

Wynne Leon (00:00)

What does it take to become someone who says yes? To the camping trip, the mountain, the family adventure, or the unexpected detour when the plans fall apart.

I'm Wynne Leon, and in this episode of The Life of Try, I'm talking with my friend Natasha Dillinger, a natural adventure organizer whose enthusiasm has a way of bringing everyone along for the ride.

Natasha shares how growing up with parents who said yes shaped her outlook, how she helps her kids embrace new experiences, and how a little preparation can make adventure feel possible, even for busy families. We also talk about group camping, learning from what goes wrong, finding low-cost fun close to home,

and remembering that if one path isn't right for you, there may be another way down the mountain.

It's a joyful conversation about building a habit of trying, creating memories together, and discovering that the imperfect moments often become the stories we treasure most. So let's say yes and get started.

Wynne Leon (01:04)

Hi Natasha!

I am lucky to get to talk to you often since our kids go to school together. But I'm thrilled to have an official recorded, adult conversation with you. I know. Without interruptions. Assuming

Natasha (01:13)

We get so few of those. Yeah. It's good to be here.

Wynne Leon (01:21)

the Cooper the dog keeps it quiet. it's funny getting to know people because our kids go to the same school.

you get to know people slowly over time. It's not like, friends that you're doing activities with, one on one. But one of the more remarkable things that became really clear about you is that you're a yes person. Like, Natasha, do you want to do this? Yes. And you're suggesting things and it's you just have this incredible and

enthusiasm and adventurous spirit that is so obvious. And and

Natasha (01:52)

Thanks, Mm.

Wynne Leon (01:53)

that's what I am hoping that you tell us the story of how you came to be a person who says yes to adventure. And have you always been this way or was there a moment where you decided to double down on yes?

Natasha (02:05)

A lot of it comes from my parents. they are yes people, like even now they live nearby, and so we are lucky to have their support and also their participation in a lot of the things that we do, and they planned things and they didn't have money growing up, but we were like constantly going camping. My mom homeschooled me up until middle school, and so we were always doing like field trips,

Wynne Leon (02:29)

Hmm.

Natasha (02:29)

My dad is really active and he feels better and is a better person if he is like doing activities every day.

Wynne Leon (02:35)

Right.

Natasha (02:37)

kind of like how we were talking about biking to school or running

Wynne Leon (02:39)

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Natasha (02:41)

around. And so I think a lot of that comes from them and

Wynne Leon (02:44)

Yeah.

Natasha (02:45)

seeing how well that worked out for my brother and I and how I can instill that in my own kids. Yep. Yeah.

Wynne Leon (02:50)

Right. Well that bodes well for passing it on to your kids. If it came from your parents, here we go.

That is right,

Natasha (02:58)

Can we to be the grandkids someday?

Wynne Leon (03:01)

right. And I've met your parents. They are lovely, lovely yes people.

So one of the things that we did this summer that I loved, is something that my friend Eric dubbed Mummer Camp because you got

six families to all go camping together. And it was only the moms, So there were like six moms, twelve kids.

and you found a group camp spot. you got us all going on this great adventure in a really nice place at Scenic Beach and you figured out all the tips and tricks and how to get there and all that stuff. How do you how do you rally people to come along on an adventure? especially young people, families, busy people.

Natasha (03:45)

Yeah. I think asking in advance is really helpful. I mean, I think we started planning that trip last summer, like the end of last summer, early fall, and then

like developing relationships over time. So the reason I felt comfortable going on our group camping trip is because someone I've known for a while had invited me the past summer. And so I'd kind of seen how people with experience on group trips planned meals and they did it in a way that I didn't realize you could do group camping. Like I just kind of assumed everyone has to be doing group meals for every meal. You're doing all the same activities all the time

Wynne Leon (04:22)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (04:23)

and

The way that my friend planned her trip was we did one group meal. And then for everything else, everybody was kind of on their own making stuff. And there might be like some sharing back and forth, but it just kind of was like a good, you can do this differently. You don't have

Wynne Leon (04:39)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (04:40)

to make everything together and not everything has to be like super coordinated.

Wynne Leon (04:45)

Right.

Natasha (04:47)

And then, you know, our our mom group at school, they're people that I've known since my oldest was in kindergarten. And so I

Wynne Leon (04:53)

Mm.

Natasha (04:54)

have a general idea of

people's personalities and where they're at and where they might fit into a group and

one of our friends is the one that has like all the camping gear and she brought all that and

Wynne Leon (05:05)

Right.

Natasha (05:05)

the other friends are great at like baking bread and just like seeing people's strengths and like how can they contribute to the greater pot of talent on the trip.

Wynne Leon (05:16)

Yeah.

Natasha (05:17)

and then as far as like rallying my kids, I think what works best for them is sort of

Setting expectations and comparing what the experience will be like to something they've already enjoyed. So, like,

Wynne Leon (05:30)

Hmm.

Natasha (05:31)

we're gonna go on this camping trip with school friends. Do you remember last summer when we went on a trip and we only knew half the people? But here's what you liked about it. Like you got outdoor time and there is lots of kids to play with, and these

Wynne Leon (05:44)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (05:44)

are the meals we're gonna eat, and you like this, you might have to try something new. a couple

Wynne Leon (05:51)

Yeah.

Natasha (05:51)

of the kids on our trip, including one of mine, are neurodiverse

And I think setting those expectations ahead of time and then also saying like this is where you're gonna need to be flexible helps

Wynne Leon (06:01)

Mm.

Natasha (06:02)

get my kids buy-in. Like, okay, we're

Wynne Leon (06:04)

Right.

Natasha (06:05)

excited to go, we know what to expect, and we know where maybe things won't come out according to expectations.

Wynne Leon (06:10)

Yeah.

Well and I love that you're calling back to memories and then you can compare and and

Natasha (06:15)

Yeah.

Wynne Leon (06:16)

contrast with that. That's a great trick. And I think at the end of that trip is what you were like, Well we should start talking about next year. I mean you really do build on on memories, group dynamics and and build from there, which is really great too.

Natasha (06:31)

Yeah. And it's nice while that memory is fresh in your mind. I think like I think everyone had a good time based on the feedback that I heard. And so

Wynne Leon (06:37)
Yeah. Yeah.

Natasha (06:39)
while people are thinking about it to be like, okay, clear these couple of weeks in July next year so that we can

Wynne Leon (06:44)
Mm-hmm.

Natasha (06:45)
start planning that. And I like taking the lead on that stuff and I find it kind

Wynne Leon (06:50)
Yeah.

Natasha (06:50)
of fun and I'm often the problem calendar wise. So I block that time out and I know I'm I'm dedicated. I'm ready to go.

Wynne Leon (06:55)
That's a strategy. Yeah.

That is a smart strategy. And you know, I've never gone camping and had a salad before. And that was

Natasha (07:03)
What are you?

Wynne Leon (07:04)
the joke that I made to my friend that he's like, Yeah, that's what you get from Mummer Camp. You know, a bunch of mums. I mean it was

Natasha (07:08)
Yeah.

Wynne Leon (07:10)
like the best food. I'm like, Wow, I don't know where that dehydrated pasta is, but we can leave that behind for the next trip.

Natasha (07:17)
Who cares about that? Uh-huh.

And I loved about that trip and I think we talked about it while we were there. I mean, I love camping with my husband. Like we camp, the four of us regularly, but I think that moms see each other in a way that maybe other adults don't. And, it was constantly like, Well, this mom has art supplies and she's really good at helping the kids like calm down from their big activities and

Wynne Leon (07:42)
Right.

Natasha (07:43)
like do art and

This mom over here, she's got the extra pot that I forgot, you know, and it

Wynne Leon (07:48)
Mm-hmm.

Natasha (07:49)
it's just people make you feel seen and it was a wonderful

Wynne Leon (07:53)
Right.

Natasha (07:54)
like those are my buddies. I can't wait to camp with them again.

Wynne Leon (07:57)
Yeah, totally.

It is a it's a different group dynamic. It's lovely. so you have Instagram suitcases in Seattle. One of the things I didn't realize until I was looking through it recently was that you were an accountant

Natasha (08:09)
Yeah.

Wynne Leon (08:10)
by trade and education, right? And you made the comment because there are so many pumpkin patches in Seattle that you made a list of and you s like sorted them by how many activities are at each and I mean it was amazing what you did, but same kind of organization that you brought to the camping trip.

Natasha (08:30)

Yeah,

it helps me make sense of the world when I have a lot of overwhelming data, like to put it into a visual form. And I'm very visual. Like someone could, you know, give me a list of their favorite verbal pumpkin patches or whatever. And I

Wynne Leon (08:44)
Yeah.

Natasha (08:45)
just need to see it laid out in an organized grid for it to make sense.

Wynne Leon (08:49)
Mm-hmm. Right.

Natasha (08:51)
so while I no longer am in accounting or finance, like those skills are still really helpful.

Wynne Leon (08:56)
Right. You still need

to know how to use a spreadsheet. It is

Natasha (08:59)
Yeah.

Wynne Leon (09:00)
very helpful. it just makes it so much easier for somebody else to follow the template.

Natasha (09:04)
Yep. Yeah.

Wynne Leon (09:04)
And I was

thinking too about your 'cause you just did a San Juan trip and you, you know, mentioned the places that you got food and it's sort of your planning and ability to to put that out there is a great leg up for somebody else who's looking to do more adventures, especially in this area.

Natasha (09:24)
the hope and honestly like I use those things too like for this trip specifically I just went back to like what was in my list of things we loved two years ago and it just it takes a load

off of planning if you go to a return destination and we don't return to a lot of places because there are so many new ones to go to but San Juan is really special and so we you

Wynne Leon (09:44)
Right.

Natasha (09:45)
know love returning there but I have to remind

Wynne Leon (09:47)
Yeah.

Natasha (09:47)
myself like that was the activity the kids really loved and how

Wynne Leon (09:50)
Yeah.

Natasha (09:50)
can I make that happen again.

Wynne Leon (09:52)
Well and I love that full circle nature right there because you're saying that you get your kids to excited about going because you bring back memories. But that's also you plan, you remember what you liked, you can get your kids excited, and then you can rely on those same resources again. I mean it works all around the for so many different facets of a trip.

Natasha (10:14)
No need to reinvent the wheel all the way. Yeah.

Wynne Leon (10:16)
Yes,

thank goodness. Thank goodness for you. That's all I all I have to say. So do you think that adventuring and saying yes is habit forming?

Natasha (10:25)
Yeah, I think so. I mean, if you had a good time and the outing was successful, then you're more likely to be able to say yes and you can even define success differently. I mean, sometimes we'll have outings that like I was expecting sun and it rained and I didn't bring a rain jacket and like wasn't it so funny that we used a cardboard box, you know, like to cover

Wynne Leon (10:46)

Yeah.

Natasha (10:47)

our heads. and those become memories that we talk about too.

Wynne Leon (10:51)

Right.

Natasha (10:52)

When things go wrong and being able to say, Hey, today was hard, but do you remember the trip we took before when it was hard and it worked out okay and

Wynne Leon (10:59)

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Natasha (11:02)

we can say yes even if we know that the conditions might not be what we're expecting.

Wynne Leon (11:06)

Right. Right. And in fact when things go wrong are often the strongest memories from a trip and how we dealt with it and and it's such a great parenting skill. It's such a great planning life skill, right? And I was thinking about that, you know, this summer

was the summer where I was trying to, get to Europe to see some friends before they moved. And I, couldn't figure out how afford the ticket prices given the oil prices kept on going up and the airline prices kept on going up. And so I ended up Airbnb being our house, which was something that I didn't really want to do because it required a lot of decluttering and I was like, it's gonna take a lot of work. But once you start rolling the ball and realizing there are a lot of ways to say

And if you're, determined to go on these adventures, you'll find

Natasha (11:59)

Such a good example for your kids too. You were so creative about how you made that work. And you were so like you went with the flow and things didn't go according to plan

Wynne Leon (12:08)

Ha ha.

Natasha (12:09)

on that trip several times. And

Wynne Leon (12:11)

Mm.

Natasha (12:11)

your kids saw it. I mean they were right there in the trenches with you. And so they've seen you like react

Wynne Leon (12:16)

Yeah.

Natasha (12:17)

to things and make alternate plans and laugh about it.

Wynne Leon (12:22)

Yeah. Yes. Yes.

Well and that's such a good point. You know, again, when things go wrong is what we what we remember one of the things that did go wrong is, you know, we missed our train from Paris to London and

we were, stuck on a curb in Paris, nowhere near the train station, and we had to figure out how to get there. And then we finally got to the Gare du Nord to find it and and figured out how to get another train. And there's a Five Guys Burger in in that train station. And we like

packed ourselves into a booth and had the

best French fries ever and that was one of the lowest moments of the trip, right? I was like, my gosh, we've got so many problems to figure out, but right now we're gonna have some French fries and mm-hmm. Right? We had a great time

Natasha (13:07)

Yeah. And that's gonna help everything just get back to normal.

Wynne Leon (13:13)

there. And and again, just like you said, it's one of those strongest memories. So I have some quick questions for you.

Are there any foods or places you won't try?

Natasha (13:23)

Tried several times to like offal but I just like liver organ meat.

Wynne Leon (13:29)

Ha ha ha.

Natasha (13:30)

Like we went to Peru and they had like a chicken hearts on a skewer, and I took a bite, I just there's like a mental block there, but I can't

Wynne Leon (13:39)

Ha ha

Natasha (13:40)

make it. I'll try it once and then I just won't go back.

Wynne Leon (13:45)

Wise. I think that's wise. I'm with you on that. Okay.

So ad activities that you did once that you don't wanna repeat. Mm.

Natasha (13:54)

Snowboarding.

I tried it twice as sort of like our kids' age, like a preteen, early teen, and got like run over by another beginner the first time and then fell and really hurt my tailbone. I just like don't have the coordination to stand sideways on a block of wood and go down the mountain.

Wynne Leon (14:14)

Heh.

Natasha (14:16)

but I took up skiing with the kids a few years ago. So we're all learning together. And it was a

Wynne Leon (14:21)

Mm.

Natasha (14:22)

good reminder that like

Just because one thing doesn't work, it doesn't mean that it there isn't a pivot that you can

Wynne Leon (14:29)

Right.

Natasha (14:29)

make happen to make it fun. I love skiing. Having two feet go

Wynne Leon (14:32)

Yeah, I love that.

Natasha (14:33)

down independently is such a like it's so much easier for me

Wynne Leon (14:36)

Yeah.

Natasha (14:37)

to be coordinated that way.

Wynne Leon (14:39)

And what

a great life lesson, which is it's well, if if you don't like snowboarding, it doesn't mean that you can't go down the mountain another way. And you could still like mountains and you could still Yeah. Which is another question. Do you like do you prefer the mountains or the beach?

Natasha (14:54)

the mountains. I grew up in San Diego, middle and high school and then I was in Northern California when I was younger and it's too hot. You know, the feeling of like being sticky in the salt water, like

is lovely. I'm also not a sit on the beach kind of girl and I think that's why a lot of people love the beach is they've got their cold beverage in one hand and their feet in the sand. But I love

Wynne Leon (15:18)

Yeah.

Natasha (15:18)

the mountain views, I love the forest, I like the little bit of pain to get to the view and then you know you get

Wynne Leon (15:24)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (15:24)

down the mountain and you've got your five guys burger or whatever it is. But like that was time too fun, but it's good now. I think that's why living in Seattle is so nice is you can do both.

Wynne Leon (15:28)

Right, right. Yeah, yeah. It it you

really can do both, that is true. And I you know, just to emphasize your point, we hiked Little Si this last weekend and then we went down and had a burger and it was the best burger for everybody in the car.

Natasha (15:45)
Perfect. Maybe I'd

like chicken hurts if I ate them after like a ten mile hike.

Wynne Leon (15:54)
do you sort of have any ultimate adventures that are on your family list, your family bucket list?

Natasha (15:59)
I feel like social media gets a bad rap a lot of the time, but it is kind of a good place to have aspirational trips. there's someone that I follow that lives in Colorado and she has done a hut-to-hut hike in the Dolomites.

Wynne Leon (16:15)
Mm.

Natasha (16:16)
That is like I don't know, it it would take some like finagling to get my kids to agree. But I just think that would be the most wonderful, like you don't have to cook food, it's cooked for you. You

Wynne Leon (16:29)
Right. Right.

Natasha (16:31)
just hike into a nice warm cozy hut, but you get those mountain views, that is big time on my bucket list.

Wynne Leon (16:36)
Yeah.

I've done a version of that. And you don't have to bring any bedding. Your backpacks are light. And they have wine on tap.

Natasha (16:43)
Yeah, I check, check, check. Yeah.

Wynne Leon (16:47)

Yeah, I'm with

you on that ultimate

adventure. That's a good one. So one trip or adventure or activity that you're grateful that you did before you had kids?

Natasha (16:59)

Peter and I

To Skellig Michael, which is the island off the west coast of Ireland that became famous when one of the Star Wars movies comes out, and like Luke Skywalker is in like a hut. But it used to be a monastery, and these monks lived in these stone huts like thousands of years ago. At the time it wasn't as well known, and we did a road trip around the southern part of Ireland and took this boat out. It was like not even really the season.

For this particular trip, and so the

Wynne Leon (17:33)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (17:34)

water was rough, and we did lots of bouncing in the boat. And I can't remember if they've since closed the island or if it's just a highly limited visitor population because Star Wars made it so popular, but

Wynne Leon (17:48)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (17:49)

it was like magical to be up there. Like the boat ride was fun, but it was miserable for the family that was on it with us. The hike

Wynne Leon (17:56)

Yeah.

Natasha (17:57)

was fun, the family didn't even do the hike because.

Because they were so sick from the boat.

Wynne Leon (18:00)

no. no.

Natasha (18:04)

And so I don't know how my kids would feel about it, but I'm really

Wynne Leon (18:08)

Mm-hmm.

Natasha (18:08)

glad that we went while we still could. It was really memorable.

Wynne Leon (18:11)

Right. That sounds like a really, really cool adventure

and I have to say that you make a lot of adventures fun. I mean, whether it's camping, which is not a you know, traveling to another country, and it's low cost kind of I I've seen you guys,

surf on cardboard. so there's a lot of

Natasha (18:32)

Yeah? Yeah.

Wynne Leon (18:33)

things or or lighthouse tours. I mean, there's so many things that you suggest that don't cost a lot, which is great, and then so fun to hear about the other adventures that

Natasha (18:44)

You don't have to spend a ton of money to have fun or travel far from home. Yeah. Yeah.

Wynne Leon (18:47)

No, or to have a say yes attitude.

Yeah, yeah. Well thank you so much for talking with us and sharing all your incredible outlook and adventures with us.

Natasha (19:00)

Thanks

for having me, Wynn. It was great chatting with you.

Wynne Leon (19:03)

Thank you for listening to this episode of The Life of Try. If this conversation resonated with you, I recommend listening next to the episode When Your Plans Fall Apart. It's another

exploration of what happens when life takes an unexpected turn and how creativity, humor, and a willingness to pivot can help us keep moving forward.

Until next time, keep saying yes. Keep trying. And remember, the imperfect adventures often become the stories we treasure the most.