

## ARISE Podcast 090 - **UNIQUE Magazine Artist Pursues Her Dream**

Host: Tania Anderson, CEO ARISE

Guest: Jessica Meicht, Poet, UNIQUE Art & Literary Magazine

Tania Anderson

Welcome to the ARISE Podcast. I'm Tania Anderson, CEO of ARISE. And it's my pleasure to have with me today, Jessica Meicht, who is one of our artists in our UNIQUE Art and Literary Magazine. Jessica has contributed poems for quite a few of our issues. So, welcome Jessica.

Jessica Meicht

Hello.

Tania Anderson

So, as I said, we at ARISE publish every year a magazine called UNIQUE Art and Literary Magazine, and you have been in the magazine for how many years now?

Jessica Meicht

This year will be the eighth year

Tania Anderson

And what is the kind of work that you contribute?

Jessica Meicht

Poetry.

Tania Anderson

And I've read all of your poems. They're fabulous!

Jessica Meicht

I'm flattered.

Tania Anderson

Thank you. And I think there's a certain theme in your work, but what would you say is the theme in your body of work?

Jessica Meicht

Definitely, mental health. Mental health and mood all the way through evenly. They're about how I handle being borderline personality disorder, bipolar, and my ups and downs and my depression and manic states. It kind of showcases the important things in my life like my family, my wife, my child, stuff like that.

Tania Anderson

Wow. And I can definitely see a through line, so you identify as someone who has a mental health diagnosis.

Jessica Meicht

Yes.

Tania Anderson

And you're also a client at our clinic at here at ARISE?

Jessica Meicht

Yep, for almost 15 years.

Tania Anderson

So how did you first connect with ARISE's mental health clinic?

Jessica Meicht

I had a bad experience and someone I don't really remember who it was. But someone told me about ARISE and I just by offhand called, because I was calling around to all the doctors around here, to find a psychiatrist ...

Tania Anderson

Right.

Jessica Meicht

And, I got it really quick back then. And they hooked me up with a really nice clinician. She was awesome. She was personable, she made me feel comfortable. I was with her for a long time, and I shouldn't have been there so long. I found out later you're only supposed to do it for three years or so.

Tania Anderson

You were attached.

Jessica Meicht

Yes. And I think she might have been attached to me too, because when we left, we both cried. When we separated, we both cried. But I've had great clinicians since then too like I haven't had a bad experience.

Tania Anderson

Wonderful. I'm so glad to hear that because it's some it's really important that you have a good relationship with your therapist.

Jessica Meicht

Oh, yes, I believe that.

Tania Anderson

Absolutely. And so, at some point along the way you learned about UNIQUE How did that happen?

Jessica Meicht 2:54

One of my counselors mentioned it to me and it wasn't until a year later. That I decided to put in a piece, and I was back then you had to bring it in. You could just email it to the email, you know what I mean? So, I brought in my permission slip and all that, saying that they could sell it or whatever. And then when I got my email I was flabbergasted. It was like...

Tania Anderson

That you were published you mean.

Jessica Meicht

That I was being published. Yeah, my email say I was being going to be published was it was life changing. And then later on, I was asked to do a speech at that opening,

Tania Anderson

Right! So that's the opening reception we have at the Everson.

Jessica Meicht

Yeah. So, it was crazy, exciting and nerve wracking. It was so nerve wracking,

Tania Anderson

But you did it.

Jessica Meicht

Yes, I did. And I mentioned it in my book that I'm writing, but someone asked the ARISE the UNIQUE opening told me that it's not about having butterflies in your stomach when you do public speaking. It's more about getting those butterflies to fly in formation.

Tania Anderson

That's a nice metaphor. I've heard that one before.

Jessica Meicht

I had never heard of it. And it changed everything the way I feel about that I still get really nervous and sometimes I shed some tears just to get the jitters out.

Tania Anderson

That's okay. We all get so you just shared a lot, and I want to make sure that I follow up so when you first submitted a piece to UNIQUE you had been writing poetry before that?

Jessica Meicht

Oh yes. I have poems like four-line three word four line poems that I wrote when I was seven years old.

Tania Anderson

I'll see you've been writing your whole life.

Jessica Meicht

Yeah. Basically, it's never been published until UNIQUE though.

Tania Anderson

What draws you to poetry as a way to express yourself?

Jessica Meicht

It comes easy to me. Writing comes easy. It's like it's almost like the words get dropped into my head and then I just have to rearrange them and make them make sense.

Tania Anderson

Wow. That's a nice way to put it. I'm a visual person. So that really that really helps me so you've been writing poetry since you were a child. And I think we already talked about that the poetry you think your mental health diagnosis informs your work and vice versa.

Jessica Meicht

Yes. With UNIQUE and with the book I wrote. It's all about mental health, like the stages going through it.

Tania Anderson 5:26

Let's talk about the book. So, you've got a book coming out next May?

Jessica Meicht

Yes, it's a book called Swallowed Whole By Emotion. And it's a poetry collection on mental illness and mood. It has 49 of my original poems. And then artwork that artwork or photos I should say, that are taken from around the Syracuse, New York area, and then a couple from like, places I then just beautiful photos that are included.

Tania Anderson 5:57

Are these photos that you took?

Jessica Meicht

That I took, my family members, my friends, they're all people who I have a close connection with, So the whole book is my baby, but it's the first of a series I'm hoping.

Tania Anderson

That's so wonderful that do you think that UNIQUE can take any credit for the fact that you're polish?

Jessica Meicht 6:21

Definitely, the confidence, confidence is the main thing and ARISE gave me that confidence, like right from the speech that I did. And then I was asked to do this big dinner thing as a ARISE confidence. Like they did an interview, and I got to go to the special dinner and it was all it made me it gave me more confidence. It made me feel important. That's what ARISE does make me feel important. I'm not just another number.

Tania Anderson

Well, you are important. I'm glad you feel important. And you're absolutely right that you know ARISE as an independent living center. We, we put the people that connect with us, you're in charge, you're the center of our focus and you've got the power to decide what services you want and what your life is going to look like.

Jessica Meicht

What my service plan looks like

Tania Anderson

Absolutely. That's so cool. What do you think? You've got a book coming you said as part of this series, what do you think is next for your for your writing?

Jessica Meicht 7:27

After I finally get this one published next May I want to start the next one is gonna be Swallowed Whole By Love, and it's going to be love poetry, and it's going to be mostly original new original work. Some of them there won't be reused from poetry I've written in the past and I revamp from the book and I plan to include just as many photos from our area in that book as well.

Tania Anderson

Wow.

Jessica Meicht

Hopefully from a wider range of people, not just my circle.

Tania Anderson

Got it. And this first book, how long have you been working on it?

Jessica Meicht

Since August of last year.

Tania Anderson

Oh, that's actually pretty quick. I would think too.

Jessica Meicht

Yeah, I only included three poems that were already written. So, the other 46 were original.

Tania Anderson 8:15

So you're very fast writer.

Jessica Meicht 8:18

It comes easy, and I really I don't feel like it's something I should take credit for because like I said, it just drops into my head. I don't put much effort into it. I can write a poem in an hour and have it be a longer rhyming story, actual progressing in it, and people think is impressive, but my impressive ones are the ones that inspire people. Like when you cry when you read my work. That's what makes me feel like I've inspired you or I'm that's what I do I aspire to inspire.

Tania Anderson

Right and you're just really trying to connect with your readers.

Jessica Meicht

Yes. And maybe help them.

Tania Anderson

Do you? I guess you've anticipated my next question in terms of someone who connects with your work, reads your work. Are you trying to tell them a story? Tell them what it's like for you living with a mental health diagnosis? Something else or is it different for every poem? What kind of message are you trying to send?

Jessica Meicht 9:22

I have to say each poem does have its own theme, but they're all related to living with and not saying I have, it's living with my mental abilities the way they are. You know what I mean? It's not about trying to change my emotions. It's about managing the emotions I have.

Tania Anderson

So, it's really looking at the way you are is just it's a strength...

Jessica Meicht

and it makes me look inward, like Shadow Work.

Tania Anderson

Right. Shadow Work, which is something a particular technique that happens a lot of times with therapy.

Jessica Meicht

There's a whole section in my book.

Tania Anderson

Is about shadow work?

Jessica Meicht

I have the names here of the sections.

Tania Anderson

Sure. What are the names of the sections of your book?

Jessica Meicht

Despair, anger, judgment, unlearning, shadow work, growth, and then inspiration is what it ends with.

Tania Anderson 10:19

Wow!

Jessica Meicht

It's almost like phases that I've gone through. Sometimes I twist back out on like a helix.

Tania Anderson

Right. Because everyone is going through their journey and at their own pace, and sometimes you double back.

Jessica Meicht

Definitely.

Tania Anderson

Wow. So if someone would be listening to this, maybe it's someone who has a mental health diagnosis or might feel like they want to connect with someone for some assistance. What would you say to them if they're feeling scared or reluctant or unsure?

Jessica Meicht 10:57

The first step is always the scariest. But the first step of anything you do the first time is scary.

Tania Anderson

Right. So they should...

Tania Anderson

Definitely like taking the first step. If you want to live a better life, you have to get a better life. And to do that, you have to take action toward what you want. So that means making a phone call or coming here and telling the front desk person that you need help. There are so many ways to connect.

Tania Anderson

What you just said. It's so powerful. And then thank you for that and someone who's listening to this and thinking, you know, I like to write I'd like to be a writer. My poetry is not good enough. What would you tell that person?

Jessica Meicht 11:48

I was that person. I don't know how else to say it. I was that person. And it took the action of jumping off the cliff of putting my poem in and having it judged like judgment and my thing. No one likes to feel judgment. But sometimes you need that judgment to transcend into something other than what you are now. And even if it's not judgment from someone else's judgment of yourself for doing that thing.

Tania Anderson

Right. So really, it's an act of courage put it out there.

Jessica Meicht

That doubles back to confidence.

Tania Anderson 12:28

Wow.



Well, I am. I'm so impressed with you, Jessica. Thank you so much for this conversation and for sharing your work with ARISE and UNIQUE but also with the world just I mean, I'm just so proud of you.

Jessica Meicht

Thank you.

Tania Anderson

And you're just such a strong person to have done the work with the clinic and then to put your work out there in terms of their poetry and now a book and a series of books. Just can't wait to see what happens next.

Jessica Meicht

I'm excited too!

Tania Anderson

Thank you.

Jessica Meicht

Thank you

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