



**Episode 26 - How a family physician is using her gift for helping others in a new career.**

**With Dr. Amie Langbein**

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HF: Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hello, hello. Welcome back to the Doctor’s Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. You are listening to episode number 26. The white coat crossroads can be a pretty tough place to find yourself. Our guest describes how she felt like she never fit in with the way medicine was being practiced. These feelings over a number of decades caused a lot of self-doubt and brought on the imposter syndrome. Then she had a big wakeup call after being told to practice in a way that contradicted who she was at her core as a person and as a physician. That was a big “aha” moment. She knew something had to change.

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Through coaching, she found a way forward from the crossroads into a new career. In guess what? Coaching. In this episode, board-certified family practice physician, Dr. Amie Langbein shares her powerful journey from dissatisfaction and self-doubt to owning her true gifts and becoming a very experienced and successful coach. Dr. Amie Langbein has been coaching for over a number of years in diverse settings, which you'll hear about including for medical students and residents.

For those of you who might be considering coaching as an option, we'll be talking about the training and several things you can do to start exploring this path. There'll be a free download on the coach training that I mentioned at the end.

I also want to give Amie a shout out. We didn't talk about this on the podcast, but she has been volunteering a full day every week at the same hospital where she was a medical student giving COVID vaccines. She told me that this chance to help individuals and hear their stories about the pandemic has been one of the most satisfying experiences of her medical career.

I say this to point out that even if practicing has not been fulfilling in the way you've wanted it to be, there can be opportunities to reconnect with the reasons why you became a doctor. I've seen us with physicians who do medical mission trips abroad and other types of volunteering and activities. So, consider keeping that license, even if you do leave. All right, it's time to give a very warm welcome to Dr. Amie Langbein.

AL: Hi, Heather. I'm so happy to be here. Thank you so much for asking me to join you.

HF: Absolutely. You've been on my radar for a while. I'm glad we got the timing worked out. I'd love to have you start by sharing your story of where you were when you first reached out to me because you were at a really tough place.

AL: Yes, yes. Your memory serves you correctly. I tell this story, I say pretty often, because it's hard to believe where I was on where I am now. So, where I was, I was really stuck. I had made the decision to go to medical school when I was so young and I loved school and I loved my training because I really love learning. And then I remember I started in psychiatry, then I did a family medicine residency. And then I tried to find where I fit in, in lots of different settings, but I just never really found my right place I think in medicine. Because I never really felt happy and fulfilled in any of the arenas that I tried to fit into. I love the patients. I love hearing their stories. I love getting to know them. I love supporting them, but I really didn't like the business of medicine.

And consequently, I feel like I really struggled. I really felt pretty often that I just didn't fit in. And I often thought like, "Well, you're just not meant to do this. You're not good enough to do this". And my husband who I met in medical school, I felt alone even though I had him. So, I think how lucky I am that I had, but I had no female role model. I remember the one attending that I worked with a female attending. She was still miserable all the time. And I just thought, "Well, I'm surely not reaching out to her".

HF: Oh no, she might like to bite your head off or something.

AL: Exactly. Like she was pretty unhappy. And so, you know the culture of medicine was, and to some extent still is unfortunately to suck it up and take care of your patients. And surely don't talk about what your experience is like. And for me, it was demoralizing and my self-esteem and self-worth really took a big hit. So, in one of the practices I work with, my boss called me in and he said, "Hey, Amie, you just spend way too much time with patients. Either you start timing yourself or we are going to start timing you".

HF: I know, I remember you telling me that story. I was horrified. I imagine them standing there behind you with this big stopwatch. You're on some conveyor belt, like Lucy in the chocolate factory, when that evil boss kept cranking up the machine and she was stuffing chocolates in her hair and in her shirt and in her mouth and she couldn't keep up.

AL: Oh, my gosh. I wish it had been chocolate.

HF: You told me you had to start timing yourself or they were going to, and then what happened.

AL: That was terrible. And I remember thinking, "Well, that's absolutely not happening" like that wasn't even an option. And then there was another incident where another peer of mine said, "Amie you're just way too empathic". And that was another thing for me that was just like, "You've got to be kidding me. How can a physician be too empathic?" It's just counterintuitive.

And for me, honestly, those two incidents were really the icing on the cake. Like they were a wakeup call, like smack in the face kind of thing. Like Amie, you need to deal with this. You're not happy. I was totally burnt out. And it made me think like, "Wait, maybe this choice that I made when I was 20 something years old isn't the choice for me when I'm in my 50s and beyond".

And so, as you know, I was really devastated. But now when I look back, I'm pretty grateful that those experiences happened. But what I know for sure is those are the things that made me reach out for help to you. And I didn't even know what a coach was. I just felt something about you and your coaching practice on Medscape. And I'm like, "Wait, I need help". I live outside of Philadelphia. I remember thinking, "Well, I'm so desperate, I'll fly to Austin. I need to talk with this lady".

HF: I would have been happy to have you come, but you didn't have to.

AL: And I do remember you saying "Amie, no, I'm going to help you over the phone". And I remember thinking, "Oh, that's absolutely absurd. How could you help me with this biggest suspicion of adult professional life over the phone?" So, I was definitely a

skeptic, but really you helped me so much. Because I never would've had the courage to leave medicine if it hadn't been for our coaching together, Heather, seriously.

HF: Well, I knew from the first few minutes I spoke with you what an amazing woman and physician you are and that being told to not be who you really are, being an empathetic person who wants to take time with their patients is completely wrong. And I'm glad that you didn't say "All right, let me figure out who they want me to be". And that decision that you made led you forward to really find a better alignment for yourself.

AL: Yeah. Thank you so much. I'm grateful that that did not happen. I'm grateful that I had wake up calls in a way. And I know now, I never would have learned what I know. And I learned a lot and I definitely learned that empathy in fact, it's not a weakness, it's one of my strengths.

HF: It's huge.

AL: Yeah, thank you.

HF: It's a gift. And since we're really focusing on coaching and the listeners may be interested in becoming coaches, would you like to talk a little bit about how the coaching process helped you?

AL: Yeah, sure, sure. For sure when we first started coaching, I was in a place where I honestly didn't think I had any particular gifts or skills. Like I just figured I was a mother and I was a doctor and that's it. And I didn't remember what I liked to do, what I didn't like to do. And in some ways, I was disconnected quite honestly, with my values. You really helped me to reconnect with those lost orphaned parts of myself, so to speak, which I'm so grateful for. And also, just to see who I was at 52, didn't have to be the same person as who I was at 20 or something. And then I had a choice who I wanted to be moving forward. And that was huge, right? Like so huge.



HF: You make a really great point there because I see this so often with physicians is that we become lost to who we are. And the process of training has us leave behind a lot of the things that we used to love to do, parts of our identity and service of caring for patients. So, when we are finding ourselves at these crossroads, before we can even know how to go forward, we often have to reintegrate those parts of ourselves and go forward with almost a new identity of integration.

AL: Yeah. You said that so beautifully because I think that's so true. Like for me, I really struggled with imposter syndrome and I was so focused on taking care of everybody else that I really didn't even know how to take care of myself. And that is definitely one of the things that I do, which we got from our coaching is that I really started to embrace the fact that you can't pour from an empty cup, that at a certain point you have to take care of yourself, not just give, give, give. And that was huge, like a huge reframe for me. So, thank you.

HF: Yeah. Well, you're welcome. And you really did a lot of great work in the coaching. You're willing to look at yourself. And since there are so many physicians who do suffer from the imposter syndrome, can you talk a little bit about how you dismantled that and were able to go forward with a stronger sense of yourself and your self-worth?

AL: Yeah. I think that's a great question. That was so much a part of our coaching together. I think it kind of started when I think about it. I think it was like redefining my identity of sorts or realigning with it, I guess. And just starting from simple things. Like, I remember you asking me this question, something like "Amie, what do you do effortlessly? What are the things that you enjoy or just do naturally?" And at the time I was like, "What does she even mean?" It stopped me in my tracks.

But in that process, I started to see, "Wow, there are things that really energetically lift me and things that really deplete me". And I became aware of the things I had always

done, like that I've always, always been a helper and a healer, I've always loved inspiring others. I always loved empowering others. People would always come to me as their confidant and they would reach out to me for support. I mean, even when I was a little girl. And so, I think having those "aha" moments really helped me to see, "Wow, this is who I am" and I had something to offer, but I just didn't know it in a sense, which I forgot it or both.

And so, I think that helped me realize that I was good and good enough and that I deserve the same level of compassion that I gave to others. And that my self-talk was so negative that that was something that I actually had control over. Like I didn't have to berate myself. Like I could actually be as nice to myself as I was to other people.

HF: Turn that empathy on yourself, it's your secret weapon.

AL: Yeah, yeah. But I think I didn't realize that until you and I worked together.

HF: So just to pick up on what you said, because I think it's really powerful, one of the things that was helpful for you is recognizing almost looking from outside in what are your gifts. And often those are not visible to us because they're so natural. It's like a fish swimming in water. You just do it so you assume everyone else has that gift. And then you also realize that what your mind was telling you and where you were not supportive of yourself.

AL: Absolutely. Just those two things.

HF: Yeah, they are huge.

AL: They are radical perspectives. Like you know from coaching so many different people, it's not rocket science, right? People just become disconnected from themselves and we help them to reconnect. I always say to people, "I don't know what's right for you as a

client, but I now have lots of tools and training and skills to help you figure out what's great for you".

HF: Find your own answers. All right. Well, this brings us to the next question, which is briefly looking at how you then decided to go into coaching yourself. Can you connect the dots for us?

AL: I investigated all kinds of different things, Heather, like I became a wish granter for the Make-A-Wish foundation, which I loved. I started a huge vegetable garden. I took a writing course. I took a course on mindfulness-based stress reduction, which I literally had said for 10 years, I should take, but didn't have time for.

HF: No time to be distressed because you're too stressed.

AL: Right. How absurd, right? And then on the professional side, I love animals. So, I really thought about going to the vet school. I remember calling the University of Pennsylvania.

HF: I remember that. Yeah.

AL: I thought about finishing my psychiatry residency. I mean, I love to teach. So, I thought about teaching. And then maybe six and a half months into our coaching, you said something to me which I'm so grateful for, you said, "What about coaching?" And that was like a light bulb moment because I hadn't really considered it. And then I signed up for the very first course in coach training and I sat there in that room and I was like, "Oh my gosh, this is what I'm meant to do. I've been doing this all my life. I just never called it coaching".

HF: Exactly. And you said even as a young child, people would come to you for help and talk to you.



- AL: Oh, no question. Like all my life, that's the role that I've always played. So, it was so in my wheelhouse, right? I wasn't reinventing the wheel. I had already had a lot of that already.
- HF: I love that. And it's funny you say that Amie, because I remember my first day at the CTI, the coaching program, you and I both went to, I felt the exact way. I sat down and I said, "This is home. This is where I'm meant to be". And you felt the exact same way.
- AL: Isn't that amazing? Yeah. That's really interesting. And I remember you telling me that, but it was the same. It was great. I was so happy.
- HF: Yeah, you came home. Tell us what it was like for you doing the CTI training.
- AL: Yeah. I mean, I really liked it. For the most part, I'm somebody who really likes to learn, so I've really enjoyed the training part. And then there was the certification part, which sometimes I didn't love as much. Sometimes I felt like I was being tested and tested and tested. And that wasn't always fun.
- HF: Just for the listeners can you tell them about the supervision? Just because I think that's a really powerful part of the certification and not all of the training programs do that.
- AL: Yeah. Yeah. We had supervision of our coaching. And so, we had to send audio tapes of our coaching sessions and then we would be watched while we were coaching. Sometimes I felt like it felt formulaic in a sense, and they had to do it this way or no way. And it's like anything else when you're learning a new skill, you have to have a beginner's mindset. And sometimes it wasn't easy. Did you feel the same way?
- HF: Well, it is really hard to be taping your calls with your clients and they know you're taping though, obviously, and trying to use these skills and be in the moment and not be

like having your mind think, “Oh God, I just did a bad job there” and judging yourself, and then your supervisor listens to it and grades you. But I have to say that is one of the most powerful parts of the training because we need that feedback.

AL: I agree. Totally. And I have to say, I've gone on to do all kinds of other certifications and I'm a way more comfortable with that now.

HF: Well, for those who are listening and might be interested in coaching, what are some suggestions you have for ways they could start exploring whether this area would be a good fit for them?

AL: Yeah. Well, obviously I think one of the big things would be to consider the skills that you have and the things that come naturally. And if they seem to be aligned with coaching, then really take some time to explore all the different options out there for coaching, because there are many different coach training programs. In fact, there's probably even more now than when you and I did it. And lots of them offer free webinars to give you like a brief introduction to what coaching is. I remember I did the CTI one, the Coaches Training Institute, where we did our training. I remember I did the Duke University program and Integrative Health Coaching webinar to kind of get a feel.

And I would talk to a lot of coaches. I think for the most part, coaches are really nice people, at least in my experience. And ask them the questions that you're thinking. Don't be afraid to ask those questions. Like, “Can I make a living being a coach? What's the hardest thing about being a coach? What do you wish you'd known?” That kind of thing. “Should I do a coach training program that gives me access to becoming an International Coach Federation coach?” Like those are all, I think really important questions. What do you think?

HF: No, I think you've done an excellent job in giving potential coaches things to think about, questions to ask, where to get information. Because it's a big decision. It's not cheap.

You can do a weekend course, but if you really are serious, the cost tends to be usually between \$5,000 to \$20,000, with an average around \$11,000 to \$14,000 to be certified and get your training. So, it's significant, but I often have to say that even if you never ended up coaching or running a business, the training of itself, it's worth probably 10 years of therapy in terms of the personal growth that you get out of all the coaching that you do and the coaching that you go through.

AL: I 100% agree with that. I think so many of the things that I learned in coach training, I wish I had had early on in my medical career too, because there is tremendous value. I agree. Whole heartedly the training in and of itself. Yeah.

HF: But you can't really lose. But in the last few minutes that we have, I'd love for you to tell us about the different kinds of coaching you're doing, because you have a very interesting variety.

AL: Oh yeah. Thank you. I remember you asking me at some point like, "Oh Amie, what do you think your niche will be?" And I was like, "Okay. Well, Heather, the two areas I'm not coaching in are healthcare and business". And the two areas I do coach in are healthcare and business.

HF: It goes in full circle.

AL: Totally, totally. But I'm very sure now that the reason I said that was, I love the Joseph Campbell quote, "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek".

HF: I love that one.

AL: Yeah, I love that because the reason I said "no" to it was first of all, I was so burnt out in healthcare that I was like, "Well, how can I help anybody if I couldn't help myself?" And then the other thing in business was "I've never run a business. So, can I help people?"



But the reality is people are people, right? And we all have the same challenges. And we're so much more than what we do. But I didn't realize that then. I'm grateful that I realize it now, but I do a ton of different types of coaching and consulting now. I do pro bono coaching for this great program called "A Whole New Doctor" where we coach medical students, the Georgetown medical school and a couple other medical schools and we provide one-on-one coaching and leadership training for them.

HF: Nice.

AL: Oh, I love it. It's amazing. And I co-created a wellness program for family practice emergency medicine residents and internal medicine residents in one of the Thomas Jefferson University campuses here, which we coached and had a facilitated workshop. I've recently become a member of the American Medical Women's Association coaching committee and love coaching students and residents. Because I really believe if we start early helping them to prioritize self-care and wellness and resiliency, my hope is that we can begin to kind of intercept this horrendous cycle of burnout that we have in medicine.

So that's in medicine. And then I coached for a bunch of other companies. One where we just coached employees from Facebook. And then I coached for another company, which is a startup where we provide one-on-one coaching and group coaching to clients who work at Fortune 500 companies. And I loved that. I really get to help clients create greater clarity, purpose, and passion in their lives. And I feel so fortunate to work for these organizations because I get to meet all different, amazing people at all levels of different organizations from all over the world. I'm very grateful.

And then the other really nice thing and I think this would be important for people interested in coaching to kind of think about is one of the things I like about these companies is they provide the clients. And for me, one of the hardest things, and I'm sure you're well established now, but for me, marketing myself is always my challenge.

And so, finding new clients, this has provided me with a wealth of experience in what the company provides for clients. And they're in all different industries, not just healthcare. It's finance, tech, the hospitality industry, the pharmaceutical industry. And I feel like it's given me like a breadth of exposure to coaching all different types of people.

HF: That is fantastic Amie, because a lot of people feel that if they are not opening up their own private practice coaching that there aren't other options. And you just mentioned a whole bunch of different things that they could potentially do without having to have that challenge of getting your own clients, because it's not just you, Amie. It is probably the biggest hurdle for anyone who wants to go into coaching. It's not easy.

AL: Yeah. And I think that's something that is useful to know. I think it's not something that I really comprehended, I'll say at the time, because like what you just said, I thought, "Well, I'm going to have my own business and that's the only way it's going to work". And I feel like one of my big learning things has been that you can easily make this work. It takes time and trial and error, and there are lots of different ways to make it work.

HF: And I'm so glad that you showed us through this episode, this arc from when you were really questioning yourself worth, you were being told to be somebody who you are not and how you were able to take back the best parts of you and transform yourself and your career into something that brings you a lot of joy. It's almost like you made a way, you made a wish and it got granted to you.

AL: Yeah. And you were the fairy godmother, Heather.

HF: I don't know about that but it's been such a pleasure, Amie. And I want to thank you so much for sharing your story on the podcast and giving a lot of great information about coaching.



AL: Oh no, I'm not kidding. You cannot imagine the amount of times that I say that I would never be where I am today if it wasn't for coaching with you. And I mean that from the bottom of my heart. So, thank you so much, Heather.

HF: Well, you're incredibly welcoming and it's a real honor, Amie and I sing your praises all the time. And I want to let the listeners know that we're going to have a download that they can get if they'd like, that's going to have information about coach training. And it will also include individual feedback from physicians such as Amie and others who have gone to some of the top coaching programs. So, if you'd like to have that, you can grab it at [www.doctorscrossing.com/coaching](http://www.doctorscrossing.com/coaching). And it'll also be in the show notes.

But thank you again, Amie. I am just thrilled and beaming over here at getting to applaud you and honor you and the hard work that you did to arrive at this beautiful place in your life. So, thank you.

AL: Oh, thank you, Heather. Thank you so much.

HF: All right. Okay, take care. And I will check in with you down the road.

AL: That sounds great.

HF: All right guys, I appreciate you listening and don't forget to carpe that diem and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

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