

Jerry: Hey Leonie. It's great to meet you.

Leonie A.: Hi.

Jerry: Hey, uh, before we get started, why don't you, um, just take a minute to introduce yourself.

[00:00:30]

Leonie A.: Yeah, sure thing. So, my name's Leonie Akhidenor. I live in Melbourne, Australia. Um, I work for a company called View Bank Homes and, um, certainly a residential developers and builders. So we build housing estates in Melbourne, Australia. Uh, my role is the head of residential development. But basically, that's very, um, vague way of saying that I'm involved in, sort of, the day to day running of the business.

[00:01:00] Um, I also ... Prior to working in property, I was in management consulting for a number of years. So, I love business, very passionate about it. Uh, outside of work, I am involved in a number of, uh, nonprofits and supporting them. I'm on, on the board of a nonprofit called Little Dreamers, which is, um, an amazing organization here in Melbourne. And outside of all of that, I've got a passion around self-development, um, radical self inquiry, as you say Jerry. And, um, you know, I'm a meditator and just, uh ... And I also love staying active. So, that's, sort of, a little bit about me in a nutshell. Um-

[00:01:30]

Jerry: That's great.

Leonie A.: I thought what would be helpful here today was to talk about ... Uh, essentially how do you feel satisfied about-

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: ... what you have achieved each day? Um, so I find that sometimes I'll get home and I'll reflect on what I was wanting to achieve during the day and then what I have achieved. Sometimes I sit there going, "Okay, I hit most of the key quality items. I'm feeling okay about today." And then other days I'm thinking, "What happened? And how did I have a ... How was I pulled in every which way and wasn't able to really achieve what I wanted." And then I find that that can then leave me feeling a little bit anxious, frustrated, even though I know that I've done the best I can. So, I don't know, it's just something that's been on my mind and I wondered if other people felt that way from your experience and how maybe I could better manage this self-criticism that comes with not feeling like I've done enough.

[00:02:00]

[00:02:30]

Jerry: Hmm. Well, thank you. Um, yeah it's a very familiar feeling. Um, can, can we spend a little bit of time getting a little bit more context for you. You know, about what's happening for you. And, and, um, you saw me taking a few notes and all. Um, tell me about this sense of guilt. Tell me about what is it that ... Um, there's a phrase

[00:03:00]

that, uh, Brene Brown likes to use, which, which I really enjoy, which is, "What is the story I'm telling myself?" So, when that guilt comes up, what is the story line? What is the story you tell yourself?

[00:03:30]

Leonie A.: Yeah. It's, uh, it's a good question. It's typically ... It's just that, that chatter in the head which is, you know, did you need to take that five minute break to sit outside? You know, "Or could you have just plowed on. Or, um, you know, why couldn't he have done that quicker? That phone call, you could have cut it down further. You know, it went on just too long." Could you ... And it's just kind of that critique. Um, and, you know, I don't think I've ever a moment in the day make myself crazy over it. But I do, certainly, think back to the big moments and think, "Oh, you know, I could have done that better." And-

[00:04:00]

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: ... if I could have, now I'm feeling not great about myself and I'm feeling a little bit, yeah, guilty and I hope to learn from that and tomorrow I'll do better. But the thing is, tomorrow comes and typically, you know, no one ever thought ... I don't know. I've, I've never actually finished a to-do list in my entire career. (laughs). And, and that's just what it is. I think you've got that list there as a, a good guide as to what you're trying to achieve, but really, um, if you hit a few of your top priorities, that's probably, you know, should be good enough. And I wonder if to most people, that is good enough and then they can carry on their day and feel satisfied. But, I'm always, sort of, challenging that in my own mind.

[00:04:30]

Jerry: You're right. You're, you're, you're sharing a lot and it's really helpful for me. I'm getting a good sense of some of the things that you're struggling with. Um, I wanna just reflect back something that, that I just heard you say. Perhaps for the second or third time, which is a kind of curiosity you had about how other people. And I think the phrase was, "I'm curious if other people feel they're good enough." Now that ... I may not have heard it a hundred percent accurately, but you're nodding. Does that, does that reflect the feeling?

[00:05:00]

Leonie A.: Yes.

[00:05:30]

Jerry: Yeah. And I think what I heard you say before is, "I'm curious if other ... How other people ... If other people have the same problem?" Did I remember that correctly?

Leonie A.: Yes. Yeah.

Jerry: Okay. So, notice those two things and, and you're smiling a little bit as you notice those things. Um-

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: ... think about ... So, so what we're, what we're working with is a kind of internal voice of harsh self-criticism. And, um, it's kind of relentless, isn't it?

Leonie A.: Yeah.

[00:06:00]

Jerry: It, it really even ... It can even show up in this, in little, in little minute ways. Like, did you really need to spend five minutes? Why did you drive those three blocks when you know that there was gonna be traffic? Now you're smiling cause I think it's cause I've been like wiretapping your head. (laughs).

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: [00:06:30] But I imagine too that there are times when it's actually large things. Like, why did you date that person? Or, why did you make that decision that might show up as kind of illumination. Am I ... Is, is, is this right?

Leonie A.: Yeah, yeah. I think the pressure of trying to expecting to get it right the first go. And when I don't it's like, "Oh God, you know, here we go again."

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: Um, it's that I used to use the word 'perfection'-

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: [00:07:00] ... and with the self-development work that I love doing. Um, and the retreats that I've been on, a lot of the times that word will come up. Like, that sort of expectation around perfection, which I now know is actually bullshit.

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: Um, but, you know, it's something that I think I ... You know, I was proud about. Like, yeah I'm, I'm pretty good at stuff. You know, I'm pretty good at life. And so, when I'm not, you know it's, what happened there? You know.

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: [00:07:30] And every day were just, were just go ... We're going with that. We don't actually really know what we're doing. And if we're doing well, it's, you know, it's hard work a lot of the time, but sometimes it's luck and, you know, there's so many other things that I think that contribute to, you know-

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: ... landing to something exactly how you anticipated it.

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: Um, which also I guess comes into control as well. I anticipate this action, um, this outcome, so therefore, you know, I have to hit that exact, you know, outcome or result. So I think there's a few things at play here.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah there's definitely. I'm glad you just said that. Cause that's, that's actually the feeling I had that the, the ... It's actually a complex web of interconnected, uh, things going on. One of which is, is, um, control, very powerful word. Control's often a reaction to fear. Um, the desire for perfection is often a similarly fear driven, uh, phenomenon, um, which is that if I am less than, what is expected of me that I'm somehow going to, um, have some sort of threat. And what I often say is that I think that most of the threats that, uh, we feel internally are really a threat to either our feeling, our ability to love or be loved, or a feeling of safety, or a feeling of belonging. And sometimes it's a combination of all of those things.

[00:08:00]

[00:08:30]

[00:09:00] And so, um, so we've got this complex web of feelings of relate ... of, of related feelings going on. Um, there's guilt, guilt that I haven't been enough. Um, the voice ... that voice of a, a harshly critical voice that is like watching your moves. I'm imagining occasionally, that voice could actually be externally focused. Right? You might ... Now we're gonna smile a little bit. Maybe, maybe, uh, how, how are you when other people let you down?

Leonie A.: Yeah, not great. (laughs).

Jerry: Yeah not, you're not great.

[00:09:30]

Leonie A.: (laughs). Yeah.

Jerry: So, so, so the voice that setting a kind of standard is really setting a standard kind of across the board. Isn't it?

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: Right. Now you're probably ... I'm just guessing here, so correct me if I'm wrong. You're probably harshest on yourself.

Leonie A.: Correct.

Jerry: And when people don't live up to your standards, is there hell to pay?

[00:10:00]

Leonie A.: I th ... I'm quite empathetic as well.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: So, I would say I would recognize it. Would I give someone a hard time for it? I would voice my opinion and say, "You know, this didn't sit right with me for these reasons." I consider myself quite diplomatic and, um reasonable...

Jerry: But you're not unreasonably aggressive or something like that?

Leonie A.: No, it's just to myself. (laughs).

Jerry: Yeah, yeah that ... that's the one where your hardest on, right?

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:10:30]

Jerry: So, how ... So, you know you wrote in talking about this in terms of running the business and, and then also balancing a bunch of different things. And there's this sort of other factor in this, which is, "I'm doing a lot, but somehow it doesn't feel like I'm doing enough."

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: Does that ... You're nodding. Does that resonate?

Leonie A.: Yeah, yes.

Jerry: Yeah. And then I'm just pulling from your email.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:11:00]

Jerry: "I hear of people working 20 hour days. I've tried this and it doesn't work for me." Pause. "I've had issues in the past with adrenal fatigue and glandular fever from pushing too hard." Yeah, something just happened. Your body, just shifted a little bit. What, what are you feeling as a replay those words for you?

Leonie A.: Um, I feel like that's honest.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: That's the truth.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: Um-

[00:11:30]

Jerry: So, notice that, notice that.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: There's a kind of exhaustion that your body can feel.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And there's a, there's a line from John O'Donohue poem called, Blessing For One Who is Exhausted. In which he says, "You have traveled too far an empty time." And so this is another factor, if you will, the complex structure here.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:12:00]

Jerry: Which is, I could ... I put my head down at the pillow at night and that voice rises up and says, "You still didn't do enough. Why didn't you?" And yet I'm exhausted, but I don't understand ... Notice again how the comparison to other people shows up. I don't understand, some people seem to be able to work 20 hour days. And there's a softness showing up in your face right now.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: What's happening for you?

[00:12:30]

Leonie A.: I think that is part of the frustration sometimes. Um, you know, I, I love my work and my work, yes, takes up a fair bit of my time, but I've also got other passions in other areas of my life. And so, when I commit to all of these things, um, you know, I find that there's not enough hours in the day to really kind of, I don't know, achieve highly in every single bucket. Because I ... I'm not one of those people that's completely obsessed with work and so that 20 hour, um-

Jerry: But do you think you're supposed to be?

Leonie A.: A little bit, yeah.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: Like I hear it from other people and I'm like, "Wow, really?" Like-

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: But-

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: Yeah. I just ... And then I'm just like, "Oh goddamn, maybe I should be." But I know I
[00:13:30] can ... I work up to 12 hours days and, and, I mean, I work crazy intensely during that time, I'm not stuffing around. So, I do that and then I'm out and then I'm doing something else. And then I'm doing my not for profit stuff, I'm doing this and I'm doing that.

Jerry: Right.

Leonie A.: I'm not someone that just sits around, but-

Jerry: But, but-

Leonie A.: Yeah, I just I'm not.

Jerry: But, but I, I wanna, I wanna suggest to you.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: That to the degree that we can, sort of, unpack this a little bit further, um, notice
[00:14:00] and hold to the side a bit the degree to which you're comparing yourself to others or comparing yourself to this other structure. I wanna go back to the voice for a little bit. How long has ... have you lived with that voice?

Leonie A.: For as long as I can remember, I think.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: I mean there has been a voice there saying something. (laughs).

Jerry: What sorts of things does it say?

Leonie A.: Um, I think, yeah, I've noticed that this, as I've become more self-aware, it's quite
[00:14:30] critical, that voice. So, and I'm, I'm making efforts to turn that around and I'm, I'm noticing it so much more, which is great. But look in the past and even now the voice is saying, "Yeah." It's, it's this whole not enough, not good enough, not working hard enough, not-

Jerry: Okay, tell me about-

Leonie A.: Yeah...

Jerry: I'm going to, I'm going to interrupt because I'm, I'm in a coaching-

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: ... techniques and, and-

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: ... when I interrupt, it's a kind of cognitive dissonance that's going on here. And, and
[00:15:00] what I wanna, I wanna stay with is, is, um, " I've been working to turn it around."
What does that mean?

Leonie A.: I've been working to notice it more and quieten it.

Jerry: What's wrong with what it says?

Leonie A.: It makes me feel like crap.

Jerry: Okay.

Leonie A.: From time to time. Yeah.

Jerry: So, so, so I'm gonna replay what I'm hearing. You tell me if this sounds right. So I
[00:15:30] have this ... I've grown up with this, this voice. And sometimes this voice has
compelled me forward and I've done really amazing things with it. But sometimes
that voice won't let me rest. And sometimes it's so won't let me rest that I'm
exhausted. And sometimes I get angry at that voice that it won't shut up. And
[00:16:00] sometimes I worry that that voice is right, that I'm not enough. Is any of this finding
a home inside your body?

Leonie A.: Yes. Spot on. Yes.

Jerry: Yeah. I wanna give you something. And talk, "And, and Jerry, you don't know a
thing. I am dedicated to self-development, I am meditating, I am gonna meditate
that voice until it's quiet.'

Leonie A.: (laughs).

Jerry: Now you're laughing, right?

Leonie A.: Yeah.

[00:16:30]

Jerry: Because I really have been listening into your brain, haven't I?

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Okay. All right. Okay, I'm gonna say something about that voice, cause it's a very, very familiar voice. And I'm tapping into that voice that lives within me to be able to speak. So from thousands of miles of way, I'm with you. Okay. I'm gonna suggest that you do something really radical here. That you love that voice, because that voice wants something really, really special for this little girl. Cause that voice has lived inside of you all of your life. What does that voice want for this little girl?

[00:17:00]

[00:17:30]

Leonie A.: Security, safety.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: Success.

Jerry: Yeah. The problem is that that little, that voice is kinda screwed up. It thinks that if it's a really mean to you, it's gonna make you feel better. And you could understand. The reason I keep pointing about little girls because it's actually a child like logic that lives within that. That voice is saying to you, I suspect, "Hey listen, if only you get it right. If you get it perfect, then what's gonna happen is, love, safety and belonging for the rest of your life." Does that sound right?

[00:18:00]

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: The problem is that like a lot of conclusions that children come to, they make sense in the time in which they form that belief system. But then, then the world evolves we grow up and becomes much more complex and it actually no longer works. And, and the voice that actually saved your life, I'm speaking metaphorically of course or perhaps not, that voice, it's just looking out for your best interest. It's just got ... It's got a view that kind of needs an operating system update. A change-

[00:18:30]

[00:19:00]

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: A change in the programming. Cause what if, if we hold that point of view what does that, what does that said voice want for you? What does that voice ... If, if you could live up to all of the expectations that voice would have what would your life be like?

[00:19:30]

Leonie A.: Amazing. You know, I'd dancing on rainbows. (laughs)

Jerry: Everything that you do...Right? Would be safe and wonderful and loving and you'd never be hungry and you'd never ... Right?

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:20:00]

Jerry: You'd open up the faucets in the house and red wine would pour out of one. (laughter) And, and you'd laugh and you'd feel love.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right?

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: And you wouldn't have to worry. Tell me about worry. Tell me about what, what did you worry about as a kid?

[00:20:30]

Leonie A.: Um, achieving, that was prized in my household.

Jerry: What if you didn't achieve?

Leonie A.: Guilt. I'd, I'd feel an amount ... Yeah.

Jerry: Why? Who would you let down?

Leonie A.: When I achieved ... Yeah. When I achieved, I would be prized particularly by my parents, probably particularly by my dad. And I loved to, you know, make him feel proud of me, really. And so, I would succeed at school, academically and things like that so that dad would be proud. I didn't really feel that much myself to be honest.

Jerry: So that you would feel dad's love.

Leonie A.: Yeah. Correct. Yeah.

Jerry: Now, dad did his best. But the message that you got was that if you ... If you are ...
[00:21:30] The love that you would feel, the love that you crave, the love that we all deserve as human beings becomes dependent upon actions, external actions and measured by external actions. And so then what happens is if we ... If our external behavior including showing up five minutes late for a meeting doesn't match those

[00:22:00]

expectations, what's threatened is that sense of love. Tell me, tell me about your meditation practice.

Leonie A.: So, um, I do currently I just use Headspace and I do 10 minutes a day and I sit there and ... Um, cause I was doing ... I did TM meditation for [inaudible 00:22:17] so was the 20 minutes start the ... start of the day in the afternoon. Um, then I found ... I sort of fell out of that a bit and I thought, you know what, 10 minutes at the start of the day is, is better than nothing. So I have my little morning routine where I get myself ready for the day mentally and then, yeah, I, I do that every morning pretty much, my meditation.

Jerry: And, um, are you a good meditator? It's a trick question.

Leonie A.: I'd say, no. (laughter)

Jerry: Okay.

Leonie A.: I try. (laughs).

Jerry: Okay, okay. So, so Ani Pema Chödrön, one of my teachers, uh, once said in a teaching that if you spend 20 minutes, if you sit down with the intention of meditating for 20 minutes and spend 90 minutes lost in thought, and wake up in the last minute, congratulations you had a wonderful meditation session. And this is really the, the issue. What can happen to high achieving people, people who use external structures to create a sense of love, safety and belonging, fueled by a harshly critical voice, what can happen is we can turn everything into a mechanism for getting an A. Including something as profoundly releasing as a meditation session. We can use something as profoundly important as code our focus on our self-development, which is a phrase you used before. Am I developing fast enough? I'm I getting an A in vulnerability and authenticity, right?

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: Right. It's really, um, uh, an endless process of finding reasons to not be worthy of love.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: So, so Headspace and, and Andy, uh, comes from a Buddhist tradition. And there's a, there's a core fundamental belief in Buddhism. And I don't know if you've heard of this notion of Buddha nature or basic goodness. But, but Buddha nature just basically boils down to this, we are fundamentally, inexorably, good. We are born that way. And the clearest evidence of that is the fact that we're born human beings. And the logic goes like this, only human beings can maintain enlightenment. And since you were born a human, you have the potential, every potential to be a

[00:25:30] Buddha. And so, there's literally nothing you have to do, other than to remember that you're fundamentally good to stay worthy of love, safety, belonging. There's nothing you have to do. This is completely radical in our Western culture, because, are you kidding me, if I don't wear the right deodorant, I'm not worthy of love, safety and belonging.

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: Right. If I don't smell right, if I don't look right, if I don't act right, if I don't ... It's this, it's this constant set of barrage of messages. And in fact what we use, what we do is we twist words. Wishes for beautiful aspirational values not as this gorgeous goal to reach towards, but as a source of guilt to somehow compel us to be better people. And the track goes on and on.

[00:26:00]

Leonie A.: Hmm. How do we break the cycle? I know there's no quick fix, but where do you start?

[00:26:30] Jerry: Well, I think we start by loving that voice, cause that voice is part of you. That voice is looking out for you, that voice doesn't want you humiliated, that voice isn't what you feeling ashamed, that voice doesn't want you feeling regret. And what we wanna do is love that voice and tell that for voice, "Chill out. I got this." Or even more, "Thanks, I really appreciate you working overtime to make sure that I get everything right. But these people in my life, these external people my life, they love me even if I fail. And I ... And maybe someday I'll love me even if I fail, but I got this and you can relax, cause I'm safe. I'm worthy of love. And there are people that I belong to." Now, what I did was just short circuit a lot of work, right?

[00:27:00]

[00:27:30]

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: It's a lot easier to lay out than it is to actually do. But if we can start to operate with a contract that says that that voice is not the enemy, that voice is just misguided. It thinks that the best way to take care of you, is to make sure that you don't make any mistakes. But, um, I want you to imagine ... I don't know if ... Do you have children, or, or do you have?

[00:28:00]

Leonie A.: I don't. No.

Jerry: What is Little Dreamers, by the way?

Leonie A.: It's they basically support young carers. So children or people into the age of 20, um, 25 who have a sibling or parent who has a disease or, um, an illness and ... So the whole, um, thing around it is that person with the illnesses and diseases is being supported in one way or another who is supporting the carer. So-

[00:28:30]

Jerry: And, and so do you-

Leonie A.: ... um, I have a big affiliation with children and supporting them.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: Uh, I had that feeling. I had that feeling.

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: And so, tell me, picture in your mind one of those kids.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:29:00]

Jerry: Is it a ... How do they identify? Girl, boy, fluid identity? How do-?

Leonie A.: Yeah, girl, girl, boy.. Yeah, uh, yeah, I've got one in my head.

Jerry: Picture one.

Leonie A.: So, yeah.

Jerry: Yeah, you could-

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And, and-

Leonie A.: 10-year-old girl. Yeah.

Jerry: Okay. And I want you to hold her in your head.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And I want you to tell me, tell me what possible thing she can do to make you not love her? Yeah.

Leonie A.: Yeah.

Jerry: Okay.

Leonie A.: Yeah.

[00:29:30]

Jerry: But, what if she actually gets on 95 on the test?

Leonie A.: Yeah, still wouldn't matter. Would it?

Jerry: Right. And, and what if she actually forgets her lunch bag at school or lunch box at school? Like, you see what I'm saying?

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: It's like it we can extend that level of loving kindness to that other person who, who
[00:30:00] no matter how ... Do we want her to strive and achieve? Of course, we do. We want her to feel the pride that comes from working hard, but we also know that you're gonna keep her safe, she belongs and you're gonna love her.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: Now if you'd like her ... Would you like her to grow up with this voice of harsh self-criticism?

Leonie A.: No way. Yeah.

[00:30:30]

Jerry: So then your job is to come to love your internal critic in such a way that she ... you model for her what it's like to be in a relationship with that voice.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: Cause the truth is, she probably has that voice as well.

Leonie A.: Hmm. And even more so, I guess with the younger generation and, you know, with social media and all those things we didn't grow up with. Um, the, the opportunity to prepare yourself.

Jerry: The constant comparison.

Leonie A.: Oh my God. You know, it's frightening.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:31:00]

Jerry:

So, I mean, the work here is really around letting go of the need to hear that voice and that particularly harsh way and loving that voice in a way that allows you to, uh, take the advice of that voice without necessarily taking in the criticism of that voice.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:31:30]

Jerry: Thanks, I really appreciated the fact that you pointed out that. Um, I often, uh, speak about my, my friend and teacher Sharon Salzberg and her book Lovingkindness would be a really wonderful book to consider reading at this point.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: The practice of metta, M-E-T-T-A, um, is a practice that the daily Buddhist meditation practice of coming to love. To, to generate loving kindness for all beings, yourself included.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:32:00]

Jerry: And to allow yourself the small mistakes of every day. Um, the other day I, I, I went shopping and I came out of the supermarket and I couldn't find my car. I was in the parking lot and I, I couldn't find the car and this never happens to me.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And I immediately went into all of the self-criticism. Well, three hours earlier I had had some dental work and I was still loopy from the anesthesia.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:32:30]

Jerry: And so I gave myself permission to lose my car cause that's not something that I do.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right? And I saw in that a moment of being able to just be gentle to myself, to be kind.

Leonie A.: It's a practice, isn't it? Uh, well, for, for me, it's a bit of a practice. Yeah.

Jerry: It is a practice.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: And I'll let you in on a little secret. That word 'practice' is a really prac ... powerful word because it is not something we achieve.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:33:00]

Jerry: It's something that we do every day. And so, part of the meditation practice for you might be to take a few brief minutes at the end of that session and just say, "I'm okay. Even, even on the days in which I've made mistakes, I'm okay."

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And I can't see because, because we're on video, but my hand is over my heart, [00:33:30] "I'm okay." And to forgive yourself of the small mistakes.

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Do you think it's strongly related to upbringing? Do you think people who were, you know, constantly praised as children for, you know, not a whole way, but just constantly praised and showered with love, do you think they then maybe don't have the same issues as an adult? You know, criticizing themselves or do you think it's just being human that we all do it? [00:34:00]

Jerry: Um, before I respond to your question I wanna point out something. I hear of people working 20 hour days. Do you hear the comparison in your question?

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: What's the comparison?

Leonie A.: I'm looking at what someone else is doing and thinking should I be going that-

Jerry: Right.

Leonie A.: ... and find out why not.

[00:34:30]

Jerry: So now let's go back to your first question. Was ... which was, do I think this is part of your upbringing? What do you think?

Leonie A.: I think it definitely has an impact, absolutely.

Jerry: So-

Leonie A.: Informing the ... That voice.

Jerry: So what ... Tell, tell me about, tell me about that.

[00:35:00]

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Um, so my father was an extremely ambitious person. Um, he actually started View Bank Homes 30 years ago. Um, came from nothing ... came as ... Was born in a village in Africa, went to a boarding school there. Um, only because he got the, um, the grades to go to this particular boarding school. It was a pretty full on environment. You can imagine boarding school, Africa and it was one of those ones where unless you are top of the class, that's basically your ticket out to the real world, you know.

Jerry: What country is that?

Leonie A.: Otherwise, you become a farmer. This is Nigeria.

Jerry: Nigeria.

[00:35:30]

Leonie A.: So, pretty full on. Um, and so, he was ... He's really smart. He's got a photographic memory. He, um, was, you know, one of the top in the class, got a scholarship to leave the country and never looked back. Um, so, you know, he's upbringing similarly wasn't really in the family environment, to be honest. Um, it was at this boarding school where, like, the older brothers who were sort of like your mentor.

[00:36:00] And I think a bit more harsh sense from what I can understand. Um, discipline, strict, um, punishments, all that kind of intense environment, which produced these brilliant children-

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: ... who went on to conquer the world. But, I guess that's the sort of environment he grew up in.

Jerry: Hmm. Hmm. And tell me about mom.

Leonie A.: So, mom, mom is the softer of the two, I'd say. I mean, look I love both my parents equally. And I think as I've gotten older, I've come to respect my father a lot more and understand where he's coming from. And, um, so, you know. But mom, I feel has always ... Sort of always had my back and always has been that voice saying, "Oh, wouldn't worry too much about it." So she's kind of balanced that a little. Always wanted me to achieve, but I think, um, also mindful of my state of mind. Um, there this is feeling like, um, dad was like, you know, if you achieve, excellent.

[00:36:30] If you don't, what happened. You know, mom was just like, "Oh, well if you didn't achieve it, that's all right, try better next time." So she's, she's has had that influence in my life.
[00:37:00]

Jerry: Um, I want you to go back in time a little bit. Tell me what would have happened to dad, had he failed out of that boarding school?

Leonie A.: Good question. He would have stayed in Nigeria. He may have gotten into business in the main city. You know, there's no ... You know, he would have just gotten by.
[00:37:30] There's no why he could have afforded a ticket out of there at that time.

Jerry: Tell me what would have happened to dad had he not been able to get into that boarding school in the first?

Leonie A.: Had he not been able to, potentially would have lived in the village. Um, maybe would have got a sort of a job elsewhere, but certainly wouldn't have been able to ... I don't know. I mean, you never know or could have happened, but I think that boarding school really gave him a massively leg up to now being able to have these massive organization.

Jerry: So, did dad have brothers and sisters?

[00:38:00]

Leonie A.: He did, yes.

Jerry: And what happened to them?

Leonie A.: Um, the ones that didn't get into the boarding school stayed at home, in the village until 18 and then went to the city to find a job.

Jerry: Right. And so, um, it's possible. We don't know cause we can't AB test, right, life. But it's possible that, that had dad not gotten into that boarding school, he might not have left the village, even emotionally even if he physically left the village, he might not have left that village?
[00:38:30]

Leonie A.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And how many generations back go ... were in that village?

Leonie A.: As many as I'm aware of...our ancestors were from there. Yeah.

Jerry: Right. So, so, so that ... So, so really what we're talking about is kind of, um, the weight of failure. It would be to, to, to sort of break away would be the failure to shift away from, uh, millennia generations of folks who are in that village or in that region or in that community. And so, when the stakes are that high, it's really hard to just be as your mom would suggest, "It's okay."
[00:39:00]
[00:39:30]

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: Right. Dad's carrying on his shoulders and has passed on to his daughter the wish ... The, the importance of being able to break free of all of that. Um, I had this image. Has your dad ever gone back to Nigeria?

[00:40:00]

Leonie A.: Once or twice since he left, so he's really just, um, he hasn't had-

Jerry: Have you ever gone?

Leonie A.: I went when I was very little.

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: So, no I haven't there as an adult.

Jerry: Because I mean ... Just kind of honor a beautiful ritual that might be there as to ...
[00:40:30] for, for dad and his daughter to go back, um, and, and honor the energy and the ancestors that were all there and let them know that what's available to him now, what's available to you now is he doesn't have to worry that you're gonna end up back there.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: I mean, I think, I think that, to get intellectual about it for a moment. I think that, that what happens is, is many of the anxieties that we carry, that we have as parents, we pass on to our children.

[00:41:00]

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: Many of the stories that we tell ourselves, um, come down to us from our ancestors. And it goes like this, "If you do not do this, then the Cossacks are gonna ride over the hill and wipe out the village. If you don't do this then, then the British are gonna come and they're gonna wipe out. If you don't do this, then the generational, a multi-generational pain and suffering will just continue going forward." And so that creates this monumental sense of urgency behind a sense of achievement.
[00:41:30]

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: I have to break through because if I fail, we tumble all the way back. Does that sound familiar at all?

Leonie A.: Absolutely. And I think you're right, it's that energy of I must breakthrough,
[00:42:00] otherwise I'm going to be, let's say, living in this village for the rest of my life. You

[00:42:30] know, um, it's that level of intensity that I've sometimes reflected on my own, "Oh my God I'm bringing that level of intensity to my day where I'm safe, I'm my house, I live in Melbourne. I know where my next meal is coming from. Why am I bringing the same levels of intensity around my to-do list that potentially was brought, you know, by my father around something a lot more intense." So, you're right. I mean, without realizing it, we implicitly taking on board things that our parents have said in the way and the energies that they bring to certain things. Um, so I think it was you that said that, you know, we ... Um, we ... Our children will always be broken or if ... You can't, you can't be the perfect parent even. You know, there's always gonna be something that you bring to the table that the child's gonna take on and then have to deal with later on in life to some extent.

Jerry: And, and, and in a sense, um, the child wants so much to belong that the child will, um, emulate positive and negative aspects of the experience of being in the family in order to make certain, that if all else fails, I know where I belong. This is home, this is who I am. And, um, you know, at one point, you know, you talk about the fear having been beneficial to your success and noting that it has a shadow side, which is that anxiety and unease. I mean, this is exactly what we're talking about.

[00:43:30]

[00:44:00] Um, and what we wanna do is welcome that in and we wanna love that in, we wanna appreciate what it has done for us and then let it know that energy. Let it know, "Hey dad, we're not going back to Nigeria in that way. We may go back, but we're not gonna go back and end up trapped in the village." Which may have been the fear that he had as a boy.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:44:30]

Jerry: That, that, that the generations to come have opportunity that that little boy helped create, by studying so hard in getting into that boarding school and we're safe now. If you, if you were to in a sense give up this fear, it ... what, what would happen to you if you gave up the fear?

[00:45:00]

Leonie A.: The fear of-

Jerry: Not being enough.

Leonie A.: ... having to achieve. Not enough in general. Um, I think liberation... weight's off the shoulders. Just be more present in the moments. Stop worrying so much about the future. I don't know. It's just a f- f- feeling of light heartedness.

Jerry: What would you lose that you would want to keep?

[00:45:30]

Leonie A.: Yeah, I'm scared to lose that drive.

Jerry: Right.

Leonie A.: That real intense motivation that I have to succeed.

Jerry: Right, right. And see the belief is, if I give up this fear of not being good enough, then I will lose the drive and I might not make it to the boarding school.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: But you're already out of the village.

Leonie A.: Hmm.

[00:46:00]

Jerry: You're already in that new place. The work is really about letting of ... Well, loving what that voice has done for all of you in the family. And then allowing, allowing the possibility that you're okay just as you're.

[00:46:30]

Leonie A.: Hmm.

Jerry: I hope that was helpful.

Leonie A.: It was and I thank you Jerry for giving me a fair bit to think about. Um-

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: ... so, as I said it's a practice and it's I feel like I know where it's stemmed from and I feel like just didn't ... Even knowing that and looking back and going, "Oh, I get with well why I behave the way I behave. Why I think the way I think."

[00:47:00]

Jerry: Hmm.

Leonie A.: That gives me a level of comfort cause it's not this unknown beast that I, you know, can't tie in.

Jerry: Yeah.

Leonie A.: So, it's a practice that I'm, you know, I'm up for it. So-

Jerry: Hmm. Well, I wanna thank you for, you know, sharing your thoughts and sharing your experiences there. And, you know, there's a piece here that I think would be helpful which is to also thank both of your parents.

[00:47:30]

Leonie A.: Mm- hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Because they've both given you something very powerful, very, very supportive. Um, and there's a balancing act that you're striving for right now and I think somehow in the relationship that exists in who they are, there may be some answers within that, so-

Leonie A.: Hmm. Hmm.

Jerry: Well, thank you for, for taking the time to, to talk with us and, um, just stay connected and let us know ... let me know what happens for you.
[00:48:00]

Leonie A.: Will do. Thanks so much Jerry. I really appreciate it.

Jerry: All right.