

Natalie: Hi, thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Kathryn: I like to start with your early life to kind of see where that influences you later on. What did you want to be when you were five?

Natalie: This is such a fun question. Yeah. When I was five, I had a pretty strong eccentric personality I would say. And I don't know how this entirely started, but I started carrying around this microphone and I made out of aluminum foil and a paper towel roll and I just interviewed everybody. I was obsessed with the news. I was always watching the news and the news casters and just walking around everyone at school asking them questions like pretending that I was on the news. So my nickname was Newscaster Natalie, even that young. Of course I wanted to be a Spice Girl also, but that's fair. Mostly I wanted to be a newscaster and I pretended, I tried to fake it till I make it at age five to be a newscaster.

Kathryn: That is some dedication. That is early dedication. I love that. So how had that changed by the time you graduated high school?

Natalie: Oh yeah. Well, by the time I graduated high school, I mean, I definitely wasn't thinking I was going to be a newscaster anymore. More, I was so influenced by like practicality. Right? Like, okay, so you finish school and then you go to college and you get a good job that gives you insurance and retirement money and all of that sort of stuff. Like that's just what you do next. It really wasn't a question. Like that was the only path that I saw or that I thought that I could take or that I knew how to take or what's even supported to take. So, I was thinking practical jobs, right? Like, Oh, you should be a nurse. That's a really good job. Just people telling me what a good job was that I would be like, oh yeah. Okay. That's a good job. Nothing about passion, nothing about what I'm interested in. Just what's the best job that's gonna get me insurance and retirement so I can go through the motions for the next 60 or 70 or 80 years of my life. Having this quote "good job"

Kathryn: So I'm guessing you went to college?

Natalie: I did, yes.

Kathryn: What did you end up majoring in?

Natalie: Yeah, so, I started out in public relations and it was such a perfect fit. I knew I was good at talking to people, networking with people, making connections, putting myself out there and representing brands or people or anything of the sort. So it just seemed logical and like something I was actually really interested in, though. So I did start in PR. And then, I remember I was not even like a semester into my studies in PR and this was right around the time, well one of many that BP, like the oil company had a huge oil spill. And so we were learning in our classes, kind of watching how BP's pr team was handling things. And I just sat there in the back of this lecture hall thinking, Oh my God, the reality of pr and what I was learning was that you just kind of come up behind and like cover things up and try to make us... Instead of just owning up and being like, I'm

really sorry we made a mistake. I was really seeing the reality of what I was supposed to be doing and PR and lying and covering things up for people. And I was like, well actually this is not what I signed up for, I don't think I can do this anymore. So a semester into my PR studies, I stopped. And I started, I changed my major to recreation therapy. So just one extreme to the other. Right? But recreation therapy was fantastic. It was something I'd never heard of. One of my counselors was like, oh, you should totally be studying that. You would be so good at that. And it definitely was like those were my people and I was really adventurous and into outdoors stuff and I could still work with people in a different capacity. So I was like, yeah, this is great. So I fell into recreation therapy after a semester of PR.

Kathryn: So what does that entail?

Natalie: Yeah, that's what most people say next when I say that. Recreation therapy entails really just helping people see or realize a different way of living so that you're kind of functioning at your highest potential in a lot of cases. This was people with preexisting conditions, so people with disabilities or the elderly people with neurological disorders, young adults with developmental disabilities. That was kind of the focus of it. But in reality, everybody needs recreation therapy and to learn how to be creative and how to choose things that make you happy and excited to do life so that you're functioning at the best version of yourself. So it entails helping people find out what they love to do so they can live their best life really.

Kathryn: Okay. So you would ask them questions to determine what they should focus on and then go from there?

Natalie: Yeah. What kind of recreational activities could they do to live happier? So for some people that'd be as simple as like read more books. Other people it would be like, what physical activity are you interested in? Or for people with disabilities, you know, it would be okay, how can you still live a full functioning life? Your disability does not determine who you are and how you can live. So just how can we find like alternate activities, just adapted a little bit to help you still live your fully functioning life.

Kathryn: So is there anything from that that you apply to what you do now?

Natalie: Yes and no. I will say yes because 100% it taught me how I want to live, not who I want to be, just how I want to live. I want to make those things that make me the best version of myself a priority. I want to have the time to do what makes me feel good. Go to yoga, go dancing, hang out with my friends in a relaxing setting, drinking coffee, going outside and getting sunshine, walking, being in nature, having time to hike. The things that we traditionally are conditioned to think of like come second. I knew I wanted all of those things to be able to come first, so I will take that as my, yes, I learned how I want to live and yeah, I learned how to know I want to live. So yes, it did.

Kathryn: Regarding your current work, how do you describe that to people when you need the short version?

Natalie: When I need the short version, I just tell people I work online and then they kind of don't ask questions because they're just like, oh, okay. This is like more towards a lot of people back home in The States. Maybe older people. Yeah. I just say that I work online.

Kathryn: Okay. And when you're talking to somebody who really wants to know what you're doing?

Natalie: So, when they really want to know what I'm doing, I really tell them what I'm doing, which is public relations for podcasters, which is hilarious. I came back to pr in the end. Right. I know. I never would've thought that this would have happened, but it fell together so perfectly that it was apparently the plan all along at this stage. So yeah, public relations for podcasters. So I connect people with the right podcast for them to speak on as a guest to like get their message out, grow their following, get more leads, just help amplify their online business from being a guest speaker on podcasts. Or, people who already have a podcast, I help them find expert guest speakers that's probably going to grow their following of their podcasts because they're going to share it on their channels as well, and just the people who will bring like an awesome, interesting perspective to things. So that is what I have fallen back into.

Kathryn: Okay. And how did you get started with that?

Natalie: So I got started with this initially. I took a course that was supposed to teach me how to work online as a virtual assistant and it's an amazing course and how she markets it is that in 90 days or less you can be working online as a virtual assistant. So I figured that was the best way for me to get started in something with someone who I knew would kind of mentor me along and maybe connect me with other people who would help me in that way. I already knew I had the skills to work on line. I just had no idea how to transfer them, which is so totally fair and I think everyone feels that way. So even though the course, some of it I felt like, yeah, I am a social media fiend. I don't even want to tell you how long I spend on social media. I totally know how to do social media. I don't know how to market to someone, Hey, I'll do your social media for you. I had no idea how to tell people that that's what I would do. So yeah, the course continued to open doors and Esther, the woman who created it, she has an amazing, huge network and she connected me with people who she thought that I would be a good fit for. And it opened all of the doors. I just had one client who was like, Hey, actually do you think that you would pitch me to podcasts? And I was like, oh my God, what you want to pay me to do that? That is amazing. Yes, I want to do that. And then from there it just more and more people kept asking me to do that and I just really couldn't believe it. Finally the feeling of like, whoa, this is so fun and I'm getting paid to do something that I actually really liked to do and it's online so I can still live however I want to live. It all really fell together super organically, as it was supposed to, I guess. Trust me, this took a long time. Like I'm talking for two years now. I've been trying to get to this stage and this would've been the absolute last thing I ever would have told you that I was doing. So it took a long time.

Kathryn: How did you first get into being location independent? I know you said you wanted, you wanted that from the beginning. Was being a virtual assistant the first kind of step into it?

Natalie:

No. So when I initially left The States, I left for a year contract teaching English in South Korea and then from there my mind just open to people traveling the world for a living and all the possibilities that entailed. I was around all these people of all different ages, who made traveling their lifestyle and I was blown away. So just from that, it's so interesting to hear everyone's stories and what they're doing and, but even then I didn't have location independence. We were all locked in two year contracts with like very minimal vacation time, which shouldn't matter because the job itself and our lifestyle was so amazing. We didn't need to think about traveling because we were living so well. But I knew going forward I didn't always want to be locked into one year contracts. Like, yes, I had this amazing travel lifestyle that I always wanted, but I would have never be able to go home and see my family or if a friend were to get married or anything like that. I couldn't just take off on a whim and be able to support people, as I wanted to. So then I heard about teaching English online and I thought, okay, that's something that I could try. That would be like another good step to keep traveling for a few years until I do have to go back to the states and like get a real job type of thing. My mind still at that point, it wasn't even like, yeah, you can do that forever. So after my year teaching English in South Korea, then I just started traveling for a little bit and then I moved to Bali and when I moved to Bali, I started teaching English online and it was amazing of course, because I was like, wow, I finally have even more freedom than I ever thought was possible. I can go anywhere that there's Wifi and work and I make a really good amount of money working three hours a day. Wow, this is awesome. Yeah, and it is, but it's also not at all. Then, the reality of it, you can't really travel. Like you always have to make sure you have good Wifi, you have a desk. Not that I ever had a desk once and it was pretty awful, but there are all these things that people don't think about about teaching English online. You always have to show up when they say that you're going to show up. You have to be alone in a quiet place. You're not working or teaching from a coffee shop, which is what a lot of people dream about with location independence, or at least I did. So very quickly I realized, yeah, I had a lot of the freedom that I was desiring, but I still didn't have it all. I hated being cooped up in my room for sometimes on Saturdays and Sundays, like 12 hours a day. I just sat and gave all of my energy to these children. So from the moment that I started teaching English online, I was just searching for my way out. I wasn't going to give up my travel lifestyle. Meaning like going back to teach English and another country with a year contract. I was determined to figure it out. So it just so happened that I landed in Bali, which was like the digital nomad capital of Southeast Asia, which I totally did not know. So at first seeing everyone on their computers and cafes, I was so annoyed. I was like, wow, can I just go to a cafe and drink my coffee without everyone working on their computers? But really I was just jealous because I wanted to be able to drink my coffee while working on my computer at whatever time of the day I wanted to. So I just started talking to everybody doing a little newscaster, Natalie, right. I'm just trying to figure out what they were doing, how they did it, how I could do it. At this point, I was still like, I'm not even techie enough to do anything. I can't work online. I have no skills. I'm not techie. Everyone's a coder. Reality, I mean, no everyone's not a coder and a lot of people think they don't have skills, we just don't know how to transfer them. So, and then after a year of teaching English online and hating it, quite honestly, very much hating it. Finally a year later I heard about the virtual assistant course and I knew that that was my, that was my in to get the freedom that I actually really wanted to work on line.

Kathryn: So what, what were some of the restrictions with teaching that you didn't expect?

Natalie: I didn't really think about the fact that I would have to be at home alone during those times. Like I thought of it more of like, oh, I can work from a coffee shop and do that. But no, you cannot. Like your, well... Maybe it's just me, but I'm really loud when I teach, so that's no way. You really do need a quiet private space. Some of the companies, especially now, I kind of got into it before it was as popular as it is now and now I know they're very strict. You have a dress code, you need to have a background. It's a lot of people think that it's easy to do. While you're traveling, but I don't know how people do that. You always have to make sure your internet is so, so, so strong. So especially saying that from Southeast Asia, like that's really not a reality. I can't tell you the amount of times that my wife, I cut off and I just had to play it cool. Like, okay, I'm back. Just seeing hide and go seek. Right. But so it's just really not realistic long term. I see it working for people in The States. If you want to get up every morning at 4:00 AM, but is that really realistic either? There are just so many other opportunities. I would love to tell people that they don't have to teach English online to work online because I know what that feels like. And I went through that for far too long. So it's very good for a temporary thing, but it's not long term sustainable. I don't know anyone who is making that work for themselves, personally.

Kathryn: As far as podcast PR, what was your first major struggle?

Natalie: My first major struggle was totally with just in with myself. No one else is doing this, so why would people pay me to do this? Am I really going to find people to pay me to do this? Just internal struggles of not feeling confident, not having this degree in PR. I still feel that honestly, I'm like, I'm such an imposter. Like, why would anyone pay me to do this? But it doesn't matter if I studied PR for a semester or not. If I did continue studying PR back when I was in university, they would have never told me about podcast pr anyways. It's not a thing. I just had to make my own thing. And I think that's what really is still a struggle honestly, of knowing that there's no direction, there's no roadmap. I'm making it up as I go. Everybody is making it up as they go. Like no one knows what they're doing. But that's the thing. Like you just have to keep figuring it out for yourself. And there's beauty in that and there's a lot of internal struggle in that. So that is what I'll say the struggle is currently, every day

Kathryn: There is so much truth in that.

Natalie: I feel like everyone is lying if they tell you that it's not true. Yeah. Every single day I have to give myself a pep talk.

Kathryn: So I dunno, it was probably a year ago I posted something on Facebook about how somebody I was talking to, she's 30 years old and I feel like I'm a 16 year old and just, nobody's figured it out yet. Like somebody's going to catch me. And my, my 63 year old aunt got in the comments and basically said "same" and that's when I decided that it's all of us. It's absolutely all of us all the time, we just don't talk about it.

Natalie: Yes. Why do we not talk about it? That is the most frustrating thing.

Kathryn: Yeah. So is there, is there anything you say to yourself when you kind of catch that you are in that spiral?

Natalie: Yeah. I have to step back and think about the fact that this organically fell into place. I didn't just wake up one day and have some idea of like, oh, I should do public relations for podcasters. No, people kept asking me to do this for them until the point of I had to make a business around it. So I have to tell myself that and that, yeah, people are willing to pay for this and it's in need and just because no one else is doing it doesn't, it doesn't matter. Like that's even more the reason of why I need to be doing it. Which is still a hard pep talk, but he just got to keep doing it. Create the momentum. Right. Yeah.

Kathryn: So on the flip side of that, what was your first major success?

Natalie: My first major success? That's a good question. I mean, really just, I feel really successful every time that I get a client that wants me to do this for them because I really enjoy it. So that feels so successful to finally to look back at all of the windy roads that it took to get here. And the amount of times I could have given up, the amount of times I could have went back to teach in South Korea. I mean, I tried, like I really tried to get off the path a thousand times when it got hard. But I think mostly it just feels really successful to have gotten to this point and to know that I didn't give up until it became a reality. I never knew the how, but I knew what I wanted and I was clear about it and I stayed focused to at least that. And, I think that feels really good and successful. So thank you for asking good reflections.

Kathryn: So, I'm guessing, odds are you don't really have a typical day, right? So you want to give us, just pick a random day, kind of walk us through it.

Natalie: Sure. So this also depends where I'm at at the time. So let's just pick now, right? I'm in Thailand, so a normal day for sure, firstly revolves around coffee. Let's be honest. So I wish that I could tell you I had like a better morning routine, but quite honestly I don't yet. So yeah, I wake up usually in a hunt for coffee. So I probably pack up my computer and everything then and just go search for a coffee shop that I'm going to work from for a few hours. So, go have a good work session till about 12 when I'm hungry and then I'll eat lunch and then I have a little bit of playtime. Actually I have as much play time as I want because I did the work first, which was really just about for three to four hours of really clear focus. And then, yeah, I have play time, so maybe I go for a bike ride, I have a yoga class, I have a meetup with other digital nomads or that sort of a thing. And then I usually try to have another work session in the afternoon into the evening because I find that I'm literally the most productive at night. And I wish that that weren't true, but that is my strength that I need to own it. So I'm, I'm usually up also being really creative until later than I wish I could tell you. But... And then I go to bed and I start all over again.

Kathryn: Very cool. Have you ever done a productivity heat map.

Natalie: I haven't, no. Tell me about this.

Kathryn: I want to say this is a Charlie Gilkey concept. I'm going to have to go back and double check and I'll put all of it in the show notes with links. But basically what you do is you take two or three days and you chart, I think he does it by quarter hour increments. It's been at least five years since I've done this. You kind of, you take a look at the blocks where you've felt most clear and focused and productive and the blocks where you feel kind of tired and distracted and you look for patterns. And then based on those patterns, that's when you schedule your work day.

Natalie: Okay. Yeah, I absolutely want to look at this actually. I'm so fascinated by productivity and hacking your mind to really get the most out of those chunks of productivity time. So I'm always searching for things like that, so that sounds really cool.

Kathryn: So yeah, I will, I will definitely get that to you. But it's, it made a difference for me, and it does shift over time as far as the individual. Or, at least it can, you know.

Natalie: Okay. Super Cool.

Kathryn: Do you have any kind of continuing education that you keep up with? I mean, you kind of developed this for yourself?

Natalie: Yeah, I mean, I'm so into personal development, any type of workshops and courses, that sort of a thing. So nothing is really ever specific, it just kind of comes up as it does. But, I usually find myself in a pretty big digital nomad community, or I at least see, I seek that out at least because I need community to thrive. And there's always workshops. I love it. Seriously, every night of the week I can go to a different workshop and learn something new on a topic. And that's another huge reason of why I live like this because I love always learning. Yes, basically I do have continuing education. It comes on kind of randomly and that's great.

Kathryn: So, what are some kinds of topics that you would consider developmental for what you do?

Natalie: Sure. I did recently go to one on productivity, so that's really funny that you mentioned this. I can't think of what the name of the method was. It didn't honestly resonate with me, like I couldn't get down with the system. So, that's probably why I don't remember the name of it, but at least I went. And let's see. Other ones just about, living as a digital nomad, like how to balance travel and work or, any type of like specific like how to get published online or how to improve your copywriting or you know, anything. Wow... social media hacks, like marketing hacks, anything like that, probably like online business or entrepreneurial related.

Kathryn: So now we're going to get into numbers. What would you say your salary ranges and how long have you been doing the work?

Natalie: So my salary range has been about \$1500 to \$2000 for the past few months. But given I live in Southeast Asia and that's more than enough to sustain a really, really awesome life. I'm talking, I get manicures and pedicures and massages and drink coffee out and

eat every meal out, every day and still live really quite comfortably. So those numbers are fine for me. I've only been doing this, I started as a va six months ago, so that is substantial to think that in six months I built up clients to even get started with my business now. And of course I don't want that number to stay. So that will be my goal for New Year is making that higher. But really even just my business has just, is making the switch to only PR within this past month. So the possibilities are like getting ready to get unleashed and I'm excited to listen to this and like a year from now and be like, okay, so that's funny, but there's so many possibilities. So in six months I was able to start working online and get enough clients to make \$1500 to \$2,000 a month.

Kathryn: And what would you say the very beginning salary range was?

Natalie: I mean obviously you start from zero, but yeah, I mean it's really up to you of course, as any thing is how much, I really hate the word hustle, like how much hustle you're going to put into it. I'm not a hustler quite honestly. But, really it is like how much effort you're going to put into it and giving yourself mindset talks of, okay, I can charge this much even though I have technically no experience doing this thing. Which I didn't do, of course not.... So I think it's fine to say, oh, I don't know. That's a really hard question actually because you, get clients by luck, like your first clients by luck or by a referral and they're probably not going to pay you as much as you desire that you're going to get paid right off the bat. But I think \$1,000 is fair.

Kathryn: Okay. And what would you consider the top salary range?

Natalie: Oh, there is no top, like there is unlimited potential. That is the beauty and the awesome. Yeah, everything is great about this lifestyle and working online because no one is going to tell you what the cap is. There is no cap. It is all up to you. Whatever you want, you can finally have. I think, yeah, there's no cap, which is awesome.

Kathryn: So how did you decide what to charge?

Natalie: I decided what to charge first of all. Of course by trial and error, I would be doing some things for what I thought was a fair rate at first. And I was like, actually I don't get paid enough to deal with you. So no, I, I'm not going to charge this anymore. So a lot of trial and error. I can think of my first client in particular that I was like, Oh God, wow, I can't believe I just quoted you that number. Um, trial and error, and then also realizing just how much I was undervaluing myself and that if I would've put the ball in my client's court and been like, yeah, how much are you going to pay me for that? They would have said double what I was saying, for sure. Without a doubt. So that's the trial and error part. And also, having facebook is really great resource, like a facebook groups specific to whatever type of online work that you're doing. So I got a lot of numbers and inspiration from stalking other virtual assistants and that sort of a thing. And the course that I took, I have a really great community with that and the mentor, you know, she's been through it and started as a VA 10 years ago, so she's really helpful in sorting out your numbers and that sort of a thing. So it makes of trial and error and mentorship, but more so on the trial and error.

Kathryn: Yeah. I think that's kind of true for all of us, especially when you're dealing with, I don't entirely know what it is, but the clients you charge the least amount of money always seem to give you the most trouble.

Natalie: Totally. Oh yeah.

Kathryn: Across every industry I've ever talked to.

Natalie: Yeah. You are speaking some truth there. And I'm just like laughing and shaking my head thinking about it because it's so true.

Kathryn: Because we all have very specific clients and we're like, I gave you a discount because you asked and I should have known. Like, that should have been my first clue. And, here we are.

Natalie: Right, right.

Kathryn: What are your next steps?

Natalie: Yeah, my next steps are super exciting. This month and next month I'm finalizing my website, stepping out only doing podcasts PR, no more virtual assistant work, which is a huge shift and an exciting shift. A leap of faith. Daily mental pep talks do not get me wrong. I gave myself one before I even got on this podcast type of a thing. So yeah, that would be my next step really, getting the foundation of my business going and, getting clients who want to get speaking on podcast, which I know that they're out there. And as soon as I do launch this, it's gonna blow up honestly. So, I'm never doing anything for the money. I'm doing it for my lifestyle. As I've mentioned, like I like traveling. I like living abroad. I like not working 40 hours a week. I'm never going to work 40 hours a week. So, I'm not launching my business for money and to like grow through the roof successfully. But of course I want to live comfortably and get the things that I want and money helps you do that. So launching my business, making more money, traveling, getting set up for the next stage of life per se.

Kathryn: And where can listeners find you?

Natalie: Listeners can find me on instagram. We can link my my name in the show notes, so @virtually.natalie, you can also find me on my website, virtuallynatalie.com and yeah, those would be the two best places as of now.

Kathryn: Okay. So yes, those will be in the show notes and I'll also get the virtual assistant mentorship program and we can drop that in there too.

Natalie: Beautiful. Yes. Alright,

Kathryn: Natalie, thank you so much for joining us. This has been great.

Natalie: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. It was so fun.

