

Jerry: Hey Ingrid, thanks for coming on the show.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Thanks for having me.

Jerry: How are you doing?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: I'm, I'm doing, I'm doing as, as well as could be, given the circumstances.

Jerry: Yeah. Um-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yeah.

Jerry: ... so let's, let's dive in and more explain the circumstances. Why don't you take a moment and just introduce yourself? [00:00:30] I'd like to have that. Tell us who you are.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Sure. I'm Ingrid Fetell Lee Lee, I am a designer, and an author, and I write about joy.

Jerry: Yes you do.

Jerry: I want to also acknowledge that, uh, while I'm in Boulder Colorado, you're in Long Island right now and if you don't mind maybe we just, for more context, um, you're gonna be a momma.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: I am, yeah. I'm three months out from ...

Jerry: Ah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... uh, yeah, my first, my first little one, so.

Jerry: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: So yeah, let's talk about joy, and the name of the book, I should say, is *Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness*, did I get that right?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: That's it.

Jerry: Yeah. So, um, let's set some context here, and then we'll ... maybe we'll talk about joy in the time of the plague. Um, simple question, which you've probably had to answer about a bazillion times, so, what's the difference between joy and happiness?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: I have answered this a lot, but I think actually right now it's really important, um, this distinction.

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: So, the way that psychologists define happiness is as a broad evaluation of your life over time, and how do you feel about your life. So it encompasses a lot of factors, it encompasses things like how we feel about our work, whether we feel connected to other people, whether we feel like we have a sense of meaning and purpose in life, all of those things get rolled into happiness. [00:03:30] Psychologists also use the term subjective well-being, that's the t- jargony term for happiness, and I think what's challenging about happiness is it, it can be a little bit vague, right?

Um, so one part of your life is up, and another part of your life is down, and it's hard to know exactly, "Am I happy?" So this question, "Am I happy?" I think we often ask ourselves that, whereas joy is much simpler and more immediate, and I know we use these two words interchangeably a lot, but they, but they are different.

So joy is an emotion, um, and it is an intense momentary experience of positive emotion. So, when we feel joy, we feel it not just in our minds, we also feel it in our bodies. One of the ways that psychologists measure joy is through physical expressions, so smiling, laughter, a feeling of wanting to jump up and down, and I think the, the real important distinction here is the time component, right? If happiness-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... is, is sort [00:04:30] of a, a broader assessment of, you know, "How am I this month? How am I this week?"

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Joy is, "How am I feeling right now?" Like in this moment, and given the time that we're in, the reason I think it's such an important distinction now, is it's very reasonable not to be happy right now ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and most of us are not happy right now with the state of the world, and, and watching this pandemic unfold, but we are, I think, allowed moments of joy, and I think we need moments of joy in that. And so to recognize that they're two different things, and that you don't have to be happy to feel joy is really important.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative). I, I just want to pause and acknowledge that, for what just felt so important, that last bit there. Um, uh,

like you I'm sure, um, I'm finding so many people feeling, um, bereft, empty, you know, and I was struck by the, uh, beautiful and succinct list of the, uh, characteristics of happiness that you sort of rattled off.

Um, and clearly, and I know 'cause I, 'cause I have a little insight, I know you worked long and hard on this book, and so you really research the question deeply, and that notion of that list, which included connection to other-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... humans, um, you know, I've said ad hoc, both on this show, and in my own book, and time and time again, I think that we are organized to seek love, safety, and belonging, and safety and belonging feel particularly threatened right now. Um, love is hard to hold on to when our arms can only reach through a video screen ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... right? Um, and I was struck by your observation, that in a sense we are, we are ... I'll build upon what you said by saying, I think we are rightfully appropriately challenged to feel happy right now.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yes.

Jerry: Right, and that, uh, to f- to, to find sustained happiness when we're living under a shadow of economic challenge that seemed unimaginable, just two, three weeks ago, unless you were wisely forecasting, or wisely listening to people like Bill Gates in 2015 and, um, which I had not I would, I would acknowledge. It, it, it seems perfectly appropriate to question that, and, um, what I'm realizing, just listening to that, that quick first response, was that, um, finding and cultivating moments of joy may be the antiviral supplement that we all need. You're nodding, does that make sense?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yeah, I believe so. I mean, you know, there's a science piece to this, which is that-

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... um, research shows that when we're able to find moments of joy, or moments of positivity, they don't have to be big, but these small moments within a crisis, um, or within a tragedy that it enables a couple of things, one, that it helps reset our physiological responses to stress, so that-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... it actually aids our resilience in that way ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... um, and then that it also facilitates a more adaptive coping style, that's the psychologist's term, um, that we are more likely to grow from adversity, um, when we have these glimmers ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... of joy, um ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... or gratitude, or love, or affection within our negative times, um ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... within our struggle, than if we don't allow those in. And I think that some of that is about finding it, and some of that is about allowing it, because sometimes when things are this hard, it's hard to allow ourselves, we feel like it's not necessarily appropriate to be laughing, or it's not appropriate to be joyous, but allowing ourselves that, recognizing that it is deeply human to find these moments of joy everywhere in any time, um, I think, and recognizing that it is a part of ... we're hardwired to find joy, because it's a part of our survival, you know?

We don't live in this just subsistence state, our emotions are not calibrated for that, they're calibrated to, to find these little spikes of joy, because it's a part of thriving, it's a part of what helps us thrive, and, and we may not be thriving now, but, but the, the glimmers of it, I think, help, help sustain us through times-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... [00:10:00] like this, and whether we think about it scientifically, or whether we think about it philosophically, I think they are, uh, uh, an important part of what will make us resilient ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... in the face of crisis like this.

Jerry: Hmm. As you, as you were speaking, I had two discrete but related thoughts, the first was a sort of more intellectualized, which was, um, to relate, uh, you, you, you said something to the effect of we're not wired just for s- that substance, subsistence level ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right.

Jerry: ... um, and which brought me to m- Maslow's hierarchy of needs, um, and what I'm hearing and reading into what you're saying, is that, um, that part of our need is f- for happiness and joy.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Absolutely.

Jerry: As we're speaking.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Absolutely.

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: I think if we don't acknowledge that, if we, i- if we miss that, we're missing a huge piece of what it means to be human, and I think that actually that is one of the challenges I see in the world around joy, even in good times, is that because we believe that joy is superfluous, or unnecessary, um, that allows us to make all kinds of decisions that push it to the margins of our lives. Um, I study aesthetics, I study the way that we look, that, that we create our physical environments, and I think you can see that we have pushed joy out of many, um, physical environments, our workplaces, our schools, many schools ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... above primary school are joyless-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... places, um, in the way that they are constructed. Um, they have no color, they have no life or vibrancy.

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Um, you know, you can see it in hospitals where at least-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... things are designed for the bi- the bare minimum, right? Not for any joy, um, and then I think you can see it most clearly in the places that house marginalized people, um, the nursing homes, right? Um, th- those tend to be quite joyless. Um, the, uh, housing projects, homeless shelters, places designed for the poor, where we believe that this isn't necessary, it's just extraneous, right? The, the n- they're the niceties of life, um, but actually recognizing that ... so you can s- you can see physically this tendency to push joy off, and to feel-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... like it's not essential, but biologically joy is absolutely essential, as essential as-

Jerry: So ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... love.

Jerry: So, you're helping me realize something, uh, not just at the organized sociological level, but really at the personal individual level, and that is the other thought that occurred to me when you were talking about allowing ourselves to feel joy. I have been struggling these last few weeks, um, uh, questioning myself for feeling joy ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... um, on a personal level, um, I am moving ahead with purchasing a new home, which sounds either incredibly smart, or incredibly delusional, um, and yet, um, as I did just before we started recording, I showed you pictures, I look at pictures, and it produces that upswell, you know it, right? I don't know the science, you know the science, right? My body is flooded with, right? Just imagining the views from that house.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: For the second source of joy that I've had, um, is extraordinary, it's in the joy that comes from helping and being there for others ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and it's a very confusing state for me as a first responder to suffering, as I often see myself, because, um, for example I did a ... I called in to a client company's, uh, all team meeting yesterday, and, um, uh, there was a moment of bittersweet joy, I don't know how else to describe it, but, uh, uh we were, the, the collective, the average age of the collective is probably somewhere in the mid-30s, most of them like you are having munchkins, and, um, uh, uh, and, and, and their predominant worry was for their parents, who are in their 60s, their 70s, or 80s, you know?

Those of us in our society right, right now we're all fixated and focused on the people who are at risk, leave aside for a moment the statistics which are coming out of New York and, you know, which show that there's equal danger across the board. We're fixated on that, and one man was telling the story of his father who, um, runs a baseball training facility, and he just pauses and he gets very

emotional, and he says, "He la- my father loves baseball, it produces joy. How do I tell him not to keep that facility open?"

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: And, so what I said was, we were talking about the fact that he has a, he has a young boy, this fellow, and I said, okay, this was a little bit of a trick I played, which was to tell him to tell his father that he wants him to live long enough to teach his grandson to play baseball.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm. That's the way.

Jerry: Hmm. And, um, that's what I mean when I say it's bittersweet, right? Because, um, e- e- for a brief moment in time, through a video screen in front of 50 other people, perhaps there was a human connection, that like electricity went from me, to that young man who was struggling in that in-between stage between his son and his father.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: [00:16:30] Right.

Jerry: And me being somewhat of the elder Uncle Jerry, which is like my new, that's my new moniker, Uncle Jerry, um, to say, "Here's how we all can stay connected." And it's, it's in that connection between, um, the joy of the connection, and the currency of the pain.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Does this resonate with, with your findings, or your thoughts?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Absol- a- absolutely. I mean I think that, well I mean there's, there are two levels, so this one is the answer you gave, which ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... is w- you know, it speaks to the fact that there are joys that are not available to us right now, or that ... and, and the thing I was thinking is, uh, I was thinking that, you know, joy is one of the things that pulls us towards things that are good for us, it's how we know, right? We feel this light inside, and we feel a little-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... more alive, and it pulls us towards something, and in that moment w- you know, the, the interaction you had, he was basically saying it's pulling him toward a thing, but in this moment that is not adaptive, that is not safe, and you

basically substituted another joy, you substituted a future joy to help him understand, um ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... that there are times when we m- must suspend certain joys, and the promise of others is what will sustain us.

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Um, so I-

Jerry: And this may be one of those times.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... found that really beautiful. Yeah.

Jerry: [00:18:00] Yeah, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: No, no.

Jerry: No, say more, say more, I'm sorry.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: No, um, I, uh, just that it is that, um, yeah, it's that promise that joy will come back again, that is what will hold us through this.

Jerry: Yeah, and thank you for many at that way, because I think that part of the guilt that I've been feeling, and I'll name it as that, 'cause that's what it feels, I firmly believe joy will come back ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and therefore happiness will be will come back. And, um, I c- I can't, I can't figure out where that sensibility comes from, uh, other than the fact that I have been s- I- so low in my life, so bereft of happiness that perhaps my body and my brain have, uh, as if they're two d- separate things, right? That the-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yeah.

Jerry: ... eh, my mind has come to understand the v- the veracity of the thing that my old psychoanalyst, my former psychoanalyst, Dr. Sayers used to say to me all the time, this too shall pass.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yes. Yes, and I think this is, for me, the essence of ... it's probably one of the most important things that's come from my work, is recognizing that joy is transient, all joys are transient, sometimes they're followed right on, uh, you know, the, the, the ending wave of one is followed right on the heel ...



Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... on its heels by another, like waves in the ocean, and sometimes there's a lull ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and we go through a low period, um ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... but recognizing that it is like a wave, and that it will rise again is the most powerful thing we can do in, in a trough, in the valley ...

Jerry: Hmm, hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... um, because I think what happens when we start to hold ourselves back from it, and I know this has been true for me, is that when I've held myself back from feeling the pain of the lows, it numbs the body and mind, numbs both, right?

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: It numbs our emotional capacity, and we can't feel the highs in the same way either.

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: We can't feel that elevation. Um, so understanding that it is cyclical, that it rises and falls, but that there's also amplitudes to this, and that you can have moments of bitter sweetness ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... you can have moments of joy that feel poignant, that feel powerful within a crisis ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... just as you can have disappointments within an incredibly happy time, and that-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... that, you know, those two things exist in parallel.

Jerry: Yeah. It, it, you know, part of that resilience that you spoke of before, I think is, um, uh, there's an, there's an old set of wisdom which is said, "In order to experience joy, you have to experience the low, you have to experience the fullness of what's going on."

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: And, um, uh, that the two are connected, and I think of, uh, one of my favorite Buddhist teachers, um, the Buddhist saint Milarepa, who, um, was a really complex and wonderful dude, um, (laughs) uh, that w- in one of his beautiful songs he sings of the fact that, um, you cannot separate the clouds from the sky, just as you cannot separate the waves from the ocean, and, um, and, and, and the point of the message is that in order to experience the ocean you have to experience the waves ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... in order to experience the expansiveness of the sky, you have to experience the Sun being blocked by clouds.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Absolutely.

Jerry: Um, and, and so what we're, to get pragmatic for a moment, I think what we're both circling around is this notion that, um, to find joy right now means to allow yourself to be open to the fullness of the bitter sweetness of this time.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and the guilt. I mean-

Jerry: I think, yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... to acknowledge that there is, you know, tha- that's not, uh, there's no judgment in the guilt either, right?

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Just the acknowledgement that you feel it, I think, can create space for it as opposed to trying to push it away, and push it away, and push it away. So, I think creating space-

Jerry: I mean, I'll give you ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... space for all of the emotions that we're feeling in this time, and recognizing that it is a ... I, I, I, sorry to interrupt, I just, I, I ...

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... the way that I've been thinking about it for myself is that, um, my emotions are a, are a terrain I'm moving through ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... as opposed to a part of me ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... um, and when I visualize it that way, it's helpful, it's like I'm walking through this landscape, and there are days that I walk through that I am crying, and I can't stop, and then a few hours later something miraculous happens, the baby kicks, or something, (laughs) and I am moving through this terrain, and I am seeing all of it, and it's not me, but I'm experiencing it, and I think that helps a little bit, it helps me see that then there will be other emotions in the future.

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: This road I'm on is long, it's not just what's right in front of me now.

Jerry: Hmm, hmm. It's beautiful, and from one lens not at all surprising that we had actually similar thoughts when we were, um, briefly talking over each other, and, and that is I was visualizing a hiking recently ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... which I'm still allowed to do, with my son Michael who's 22, and just last night we took a walk around the lake nearby, and, um, as m- as often as he and I have walked the landscape, the terrain here, I hadn't walked with him in that way, taking that angle, and of course, you know, if you walk clockwise around a lake you see one view, if you walk counterclockwise you see another view, right?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right.

Jerry: Um, which is also important to remember, that we can change our views.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: And at one point, he just sort of stopped, and he stared at the lake, and the Sun was setting, and it was a sort of post-dinner, we'd both been staring at screens all day we stood at the lake and we just watched, and we listened to the birds calling for the end of the sunlight as they do, and we looked up and saw the hills dotted with houses whose lights had just turned on, and little patches of snow,

and he just stood there and he just said, "Oh, it's so beautiful." And it was a source of sustenance, it felt like food ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... after starvation. Um, and there's a sharpness, I think about this time, in which we are, um, finding the, the extraordinary power of those moments, and the preciousness of those moments.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yes.

Jerry: You know, um, not to be the old parent in this conversation, but, um, there will come a day when your baby is no longer inside your body kicking ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right.

Jerry: ... um, you won't-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Soon (laughs).

Jerry: Soon (laughs). Maybe not soon enough. Um ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: No, I, I, I, I'll keep him in there as long as I can right now (laughs).

Jerry: (laughs) But, but, but there's a preciousness ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... right? Um, there's a preciousness, I mean, what it's making me recall is, uh, I, I don't think I will ever forget God, God I hope I never forget what it feels like to hold one of my children in my hands from the tip of my overly large hands ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... to the crook of my elbow.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: Right? Or, or t- or to know what it feels like when after a bath, uh, they snuggle into the crook of my neck ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... and the smell of the fresh, organic, non-GMO ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: (laughs).

Jerry: ... shampoo comes, and they take a sigh ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... and, um, as I s- as, as I say, my, my youngest is 22 ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... and so it's been a long chronological time since I had those feelings, but they are in my body.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm. I, I mean it, what it makes me think of is just the power of the human mind ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... to time travel through joy.

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right? That we, we have within us all our memories ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... we carry them ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and in times like this, those memories can be sustenance, just as experiences of intense ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... beauty and nature can be sustenance ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and we also have the power to anticipate joy, which when we think to the future, you know, when I ... people ask me, how do I find joy right now, one of the things I say is, "Go back through your camera roll."

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Sounds really mundane, but go back and look at moments of joy that were, you know, even not-too-distant, and just remember that those will happen again, that you will have-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... moments like that again.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: They may look different, because everything's gonna be different, you know?

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: It's not that we're, we're gonna go back to the way things were, but recognize-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... that those will happen again, and the other thing you can do is think about something you want to do when, when things are over, right? When this crisis is over ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... what, w- what mundane thing that you once took so for granted would be-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... so joyous to do ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and think about that, um, and we can't make plans for it yet, but we can anticipate it, and, um, the richness of our imagination, and the richness of our memories, the multi-sensory quality of those things is so powerful, um, that it can bring joy into the present ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... even in a difficult time.

Jerry: Hmm. I, I've got a small suggestion as well that I know works for me, I planted a tree the other day ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... you know, um, and for those who, who've read my book, you'll understand the reference, um, I planted a horse chestnut tree, which had been a gift to me from, um, a client, and as a boy, um, a horse chestnut tree had meant so much to me, and, um, uh, I'm finding comfort and joy in the belief that 20 years from now somebody will, uh, be shaded by that tree.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: Um, I, you know, I loved your suggestions, and, um, I'm realizing that, you know, without really being conscious about doing it, I'm finding myself in little ways in each day, I'm finding those ways to inject that joy ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... you know?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: And that it can be for others.

Jerry: And it can be for others, I wa- I was just gonna say one of the things that, that are, that is happening for me, even in this moment, is this conversation ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... is producing that for me, you know?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Me too.

Jerry: Um, I, I, I remember before your book was published, and the anxiousness I, I remember a conversation we had about like you having to write at your desk, and, and spending the days and not being ab- and then a year later I was stuck at my desk doing (laughs) the same thing.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: (laughs).

Jerry: And all of the pain, and I imagine-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: I remember that well.

Jerry: Right?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: You were like, "I don't know if 14 hours a day at a desk is a really good idea."

Jerry: (laughs).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: And I was like, "I know, but I gotta, I gotta get it done, there's like no other way to get this book out of me." (laughs).

Jerry: And yet, um, it's funny that we, we would both say that, I'd find myself these days, first of all, uh, I'll acknowledge that, um, for the first time in about six or seven years I have zero airline tickets in my inbox.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: I'm not traveling.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right.

Jerry: And, uh, travel was always an impediment for me, right?

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: And, um, what I'm finding myself drawn to right now is saying, "Okay, I actually need to do some more writing." Um, because that produces joy, writing without a deadline, and writing without an (laughs) a publisher knocking on the door (laughs).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yes. Yes. Yes. I think th- th- that that speaks too also for me is, um, there are peculiar joys of hard times ...

Jerry: Hmm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... very peculiar joys that you will not discover until you are in them. There is a joy in slowness, there is a joy in, a weird joy in being home all the time.

Jerry: Yes.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Um, and it ... one of the things I've been thinking about is how it is redefining my notion of home, when your whole world is your home and all you can leave to do are take walks, home is a very different world than the place you drop your bags between trips, right?

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: (laughs) Um, or the place you come home at night, and you meet, and you cook dinner, and you watch a little TV, and you fall asleep, and you, and you do it again, you leave the house. So ...

Jerry: Cook dinner? You mean order dinner (laughs).



Ingrid Fetell Lee: In New York? That's the time, order dinner. Right, and that a- the, the discovery of cooking every day, I mean we, you know, moving back-

Jerry: Right.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... to, to that behavior, there are things you notice, um ...

Jerry: Right.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... I mean the house that we're sheltering in place, and, uh, was intended to be a weekend place, and now we're here-

Jerry: Right.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... full-time, and things I'm noticing, there's a, a little red ... it, it started with a knocking, there was a knocking ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... on the side of the house, and I thought, "Is there a woodpecker trying to bore into the side of our house?"

Jerry: Hmm. Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: And we listened to it over time, and then Albert started to notice that it was a wren ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and so it wasn't, he wasn't knocking, he's not trying to get into the wood, he's building a nest, and he's trying-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... to pull the dried clematis off the side of the house to make this nest ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and so today I heard the knocking, and I just went and watched him, and I watched him root around in the garden, and I watched his mate in one of the bushes, and I was starting to pinpoint, you know, this is, uh, where they're building the nest, and there was a really profound but very simple joy for me in watching this unfold, something that I never actually get to see, because I'm in and out of here often, except, you know, just for a couple days at a time. So

there are things, and th- and that will change us as we go forward, I think, um, so.

Jerry: And, uh, and, and I think what I'm hearing you note, is that in the busyness of our lives, um, we lose, we overlook the possibilities of joy, and the forced slowness, um, and, which by the way we need to acknowledge is scary, and frightening, and devastating for, for so many folks, and there's-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: It is.

Jerry: ... a privilege in being able to say, "I am safe."

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yes.

Jerry: And I shall see-

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Huge privilege, a huge privilege.

Jerry: And the acknowledgment of that, to the side for a moment, there is something really important going on, and hopefully a more longer-term shift, you know, in my book I wrote about, um, busyness as a means of distracting from the fullness of our lives.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Yes.

Jerry: It's almost like a, a conscious, uh, looking away, and your story and Albert's realization that it was a wren brings me back to the realization that, um, uh, uh, you know, myself and all my airline trips, or all my airplane trips have led me to at times overlook the w- the, the wren's building of a nest.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: And, um, you know, I've been exhorting companies right now to, um, use this time period as a call to action for building humane workspaces ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... and I will, um, follow the heed of Thich Nhat Hanh, the Buddhist teacher who says, um, "Peace begins with me."

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: Maybe, maybe the right next step for me in my life is to make sure that I'm creating spaces for the wren ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... and that I look askance at busyness, and look twice at those airline tickets.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm. The question that has been with me lately is this question of how do we grow through this time ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... because I am privileged to be safe right now ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... at least for right now, and let's hope that that stays that way. Um, I think, yeah, I think that is, sounds like that's what you're, you're pointing towards is what is the growth that comes from this.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: And, and I think that in the busyness- it's hard to grow in busyness.

Jerry: Yes.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: I mean maybe there are kinds of growths that happen in busyness, I guess- I suppose that's not necessarily true, I, I certainly grew, I grew outwardly a lot in my busy-

Jerry: Right.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... period. [00:39:30] I conquered-

Jerry: Right.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... my fear of public speaking, and I did a lot of, I, I, I grew in a lot of ways through that, um, but the deep growth, the, the growth of the soul ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... the growth of our capacity to feel, the growth of our capacity to understand, I don't think that is as dimensional in a time of busyness. I think the slowness is a maybe more fertile environment for that, as difficult as it is to say that.

Jerry: Yeah, I'll, I'll give in the image that, that has a, that I have carried in my life for a few decades now, and that is, uh, the farmer, um, and I've often thought about this around my own life, which is that there are times in my soul when I must plant ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and then there were times in which I reap, and I harvest. Um, and, um, for me, um, th- the, the writing of my book was a time of harvesting, um, the year or so of being out in the world in this extraordinarily, um, externalized way, was a time of distribution of that, and, uh, my soul needs me to tend to the inner landscape, to the terrain ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: ... um, the internal, so that three or four years from now there's another harvesting ...

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... that will come.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Um, I, I could not be the coach I am had I not tended to the inner terrain for years, and, um, um, re- and our conversation [00:41:30] brought me back to, to understanding that, um, that, that, that old biblical notion of a time for harvesting, and a time for planting, and a time for rest, and, um, we're certainly in that time of shift right now.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right. I, it reminds me, I often think about it into a similar way of thinking about it, I think about it in terms of seasons, and, um, I don't know where I first heard it, but someone talked about creative winters ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and that you go through periods where you can't seem to make anything, you can't seem to ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... put together a piece, and I think a lot of people are struggling with this right now, where they feel like they have ...

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... tons of time, yet they're so anxious they're not feeling productive, and they're-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... struggling with that, "But I have all this time but I don't seem able to use it."

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: And recognizing that there are dormant periods, and that dormant-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... periods in nature are actually still quite active.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Right? And that there's work happening under the soil, and that there are, there are things happening in that tree, there are buds that are actually set but not open yet.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Um, that always really helps me to recognize-

Jerry: Hmm.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... that, um, maybe writing, if you're, if you're able to write, write ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... and if I'm not able to write, that's o- that's okay too, that there is, uh, that sometimes w- we don't know what will happen as a result, but there is, there's work happening now (laughs) ...

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ingrid Fetell Lee: ... even if we're not actively pursuing it.

Jerry: Hmm, hmm. Thank you for that. I, I, uh, I have found our conversation so helpful, um, so joyful, and, uh, and dare I say contributing even to my happiness.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Me too.

Jerry: Yeah.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Thank you.

Jerry: Thank you, and, and may everyone find the wren's nest outside their windows.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Hmm.

Jerry: Thank you Ingrid.

Ingrid Fetell Lee: Thank you Jerry.