Ann Curry is SPREADING HOPE

By LIZ VACCARIELLO AND BONNIE SIEGLER

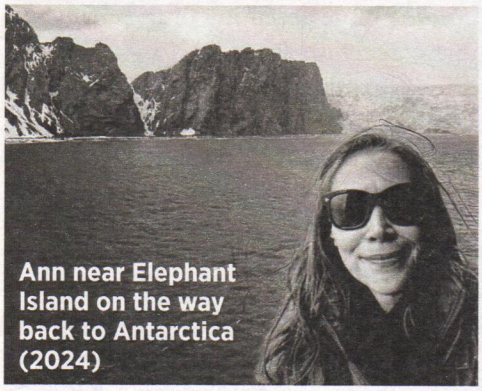


Millions know Ann Curry as the award-winning journalist who has spent more than four decades bringing the world's most powerful news stories into our homes. But long before she was reporting from war zones and humanitarian crises, Ann was shaped by the courage and struggles of her own family. "My Japanese mother fell in love with my American father after World War II and I was born in Guam. My mom immigrated to the U.S. and was very brave in coming to a new world," Ann tells *Woman's World*. "But she was treated poorly, and it lasted throughout her life."

Those early experiences—and putting herself through college by cleaning hotel rooms—taught Ann to see the humanity in people who are struggling and inspired a career devoted to telling their stories. From conversations with world leaders to speaking with everyday people, Ann's journalism is rooted in compassion.

Now, as she approaches 70, Ann says she's in one of the most fulfilling chapters of her life. "I'm able to focus on doing as much good as I can," she says. "I hope to inspire what I truly think exists in all of us: a capacity for empathy." That calling recently took her to Sudan, where she advocates for people displaced by war.

"It's the combination of joy and suffering that leads to a rich life," she says. Here, Ann shares her deep wisdom and why she believes there is hope in us all.



Ann near Elephant Island on the way back to Antarctica (2024)

Focus on what matters

When Ann was 12, she asked her father what she should be when she grew up. His answer would become a guiding principle for her life.

"Whatever you do in life, whether it's in your job or simply in how you live, do something that is of some good or service to someone else," he told her. "Because then—and only then—will you know, when you breathe your last breath, that it mattered that you were born.

"It was a pretty heavy answer," Ann recalls. "But he said the same thing over and over whenever I asked the question. The idea of service lit something in me about what I should do with my life."

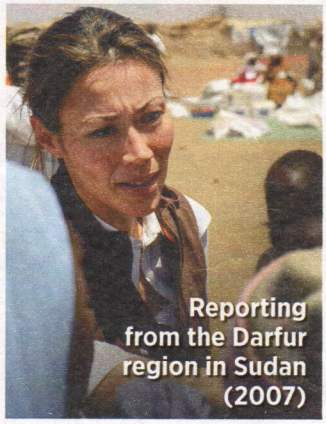
Ann followed this spark by attending the University of Oregon. After graduating with a journalism degree in 1978, she began her career in local television. She worked as a reporter for *KCBS-TV* in Los Angeles—where she won two Emmy Awards for her coverage of the 1987 L.A. earthquake—before joining *NBC News* in 1990. At NBC, she rose through the ranks, first as an anchor on *NBC News at Sunrise* and, in 1997, as the news anchor on *TODAY*, which made her a familiar face to millions of Americans. Now, more than 45 years into her career, Ann says she still comes back to her father's idea of service.

"We have to discover it in ourselves, and we also have to decide to live with that purpose," she says. "When you feel something deeply or passionately, I would say: 'Step in that direction.'

"What's been wonderful about my life now is that every decision I make is based on whether I can do some good—if I can, then it's easier to say yes," she adds. "I'm at this point where I am having one of the most rewarding, fulfilling times in my life. Spend your time purposefully."

Empathy is a muscle

After decades of listening to people's stories during some of their most difficult moments, Ann believes empathy is something every single one of us can develop. "Empathy is something I know exists in all of us," she says. "We may be out of practice, but it's there. It's a key part of being human."



Reporting from the Darfur region in Sudan (2007)

And strengthening that instinct doesn't necessarily require grand gestures. Ann says everyday life gives us opportunities to notice what someone else needs.

"You go through your day and there will be a child who's crying or there will be a person who can't open a door or an elderly person who can't open a jar—life is constantly presenting you with things you can help with," she says. "All you have to do is be aware and wake up to the needs of others and do it. Just look and be open. It's possible in all of us if we decide."

Ann also believes empathy can be influenced by the world around us. "Fear, anger and the feeling that there isn't enough to go around can make us retreat into ourselves, while gratitude and a sense of abundance can help us remain open to others."

Look for the helpers

Even after witnessing so much suffering in the world, from natural disasters to humanitarian crises, Ann has held on to her faith in humanity by paying attention to the people who *choose* to help.

"Mister Rogers used to say to look for the helpers, and I look for the helpers," she shares. "Whenever you look for the helpers in this world, it's surprising what you see—they're all around us!

"It's the person who walks an elderly person to her car and the people who pay for your coffee or put their arm around a person because of a difficulty," she says. "The helpers are really more prevalent than we think."

And Ann says noticing those acts is only part of the equation.

"Recognizing it, acknowledging it, encouraging it and being it—most importantly being it," she says. "Because when you do this, you actually become a magnet for other helpers."

Ann recalls seeing that ripple effect after covering the Sandy Hook school shooting. When she encouraged people to perform an act of kindness for every child and teacher who was lost, they did.

"It doesn't fix what happened. You're not undoing the horror," Ann says. "But you are putting kindness into the world wherever and however you can."

Find hope in small things

Ann knows how frightening the world can feel, particularly when she thinks about the suffering she sees in the news and the world her two grown children and grandchildren are living in.

"How are we supposed to face the world we are raising our children in when it feels scary in a whole new way?" she asks. "How are we to survive, how are we to breathe, how are we to act?" Her answer is to lean into goodness rather



Ann and her crew reporting from the Amazon rainforest (2013)

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Rasheda Ali giving Ann the Global Citizenship Award

than becoming overwhelmed by everything that is wrong.

"When the world feels like it's falling apart, it's a time to double down on being a force for good. And I think there is a certain kind of happiness, joy and wisdom that comes from that," she says.

For Ann, that can mean resisting the temptation to become numb to suffering and instead asking what small, meaningful action is possible in the moment.

Practice self-care

Over the years, Ann has also learned that caring about the world requires caring for herself as well. When the news is overwhelming, she tries to step away from it for a short time rather than letting the stress take over.

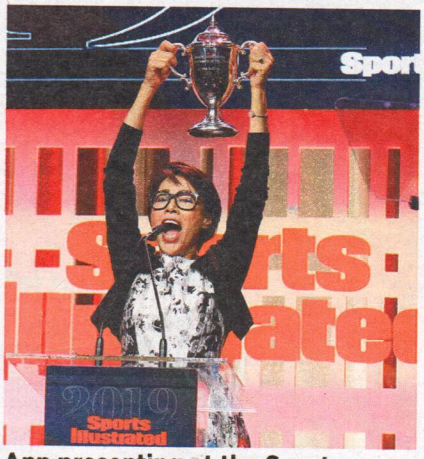
"I'll just stop and almost always say, 'Don't overthink it,'" she says. "Put your shoes on, go outside and take a walk. Reset.

"Maybe I go for only a couple of minutes or maybe if I'm really juiced up with stress, I'll go a little longer," she says. "But I've found that just the act of being outside is better than being inside. If you see a bird and if you just breathe, it helps so much.

"If you're in an urban environment, just go somewhere quiet," she adds. "Moving and being around nature helps more than I ever imagined."

To overcome hard moments or feelings, Ann also believes in getting curious about what's underneath those hard emotions.

"I also just try to rethink my reaction and breathe deeply. *Oh, so you're angry—why are you angry? Oh, so you're stressed out—what does that say about where you are? What can you do to take care of yourself better?"*


Ann presenting at the Sports Illustrated Spokesperson of the Year (2019)


"Never ever give up," she says

Embrace your age

Ann will turn 70 this year, and she sees getting older as something to celebrate.

"It is an achievement to grow old," she says. "And if you can grow older and live purposefully, it really is an enormous joy."

But Ann still wants to work because she believes there is important work left to do.

"If someone else were doing it, I'd be happy to sit at home, read books and grow flowers," she says with a laugh. "But we still need people out there." She's also become more accepting of the changes that come with age.

"The truth is I'm an older person. My hair is grayer now and I have wrinkles I didn't have before. Your initial response is you have to cover all this up, right?" she says. "And guess what—you can't.

"What you can do is eat really healthy, exercise thoughtfully and get a lot of sleep," she smiles, adding, "and when I don't get these things, I look terrible."

Keep learning

One of Ann's superpowers that has fueled her life and career is curiosity. She has always been curious, and she says she continues to read and learn every day.

"I come from a poor background. I had to kind of catch up my whole life, but I think the great works of literature should be for everyone," she says. "I've made it my life's mission to not look at anything as something I can't have if I can respectfully seek it.

"I want knowledge and want to keep learning and understanding ideas." But some of her greatest lessons haven't come from books.

"Wisdom can come from anywhere," Ann says. "Even grief from a terrible loss—there's wisdom in all these things. Embrace it and ingest it."

Have faith in yourself

If Ann could go back and talk to her younger self, she would say, "worry less about getting everything right."

"I would have told my younger self to have faith in yourself," she says. "It's going to work out one way or another.

"And I'd add that I'm proud of you for getting through challenges and holding true to your sense of what's right and what's wrong.

"As a reporter, as a human being, you have to be clear of what the answer is, follow your gut and acknowledge your mistakes and move forward," Ann says.

"I'm proud of myself at every age for trying so hard to do what's right."

Shining a light on Sudan

With her recent on-the-ground reporting in Sudan, Ann continues to tell the stories of people affected by war and persecution. Since 2023, 14 million people have been forced from their homes. Ann was troubled by how little attention the conflict was receiving when the United Nations' refugee agency reached out to her. So she began bringing news from Sudan to a wider audience, with coverage appearing on *PBS NewsHour*, in *The New York Times* and beyond. "We were able to share powerful stories," Ann says. "The response was enormous." For more info, follow Ann on Instagram @AnnCurry.





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Honest Answers *with Ann*

What is always in your travel bag?
"My phone, my glasses (which I need), a good sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat. I try to pack one thing that makes me feel cozy—sometimes it's a scarf or a book. Oftentimes it's great socks or pajamas."

What's your favorite healthy snack?
"An apple with chunky peanut butter makes me super happy."

What's a beauty trick you swear by?
"I don't want to carry a lot of make-up, so I take my lipstick and put little spots on my cheeks as blush!"

What's your go-to lipstick?
"I wear 'Chili' by MAC and a lip liner called 'Spice.' And I usually add a nice gloss to it."

What's something that can instantly make you feel better?
"Reading or getting lost in a museum makes me happy because it lets me escape the world."

What are you reading right now?
"*Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius. It's not a hard read. He was an emperor of Rome and a Stoic philosopher, so there's a lot of wisdom. I guess I'm in that seeking phase."

What do you do when you've had a really hard day?
"When I'm really upset, I tend to oversnack, which isn't good for me. Being aware of my vulnerabilities when I am sad, angry or whatever has really helped me slow down."

Watch the chat!

BEYOND THE COVER

Simply scan the QR code with your phone and watch the full interview with Ann and Liz on YouTube now!