



## **294: Standing at the Threshold with Lowland Hum**

I'm Emily P. Freeman, and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 294. I'm an author, a spiritual director, and an occasional workshop leader. I live in the Piedmont of North Carolina with my family. And through my work, I've helped thousands of spiritually thoughtful people overcome decision fatigue so that they can discern their next right thing in faith, work, and life.

You are enjoying this podcast ad free because of the generous support of subscribers to The Soul Minimalist on Substack. You can learn more and subscribe at [emilypfreeman.substack.com](http://emilypfreeman.substack.com), where we'll continue the conversation that we start here about discernment and decision-making for anyone who wants to move beyond the pro con list.

If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place for discerning your next right thing. Sometimes I tell stories from my own life. And other times I invite people on the podcast to tell us stories from theirs.

Today, I'm talking with not one but two guests based on their rural homestead in Charlottesville, Virginia, it's husband and wife duo, Lowland Hum Daniel and Lauren Goans. With the release of their brand new album *From Self With Love*, this seemed like the perfect time to have them on the podcast to talk about some of the key decisions they've made as they've traveled a unique road, quite literally.

For the first few years of their marriage, they spent most of their time on the road touring. Now they're parents of two young children and are discovering new rhythms and ways of creating apart, and together. Their sound is whimsical, earthy, and oh so compelling. I've had this new album on repeat, and it's not the first time I've listened to Lowland Hum.

I've loved their music for years. So, much so that when my family and I were eating in an outside sidewalk restaurant in London back in the summer of 2019, we heard just a few notes of a song playing through the speakers of the restaurant and John and I looked at each other and said, "That's Lowland Hum."

We'd know their sound anywhere. I'm sure you'll love them too. And I'm thrilled to have them on the podcast to share more about some pivotal moments along their way from touring to grief to the logistics of their creative process and how that's all had to shift since becoming parents.

Be sure to stay tuned at the end where we'll play a snippet from one of my favorite songs on the album. I hope you'll listen in.

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Emily P. Freeman:

Daniel and Lauren, welcome to The Next Right Thing.

Daniel Goans:

Thank you so much for having us.

Lauren Goans:

Yeah, thank you.

Emily P. Freeman:

I've already given a brief introduction to you professionally. But I would love it if you could share with us in your words today how you would introduce yourselves and your work to a potentially new audience. What would you like us to know?

Lauren Goans:

We are a duo that is married. We make music. Yeah, it's generally quiet, but sometimes we branch out a little bit. What would you say?

Daniel Goans:

Well, I would say that we are a band that writes all our songs together and we arrange everything together. And we're also married.

Lauren Goans:

We do everything together.

Daniel Goans:

We do everything together basically. And that means there's lots of tension. But when we work through that, beautiful things come out of that. And we're really grateful for the whole process.

Emily P. Freeman:

I hear a common theme of together.

Daniel Goans:

It's true, yes.

Emily P. Freeman:

This feels like a key word in Lowland Hum. And share with us where you're based.

Daniel Goans:

So, we lived just north of Charlottesville, Virginia, and we've been here about eight years. We first lived in downtown Charlottesville, and then about six years ago we moved out to the country kind of north of town. And we have a little studio out here where we're sitting right now.

Emily P. Freeman:

Well, for the listener, I feel like I would be remiss if I didn't say that I have known these two for quite some time. I knew Daniel first. We went to church together when John and I were first married. And actually Daniel, I don't remember how old you were in the year of our Lord 2001.

Daniel Goans:

I would've been 16 years old.

Emily P. Freeman:

So, you were in the youth group, yes?

Daniel Goans:

Yes I was. Yeah, I was in the youth group.

Emily P. Freeman:

You were in the youth group. John was one of the youth pastors. Daniel's dad was our senior pastor at the church. So, John was a coworker with your dad, which is always fun to look back on the days.

Daniel Goans:

Yes. Yeah, I remember...

Emily P. Freeman:

And this is the Rachel I remember was like eighth grade, maybe seventh or eighth grade when we started.

Daniel Goans:

That's right.

Emily P. Freeman:

And this is just a side note, she was a baby. She's like a grown person now with a whole family. But I remember when we first started at that job and we really didn't know anyone, we'd just gotten married. And I was talking with Rachel and she said something, she referred to her dad. And I was like, "Oh, who's your dad?" And she looked at me like I was a foreign creature. She was like, "My dad is Bill Goans and he's going to be the senior pastor."

Lauren Goans:  
That's amazing.

Emily P. Freeman:  
And I was like, "I'm the worst. I can't believe I didn't know that." It was just, I was brand new. So, hi Rachel, I do apologize for sharing that story. She was adorable.

Lauren Goans:  
So, adorable.

Emily P. Freeman:  
But she was like so all about her dad.

Daniel Goans:  
Rach has always had some sass and loyalty.

Lauren Goans:  
Loyalty is a high value.

Daniel Goans:  
She's a wonderful person. I love her so much.

Emily P. Freeman:  
She is. She's a delight.

Daniel Goans:  
I always tell people actually about Rachel, I'll say this on here because I think it's fun. So, I'm the entertainer in our family, but Rachel is the funniest one. People think I'm funny because I do public things and I am somewhat funny sometimes, but Rachel is extremely funny.

Lauren Goans:  
Almost all the time.

Daniel Goans:  
Yeah, many, many moments of each day.

Emily P. Freeman:  
I could see this.

Daniel Goans:  
It's a beautiful thing.

Emily P. Freeman:

I could totally see this. People don't know it about her because maybe she's just not in the spotlight as much as you are these days.

Lauren Goans:

But she should be.

Daniel Goans:

That's right. That's kind of what I tell people. If you're laughing now, just imagine if my sister was here you'd really be laughing.

Lauren Goans:

Yeah, today's the day. We are doing it for her.

Daniel Goans:

That's right. Thrusting her into the spotlight.

Emily P. Freeman:

Oh, that's good. Well, Daniel is not the only one I knew. So, Lauren and I met several years later.

Lauren Goans:

Yeah.

Emily P. Freeman:

So, I knew Daniel first, but Lauren and I met in our mutual friend Kendra Adachi, y'all, it all connects, The Lazy Genius. Kendra Adachi's house we shared a love for so you think you can dance.

Lauren Goans:

That's right.

Emily P. Freeman:

And we attended watch parties together.

Lauren Goans:

Yes.

Emily P. Freeman:

Am I sharing things you'd rather people not know about you, Lauren?

Lauren Goans:

No, this is great. We made t-shirts one year. I mean, I don't know if you remember that or if you were there that time.

Emily P. Freeman:

Oh, do I remember that?

Lauren Goans:

Iron on letters.

Emily P. Freeman:

You know why we made those t-shirts was because we went to the live tour.

Lauren Goans:

I know. It's all coming out now.

Emily P. Freeman:

I wish so badly I still had that t-shirt. I don't think. But wouldn't that be something?

Lauren Goans:

Yes, mine's in a goodwill somewhere or in someone's closet now. It wasn't even a direct quote from anything what my shirt said. It was like something about Baby Fox's...

Emily P. Freeman:

It was so random, all of it. The whole thing, looking back, it's like, wow, that was a time. We shared some time. So, we go way back.

Lauren Goans:

That's right.

Daniel Goans:

That's amazing.

Emily P. Freeman:

Into our histories. And we accepted all. We embraced all of ourselves.

Lauren Goans:

Yes, that's right.

Daniel Goans:

Yes. That's what I was going to say. I'm glad this is where we're starting because you have to square with all this stuff and it's all present whether you acknowledge it or not.

Lauren Goans:

I know.

Daniel Goans:

So, it's good to go there.

Emily P. Freeman:

It's good to go there. Well said Daniel. Well, listeners come to the next right thing for help in decision-making. And when they feel stuck, overwhelmed, or often are just standing on a threshold of change, sometimes people who consider themselves to be extremely decisive, find a bout of decision fatigue hitting them when they're standing in that threshold of something's going to change, something's going to be different.

And so, as a duo, the pair of you have seen your fair share of threshold moments. And I know, Daniel, before you met Lauren, you were creating music on your own and then Lauren came along. So, I'm curious about those early days of making music together. Was there a moment or maybe a series of moments where you, Daniel had to make a decision to include her or not?

Daniel Goans:

Yes, this is...

Emily P. Freeman:

Or was it just more organic than that?

Daniel Goans:

No, this is an amazing question. And I think you offering people help and decision-making is an incredibly beautiful and important thing. And I thank you for doing all that you've done for many years to do that. Decision fatigue, it's such an everyday struggle for so many of us. And especially if you're working on something that you're giving shape to. If you're giving shape and structure to your own days, it can be extremely overwhelming. And it is for us oftentimes. So, early on, Lauren's background is visual art. So, I really liked all the visual art that I had seen of hers.

So, I asked her originally to do the album cover for a solo album I was working on. And then eventually I heard her singing. I just heard her singing along to a song at a party and I was like, "Whoa." Because she was writing a harmony on the spot to the song that was on.

And it was so good that I actually thought it was on the recording. But then I turned around and it was someone singing it. I didn't even know her. So, then I was like, "Hey..."

Lauren Goans:

So, that happened before you asked me.

Daniel Goans:

Yeah, so that happened before the art thing.

Lauren Goans:  
Backtrack.

Daniel Goans:  
Sorry. That happened before the art thing, this party experience. But then I saw her artwork and I was like, "Oh, could you design something for this album I'm working on?" And then I asked her to sing on a song.  
And it went so well that I asked her to sing on the second song and then a third song and a fourth song. But see, we're not even to the decision moment yet. About six months after that, I was writing a song, I was starting to write a song and I get into a kind of weird...

Lauren Goans:  
Hold on, fill in the background. We had become very seriously intertwined romantically.

Daniel Goans:  
That's true.

Lauren Goans:  
I don't think we were married yet. We might've been engaged.

Daniel Goans:  
We were, yeah.

Lauren Goans:  
Well, were we?

Daniel Goans:  
It's okay either way.

Lauren Goans:  
It doesn't matter really. But we were very serious about each other at this moment.  
Continue.

Daniel Goans:  
Yes, so when I write songs, especially in the early days, I would kind of get in this weird zone and sort of go off by myself for a while and then come back with something or the beginning of something. And Lauren sort of saw me starting to do that and she was like, "Can I stay?"

Lauren Goans:  
I said, "Can I stay in the room?"

Daniel Goans:  
And inside of myself, I was like, I was kind of freaked out. Because we were really serious about each other, but...



Lauren Goans:

I think we were married because this was in our house. I remember the room.

Daniel Goans:

Yeah, but I moved in early and we might've been engaged. We were either engaged or married.

Lauren Goans:

It doesn't matter.

Daniel Goans:

Lauren is big on...

Emily P. Freeman:

You were very close.

Daniel Goans:

Yes. Lauren is big on the full truth, the whole truth.

Lauren Goans:

Precision.

Emily P. Freeman:

I appreciate it. I really do. Because I'm that way too.

Daniel Goans:

I am a storyteller. So, my goal is just that you would experience something related to what I experienced more than you would know exactly what happened.

Lauren Goans:

The facts.

Daniel Goans:

We balance each other out. It's good.

Lauren Goans:

Keep going. Sorry.

Daniel Goans:

So, what I was thinking was, okay, we're very seriously intertwined already. We're either about to be married or we're married. If I say yes, you can stay, and then I don't like your instincts in the song, I will have to say something very strange like, "Your idea is awesome. And I think it might just be for a different song."

Daniel Goans:

Or I just didn't know what I would do. And being a very hospitable southern pastor's kid, I was like, "How do I love this person that I do love, but in this moment, what do I do?" So, it was a big risk and I could feel the risk. But then I said, "You can stay."

And what was beautiful about it is that kind of from that moment on, there is tension involved in collaborating always because it's very personal and you can get your feelings hurt very easily. And in visual art, critique is a big part of your education.

So, Lauren had more experience in directly being critiqued in something she's making. Whereas for me, I would've put pillows around the room, if you know what I mean. I would've saw what...

Lauren Goans:

What he's trying to say is I was not very tactful when I would apply an editor's brain to something that Daniel was working on.

Daniel Goans:

But what I wanted to say about taking the risk, what we learned is that very early on we could each throw out ideas and we would both almost every time agree on what was the best thing for the song. So, it became our...

Lauren Goans:

And we both generally liked each other's instincts.

Daniel Goans:

That's true.

Lauren Goans:

Which was very helpful. If that weren't the case, it would be extremely painful and uncomfortable probably.

Daniel Goans:

I think without that, the band wouldn't exist. But I think that's where the band was born was that moment where she put herself out there. And then I was kind of like, "Yes, you can stay." And that's when that very song, that first song we wrote together, we both kind of realized, oh, this isn't Daniel's music anymore.

This is a different thing. And what is it? And we began the journey to kind of figure out our sound and our band. But that was a huge turning point. And we had written down some turning points leading up to this conversation and that wasn't on the list. So, I'm glad you went all the way back there.

Lauren Goans:

Yeah, to the beginning.

Emily P. Freeman:

What was that song you wrote together, the very first one?

Daniel Goans:

It's called Pocketknife. That's what we wrote together from the beginning. Yeah, the first one.

Lauren Goans:

Yeah, that's the first one we wrote together from the beginning.

Emily P. Freeman:

I have two follow-up questions to that story, Daniel or Lauren. And that is number one, Daniel, are you telling me that you heard Lauren's singing voice before you heard her speaking voice?

Daniel Goans:

I think I did. Because here's what happened. A friend of mine was going to a party that that was happening at her apartment. I had just moved back to Greensboro and I was like, "Hey, what are you doing tonight?" And he's like, "I'm going to this thing."

And I was like, "Cool, am I going?" So, I just invited myself to this party with him and then I went. And I was just standing by the speakers. Because what I do at parties is I try to stay near the speakers and not say too much when I don't know anybody because I'm just an open book.

So, I have no idea what I might say. So, I was just near the music. I was just listening to music, enjoying that. And then I heard this harmony on the song. I knew the song, but there isn't a harmony on the version I knew. So, I was looking around like a regular music nerd.

I was like, "What version of the song is this?" And then I was like, "Oh, that's a person singing right here." And our memory differs about what I first said. I thought I said, "Hi, I'm Daniel, you have a lovely singing voice." Something like that.

But Lauren remembers me just saying, "You should sing with me." Without any introduction at all. So, I don't know. They're probably both true or mainly hers.

Emily P. Freeman:

So, my second follow-up question was, would you say then, Daniel, that because you said after we recorded that first song, that's when you began to figure out, okay, we are a thing together now and we're moving forward. I mean, you were a solo artist. So, was this a moment and we're two now?

Or was there a gradual grief of letting go what you might thought your future was going to look like musically? Or how did that all play out for you?

Daniel Goans:

Honestly, that's a great question and no one's ever asked me that. It all feels very connected. And some people will ask us, "How can you collaborate on everything in your entire

marriage? That seems so insane and a terrible idea or great, but probably really hard."

And the truth is we don't know anything else. And it's kind of similar. What was happening was we were merging our lives together. And at the same time, basically our goal in the early days, and still is, to make music that we both feel at home in, that we both can say and mean all the way.

And so, a lot of times a line will be great, but we can't both mean it. So, it gets cut. So, it's just different. It felt like a discovery process. And looking back, I realized that I was going in a very different direction in my solo music.

It was much more like an English major who is more focused on the words and less focused on melody, who's not singing as precisely. Who's kind of throwing stuff out there, throwing a lot of stuff at the wall. And it was much more linear too and sort of narrative.

And then Lauren brought this whole more imagistic, more immersive and much more precise and distilled kind of presence to the whole thing. And to me it was exciting because she has such precision in her voice, it really pushed me to be much more specific. And also in the early days we had all these people playing with us.

Our big sort of launch show, there were 13 musicians playing with us. So, it was this sort of huge sound. And then when we started to tour, we couldn't afford that. So, we just were touring with two people. So, we were trying to figure out how do we create the dynamics of that big band with only two people?

And all of those challenges seem very connected with us figuring out who we were together. And so, it was honestly a really exciting time. And I do remember tensions, but there was just a lot of discovery. And to me as an artist, I felt like I'm in a totally new place and we're going somewhere that I don't know about. And I think...

Emily P. Freeman:

I want to go back and ask, did you grieve that though, the pivot or the loss of the Daniel path, solo Daniel path?

Daniel Goans:

And I'll usually just tell you, but there are moments where I have felt like, "Oh, I miss setting out to write a kind of mythic song with a ton of lyrics and so many images it's kind of overwhelming." Sometimes I miss that. So, a lot of people think that this kind of thing would be a big compromise and would be diminishing to that part of me or something.

But I think that it is much more complicated than that. I think there's more present in the collaboration, not less. So, I think the musical term is augmentation. So, if you play two notes at the same time, there's more of each of those notes present, which is hard to understand, but it's true.

So, if you play a C and then an E and then a G, that's a C major chord. And each note by themselves sounds beautiful. But when you play them together, you hear more about each of the notes. This is kind of a borrowed image from Jeremy Begbie who's a guy at Duke.

But to me the experience was much more like that. And there were certain melancholy moments. There was a lot more twang in my music before. Which is weird to me because I don't think of myself as a real twang guy. But when I listened back I'm like, "Whoa, it's..."

Lauren Goans:  
Or when I get your voicemail.

Daniel Goans:  
Oh, my old voicemail.

Lauren Goans:  
Like, "Hey, this is Daniel." You haven't changed it since 2012.

Daniel Goans:  
Yeah, that's true.

Daniel Goans:  
So, there was something different. Sitting on front porches, there was something much more like North Carolina folk about the thing before we started working together. But I've always seen it as a kind of growth and something unique. That I think what I was doing before, there was uniqueness in there, but I think it was also... Honestly to me, the first hundred songs I wrote were kind of like bad Bob Dylan songs. I was just sort of aping all these people I really respect. And you got to write that stuff out of your system. And it takes some people longer. I think I'm one of the people that took longer to get through just kind of doing lesser versions of my heroes kind of thing.

Emily P. Freeman:  
Lauren, what about for you? Because this was not in your life plan originally, I don't think.

Lauren Goans:  
Right.

Emily P. Freeman:  
Because you were just singing at a party. You're having a good time.

Lauren Goans:  
Yeah, I was a shower, closet, car singer. I wasn't trying to sing in front of people. I love singing more than anything and music and did chorus in high school and middle school. And that was a safe way to explore my voice where I was hidden by literally tons of other people. For me, it felt really exciting and a little bit scary, but mostly really exciting. A good mutual friend of ours before we got married, she was like, "You just need to know that Daniel has to do music he's made to do music. So, either make space for that. You need to find a way to make space for that." And I really thought I wanted Daniel to do music. I wasn't really

thinking, I'll just join him. That's how we'll make space for that. I just thought like, "Sure, of course I want him to do music forever, as long as he wants." And I appreciated her warning me. Because I think that compatibility piece is really important. Doesn't get talked about much when people are getting to know each other, but the thing you're passionate about, it's ideal if there's space for that in your combined life. And that doesn't always work out that way.

But yeah, so when she said that, I wasn't thinking, "Yeah, I'll just start making music too." But it really felt like a natural progression to me. Although scary, I was very shy. And I think that I'd believed a lie that I didn't have anything to say.

So, when it came time to write songs, I was kind of like, "What am I even going to talk about? I don't know. I'm empty inside is what I kind of felt like." But Daniel really believed in me. And I think he saw things in me that I didn't see in myself, which I'm eternally grateful for and made space for me.

It's so brave. It's like, oh yeah, a person who's never written a song ever? Sure, throw in some ideas on my song when I've been writing for years. That's really generous and really vulnerable. So, I was very grateful.

Emily P. Freeman:

You've both put language to what it looks like to live in a next right thing kind of way. Because what you've said is there wasn't a 10-year plan, there wasn't a five-step process, there was just an organic connection and a, well, this seems right for now, let's try that. And now you can look back and put the story together.

But we don't know that ahead of time, which is what we always want. It's like, but what's the plan and how's this going to work? And are we going to be okay? Which is always the question we're asking. And so, thank you for sharing that kind of grassrootsy beginning story of how it all started.

Because you probably didn't imagine it would look exactly like this. You couldn't have moving forward. Now you just released your eighth album. But I'm curious, you spent the first part of your marriage traveling, touring, creating music together, which I know had its own set of unique challenges these days.

The way you approach and create your work has had to change since having children. And, Lauren, you've said, and I love this quote, "Early motherhood has been a challenging war of interest." I think so many of us can relate with that and I'd love for you to tell us more. What is that challenge and how are you navigating it as a mother and as a creative?

Lauren Goans:

Well, I'm navigating it to varying degrees of success and failure every single day. But I think I really love my children like any parent does. And I love being with them and I love seeing them grow and I love being a part of their growth and kind of just curating their little world and sharing things with them.

So, there's a part of me that loves that enough to just do that. And then there's a part of me that feels like I really become more of who I am when I'm making music and creating. And especially I think we've realized since creating together has become more scarce, that

creating together is a big part of our relationship. Daniel's and my marriage and our connection is really blessed by creating together and collaborating. So, it's been kind of a war of how to balance those two things. I think in the beginning we were trying to go full on both things at the same time, which is kind of impossible.

Especially when you don't have childcare, which we didn't for a very long time. And we don't right now either really. We have a babysitter right now who's at our house making this possible. But yeah, that feeling of if I'm with my kids, I'm not doing that other thing.

Or other things that I need to do, just basic things, preparing food or cleaning something. And then if I'm doing those other things, I'm not with my kids. It's very challenging. So, I think right now the way we're navigating it is I have taken a little bit of a step back from some of the Lowland Hum stuff I used to do, some of the more admin stuff.

And Daniel has taken over a lot for us in the work of Lowland Hum, the behind the scenes work. We're still making music, but we just have to take turns. It's like we're just swapping back and forth. Daniel will watch the kids while I go listen to what he did, maybe write down some thoughts or make some tweaks and record a vocal or something.

Then I'll go back to the kids and he'll kind of kind of work on that stuff that I just did. We definitely haven't found our way forward yet, I wouldn't say. But I'm trying to appreciate what our therapist told me, which is that motherhood and keeping a home are things that you learn over time.

You don't just suddenly know how to do them just because you have homemaking instincts or enjoyment of your children. It takes time to find your systems and the ways that you work and the things that work for your family. So, I think I'm trying to be more gracious with myself as we just find our way forward.

Daniel Goans:

I think here's a big thing we've been talking about a lot, and we wrote this down to mention today because I just love how clarifying even the name of this podcast is. The Next Right Thing. All of us have so little control over what happens in our life.

And so, we can look at what's available and we can choose sort of in a moment by moment way, a way forward that we think with the knowledge that we have in that one moment, which is also very limited. Which we make a choice that we think this could lead to flourishing for the family or for our community or for our friendships or for ourselves or whatever.

And I think for us, when we first had kids, we thought, "Okay, let's adjust to this new person and then let's just return to the old way of working." Because that's the only way we know how to do this job, and that's the only way we know how to create records and do all this stuff.

And I thought that with our first kid, "Okay, we'll kind of assimilate this child into what exists. And then kind of get back to the thing." What would've helped me I think is if someone sort of very straightforwardly said, "That old thing does not exist at all now and you're going to make up a whole new thing."

"It'll change everything about your process and about the way your days are structured and the way your mind even works." Because another eternal soul is a part of the negotiation

every day. And then when our second child came, then we knew that there was no way back to the old operating system.

Lauren Goans:

It helped us realize, oh yeah, that is definitely not something we're returning to.

Daniel Goans:

I mean, to be totally frank, we went to therapy and said, "Hey, what are we supposed to do? We collaborate on everything in real time and now we can't do anything. Because one of us at least has to be focused on these two other little people that are primarily made up of need at this time."

So, it was wonderful. The therapist's like, "Have you ever heard of divide and conquer?" And we kind of started laughing, but we were like, "No, tell us about that." But yeah, what we've learned in this new record that's just come out, this record was us finding a new way.

And it was passing the kids back and forth. I remember literally having an idea laying it down and then running up to the house, grabbing the baby and said, "Go check that out." And then Lauren ran out here. The studio's about 400 feet behind the house.

So, we would sometimes pass the baby halfway between the house and the studio and switch. And then there was a kind of excitement. Because usually we discover things at the same time. Someone has an idea and the other person's there and hears it.

In this case, it's someone finds something and then runs to tell the person, the other person comes and discovers it, then changes it and back and forth and back and forth. So, the new album, you can even hear the way we laid out the song order. We tried to have it be more conversational and there be a kind of back and forth.

And we do sing of course together on every song, and we do write every song together. But they usually start from one perspective or the other, and then we kind of pass the songs back and forth. And I think we're just learning a totally new way and we're trusting that again, this newness will be an augmentation, not a diminishment of what once existed.

And I think a lot of the questions we're asking on the new album are identity questions. If we are at a point in our life where all these things change and the way we do everything changes, how much of us makes it through that?

How much of our core identity is even still there on the other side of these huge life changes and all these tiny decisions that, I don't know, that you are helping all of us make, Emily, with this podcast? All those small decisions make up, they're each adjust our path a little bit. And so, each little decision does really affect the 10-year plan or the five-year plan.

But to think that way sometimes isn't helpful. And you do have to get back to that moment by moment, doing the best you can with the information and energy and time that you have.

Lauren Goans:

I think another thing I would add is just I think we've given ourselves freedom to reevaluate things that we thought would always be a part of our lives, like touring or a certain intensity that we applied to gardening, those things. We've just allowed ourselves to reexamine. And even the things that we thought are non-negotiables.



Lauren Goans:

We did one tour when our first kid was one year old. And we just realized that is not something we can do right now with very tiny people. I know some people can do it. But really accepting, not just saying, "Oh no, we're musicians, we have to tour. That's how it works."

But just saying, "Actually we can't do that." A big thing we both learned was like, well, if my spouse can't do something, I think that means we can't do that thing. It doesn't mean the other person just picks it up and drags it into existence because that's just what we have to do.

Someone has to do it. But certain things like touring, we realized we had plans to tour with this album and we started getting really excited about how we would do that. And a couple weeks into that planning, I realized, I don't think I can do this.

I am still recovering from childbirth and having some postpartum depression, anxiety symptoms that had not alleviated yet. And just felt like being able to say, "I don't think I can do this." And for Daniel to say, "Okay, I think that means we can't do this." And that is okay.

I think being open to shaving off the things that maybe you thought you could do or had to do, but you can let those go for a time. And in the same way that when we started touring in the very beginning, I decided to quit my coffee shop job. And we were like, "I think we'd make more money if we actually toured more and you didn't work at the coffee shop five days a week or whatever."

And I think our mentality was we can always change it. We can always get different jobs. If it doesn't work, let's just try it for a month and see what happens. And I think with this, we've been like each change we've had to make, we've kind of said, well, we'll see how this goes for a while.

We are not committing to this forever. This is what we're doing right now. And we'll see how it goes. I think we do really want there to be a plan, like a 10 step plan that forever charges into eternity in front of us and we know all the things that are coming. And a lot more of life is more like taking a step and seeing what unfolds there and then making the next decision there from that vantage point.

Emily P. Freeman:

From *Self With Love* is your eighth album. And you made this one in the midst of a time of great difficulty. Sometimes grief shuts us down and makes it difficult for us to create. And for you, it seems to have done the opposite.

I'm curious if you could share a little bit about just the making and writing of this album. In the midst of a lot of hard times.

Lauren Goans:

Yeah, we were caring for our friend and mentor who was dying, and we didn't know he was dying at the time. When we started caring for him, we thought we were just helping him through a rough patch of health problems. And it was a big turning point for us then too because we just decided kind of without warning just went dark for months it felt like.

And we didn't even post anything about what was going on. We just had to get right into the mess of things. And it felt like one of those moments in your life where you're like, all that

stuff can wait. This thing is more important. And just survival with our family, making sure our one-year-old at the time was well and okay.

And yeah, I would say in the moment of all of that, we did not feel like creating. And it was a big chunk of a year that we just were focused on our friend. And then after his passing, focused on handling his affairs and kind of getting things squared away there.

But there were these moments in between. I do recall recording a little bit. We'd have a day or an afternoon where for some reason we weren't at the facility where he was. I'm not sure what allowed that, but there were some moments where we were recording and working on things in very tiny slices.

Daniel Goans:

I think honestly we were feeling ourselves be transformed by the transition into being parents. And then this whole thing with our friend happening, it brought all this stuff to the surface. And as you referred to, the first eight years of our marriage, we were touring between six and one year we toured 11 months of the year.

And so, it was almost like all of those years were kind of like we were grounded by COVID as everyone was. And then we had a kid and then that's being grounded in a whole different way. And when I say grounded, I guess, I mean all of our focus had to go. It wasn't focused outward. There weren't these big plans and all these travels and all these logistics and meetings and...

Lauren Goans:

Things to kind of distracting.

Daniel Goans:

It all went kind of internal or sort of small, just our little place out here in the woods and our little baby screaming because he was colicky for six months. So, all of that stuff sort of focused us down in a way. And then all these things were surfacing.

And I think what happened whenever there were spaces, it was like these songs were kind of just burst out. And because of the piecemeal new form of working, it'd be like, I know this isn't always the case for people, but for us, parenthood has really focused our minds in certain ways. Let's say we used to write for four hour periods of time.

Now maybe we each get 30 minutes or something. So, then in that 30 minutes, it's like your mind's like, "Now, now, now." And that doesn't always happen. Lauren was reminding me that that's not always the case. Sometimes we take that time and we're like, "Oh, nothing came."

But I guess I think what happened is all of that stuff that was surfacing and us kind of realizing we kind of don't know the way forward. And we don't really know what of us has made it through all these hard times and what of us is gone. And maybe some of the stuff that is gone needed to go.

And then maybe some of it we want to reach back and see if we can breathe life back into that in some way. And so, I think the album is really, it was kind of us grappling with all of this stuff and all the changes and all that we had lost, including our friend and then things

we had gained, perspective. And I don't know.

I think we were really changed. We've been very changed by the last two years. And trying to accept parts of that and grieve other parts of that. And it's weird because I think we've written about four albums about human frailty.

But we just can't seem to fully understand how frail we really are, how limited human beings are in perspective and in experience and I don't know, in control, as I mentioned. We just don't have control. And we can't do most things that we want to do in a certain way. And that is frustrating.

Lauren Goans:

Also, it might just be an adulthood thing. The longer you live, the more hard things you encounter. But I feel like the more we're forced to face our limitations and our frailty, because we just keep going down that road when we write songs. But I do remember it was kind of more organic in the season of caring for our friend.

Sometimes Daniel would just make up songs on the spot to entertain our baby, just set them on the bed and play some songs for him. And you kind of sing-song whatever you were feeling or thinking. And sometimes it was silly and sometimes it was really serious.

And sometimes he would record them on his phone just for fun. Two songs on the album came from that kind of you could call it writing and it is writing. It's like stream of conscious writing that Daniel has this amazing knack for.

But just those kinds of things were folded into our days. And so, in that way things were coming to the surface and being written in a less focused way. But some of that made it through onto the album too.

Emily P. Freeman:

And as someone who's listened to the album many times now, thank you for the early copy. It really does read or it listens like a conversation with the self and a reflection of who you are and who you are becoming. I think specifically of track seven, feeling like myself again, you share how the self is always changing.

And I'm curious as we begin to wrap up our conversation, which I'm so sad because I could talk forever about it. I'm curious to hear from you, what are the gifts of that reality that the self is always changing? And then what are some of the fears?

Lauren Goans:

That's a great question.

Daniel Goans:

Yeah, that is a great question. One of the gifts is that you see other people not as static more when you realize, "Oh, I seem to be totally different than I was two years ago." And so, it allows you to kind of enter conversations and friendships and any relationship with a kind of excitement. Daniel Goans:

It's not always a simple excitement. But I guess I mean kind of this feeling of expectation or anticipation. I don't know what's about to happen. I don't know what this hang is about to be like.

Anything could happen and probably we'll both be changed by it.

Daniel Goans:

And what's possible in our minds will be different than what was possible before I spent time with this person. And so, hopefully it leads to more wonder and more curiosity. I think that is a potential gift of it. I think a challenge of it is feeling disoriented, and feeling for me, kind of adrift.

Lauren Goans:

I think for me it's kind of answers both of those questions. What is some of the gift of that, and then what are you afraid of? I think in this season I've discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was and I'm weaker than I thought I was. So, I'm like both.

Or I'll look back and think, "Wow, we got through that." I don't know how we did, but we did. And I think I'm capable of more than I thought. And that seems to be growing over the years. And then there'll be a moment with our children where I get frustrated and feel like, "Oh, I wish I didn't react that way to whatever they were doing."

It's high highs and low lows. Yeah, what you said, Daniel, about kind of the way it can help you see the fluidity for every person around you, how we are all changing all the time. It can help us not close down our view of someone in our mind or heart. And that is helpful.

Even on a toddler level, our child is very vocal and sometimes he'll say, "I don't like so-and-so." And I'm like, "Yeah, he did push you last time you saw him, but he's changing all the time just like you are. So, next time you see him, he might be very different. So, let's be open to that."

And also I'll try to make sure he doesn't push you if you see him again. But I mean, seeing it in our children, how quickly they're changing, it is rapid. And everyone always says that the time flies by, blah, blah, blah. But it is really true how quickly they change.

And I think we maybe don't see it as much in ourselves. But I think we are changing maybe almost as rapidly if we're being open to what's happening around us. And then if we're not being open to that, then maybe we're changing in a hardening way. That's still a change, just not maybe in the way you want to go.

Emily P. Freeman:

Yeah. Before I ask you one final question, I do want to just see and hear from you. How can listeners first of all find *From Self With Love*, the brand new album? And also what's the best way to support you and this new music?

Daniel Goans:

Thank you so much for asking that. So, you can hear *From Self with Love* anywhere that you listen to music now. If you like physical copies, you can go to [lowlandhum.com](http://lowlandhum.com) and you can get it on vinyl. We did a limited run of vinyl. The best way to support us is to join our Patreon community, which is just [patreon.com/lowlandhum](http://patreon.com/lowlandhum).

And there's various things you can check out there, but it can be as cheap as \$3 a month. One thing I also want to mention is just that whenever we do a conversation like this,

afterward, I'm left thinking, I wish I could ask all these questions to Emily and just be quiet for a long time.

Emily P. Freeman:

I know. I was thinking the same thing.

Daniel Goans:

But fortunately I can go back and listen to a lot of your podcasts. But I just want you to know that that's often what we talk about after we have a conversation like this is we're grateful for the opportunity to get to share. But we admire you and would love to just ask you all these questions and just listen for an hour.

And maybe someday we'll get to do that. But I thank you for asking such good questions and listening and witnessing all these things we're saying. We appreciate it very much.

Emily P. Freeman:

Well, we are big fans of yours here in the Freeman House. And I'll also just say fun fact that our twins who are sophomores in college, listen, because you remembered when they were really little.

Daniel Goans:

Yes.

Emily P. Freeman:

They didn't know that we knew you guys and were fans apart from knowing. And so, when I mentioned to Stella that I was going to have you guys on the podcast, I thought she was going to die. But she's a big fan.

Daniel Goans:

Oh, that's awesome.

Emily P. Freeman:

And so, am I. We all are. I hope you never stop writing about human frailty because we need the language that your soul speaks. So, thank you for putting to words and music all of the ways in which you see the world. Because we are definitely recipients of that gift and we want more and more of it.

Final question for both of you if you could answer. And you can answer together or individually, individually might be more fun. Lauren and Daniel, what is your next right thing?

Daniel Goans:

Well, I think my next right thing is to make us eat a cup of tea and to sit presently with the family for a little bit before I jump into this mammoth list. I always have a mammoth list in my mind of what I'm hoping I'll be able to use the day to do to pull off. And so, what I'm

feeling in this moment is pause before that.

Lauren Goans:

I think my next right thing will be to drink the cup of tea that Daniel makes. I have a very short list of things to do, but I think I'll try to balance those things with being with our children and caring for them. We all have colds right now, so try to help them feel comfortable.

Daniel Goans:

And Emily, what is your...

Lauren Goans:

Yeah, can we ask you that?

Daniel Goans:

What is your next right thing? Can we do that? Is that allowed?

Emily P. Freeman:

Well, technically my next right thing is to make sure all of this is recorded properly if you want to know the truth. But yeah, it's funny when you both shared your two kind of opposite. Daniel has a mammoth list and Lauren has a smaller list.

I'm like, "I'm probably in this case more of a Daniel than a Lauren." Lauren, as I hear you share a smaller list, I'm like, "My next right thing is to make smaller and shorter lists." I do think I expect too much from the day sometimes.

And maybe an invitation to stillness in the moments that we can get. I think that's my next right thing today is similar to as you drink your tea, maybe I'll drink mine.

Daniel Goans:

Wonderful.

Lauren Goans:

I love it.

Emily P. Freeman:

Thank you both for being here. Congratulations on the release of this beautiful new album, your eighth. Which by the way, if you are new to Lowland Hum, y'all go back in the archives and listen to their other music. You will not be disappointed. Thank you both for being here. And we are always going to be rooting for you.

Lauren Goans:

Oh, thank you so much.

Daniel Goans:

Oh, thank you so much for having us.

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Thanks for listening to episode 294 of The Next Right Thing. You're listening to one of my favorite songs on the album, track two titled Sandrine. Which they describe as a characterization of those traits and instincts that we hope have not been permanently damaged by the disillusionment, difficulty and exhaustion of recent years.

They say they write about human frailty and they're not wrong. Sandrine they say is a love letter of sorts to aspects of our former selves and our desire to have them stick around. If you find yourself standing on the edge of grief, change, or something new, I hope this conversation with Daniel and Lauren has been an encouraging one for you.

And I hope you'll check out their brand new album From Self With Love. You can find out more about Daniel and Lauren at [lowlandhum.com](http://lowlandhum.com). That's L-O-W-L-A-N-D H-U-M dot com. You can also find them on Instagram at Lowland Hum. Or if you want to go all in and support them on Patreon, you can find them there at [patreon.com/lowlandhum](http://patreon.com/lowlandhum).

As always, you can find me at [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com) or on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman. Thanks to our subscribers at the Soul Minimalist on Substack who make it possible to offer these episodes ad free. And a special shout out to our founding members who make it possible for us to offer scholarships to anyone who can't afford the \$5 a month subscription. Our Soul Minimalist highlight of the week is from Lori who says, "I'm subscribing because your work has had an effect on the way I live. I'm attracted to the quiet stillness of your writing and speaking. Looking forward to hearing and reading more of your work and being part of the Soul Minimalist."

Thanks, Lori. And thanks to you for listening and for being part of The Next right Thing community here. A big thanks also to Ashley Sherlock, who does our tech and show notes, and to the team at Unmutable who faithfully edits our sound Especially this week when I probably sent them over six different wave files to pull together to make one seamless episode for your listening pleasure.

In closing, a few words directly from Lowland Hum that they use to describe their song, Feeling Like Myself Again, where they say this, "The self is always changing. We've learned it more than ever in these not so distant waves of pandemic isolation, early parenthood, death, grief, and new life. In some ways, we feel as though we are uncovering our new selves more each day. Growing in some ways, regressing in others, but the essence is still there. And we cherish the moments when we sense it has prevailed."

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.