

Jerry: Hey Nicole. It's good to see you.

Nicole: Hi Jerry.

Jerry: Thank you for coming on the show and, and um, why don't you just take a moment and introduce yourself.

Nicole: Sure. My, my name's Nicole Glaros. I'm a partner at Techstars ... um, I've been with Techstars for many years um, and we are, we make, we're the ... I think the term we use is we're the worldwide network that helps entrepreneurs succeed so play a lot in the investment space and early stage start-ups. Work a lot with entrepreneurs and uh, prior to that, I was an entrepreneur myself. Um, but, I, so I've been around the like early tech, internet start-up space for probably fif, 15 plus years.

[00:00:30]

Nicole: It was New York, yup.

Nicole: Yep (laughing). We are both smiling. Actually I remember the content of our first conversation.

Jerry: Do you? Now, now you got me.

Nicole: Well, um, I would say that it's not often that I remember the content of a first conversation, mostly because of the sheer number of people that I talk to on the daily basis-

Jerry: (Laughs) Amen.

Nicole: But the struggle that I was having was that I was coming from Boulder-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: To New York to run the Techstars program there. And I was very aware of the cultural difference between Boulder and New York. And I was unsure ... how to ... really leverage the magic that we had built in Boulder ... How I could really take that magic and sort of repurpose it in New York. And when I was struggling with how do I approach the, this, like, I'm not a New Yorker, I never lived in New York.

[00:03:00]

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: How do I take the huggy, lovey ...

Jerry: (Laughing)

Nicole: The world is wonderful-

Jerry: Crunchy ...

Nicole: Your first-

Jerry: Right.

[00:03:30]

Nicole: Atmosphere of Boulder and really turn that into something positive and not, not critical in New York. And, when I was asking around for people that might help me navigate through that, your name came up as one of them.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: And um, and, and I had asked you some questions and you just spent an hour talking to me about how New Yorkers think and how to best navigate New York and, and um, that 2013 class in New York has um, companies like BlueCore in it and Plated in it and a bunch of really great companies have come out of that program.

[00:04:00]

Jerry: Hm.

Nicole: And I really attest that to the guidance that I got from you-

Jerry: Aw.

Nicole: On how to navigate that-

Jerry: Now you're gonna make me cry.

Nicole: (Laughing).

Jerry: I know your big concern about coming on the show is I was gonna make you cry, now you're gonna make me cry.

Nicole: I'm not worried about you making me cry cause I already know that's gonna happen.

Jerry: (Laughing)

Nicole: (Laughing) But anyway, that was um, that was, that was my first exposure to you-

Jerry: Wow.

Nicole: [00:04:30] And it was really helpful. And I think that program and the mentorship program that we built around that New York program, um, just really was impactful to New York.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: And I attribute a lot of that to ... you, helping me really think through how to ...

Jerry: Aw.

Nicole: Get everybody row in the same direction.

Jerry: Wow. That, that ... I'm glad I had that memory come back.

Nicole: (Laughing)

Jerry: [00:06:00] So well, thank you again for, for that and thank you for coming on the show. And, I, I know that, that some of this came out of that fact that ... um ... um, we sort of were ... were, were bouncing around different ideas about things that might be, um ... helpful for you to talk through. Um, w-why don't you s-speak to that, what would be helpful in this time? Cause, you know, as we were starting to say, even though off, off the recording, there's an opportunity in this conversation to spend a little bit of quiet time ... slow time, if you will. Uh, where you get to kinda hang out with big issues and hang out with those issues with uh ... with kind of uh, gentleness around it. [00:06:30]

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: So what would be helpful to talk through?

Nicole: Well, I, the thing that we had sorta talked about before we started recording, was ... this notion of the space between stimulus and response. And ... that, that um ... that, that space for me has been a really interesting space to be introspective.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:07:00]

Nicole: I come from a very large, big, fat Greek family and as most Greeks will attest they're very emotional and very emotionally driven and their joys are very, very high and their angers are very, very high. And voices are always raised. In fact, when I was in college I was dating a guy and brought him home to meet my parents and at the end of the weekend ... And we had a great time, I mean everybody was having a great time and hanging out and at the end of the weekend, I said "So what'd ya think of my family?" And he said "Everyone's so mad at each other all the time." And I was like "What?"

Jerry: (Laughing)

[00:07:30]

Nicole: I was trying to think in my head "When was anybody mad at each other?"

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: And it wasn't that anyone's mad, it was that everybody was yelling.

Jerry: Yep-

Nicole: But that's because you're Greek and you always yell. So anyway, this notion of that space in between stimulus and response has been really interesting for, um, for me to observe when, when I get upset or when I get excited or

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: When I get angry or when I get scared. And then try to

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:08:00]

Nicole: Sort of piece together a story about why those things happened.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: And um, um ... It's been uh, actually like, something that really started me down this journey was, you had mentioned Carrie and Kirsten Barry-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Was the boxing.

Jerry: Yup, yeah.

Nicole: Because-

Jerry: This is the, the corner boxing gym where we both train at. But, yeah. Say more.

Nicole: Yeah, when you're boxing and somebody is trying to punch you in the face, you have this reaction, which is a very natural reaction ... which is to get out of the way. But if you're not thoughtful about ... thoughtful is not the exact right but if you're not um ...f you can drill into yourself to be present enough to react in the right way, in that situation then you get punched in the face.

[00:08:30]

Jerry: Yeah well it's funny. Yeah, You're reminding me even though we can sort of play with the quote between stimulus and response, there a space. And in that space lays our choice and our freedom, which as I have come to understand is not from Viktor Frankl but in fact ... I forget who it said, but somebody describing Viktor Frankl's work. Anyway, the other quote that pops in, is actually a poster that uh, Carrie has up in the gym, which is "Everybody has a plan until they're punched in the face."

Nicole: Oh right. (Laughing)

[00:09:30]

Jerry: And I think that's Mike Tyson. And, and you know, in a sense the, the, the stimulus that you're talking about is the punch in the face. Right?

Nicole: That ... Yeah. That one was in, that one was interesting though because it took a very like visceral and physical-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: Um, activity-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: But then you extract out of that-

Jerry: Mm.

Nicole: Into like every day-

Jerry: Mm.

Nicole: Interactions

Jerry: Mm.

Nicole: And it was, it was through boxing that and you know for the record, I wouldn't call myself a boxer. I go to a boxing gym -

[00:10:00]

Jerry: I've watched you. You are a boxer.

Nicole: (Laughing) I go-

Nicole: To a boxing gym for workouts.

Jerry: Yep.

Nicole: Carrie is still trying to get me back in the ring.

Jerry: Yep.

Nicole: Um, but, um ... But you realize that you have these very automatic responses in the ring, that are sometimes the wrong response.

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: And, and so to st-s-s-start to be conscious of what you're doing in that moment. Um in the boxing ring is very advantageous because you can learn how to dodge a punch, you can learn how to be on o-offensive right back at the same time. But really, what, what I liked about boxing, is taking that out of boxing and applying it to, every day. And you can't get that kind of practice every day, unless you're in the boxing ring.

[00:10:30]

Jerry: So, yeah, lets play with this because I- I think the connection between seeing this response, your question about that, your question about presence, your question about reaction ... and the link I think is really interesting and w-we were just down a path of, of, of being introduced and how did you find the connection to the corner? Was it David Mandel?

[00:11:00]

Nicole: It was, yeah it was David Mandel actually.

Jerry: Uh huh.

Nicole: He had been trying to get me to go for probably about a year-

Jerry: Uh huh.

Nicole: And I went to, I went to like an intro class that they had and I was ... At the time I was looking for inspiration-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: In my workout and he was like "Nothing is inspiring like being punched in the face." I was like "No interest-

Jerry: On being punched in the face.

Nicole: No interest in being-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Punched in the face and I have even less interest in punching somebody in the face, like that just doesn't sound inspiring to me." But, um, so I went to one of the intro

[00:11:30]

classes and the intro class was okay. But, what, what happened was David really talked me into doing the Founder Fights-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: Thing. And he, he talked me into because he made it sound like it was gonna be fun.

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: I should've known better.

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: Um-

Jerry: Now, just to, t-to be clear, Founder Fights is a charity event that the corner runs where founders and others connected to the start-up scene here in, in Boulder, actually climb into the ring and punch each other. Um and I agreed to do it and then bailed. Um-

[00:12:00]

Nicole: (Laughing) It's terrifying.

Jerry: It's terrifying.

Nicole: It's terrifying.

Jerry: But um, but anyway, go ahead. I'm sorry.

Nicole: Yeah and it was, the way that it was presented to me was ... it's for charity, everybody that's doing it is new. Like its gonna be fun. And so I had painted this picture in my head of like ... of silliness. Like, you know, we're gonna get in there we're gonna be awkward-

Jerry: Kind of Buster Keaton-

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: And Charlie Chaplin throwing things-

[00:12:30]

Nicole: Yes.

Jerry: Around, not really-

Nicole: Not real boxing-

Jerry: When actually, this was real boxing.

Nicole: Not real boxing. So I painted this image in my head and so, I committed to doing it. Um, I think I made the mistake of committing via Twitter ... which was dumb.

Jerry: Mmm. I remember that now.

Nicole: And like the next day, The Denver Post ... I think it was The Denver Post, ran an article about Founder Fights-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: And then said that I was one of the people fighting in it.

Jerry: Right. Right.

Nicole: And I was like "Oh, I guess, I guess I'm really doing this, so, alright this is interesting, I better get in the gym." And the first day I walked in, I was like "Oh, Oh God.-
[00:13:00]

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: Oh God-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: What have I gotten my ... This is legitimate boxing. What have I gotten myself into?"

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: And I-I, but I couldn't bring myself to quit.

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole: Like I committed publicly-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: There was an article written about it-

Jerry: Right, right. So you were kind of trapped.

Nicole: So I was-

Jerry: So I-I the reason that popped into my head is that I remember running into you in the gym and realizing that you had signed up and you were that. And I'm sure at one of our conversations I may have said something like this ... but I-I remember
[00:13:30]

saying ... Cause I, Cause I, in one form or another been doing kinds of boxing for many years. I remember thinking "This is gonna be so good for her."

Nicole: (Laughing)

[00:14:00]

Jerry: Not the Founder Fights, per se. But getting Nicole a little bit out of her head and really more fully into her body. Does that have any resonance?

Nicole: Um, I am in my head too much but I don't know what it means to be in my body.

Jerry: Well, when you're throwing a punch-

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: Or when you're and hit, and you're blocking and when you're dodging, you're in your body.

Nicole: This is true. I mean I-

[00:14:30]

Jerry: Cause you can't, y-you don't have time to react.

Nicole: I think ... It's interesting, I mean I've been an athlete much of my life so-

Jerry: Ah.

Nicole: So very ... like-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: Naturally physical, right?

Jerry: So-so-so-so getting into that mode is, was actually familiar for you?

Nicole: Yeah but I think what was interesting was ... I mean I process and process and spin and analyze and come at things from-

Jerry: Yeah that's what I saying-

[00:15:00]

Nicole: From multiple different directions, right? And the thing that boxing ... Boxing does not let you do that.

Jerry: There's no time.

Nicole: There's no time.

Jerry: You will get punched in the face.

Nicole: But the intensity of the focus that you have when you're boxing, there is no ... I used to rock climb and one of the things I liked about-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Rock climbing, was the focus. When you're on the wall, there's nothing else that's going through your mind, you're not thinking about your to-do list ... I mean you're one, you're like making sure that you've your next hand placement, your next foot placement. Boxing was like that times two thousand.

Jerry: Right.

[00:15:30]

Nicole: Um ... and I liked that because of the intense focus, and I liked the tr ... Like, there's mental training that goes into, into boxing, that I um ... Trainings may be the wrong word-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: I think if you're professional level then of course there's mental training. But at a , at a, at first timer, you're just dealing with fear at such a, at a, as a physical level.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Like you can feel the fear in your body. Its not just in your heart or in your throat-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: It's like every cell in your body's telling you to run-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:16:00]

Nicole: And you don't run. And I like that. I like being pushed to the edge of what I feel like I'm capable of doing-

Jerry: So lets go back to the original question.

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative). (Laughs) Stimulus and response?

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: Right. So, So the normal programming, the amygdala based programming, the part
[00:16:30] of the brain, whose sole purpose is to keep you alive ... says fight or flee. And-

Nicole: I'm nodding yes.

Jerry: You're nodding yes and there's this moment ... and people who don't box or don't
do a physical activity that forces that level of concentration. Or, even meditation or
[00:17:00] some forms of yoga. You know I've even done dance therapy, right? People who
aren't experiencing that are not ... d- might presume that what's going on in a
sparring match, is that the amygdalas fight reflex has taken over. But it's actually
not.

Nicole: It's not, no. Yeah, your flee reflex is still (laughs)-

Jerry: Your flee ref ... You said you're in this place where you're not fleeing nor ... and I
[00:17:30] know this sounds contradictory ... Nor are you fighting in that reflexive manner.
You're actually focused and strategic.

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative). It's very strategic.

Jerry: It's ve- it's in fact, it's, it's what you're doing is, neurologically ... and let's hope that
there isn't brain damage, right, as we box. But, neurologically, you're activating the
[00:18:00] prefrontal cortex and you're taking, you're, you're basically giving up the amygdala
hijack-

Nicole: Well, so actually, th-ah-th-your-uh, just to get into

Jerry: Yep.

Nicole: Into neurology for a moment. I think your prefrontal cortex is all about rational
thought, right?

Jerry: Correct.

Nicole: But the problem with boxing is, you don't have time to have rational thought.

Jerry: Well so you're actually in the limbic system.

Nicole: Yeah. So and that's the thing I liked about and the stimulus and response because ...
in everyday life when you're sitting there and you get angry and your response is to
yell ... but you need to insert ...

Jerry: Something.

[00:18:30]

Nicole: ... Something in between the thing that got you angry-

Jerry: Yes.

Nicole: And your yelling-

Jerry: Yes.

Nicole: And that, how do you practice that?

Jerry: Ah.

Nicole: You don't practice that. You can't practice that.

Jerry: I disagree with you. I think you can practice that.

Nicole: No. So that's what I liked about boxing is because boxing felt like it gave me that-

Jerry: And that is a practice. That is exactly right.

Nicole: (Laughing) It's maybe a whacked version of practice, but okay.

Jerry: Well, but, but, but any ... so, so you're, so you were right. So, so neurologically
[00:19:00] there are actually several brain structures that exist, lets call it, between the pre-evolutionary part of the brain-

Nicole: Yup.

Jerry: Which, is rooted in the amygdala and the post-evolutionary part of the brain. It's false expression is a pre-frontal cortex.

Nicole: Yup.

Jerry: But there is this intuitive part of the brain, that is non fighter flight ... but is also not over-developed strategic.

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: And that's the part of the brain, that we're really focused on here.

Nicole: Yeah.

[00:19:30]

Jerry: And that interestingly, perhaps you'll find it interesting, that's the part of the brain that relaxes and takes over when one is meditating. That's the part of the brain that's like uh, is aware, if you will, of the fighter flight impulse. The res- the reactive brain. And it's part- it's aware of the over-analytical part of the brain but it's not
[00:20:00] giving into either side of that.

Nicole: It's just awareness.

Jerry: It's just awareness.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: It's fully focused present awareness.

Nicole: I'm still like as I, I mean I've just gotten into meditation maybe in the last year-

Jerry: Uh huh.

Nicole: And starting it ... was ... felt like an effort in futility. I mean I'd just sit there and spin on all the 10,000 things I should be doing-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: And-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: [00:20:30] Stuff that was going on and um, I as I sort of proceed more into my own journey of meditation, I am appreciating that more but what I'm finding is, is that the thing that is helping, is that awareness of in the moment reaction to things?

Jerry: Yes.

Nicole: And if I can make that space, that space between the stimulus and response or that between the action and the reaction whatever, if I can make that space bigger-

Jerry: That's right.

Nicole: So I'm still on the like "Oh I'm aware I'm mad but I can't stop myself from yelling-

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah.

Nicole: But I recognize that I'm mad.

Jerry: Yeah.

[00:21:00]

Nicole: So like expanding that space, to go "Huh, why am I mad?"

Jerry: Yes.

Nicole: Or "Why am I upset?" Or "Why am I triggered?"

Jerry: Yep.

Nicole: And, and then be able to stop the reaction from coming out.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: I don't wanna be a slave to my reactions. I think that's-

Jerry: Yeah. Well, and-and-and-and I'll gi- I'll give you a little story that may be a little helpful in, in understanding how to widen that gap.

[00:21:30]

Nicole: Yeah, I- I'd love it.

Jerry: Right? So and I've told this story on the podcast before. I remember one time I was sitting on the cushion and ... um ... It-it you know the session was going fine and I-I was just sitting and all of a sudden I had this wave of anxiety come up. And anxiety is a very particular kind of fear. It's-it's-it's a- it in my experience it's-it's a fear about

[00:22:00]

the future. It's a fear about something that might happen as opposed to say, um ... fearfully replaying what happened or ruminating and feeling terrible about a decision that you made in the past. That's, that's a different kind of experience. And so, um, I was sitting there and just wave after wave of anxiety came up and because I think, because I was at this point, several years into my practice, I was able to just

[00:22:30]

notice it. Noticing the impulse and the impulse that arose was try to figure out why I was feeling anxious. And then, I noticed something really important, which was my mind started creating stories about things that I should worry about.

Nicole: (Laughing) Huh.

Jerry: Like, I'm gonna, like tomorrow this is gonna happen and this is gonna happen. And I could almost watch my own mind, trying to find it's way out of the discomfort of the anxiety but ... supplying reasons why I should be worried, so that I could then make them go away-

[00:23:00]

Nicole: Okay.

Jerry: And not feel anxious.

Nicole: Right. Interesting.

Jerry: Right? Now you can sorta see how perverse-

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: This is ... cause the mind is kind of trying to say to itself "Well that's an awful feeling, why am I feeling that way?" If I can understand why I'm feeling that way, then I can eliminate why I'm feeling that way ... It's perfectly logical except it

[00:23:30] doesn't work because what ends up happening is the mind starts to feel more and more anxious. So then, I said to myself "Well, what does this anxiety smell like?"

Nicole: Smell?

Jerry: And the reason that, that was a helpful question was because my pre-frontal cortex, which was trying to figure its way out of the anxiety, couldn't answer that question.

Nicole: (Laughing)

Jerry: There is no answer to that question.

Nicole: Right, of course.

Jerry: [00:24:00] And the more I realize that ... they're here, this is all happening in space I'm sitting in a cushion. I'm sitting there and I started to lighten up ...

Nicole: Interesting.

Jerry: And then, the anxiety ...

Nicole: Went away-

Jerry: Passed.

Nicole: Interesting.

Jerry: Right? So, here I am. There's a stimulus, something caused the anxiety to come up and you know after that I began to realize that, that anxiety will sometimes just naturally arise.

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:24:30]

Jerry: It's part of our wiring. Um, I think, I think back to-to ... prehomimid humans and-and ... you know, just the fear of staying alive ... was built into our biology.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: And so there we are (Gasps) you know, something's happening-

Nicole: Yeah, you need that.

Jerry: [00:25:00] Right? And yet, if we jump too quickly into the response, (Snaps fingers) boom. We're actually not ... Our experience at being human becomes more painful. And

by interrupting that flow, I was able to just sort of widen the experience a-a bit and that space became wider and deeper and much more pleasant.

Nicole: And-And you can, I mean I would imagine that you can learn about yourself more in those cont- in that context.

Jerry:
[00:25:30] Well that's, yeah. And I think that-that- that's the opportunity. I think- I think the p- the post of the experience of that, you know ... You've come to one of our boot camps, you know that we often speak of this notion of resiliency. Resiliency is the capacity to recover when punched in the face.

Nicole: (Laughs)

Jerry:
[00:26:00] That's- That's really resiliency, right? What I have found is that when we enhance the capacity to widen the gap between stimulus and response, what ends up happening is our ability to be resilient to the punches in the face. Enhances.

Nicole: Interesting. I haven't thought about it from a resiliency perspective. I mean the-the- the two things that I've noticed the most is one, you avoid problems-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: And-and w-what I can use a really simple but-but um, but maybe poignant example, which is, last night, my husband ... my husbands in a band. And um, he loves music-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:26:30]
Nicole: Obviously ... he's actually in two bands-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nicole: And so he was- he had band practice last night and the guys were downstairs and they were practicing and he was upstairs and he had music going upstairs and the-the cacophony-

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole: Between the band practicing downstairs and the music that he's playing upstairs ... like triggers this-

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole:
[00:27:00] ... it triggers this like anger in my brain, like "Stop it, it hurts my brain." And I realized right before I yelled at him, that yelling like, I was like "Wow, I'm angry" and then I just stopped and I said "Hey honey, just so you know, it really hurts my brain when we have conflicting sounds, can we just try to keep it to one sound?" He

was like "Sure, no problem." He turned the stereo off. So, if I had yelled at him it would've turned into an argument-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: Right. So, I save, um ... a negative interaction between my husband and I-

Jerry: And I would argue that you turned it into a positive interaction because you taught your brain something really important-

Nicole: Right, which is-

Jerry: Which is that Mark actually ... Mark is your husbands' name-

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: Mark will actually respond-

[00:27:30]

Nicole: And he's wonderful about stuff like that.

Jerry: But he didn't know. What was ... Let me bring your attention to this. What was in my mind the key moment?

Nicole: It was funny because I started to yell, I literally opened my mouth to yell and I recognized at the moment. I recognized two things. One, I was angry-

Jerry: Yes.

Nicole: And the second thing was yelling was counter productive.

[00:28:00]

Jerry: Yes! So, but the first thing was ... "I am angry."

Nicole: Yeah, no, I-its kind of a silly thing to be angry about ... like but it, whatever it triggers me.

Jerry: Who cares?

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: The key thing was, not necessarily to-to-to step into it-

Nicole: Yup.

Jerry: I have a story for you that's very similar. M-m-my middle child's name is Emma and my children are probably my favorite human beings in the entire planet. They're

[00:28:30]

[00:29:00] extraordinary humans. And Emma was a teenager at the time and she um, uh, I remember her ... We had this rule that if she was gonna be home before, on Friday afternoons after school, she was probably in middle school ... maybe first year, second year of high school. If she was gonna be home after six o'clock, she had to call and let us know what she was doing. So six o'clock rolled around, she didn't call. Seven o'clock rolled around, she didn't call. I'm calling her cell phone like "Where is she, where is she?"

[00:29:30] And, uh, finally I got a hold of her brother and I said "I don't know how you're gonna do it but find your sister." And within five minutes she called. So they must've activated the, you know, the- the bat signals among teenagers, right? And she calls up and I said "Where are you?" And she said "I'm hanging out with my friends ..." blah blah blah. I said "Stay right there, I'm coming to get you." And I was fucking furious. And I get in the car and I'm driving and I'm stopped at a red light and I'm like steaming. And I said to myself in a similar fashion, "What are you angry about?"

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: And the voice that came back to me was "I'm scared shit."

Nicole: Yeah.

[00:30:00] Jerry: As soon as I allowed myself to say "I am scared," the anger went away. It was like the part of me that wanted to make sure that the fear was being paid attention to. Right? All this and the anger just sort of dissipated. And I could feel the fear, which I actually didn't wanna feel all of the fearful thoughts-

Nicole: Yeah.

[00:30:30] Jerry: Of what had happened to my child. Right? So I'm dri- I'm sitting in the car, I'm stopped at the red light, the light turns green, I drive, I go- go to her friends house. I pull up, she comes out, she's now scared cause she's heard the tone in my voice and I-I didn't yell at my kids a lot. And I come out and I said "Honey, please don't ever do that to me again."

Nicole: (Laughing)

Jerry: And you know what? She never did.

Nicole: Yeah. Well she understood the seriousness of it, too.

[00:31:00] Jerry: Because she understood I was afraid. Whereas if I had come out and started swinging with that anger, which was really a protective measure against the feelings of fear, right? And it was literally the red light moment that gave me the space between stimulus and response ... that allowed me to just pause-

Nicole: And breathe, yeah. I understand.

Jerry: I mean, if you think back to what we do at boot camps, whether it's with our red, yellow, green exercise ... which is to sort of just identify where you are, or where we encourage people's like "How are you?" Remember my famous question at the start of the boot camp, "How are you?"

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative). The question that take a day to answer.

[00:31:30]

Jerry: (Laughing) A question that takes a day to answer. To answer properly.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: What were, what I'm trying to do at that moment is encourage that self reflection where you got last night, where you said "I'm angry and that's actually not going to help me get what I want-

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Which is understanding from the man I love ... And a little quiet please."

Nicole: (Laughing)

[00:32:00]

Jerry: Right? Whereas the first, the Greek response if you will-

Nicole: Is to yell.

Jerry: Would've been "I would like it quiet so I'm gonna yell." (Laughing)

Nicole: Counter-intuitive yes, but-

Jerry: Ri-right?

Nicole: Yeah. I mean the-the response that we always give in the family, when I was growing up, it was loud voices. I mean that was it-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Yelling about everything. I mean it could even be happy yelling ... but still yelling. Always yelling.

Jerry: Always yelling.

[00:32:30]

Nicole: Always yelling. But it was always driven by whatever emotion you were feeling at that moment. And when-

Jerry: But without a consciousness of what that emotion was-

Nicole: That's right. That's right. And I found it to be an incredible disservice to-to me and to those that-that know me and love me and work with me-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: Right ... Because, um, you-you-you know it gets people on the, it gets people on the defensive, it creates barriers between you and them and those barriers can be often hard to repair once ... once you-

[00:33:00]

Jerry: Well and remember to, the-the-the operative question ... you've hung around with me enough times to know this question. Right? This question, you know the question I learned from my therapist, which was "How am I complicit and creating the conditions I say I don't want?" Right? And because there's a distance between my experience-

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: In-in the moment. In my awareness of the experience in that moment because
[00:33:30] there's a distance there. I am grasping at-at different behaviors. I might, I might hire somebody that um, uh, exacerbates a problem for me. Or, I might, uh, cause the company to run out of money, um, unconsciously ... all because I'm really
[00:34:00] disconnected from the experience of how I really am. Whereas, if I can bring my awareness back to how am I ... How are you? Not only are we creating the space to widen, right, so that we then get to choose the emotional reaction. You still could've yelled at Mark last night. That may have been the only way in which you
[00:34:30] might have been heard but then it would've been strategic application of your authority and agency. Not uh an nonstrategic, flailing, spontaneous reaction. And if you notice what I did, I suddenly shifted us into management issues.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: We can think that the goal is to widen the gap and in a sense it is. But the real goal is to create a more resilient experience and one of the tools is that self awareness "
[00:35:00] I am angry" or in my case "I am afraid." Then I get to choose, there and that creates the gap because in my case, my anger dropped away and I think in your case, once you saw Mark just flip a switch or lower a volume ... "Wait a minute, I don't have to be angry anymore-"

Nicole: Yeah, it was even before that. Just seeing his reaction to my comment.

Jerry: Just seeing his reaction to the comment. In fact when he looked at you and saw
[00:35:30] your reaction, what feeling did he have for you?

Nicole: He felt, he felt bad that I felt bad. He didn't want to instill-

Jerry: Why doesn't he want to instill whatever?

Nicole: Yeah, like, well he didn't want me to feel angry and he-

Jerry: Because he loves you.

Nicole: Yeah, because he loves me. That's right.

Jerry: Right. Your ability, not only did you create a gap so that you didn't have a reaction that would've exacerbated any tension in the relationship, but you actually gave him space to be able to demonstrate-

Nicole: Yeah.

[00:36:00]

Jerry: That he loves you.

Nicole: Yeah. I mean I think it's funny because when like sometimes I've been in you know I've been in meetings and I'll-I'll feel this triggering and it will be my place at that moment in time to say something.

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole: And I've always struggled with that-

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole: In the way that I've been learning to deal with it, is ... to start, to-to respond in the situation by asking a question-

[00:36:30]

Jerry: Yeah. Beautiful.

Nicole: But trying, the problem is ... is that I-I-I can sometimes weave a little, um-

Jerry: Pointed in your question-

Nicole: Passive-aggressiveness into my questions maybe-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Is the thing that I would say. But, um, like I-I'm working on that, right. And I think just ... um the awareness of everything is once you can be aware-

Jerry: Okay. So let me give you another tool there, okay?

Nicole: Love it.

[00:37:00]

Jerry: I think asking the question is the right strategy and again this is something we work on in boot camp. Remember the notion of an open honest questions? I don't know if you remember those?

Nicole: Yeah, I- I do.

Jerry: Right, so an open, honest question, is a question that you don't know the answer to-

Nicole: Yeah, that's not a leading question or has-

Jerry: It's not a leading and its not one with an agenda and it's also not a-

Nicole: [inaudible 00:37:19]-

Jerry: Yes or no question.

Nicole: Yup.

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: I'm not good at these questions. These questions require really ... like they require thoughtfulness, at least for me.

Jerry: Well they require pausing ...

Nicole: Yeah.

[00:37:30]

Jerry: Right? Open, honest questions are really powerful. Now, the most koan-like and a koan is an imponderable question. It's a question to which there is almost no answer. What is the sound of one hand clapping?

Nicole: (Laughs)

Jerry: Right? That is a classic, right, imponderable koan. Uh, if a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound? Right? Now, there's a philosophical ... implication there-

[00:38:00]

Nicole: (Laughs)

Jerry: Which is, if there's no listener, is there a sound? Forget that question [inaudible 00:38:04]-

Nicole: Right. (Laughs)

Jerry: The purpose of those kinds of questions are very similar to the purpose of an open honest question. It's a little different. The-The koan structure is really designed to interrupt, to do what I infected ... What does- what does anxiety smell like? Right? It's really designed to interrupt the reactive response so that we're- we're- we're thrust back on to ourselves. And thrust back into our experience instead of this externalized experience of outward, outward, outward you. If only you were different then, I would feel better internally.

[00:38:30]

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: Right? The open honest question is really designed to really seek space for the truest answers to emerge. And so I think your impulse to ask a question, rather than pointedly make an observation or to quote as you put it "My role." I'm gonna step into my role, I'm gonna tell the truth cause that's what Nicole does, she tells the truth and you're laughing cause you know what I'm talking about.

[00:39:00]

Nicole: Yes. (Laughs)

Jerry: If we can frame it, then what we do is, we allow, just like you gave Mark the space to demonstrate, yet again, that he loves you and he cares about your happiness. If we can give the space to our colleagues, to demonstrate that they are trying or where they're lost or where they're struggling, or what their wishes are ... then the group as a whole starts to arrive at this place of ... respect.

[00:39:30]

[00:40:00]
Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: You know. This reminds me of the second piece that you were talking ... that you wanted to talk through, which is the notion of trust, you know, within the work place. And-And, um, what I often say to folks is that trust is not what ... trust is not the goal, trust is the outcome. Trust is what happens when we create a safe respectful, open, honest workplace. See, everybody says "We want trust." And I understand why they want trust, but they're aiming for the wrong thing. If I could create a place where the gap between stimulus and response is wide enough, that I could turn around and demonstrate to you that I care about your feelings and I'll lower the volume, then my ability- your ability to trust that you- that I care about your feelings, goes up. Cause I've just demonstrated it.

[00:40:30]

[00:41:00]

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: Whereas, if I say to you forcefully "Trust me-"

Nicole: Well, no one will do it, of course.

Jerry: The-it-n-not only that ... When we say to somebody "Trust me," it's almost like our President saying "Believe me."

Nicole: Right (laughs).

Jerry: Right. The impulse is "I'm not gonna believe a fucking word you have to say after you say "Believe me"."

Nicole: Yeah.

[00:41:30]

Jerry: It's like trust me, right? Whereas, if we, if I demonstrate the capacity so that open honest question says ... you're accepting of whatever my response is. Question that goes something like "How would it feel, what would it be like for you, if you weren't the one in the room to have that responsibility?" What would that feel like? You know the responsibility we were talking before to say the truth or to name it.

[00:42:00]

Nicole: It would feel awesome.

Jerry: Haha, wow.

Nicole: I mean, I often feel the need to say the truth because I feel like nobody else is.

Jerry: Ah.

Nicole: It would feel amazing.

Jerry: Ah.

[00:42:30]

Nicole: And how do you let ... I don't- I don't do well with elephants in the room.

Jerry: Right. I-I also grew up in my view, I grew up with a lot of elephants in the room not named. And it was awful for me. And I, in this moment, just really relate to your awesome reaction. It's the notion of ... what for me, feels like a burden ... of having to be the one, to name the elephant in the room. Does that resonate with you?

[00:43:00]

Nicole: Burden isn't the word, it would be a compulsion.

Jerry: Ahhh.

Nicole: And it's because um, are we, are we lying to ourselves? Are we ... Like I- the façade drives me insane.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: And when there's an elephant in the room and nobody is talking about it, I have a compulsion-

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole: ... to tear down the façade-

Jerry: Mmm.

[00:43:30]

Nicole: And so if other people are speaking a truth, then ... I feel like that would be a gigantic relief because we're not lying to ourselves. We are having a conversation about what's really going on.

Jerry: So go back to what happened last night. Are there lessons in the experience? The entire ark of the experience, the cacophony, the noise downstairs, the noise upstairs, the sounds, the sounds ... the realization "I am angry," the pause before reacting, the framing of what you were saying, Marks' first reaction and then his action. Are there lessons in that?

[00:44:00]

Nicole: Well, may-maybe that example's not a great one because it's such a small one-

Jerry: Oh, I think it's powerful, but go ahead.

Nicole: But I think you know, there's this ... when I sat down and thought about why I was angry, I mean, one ... is just like the level of noise is driving my brain crazy but you have this anger that ... if somebody knows that it drives you crazy and yet it continues to go on-

[00:44:30]

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: They should be more sensitive, like I was mad, I think the reason I was mad was because he, my husband knows that drives me insane and wasn't, and he wasn't doing anything about it. And so it was showing me, um-

Jerry: Well the story you told yourself ... was that you didn't care.

[00:45:00]

Nicole: Th- But I realized that that wasn't true.

Jerry: Yes.

Nicole: It's not that he didn't, it's not that he doesn't care, it's that he actually is oblivious, he li-

Jerry: He-he-he wasn't-

Nicole: Literally doesn't care.

Jerry: Because he's not you.

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: It's not that he doesn't care about you, it's that he didn't have that experience. And so, remem- one of the things to hold on to is ... sometimes ... part of what's
[00:45:30] happening with the elephants in the room is that you and I are seeing elephants that other people don't see.

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: Not bec-not what we, the story we tell ourselves, which is, they know the elephant's in the room ... they're just not saying something.

Nicole: Hmm.

Jerry: They in fact, may not see them. Now there's all sorts of complicated reasons why the person may not see what's in front of them. It's a defense mechanism, they're blind or they're caught up in something else, or its not as big an issue for them, as it is for us. Right. But you did something really powerful, where you chose a path that's laid between, ignoring the elephant in the room and reacting, naming the elephant in the room.
[00:46:00]

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: "What's the matter with you? Don't you care about my feelings?"

Nicole: Right. (Laughs)

Jerry: And the result was he was able to demonstrate that he actually cares about your feelings.

Nicole: Right.

[00:46:30]
Jerry: It's just ... he's seeing things differently.

Nicole: So, it-it's interesting to think about that in sort of the work context because I mean I can think of times when I'm like "How are we not talking about ... we're talking about this and we should be talking about-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: This other thing. And how are we not-

Jerry: Right.

Nicole: How are we not talking about that?"

Jerry: Right. So, I'm gonna give you a phrase to hold on to.

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:47:00]

Jerry: You know that phrase that exists in your brain when you're in the middle of that meeting, and its quote ... obvious-

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: It's actually not. It's not necessarily obvious. So therefore, the others non-seeing of the elephant in the room, is not willful and therefore not as threatening. It still may be threatening because there may be a threat that they're not seeing ... but its not intended to gas light us, or to make us feel bad.

[00:47:30]

Nicole: Hmm. And how do we know ... that they ... that they're ch ... How do we know that they don't see it? Like you-you said that-

Jerry: We'll tell, We'll confirm by their reaction.

Nicole: Right.

[00:48:00]

Jerry: How did you know that Mark wasn't willfully playing music in two different places, creating a cacophony? How did you know that? How was it confirmed for you-

Nicole: Okay, I see your point.

Jerry: By his reaction.

Nicole: By his reaction, I see your point. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Which then and then that gets internalized as "Wait a minute, the next time the story arises in my head that he's doing this purposefully, I can remember that last time." You know what that is called? Trust.

Nicole: Yeah. Interesting.

[00:48:30]

Jerry: It's called the benefit of the doubt. "Oh, Ill bet you that he doesn't even realize that my brain is even hurting."

Nicole: Yeah. I see your point. So, by ... not, I mean so by gentle probing or-

Jerry: Mmm.

Nicole: What did you call it? You called it non ... was the question?

Jerry: Open honest question.

Nicole: Open honest questions.

[00:49:00]

Jerry: Honesty. Honesty comes in not having an answer to your question.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? So-

Nicole: There's no judgment in it-

Jerry: So-so-so-so-so last night you could've said in a pretend, dishonest question "What are you thinking, Mark?"

Nicole: Yup. (laughing)

Jerry: Okay. That's not an honest question.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? He might- he might've turned down the music then-

Nicole: I could say "Are you really okay with listening to both of this like ... crap at the same time?"

Jerry: Right. That's not a question. That's actually an accusation

Nicole: Yeah (laughing)

Jerry: and an attack, okay?

[00:49:30]

Nicole: Yes (laughing). That's what I wanted to say.

Jerry: But if after the emotions die down and you were able to say something like "Mark, what-what is the experience for you, hearing two sources of music from two different places?" And you were truly curious about that-

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Cause that's actually a difference in the way your brains are wired.

Nicole: Yup.

[00:50:00]

Jerry: He can handle two different sources of- of data, music data coming in. Does that make sense?

Nicole: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: And for you, that's just a completely different experience. "I can't handle it. I can't, I can't be in a room with people listening to the radio while watching TV."

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: You know those type?

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: Like "I can't handle that."

Nicole: No, I can't either.

Jerry: I can barely handle one of those-

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: ...let alone two.

Nicole: I was- that was the- that was actually the source of our conversation last night.

Jerry: Right

Nicole: So.

[00:50:30]

Jerry: Right. So I guess to start to close it out ... the gap ... if we can, if we can marry the self awareness in the gap, then we start to create, and we start to create open honest questions ... "Why am I, You know what's happening here?" We start to create this sense of trust, which actually leads to resiliency. Right. What you both did last night, in your action and reaction and his reaction and action, what you both did was fed the better parts of the relationship. SO that next time there's a stimulus, there's a possibility of giving him the benefit of the doubt and the ability to take a punch in the face ... A relationships' ability to take a punch in the face gets strengthened. Does that make sense?

[00:51:00]

Nicole: Yeah, it does.

Jerry: So-

Nicole: It does and like learning how to work through practicing that.

Jerry: That's right.

Nicole: And that's-that's tricky.

Jerry: That's right. But start small.

Nicole: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:51:30]

Jerry: It's the noticing. It-I really congratulate you for the "I am angry" versus anger.

Nicole: Right. (Laughing).

Jerry: So. So, I wanna thank you for-for-for this conversation.

Nicole: Yeah.

Jerry: I hope it was helpful.

Nicole: It is. It's-it's you know like I said as I work through practicing that and being aware ... just learning how to be aware so-

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: So you can, you can practice that.

Jerry: Yeah.

Nicole: Is um, is I think just huge steps towards my own development.

[00:52:00]

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. Well and-and-and the goal is the experience of being human-

Nicole: Yeah. (Laughing)

Jerry: Is a little bit less painful and a little bit more fun. (Laughing)

Nicole: Right.

Jerry: That's really what we're going for here.

Nicole: Well if I can avoid conflict and in the process strengthen a relationship, I mean, that's positive all the way around-

Jerry: Amen.

Nicole: ... And learn about myself too.

Jerry: Exactly. Exactly. Well thank you so much for coming on the show-

Nicole: Thanks Jerry-