**Everyday Women of Sitka: Caitlin Way**



* **Can you please tell me a little about yourself? How long have you lived in Sitka? What types of things are you involved in here?**

I was born and raised in Sitka and then I left for school and went to Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. I studied exercise physiology and thought that I wanted to go into physical therapy. Once I got done with my undergrad and was getting ready to apply for physical therapy school, I had a full on freak out. For the first time in my life, I felt like I didn’t know to do. Before that, I kind of bought into I’ll go to school and then I will go to grad school and everything will be fine. And then, it was the weirdest thing. Nothing in my body wanted to apply for grad school so I didn’t. It was a really uncomfortable for a while. I was living back in town and questioning what I wanted to do. I fished in the summer and I had worked a couple of random job. I had worked for my aunt and uncle at Fish Eye. While I was fishing one summer I signed up for the Integrated Institute which is like a health coaching or life coaching certificate program. It is based on mostly nutrition. I was super interested in that. Anything wellness I really gravitate towards to become healthier and happier. That has always been the dream deep down which is kind of why I went for physical therapy. I did that, fished, and then got a job working on the dam which was a really tough construction job. Then I was like what am I doing? It was a really good paying construction job, but I was out in the winter months, it was so rough and I was the only girl who worked up there. I was not in my element. The guys were super awesome, but I don’t know anything about construction. I got a really bad injury up there. I hurt my back and was down in the office for a while. Then, my aunt and uncle had to sell their business. They offered it to me and gave me time to figure out a loan situation and gave me time to think about it. They were really supportive. They thanked me for filling in the gaps for them. They gave me this opportunity and thought I’d be good at it. Everything in my body was like yes. Then it was like a couple years of ups and downs. I could not catch my stride on it. I was with a business partner, and we did not work well together. We had different missions and values and ideas around business. I really questioned myself for years. I ended up meeting Alana. Her job was at Spruce Root and they did small business loans in Southeast Alaska. I called it business boot camp. I got a loan and was able to buy out my partner. I was able to reconstruct my whole perspective on business and entrepreneurship. It was this big shift. Once that happened, I finally felt this sense of peace and understood myself. It was a cool experience because nothing really changed, just how I thought about things. I was then more motivated, trusted my natural gifts, and went with it. It was a really great experience, but a very long experience.

I am involved all over the place in Sitka. I have coached for Girls on the Run. I love to go hiking so every Sunday I hike with my dad. I like big outdoor adventures. We do a big adventure at least one time a year in the summer. Any sort of adventure stuff I will get in on. Last summer we hiked across the island. We will do hunting trips, biking trips, we do at least something like that in the summer. I also dance with the Naa Kahidi group. This year I paddled over to Celebration and we performed there. The paddling and camping was really fun, that was my favorite part. I do culture class through the SNEP program during the school year. I participate in the 6th-12th grade class and Lakrisha teaches it. We are in the same dance group. When I moved back to Sitka, I was ready to move again.

I felt like I always searching for something and needing a purpose. Once I finally got over that and surrendered to the fact that I was here with a business, everything opened up and I was able to get involved in a lot more things and develop these pockets of the community. It was really fun. It has all come full circle. I feel really happy with where it has come and all the connections I have made. I feel like I can now call myself an entrepreneur. There was a lot healing that had to go on in order to get there. My favorite part is that I get to work with most amazing people ever. All the girls at Fish Eye are great and I get to work as part of a team. If I can think of business like a game, I really like that. It is team mentality and bettering yourself and your performance each time. Practice is really important and team building. I just love all that stuff. That metaphor is really great and really drives me and motivates me. The team factor is really big. Alana taught me a lot about sustainable businesses and triple bottom line businesses where you are obviously trying to make a profit, but you are trying to do better for your community and all the people you work with too. That was really cool because even though you are just making coffee or just a barista, the opportunities are so endless. All of us are working together so there is no excuse for all of us to create whatever job you want or be in whatever place you want. Working with Alana, that really opened that up. We are like ying and yang, we are very different but we complement each other really well. I can express all these deep and meaningful dreams and wants, and she can kind of practically put them out. That is really exciting and I feel really pumped to hopefully be able to offer more career opportunities for the girls too because they are so amazing and they all bring so much to the table that I think it would be really cool to help them grow and offer them more. That really motivates me.

I teach yoga and I am also a personal trainer. I do that stuff kind of on the side. I sometimes book myself a little full, but I love it. Getting to work with new people and meet new people is really fun for me. When I was at the Institute of Integrated Nutrition, they taught us that when you are working with someone they have all these quote unquote unhealthy habits or choices, you don’t want to take those all away. If you tell someone you can’t do xyz, they are will be like well actually I am going to. They say you just want to crowd in more and more good and then the bad will fall away. So obviously you learn that in terms of a diet, but it applies to every other area of your life. The more good you fit in, the less room there is for bad. I remember being in such a victim state for a while, and just kind of feeling like I don’t want to be in Sitka, and I am lonely, and I am missing out on all this stuff. And then I guess the more things I got involved in, I felt I was bringing more good in even though I didn’t necessarily want to at first. After all this amazing stuff was there, there wasn’t room to be unhappy.

* **Do you have something you’d like to say to other women in Sitka?**

Whatever your unspoken goal and dream is, I want to know about it and I want to support you in any way that I can in getting there. I hope that they all have somebody that would offer them support and anything that they ever need. And if they don’t feel that way, it is totally possible to feel that way so don’t give up.

* **What is your biggest struggle right now?**

My biggest struggle is not feeling guilty when taking time for myself. Taking a break when owning your own business is hard. There is this thing you love so much and always want to give everything to it. It is hard to take a break and step away without feeling guilty and questioning if it is okay and if you deserve this.

* **What does a normal “Day in the Life” look like for you?**

As of right now, I usually wake up around 5 and I take almost an hour to myself where I start to get ready in the morning. There is this really cool book I read a while ago and it is *The* *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. There is an acronym called SAVERS in it. It stands for silence, affirmation, visualization, exercise, reading, and scribing or writing. I really try to get my mind ready for the day. I chill out for an hour and get kind of pumped for the day. Then from there, I usually go by Fish Eye and now by North Sisters. I sometimes will teach yoga. I just do one-on-ones right now so that is really fulfilling because I can get close with that person and really invested in them. After that, I go to the gym and somedays I can’t. I try to come back home, make breakfast and shower, and then get back to work. Work varies every day. I try to take a lunch break, but sometimes I don’t. In the evenings, we do team meetings. I do softball or go to dance. It kind of varies between those different things I am involved with. I get outside and schedule a walk with a friend. My sister is back so last night some of our friends and my sister came over and we painted for a little bit. I try to have something in the evening. I go down to my parent’s house. They live close so I will go have dinner or something. I try to get to bed by like 9, but usually it is later. If I don’t have enough planned, I am more likely to get depressed or anxious. It is good for me to keep going.

* **What makes you proud to be a woman?**

I think how connected we can be and how empathetic we can be. If you tell me something, I think that I can feel it a lot and I don’t know if that is just because of being a woman. It is so easy to connect. I feel really proud right now by trying to change the script of being intimidated or trying to take another woman down to supporting and honoring all of her gifts and trying to build her up. We are making it more of a sisterhood and less of a competition. I heard this cool concept that back in the day we were picking berries, watching kids, and making sure there wasn’t an animal around so we are very sensory aware and able to do more things at once. Guys are very singularly focused. It is these two awesome tools we both have. They were always hunting for one thing or focused on one thing like I have to get this thing to survive and to feed my family. Where we were like watch the kids, watch the hot water, is the rain coming, etc… It was these two skills that we had to develop together to survive.