

Ali Schultz:  
[00:00:30] When it comes to confidence and feeling A-Okay with showing vulnerability, and trying to avoid the sneaky snares of the imposter syndrome, we often feel at odds. Torn between the parts of us that say, "Who do you think you are?" And the parts of us who know who we are. Self doubt and inadequacy can creep in and color the most assured parts of us at times, but what's really at play here? We know it's an inside job to keep ourselves clear-headed and attuned with our inner knowing regardless of what the world throws our way in terms of perceptions, biases, and double standards. How can we be steeled in the face of these things without being an ice queen?

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[00:01:30] While most leaders experience imposter syndrome, women generally are known for their own variety of getting in their own way in this regard. One of the ways that shows up is that they often will dive into a project or opportunity more slowly than men because they think they need more credentials first. Another class, another certification, an MBA, on top of what they have already rightly achieved academically or professionally. But consider the high achieving CEO who identifies as a woman who still feels less than the male colleagues in her network. How is it possible to be so accomplished and feel so shaky? How have high achievers recognized this in themselves and employed the right self management when the inner voice tries to get the best of them?

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[00:02:30] Many women leaders in the tech dominant space perceive that they have to be more assertive or strong in their executive team seat to match the other energies in the room. And while this stance doesn't feel authentic, they feel the skewed weight of that external metric on "How one should be," or what it takes to be seen and heard. We often hear our clients ask, "Is it okay that I want to lead differently than my male superiors? What does it look like to be even more effective without working harder, because I can't work harder. How can I show heart and vulnerability and still be taken seriously?"

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Speaker 1:  
[00:03:30] So, how do we as women stay in our own bodies, hold fast to our own truths, and not view ourselves through the eyes and expectations of others in the world at large? Who do you choose to be? What life do you want to lead? Recorded on Halloween 2019. In this conversation, I am joined by Ann Mehl, Heather Jassy, and Miriam Meima. We jump right in to talking about the masks we feel we need to wear, how imposter syndrome grips us, and all that gets in the way of us feeling our inherent enoughness.

Ali: First one thing that would be helpful is, um, just an introduction of who you are introduce yourselves so the listeners kind of know, like who, who's in the conversation today?

Ann Mehl: This is Ann Mehl and I'm an executive coach based out of Manhattan.

Miriam Meima: This is Miriam Meima. I am a coach and facilitator.

Heather Jassy: This is Heather Jassy. I'm a coach and facilitator.

Ali: And I'm Ali one of Reboot's Co-founders and also a coach and facilitator.

Ali: This poem came to me this week:

Ali: How to triumph like a girl:

*I like the lady horses best,  
how they make it all look easy,  
like running 40 miles per hour  
is as fun as taking a nap, or grass.  
I like their lady horse swagger,  
after winning. Ears up, girls, ears up!  
But mainly, let's be honest, I like  
that they're ladies. As if this big  
dangerous animal is also a part of me,  
that somewhere inside the delicate  
skin of my body, there pumps  
an 8-pound female horse heart,  
giant with power, heavy with blood.  
Don't you want to believe it?  
Don't you want to lift my shirt and see  
the huge beating genius machine*

*that thinks, no, it knows,*

*it's going to come in first.*

Miriam Meima: That's perfect. It just hits the heart of it. I mean, so many women that we know that I think ourselves included, I don't, what we are leaning into is knowing and trusting or knowing. That's always been there. But when imposter syndrome comes in, it's literally the hardest thing to find. It's still there. It's just hard to connect to and hard to trust. I love this poem and how it speaks to the unwaveringness of our, our truth that's that is always there.

Ann Mehl: I have to pre apologize for my horse voice, but when the imposter syndrome topic surfaced. I was thinking about a conversation we had a long time ago related to this and you had brought forward a book you're a fan of.

Heather Jassy: *Secret Thoughts of Successful Women*. I have it sitting right here, by Valerie Young.

Heather Jassy: It's the greatest book. I've given this book to so many people every woman I've ever managed directly. I think, one of the things she really nails, is, is talking about how imposter syndrome doesn't really show up as imposter syndrome.

Heather Jassy: People say, you know, "I don't have imposter syndrome. I just really feel like I fooled everybody and I'm going to get caught." Right? (laughs) It shows up as different language that feels incredibly valid. It feels like a very rational friend who speaking to you.

Heather Jassy: Mine shows up, but something that starts with a, who do you think you are? I think everybody has their own version of how that voice shows up for them. I pulled out some of the phrases that people can use with imposter syndrome. Who do you think you are? Sure. I'm successful, but I can explain all of that. (laughs) You know, someone made a terrible mistake. I had a lot of help. People feel sorry for me. Sometimes it's people just really like me. While I just had connections, wait, until next time I'm going to get found out and just generally minimizing successes as a fluke. Are some of the ways in which impostor syndrome show up?

Heather Jassy: There are a few great quotes. I'm sorry, I'm just going to be with this book. (laughs) Um, Maya Angelou said, "I've written 11 books, but each time I think, Oh, they're going to find out now I've run a game on everyone. They're going to find me out." Meryl Streep. So she gets cold feet at the beginning of every new project telling a reporter, "You think, why would anyone want to see me again in a movie? I don't even know how to act anyway.

Heather Jassy: I mean, one thing we've discussed in this podcast, um, already it's just this idea that when imposter syndrome shows up for men and according to Valerie Young, not nearly as often and which I believe very strongly, um, it shows up

differently. And really with men, you're just sort of learning like, "Hey, this is a thing in your, that you have learned. It's a voice in your head that we have to dismantle by looking into our demons. But it's not, it's not reality."

Heather Jassy: And with women, we have this complex double layer of this where it's like there's the imposter syndrome and dismantling sort of the mythology about yourself that you've accumulated through your life. And then there's the societal piece on top of that where people really are judging your tone. They really are making assumptions about you because of your gender or your race or, um, your socioeconomic background. And so it was just, there are a lot of layers in there to unpack. So it's in your head, but it's also true.

Miriam Meima: When you were saying Heather, that yours shows up as a, can you say it again? The phrase of who are you? Who do you think you are?

Heather Jassy: Yeah. I think that voice usually shows up for me as, "Well, who do you think you are?"

Miriam Meima: I like saying that a lot of people are just like, "Oh no, I don't have imposter syndrome. I'm just worried I'm going to be found out." And a version of that that I hear from clients quite a bit is "I just don't belong here. I don't feel like I fit in." Which I think is a very female thing of, "How can I be myself and be here?" And the, the tension of that is another version of what is labeled imposter syndrome.

Heather Jassy: Yeah, and in observation and experience. It seems as though, um, these feelings are particularly triggered in moments of vulnerability, feeling exposed. Um, which is why often people will not put themselves out there because this, these are the things that come to the forefront. So you know, if we're in the lane we've always been, using the same muscles we've always used. You know, maybe we don't feel as much of that. There's a feeling of competence, but when we start to really take risks, these feelings really come flooding to the forefront.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I've seen it really grip people, powerful, capable, impressive humans that are slowly crippled by their, their inner demons that have roots in, in this conversation around who am I to be here? Which is really a sad thing to see someone so capable, doubt themselves and therefore start to get in their own way.

Ann Mehl: Yeah, I think that it's amazing that there's a few different other books that I've read called the *Confidence Code* by Katie Kay and Claire Shipman and they highlight the science and art of self assurance and what women should know specifically. And a lot of the interviews they've done are with professional athletes and actors and people that you know in their own right, you would separate yourself from and say they've got to have reached this potential that they, they know themselves or they trust themselves, or they're much more confident than me. And yet they've got the same scripts playing inside.

Ann Mehl: Even with all the achievements they've had. So I love that because it neutralizes, "Oh, okay. We all, we all truly feel this at different stages." Most of us do at some stage, or you're on the precipice of something. And even with all the accolades and achievements you've already received, you're at a new frontier and therefore it comes up again.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ann Mehl: And then what to do with it is a big question. You know, do you, do you stay put, do, uh, sort of dismantle something that could be your potential next move because of that fear? Do you deflect, or do you name it and then try to work with it and hold it along with the change you're going to, you know, step into?

Miriam Meima: And to one of your earlier questions, I think it was just kind of an open question of what do you do with it when it, when this energy shows up? You want to label it imposter syndrome. Do you sit with it? Do you work with it? And I want to throw out a few things that I lean into and I'm curious what, what everyone else has tried or what you like to use as tools with your clients. But I believe it's usually highlighting some sort of healing that's ready to happen. So when intense fear or self doubt shows up, it's revealing something that was there that's ready to be witnessed even more fully.

Miriam Meima: And, and some aspect of myself or some aspect of my belief systems that's ready to shift, but it requires kind of turning towards it. It's important, more important I think of confidence as a track record of success. And I just need to remind myself that I have earned this place or I've, I am worthy of fill in the blank. Um, to Heather's question of "who am I to blank?", I actually need to answer that question for myself or help other people answer that question for themselves.

Ann Mehl: I like writing exercises for myself and for clients. And so one of them I might do is called defining moments. And what I asked the client to do is to think of an occasion when they found something in themselves that they didn't know they had or forgot they had and they pulled it out. And as a result that it changed an outcome from say negative to positive. Like a moment when they either said yes I will or no, I won't (laughs). Like when they drew a line maybe or even erased one if it was needed to be done.

Ann Mehl: And the concept is like this moment is a time when they may have as they, um, reflect on it, when they may, uh, have thought of themselves in not the, quite the same way. So they're proud of themselves or they stretched in the process. And when they write this down and they describe it back to me, usually it's like they sort of sit up straight almost. You know? They kind of, as we talk about, take their seat.

Ann Mehl: And the reason I have them write these is we easily forget them. And when you have them in one place, like I've had clients put it in their desk drawer and even

if it doesn't relate to the moment where they're feeling shaky, say they have to go into a board meeting or something that feels like they're on stage. I asked them to just take a quick review of those times because I think it still has the same effect when you hard wire back to a time when you were brave, where your time, when you were, you know, it didn't even have to be climbing Everest, I say, you know, it can be as simple as I asked somebody to stop talking to me a way that they were talking to me. They felt like they drew a line in the sand as a, for instance.

Ann Mehl: So there are defining moments I think they need reminders of, and they're usually very unique and they don't have to be humongous feats. It can be, um, quiet moments where they really felt strong about themselves. And I feel like that brings you back to your stronger self, even if it's an unrelated, you know, um, time from what you're, you're headed into. So, um, I used to feel it. I used to feel it in my early career when I'd sit around a table with, it was at the time all men, and it was recruiting and it was pretty intense, like a sales job.

Ann Mehl: And at times I felt in over my head. And what I would access as if I had this kind of a morning was if I had a morning where I was proud of myself for showing up to Central Park and going for a run or making it to a morning yoga class or something, I would access that in a moment. That would be my morning defining moment. Had nothing to do with the subject at hand, but I could stay in the room because of it, you know? In, in more of a, and listening, listening to the narrative that, uh, you know, I'm not worthy and more the narrative of, um, watch me now. Or, um, I got this, you know, I got this from another part of myself. So.

Heather Jassy: I think, you know, when I work with this, with clients where I work with this in myself, you know, I feel like normalizing these feelings, it just has this magical effect of neutralizing the shame around this. So when we say, "Of course you like, of course I feel this way, I'm human." Right? Hearing that Meryl Streep also feels that way, Mya Angelou also feels this way that every leader, every female leader I interact with, a lot of them feel this way, right?

Heather Jassy: And, and that, um, this is a reaction to something societal that isn't about you. And it also, um, is a reaction to feeling vulnerable and feeling like a stranger in a strange land. Right? There, there were a lot of pieces to this. And so the more that we can, um, just normalize these feelings and not think that we have to, they have to be absent for us to be able to move forward, we can, we can develop a greater tolerance for just doing what we need to do anyway. Notice the thing and do it anyway.

Heather Jassy: I resist, you know, the self-esteem myth around it that I just have to build myself up, um, and develop confidence because I, I feel as though as long as we're attached to the idea that we always have to feel confidence in order to do something, we're still, um, attaching our ability to move forward to some sort of condition that has to be present. Right? So it's more about like understanding I can experience this vulnerability. It's an essential part of being human and I

don't, it doesn't have to, I can just notice it, have awareness about it, gain an awareness of, of how that film strip is running in my head (laughs) and step past it.

Heather Jassy: And so I think the work there is really learning to identify and discourse with it, you know? Have a discourse that is like, um, I love all the, you know, cognitive behavioral therapy models around like learning to have a discourse and stated it as preferences instead of like, okay, well I would prefer instead of saying I can't feel impostor syndrome, I can't feel these feelings (laughs), I won't survive it. We say, well, like, "I'd prefer not to feel this way, but I feel this way and it doesn't have to stop me from doing anything."

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Heather Jassy: Um, or like, "Well, who the hell do you think you are to tell me I can't, (laughs) I can't do it anyway." Right? Um, I love it when I talk that way to myself.

Miriam Meima: (laughs).

Heather Jassy: Um, and so, you know, to me the work is really just like learning to live and dialogue with this thing. And you know, as I say to clients all the time and don't want to say everything I say to clients, I say to myself as well, I try to. Um, you know, growth doesn't mean we never feel the thing again. It just means often that we recognize it a lot faster and get back on track. So what may have taken me 10 months of agita, my, I might figure out in two hours this time, right? This is like, "Oh gosh, I'm doing that thing. Stop talking to yourself that way, girl, get up, get back on track."

Heather Jassy: And there's a faster shift. But it doesn't, I don't know. I mean, I think we tend to, we get it, we feel vulnerable. We put ourselves out there. These old feelings are triggered. We have to work with them again. That's, that's the movement through life for me. And so if I get a little faster at spotting it or, you know, it shows up in a different form and I recognize it, that always feels like progress to me.

Miriam Meima: Yes. That's very well said.

Ann Mehl: I like the, the visual there, Heather, of like the observer to the thought because I think that's a really poignant. Which is I sometimes say, um, if you can recognize that you're doing the loop again, you could say, "Up, there we go. One of our greatest hits."

Ali: Oh, I love that.

Ann Mehl: [inaudible] some levity with it, you know? But then it doesn't own you because it's outside of you. You know? You're looking down at it into, you know, your, your mind's eye and it's, it, you're not, um, um, in mesh with it as much.

Ali: I had this brilliant client who came to me for a session with the horses and um, we were talking about her inner critic and she's like, "Well, what, what do you call them? What do you call this, this voice, this cacophony of voices that comes up?" And she's like, "I called them the shitty committee."

Heather Jassy: (laughing) Oh, that's amazing.

Miriam Meima: I'm feeling into the people that in this moment might be hearing those voices and not yet know that it's a shitty committee, which is getting back to something we were talking about earlier of just really kind of buying into or believing those voices. And I'm just, just hitting my heart right now. And so I just wanted to give voice to that and honor that. It's not always easy to distinguish between me, my true self and then the shitty committee.

Ali: I think there's, you know, Heather, you were saying your voices will say, "Well who do you think you are?" And all the intonations around the who do you think you are voice and how, how did that committee of, of words flying at you can just shutter the, but who do I know I am?

Miriam Meima: As you were feeding that back, that question of who do I think I am? I just heard it differently this time. And I thought, "What a great question," which is with a different tone. It's like, yeah, who do I think I am? Right? I mean, it's just amazing how we, the tone has such a powerful impact. And just depending on if that question is rooted in a place of shame or doubt or, or to curiosity. It's like, I don't know who do I think I am? Who am I?

Heather Jassy: Yeah. I've also heard they show up with women in a different form, which is around ambition and um, it, it can show up as, uh, maybe the person says, "You know, people are telling me I'm ambitious and I'm not ambitious. I just want to do good things in the world." And so we go toward, I'm not, as opposed to what's wrong with that? It feels like this is a theme I feel show up a lot. I observe it showing up a lot.

Miriam Meima: So you're saying that people are re- are resistant to being ambitious?

Heather Jassy: Being labeled ambitious, identifying with being ambitious.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Heather Jassy: And what that might suggest about them.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali: Does that relate back to something that Heather, you and I talked about, um, in the first little intro episode about a tall poppy syndrome?



Heather Jassy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We talked about, um, this question that was posed to me by a client. She said, "You know, I feel like my only options here are to, you know, make myself smaller and make everybody really uncomfortable or be myself and have everybody hate me." Which is a really crappy set of choices.

Heather Jassy: And I think that sort of sums it up (laughing).

Miriam Meima: Yeah. I remember my first coach when I was having versions of this. She was so excited (laughs). "Great. This means you're on, you're living your path. If you weren't having these thoughts, if you weren't feeling such edgy reactions to the life that you've created for yourself, I would doubt whether you actually on your path. But I want you to get really comfortable with this feeling because if you aren't feeling it, there's something to look at." (laughs) It's quite a reframe for me.

Heather Jassy: I love that. I say a different version of that, which is like, uh, you know, great. The discomfort is a sign you've outgrown your current situation.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Heather Jassy: All that annoyance and irritation that you're feeling, the constraints. It's a sign you've been doing your work, but it doesn't make it more pleasant.

Miriam Meima: Yeah. I have to simultaneously, eye roll and smile when I think myself of these things, but it doesn't kind of loose, it doesn't instantly loosen the grip, but it does create some space. And in that it's a question of how practiced am I making use of that space between thoughts and making it bigger and bigger and bigger so I can find myself again.

Al Schultz: I think that's a key too, is being able to find yourself again.

Miriam Meima: I picked a card while we were talking like what's the essence of this? And this is what I came up with. The essence, inner goddess. It says, awaken the goddess within you through dance, self care and appreciating your divinity.

Miriam Meima: I really have been playing with putting on music or doing kind of the opposite, let me try and put this into words. Whatever I feel like doing, which might be hiding under the blankets and going into a little ball. What if I turn on music and dance instead? And, and really kind of go against or work with the opposite of what feels natural in that moment and from that place get into a different mindset and approach the same question, which 100% of the time when I can shift my mindset, the rest begins to take care of itself.

Heather Jassy: I love that. And as you're saying that, you know, one thing that's coming to me is that so much of what we're talking about is actually anxiety about, um, anticipation of future outcomes and being pulled out of the present. And I think that Ali, and I've been talking about this a lot in the podcast, that's so much of,

um, the challenge here is about being pulled out of your own experience into and looking at yourself through the gaze of others. As opposed to staying firmly rooted.

Heather Jassy: So I love what you're saying, Miriam, about being in the body, being in your experience. And it, it to me feels like there's this interesting path through this, which is on one hand, almost hyper rational saying, "Actually, this is a societal thing. This is really, it's really logical to have this set of feelings. I don't have to, to mess with it. I can dialogue with it."

Heather Jassy: And then there's this other part that feels very primal. And the other part of the work is like, "I need to be firmly rooted in my experience. I need to steep in my own experience. I need to, um, listen to my inner voice. I need to be alone with that and in that wildness." And so it's, it's sort of a, (laughs) an interesting two pronged approach through, right?

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And the latter feels so much more feminine. [crosstalk] Sitting with it, inquiring, not rushing through it.

Heather Jassy: Yes.

Miriam Meima: Yeah.

Ali: I keep getting this image of, um, of like, uh, a seed, uh, breaking through or a plant breaking through the soil, like emerging as if, in those super vulnerable moments, um, where we're at growth edges, right? We're moving into new spaces. Everything's like so fresh and new for us that, that's a naturally when all those fears are going to show up. It's always, they always get louder when like Miriam, like you were saying like, this is actually a good moment, you know?

Ali: Let's just notice how loud the stuff is getting and applaud like what the opportunity is here. But using the image of like a plant that's just starting to like pop through the soil. Like, man, if that thing listened to the voice of the shitty committee and like crawled back in the dirt, we would have nothing.

Ali: And there is something to growing vulnerably and becoming your wholeness, right? Like you're in this constant process of becoming as a human more and more just like unfurling and unfolding into who you are. Um, that to almost listen to the voice of the, you know, imposter syndrome or the shitty committee or however it shows up. It feels almost tragic to me that it can take us down like that. Because it just kind of, um, the rest of us are in a way like deny, like the gift that is the thing emerging.

Heather Jassy: I'm a late comer to gardening. I've been, I see, I mean, there's so many great metaphors in it and, and one of the ones that really struck me was, you know, just this idea that when you plant a tree, it doesn't really grow that much the first year because it's just developing a root system under the ground.

Heather Jassy: Like all that effort is around getting firmly rooted, doing the work in it. And every winter, I think there's no way this yard's coming back. Like everything disappears. It's under a blanket of snow and all winter it's just gathering energy and feeding itself. And the work is invisible, but it's still happening beneath the soil and it's just, I, I so many parallels, um, to how the soul works.

Heather Jassy: And sometimes it feels as though just doing this work, I'm dialoguing with myself. I'm like [inaudible 00:41:33], I'm doing all the things I'm supposed to do every day and it just, I'm not seeing those, I'm not seeing spring yet. But you keep doing the work and that root system is developing and it's getting stronger. I think there's an inevitability to it when you do that work.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali: Yeah. And it, like you said, it's that quiet internal dialogue that strength-strengthens the roots and the, the tools that we use that build our resilience and create that space more space for us so that we don't, we stay with ourselves, which is like, I don't know. In my, in my experience, probably the biggest lesson that's always in front of me. It's like, where do I lose myself? How do I stay with myself? And as long as I have me, um, I am okay.

Ann Mehl: When you were describing that Heather, I was thinking about another coach was working with me at one time and she said it was, I was getting on a call with someone probably, you know, senior level and I was doing the old, well, I don't know how I'm going to help this person script. And so she hadn't channeled back to a time where I felt like I was in my element and I was myself and I was right where I needed to be to kind of, um, pull up, you know, those roots like you were describing. And, um, and the thought I had, I didn't had no professional connection. You know, it wasn't a time that I, my career per se, it was like a time I was there for my mom when she was in hospital. But it felt like I was so brave and I was so present and I was so needed and it was all right and it wasn't even a positive moment really.

Ann Mehl: What's interesting is to look at too, as you describe, you know, connecting with just the garden as a relationship to where you are. I think sometimes it's also good to look at what does that imposter syndrome voice expect here. Because the gems, you know, in this, in the way that I was surprised with my own memory, I think sometimes those confident places come in whispers. They're not grand achievements. Perhaps they're not even positive. They're a connection to the body or the connection to being present or there you, you deserve to be here could be tiny little passing moments.

Ann Mehl: But if you can access them, they are real, they're real, they're gems, they're not maybe huge. They're not written about in the papers. But, um, so I like that reframe too as part of this is, um, kind of accessing your best self is like uniquely what does that look like and that, and then just stay there. Don't put upon it. It has to look like X 'cause that's chasing the, the outer, the external. You know?

Heather Jassy: I love, I love that, Anne. And because I mean, I can't presume to know what your internal experience was at that time, but you're describing, you know, being there with your mom in the hospital. Um, and, and you know, that's, I love that. That's something that feels private, that's yours. And it's not about an award someone gave you or something, you know, like to your point about it being something external. Because it's about like, um, success being defined on your own terms, how you want to show up. Um, what brave looks like for you and not, not how the world would say it has to look. It's something private you're keeping for yourself.

Ali: In a lot of the horse sessions that I do with folks, um, this can come up in a myriad of ways, but one of the key things that can happen is this, um, this lack of belief in, in a right to exist even. And um, that that shows up actually in the arena with the horses as the horses not even realize like sensing the human that's there Um, which is fascinating to watch.

Ali: And then soon as that human finds their feet and finds their roots and like starts kind of owning the, "Oh wait, this is who I know I am." Then the horse starts interacting with them as if they're actually there. Um, such a like affirming moment because it's such a dramatic shift in the whole experience for them.

Ali: And it can really just lift up, um, how even something so basic as just a base of the basic right to exist is, is impaired. And so many of us, like we have to build that back. We'll find that for ourselves. And then, you know, stay with ourselves and grow ourselves kind of out a, that place.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative). What I was thinking about earlier was how, what we might call imposter syndrome leads to such. Predictable behavior and unhelpful. Um, what I mean by that is I see my clients in a moment where they're feeling this doubt of themselves or they're not feeling connected to their, their true self or best self. They're more likely to feel like they're supposed to have the answers instead of trusting that coming up with the right questions will help generate the solution that their team needs from them, or that their presence matters or all the things that we as coaches know to be valuable. Like presence, questions, listening, all of that.

Miriam Meima: They abandon those skills and instead go into being a solution factory or feeling like they need to be really busy and filling their calendar. And so therefore they're not available, not accessible, and they begin to perpetuate this version of themselves, this persona that's got it all together and has it all figured out. Which isn't actually that helpful because it's quite replaceable if you're just trying to find someone to be more of like a solution factory.

Heather Jassy: I love that. You know, it can show up as overwork and overfunctioning on the small stuff. And um, you know, when we talk about vulnerability is when this stuff shows up, it can also mean, um, to your point, filling up the calendar with the busy work and not making time and space for the bigger strategic work.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Heather Jassy: Um, which is, which is often empty space (laughs), right? Which can really trigger vulnerability for people. So you can imagine if you, if you show up with this idea of like, "It's all a fluke, I'm going to get found out. Um, you know, just wait." (laughs) You know, those thoughts really drive you to want to function really hard and show how productive you can be and that isn't necessarily, um, the most helpful set of behaviors when you're trying to stretch into a greater leadership role.

Ali: I see. I see that a lot in clients too. It's like, I'm going to read this and I'm going to read this and then I'm going to click on this link and I'm going to read all of this and I'm like, Whoa. It's interesting to watch the mind try to like ameliorate, right? Like does these deep felt feelings of discomfort and unpleasantness and you know, the feelings that feel like they're kind of attacking our, our very sense of self. Right? Which all of those feelings are such an inside job that really nothing on the outside can, um, really dislodge it.

Ali: Like it takes that like going in and finding yourself. Um, I don't know if it's a soul retrieval, but it feels like at least a self retrieval. You know, we get so lost in the mire of voices from the outside that the more we read, the more we click on, the more we listened to. But it doesn't matter. You know, you're just hung up more in the, in the mires of thoughts and words that are really on the outside.

Heather Jassy: You know, to that point about soul retrievals, you know, just, I think of soul retrievals is just the process of going back and understanding and dismantling the agreement you've made in the past to make yourself smaller.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Can you say that one more time?

Heather Jassy: Going back to discover and dismantle the agreement that you made to make yourself smaller?

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Heather Jassy: And you know (laughs), I, I, I never tell anybody to do anything. I try, well other than my children, but you know (laughs), but with clients I say, "I want to give you an invitation to stop reading business books or stop reading books about meditation and sit and commune with your soul every day." Because your soul is the filter that's going to tell you which part of this information is authentic for you and which isn't.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes, [inaudible 00:55:52].

Ali: That's, that's to me, the craft. That is the master work of being human right there.

Heather Jassy: Otherwise we're just taking everyone's frames and putting them on again, because we're talking so much about being in our own experience. To me is really hard to imagine really doing the work and growing without some version of sitting with yourself.

Miriam Meima: There's no other way around it. Some version of sitting with myself, which for me is either journaling, meditating, dancing, went for a walk, being in nature or being with someone who I can be fully myself with without needing to make much sense. Somehow, in the presence of those kinds of people. I can come to new awareness.

Heather Jassy: When I was a therapist, I noticed that people often call it going "there." They're like, I don't want to go there. Some version of going there and there's this real fear, and I've certainly experienced this in my life as well. There's such a fear of "going there" and what I might find. And that we have these ideas about what's under there in the shadows about ourselves. And then we actually go there and face that fear actually like, "Oh, it's not so bad." And once you learn to go there and sit with it, it just reduces the fear of what you might find or uncover. Like, "Oh yeah,."

Heather Jassy: Like when you're pretty comfortable going there, it's a lot easier to receive feedback. At work. Like, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, this is, this is stuff I need to work on." Like I hear it. Just like, "Yeah, I'm, I'm hearing these uncomfortable things. Like I'm pretty aware of these things. These are things I need to work on." There's a different feeling when we're not going through life, like afraid to be uncovered at any moment. (laughs) There's really something dark under there and we have to do whatever we can to keep it at bay. What a relief.

Miriam Meima: What a relief. Exactly. It really allows us to take out the noise. So I think the noise is just trying to drown out the a call, right? The call to go there.

Ann Mehl: I do think sometimes it is difficult for people to find that for themselves or get to the place where they're present with, um, standing still.

Heather Jassy: And I, you know, I had to really test my belief of this as a therapist because I, I knew the only way out was by going there and I would still be scared for people and I had to trust that process. That it's going to get a little, it's going to get a little more painful for a while.

Heather Jassy: This coach I once had gave me this little equation I use all the time and it's  $P + V = C$ . Pain + vision = change. Um, and, and I, you know, that, that if you're really trying to get people to overcome the difficulty of change, which humans tend to resist, you have to either intensify the amount of, like an awareness of the amount of pain that they're currently experiencing in their current situation and pain, as, uh, uh, credible or, or at least, you know, some sort of picture of the future that they can, they can look toward because the abstract fear of the unknown is so compelling. Right?

Heather Jassy: And so, I mean I think this is why therapists, you know, make you sign a disclaimer that says this may get worse before it gets better (laughs) because you know, you've essentially got to step on the gas to feel the pain a little bit, right? Like let's understand why your current situation, like just how deeply painful it is. Because you haven't been going there. You may not even know how much pain you're really in. You're seeing some of the symptoms of it in your life. Um, but we have to feel. This is why we often resist it. Like, "Oh, I don't want to feel that. I don't want to go there. 'Cause then I have to feel how miserable this job is making me and then I have to maybe have to do something about it."

Miriam Meima: Or to your earlier point about the contract that we've made with ourselves to be small. I know so many people who want to feel connected to their family and if their family is of a certain socioeconomic status excelling in their career actually feels like they're abandoning their roots. And so there's this tension between can I still feel like I belong to my family and excel as one example of the kind of thing that might be discovered as we turn inward?

Heather Jassy: Well, I think we all want to believe that if we just, if we grow and evolve as a human, everyone in our life is going to embrace that and just love it (laughing). [crosstalk] We're all laughing.

Miriam Meima: I don't think it always turns out to be so true.

Ann Mehl: It does not.

Ali: There's always there. There's always that question of the ecology. My mentor's an NLP, he called it like the ecology question. Like what might you lose that you value if you get this thing that you want? And um, and sometimes that thing that you value is like just belonging with your people or under like some relationship with your, one of the parental units or some important caregiver in your life. And um, it's like those odd commitments that we make backwards. Like, I will not be better than you, my key people or you know, or family.

Ali: So yeah, there's, there's so much to unpack when we, um, when we look, have the courage to look. That's really, um, keeping us small, uh, caging our hearts so to speak in some ways.

Miriam Meima: The thing on my mind is the Untethered Soul and how helpful that resource has been. To cover a lot of the topics we've been talking about.

Miriam Meima: What I got out of the Untethered Soul was there are either unconscious agreements that I've made or places in me that cause me to react really strongly when different circumstances present themselves. And it's not my job to go through life trying to change circumstances so that I don't feel triggered. It's actually my job to make myself less and less triggerable. Which means each of those spots where I get triggered, is like a thorn. And I want to find those thorns

that actually learn to lovingly remove them rather than feeling like I want to protect myself from having them detached.

Ali: That is the work. And I think too part of the work and the kind of that masterful move in the craft of becoming human is to know that there's no X marks the spot, right? Like we never arrive at a place where we're like, "Oh great, I don't have to look at that shit anymore." But it's the process of coming back and returning even if you do venture out into the world and you get lost in the other voices that are out there and the noise and the et cetera. You're able to track yourself back home and find your ground and find your roots. And Heather, as you said earlier, that as the time between going out and coming back can get smaller and smaller.

Miriam Meima: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Heather Jassy: Well, and also you've built a map of how to get back. You've left some breadcrumbs yourself.

Heather Jassy: But I understand that feeling and I've certainly had it. Like, "Oh, I just have to keep doing. I just have to keep doing these things." Um, and the form may change, but the formula stays pretty consistent.

Ali: Thank you so much you guys. That was fantastic.

Heather Jassy: Yeah. So good. Thank you all.