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Proem



Figure 2: Photo by Frgal Flyer on Unsplash

Welcome subscribers and patrons to this first exclusive bonus episode #200 (egads, #200). If you could look around the room, you’d see 275 long-standing subscribers, 12 monthly Patrons, and ten one-time supporters who contributed almost \$300 in May and nearly \$675 in June. Beyond my wildest expectations! I have an advisory call scheduled in early July with some experts who work with emerging adult interns. My colleague and friend Fatima has agreed to help me manage the initiative. I’m burning with excitement to get going. Thanks to you, I can afford it. My friend and crony in podcasting,

Steve Heatherington, of [Alpaca Tribe](#) fame, joins me in today’s bonus episode as we muse about this intriguing podcasting world. I love that I can still learn with my Swiss cheese brain. Check out the quilt in Steve’s background if you’re watching the video. Very cool.

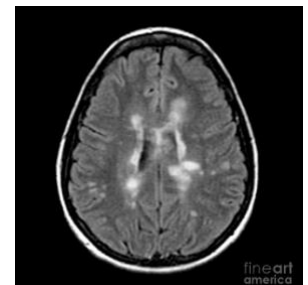


Figure 1: Image from <https://fineartamerica.com>



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Podcast intro 01:27

Welcome to Health Hats, the Podcast. I'm Danny van Leeuwen, a two-legged cisgender old white man of privilege who knows a little bit about a lot of healthcare and a lot about very little. We will listen and learn about what it takes to adjust to life's realities in the awesome circus of healthcare. Let's make some sense of all of this.

Introducing Steve Heatherington, Alpaca Shepherd 05:25

Health Hats: Steve. Thank you so much for doing this with me. So, you know that this is for me. This is going to be my first bonus episode. Nice. In my new Patreon world that I'm setting up. I'm excited to talk about all things podcasting with you since we've been buddies for four and a half, five years, and four and a half. Yeah. Four and a half years. And we've been podcasting, and we meet weekly to discuss anything about podcasting and life—the six or seven of us who, however many, it changes from time to time.

So anyway, thank you. Why don't you introduce yourself?

Steve Heatherington: It's a pleasure and a privilege to meet up like this, and Wow. Honor to be part of the first bonus episode. Wow, that's so exciting. Yeah. How did this happen? It happened by mistake almost.

I'm based in Swansea in the UK. And we have a farm, and I'm an alpaca shepherd. So, we got currently got 36 alpacas that I care for. Most of the time, it's straightforward, but occasionally you turn a corner, and there's something new and challenging. I used the alpacas to learn to podcast, and it's kept going. So, I've been going over four years now. Episode 224 just went out the door yesterday, and that was a surprise, wasn't it? In a sense expecting that I was trying to help my wife, who was writing a book at the time, didn't have time to do the prod podcasting workshop, so I thought I'd do that workshop. So, you carry on writing the book, I'll do the workshop, and we'll see whether that goes, and I'll teach you how to do the podcasting bit later. And we still not quite got around to that bit, but it's come close a few times. Yeah. So, it's interesting, I discovered a few weeks ago that I'm a podcaster, but I've always been a podcaster. Even before I was podcasting, I was a podcaster. And it was a similar thing when I started with the alpacas. I realized I was a shepherd, although I'd never had an opportunity to express that. Podcasting is just a perfect fit for me. And there are many side benefits and things that have been added in there, and many exciting people I met and worked with, such as yourself.

Virtual podcasting friends. Yes, friends. 05:08

Health Hats: Goodness. So, I'm just working on episode 196, and I feel the same way. Podcasting is a perfect nexus for me in that it works for my advocacy. I like to write. I'm a musician. I like technology. So, it's a big part of my life, and it brings a lot of different pieces together. And I want to experiment, and an unlimited amount of experimentation is possible in doing this. But I want to say that Steve, I don't know whether I've thanked you enough that Steve was the host of my 70th Zoom party, and there were about 50 or 60 people on the call. And Steve hosted that and was the facilitator the moderator,



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keeping things going and ensuring everybody had a voice. I so appreciate that. Thank you. And I think it just when I tell people that my friend the Alpaca Shepherd from Wales was the host of my birthday party, they think I'm crazy.

Steve Heatherington: That may be true, but probably not for that reason. It's interesting, isn't it, that because we've been meeting so regularly, I feel like I know you and count you as one of my friends. Definitely, and that's just a strange experience, and that all started before the Covid thing and Zoom calls becoming so much part of life, but that regular contact and understanding of each other, but being surprised by each other all the time as well.

Podcasting and writing 07:28

Steve Heatherington: And I think there are things that we are still learning and new challenges. And you're right. You are an experimenter. You're always trying to try this thing or that thing. And you mentioned writing, and I think that one of the exciting things I hadn't expected with podcasting is how much writing is involved.

I've found that it's been something that's cleared my thinking. I think better. I communicate better in terms of writing, but also the spoken word. And there are things that I wasn't expecting to have to do that become part of the jigsaw that you are. It's not like jigsaw's the wrong word. It's one of those puzzles that the squares and you, that you got to, you've got one piece that's a gap and you move these things backward and forwards and slide them around too, yes, to move and create the pattern or whatever it is. And podcasting seems to be a bit like that. There are lots of pieces, moving pieces, and things that need to be in place and things that need to be done one after the other or at least have to be done before you, you finish and get the thing out the door.

And it's a fascinating process because there are always things you can do better, and that isn't to say that what you're doing isn't good. It is good, and it's as good as you can do it, but there's still more growing space. You can still learn new things.

Sound editing 08:51

Health Hats: I told you that my grandson, Leon, has been doing some editing for me to help make the audio transcript into a newsletter. He makes the sound in his high school for assemblies and musical events. He's listening to the episodes he's done the editing for and coming to me with issues he's hearing. At three minutes and 16 seconds, there's an abrupt transition. And so, which maybe I heard but didn't pay any attention to.

In talking to him, I realize that when I'm doing sound editing, I am trying to clean up the language by taking out not necessarily all the ums and everything. Still, people are talking in circles, stopping, and starting and, like that, and so I've been noticing that I'm doing less of that, and that's okay.



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I play baritone saxophone in a Latin band, and I've been learning a lot differently about music in the last couple of years now that I have more audio expertise. Like I'm much more familiar with Garage Band and then recording myself like with a backing track, or I play in a Latin band, Lechuga Fresca, where I'll play the tune as we played it at a rehearsal or a gig and then work on my part and or work on soloing, but having the comfort with audio, managing audio software has listened to yourself. I remember when we first started, we would have conversations about hating the sounds of our voices. Yeah. And then eventually, that's like the least of it. Because you hear things differently, I like that now, like listening to other people's podcasts and people with ten people on their team when they do their credits. They have producers and editors and are no better than we are. Yeah. Or maybe that's not fair. But I can hear what we've been working on over the years, like, what's the story? What's the balance between the interviewer and the interviewee? How are they using music? How are they doing transitions? It's mainly before that stuff. It just washed over me. I didn't hear that detail. Yeah. And then you start hearing everything, so it's a kick.

You know that now I have more profound knowledge, so I hear differently.

[What's the story? 12:36](#)

I wanted to ask you what is your biggest challenge today in podcasting? What's top of mind for you?

Steve Heatherington: I think it's a sense that there's more that I want to do in terms of the story. Story's an interesting word, isn't it? Because we use it a lot. And stories made up, or it's a crafted thing and you. But it's not. It's the message. It's how do we communicate?

So we used story in a slightly different word to think about creative writing, film, TV, or whatever. So it's not the story, but it's the how do you put the bits together, the facts but also which bits do you include and which do you major on, and how do you, create something that's, that, that comes together? That connects with the other person on the other side of the microphone with the headphones. And it just feels like there's, I guess, it's always been there. The focus keeps changing. That's an interesting observation. Yeah. So just to recognize that there's always more I can see than I can do.

Do you know what I mean?

Health Hats: So, there's more that you can see than you can do. Okay.

Steve Heatherington: Yes, so I've got this thing of a story. I tell stories, and some of them are kind of factual. This happened, and then this happened, and this happened. And sometimes, I'm telling them for a reason, and sometimes I'm just telling them because it's a great story.

But to craft the thing that says, okay, what is it that, what's the point of this? What do I want people to understand more clearly or want them to ask a question about for themselves, or what's the item, and



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how do I put that together without it just being sequential? This happened, or I just hit record, and it's there. But if I'm going to take something and I'm going to add this bit here, do that. What about music? What about adding something, some music in the background? Is that good? Is that bad? It's certainly different. I use the music of the alpacas eating their breakfast, the birds singing, or the wind blowing. Oh, the wind blowing doesn't work. I found that. Oh, the number of times I've recorded something is good. But then, when I listened back to it, the wind was howling over the microphone of the phone when I was down at the stable, and it's unusable, but being able to take some bits and create a sense of something that connects with people. I think that's the magic I've sometimes recognized, sometimes seen, and can see the potential of, but I'm not quite there yet. I need to do some more work and grapple with it to bring it into my reach, as it were.

Unexpected engagement 15:38

Health Hats: Do you ever find that you'll hear from somebody who's listened, and they mainly focus on a piece of the story, and you think that, whoa, that's what they heard? Like either pleasantly surprised or just surprised. You didn't know that was the nut, but it's what they heard. Yeah.

Steve Heatherington: That's true. I do now and again, hear from people. And I'm always surprised and constantly challenged because you see these little maps of who's listening, where, and who's downloaded the files you get with your statistics that you can get with the podcast. Then you can see there are people worldwide listening to, to do this stuff. But I don't know who they are. I know some people. I can probably find you because I know where to look. But there are other people I think I don't know who that person is, and I don't know their situation. I don't know why they're listening. And sometimes you hear from them, and they say it's been terrific. I've been listening to your stuff, and I know I'm more confident with or will buy some land to keep my alpacas. Which I always feel incredibly responsible for.

Health Hats: But you have influence.

Steve Heatherington: Absolutely. It's very scary. Yeah, I get that. But those things, and I think it's, but people, they'll never have alpacas. They're never in a situation where they'll be able to, or perhaps they never really want to. They just like the stories, right? And the experience of coming down on the farm with me and coming down with the alpacas and spending time around them and me telling the stories about what's happening. Yeah, some of this stuff, I think, is just ordinary, as you say, but for other people, this is significant. And I know there were some people through the pandemic, and I'm thinking, do you know, this doesn't feel important enough? It doesn't feel big enough for the fact that we're facing all this fantastic, horrendous stuff all over the place with people dying and being sick and, oh, just so serious.

A word from our sponsor, [Abridge](#) 17:51

Now a word about our sponsor, [Abridge](#). Record your healthcare conversations with doctors and other clinicians with Abridge. Push the big pink button and record. Read the transcript or listen to clips when



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you get home. Check out the app at [ABridge.com](https://www.abridge.com) or download it from the Apple app store or Google Play store. Let me know how it went.

Call to action 18:35

I need help. I've expanded my podcast this year to include video, and costs have surged to \$15,000 annually, while each episode takes 30 to 40 hours to produce. With growing content and shrinking bandwidth, I need support to keep creating without impacting our retirement funds.

As I look towards the next 5-10 years, I'm building a production team of emerging adults to carry this project forward. This succession planning requires resources. But here's the deal: you can help.

Visit health-hats.com/support for ways to contribute. Best option? Patreon offers a monthly subscription with bonus content, Zoom meetings with me and fellow contributors, personal Bari Sax MP3s, coaching sessions, and more.

Occasional donations are welcome, and you can still subscribe for free to enjoy bonus episodes. You can also recommend us through email, social media, or postcard - postage on us! Visit health-hats.com/support. Your support is deeply appreciated. Thank you.

Knitting 20:16

Health Hats: I was telling you before we recorded that my friend Lynn, who I had dinner with last night when I told her I was going to be on the phone with an alpaca shepherd from Wales. And she got so excited because she's a knitter. And she loves alpaca wool. She's all ready to listen. And she's somebody who physically could never manage an alpaca.

So much to do. Music! 20:48

Health Hats: My challenge is that there's so much to do. There are so many pieces to this now that I'm doing written audio and video. I'm doing less with the music. Okay, I'm a musician. I'm trying to get to the place where listening to myself play music is like it used to be listening to our voices. We had judgment about our voices, and I'm finding that I have judgment about listening to myself play music. But there are so many pieces. Especially since I've branched out into video, I'm putting a lot less effort into the music part of the podcast and the vlogging. But I like that part. Yeah. I suppose it's all building to being more comfortable with music and my sound and just saying I am where I am. And who cares?

One of the things we talk about but don't talk about is the ridiculous amount of time this takes like I had breakfast this morning with somebody who is a guest on my next episode. And so I've been working on it, and when I told her that a 40-minute episode probably takes me 40 hours to put together, she was shocked. I'm shocked.



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Many Decisions to Make 22:53

Steve Heatherington: I think it is the number of decisions we must make for me. Ah, because I find I get weary. I get drained. I don't know how many there are, but I've got a limited number of decisions I can make daily.

Health Hats: Yes, no, I get it.

Steve Heatherington: The more things that I have to decide is that, and if you record a lot of, we call it tape, but it's digital these days. So, it's not, technically, it's not tape, but it's when we record the audio, it's if you record a lot of it, but you need to cut a lot out, then you have to make decisions about this good bit that's not quite going to make the cut. It's going to have to come out. It's going to be deleted, but it's okay. Is it the piece that you need to keep? Is it just, Okay? We can just trim a word, trim a sentence, trim a paragraph, or take a whole chunk out. It's a circular argument that's not even included, and those decisions are challenging and take a lot of time. So, if you're very clear, everything I'm going to do, going to record for, I'm going to have a 20-minute episode. I'm going to record 30 minutes of this stuff, and then I've got a manageable amount to make those decisions of which stays and which goes. There are bits and pieces. There's a breath here. Is that breath too loud? Is it not? As I've settled for myself, I already know what it looks like on the waveform. If I can see it and it stands out, and it's out, out of keeping with the other stuff, it needs something doing with it. But it could be that it's me sighing or making a point. Which is relevant and that stays in. You don't take everything out just because it's this is it sounds unnatural. This is a breath. You have to breathe. People expect you to breathe, but if it's really loud, then you need to tame it down and so all of those things. There's all of those making the decisions in advance record better. So, the quality is better. So, there's less to do.

Decisions in disability

Health Hats: What you're talking about with making decisions. One of the things that I notice especially being a person with disabilities and liking to travel, is that when you travel, and I'm a wheelchair and two forearm crutch guy, there are so many decisions to make. How am I going to navigate this curb? Like there's a route. How am I going to do that? In the elevator, you have to exit at a right angle. How are you going to get out? It's the same at some point; it's tiring. Now I think that my decision-making capacity has increased, But after ten days of traveling, I'm exhausted. And it's not so much from the traveling but from all the decision-making. Yeah. Interesting.

I've learned with podcasting that I need to spend a little time every day. Every day I purposefully take days off, but still, it's no good if I'm going to be tired, which is why I've gone from weekly to every other week and sometimes three weeks. Also, I'm video doing video, which is all that much more, but it's also that I end up doing, okay, this is good enough. Yeah. Which I do anyway. I can see I could do better. I could do better. So many times, as I'm listening to it, I have to go, oh my goodness enough, just do it. And then I'm sure my cronies will point out to me, or my grandson will point out where I could have done it better. And then I would think, oh, whatever, next time. Yeah. But if I say that my limit is maybe a couple of hours, then I have to work on it every day because I don't want that



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fatigue because it's not fun anymore. And what good is it if it's not fun? It should be fun. It should be fun. Oh my God. It has to be fun. I'm retired, for crying out loud. I only do fun things. Yeah,

Steve Heatherington: Absolutely.

Podcast workshop 27:17

Health Hats: Yeah. What do you see for yourself in the next year or so?

Steve Heatherington: Good question. Yeah. Mean I'm doing work with podcasting as a workshop for teaching people to podcast. So, that needs to get established and become more apparent, defined, and refined.

Health Hats: So, the business part of the teaching part?

Steve Heatherington: Both. I'm trying to put it together in a way that that is sensible. How many people are there teaching people how to podcast a lot? There are tons, absolutely loads of people.

Why are they going to pick me? So, I'm looking at people who've got something to say. Not just too fancy doing a podcast. You can learn the podcast everywhere, so do it there. What I can offer is the process of thinking through what is your message and finding your voice. That's an overused phrase, but finding your voice, but using your voice. How do you put it to work? How do you connect with people? How do you build a community of people who want to hear from you? And that's not easy to do. So I think that's the kind of area where I want to develop. And I think there needs to be something of a community space.

Health Hats: Yeah, that, that makes a lot of sense. I'm a persistent guy, but I don't know that I would still be doing this if we didn't have our Sunday group. Yeah. I feel like we've been learning together and experimenting together, and one of the things that I find exciting about hearing about what you're doing is your use of natural sound. That's fascinating. And, as you said, forget the wind. I know the episodes where I can hear you walking and the crunch of the leaves under your feet or the frost. Yeah. I remember you had an episode. And then there was an episode of the alpacas spitting.

Steve Heatherington: That was like getting stroppy with each other.

Health Hats: Absolutely. So, I learn a lot. They're like different problems. Having the community like a muscle through some of those challenges is helpful. All right. Listen, we've done our half hour, which is what we said we would do.

Steve Heatherington: Thanks, Steve. Okay.



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Health Hats: I appreciate this. I appreciate you. Thank you too. I'll talk to you on Sunday. Yeah. Okay. All right. Take care.



Figure 3: Photo by Noah Buscher on Unsplash

Reflection 30:06

Podcasting offers Steve and me many opportunities and satisfies many creative itches. He's focusing on story and community for podcasting. I'm focusing on music in podcasting. I'm working on recording myself playing Goodbye Pork Pie Hat by Charles Mingus as a Patreon benefit. Stretching, stretching.

Once again, thank you all, valued supporters. I do it for you and me, of course.

Podcast Outro 30:55

I host, write, edit, engineer, and produce Health Hats, the Podcast. Kayla Nelson provides website and social media consultation and manages dissemination. Joey van Leeuwen supplies musical support, especially for the podcast intro and outro. I play bari sax on some episodes alone or with the Lechuga Fresca Latin Band. I'm grateful to you, who have the most critical roles as listeners, readers, and watchers. See the show notes, previous podcasts, and other resources through my website, www.health-hats.com, and [YouTube channel](#). Please subscribe and contribute. If you like it, share it. See you around the block!



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