and we're super excited to hear about this concept of the Zone of Genius that you've been talking about for a couple of years here. Let's just dive right in and let us know what this means, the Zone of Genius. What is this?

Laura: Sure. Absolutely. Well, it's a phrase that I think – (um), I use it because it so perfectly describes what I observed in other people.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Laura: And I defined it as your (t-), your innate talent, plus your purpose. And...

Lindsay: Okay.

Laura: ...I also redefined those words because those words could be used for a lot of, (um), in a lot of different ways. But I define your talent as how you do



what you do. And what I've observed is that everyone has a unique way that their brain processes information and tries to problem solve. It's a process.

Lindsay: I love that.

Laura: So by, (you know), identifying that – I call that your innate talent – (uh), you can begin to create situations where that's needed. Now...

Lindsay: I love it.

Laura: ...your purpose, (um), again, a lot of people talk about purpose, (um), but what I found is that, it's, it's (cor-), your purpose is correlated to a core challenge that you've faced in your life. So...

Lindsay: Okay.

Laura: ...we've all had, we all have tons of challenges, but if you go through your whole life, you'll find that there's one central challenge that you've been working on most of your life. If you can identify that challenge and then help other people with that, that in essence gives you this sense of fulfillment.

Lindsay: Got it. I love it. It's so, it's such a freeing idea of investigating this because, (you know), I think a lot of what we're told to do is (kind of) strengthen our weaknesses.

Laura: Right.

Lindsay: Is that true? Do you remember hearing that in school, (right)?

Laura: Yes.

Lindsay: And then, I've always found that (kind of) not very empowering because we're never gonna (going to) get that good at what we're weak at, but if we can think about what we're actually really good at, then we can become truly phenomenal.



Laura: (Abso-), absolutely. And that's what I've experienced by myself. That's what I've experienced on my own and that's what I've experienced with people I work with. When you hone in on that talent and purpose and really, (uh), design your career or your job around it...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Laura: ...then you get to become, you get to experience what it's like to be a genius or an expert or the best at something. And...

Lindsay: I love it.

Laura: ...(you know), some people will say, "Oh, it's so hard to narrow down to this one thing," but I found that there's an endless world of stimulation when you're focused, (uh), when you're using something that you're naturally good at.

Lindsay: Oh, and it's just amazing. Sometimes when we're doing what we're naturally good at, we don't realize it because it's so natural to us.

Laura: Correct.

Lindsay: Is that something you encounter with your clients?

Laura: Well, it's, it's hard for us to be able to see this in ourselves because...

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm).

Laura: ...it comes so naturally.

Lindsay: Exactly.

Laura: And again, because people don't know that that's what it is, they're not (kind of) pushing their comfort zone using that specific talent. So...

Lindsay: I see.

Laura: ...that's kind of where the identification and pinpointing it is so important. So really understanding what that is and then being able to create



language around that, (um), in order to, to, to be able to share that with others.

Lindsay: Perfect. So have you worked with clients from different parts of the world because our audience is all over the world, (right)? We have listeners in Japan, in Italy, in Spain, in Brazil. Have you worked with a fair number of clients from different parts of the world and have you seen the way that they look at this idea?

Laura: Absolutely. I've had... I have a client right now who's in Singapore. (Um), I've worked with clients in Russia. (Um), I've had clients all over. I think the, the thing that differentiates different countries and different cultures is really just what kind of, (you know), what are the cultures of the organizations, what is the culture of business in that country. I do think there are some places where this concept of doing what you're innately good at and focusing it on that is still not something that's mainstream.

Lindsay: Right, right.

Laura: And those individuals may have a harder time crafting that in, within an organization. Maybe they wanna (want to) start their own business. (Um), so it really, (you know), it depends on, (you know), where they're sitting and what they're, they're (kind of), (you know), (compon-), a country culture is [inaudible]...

Lindsay: Sure. Sure, sure, 'cause (because) I could imagine that be one small hurdle from...

Laura: Absolutely.

Lindsay: ...for people from different parts of the world, (right), because a lot of times the goal in certain cultures is not to stand out. But I'm thinking that here in the US one of our goals would be, with finding this zone of genius, would be to really stand out and separate ourselves from the pack, (right). Especially – yeah. Interesting.

Laura: Well, well the other component and this could be (some-) – (you know), in a, in a country where standing out may not be revered, (uh), really the, the



art of this is to be able to be proactive about creating or, or putting your hand up for the projects or the responsibilities that you're naturally suited for. So that's something that I think someone who's working in a company where maybe this isn't so mainstream could do. Just be, just being able to be proactive and taking a step forward and saying, "Hey, I'm really good at this. That's the project I should be doing."

Lindsay: Yeah, so it's about taking the choices in our lives that work for what we do well...

Laura: Exactly.

Lindsay: ...and the way we do it.

Lindsay: Hey, guys. We're gonna (going to) take just a minute here to thank our sponsors.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Guys, here is today's question: Do you speak real English, or do you speak textbook English? I think some of you guys learned textbook English in class with grammar books. But at All Ears English, we don't believe in textbook English. We believe in real English and the way to learn real English is with real native speakers.

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Lindsay: So Laura can you tell us how – if our audience, if our listeners actually wanna (want to) find their zones of genius, how would they go about that? (Like), what are three things that they can do, three or four things...?



Laura: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...to find that zone of genius on their own?

Laura: Sure.

Lindsay: What could they do?

Laura: Well, I'll start with two things – I'll give you for things. So...

Lindsay: Okay.

Laura: ...the first two things are, (um), in order to be able to identify your talent – one of the things I do when I work with people is get them to send to five or ten of their colleagues that they've worked with in the past or work with, are working with currently a question. And that question is: What is the unique (um), what is the unique approach that I take to the work that I do?

Lindsay: (Umm). Okay.

Laura: And you can put... insert your job title or whatever, but what is the unique approach that I take to what I'm doing. And if you survey a bunch of people that have worked closely with you, they're able to describe in words what it is, (you know), what this (kind of) innate way of problem-solving is that you may not be able to identify on your own. So that's the first thing.

Lindsay: Okay.

Laura: The second thing would be to do a – (um) this is related to the purpose. So just really walk through your whole life and start in the beginning of your life and through childhood and through school, and university, and your first job and your second job and really...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Laura: ...look at your life through the lens of: What was my core challenge. What were the things that I struggled with? What was hard for me? And...



Lindsay: Okay.

Laura: ...what kind of, (um), (you know), really (kind of) in, (you know), relate – makes you feel like that’s – that’s the challenge that I can relate to the most. Try to identify that challenge and then look at what gives you fulfillment.

Lindsay: (Umm).

Laura: Invariably, you’re somehow helping someone else with that same challenge. It’s kind of been [crosstalk], but that’s another exercise that can be (va-), valuable.

Lindsay: Interesting. Interesting. Okay.

Laura: Yeah.

Lindsay: And so what would be the... what could they do next?

Laura: And the second two would be – and you could almost do – I would do all of these and sometimes the second two can kind of help you if you’re having trouble with the first two.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Laura: But just ask yourself every week these two questions. One is: ‘What am I excited about at work?’

Lindsay: (Umm), that’s an important question.

Laura: Yeah. And figuring out, (you know), are you bored, are you excited? Why or why not? And usually the answer to that question will allow you to see the kind of work that really fires you up. Excitement and energy and engagement are signs of you, (you know), leveraging your talent or your purpose. The next one is: “What is the impact that I’m (ha-), what is the impact that I had this week?”

Lindsay: (Uhn).



Laura: And try to figure out, (uh), is the impact that you're having on your clients or your colleagues or the world, is that the kind of impact that you wanna (want to) have in general.

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm), in terms of the way that, that you're making people act or react or (kind of)...

Laura: Correct.

Lindsay: ...how you're inspiring th-them, just that (sort of) deal. Okay. Got it. Got it.

Laura: Just (kind of) check in with yourself: 'Am I making the kind of...?' And you don't necessarily have to ask people, but just (kind of) think back to what did, what have people said to you over the course of the week? What if (some-), if no one said anything to you, that's, that's an impact. What kind of reactions do you get from people as you're working?

Lindsay: Okay.

Laura: Really start tracking that and that can give you another sense of – if you're making zero impact that means you're not working on your purpose at all.

Lindsay: Right. So you're not working within the zone of genius...

Laura: Correct.

Lindsay: ...and they should probably step back and reconsider that. Okay.

Laura: Yeah, and that's just the...

Lindsay: Awesome.

Laura: ...answer to these questions can start you thinking and becoming more conscious about what is really working well and what is not and if you stick to that and start tracking it over time, you'll see things and patterns that will allow you to see what your zone of genius is and what kind of things you should be doing versus not.

Lindsay: I love it, I love it because the way that we see the world can be so different when we're working within this kind of zone of, of, of skills or of genius or



however we wanna (want to) define it. We have a choice. We can go to work every day and be (kind of), (kind of) bummed out and kind of bored, or we can find this and really (kind of) change the way we look at the world.

Laura: Exactly.

Lindsay: That's fantastic.

Laura: Exactly.

Lindsay: Awesome. Awesome. Well, I'm so inspired by this. Thank you so much Laura. This has been fantastic and I, (you know), I wanna (want to) encourage our listeners to check this out. Go through these steps guys and have a look at maybe at what your zone of genius could be. And Laura, where can our listeners find you online if they wanna (want to) know more about how to do this...

Laura: Sure.

Lindsay: ...how to go through this.

Laura: You could go to my website, lauragarnett.com, (um), two 't's'. And we can sign up for my newsletter and I send out a weekly, (uh), weekly tips and articles that I write to all of my, (uh), to all of my readers. And if you go through the website, there's also a questionnaire. (Um), are you operating, are you experiencing peak performance – you can take that and get a sense of whether or not you're really maximizing your potential there as well.

Lindsay: Perfect, perfect. Well, thank you so much for coming in today. This has been fantastic and super inspiring. I'm looking forward to hearing from our listeners about how they took these steps and went ahead and started to look at their zone of genius. So thank you Laura.

Laura: Great. Thank you so much for having me.

Lindsay: Have a good one.



Laura: All right. Bye.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

