

Jerry: Hey, Joan, how are you? It's wonderful to see you again.

Joan: Well, it's great to connect with you, Jerry. I'm, uh, re-really grateful to have this opportunity also, to, through you, to, uh, connect with, um, the subject of leadership and all the people that, are, uh, touched by your work.

[00:00:30]

Jerry: Oh, well, thank you, you know, it's, uh ... I'm at a funny place in the sense that, um, I think that part of my job is to be an inter-locketer ...

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Between, um, different worlds. And in one capacity it's kind of the world of to, to the degree that I can interpret it, the Dharma ... And the crazy world of startup

[00:01:00] leadership and what is it like to live in a startup. So I feel like I, I'm in this funny little mix of places. And, um, working with folks like you helps me do that.

Joan: Well it, also I think it helps us, because we learn a lot about how to translate our world and work into, um, the, sort of lay world of corporate perspectives, uh, business perspectives, you know ... What, what is it to ... You know, I work mostly with clinicians, for example ...

[00:01:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Uh, clinicians who are in the, the field of really helping people, those sort of helping professions, is that right?

Joan: Yeah, yeah, but you know, I, I actually (Laughs) ... It's funny, I, I don't like to use the word help so much, because ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Uh, I want to just site, um, uh, a wonderful quote from Rachel Naomi Remen, she said that, um, uh, uh, fixing, helping and serving, um, are three different ways we see, uh, life. When we fix, we see life as broken ...

[00:02:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: When we help, we see life as weak, and when we serve we see life as whole, so you know ...

Jerry: Ah, I love that.

Joan: Yeah, I, I do, too. (Laughs) That's why it's in my memory so deeply.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: So, I, you know, for me what's fascinating about the issue of leadership, um, really comes out of the work of Robert Greenleaf in terms of servant leadership.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:02:30]

Joan: How does a leader serve not only the vision but the people who are involved with, uh, implementing the vision that is, you know, all the people on the team ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: So, see and, and, how do, how do we serve their highest good, their highest, not only principles but their capacities?

Jerry: Well, I, I, I think that's a, a really important frame, and I'm going to suggest we hold that as a context and, and, and dive into what is prompting this discussion in some ways, which is, um, your, your newest book, uh, Standing at the Edge ... Um, which, I, I'm ...

[00:03:00]

Joan: There it is (Laughs) ...

Jerry: We're both, I'm thinking, really excited and, and we're both have advanced reading copies, which makes me feel really special. My ego is dancing nicely, my little ego is dancing nicely. So, um, Standing at the Edge, the subtitle, which ... By the way, I always find subtitles super helpful ... Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet. Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet.

[00:03:30]

Um, you know, we had a wonderful conversation before for the podcast on grace, you model for leadership, your model for a way of being in the world. And here again, I think you're, um, leaning into an important new space. Um, in this book, and, if we can start off with; tell me about edge states.

[00:04:00]

Joan: You know they, they are, uh, five internal and interpersonal states that I've identified as being really critical in terms of our capacities as human beings to be in a social and environmental world.

[00:04:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: A world where there are others. A world where, um, we want to, uh, foster the best in ourselves and others and also, a world that's characterized by fundamental stability.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: [00:05:00] But, um, by altruism, by empathy, by integrity, by respect and by engagement. So these five states, Jerry, are states that I became aware of as extremely relevant because I worked not only with clinicians, I work with CEOs, with educators, people who work in human rights organizations, with politicians, which is a human rights organization ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Though many politicians don't remember that (Laughs) ...

Jerry: (Laughs)

Joan: [00:05:30] But, um, these, uh, five different aspects became very, um, visible for me, because what I recognized in listening to others is they talked about the difficulties they encounter in the work of service they do in their various professions, is that each of these different virtues if you will, has a fraught side ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: [00:06:00] Has a shadow side, and that in order for us to uphold ourselves on the high edge, say of altruism, and not all into pathological altruism, um, what I'd discovered, which I think is very important, is that compassion is a kind of lever that makes it possible for us to transform our experience of the fraught side, the challenging side of altruism, of pathological altruism. Um, in back onto the high edge, the healthy aspect of altruism.

[00:06:30] So, these are these edge states. Uh, compassion is not an edge state. It is will, if you will, the transforming context where our edge states can shift back. But I also make a, I think, a really important point in the book, that falling over the edge as actually ... And we don't have to seek it, it will happen ... But it is something that really builds character ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: We learn and, um, we get, you know a good dose ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:07:00]

Joan: Of, uh, not only learning but opening up ourselves to a kind of humility.

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

Joan: And making compassion even more accessible. Um, through the medium of ...

Jerry: So ...

Joan: Our failures.

Jerry: So, I, I'm gonna take it back a little bit, um, and I'm going to read to you from your own work.

Joan: Okay.

Jerry:
[00:07:30]

Joan: Wow.

Jerry: So, tell me about that. Tell me about edge states.

[00:08:00]

Joan: You know, they are, um, those states, which, uh, teach us, which make, um, our human relationships viable, and, uh, they also have traps within them.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And being aware of those traps, um, helps us to maintain our footing within the experience of altruism, or empathy or integrity or respect or engagement. And
[00:08:30] when we do fall over the edge, when we experience pathological altruism, when we experience empathic distress, when we are disrespectful, when we are, um, subject to moral suffering, when we have the experience of burn out, compassion is
[00:09:00] this brilliant, uh, capacity within us that can transform the fraught side back into the experience of that edge state as a virtue.

Jerry: Okay, so, I'm gonna, I'm gonna, um, make a connection to some of the previous work that we do at Reboot ...

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: So, um, we're both fans of this notion of the warrior stance of strong back, open
[00:09:30] heart. We both see that, uh, it, it has a really an important state, and, um, one of the things that we experience at Reboot, um ... You know we have this, uh, somewhat simplistic way of describing the work that we see ourselves as doing, and that is em-embodiment something I call The Formula, which goes like this: Practical skills plus, what I call, radical self-inquiry, which is skillful ...

Joan: Beautiful ...

[00:10:00]

Jerry: And caring, plus shared experiences, so the ability to speak with others, equals enhanced leadership and greater resiliency. So, practical skills, how do I do what I'm supposed to do? Radical self-inquiry; why do I do what I do in the ways in which I do it?

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:10:30]

Jerry: And then s- being able to speak to that creates leadership that is more humane and most important from where I sit, fosters a sense of resiliency. Now, what I hear in, in a lot of the work around edge states, and a lot of the work implicit in your, in your book is a recognition that, uh, living in places where freedom and courage meet, living at places between, say, suffering and freedom, or, in the case of the traditional Reboot audience, living in a place where I am called to learn more, to do more, to grow ... Is a kind of edge state.

[00:11:00]

Joan: Absolutely.

Jerry: And the danger in that edge state is falling into, uh, pathological altruism, as you called, or, I would argue, a kind of, um, shadow-based aggression ... And what I'm hearing you suggest and really lay out in the book is a way to avoid the burnout that comes from this is to approach compassion from a, uh, from a very different angle than we traditionally approach it. Am I hearing that correctly?

[00:11:30]

[00:12:00]

Joan: You are, and it's, I'm, uh, I love how you're taking this material, um, and interpreting it through the lens of this powerful algorithm that you've developed as a trainer ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Of leaders, uh, it makes a lot of sense to me, and, um, you know, the point ... One of the points I make in the book is that by standing at the edge, you're able to take in the entire landscape. You're not just in the virtue, if you will ...

[00:12:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: You're, you're not just, you know, uh, in peace, but not understanding more.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: You're not just, uh, in safety and not understanding abuse ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: But you're on the edge between worlds, but the height that it allows you to have a wider, much more radical, inclusive view.

[00:13:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Inclusive, perhaps, of even the ... Because you speak to this in the book ... Even the self-aggrandizing aspects of our altruistic impulses ... Am I hearing that right?

Joan: Oh, well that is, um, absolutely. It's like, people who walk around with Bodhisattva buttons ...

Jerry: Wow. (Laughs)

[00:13:30]

Joan: On their shirt. Now, many of us, for example, um, uh, engage in acts that are helpful to others, or serving others, or ... Um, uh, kind, but, um, are really caught in a kind of ego need.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: For social recognition, for appreciation, or even a kind of an economic sub service where there's a sort of quid pro quo expected ...

Jerry: Uh ...

Joan: There's a return expected.

[00:14:00]

Jerry: And, and, and, to, and to make the connection to startup leadership, what I see as a reflection of, of what you've just identified is when the leader unconsciously, unintentionally uses the organization for self-aggrandizement.

Joan: Yeah.

[00:14:30]

Jerry: Or, for, for, for m-, for, um, move, moving in a way that is designed either to, um-

Joan: Enhance their identity ...

Jerry: To enhance our identity and, and, and, and-

Joan: But also, you know ...

Jerry: Yeah.

Joan: It's also about enhancing one's self-esteem. So, it's not just a negative. In other words, um ... One of the fascinating things, Jerry, about compassion is that, um, uh, when we engage in acts of compassion, we experience a sense of moral elevation.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:15:00]

Joan: So, it, you know, that's an enhancement of our self-esteem, because we feel morally enhanced.

Jerry: Well, but I think you're, I think you're, you're proposing something radically, uh, interesting, uh, and that is that, uh, we, we typically think of compassion in that Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership model ...

Joan: Yeah.

Jerry: Of, how am I in service to others, and it is there, it is true. When a leader acts from a place of compassion, they are in service. And that does create a greater contribute to a greater good. And it does create this sort of moral uplift, and a f- an affirmation of our self-esteem. But I'm hearing something else that's, I think it's equally important, and that is ... And so many people who listen to this podcast are listening because, quite frankly Roshi, their hearts are broken. They're scared, they're beyond burned out, they're at that point where they're really ... Um, hurt and lost.

[00:16:00]

[00:16:30] I, I remember one time, uh, meeting with Ari Pema Chodron, and she was asking me about the work that I do, and I was talking about, oh, how I, I said, I said, uh, the, the, these folks, they're, they're whole sense of self has, has been obliterated and there's a long pause and she says, oh, oh you mean in a negative way? (Laughs)

Joan: Oh, yeah, right. (Laughs)

Jerry: And, and, um ... That's a little Buddhist joke about, you know, the ...

Joan: Absence of the inherent self-identity ...

Jerry: That's right, that's right, but, but, but, what, but, but, so many folks are, are, are struggling ... And even some of the folks who listen to the podcast who are not in a startup have begun listening to it and just say my relationship to work is such a source of suffering ...

[00:17:00]

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And what I'm hearing you say is beyond an altruistic, a traditional altruistic view of being in service to others, that cultivating compassion and, and being, and staying at the edge state, standing on the edge ...

Joan: Yeah, that's right.

Jerry: Creates a kind of resiliency.

Joan: Exactly.

[00:17:30]

Jerry: That enables us to withstand the vagaries of being in that place.

Joan: Exactly. And, um, it's almost you could say, like physical training in the sense that, um, when we push ourself physically in a good way, uh, our muscles break down and repair at a high, themselves, at a higher order and more strength, us more resilience, so, um, you know there's a whole field of stress where there's distress

[00:18:00] and then there's you stress. We need a certain kind of stress in our lives in order for ourselves to be strong.

Jerry: And so to, to, to play with the analogy a moment; what I hear you saying is that compassion, genuine acts of compassion however mixed our motivations may be, however tainted by egotism or, that altruism may be. Let's leave that aside for a moment. Genuine acts of compassion and compassionate leadership fosters the ability to withstand the forces that cause burnout.

[00:18:30]

Joan: Exactly. You, you're ... Well, Jerry, it's always a pleasure to (Laughs) ...

Jerry: (Laughs)

Joan: You, you get it so roundly and soundly.

Jerry: Ah ...

Joan: Precisely. Compassion ... And do you know, Jerry, it's fascinating because, uh, research and neuroscience, immunology and social psychology indicates for example that compassion enhances our immune response.

[00:19:00]

Jerry: (Laughs) How fascinating.

Joan: Um, it, it, it reduces stress. It's associated with the pleasure networks in our brain ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, it is associated with increased longevity. So ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so, so, I'm going to give you a picture and then, and then we're going to talk about this for a moment. So, a client will call me ... Usually a video chat, because, I'm, uh, I, I'm, I'm living in my Boulder bubble. And so, here I am on the phone, and the client, uh, is in what I call a hair on fire moment. Ah ... Jerry, what do I do?

[00:19:30]

Joan: (Laughs)

Jerry: And, and my coaching would be let's find the thing that you can act-, that, the genuine act of compassion that you can lean into ... To mitigate the effect of being spent and burned out, of feeling that I'm at the end of my rope. That I'm at the edge, and I'm gonna leap to, to my demise. Now, I'm picturing the client responding to, to this advice, and them saying, "Are you crazy?"

Joan: (Laughs) I might do a few steps before that.

Jerry: (Laughing) Okay, so tell me about that ...

[00:20:30]

Joan: Well, no, I'm gonna ask you, if you were to be sitting in front of a client who is, um, uh, decompensating ...

Jerry: Yeah.

Joan: Falling apart, uh, fragmented, frightened ... Um, I wouldn't probably tell them, to, uh, catch the next plane to Haiti ...

Jerry: (Laughs)

Joan: Or, to come with Roshi Joan on her nomads clinics ...

Jerry: Right.

Joan: In Nepal ...

Jerry: Right.

[00:21:00]

Joan: Um, I would probably enter into a relational inquiry just as you do with this person. Um, creating a sense of, uh, fostering a sense of safety ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And connection with this person ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Which in itself is a refuge for that person.

Jerry: Ah, so what I'm hearing is, is you're identifying something ... And I think your impulse is, is right, I think this is what good coaching would do, and I think this is what good counseling would do, which is ... I'm gonna mangle the quote, but Freud once, I believe, said, structure before content. So, in that moment where the client, where the person, where the other, and, you know, speaking to the CEOs who are listening, where your staff member is coming in and s- decompensating, falling apart before your eyes, what you do is you provide a kind of a structure for them, a scaffolding for them to sort of gather their, their own wits about them.

[00:21:30]

Joan: Yeah, and that, you could, that's ... I mean, that feels like something that is around them and that's exactly what I'm speaking about.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, it's also something, you know, at another level that's more personal. It's between you and them.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: You know it's a, a, um, the experience of connection, of, uh, being held ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:22:30]

Joan: Of, um, having someone who bears witness without judgment. Um, to whatever is going on, uh, that is threatening ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: To one's, uh, safety, uh, identity, well-being, um, to have somebody hold that in a way that is, uh, respectful, that is characterized by integrity, that is empathic, is really important. And that, that's what I think, you know, a person like you, I hope, I do the same, um, that you would bring to your clients, I would bring to my students.

[00:23:00]

Jerry: I, I, I, I think that, um ... I, I think that the, the observation you're making is really important and, and, and is often the case, elucidating it and, and articulating it elevates and makes it clearer that there's actually a step here. And I'm going to describe what you've laid out, you know, what I call the scaffolding for the other ...

[00:23:30]

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: As an act of compassion.

Joan: Absolutely. It's an act of compassion, um, that the coach, uh, that spontaneously arises in the coach. It's not like the coach saying, "Now I'm going to be compassionate." The coach actually um, brings his attention to his client. The coach feels concern for his client. Um, the coach bears witness to whatever is happening in the client, in addition to recognizing that the client really has the solution. (Laughs)

Jerry: Yes, well, I-

Joan: They're just not the expert ...

Jerry: That's right, I'm gonna say that, uh, uh, you've been using the term coach, because you're, uh, I'm imagining looking at the video, you're looking at me, but the truth is what we're really talking about is the other, with a capital O.

[00:24:30]

Joan: Ah ...

Jerry: Because the opportunity is for a clinician, the opportunity is for a leader, the opportunity ... From my lips to God's ears for our politicians ... To hold that stance to say, "I'm gonna stand in a way that, uh ... I will, I, I will use my experience to create, to create a safe container for the pain and suffering that is existing between us, so that this other person who in this moment doesn't have that capacity has the capacity to process that."

[00:25:00]

Joan: Yeah, beautiful, Jerry.

Jerry: Yeah.

Joan: Okay.

Jerry: Now, but I think that there's a challenge implicit in this, which I think your book speaks to, I think your work speaks to, I think that I have experienced myself, which is that for me to hold that space as a leader, um, as the other in a relationship, uh, to, to create that container I have to have done my own work. I think part of the challenge that we see, and we see this in organizations all the time, is a kind of of amplification of the decompensation that occurs.

[00:25:30]

[00:26:00] Um, several months back I did a, a, uh podcast conversation with Dan Harris and Ben Ruben

Jerry: And, and, and what we talked about is the amplifying effect of each of their anxious states. One gets anxious the other gets more anxious then they, and then it just goes back and forth. And in the same kind of place when, when, when we are at working with someone who is in effect decompensating and falling apart, whether [00:26:30] it's my employee walks in and says, "I can't handle this ..." The leader's responsibility, I think is to pause ... Do a para-sympathetic nervous system reset ...

Joan: How do you do that?

Jerry: Take a breath.

Joan: Thank you (Laughs) ...

Jerry: Literally take a breath. You sit there and you say ...

Joan: (Laughs)

[00:27:00]

Jerry: You find ground beneath your butt, or bet-, beneath your feet ... You notice without, uh, falling, uh, into the seductive trap of your own thoughts. And you hold yourself steady.

Joan: I mean, this is, you're basically describing the, the GRACE process ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Which is: G, gather your attention, R, recalling your intention, attuning to your [00:27:30] body, heart and mind, attuning to the other, considering, because also, discernment is really important insight, uh, intuition, um, uh, bringing forth our expertise, considering what we're serving, and then engaging. That's GRACE.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and, and what I'm hearing is, is that GRACE is the way to meet the edge.

[00:28:00]

Joan: That's it, GRACE is a suite of, um, features including attention and, um, affect and, uh, our moral ground, our intention and so forth, that actually p-prime compassion, that nourish compassion to come forth.

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

Joan: So, you know, one of the things, like, you were saying on the in breath, I mean, the in breath stimulates the para-sympathetic system, according to neuroscience, but also, um, ah, the in breath is a place where we can allocate or put our attention ...
[00:28:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And, um, c-, release all of the distractions and anxieties, ah, that, um, are causing us to feel threatened.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: So, you know, just bringing our attention to our breath. Meditation is such a powerful medium for us to transform the suffering that arises in our lives.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative). So-

[00:29:00]
Joan: And so that's like a micro-meditation ...

Jerry: In that moment, so there's that, that, that, that, that, that moment, the, the staff member comes in, hair on fire, you as the leader in this space of, how do I respond, um ... We respond, uh, either from a place of, uh, er ... We respond from a servant leadership perspe- ... I was gonna say, like, a coach, but no, we respond from a servant leadership-
[00:29:30]

Joan: Yeah. And as such, you know, um, it's really important for us to get grounded because the, the connection with this person whose having a difficult time can, um, affect us, we can take it on ...

Jerry: Right.

Joan: We can get, you know, very up-regulated and feel fragile or threatened ourselves, and so part of what, what, you know, is so important for us to learn how to ground ourselves.
[00:30:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And, and, and ... The, the, that, from that place, when we respond ... Just even that stance is a compassionate stance. And then when we respond from that place, the acts that we take could then be genuinely compassionate.

[00:30:30]
Joan: Exactly. And it's, you know, it's very difficult for us not to be operating out of our biases, um, when we're ungrounded.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: In other words we're just, we're kind of mass of reactivity ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And what grounding ... And also, Jerry, I think what's so important is to, you know, the kind of moral ground, not just this sort of embodied ground, um, or intentional grounding, but the moral ground, you know, why are we doing this? Why are we engaged in this kind of relationship at this moment? And as a servant leader, you know, sitting in front of a heartbroken person ...

[00:31:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, and to, uh, be able to be a resource for them as they discover or build their own capacities ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: It's really important.

[00:31:30]

Jerry: So, um, I'm gonna, I'm, I'm gonna shift the lens a little bit, um ... Because I think that this area that I'm gonna speak to can be really helpful. And it's a funny line of inquiry that I would bring to you, which is: I know a little bit about your story, but tell me why this is so important to you.

Joan: You know it's important both personally and also in terms of, um, what I'm seeing in the world today. You know, uh, all of these edge states I describe, Jerry, are ones that are familiar to me, um, in terms of my own experience. Uh, I have, I've done pathological altruism, I've overextended myself, uh, I've harmed people when I've been trying to help them by being unskillful. Um, I've experienced empathic distress, I've been in, uh, um, many interactions where, um, I, uh, was in resonance with a person who was suffering profoundly and I completely lost my boundaries and took on that suffering vicariously ...

[00:32:00]

[00:32:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, uh, you know, when it comes to integrity I have experienced morals, uh, injury, I have seen things that have caused my, my heart to break. Uh, I know, I'm well familiar with moral distress when I can see a way through a situation where integrity is being violated, and, um, I can't implement a good shift because of external circumstances. I know moral outrage, I experience it a lot in relation to our, our current political situation, or the treatment of refugees, or what I've seen in the medical system.

[00:33:00]

[00:33:30] Um, I've, I've known moral apathy, I've turned away at times from situations of suffering when I feel overwhelmed. Um, so, you know, integrity violation is something, loss of integrity or moral suffering is something I know from personal experience, and I see everywhere.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And knowing how this affects individuals and how it's effecting our society and really our world, our environment and our global culture. And then respect and disrespect. Um, I've been subjected to bullying. Uh, I've been bullied top down and bottom up (Laughs) ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, you know, as a teacher I've had students, um, uh, treat me in ways that were really pretty rough.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And, um, I've also had been subject to top down bullying, and also horizontal hostility, um, where, um, peers have tried to take me out ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:34:30] Joan: Uh, if you will. So, the issue of respect and disrespect is a very personal, uh, experience for me. And then when it comes to engagement, um, like you I'm a kind of person who's wholeheartedly engaged. I'm very industrious. I love my work. And there are times when I go a little bit too far and almost s-slip into burnout.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:35:00] Joan: So, um, and I hear burnout, you know, everywhere, um, teachers, clinicians, uh, business people, people in Silicon Valley, it's just, um, uh, an, uh, epidemic proportions. So one of the reasons I wrote this book, not just for clinicians but really for all the sectors that I've been talking about, including parents ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, eh, that I, you know, I feel people, we need to identify the challenges ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:35:30]

Joan: But also, um, there are pathways of transforming these challenges into strengths. Is that helpful?

Jerry: It was very helpful and, and, you know, there are, there are a number of times in which when we're recording these podcasts that I wish we actually had the videos ...

Joan: Ah ...

Jerry: Of the whole recording, because then people would have been able to see your eyes.

Joan: Ah.

Jerry: And when you were speaking, you were remembering, and when we remember there, there is, uh, there is this personal connection and powerful motivation going on and, and, and, and ... You know ... What, what I, what I witnessed, it was almost like a, a news reel ... And some of our listeners are too young to even know what a news reel is ...

Joan: (Laughs)

Jerry: But it was almost like a news reel, and I saw you ... Because many of the people who know you may not know this about you ... I saw you on the front lines of fighting for civil rights in the 1960s ...

[00:36:30]

Joan: Mm- hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: I saw you in your journey through the dharma. And in your process of becoming Roshi Joan. I saw all of that flashing forward, and I saw a woman I respect, a teacher that, whose words have lifted my life, whose presence has created, um, has added to whatever wisdom that I then pass along. I saw her being acted upon in a way that was painful and hurtful, and I saw her losing her own self occasionally, because we're all capable of that.

[00:37:00]

[00:37:30] And, um, I saw that the book, and I saw your work as something that I can really relate to, which is seeking the answers to the questions that we ourselves carry. How do I exist in a world that seems hellbent on distressing me? (Laughs)

Joan: Well, (Laughs) but you know I, it's kind of, we're in a world where, uh, there's a tremendous flow of kindness and compassion on one side of the equation. On the other there's, it's a quite mean world that we're in at this time. And I feel a kind of moral responsibility, um, at my age to, um, s- share what I've learned, um, through

[00:38:00]

my own difficulties and my own errors, and also having been trusted by enough people who have shared their experience with me.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). .

Joan: Um, where we can use this little bit of wisdom that I've gained as a way to maybe, uh, nourish a more sane world.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). .

Joan: A healthier world.

[00:38:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, it's, uh, uh, uh, it's part of that, um, wish to alleviate suffering.

Joan: Exactly.

Jerry: Mine as well as everyone else's because it's all one big suffering, yeah. So, uh, I, I, we'll, we'll start to wrap, but I want to bring in back to a particular question that, that I have found intriguing, which is, um, going back to the book for a moment ...
[00:39:00] In a sense, it's a pathway towards resiliency.

Joan: Absolutely, it is a path toward resiliency. Actually, that is the point of the book.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and, and yet there's also a very powerful message, which is that in that movement towards resiliency is this notion of freedom.

Joan: Yes.

[00:39:30]

Jerry: So make that connection for me, because that's actually not something that we spend a lot of time talking about, uh, uh, at, at, on my side of the equation, here at Reboot and what we're doing. Tell me about freedom. And I, I, it's, like, such a big question, but ...

Joan: Uh, resilience means that we are pliable, nimble, that we have this capacity to adapt. That we can uphold ourselves in the midst of these complex conditions of life ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:40:00]

Joan: As we experience it, uh, day in and day out. And when we can't, uh, we become brittle and we break. And freedom is not breaking. Freedom is bending.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Freedom is being supple.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Freedom is that capacity to transform the adversities that we encounter and others encounter, um, in to strengths.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: [00:40:30] And the strength, the, in a way the core strength that we're talking about here is freedom, it's freedom from suffering.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Freedom from attachment. Freedom from, uh, clinging.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Freedom from the need to have an ego.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Um, so, this is the kind of freedom I'm talking about, it's, in a way, freedom even from our role as a leader.

Jerry: [00:41:00] I want, I want, I want to bring it back to something that occurred just a few weeks ago. We had one of our ... Uh, periodic immersive retreat experiences we call Boot Camps, and, um, we were talking about, um, the tendency in our, in our lives to be in a place where we're supposed to fix the other. And, um, uh, we, we do an exercise where, uh, we, we, we have very constrained instructions or constraining instructions, and we ask, uh, participants to speak with one another in a way that is, uh, designed to, to, en-engage them to notice the impulse to fix, but not be able to fix. And it's a simple thing, which is, you're not allowed to speak, you're just to listen, okay?

[00:41:30]

[00:42:00] And the folks come back, and we usually do this and, and we send them out on a walk to do this, because I think that there's something, um, that interrupts the power structure when we walk side by side, versus sitting across from each other. All the sudden there becomes this conference table between us and a power structure. Versus two friends going for a walk.

And one woman came back and I said, you know, so, how was that for you? And she said, "It was so freeing ..."

Joan: Wow.

Jerry: "To listen without feeling responsible for fixing, making better, or making the other person's difference." And so then I turned to her partner and I said, well, what was that like for you? And she said, "I felt heard, I felt received ..."
[00:42:30]

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: "I felt acknowledged." And I think that there's a resilient freedom in that presence.

Joan: Yeah.

Jerry: Does this resonate?

Joan: It totally, uh, resonates. You know, um, my teacher is Roshi Bernie Glassman ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:43:00]

Joan: And he, uh, and his late wife developed these three tenets of a peacemaker. And the first one is of not knowing, be-beginners mind. Um, having curiosity, being open to whatever is arising. The second is bearing witness ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And this is exactly what this woman is talking about (Laughs) I think, is, um, this capacity to be fully present but not feel that you have to fix or help. Bearing witness is a way that we serve. It's a way that we receive the world as it is.
[00:43:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And then the third tenet, Jerry, is compassionate action.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: And, um, our engagement is based on the experience of not knowing, of being open, not being stupid, but being open (Laughs). Being curious, uh, and, just, um, being present for it, and then bearing witness that capacity to, to not be separate from things as they are and then compassionate actions of rising from, from that.
[00:44:00]

Jerry: And so, to, to, to bring it all together, perhaps, I think what we're saying is that when we're at that edge state and we cultivate compassion by bearing witness ...

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry:
[00:44:30] By holding ourselves with presence and creating a scaffolding, a container for the other to have whatever experience they're having. When we lead from that place, it creates freedom. Freedom for me to just be, freedom for the other to just be, and so that we can then later, in a few minutes roll up our sleeves and get to work and do the work that needs to be done. Compassion in action.

Joan: That's it, you ... Jerry, I feel like you're my teacher.

Jerry: (Laughs)

Joan: (Laughs)

[00:45:00]

Jerry: That is one of the, the greatest honors I've had, thank you. You know, what, what, what ...

Joan: I mean, you just summarized my book in a way that I could never have done.

Jerry: (Laughs)

Joan: It's so wonderful.

Thank you for taking the time with us today. And thank you for writing the book.

Jerry:
[00:46:00]

Joan: Full of care. Jerry, it's been an honor to be with you this morning ...

Jerry: You-

Joan: I just thank you so much.

Jerry: You too, you too. Thank you, thank you.

Joan: (Laughs)