

Jerry: Hey, Nancy, it's really great to see you and thank you so much for coming on the show.

Nancy: Thanks for having me. I'm excited.

Jerry: Yeah. Can we ta-, take a minute and just sort of introduce yourself, mostly so folks can get used to your s-, to, to your voice and ... 'Cause of course we don't want them confusing your voice with my voice. (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter) Sure. Uh, well, they won't confuse us 'cause I will not be quoting any poetry.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter) So, so, um, but other than that, we sound exactly the same. Uh, I'm Nancy Lublin. I'm funnier than people expect me to be, there you go.

Jerry: You are indeed.

Nancy: And, um, I ... I am. And I'm a social entrepreneur, which basically just means I'm an entrepreneur facing all of the same issues that all of your, your other friends and clients and people on this have faced, except I will never make any money.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter) So, I just keep starting not-for- ... I mean, some of them are never gonna make money too, I guess, but, yeah, I, um, I start not-for-profits. I keep, I keep doing the social change thing.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative), right. Then, so, and so, I'll, I'll quote some poetry ... No, just kidding.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: Um, I-, I'll quote some, some ... I'll make note that th-, the social return that you get, and I'll say it out loud, is pretty fucking awesome.

Nancy: Thanks. Yeah.

Jerry: And, and I appreciate you starting the not-for-profits that you start.

Nancy: Thanks. I, um, I love what I do. I mean, I ... In that introduction, I guess I said it, one of the ... Like, look, when I first met you, one of the many chips on my plate that I had to work through with you was the sort of inferiority complex of running not-for-profits, as opposed just for-profits.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: That I think I internalized, and that comes from the external world. I mean-

Jerry: Amen.

Nancy: You know, people still think that because I run a not-for-profit, that means they should reach me at 1:00 at home 'cause I must be watching Days of Our Lives.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: And, um, and, uh, so ... And I, I, um, so, I, I ... Yeah. I love what I do. And don't apologize for it.

Jerry: Yeah. And that somehow you wouldn't understand how to read a balance sheet or figure out a marketing plan.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: Which is hysterical.

Nancy: Yeah, it's actually kind of adorable, because I think it'd be super fun to run one of these big, fat for-profits with their big, fat marketing budgets and, you know, to be able to recruit people by throwing equity in their face and, you know, uh, I don't know, um, lunch-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: -and, instead, what I do, um ... I don't have any of those bells and whistles.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: Like the quality of management becomes that much more acutely important.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, the product, the UX, like we can't, we can't bribe people. Um, and you may come to a not-for-profit 'cause you believe in the mission, but you'll leave because of bad management.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: And so it's really important that we get it right. I don't ... Bribing is not something a not-for-profit can do, and for-profits do it all the time. Don't tell me that everybody at Palantir is happy.

Jerry: (laughter) I cannot-

Nancy: They're not.

Jerry: I can attest, they're not.

Nancy: Yeah. You know they're not. Some of them are just, they're just really well-compensated.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah. Well, the ... I, I think it would be great if we talked about your latest not-for-profit. Um, and, you know, we had dinner a couple weeks ago and we were bouncing it around and it just, it just dawned on me that the folks who follow this podcast, really the folks who kind of are, are bought in to their, what we're trying to do here at Reboot, um, really need to hear this story. And so the not-for-profit, the current not-for-profit-

Nancy: Mmm.

Jerry: -'cause there's always, there's always-

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: -there always one right in the, in the past, and there's another one-

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: -that you're cooking, 'cause I know, girl.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: Right? Is Crisis Text Line.

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: Tell us what Crisis Text Line is.

Nancy: Crisis Text Line is free 24/7 support at your fingertips.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, it's not an app, and so we don't want you to have to go through the friction of downloading something new, maybe you'll need it, what, you'll keep it on your phone next to Tinder and Instagram? I don't think so. So, um, instead, we want to be where you are already. So it's via text, it's via Facebook Messenger, um, you can find us in YouTube and Kick and Afterschool. We want to be everywhere people are

so that eventually it's easier to get help than it is to avoid getting help. Um-

Jerry: I think that's a really powerful point there.

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: I mean, it ... In, in-

Nancy: Then it's ... ki-, still kinda easy to avoid it.

Jerry: Yeah. In a sense, it's kind of, I, I feel, a kinship to the mission. In that sense. Which is making it easier to get help than to avoid getting help.

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah.

Nancy: That's right. That's right.

Jerry: And so, so, but let's get real specific. What's the kind of help that people are getting, and what are they reaching out for and, and then I'd, I'd love to hear the creation story, you know.

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: The back story here.

Nancy: So, it's, um, it's crisis intervention. I mean, it's real in the moment, heat of the moment, you're in that hot spot, and we get you to a safety plan, to a what we call a cool, calm. So it's not therapy. Um, it's not a long-term engagement. It's not a replacement for your best friend. It's, um, a panoply of issues. It's, it's everything. So it's not just suicide, but it's depression, anxiety, opioid addiction. We see a lot of self-harm and cutting. Eating disorders. Um, bereavement. Lot of grief.

Uh, we see all of the issues. Frankly, most ... We're, we're ... Most humans experience a mixture of issues, so we're not one thing. Um, not specialists in one thing. We're here to do all of it and it is entirely by text. Um, uh, conversations last typically around 45 minutes. The sweet spot is between 40 and 60 messages exchanged. Most of our volume comes at night between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., when you don't really have another avenue.

Um, uh, I will say that 30 percent of our messages are about suicide and depression. That is our biggest group. After that, anxiety is the next most common thing we see. And then self-harm.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: So, um, I thought when we launched it was all gonna be about bullying.

Jerry: Hmm.

Nancy: Like, I have seen every episode of Glee. I really thought that was the big epidemic in America. And it is terrible, um, but, um, it's only about three percent of our messages.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um.

Jerry: So, y-, you know, you just shared something. which it didn't even dawn on you but of course it makes total sense, which is that, um, the, the, the realization that this, this is about a mixture of things. And that, for example ... And there's no necessarily narrative arc here-

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: -but there's a connection between anxiety, depression, self-harm, perhaps suicidal ideation. Perhaps bullying. Perhaps bereavement.

Nancy: Insomnia.

Jerry: Insomnia. Which, you know, it's, it ... what I, what I'm ... Like there's a light bulb that just went off for me, which, you know, it sounds obvious now that I say it out loud, but, yeah, of course.

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: Right? And there, there's, there's, um ... I think sometimes the dialogue that exists around these moments is that in some ways we ... It may be easier for us to compartmentalize them.

Nancy: Absolutely.

Jerry: Right, so there's a-

Nancy: And by the way-

Jerry: -suicide prevention-

Nancy: That's right.

Jerry: -line. [crosstalk 00:07:25]

Nancy: That's right. And by the way, not just for us, um, that way that we've all functioned, but for the funding space, in the not-for-profit world it was well, I fund suicide. Or I fund eating disorders. One of the really interesting challenges for us is, w-, well we are, we're new. That's not how we're gonna function. We're not in one swim lane.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, and so funders would look at us and say, "Well, you don't exactly fit in my bucket," and I would say, "No shit. New things don't fit old buckets." And I think a lot of people who imagine new companies, whether they're for-profit or not-for-profit, one of those early stumbling blocks is, if you're doing it in a new way, of course it's unfamiliar to people.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: And so, um, it has been a switch that has had to flip in a lot of people's heads, the idea of an all-in-one one-stop shop, all crisis intervention. Now those are less-

Jerry: Can, can, can I jump in on that point?

Nancy: Please, please.

Jerry: Not only does this require a switch in the funding mentality, but what I'm hearing you talk about is you're treating the human condition.

Nancy: Exactly. Exactly.

Jerry: Right? And so they want a baseline common denominator? Do you help human beings?

Nancy: That's right. (laughter)

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: Well, here, here's the other thing is, the, um ... How this was born. You asked me about-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: -the origin story. This was born user-centric. And, um, I happen to think that the best tech start-ups are, obviously, are user-centric. They're not ... You don't make them because technology makes it possible for you to make purple ketchup or possible for you to, I don't know, geo-locate best on, um, I don't know, eyebrow shape or something.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: Know what I mean? Like-

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: -that's, that's really adorable, but do people really want it? Is that how people function? And then people go out and do user testing. We did it the opposite way. We were triaging this out of my former organization. So this was born as an edge case of an existing platform.

Jerry: All right. So just briefly tell us what the former-

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: -organization was.

Nancy: Yeah, so, I was-

Jerry: Or is.

Nancy: (laughter). Right. So I was the CEO of DoSomething.org. Um, it is now the largest organization for young people in America. It's about 5.7 million members. That's bigger than Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts combined-

Jerry: Wow.

Nancy: -in the U.S. Um, and the reason it got so big is because, uh, we texted. We found people. You really only text with your parents and your friends. Like there are not a lot of brands who are texting you. In part because, um, of the way the mobile carrier treat texts.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: They make money still on text. And so they block-

Jerry: (coughing)

Nancy: -all, yeah. You remember ... I mean, I'm gonna embarrass you, but you, you and I are old enough to remember e-mail spam. Remember all those Viagra e-mails?

Jerry: Yeah. I do.

Nancy: Okay. I remember them too, so I'm not ... This is not a statement on Jerry and Viagra, right?

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: I got those e-mails, too. And, and then ... Or the e-mails from like the Nigerian prince who lost-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -his wallet in the cab-

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: -send me \$500, I'll send you back five million? Right.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: So, those killed e-mail. We all created junk folders, spam, blah, blah, blah. But the mobile carriers do not want to happen to text, so they are blocking 80 percent of the messages being sent to you right now.

Jerry: Hmm.

Nancy: You're only seeing 20 percent of your text messages right now. Thank goodness. Because what it means is that when you opt in to your family, to your friends, to DoSomething.org, you trust them.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: So text has a 97 percent open rate.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: Because there's that trust. So because of that, when DoSomething would send out a text message, it would get opened, 97 percent open rate, because you trusted DoSomething. People started sharing things with DoSomething, having nothing to do with DoSomething campaigns, but about their personal life. Like, they were being bullied. Or that their best friend was addicted to crystal meth.

And so we would triage it with okay, here's a, here's a hotline number. Talk to your mom, talk to your principal. And then-

Jerry: Can, can we just pause on that?

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: Just pause on that. So I'm a DoSomething employee.

Nancy: Oh, yeah. So-

Jerry: And I get this text message. What was that like for them?

Nancy: Jerry, you are the first person to ask me that and it is a huge part of this arc. Um, really fucking hard. Like this was not part of the job. DoSomething employees are really special, passionate people, right? You ... To be a twenty-something and choose to go do like campaigns and social change means you're an inherently optimistic person, right? Like you just believe-

Jerry: And empathetic.

Nancy: -you can make a change. And empathetic.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: Um, you're, you're really concerned about the state of the world and so, yeah, it was painful. And on this day, I remember an employee printed out this one message that came from a girl that said, "He won't stop raping me. It's my dad. He told me not to tell anyone." And then the letters "R U there."

Jerry: Ugh.

Nancy: She printed it out, brought it to me and didn't anything, she just put it down on my desk and said, "I don't know what to do with this one." And I read it ... You know sometimes when like you read something and you, you're so shocked. I read it like four times over and I was like, "Wait, what?" And ... 'Cause it was horrifying. And then also shocking, that someone would share something so deeply personal with us.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: Like how desperate and alone do you have to feel to send something like that? So, um, we sent her the phone number for RAINN. Great rape and incest organization. The next day I came in and said, "What happened? Did we hear from her?" No. I said, "Send it to her again."

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: And the truth of the matter is, this was five-and-a-half years ago now, and I've personally taken that phone number and tried to call it, tried to text it, and I've never heard back from her. DoSomething's never heard back from her. And I don't know if it was a burner phone. I don't know if her father saw that message. And honestly, Jerry, I don't know if she's dead or alive.

Jerry: Huh.

Nancy: And I talk about her all the time because I really hope that she is somewhere and she has heard what she inspired.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, because she is absolutely the inspiration for Crisis Text Line.

Jerry: Yeah. And tell me about the employee.

Nancy: So, um, the employee, actually, I asked to help do this with me and if she wanted to sort of co-found this with me and she helped, um, sort of, uh, come up with the framework for how this might work and then she eventually left to do something and is somewhere else and apparently thriving in her job.

Um, but, and there were other employees who were helpful along the way and, and let me also confess, 'cause I was working with you at the time, so you'll remember this.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: I didn't initially go to Crisis Text Line full time.

Jerry: I remember.

Nancy: This was not one of those, like, epiphanies that every entrepreneur then says, "Oh, yeah, you know, I chucked everything and took out a mortgage and put everything behind this." I wasn't sure that I could handle the emotional strength that was gonna be needed for this. And I didn't think that I had the empathy to do this. And, um, so I raised the money. And I hired the first couple of people. And then I hired someone to run it. And I was just-

Jerry: I remember that.

Nancy: -the board, I was just the board chair. And I thought, "Okay. This is like ... This is such a neat and tidy solution. What a great way to be an entrepreneur. (laughter) Let's outsource it."

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: You know?

Jerry: Yeah, yeah.

Nancy: And that's just not ... That ... It didn't work. Um, she was-

Jerry: Why?

Nancy: -she, Because-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: 'Cause, 'cause a baby needs its mommy, right? Like, you can't really ... There's not really a replacement for that person and so, um, so-

Jerry: Well, can, can I, can I jump in on that point?

Nancy: Sure.

Jerry: A baby needs its mommy for sure. And this needed Nancy. Okay? You have superpowers.

Nancy: (laughter) Now I feel like I'm back on your couch. Here we go.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: You're [inaudible 00:14:58] on me, why are you crying? What's going on here?

Jerry: 'Cause I always cry.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: Because I, because I give a shit. Right? And I see my friend, someone I admire, applying her superpowers to a really important problem. And, and I would argue that, you know ... Like, I think of my work at Reboot and I say, it's the culmination of years and years of kinda circling in to what I'm supposed to do in my life. And who knows if this is the same thing for you, but it feels like that.

Nancy: It does. I mean, it does. To me, what I'm doing is, um ... I'm applying all of the stuff I've learned in tech about leading a tech company and solving problems with product instead of solving problems with people. You know, like that, you just think product first, and thinking about scalable solutions and thinking about building an internal culture. I'm applying all of that to this really, um, powerful human problem.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: It's not like finding Chinese food at two o'clock in the morning in a new city or getting like a car faster in the rain. It's this ... Like last night, I was on the platform taking conversations and for 45 minutes I was talking to a mom of three who was suicidal.

Jerry: Aaah.

Nancy: And, like that is-

Jerry: And you're a mom of two.

Nancy: And I'm a mom. Like, I'm a mom. I'm a mom of two. But, uh, but, but yeah, but like-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: -and she was really, she was just at her wit's end. And, and I will never talk to her again. I don't know her real name, she doesn't know my real name, but she was telling me things that she's never shared with another human being and it was raw, and the platform was like functioning perfectly-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -and I was able to talk in global chat to the other crisis counselors to say, "Hey, guys, can you help me help her?"

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: And I was able to flag from my supervisor, am I doing the right thing here? And, like, the ... All of the technology was working, you know, beautifully, to enable me to get this woman through one of the worst nights of her life.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Hmmm.

Nancy: Um, yeah. It feels, it feels really good, Jerry. Feels good.

Jerry: You know, it's ... And, and, and what I want to bring attention to, just in this moment, you know, like I am an old guy. Right?

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: I mean, as I, as I like to joke, I was at the Windows 1.0 press briefing. Okay, that's-

Nancy: That's-

Jerry: -how freaking old I am, okay?

Nancy: That's amazing. Lucky.

Jerry: Okay?

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: And so like it was written in hieroglyphics. Okay?

Nancy: And you took Eastern Airlines to get there?

Jerry: (laughter) Very good.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: And, and, and I think about the arc of technology development and, and, and, you know, sitting in the seat that I'm sitting in, I get all this ... God love 'em, they're really well-intended apps, that are designed to help. And what ... And that story that you just told, what I like about it is, at the other end of the conversation was, was another human being. It wasn't a chat bot. It wasn't AI that was routing it to some sort of si-, sort of information. It was ... What you were doing was, what I think we're supposed to do with technology. Enhance the human experience.

Nancy: So that's right. So by, by the way ... So that's right. We could do this by chat bot. Our data corpus is large enough, it's already more than 33 million messages. We can layer on predictive analytics. We could do this by chat bot. I mean, we could. We've got the AI and NLP and the, the-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: -volume var-, variety, velocity to be able to, to do this. And we've made a conscious decision not to. Um, our board, all of us sat down and said, we are what we call a human first-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: -organization. And our philosophy is that technology and data are here to make the humans faster and more accurate.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: But not to replace us. So faster and more accurate. Let me give a great example.

Jerry: Yes.

Nancy: My favorite example of this ... We talked about this over dinner, but my favorite example of this is how we stack rank based on severity. So, um, when we first built the algorithm, um, w-, we ... The guys here are really smart and they loaded in words like die, suicide, overdose and so if these words show up in the first couple of messages, make that, that, uh, person first in the queue. Right? We should take that person fir- ... Like a, like a hospital emergency room, right?

Jerry: Triage.

Nancy: Where the gunsh-, gun ... Triage. Gunshot wound should be taken before the kid with the sprained ankle.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: Makes total sense. I wish all customer service worked this way.

Jerry: (laughter) Right.

Nancy: (laughter) So, so, um, anyway. So that was working pretty well and then last summer we layered on a machine learning, um, algorithm, and found that actually there are thousands of words and word combinations, so engrams, bigrams, trigrams, that are more powerful than the word suicide. So, um, there's one family of words that's sixteen times more likely for us to end up triggering an active rescue, so calling 9-1-1, than the word suicide. So, do you want to guess? Do you remember what that word is? I think we talked about-

Jerry: I don't. I don't.

Nancy: Yeah. So, so, think about it. When we trigger an active rescue, it's when someone has the ideation, the plan, the means, and the timing.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: That's really of definition, um, imminent risk for either suicide or homicide.

Jerry: Hmm.

Nancy: So what do you think the, the, the words are that are most likely for us to go through that four-part risk assessment and say, "Oh, shit, we gotta call 9-1-1. This is about to go down."

Jerry: Hopeless? Lack of choice? Um, I have no other, uh, thing. I don't know.

Nancy: What's the most common drug in your house?

Jerry: Uh, Advil?

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: Hmmm.

Nancy: Advil. Tylenol. Ibuprofen. Aspirin.

Jerry: Hmmm.

Nancy: So they're, they're right in reach. If you've got the ideation and the plan, you've already thought about how to do it and, and you own that stuff and it's, it's within five feet of you right now. Wherever you're listening to this. Like-

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: -everybody has access to this. And if you've thought that through, y-, y-, you're ... This means that you're at imminent risk. Turns out that the unhappy face, crying emoji?

Jerry: Mmm.

Nancy: Four times more likely for us to trigger an active rescue than the word suicide. And we also discovered through this algorithm the hashtag KMS, which we had never heard of before. Kill myself.

Jerry: Ah.

Nancy: So this is an example of technology and data being used to make humans better. And so we loaded all of this in and now we handle those, what we call Code Orange conversations, those imminent risk conversations, in 39 seconds.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: That's, that's what I think all of these skills should be used for. Like-

Jerry: I'm, I'm gonna, I'm gonna envision that, that, that person on the other end of the line.

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: In code armed.

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: Being responded to by, by someone who gives them a feeling of not, of them not being alone.

Nancy: That's right.

Jerry: It gives them a feeling of being understood within 39 seconds.

Nancy: Within 39 seconds, they are connected with a human who's gonna do that. Who

has been trained. These are all volunteers. We haven't talked about that. But they're all volunteers who have been trained in like what empathy is and how to actually do it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, uh, the training is pretty terrific. Like, you see some-

Jerry: You must be reading poetry to them.

Nancy: Fuck no.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter). So, um, the, uh ... But there's things that you do, that you're, you're kind of, you know, a, a master of-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -like validation.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, and you validate in a way that we actually teach people to validate, which is one of the ways that you validate is you hear their pain, you reflect it back to them-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -and you level it up one degree.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: So if I were to say, "I had a really bad day."

Jerry: You had a really, really hard day.

Nancy: You would respond with, "Tell me about your horrible day."

Jerry: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Nancy: If I was saying, like, "I'm really sad today," you would respond with, "Tell me what's got you feeling so rough."

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: So, you ... That's, that's how you validate. So there is ... We're actually also putting

again the science and data behind empathy. We know, for example, that why questions?

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: Why did you think this? Are terrible. Totally useless questions. They sound condescending, kinda arrogant. Like an accusation.

Jerry: It could trigger all sorts of defensiveness and-

Nancy: Totally.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah.

Nancy: How questions. Super useful.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: We know that the words smart, proud, and brave are like the best words you could use with someone in crisis.

Jerry: I think I used one of those words with you today.

Nancy: (laughter) You use them all the time. You're ... right?

Jerry: Right, right.

Nancy: You're really smart, Jerry. You should feel really proud of how-

Jerry: Well, I, I'm brave in the way I learned. (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter) Yeah.

Jerry: Right. I, I think this is incredible data and, and such an incredible experience. Um, I think back to my own times of crisis, you know, as I've told this story before, my first major bout of suicidal ideation and depression was really in my late teens and, you know, while I'm super happy with the way my life has turned out, I'm curious as what would have happened if I had Crisis Text Line back then. You know? I, I may not have actually taken the actions that I took.

Nancy: Well-

Jerry: I still would've had the feelings.

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? But I may not have taken the actions that I took. And, and, and, again, I'm grateful, uh, for the work you're doing.

I want to go ... I want to take this in, in, in a, in, in a slightly different direction and talk about some of the things that we, we've already bounced around, like it's ... So we at Reboot, we sort of put ourselves out there and we have this conversation about being vulnerable, being authentic, being real and, you know, as you know, 'cause you've been on the receiving end of a lot of this, um, I think that that's actually the best way to lead. You know?

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: We joke all the time that better humans make better leaders, right?

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Remarkable thing. And one of the things not unlike, I think, your experience with DoSomething is we start getting, uh, inquiries that are, that are unexpected. And, and at this point, they're coming in about once every two weeks, maybe even once a week. And it usually goes like this. "Someone at our company either attempted or committed suicide."

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: "What do we do?" Which is around a kind of a bereavement question.

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And the second piece to that is, "How come we didn't see this coming?"

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And the not seeing this coming, I think embedded in your data may be some additional ways that we could "see this coming." And I want to be careful in this moment 'cause I don't want to make the, the, those who survive this situation to feel responsible. Especially if they're not directly-

Nancy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: -connected to it. But the feeling of being responsible, and the helplessness, is really powerful for those who are, are around the person in crisis.

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: And so, I guess this is a long-winded entry into how do we expand this? 'Cause I, I think the primary audience of teens, young adults ... But there's no reason. I mean,

you were talking to a mom of three last night.

Nancy: Yeah, that's right. No, that's right. So 75 percent of our users are under age 25.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, and of the over 25, um, it's a greater percentage male than of the under 25s, so we are getting, um ... Which is really important because actually middle-aged men are the ones most likely to die by suicide. So-

Jerry: Um, I, I just want to pause on that. That's an important statistic. People don't realize-

Nancy: Oh. They don't.

Jerry: It's the, it's the 35 to 60-year-old men.

Nancy: That's right. You guys don't go to doctors. You don't raise your hand and say, "Hey, I'm in pain." You don't talk about this stuff.

Jerry: That's right.

Nancy: And so, to me, Crisis Text Line is a phenomenal solution. Like you could be texting in the middle of a meeting. You could be texting us about an anxiety attack and nobody around you would know. It's perfectly private.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: So, I, I, um-

Jerry: Um, there, there is a, there is a really important book by a guy named Terrence Real. And the title of the book is "I Just Don't Want To Talk About It."

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: And it's men and depression.

Nancy: Yep. And by the way, this isn't talking, it's texting.

Jerry: Right. (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter) So I do think this is, it's a great solution for the start-up, for start-up culture.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: Um, where there is this ... a massive stigma. I will say that the rising generation ... Like, like the world is just gonna be better when these kids take over. I'm, I'm really, I'm long on this generation because they don't have a stigma, a stigma around mental health issues that, um, that middle-aged people have.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: Um, so, so to get back to this, 'cause I, I think you're also asking for practically, how should-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -co-workers and managers-

Jerry: That's right.

Nancy: -respond to these high-intensity situations? Um, so I'll just say, like, I've, I've been there, too, right? When I was the CEO of DoSomething.org, at one point in time we had 70 employees and only 10 of them were over the age of 30.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: And all of those twenty-somethings were going through death of a parent for the first time, falling in and out of love for the first time. Some questions about, um, sexual and gender identity. Um, um, getting an apartment for the first time. Going through a break-up for the first time. And, actually in part during my work with you, um, one-on-one, I, I really got to a place where I've decided that those aren't challenges. That was ... That is the best part of my job.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: That it's a privilege to lead people while they're going through this unbelievable formative time in their life. I'm, I'm, I'm almost 46. Got two kids, I'm gonna be married to my husband probably for my whole life.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: And like my big moments are kinda done. I'm, I'm like, I'm cake that's already kind of risen in the oven. Um, you can stick in fork in me and put some frosting on me and I'll still be delicious but I'm pretty much done. But all of those twenty-somethings are just rising and figuring out what kind of cake they are. Okay, I'm clearly hungry. But, uh-

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: -and it's, and it's Passover, so I'm using a cake metaphor. Oh my goodness.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: But, um ... And I think it's really a privilege to lead those people then, but you have to start with that as your basis.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: These mental health and ... Not even mental health or behavioral health. These human issues are a privilege for you to lead and manage, not a challenge. Not a responsibility. If you start by thinking about your employees and your co-workers as human beings rather than employees and co-workers, um, you, you're gonna miss less, you're gonna be a better leader, you're gonna be more authentic. You're gonna have a m-, a much happier workplace. Um-

Jerry: I'm sitting here beaming with pride, you know that.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: And I will just say, it's not easy. Like I don't always get it right.

Jerry: A-, Amen. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Whew. It's incredibly challenging. Like it's-

Jerry: And, and, and it demands of you that you rise to the occasion.

Nancy: Oh my God-

Jerry: 'Cause even though you think you're fully-baked, you're still rising.

Nancy: Of course I am. And I'm still ... Especially with these millennials who present with all kinds of things that I never thought about or encountered. Cutting? Like self-harm, I never saw when I was in my twenties. And now I see it. Um, and let me just say, this, this request that I'm making of leaders and of managers to, to think of people as humans and bring your whole self and recognize their whole self is fucking exhausting.

Jerry: Amen.

Nancy: Like I get home at night and I am spent. I am a couch potato. I watch more television and Netflix. Oh my gosh, I just lie there and eat ice cream.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: I mean, truly.

Jerry: (clears throat)

Nancy: Um, but I'm really happy.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nancy: And my companies are productive.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: And for the people who buy into this ... And by the way, there are some employees for whom they were like, "Nancy was all up in my business and I ... That's not the right work environment for me. I need to be at place where I can just clock in and clock out nine to five," and that's fine. Um, I don't think there's ... You know, I, I'm not the, the perfect leader for everyone, but I have a family of Crisis Text Line and DoSomething and some former, you know, Dress For Success, um, co-workers who-

Jerry: Which was your first not-for-profit.

Nancy: Which my first thing, yeah, who like ... I mean, I will bleed for. And, you know, I'm the first person they tell when they're pregnant or gender transitioning and it's because they know, like, I'm there for them.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: And I will put my whole self behind-

Jerry: I-

Nancy: -what's going with you.

Jerry: I, I, I'll tell you a quick little story from this morning. I, I had conversation with a client, uh, a CEO struggling, um, with some very specific issues, with a particular employee and, and we were talking about language that he wanted to use and he said, "You know, I think what I'm gonna say to him is, 'As your friend.'" I said, "Stop."

Nancy: Nope. Yeah.

Jerry: Okay. If you start off a conversation with, "As your friend," what you're actually doing is distinguishing.

Nancy: That's right.

Jerry: And you're, you're re-, you're re- ... I said, "Why don't you just start the conversation being their friend?"

Nancy: Yeah.

Jerry: And he, he laughed and he said, "Oh, that's a lot easier." I said, "Yes. And it's going to require your human heart to be present."

Nancy: Yeah, the idea that there's a difference between work and personal is just a silly fallacy. We're, we are whole people. Um, and by the way, I learned this, um, because somebody taught it to me, because I had a COO do something who made me a better leader. So, um, Aria Finger, uh, who was my COO, pulled me aside once about, uh, eight years ago and said, um, "What's going on? You're mean." And I was like, "What?" And she was like, "What's going on with you?" And I, I cried, there in the office in a conference room with glass walls, that was an awesome moment. And, um-

Jerry: Yes, it was.

Nancy: It was. Yeah, it was, it was. And, um, and I said, "What you don't know is in the last six weeks I've actually lost both of my grandmothers-"

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: "-and I was very close with each of them and this is a hard time." And she said like, "I had no idea." And I said, "Well, you know, it was personal, I didn't think it mattered for everybody and I'm leading," and I was so fucking wrong. And she was like, "Nancy, this is part of, like, who you are and what's going on with you. You have to share that with us. It's okay to be vulnerable." And I looked at her and I said, "God, I want to be more like you. You are, like, positive and authentic," um, you know, she comes from a family where her, her parents are divorced and probably get along better than my parents who have been married for 50 years. (laughter) You know, so-

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: -she comes from this unbelievable communicative family and background and she's made me a better leader. And I chose on that day to make my operating system kindness.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, and that's just, which in-, which requires you to be vulnerable and honest with yourself and everyone else. But kindness.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: And, um, it was a muscle I had to develop, so-

Jerry: Yep. I remember.

Nancy: Yeah, for a while I had to stop myself and be like, ugh, don't judge.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, but like open your heart. And now it's really like natural to me, and to kind of think the best of people and just kind of love harder when someone is struggling. Like my quarterly reviews with people are not about OKRs or KPIs. For the company, we focus on KPIs.

Jerry: Yep.

Nancy: I mean, we have a slack channel where every morning at 7:00 a.m. we all see the same KPIs. But in my quarterly reviews with my team, it's, "What do you want to achieve this quarter content-wise and what do you want to achieve methodologically?" Which might mean like get more sleep. Or, like, go take your wife on a date. Um, but it's ... Those quarterly things are much more human than goal-oriented, if that makes sense.

Jerry: It makes total sense and I want to bring it full circle to that group of start-up executives that we were just talking about before. So, in my experience, part of what happens for them, and I don't have any data other than anecdotal to back this up, but part of what happens to them is when they live 15, 20, 30 years in a particular mode and the mode is, "I'm gonna live," to quote Parker Palmer for a moment, "divided."

Jerry: Where, "I'm gonna leave that shit at the door. The fact that I lost both my grandmothers."

Jerry: Right? I'm gonna live that ... And then what ends up happening is you, spend 10 years, 15 years, 20 years divided. Where the inner part of who you are and the outer experience of what you are, are so out of sync. And then you haven't been socialized with the language to say, "Hey, I feel like shit right now." Right? Just that. It doesn't have to be a therapy session, right?

Jerry: Then all of a sudden, the systems start breaking down. The personas start breaking down. And you end up in crisis.

Nancy: So, I want to add another layer to that.

Jerry: Please.

Nancy: Um, because of the workplaces that I've been in that are so diverse, that, um ... Like, look. I'm a privileged white woman. This ... So, so, I'm good on this, but I am acutely aware that for my LGBTQ co-workers, for my co-workers who are people of color, that division is im-, is an impossible request.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: And we need to be honest in the tech industry as one of the reasons why not enough diverse people have succeeded. Because the idea of dividing like who, who you are and your lived experience ... And by the way, people with mental health issues. The idea that you're just supposed to succeed and win and grind it out, but you have crippling anxiety. Or you have like OCD. Um, actually, OCD can kind of help. But you have, um, but you have depression. And you're supposed to divide that and just keep that home in your personal life is impossible. And-

Jerry: Right. It's, i-, it's, it's, it's part of, you know, Lori Segal at, uh, at CNN did that-

Nancy: Yeah, that-

Jerry: -that brilliant piece on the-

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: -Silicon Valley secret. What we're really talking about is this, this correlation between the culture that we have-

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: -in the tech industry. Which is, leave it at the door. It's a kind of binary thinking of, you're either on, you're switched on or you're off, you know. It's, it's not a whole experience. So, and, what you're linking, which I think is brilliant, is this is part of the reason we have a diversity challenge.

Nancy: That's right. That's-

Jerry: We have an inclusivity challenge. It's not a numbers game.

Nancy: No, it's not. Stop with the numbers game.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: It's not. It's a cultural, um, it's cultural issue. It's a, it's a structural issue. And, again,

it's not a diversity challenge. It's this untapped opportunity. It's, it's, it's, um, human. Like what we need to stop just valuing, again, OKRs and KPIs and win, win, win and post numbers and instead start valuing the whole people and everything they bring-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -to our environments. And then, P.S., you're gonna end up crushing those numbers. Because when you lead and your team leads with like the whole self and who they are ... I don't mean sitting around and reading poetry and singing Kumbaya. I really don't.

Jerry: Right. Right.

Nancy: But I mean, but I mean saying like, um, you know, "My grandma died last weekend. I'm really having a hard time with this. Can somebody proofread what I just wrote, because like I," or "I need to do like a second pull request on this code because I think I probably missed things in the last 48 hours."

Jerry: That's right.

Nancy: That's like, yes. That's the practical application of what I'm talking about here.

Jerry: Yeah, at the ... My shorthand for it is to stop treating everything below the mind as a meat bag that's just out there to carry everything around.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: Right?

Nancy: Yes. Right.

Jerry: We're not, we're not, we're, we're flesh and blood. We are whole-

Nancy: Totally.

Jerry: -humans.

Nancy: That's right. That's right.

Jerry: Including our feelings.

Nancy: Yep. That's right. Um, uh, I think, uh ... So in my workplaces Valentine's Day is a day off.

Jerry: Mmm.

Nancy: Um, I want everybody to have love in their life. I don't care if you take your mom to, to lunch that day but there's gonna be somebody in your life who you love. You can't just love your co-workers and your job.

Jerry: How about loving yourself?

Nancy: Absolutely. Absolutely. But I think it's also, it's also important to love somebody else, too, Jerry.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, both of those of things. And so, um, Valentine's Day is always a day off, um, so long as I'm in charge, so, who knows?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, I think maybe we'll start to wrap, but, but the question I'm holding is, where do we go with Crisis Text Line now? Where-

Nancy: I'd like-

Jerry: Where are you taking it?

Nancy: Yeah, so, we should be like 9-1-1 for all of the other stuff, right?

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: So (laughter) all of the mental health and behavioral issues. And it should be as big as 9-1-1. We are at the bottom of this mountain. We're just getting started. Um, and, uh, you know, 9-1-1 handles like 300 million calls a year. Um, um, we're gonna do about a million this year, so-

Jerry: Phone calls.

Nancy: -yeah, we're just getting started. Yeah. Well, well, phone calls, conversations.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: That's right. So, um, we're just getting started.

Jerry: Okay.

Nancy: And, um, uh, and I think it, it- ... I'd like to bring it around the world. 'Cause if we have these problems here in the United States, um, it's actually, uh, really dire in places like the Mideast-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -where there's, um, not a lot of mental health professionals and, and in some countries domestic violence is not illegal. It's, that's, it's just what you do when you're married to someone, you can do whatever you want. Um, that's their property now. Um, there's no mapping of any of these issues, right? So people don't know, um, um, where-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: -things are happening or how often. Um, and so, to have all ... We didn't even talk about the use of the data for public benefit.

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: But, um, yeah, that's ... So I want to bring this 9-1-1 to the world. It's like a little dream. 9-1-1 to the world.

Jerry: Well, here, here's what I see, too. Um, and I've, I've said this to my friend Brad Fell and I've, I've I've given my assign-, this assignment to myself as well. Us old folks, and I'm throwing you in this bucket.

Nancy: (laughter) Yeah.

Jerry: We kinda have a mentor responsibility. Our responsibility is to pave the way, right? And, and-

Nancy: I think-

Jerry: And-

Nancy: I think-

Jerry: And, and to clear their way for th-, for, for those who are coming right behind us.

Nancy: I think it's more than mentor, Jerry. I think it's example.

Jerry: Yes.

Nancy: Um, I think it's example. I think we need to require this of ourselves also. Like-

Jerry: Right.

Nancy: -um, that's right. But we need to basically reset everything that winning is actually leading with your whole self, leading with the product, uh, whatever your company service or product is, it's for another human. Like who is going to use this? Instead

of, um, how is it going to be used? Like, we need like a whole-, complete re-imagining of, um, user experience, winning, culture, that's human-centric.

Jerry: Yeah. I got-

Nancy: Instead of just numbers.

Jerry: I think you're right and I think the arc of this conversation's really fascinating, because we started by talking about the moments of crisis but what we're really talking about is the moments of being human. And actually making it safe to be human in a workplace.

Nancy: Yep. I think that's right.

Jerry: That's what we're talking about. Now, we're also talking about making it safe to be human in our lives. But I'd-

Nancy: Yep.

Jerry: -steered us to in the workplace and that.

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: So.

Nancy: Well, I think that makes it very, a good, a good conversation, good practical conversation. Thank you.

Jerry: Yeah. I want to thank you. Not only for coming on this, uh, but also for making your old coach really proud.

Nancy: Well, I want to thank you for being that person for me and being my safe place for so long and such a good touchstone for me.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Thank you. I really, I appreciate you so much, Jerry. And I feel really lucky to have had that one-on-one time with you.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy: Um, thank-

Jerry: Well, the honor and the luck was mine, so.

Nancy: No, it was mine. No backsies.

Jerry: (laughter)

Nancy: (laughter)

Jerry: Deal. (laughter)