

Jerry: [00:00:30] So Shizu, um, it's really a, a delight to connect with you. Um, why don't you just take a moment and introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about yourself. And then, uh, and then we'll talk and we'll see what, what could be helpful for you.

Shizu Okusa: [00:01:00] Perfect. Yeah, so I am the founder and CEO of Wealthy & Co. Which is a parent company that owns multiple wellness brands. And so, we have one company called JRINK, uh, which I started seven years ago, um, after I quit my Wall Street job. And then, uh, recently this year another brand called Apothékary, which is a herbal, um, pharmacy that offers natural solutions to the pharmaceutical drugs.

[00:01:30] And so you know, we're to direct to consumer brands. Um, we're located between New York and D.C. uh, you know we've taken on some rounds of capital and we're you know, growing quickly. Um, and I, I think you know for this context of this conversation, I would love to kind of chat through sort of you know, my thoughts between how I manage time and how I should be managing time at scale the [inaudible 00:01:30] between, uh, the two companies. And, um, and, uh, and yeah. Uh, also a Yogi, uh, and a plant hoarder I tell my friends, and, uh, a daughter, a farmer and, and all that good stuff, so.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well that's great and thank you for that. And, um, just so I can land it. Um, are you CEO of Wealthy?

[00:02:00] Shizu Okusa: Yes, I am. Yeah, so chairman and CEO, um, treasurer, and book keeper, chief [inaudible 00:02:08] officer. (laughs).

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Got it, got it. So, so what would be helpful to talk through? What are you, what are you holding onto as, as an issue that, uh, that might be useful to talk through?

Shizu Okusa: [00:03:00] Um, yeah so I think you know for today, you know the most active thoughts in my mind I have recently are just a how do I manage my time effectively as leader. Uh, feelings I think of being torn between two companies, two different capital structures and investors. Um, and three this idea of potentially exiting one company but maybe not for the value that I had originally wanted or anticipated, yet people want me to kind of stick it out longer. But I also wanna build another company at the same time.

[00:03:30] So ones kind of a very mature baby and like ready for exit. Um, and another is just starting, so I just feel like I'm not using my time effectively or a little bit of guilt probably to people I've taken money on from friends and family. And, uh, and yeah just kinda trying to think through that and, and manage my team.

And maybe feels like there's seven jobs going on at the same time, which maybe is all an entrepreneur's job. Yeah.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. So I'm hearing a lot of that.

[00:04:00]

Jerry: So, you've got a lot going on.

Shizu Okusa: I do, yeah. Two companies, um, two investor bases. And we're opening our sixth store inside a Whole Foods for our ... my drink company which is a D.C. sort of like largest cold pressed juice and delivery business, um, with a great name brand like Whole Foods. And you know we kinda ... I feel like you ... As an entrepreneur, you feel like you made it when you kinda work with someone like that.

[00:04:30]

Um, but you know I feel like it's you know not as exciting and sexy as you used to be. It's seven years in and, um, you know we received a few offers to potentially sell the company. And just trying think you know, is this the best time to do that? Um, will I max my shareholder value by doing that? And if not, then do I stick it out and try to run two companies at the same time.

[00:05:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And you know I, I'm gonna get some more of the sorta pragmatic, um, context that's going on here.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Um, uh, so I can really sort of understand it. Seven years in, two companies but one parent company, one holding company.

Shizu Okusa: Yup.

Jerry: But two investor bases.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. So investors have, um, the opportunity to invest out of the Apothékary subsidiary level. And then also the drinks subsidiary level. Uh, but I sit at the board level at the parent company where it's basically a shell entity. Um, and originally when we first started the business, we put you know, all of the capitals at the parent company, but we've since restructured and moved everything out to the subs.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And not to get too in the weeds, but why did you do that?

Shizu Okusa: Um, we were having trouble fundraising at the Apothékary level with DRINK being attached to it because nobody wanted to invest in sort of the retail juice

[00:06:00]

business that was kind of you know a more mature and competitive, and, uh, you know super, super short shelf life.

And so, I felt this lev- level of, oh this you know, new investors aren't gonna want the old stuff quote unquote.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: Um, and then on the DRINK side, you know, if we wanted to sell DRINK, we would've have to sold Apothékary with it, so it only made sense to kind of split the two separately.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: [00:06:30] Um, and this is actually very you know, a current thing that I'm going through right now with the restructuring, and fundraising, and exiting. So it, it really tests me I think as an entrepreneur that you know you create, you build, and you end. I think that's the three kind of goals. And trying to do that all at the same time has been a little bit, uh, a little bit a lot, a little bit a lot (laughs).

Jerry: [00:07:00] Mm-hmm (affirmative). And, um, I'm sort of feeling a lot of different pulls in a lotta different directions. And, uh, you know there's a, there's a thing that occurs whether it's in a therapeutic relationship or a coaching relationship where the, the coach, the therapist starts to feel, um, what the client is feeling.

Shizu Okusa: Right, right.

Jerry: And so I'm imagining, um, going back to the words you're using before. The guilt, um, you, you made a reference about all the shoulds that you have going on.

[00:07:30]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Um, if you could iden- you, you know I, I ... There's a piece in me that feels the desire to know what to do.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: [00:08:00] And I wanna name that and honor that. And I'm gonna do, I, I'm gonna say something to you that I've often said to clients, um, uh, in other circumstances. And that is, um, I promise you that we will get to the What to do. But first, I want you to indulge me in what's talking about the context of how you are within this.

Shizu Okusa: Yup.

Jerry: Okay. Um, how important is it for you? Or more specifically, how important has it been for you to do the right thing?

[00:08:30]

Shizu Okusa: Very important. Um, I think as, uh, you now maybe growing up in a household that was very Asian and Japanese where we always say sorry first. Uh, we always wanna make sure we over-deliver, uh, and, uh, you know keep our word. And so I think those values have been ... I think my word is everything and how I act should reflect that.

[00:09:00]

Um, and so there ... I, I definitely think there's this level of wanting to prove myself, make sure I do the right thing, and the responsible thing. Uh, and I think being in this kind of industry in particular with wellness, and healthy living, and being pure, I think there's this idea that you know, we need to have our shit together all the time. (laughs).

Jerry:

So, need to have the shit together all the time. Okay. Thank you. Um, and as you were describing that, I know that the listeners are not, uh, seeing your face. But as you were describing that, there was ... You got ... You seemed to get a little flush.

[00:09:30]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry:

So, which tells me that the roots of that are deep.

Shizu Okusa:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry:

And so, I'm gonna repeat back to you a line which is, you need to have your shit together all the time.

Shizu Okusa:

Right.

Jerry:

All the time. And the first thing that occurs to me is that must be fucking exhausting.

[00:10:00]

Shizu Okusa:

It is, yeah.

Jerry:

Yeah. So right now what's happening for you? Just notice the softness that's just come in. So you're a wellness person, you're a Yogi. Yeah, now you're breathing. (laughs). Right.

[00:10:30]

We're gonna take a deep breath together. And because they're on audible, I need them to hear it. There we go. Yeah. So I'm seeing a picture. And you tell me if this lands for you.

Um, I know from a little bit of the background that, uh, you worked at Goldman before. And before that, you worked at the World Bank.

Shizu Okusa: I did, yup.

Jerry: And, um, and not only do you have one business, but you have two.

Shizu Okusa: I do.

[00:11:00]

Jerry: And not only do you have two businesses, but you actually have a very clever and complex structure that made sure that Apothékary got funding even though DRINKS didn't.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: And so you've reached into kind of a really intellectually clever way to make sure that that happened.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And all of a sudden I had this feeling of this little kid who's been figuring shit out for a long time.

[00:11:30]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah. I mean I, I, I think in this last year now that it's September, it's kind of crazy. 'Cause in this nine months, I feel like I actually didn't achieve anything.

Jerry: Oh.

Shizu Okusa: Like there wasn't a thing except a lot of talk and a lot of emails with boards. And I just feel like nothing got accomplished. Um, and I-

Jerry: Except of course a deal with Whole Foods.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah, but I, I-

Jerry: [crosstalk 00:11:56]

[00:12:00]

Shizu Okusa: ... that deal was made last year and it's finally happening now. And you know I, I hope that I was able to take capital and use it affectively. But in some ways, I feel like nothing this year really, really got done. Um, and I look back at the seven, eight years that we've been doing this. And there's ... I feel like as entrepreneurs, you kind of go through this you know, like super fast growth. And then you kind of plateau a little bit as you figure out the direction of the

business, like what's the real business model look? How do you wanna take it from here?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:12:30]

Shizu Okusa: 'Cause I feel like we're, I'm kind of at that stage but with two companies. And I just wanna know that I'm doing the right thing for the team, with our investors, am I being true to myself, which is kind of always the last question. Um, so it was easier when I had a partner, but she left. So I think, uh, it's you know, it's, it's lonely at the top. (laughs).

[00:13:00]

Jerry: So in addition to, um, always needing to keep your shit together, always doing the right thing, which by the way is different, right? Keeping your shit together means not having it fall apart.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

Jerry: Which of course could be the right thing, but doing the right thing also implies you said before, being true to myself, but it also means being true to everybody around you.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

[00:13:30]

Jerry: In addition to carrying all of that, there's a sense of loneliness that comes when your co-founder left.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Which is always a, an interesting relationship I think to manage after the fact. And, uh, you know there ... It, it's ... Even if they leave, they're still kind of, you know they're on the cap table, there's things to consider, there's just you know, back of mind [crosstalk 00:13:55]-

Jerry: You, you need their approval if you're gonna change the capital structure, if you're gonna issue [inaudible 00:14:00] you know?
[00:14:00]

Shizu Okusa: Absolutely.

Jerry: Yeah.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah, absolutely and in some ways it's kind of like a, you know when you date someone and they divorce you. And you kind of wanna, you still wanna, you still wanna do well by them. You wanna show that you can do it even by yourself. And-

Jerry: Because that's doing the right thing isn't it?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah. I guess so.

Jerry: I just cut you off. I'm sorry.

Shizu Okusa: No, no it's okay.

[00:14:30]

Jerry: Um, the reason I jumped in was because I just feel so strongly this wish that you have to, to act from a place of integrity. What would you like to have happen with the company?

[00:15:00]

Shizu Okusa: Oh, I think it'd be ideal, ideal world, uh, I would eventually exit the company for you know, X money to you know, return money to shareholders, investors, have a clean no investor cap table, uh, because I feel like once you start fundraising, you'll always be fundraising.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: Uh, and then just have my own sort of pool of capital that I can maybe you know, use to either grow a business, um, buy businesses, invest in businesses, but by myself. And not having that burden I think of always doing the right thing.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Always keeping the, your shit together and making sure that you do right by those investors.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah. And you know I don't, I don't know why the investor voice seems so much more powerful to me than maybe even friends, or even my employees, or customers. It's like the investor voice that just like feels so much more powerful in my mind. And I, I'm trying to understand why that might be.

Jerry: Well what occurs to you? I mean I, I, I can offer a million different things, but those would be coming from my psyche.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: What if it comes from you?

[00:16:30]

Shizu Okusa: Um, it's probably this idea that like financially, we're probably in the strongest place that we are in now. But there's this underlying fear that if there's a recession or you know, things slow down or the unknown unknowns of the business happen that I will need to rely on investor support. And so, maybe there's this like idea that they will always have my back.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And so, I wanna make sure I always have their back.

[00:17:00]

Jerry: So, you anticipate them, needing them, so you wanna make sure that they know that you will always put them first. Is that, is that ... Am I feeling that right?

Shizu Okusa: I think so. I think so. And I've ... Yes. And on the other side of that, I think argue ... I, I used to spend so much more time wanting to please employees and make sure that they were happy, and that they are you know, comfortable, and that we had a really great culture. And I still do, but I think with co-founders leaving, and employees leaving in the past, which as they should, um, it's harder to want to invest in something that's always going to leave you.

[00:17:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Can we shift gears a little bit?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: I'm just following my intuition. Um, you said dad was a farmer?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: What does that mean? Tell me a story.

[00:18:00]

Shizu Okusa: Uh, 'cause my parents moved to Vancouver in Canada like 20, like 30 years ago.

Jerry: They moved there from where?

Shizu Okusa: From Japan, yeah. My dad, uh, was from Tokyo and my mom was from Osaka. And, uh, so they moved over to Vancouver as immigrants. And had three children. I'm the youngest. And, uh, I moved out at a young age. And he now has a farm, he's retired. And grows a lot of fruits and vegetables, and has honeybees, and lives a very zen life I must say. (laughs).

[00:18:30]

Jerry: And what was he doing ... Uh, what did mom and dad do, um, before the farm as part of the immigration to Vancouver?

Shizu Okusa: Uh, so my dad was a landscaper. He designed Japanese gardens for living. Um, made them, um, designed them. And then my mom was sort of the administrative stay at home wife that you know, helped with the business. But she did a lot of the things that I think you know, he couldn't do, um, and I think we joke about it to this day where he's the one that always has the fun

[00:19:00]

projects, so the fun stuff. And my mom always has to do the, the, you know the administrative non-sexy stuff in the background. (laughs).

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: But they're both retired now.

Jerry: So there's a couple of threads that I would, I would pull on. I'm, I'm imagining a relationship between your commitment to healthy living and what you saw your parents, uh, experiencing. And you, you immediately went to and, um, talking about, um, dad living a very zen like existence. And you know, um, most Americans don't understand that phrase zen.

[00:19:30]

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And so, um, they will inappropriate, uh, apply it to anything that implies calm.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

Jerry: Whereas your dad actually by working closely with the land-

Shizu Okusa: Yeah, yeah.

[00:20:00]

Jerry: ... a- actually is closer to that zen tradition isn't he?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. And I mean, I think the iaido, and the Kendo that he's been teaching for 40 years now. We have a dojo on the farm, uh, so we practice meditation when we were practicing for eight, like myself for eight years. And-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: ... the you know, zen is, is short for zazen in Japanese where you sit in meditation. And zazen meditation for days. And, uh, so I think innately I was so fascinated with this idea of natural living, uh, alternative living, east meets west approach. And, uh, it's easier to ... I always, I joke about this. It's easier to speed up in a slow environment than it is to slow down in a fast environment.

[00:20:30]

Jerry: Amen sister.

Shizu Okusa: (laughs). So it's just, I think in this fast paced world of New York and D.C. I just felt like, how do I bring slowness, and calmness, and wellness really to my community that's around me.

[00:21:00]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And, and of course you spent years at Goldman and the World Bank, which are not necessarily slow environments.

Shizu Okusa: No, they are not. But I felt like I guess they gave me the structure and frameworks of thinking maybe for the business and some level of credibility. I mean I don't really use any of that stuff now, but language is understandable from cap tables, investor language. Um, but I fear too much that maybe that's too caught up in my ego and identity.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And story.

[00:21:30]

Jerry: So tell me, um ... So you were obvious ... Not obviously, were you raised with, um, a spiritual tradition in this way?

Shizu Okusa: Uh, my sisters aren't and my mom is not spiritual, um, at all. I, I moved out when I was a really ... at a really young age. And I think I was always curious to build my own way and path. And part of that was just trying to find meaning to my life. And spirituality was kind of the natural next step.

[00:22:00]

I ... So after New York and I lived in, um, I lived in Africa for about a year. And then I wen to Bali for three months to get my yoga teacher training and-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: ... learned a little bit more about yoga, philosophy, um, [inaudible 00:22:18] to everything. And so yeah, I think living a life that was round versus square was always really interesting and fascinating for me. And spirituality helped kind of make meaning to all of that.

[00:22:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, um, in my own experience, and in the observation that we make about a lot of Americans who feel drawn to eastern traditions, they typically are coming from a place, uh, being square to use your language-

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and trying to sorta round it, the edges a bit. And trying to, to heal, um, uh, some experiences. And they see a resonance in that. And the result is often times trying to reconcile, again to reflect language that you have been using, fast and slow, fast and slow.

[00:23:00]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And I see you trying to reconcile fast and slow, fast and slow. Um, I'm curious about one other piece here. And again, uh, I'm thinking about the do the right thing, keep your shit together. Um, if we imagine for a moment, um, a

[00:23:30]

connection to the zen teachings, what, what would the response be to you better keep your shit together?

Shizu Okusa:
[00:24:00]

Um, I think one thing, one quote that really resonates with me a lot is this idea that ... You know letting go is one. I just like the nature of yoga where you're in shavasana letting go. Two would be the more I think about the future, that's anxiety; the more you think about the past, that's depression. And then really the only true bliss point is living presently.

Um, but I think with fundraising, and thinking about exit, thinking about the team, all the, the money stuff, you're always living in anxiety because you're always thinking of the future and projection.

[00:24:30]

Jerry:

Well and, and, and if I may, I think you're adding to that anxiety by also layering in the do the right thing by way of those powerful investors who somehow believed in you and wrote a check.

Shizu Okusa:

Right. Right.

Jerry:

Because you may need them at some future calamitous moment.

Shizu Okusa:

Correct.

Jerry:

Right? And that [crosstalk 00:24:53] that just landed for you.

Shizu Okusa:

Yeah.

Jerry:

Say that again?

[00:25:00]

Shizu Okusa:

It's the pull of the "shoulds" of the past, speaking to the future of the anxiety.

Jerry:

Okay. So, so let's, let's hang out there for a moment. Did mom and dad ever experience calamity?

Shizu Okusa:

Um, I feel like my mom has always been a little more of an anxious personality. So, like whenever we go to Costco, I feel like we buy the entire free-

Jerry:

(laughs).

Shizu Okusa:
[00:25:30]

We'll have like cere ... Like five loaves of bread, and like our freezers always over ... like about to explode.

Jerry:

But, but, but we laugh. But how, how old is mom?

Shizu Okusa:

Uh, she's in her mid 70s now.

Jerry: Okay. And what did she grow up with?

Shizu Okusa: Nothing. So I think she you know ... And also 'cause she had three siblings, and always would tell me about the story of like splitting a sweet potato for dinner amongst her entire family.

Jerry: Right. And, and, and, and what year was she born?

Shizu Okusa: 1947.

[00:26:00]

Jerry: And what happened in 1945?

Shizu Okusa: [inaudible 00:26:03] World War II.

Jerry: Well more than that.

Shizu Okusa: Oh yeah, in Japan it was really bad.

Jerry: Okay. So let's just pause and honor them. One of the things that I often speak about, um, is the epigenetic intergenerational experience. War, genocide, poverty. They, they live in our bones. They live in our DNA.

[00:26:30]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: I mean there's plenty of evidence that shows that trauma such as genocide-

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: ... within a community, um, changes the chromosomal structure.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

[00:27:00]

Jerry: And so, um, we wanna honor mom and dad because their parents ... And part of the theme here is, I better be careful about those investors because something can take it all away, bang, in a snap. And Jerry, why do I worry about the investors more than I worry about someone else? Perhaps, perhaps Shizu, because one of the survival strategies you grew up with was you better load up at Costco.

[00:27:30]

Shizu Okusa: (laughs).

Jerry: Yeah. I'm glad you laughed because, because we wanna, we wanna acknowledge the structures.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: Right? But th- but think about what mom is carrying ... You said of the two, mom is the more anxious of the two. Dad has moved as he's moved into elder-hood.

[00:28:00]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Tending to honeybees.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Which is such a, such a present day activity that is focused on the future.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Because God blessed the fact that he's tending to honeybees because we need honeybees.

Shizu Okusa: Right. We do.

Jerry: As a species, we need them. It's one of the many, many iterations in which the planet is crying out for help and the climate is in crisis.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:28:30]

Jerry: And yet ... We haven't even heard your dad's story about ... but your mom's splitting a sweet potato.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And so of course you have to do the right thing to make sure that there's enough sweet potatoes.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: And of course you can't just have one job. You have to have two. And of course like so many people, you had that, a high achiever response.

[00:29:00]

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: It's a way to stay safe. Is this resonating with you?

Shizu Okusa: It does. When you say high achiever response, is that the need to continue growing, and fundraising, and scaling-

Jerry: Yeah.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah?

Jerry: Um, I, I would say more simply, always have your shit together.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

[00:29:30]

Jerry: Always have your shit together. How often were you late in school in her- in turning in a term paper?

Shizu Okusa: Never.

Jerry: Never? Never? It's like if, if, if we could capture the look on your face, it was like you look at me like I was speaking Greek. Are you kidding me? What? Couldn't conceive of it.

Shizu Okusa: (laughs) never.

Jerry: Right?

Shizu Okusa: I mean I, I feel like there was this, there was this stage in my high school where I ran away from home.

[00:30:00]

Jerry: Mm- hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And I want ... You know I ... There was a lot of other things going on in my family. But some internal chaos with my siblings. And I felt it was almost easier if I just left home and take care of myself and, uh, move out. And I never went back. And I paid my way [crosstalk 00:30:20]-

Jerry: So that's, that's what you were referring to when you said you left home early.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: How old were you?

Shizu Okusa: Uh, I was about 17.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:30:30]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. So I think this idea of leaning on people, and this impacts me I think personally too in dating or relationships. And it's just like, it's petrifying.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). What will happen if you lean on people?

Shizu Okusa: A lot of ... And if they leave, it's this like level of crumbling where I have no maybe foundation.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:31:00]

Jerry: I wanna pause and, and just acknowledge that you've just said something really, really ... and powerful and moving. So I wanna reflect back what I just heard you say. And I relate to this because I left my house at 17 to escape the chaos.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: So I, I hear you my sister.

[00:31:30]

Shizu Okusa: (laughs). Brother.

Jerry: Um, to save your life, you left home.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And to save your life, you continued to carry structures.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Like it's hard to trust that someone's gonna stay there. Or it's hard to trust that my investors will be there.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

[00:32:00]

Jerry: So I better out perform now to increase the chance that when I really need them, they'll be there.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And there's even a wish that when I ask what would happen, what, what would you like to have happen? You, you, you said in effect to no longer be dependent upon anybody.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah, which maybe not that I look back on it, it's not the right approach.

[00:32:30]

Jerry: Well I will say this, it was the right approach to the 17 year old.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Because it made you who you are today. And as is often the case, it becomes a, a belief system that may in fact limit your access to happiness.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:33:00]

Jerry: And a zen feeling. The feeling that one would get theoretically after having sat zazen.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Because I can't trust that the world will be there for me.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: Because not only is it true that past generations ... I mean we have only begun to understand the longterm implications of those bonds.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

[00:33:30]

Jerry: And the genocide, and the murder that we labeled as war.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And the fear and the anxiety that the world may disappear. Because guess what? In a flash, the world can disappear.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Yeah. Yeah, especially nowadays, I just feel like there's, there's so much fear. And living in fear, living in D.C. is like fear.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:34:00]

Shizu Okusa: Um, and how do we act more from a place of love and abundance.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: This sounds a little corny, but I always kind of lean back on the idea that we make de- you know decision of fear, we make decisions out of love and I think

I actively try out of the latter, but it's, it's hard when we live in a place of anxiety and somewhat pulled back by the shoulds of the past.

Jerry:
[00:34:30] So what I have found is that, uh, the first impulse in recognizing that age of anxiety, that, that experience. And, and I really applaud your ability to see the connection between obsessing about the future creating an anxiety. Or perhaps obsessing about the past creating a kinda rumina- ruminative- rumination. And neither state is really being helpful.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:35:00]
Jerry: And, and, and yet what I have found is that trying to push away that fear, trying to deny that fear, or trying to mitigate that fear by overloading ourselves with activity. You see perhaps what you may have done. As clever as those structures were, you put yourself into a situation where you're ... the way you're trying to feel less burdened by the responsibility is to take on more burdens.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:35:30]
Jerry: I know, I'll have two companies. It was incredibly brilliant.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And only someone who has the intellectual prowess that you obviously have could have come up with that structure. And the downside to that structure is not that you have one set of investors, but two sets of investors. About whom to obsessively worry.

Shizu Okusa:
[00:36:00] (laughs). Yeah. And now ... That I, I think this is like deep fear down that I'm sure you've heard this from entrepreneurs, we have a 10 year window.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: We have a 10 year window before you just get exhausted and you [crosstalk 00:36:08]-

Jerry: Or then you just puff, blow up and then you go away.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah I, I don't know. I forget where I heard this, but it was this idea of 10 years where you know, life starts happening around you, maybe you wanna get you know, married and have kids. And I feel like that that might change for me. I, I don't know. Um, but there's also this idea that I think as entrepreneurs, we're all in, and your, all your eggs are in one basket. And your fear is that it's all goes away, that, who are you at the end of it?
[00:36:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And maybe if I had two and one goes, then at least I have the other still.

Jerry: Maybe. Uh, that, I, that, that would, that makes a lot of sense to me. Or it makes a lot of sense to a five year old.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:37:00]

Jerry: My meaning ... And I, I, I say that purposely because so many of these belief systems are laid down at those early ages, right? And yet, um, to reflect back onto it with adult eyes, one of the core challenges that I think is behind the belief system is, well if it all goes away, which we've acknowledged as not just your fear, but actually a, a multi-generational fear.

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: If it all goes away, well who am I?

[00:37:30]

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

Jerry: And so, um, what would the Buddha say in response to that?

Shizu Okusa: That ... I mean these are all fake illusions anyway. Like-

Jerry: Yeah.

Shizu Okusa: ... false beliefs. And maybe we're all just projecting whatever we want on ourselves. And like maybe we are ... We are nothing.

Jerry: Well on the one hand we are nothing, and so therefore we are everything.

[00:38:00]

Shizu Okusa: Sure, yeah.

Jerry: Right? Because on the one hand, what is nothing? You know to use the Buddhist terminology is, Amara is illusion.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: This is a construct. And so therefore what's left is the thing that is everything. The thing that is interdependent, interconnected hu- human being who is fundamentally basically good.

[00:38:30]

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: By no other activity, no other accomplishment than simply having incarnated as a human being.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: The second noble truth of course is following the first noble truth that life is filled with suffering is filled with Dukkha.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:39:00]
Jerry: Existential suffering. A second noble truth which is that which we do to push away, not acknowledge, and not work with. That suffering exacerbates that suffering.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Do you used to [crosstalk 00:39:17]-

Jerry: I was just gonna say, so I'll have two companies.

Shizu Okusa: (laughs).

Jerry: But maybe I should have three, or four, or five.

Shizu Okusa: (laughs).

Jerry: You see where I'm headed?

[00:39:30]
Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Or maybe you know ... And the biggest fear for I think me is like, I can never work for someone again. Do I wanna give up that control? That is scary.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: What would happen? What's, what's the fearful image that comes to mind?

[00:40:00]
Shizu Okusa: Maybe a loss of identity with that. Um, freedom, control.

Jerry: If we were to strip away all of the things that by which you use to identify yourself-

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: ... the multiple roles, the responsible woman-

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: ... a capable person. If we were to strip all that away, what remains?

[00:40:30]
Shizu Okusa: I don't know why that's so hard to answer.

Jerry: I think that's the existential question isn't it?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: I think the thing is and I'll make an observation from an old man point of view. Um, that was a joke, you're supposed to laugh at that.

Jerry: Okay. Um, I think we spend our 20s and our 30s in different developmental stages. We spend our 20s developing a sense of an adulthood independent from or in opposition to or in accordance with our parents.
[00:41:00]

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And the family structure that we grew up with. And as we enter our 30s, we start to ask ourselves this larger question, who the fuck am I?

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Independent of all these things.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

[00:41:30]
Jerry: And you know, unfortunately, the answer doesn't come from some coach on a podcast conversation.

Shizu Okusa: Damn.

Jerry: Yeah, damn right?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And before we started recording, I noticed a tattoo.

Jerry: The one I, the one I noticed that just so the listeners can, can, can understand it. It's, um, I noticed immediately that it was a Timb- Tibetan symbol.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:43:30]

Jerry: It's a Tibetan, um, uh, uh, pictograph. And it's on your wrist just below your wrist on, uh, just above the forearm. Am I seeing that right?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: And it's black. And, and, and what, what does it stand for? What does it, uh, what does it say if you will? And what does it mean to you?

Shizu Okusa: So it says strength. Uh, and what it means to me is when you I guess literally strength. And you know I could've got it in kanji, which is the Japanese-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: ... you know calling- um, kanji or language. But for some reason, that didn't really identify with me. And I wanted something that was a little bit more non-literal, or just something a little bit more, like open for interpretation.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And, uh, I got it at the time in 2016 when I thought we were gonna go out of business. And my business partner was leaving, uh, I couldn't close money, I didn't know what we were doing. And it was like a year of just lull. And I was living in a studio with somebody else and not paying myself in my fourth year. And I thought I was gonna just I don't know, not make it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: Um, but we made it. And I think coming out of that, this, this was sort of just like a lesson. And I remember my friend was like, "You won't regret it, because it was just a lesson and a sort of stamp of where you were at, at some point in life." And I wanted to honor that.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I recognize, uh, many of those feelings. And, and the listeners may or may not know that I have a spider tattoo.

Shizu Okusa: Wow.

Jerry: [00:45:30] And if they really wanna know the story of that, they have to listen to my interview with Tim Farriss, who's opening question to me was, "Tell me about the spider tattoo."

Shizu Okusa: I would love the story about the spider tattoo. Can you share that?

Jerry: You gotta, you gotta listen to Tim Farriss.

Shizu Okusa: I, I, I'll listen to it again. I didn't ... just did not. Yeah.

Jerry: That, um, but I will say that, uh, it is, uh, I've had, uh, this spider since 2010. And, um, uh, it is a spirit guide.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:46:00]
Jerry: And, um, what I will tell you is I, I recognize what you were describing in terms of the pain and, and all. And, um, what I'm hearing is in the word strength is both an admonition to yourself to remember your strength and a declaration to the world. Because of course unlike your tattoo, um, my, mine is hidden.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:46:30]
Jerry: Yours is out there to be seen, glanced at by a guy that you're about to have a podcast conversation with.

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

Jerry: And so there's a declarative aspect to this-

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... that I reflect back to you. And so maybe we can shift back to sort of the, the core questions that you're holding. And 'cause I did promise you. What, what ... How would you frame the question that's before you now as it relates to the business? And what, what do you see the choices that you have to make? What do you, what do, what's before you?
[00:47:00]

Shizu Okusa: I think I need to, I think I need to just make a decision and stick with it. And I know that sounds so corny but I've, I think when I elude to this idea that we didn't even accomplish anything this year is this idea that I get too many opinions. And because I want to please, now I wanna make sure I do good, that I try to make it work for everybody, but for not for myself or ... Someone's always gonna inevitably be unhappy and have an opinion.
[00:47:30]

And so, I think I just need to make a decision, stick with it, stick by it and live up to it.

Jerry: And, and, and formulate for me the, the choices that you have to make in order to make that decision.

Shizu Okusa: [00:48:00] So one could be, do we sell the company now or one of the, one of my companies, DRINK. Two would be, uh, you know how much money do we fundraise for Apothékary. Um, at you know what valuation?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: [00:48:30] Three is you know if we don't sell the company for a drink, how would I split my time between the two? Uh, four is you know, am I gonna start this all over again with another business? And what did I learn from that? Did I ever have the opportunity to pause between starting one company and the next. And I don't think I'd think about it.

Jerry: Notice the ... Is there a, is there a ... Uh, what is the difference between the first three questions that you had and that last one? What's the qualitative difference? And what's the emotional difference in those questions?

Shizu Okusa: I think one is all about other people.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And the last one is probably a little bit more about myself.

[00:49:00]

Jerry: [00:49:30] Yeah. I, I hear that. And I also heard, um, uh, the first three are very sort of steps to take, which are important discussions. And the, the fourth is about a longer term consequences. And what I would suggest that, uh, one framing to, to make this decision or to make these decisions is to acknowledge the differences between those. Understand that, um, to feel right by yourself you, you will want to make good decisions in those first three areas, those first three questions.

And yet the skills necessary to work through the fourth question, which is essentially not who am I, if I strip away all the business, but who would I like to be?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: [00:50:00] And how would I like to be? That the skills necessary there may be found on the cushion. They may be found in the honeybee hives.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right.

Jerry: They may be found inwardly, whereas in the first three, there's a, there's a, there's a conviction I need to choose.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: [00:50:30] And I'm gonna, I'm gonna alter slightly the, the, the words before you from I need to decide to I need to choose. For me, the I need to decide can be a kind of self loathing recursive state. Because the truth is, I'm so indecisive I don't- whereas choosing means I have agency.

Shizu Okusa: Sure.

Jerry: [00:51:00] Now I'm splitting hairs here. But, um, what I heard when you were defining those questions was strength. Which is ironic 'cause I brought you back to your tattoo.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: Right? And so I am going to resist the impulse to tell you what to do as much as it would enjoy, uh, it'd be enjoyable for me. Especially 'cause I don't have to live with the consequences.

Shizu Okusa: (laughs).

[00:51:30]

Jerry: Um, but really suggest instead that, um, if you listen carefully, you might already know what choice you'd like to make.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. I think so. I don't ... And I, I think I know deep down in a ... It's just taking longer to press the, the go button.

Jerry: Well, because I think what's, what's holding you back from pressing the go button is the fear that if you choose unwisely-

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: ... it's all gonna disappear.

[00:52:00]

Shizu Okusa: Right. And I won't have enough bread in the freezer.

Jerry: And you'll have to split the sweet potato with everybody.

Shizu Okusa: (laughs).

Jerry: That's right. Whereas the reality is a little bit different. It is not 1947, Osaka. It is not. It's not even 1947, Osaka for your mother in Vancouver.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:52:30]

Jerry: And she may not ever realize that fully.

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: But we honor those ghosts. We honor those ancestors. We allow those ghosts to become ancestors. Because if we think about it for a moment ... I can only imagine how proud your grandparents and great grandparents are. I mean look at you. Look what you've done. They thought it would, they thought everything had gone away.

[00:53:00]

Shizu Okusa: Right.

[00:53:30]

Jerry: And it didn't. Whatever your relationship with, with the larger family is, strength.

Shizu Okusa: Strength.

Jerry: Strength. How does that feel?

[00:54:00]

Shizu Okusa: I, I tend to be one of those people that like when they come to some sort of realization, more questions pop up.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shizu Okusa: And so maybe instead of feeling I'm, I'm more, I have more questions. And that includes things like, was this all for pleasing my parents? Or my family?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:54:30]

Shizu Okusa: You know? Or what does true bliss point really feel like where you're kind of at that present, you know? And where you no longer live in the future and the past. And then finally is okay, so if I know that I wanna be there, how do I structurally now make those decisions to be there?

Jerry: Okay. So notice the quality of, of anxiety that comes in. When you start to see the path, all the sudden, it starts to ramp up. And notice how I want, well what do I do now? What do I do now?

[00:55:00]

Shizu Okusa: Right. Right.

Jerry: Right? And so we notice that. And create some distance with that. We go back to sitting, we go back to the power, that meditative posture, which is to notice what's going on without being drawn into it. And recognize that while we may not all be trying to please our parents, or swage their ghost, we are all subjected to unconscious belief systems that shape us.

[00:55:30]

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: And those have powered you to power through, to leave home, to make a life for yourself. And, uh, one of the impulses, when we start to understand and see these unconscious threads. In, in my book, I call them the subroutines that define our lives. When we start the existence of these subroutines, one of the first impulses is it to say, "Boy, I'm really fucked up."

[00:56:00]

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And you're not. You're human.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: And this is, this is part of the shared humanity. When the Buddha said, "Only humans are capable of enlightenment." He said it with the full awareness that we're all dictated to by our crazy unconscious thoughts.

[00:56:30]

Shizu Okusa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Right? We, he, he ... The, the, the notion that when, when he said that we're all fundamentally basically good, that we all contain Buddha nature, he was speaking about ... w- with the full cognition that we're all kinda nutty. And we all make ourselves crazy worrying about the future and the past simultaneously.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. All the time.

Jerry: All the time.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:57:00]

Jerry: And so, part of our work and growing up, part of our work in becoming fully actualized human beings and leaders is to use that leadership experience. To look back and say, "Wow, look what I have to learn." So that when I'm dealing with that fourth question-

Shizu Okusa: Right.

Jerry: ... what should I do now?

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:57:30]

Jerry: Becomes how would I like to be? Would I like to be an entrepreneur who's ... May or may not sell my company going public, but it's really about bringing good, bringing fourth good products and services than in, that, uh, enhance people's lives. I suspect there's something in there for you as well.

[00:58:00]

Shizu Okusa: Yeah. I think we just wanna make an impact of some sorts, you know like-

Jerry: And what would happen if you understood that you're already making an impact?

Shizu Okusa: I think that's the process right now. It's like coming to, coming to ... okay with that idea. Or I don't know okay is the right word. I-

Jerry: It's coming to be with it.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

[00:58:30]

Jerry: Yeah. Well I wanna thank you for sharing so openly about yourself and your journey.

Shizu Okusa: Yeah.

Jerry: Um, I know you've li- listened to this show before. And I know you know that there's this creates value for other entrepreneurs.

Shizu Okusa: I hope so.

Jerry: And our listeners. So, thank you and promise me that you'll stay in touch.

Shizu Okusa: Thank you so much, Jerry.

Jerry: Thank you. Thank you. And thank you for coming on the show.