

Jerry: Hi, Dave. It's a little bit of a fanboy kind of pleasure for me to look across my screen and see your smiling, somewhat shaggy-haired-

David Hieatt: (Laughs).

Jerry: ... uh, look, (laughs) and, uh, why don't... Why don't you take a moment and just introduce yourself, um, and tell us who you are and we'll dive right in. Thanks for coming on the show.

David Hieatt: It's a pleasure. My name is David Hieatt. Um, I'm sort of co-founder of Hiut Denim Company. I also, uh, run an events company also with Claire, my wife, um, called The Do Lectures and we do that from, um, uh, an old cow shed in West Wales.

Jerry: You know, the, the fanboy part of me, um, I was mentioning before we actually really started recording was that, um, I've actually been a fan of Hiut Denim, uh, uh, for several years now since I stumbled upon, a video and I was, coaching at Etsy,

David Hieatt: Right.

Jerry: ... when you... Wh- when Chad Dickerson was the CEO and, um, I was so moved by that story. Now, it was great filmmaking, but, um, I was so moved by wh- what you'd done in this, um, tiny... Well, I'm imagining a smallish town of Cardigan, Wales-

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... um, so give us a little bit of your origin story. What is Hiut Denim and I know you've probably said this a bazillion times-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... but say it one more time.

David Hieatt: Well, I mean, so Cardigan... W- West Wales, super-remote, 4,000 people. More sheep than people. Many more sheep than people. Um, beautiful but small and quiet. But it used to have Britain's biggest jeans factory.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Um, and nobody really knows why, uh, but just did. It made 35,000 pairs of jeans a week for nearly 40 years-

Jerry: Gosh.

David Hieatt: ... and, and so it was... Like, it was a machine. And, and it employed 400 people in the town of 4,000. So by far the biggest employer in town. And, and they were good at it, they were very, very good at it. And it was the, it was the last jeans factory to close in the UK and it was profitable till the, you know, the last day.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Um, and it was incredible. And, and as suddenly the factory closed because they went somewhere cheaper, probably not better, um, but-

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: ... uh, and then 400 world-class makers had nothing to make.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: I had visited the factory 'cause I was doing another company at the time-

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: ... and I was just going like, "Oh, my God, like, this, uh..." You know, y- when we see a, like a, uh, amazing athlete and there's no...They're at incredible weight there. So, like, they're so right for that sport at that time, and, and that factory was, uh, completely and utterly right and, you know, like just in... It was an athlete-

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: ... and uh, an incredible, uh, machine. Um, and, and so it, you know, the alot of the workers were... Had left school, been there, got married there, you know-

Jerry: Aw.

David Hieatt: ... their children were working there. It was-

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: ... a thing. It was-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: ... a big thing.

Jerry: It was a big thing, and, and, and then you... A- at one point I imagine got it into your crazy head that you were gonna, uh, revive this factory-

David Hieatt: Well-

Jerry: ... tell me about that.

David Hieatt: I mean, well, uh, just give you a very quick backstory because before that we were doing a company called Howies and we ended up selling it. And, and, and to be honest, and I'm sure we'll talk about that, it sort of ended up sort of bittersweet. We sold it. We didn't really wanna sell it and, uh, and the people who bought it didn't really wanna buy it. Um, and I sort of, uh, and I left the company, I didn't really wanna leave the company. And, and I sort of went...

I wrote a plan 'cause I thought, "Well, actually, God, the town is really good at making jeans and we're brand-builders. Maybe those two things could come together." And I wrote a plan and, uh, I'll be honest, uh, I put it to one side. Um, and I just went running for a year 'cause, I, I felt, um, I felt like I was a little bit broken 'cause I, I didn't really want to sell it, I ended up selling it and, and I mean it's, it's a classic founder's story.

Something was missing in me and that was I didn't really wanna run around the same track twice. I felt like... I felt, um, I, I was, I was definitely hurting, and uh... It was a phone call I had with someone and they said, "Well, Dave, why aren't you doing the plan?"

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: And, so... And I said, "Well, actually I..." you know, and I said, you know, I said that. I said, "Well I didn't wanna run round the same track twice. I'm feeling, you know, like I don't... I don't know why I'd wanna do it, uh, anymore. I know I can do it." And he said, "Yeah, but it's not, actually, not about you. It's about the town."

And I, uh, in that moment I went, "Oh, I can do it for the town." And, uh, and it was like a little... I, I, I knew where I was standing, I knew-

Jerry: Right.

David Hieatt: ... what I was wearing.

Jerry: Right

David Hieatt: I literally... You know, it was like a lightning bolt going through you and going, "Yeah, I can do it to the town." And, and interestingly it was... There was

another thing that had come into play which was obviously the town had skills, I had skills, and, and, and so, um, every time I say I, I mean me and Claire. Um. um-

Jerry: Claire, Claire your partner and your wife?

David Hieatt: Yeah. And, um, but another thing, uh, came into play which was the internet really had taken, you know, some big steps forward.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Um, and so I was literally, I found myself in the right town with the right, you know, amazing people at the right time and I thought, "Okay, I, I, I think we can do this." Um, and I, I think I feel like... Um, you know, after that phone call I almost got my mojo back.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And the, the town had lost its mojo-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: ... um, it lost its purpose.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And, uh, and, and after, like, you know, selling Howies to Timberland... And, and it wasn't actually Timberland's fault. It was no one's fault, it was just the way it, it went. Um, had lost my mojo. Um, and suddenly I went, "Okay, we can do this, and, uh... But this time I'll take the lessons I learned and..." um, and some of them were quite tough lessons to learn.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Um, and, and you will have heard this story here, yeah, uh-

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: ... many times. Uh, the founder, you know, does a deal with somebody and it, it doesn't end like they want it to end and, um, and, uh, that's called learning. And, it... And it's fine (laughs).

Jerry: Hm. It is fine. It is fine. Uh, I'm really curious about the lost mojo. How old were you?

David Hieatt: Well, so I would have been about 45 at the time, so-

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: ... it was sort of classic. Whoo-hoo (laughs)!

Jerry: Yeah. We're both smiling right now. Yeah-

David Hieatt: Yeah, there's just no sense in...

Jerry: ... you know, what, what is it, Dante's Inferno, "Midway through the journey of my life I found myself wholly lost in a dark wood."

David Hieatt: Mm. And, um, it, it, it's, it's a funny feeling where... Especially if you're driven and then...

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Then it's not like you've lost the drive but you just don't know why to drive. And, and that is so... It's an odd feeling. Um, when I, I, I... When we, we sold Howies to Timberland, we could have sold it to lots of people. Um, there was h- high demand for it. But, the experience was and odd one where y-... Actually what I learned was I actually really value my independence.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Um, and, uh, and, uh, and I've learned that that's more important to me than other stuff. Um, and, and so that was... You know, that was, uh, an interesting learning. But m- my sister who is also a nurse, um, you know, she said to me, "Well I think you're grieving, Dave."

Jerry: Smart sister-

David Hieatt: And I went, "Yeah." And, uh, and I... Because I wasn't sleeping, you know, I was having headaches.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Uh, uh, and she said... "Yeah, I think you're grieving and you put not just everything into that company, it was your identity and, and now it, suddenly, your b- your body's going, like, wh- I, I, okay, who am I then if I'm not a founder?" Um, and so it's um... And then you get stripped bare of that stuff and you have to, um, uh, and I think going through that process makes you much more interesting as a person. Because I think you suddenly, um, you're... The ego is not fully put to one side where it's... It's, it's really, uh, taught some really valuable lessons.

Jerry: Uh, I, I, I completely agree with you, uh, you know... I'll do that annoying thing that authors say which is preface everything with, "In my book..." um (laughs)-

David Hieatt: (Laughs).

Jerry: ... um, and, and I know you've read my book, but-

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah, I have, yeah.

Jerry: Um, and, and so in knowing that, I know that you know that I have been in a similar place. Right?

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: The dissonance and the, the, uh, discomfort with... Of having your, um, the ground taken from you. Uh, and, and by the way, I don't think it's a coincidence you, you know, we tossed off the notion of mid-life there. That's not a coincidence, right?

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry: There is that experience. And for some of us, and I suspect you're one of them, um, there's a kind of fork in the road that occurs as it relates to how will we deal with that moment of grief.

David Hieatt: Hm.

Jerry: Because I think, as I know, your sister is wise. I, I, I think you were in a grieving state, and, um, there are those who grieve, um, who succumb if you will-

David Hieatt: Yes.

Jerry: ... to a kind of malaise and a grief. And you moved in a different direction.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: Does that resonate with you?

David Hieatt: Yeah, no, it does. And I, I think that like, um, I think that's why your book really, really did hit, uh, um, a very tender nerve because I, I could feel like you've been there, too and it was.... And the way you write is incredible. I, I can tell you read poetry and, uh... Because to get to that level of honesty is quite rare in a book.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: Um, and... And, you know, getting back to your sort of question is, I think some of the questions I was asking myself is, "Why can't I just pick the easy road?" And-

Jerry: (Laughs).

David Hieatt: ... th- and I (laughs), and I was just going... C- 'cause I'm going, "Actually the easy road would have been stay..." Uh, I had this massive contract, it would have been fine. But I just couldn't and, uh, and it's, uh, and, uh, the funny thing is y- you get to 45 you see, "Oh, I've got everything sorted and all s-... I'm all done. I'm all good."

Jerry: Right.

David Hieatt: And, a- and then this, the other part of me is just going, "Man, you haven't come this far to just do that and settle and be a pawn in their little game." Um, and you know, going back to that independence, I'm going, "Actually that is actually really important." Um, and I, I-

Jerry: But I... Yeah.

David Hieatt: And-

Jerry: I didn't mean to interrupt you. Keep going.

David Hieatt: But the, uh, I did, uh, I've d= actually done this thing of like asking yourself seven whys and getting to the-

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: ... into, to the, the... Some of the truths down at the bottom.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: And, i- it can get pretty interesting. Th-... But it was in-... It was really... I didn't expect to get that answer because m- my dad was in the merchant navy and so he would work for three or six months and, you know, then he'd be back for maybe three, four months, um, and, you know, so he was, he was here, he wasn't there. And actually when he was here, it was... We had the best of times. And so, you know, we lived in a street, um, my friends would come and knock on the door to see if my dad was coming out to play 'cause we used to play cricket. Um, and so we'd have-

Jerry: Oh.

David Hieatt: ... so we had the whole street playing cricket and then... Um, and then, you know, we got a phone call or he got a phone call and, and then he had to go back.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And, and I, I always said to myself is, "I'm not gonna let anybody, you know, um, have any power over me as though they can make a phone call to me to tell me where to go." And, and, um, that was the best, you know,

Jerry: L- least of all to leave m-... To leave my son and his friends-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... to play cricket without me.

David Hieatt: Yeah. Thus, sort of the independence, the freedom is the thing that I place greater store on. And, um, and th- that's why you have to g- take the more difficult path-

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: ... 'cause you value that more clearly. And so then I s- understood why I had to take the-

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: ... more difficult path. Um-

Jerry: I, I, I, I hear you and, well first of all I wanna say thank you for the kind words about my book. Um, again, coming from you it means a lot to me.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: And, um, to know that I care for words as much as I do, and to know that that care is seen and recognized, um is, is quite moving.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: But, I wanted to circle back to something you were saying before. You were describing the loss of mojo. And you were describing this town, 400 workers, 4,000 people. Um, and you said that they lost their purpose. You also said that something was missing inside of you.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: And I get the connection to independence. Like you-

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... you know, I've often told the story of watching my father lose his job-

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: ... you know, in the middle... In midlife and really vowing f-... In effect for my own independence. My own entrepreneurial-

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: ... endeavor. I was going to call the shots in my own life even at age 10 I knew that.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: And freedom... And even leaning into taking the difficult path. I totally resonate with all of that.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: So it's like... It's like looking across the screen to a long-lost brother in that way.

David Hieatt: (Laughs).

Jerry: And I, I would wonder if... That part of the balm, part of the medicine that you imbibed after the grieving period, to begin the process of healing was purpose?

David Hieatt: Yeah. And it was and just to give you s- some context is, and this is wh- what I was... And this is what I was feeling at the time and there's nothing more worse than walking out of your company knowing that you've half-finished the job.

Jerry: Oh.

David Hieatt: And it was... And it w-... And it was infuriating to me. And I couldn't blame anybody. I wasn't angry at, you know, Timberland or whoever. I was angry at myself because, like, uh, I... You know, I, I, I should have had more confidence to go and, you know, w- w- w-... To fight for our independence. And, and therefore, because I knew, like, like, if you're gonna build something great you've gotta... You know, there's... There's a frustration with founders, but there's a beauty with the founders. Because they've got the heart. And not always the brain, but they've got the heart and, and so it's like a really pent-up frustration with myself.

I'm going, "Well, we half-finished the job, Dave." And it was really, um, yeah. And I can't dwell on it too much even now 'cause I feel like, "Whoa." Um, and, but, uh, what I said to the team this time, I go, "We're gonna finish the job." And, yeah...

Jerry: You mean after launching Hiut?

David Hieatt: Yeah. And I'm going, you know-

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: ... and I'm going, "This time we finish the job. And, uh, um, we will complete the mission." And, um, so that... That purpose, you know, was, um... It was and is the driver. And, um, if there's ever any weak moments or there's some tough days, I just think about the team and, and then I get back to a place where I'm going, "Right, okay." One of the rare gifts of an entr-... An entrepreneur is to build a team and to be part of a team. And, and it's a special gift. And it's a special time.

And if you're lucky, even if you're a serial entrepreneur, you will build one or two extraordinary teams in your life. If that. And, and when you do that it's just the biggest gift to be able to work with them. And you support each other and, and, and I call it like a... Like a zen-like team where actually you're all working for each other. And it's... It's such an extraordinary thing. And it's rare. It's so rare. And I- I mean, I'll, I'll sh- I'll share with you a sporting story and I, I don't actually know who told the story 'cause I was in a car and it was an English rugby player speaking, which is hard for a Welshman because-

Jerry: (Laughs).

David Hieatt: ... th- there's nothing... There's nothing fair in being the English rugby team. Trust me. And, um, he, he, he said, uh, um... He was being interviewed and he was asked a question and it was... "Was winning the world cup your, you know, most defining moment?"

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And he thought about it and he said, "No. The defining moment was being in the tunnel with the team, and we all said thank you to each other."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: "Because we all knew how hard we had worked to get there." And he said, "And nobody spoke, and they said thank you with a nod of the head." And he said, "That was the moment, because win or lose, we knew we had given everything."

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And I was like, I was almost crying. As a Welshman.

Jerry: (Laughs).

David Hieatt: To this English lad going on, and I'm going, uh, "I, I can't tell my friends that." (Laughs) but I just... But, uh, and, th- the... Uh, uh, and actually what he'd got to was for me, which is so, like, beautiful is the real beauty in teams and when you can get them to work well. And, uh, and when... You know, get a zen-like state, and you go... Where, you know, everyone is as important as each other, you know. It's like a bike chain. Every link is, you know, independent. You know, uh, dependent on each other and, and it's a really beautiful thing, and, and, uh, that's the bit that I'm going, ah... That's the bit of business I'm interested in. You know, in the community-

Jerry: What was the relationship? What is the relationship between that insight, which, ah, which I really resonate with and, and I think of the teams that I have been a part of and I think of my role as CEO... You've helped me understand even more why I believe so firmly in Robert Greenleaf's concept of the servant-leader.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: Because, because as, as CEOs our job is not to actually tell people what to do, but to create the conditions for that team to arise, right?

David Hieatt: [crosstalk]-

Jerry: And... What is the relationship, though, between, say, that, and that moment where your friend looked at you as you were lost, perhaps even in a dark wood-

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and, and they said, "Well he- hold on. How about that plan that you'd put aside?"

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry: But not, you know, not for you. But for the community.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry: Tell me about that relationship.

David Hieatt: Well it was... You know... You know when a friend really asks you a question that you kn-... You know he knows the answer to and you know the answer to, but nobody's asking it. And, uh, and in a way it really helped me because I knew the answer. Um...but I was... I was tr-... I was just trying to not delay it but just I, I wouldn't recognize... I didn't wanna know the answer 'cause I was still hurting.

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And, you know, that thing about healing is when you stop thinking about yourself and you start trying to help somebody else you help yourself.

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And, um, and, uh... I was, uh, when I was a copywriter and actually I was in, um, I was... In 1987, I was in New York, uh, and I worked for this, um, company called Saatchi & Saatchi and, um, and, uh, they didn't really have anything for me to do but they sent me to New York and I'm going, "Fine, um, I'll, I'll take that one for the team." Uh, but I... I went to the library in the advertising agency and I just, you know, like, some of the American writers are brilliant and I just, uh, photocopied all the ads that I loved. Um, and, like, and I spent weeks photocopying them.

And there was one ad there. It was a picture of a man in a wheelchair, um, repairing a TV. And the headline said, "This is a TV repairing a man." And I read it and I just sort of... "Ah. A, I'll never write anything as beautiful as that. And, and, and B," I'm going, "And in a way, you know, that's what Hiut is doing for me."

Jerry: How so, say more.

David Hieatt: It's gonna... It's, it's repairing me. Um, it's, it's getting my purpose back, it's, you know, it's driving me and, and I... But I appreciate now the importance of being, like, part of a team. And, and, and, uh, when I was like the younger entrepreneur it was all about me.

Jerry: Hm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And, and it, um, and now it's not all about me and, and actually now think of myself as the coach rather, and, and I, and I don't like the tag being the boss because I... You know, I, I'm going, well... I, I ask questions now and I don't tell. And, um, and... So it's been a really, you know, like... Being an entrepreneur is the best personal development program on the planet because unless you grow your business won't grow (laughs).

And, and so I'm going, "Oh, oh, okay," and it's some of the best learning I've ever had. But I- like you, some of the best learning you ever had was not nice. It was-

Jerry: Yes.

David Hieatt: ... tough.

Jerry: Well, as I... As I often say, "That's actually what growth feels like."

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: It's painful.

David Hieatt: Yeah. It, it's, it's... it, it's a real, you know, it's a tough one to take on the chin, and, um...when you see it as growth then you think about it in a different way.

Jerry: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative). I, I, I, I, I, I'll offer a build on what you're saying. Because I understand that Hiut is healing you. B- but I'll warrant, and I don't have to visit and someday I will visit, and I will walk the factory floor with you.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: And I know in my heart that you're also healing them.

David Hieatt: Yes.

Jerry: And, and I will warrant that, um, there's a part of you, you said before, "My sister is also a nurse." I know that the n-... That also was referring to the fact that your mom was a nurse as well.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: And, uh, and so I, I want y- to offer to you a reflection. You're healing. You're probably wired to not take that in.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: Okay? I can sense it already. And Claire-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... is whispering in my ear right now-

David Hieatt: (Laughs).

Jerry: ... saying, "Tell him. Make sure he knows."

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: (Laughs) you... Um, um. Because y- you know, in some ways you remind me of my friend Al Doan whose, uh, family company, The Missouri Star Quilt Company, I mean, Hamilton, Missouri, uh, almost single handedly beco-... The family did, revitalized and brought back this small little town by making it a center-place, the centerpiece of the quilting phenomenon in the United States-

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... and created j- jobs for 400 people where there were none.

David Hieatt: Mm. Nice.

Jerry: Right? What you're doing in tha experience is mutual healing.

David Hieatt: Yes.

Jerry: Right? And instead of a business being organized solely for economic prosperity, economic prosperity becomes the means for life prosperity.

David Hieatt: Yes.

Jerry: Right? So it's not... It's not a point that we skip over. It's-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... a necessary condition, right? Because as a point of pride I imagine one of your employees, one of your colleagues, one of your coworkers being able to again pay their bills when for a while they thought they may not be able to.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: And that's healing-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... as well.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah. And th- the interesting thing is we had a meeting on the Monday and when we said to the team before we, you know, stopped the factory, you know, during COVID and we said to them, you know, was anyone feeling

nervous and, and this was in the morning. And a couple of them said, "Look, we are, we're not feeling comfortable."

So we said, "Look. We'll stop today and... But you gotta understand we don't actually know how long this is gonna be and, um, but we're gonna do our best to, um, look after everybody." Um, until the hardest thing was, and not being able to, like, hug each other to say goodbye. It was just... It was just, like, nobody could hug each other to say goodbye, and, um, and, uh... That's the hardest thing.

And, uh, I, I wrote about it in the email to the telecustomers and I was literally crying when I was writing it. 'Cause, um, I'm still... You know, but you do this where you're writing things and you just kind of...You choke up.

Jerry: Oh, absolutely.

David Hieatt: And, um, and, uh, and, and people say, "Oh, God I really felt that email." I'm going, "So did I." (Laughs) um, you know-

Jerry: Well, I, I, I'll speak on behalf because I'm a customer.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: Right? I've got an order in for a third pair of jeans.

David Hieatt: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: Which is okay if it's waiting.

David Hieatt: (Laughs).

Jerry: I felt your tears.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: I felt your heart. I felt your care and concern.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: I didn't know the specifics, the heartbreaking specific of not being able to walk across a room and-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... hug a Welshman.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry: But, but I could feel-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... that, that, you know, in this... And, and w-, and we'll, we'll give a little context. So here we are, really early May, I guess, talking in this experience of COVID, this worldwide global experience. And so here's this gorgeous expression of healing team coming together that now has to hit the pause button for who knows how long?

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: And you make this announcement and you can no longer guarantee when they'll come back.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: You okay?

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: You're feeling it right now, aren't you.

David Hieatt: Yeah, it's, um... You know, you spend a lot of time with people and, um, and, you know, work is work, and, uh, work is also...It's your community. And, and you know, yes, you don't see them on the weekend, but you see them all week and, you know, they're... They're your second family (laughs)-

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: ... and, and... But you spend more time with your second family than your first family.

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And, um, and, you know, also when you start something and... You know what it's like when you start on something. There's no guarantees. You are, um, you go through the ebbs and you go through the flows, and, and, and then you back through the ebbs and, you know, the flows and so you know, you are resilient and you've been through things. And, and because you've been through things together is, y- you know, you, the bond is therefore tighter and stronger.

Um, and, and yes, and all of a sudden, like, the good times come and then all of a sudden it's a pause. And, and you fought so, like, crazy hard to get to the good times and then pause. And... Um, and, you know, that's for the team, but you know, obviously the greater context is there's an awful lot of people suffering out there right now and, um, and, um, this isn't a very fair virus doing it. It attacks the weak and, uh, um, and it, it's you know, there's... And I'm sure y- y- y- you, you know, because I think your, your antenna is wired to feel it.

It's... There's a lot of, you know, hurt and pain and it's, um, and it is like... The world has never seen such a pause. Um, and, and we're all watching it on, in a way, helpless. um, and that's the hardest thing is where, what can you do? Um-

Jerry: Right.

David Hieatt: ... and that's-

Jerry: Well, let me offer something with regard to that. You're, you're right. I am wired to feel that pain. Um, but, um, I will share this. I am painfully optimistic.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: I am painfully... Painful in the sense that I am feeling that-

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: ... as I often say, uh, h-... How... Never in my life before have I been able to use the phrase, all of humanity, and mean it.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? And now we get to use that phrase. Not in some hyperbole or metaphorical ways, but in actual, real ways. You know? M-, uh, uh, I was saying to you before that we need each other in ways that we never needed each other... We never knew that we need... Needed each other.

David Hieatt: Yeah, right, yeah.

Jerry: I need you to wear a mask. You need me to wear a mask.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: You're in Cardigan. I'm in Boulder, Colorado. And yet, I, I need you to do something physically with your life-

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: ... so that I can stay safe, so that my children who are in New York can stay safe.

David Hieatt: Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry: So that your Claire can stay safe.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: So that we together can get through this. Right? And yet there's something powerfully beautiful-

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... about that experience.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: And, and, and, uh, I know that we have all been transformed-

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: ... by this experience. And the optimism is: For God's sake maybe now we will understand what it means to put people ahead of profits.

David Hieatt: Y- yes.

Jerry: Right?

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Maybe now we will no longer debate the trade-off between the climate and profit.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: There is no debate.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: Not when humanity is at stake.

David Hieatt: Mm. Yeah.

Jerry: So I take comfort and it gives me a sense of agency-

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... when I can step into that optimism and say, "Uh, my shoulder is to the wheel. I am working day by day, and the work that I know how to do, which is to reach out across the screen, or to, to talk to someone on the phone until I can see them again in person and I can be a source of comfort and guidance and live into the truth of all that I have learned before."

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: So I say that in response to the feeling of helplessness.

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: Dave, you are not helpless.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: You just feel helpless.

David Hieatt: What you said just there was really powerful, and, [00:44:30] and I, and I, I share that optimism as well, and I think, um, we've had to really think many things and we've had t- to have the time to rethink them, that you run a business or you don't run a business. And it's-

Jerry: Right.

David Hieatt: ... um, and it's a very... It's a very stark reminder of how much w-, um, we need to look after each other.

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And our wh-... And there's m-... Always many communities. There's your, your town, your, your people, your... Yeah.

Jerry: (Laughs).

David Hieatt: That, that thing of business really used to be about, um, looking after your community.

Jerry: Hm.

David Hieatt: And somewhere along the way they forgot. And, and, and, and the planet is part of the community (laughs). Um, and, and that silent shareholder, you know, we suddenly forget about. Um, and then this has been that reminder. And, um, and,

and if we don't use that reminder to change things then, you know, you know, we're fools doing-

Jerry: And, and, and it will be a tragedy if we do.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: I wanna update your story a little bit. I know from what you've shared already with me that actually the factory is still doing some work. [00:46:00] Is that right?

David Hieatt: Yeah, we're, um... I mean, and, and this is really down to Claire and the team. They've, um, they're making scrubs for the NHS 'cause there's a big shortage of, um, you know, uniforms to, um... And so, um, we've got fabric, you know, the, some of the grandmasters have volunteered their time. We're buying the fabric and we're... Then we're giving the, um, the scrubs to the NHS for free. Um, and, um, you know... And we're not making many but we're doing something. And, um, uh, and it... And right now it, it does feel (laughs) very good to do something.

Um, and, you know, and the grandmasters-

David Hieatt: ... want to help and, you know, and, and you know, before we, we, we started this, I mean, we were talking about, you know... My mom who was a nurse-

Jerry: Right.

David Hieatt: She was speaking to Claire today and saying how proud she was. And, um, and she's, you know, she wants to... And she's not a rich woman by any means. She's going, "Can I give some money to pay for some material?"

Jerry: (Laughs).

David Hieatt: And, um, and, uh, and she's going, you know, "I, I've never been so proud." And, and she spent her entire life as a nurse. So, you know, she knows what it's like, you know, um, so... I, I think that's... That, that suddenly reminds me I'm gonna... Ah. This. Even if you do a little bit, it's a good bit. The one thing I've learned from this is seeing the town trying to help each other.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And they, and they, and they... It's like those small... Uh, I can help you with this, I can help you with this. And, and, uh, it's a real sense of coming together.

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And, and, and trying to help each other and going, "Oh, um, are you okay? Is there anything I can do to help?" And that, that, that, that hasn't... That hasn't been always there. Even in a small-

Jerry: No, I, I [crosstalk]-

David Hieatt: ... friendly town.

Jerry: I was so moved by your statement, you know, that, uh, a- about business forgot its way.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: And, and how business has forgot that we're supposed to actually... We're organized for the commonwealth.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: You know, I mean, what difference-

David Hieatt: Right.

Jerry: ... is there between a factory and a shared sheep pasture?

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: Where everybody can raise their sheep together and that the, uh, uh, the pasture was taken care of.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: Right?

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah.

Jerry: And, you know, the commons. The-

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: ... the sense that we're in this together. The land, um, and, and, and the notion, as you put it, that the Earth is, is invisible... Or perhaps not quite visible consciously, to the eye, shareholder.

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. And it is a return to simple and it's a return to some values that actually we, w- were incredibly important to us. And then, I

don't know what happened. Maybe we just got busy and forgot actually the things that we really cared about. And that sense of, like, disquiet is, is really the lack of fulfillment from being busy. Um, and actually, I think one of the things that, uh, will oddly come out of this is, like, it'll be okay for founders to say, "Yeah, I'm a slow growth company."

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And then, and, and you go, "Oh, good for you."

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: Because it was always the celebration of the fast company. And, and you know, like, there's cues in nature, isn't there? Like the, the, the tree that is the strongest wood is the slowest growth. And-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: ... um, and, and, and that's why pine is fast growth and, and it's not as strong as oak. And, um, and nature has all these incredible answers, and, and the, the tree, you know... A tree's really vulnerable when it's in full leaf to a, uh, a summer storm, but it can survive the winter storm. Uh, because it hasn't got no leaves on. (Laughs) and, so there's, there's all incredible answers around us. We, we got, you know, we started believing that we were cleverer than anything else.

Jerry: No. Um, I, I, couldn't agree more, and I'm reminded in our... In, in your, um, observations, by your observations, of a conversation I had with, uh, my dear friend Parker Palmer. And, I, I, I don't, uh, know that I'll ever forget this. We were, we were riffing as we often did for a podcast on the fact that, that as I am now slip, uh, sliding into elderhood and-

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: ... God bless him, he's 80 so he's a little bit further along than I am-

David Hieatt: (Laughs).

Jerry: ... in elderhood, how we're both approached by people trying to answer the question, uh, "What is the purpose of life? What is the purpose of my life?" And, um, this whole conversation I've been thinking about what we concluded at that point which was that that's actually not the question. The question is how have I been kind?

David Hieatt: Yes.

Jerry: And how have I taken care... And so I'll expand upon that. You know, for me the thing that seemed to have been missing for you was the purpose derived from taking care of others.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: Or the, or, or the, or the healing derived from the purpose being to take care.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: To create a business whose purpose, whose business purpose was to put... Was to enable the employees to put food on the table.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: Send their children to school.

David Hieatt: Yeah.

Jerry: Repair a leak in the roof.

David Hieatt: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry: Right? Pay your doctor's bill.

David Hieatt: Mm.

Jerry: T= t- to, to, to be kind to one another.

David Hieatt: Yes. And it's... You know, I think you've really hit the... Or got to the truth there because when you're helping each other and, and you know, when it is a, a group of people, sometimes some people are flourishing and some people are hurting. And, and when this happened at the factory and we've helped people, I've got more out of that than anything I've done in business.

Jerry: Great.

David Hieatt: And, and you do it quietly. Nobody really knows. Uh, you're helping people and they know. Um, and they won't talk about it anyway. Um, but when you... And you see somebody who is really down in the dumps, you know, quite a significant way come out of that because you've given them just a... Basically you had said that you care.

Jerry: Yeah.

David Hieatt: And, and it's not about anything other than even sometimes just spending a half an hour and that, having a conversation. And, um, and I think we, we have lost our way in our thing of, we celebrate founders for growth but not for, for kindness. And, um, and, and I've refocused my, like, business heroes in a very different way now. Um, and, you know, like when people look after their team, I think very highly of them. And, um, you know, th- th- they're, 'cause there are humans amongst us. And, um, and I think, um, and you... Having kindness for another human being is a beautiful thing.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

David Hieatt: And, and i think you know, that should be one of the, the, the reasons to run a business. To look after your people and to grow your people. Um, and, um, and t- to give them that confidence about, you know... And th- the one th- one sound I keep hearing and I've n-... And I didn't hear the sound, is when the g- factory gates closed. I can hear the sound even though I wasn't there. It was the clunk of the factory gates, when they closed the gates for the last time. But to give people hope again is significant, doing, and e- and that thing of going, and, um, and you know, when we lost our way we knew how miserable that felt.

And, and so... And then dpart of that thing is going, well, actually building this incredible melting p- pot of people and we're all getting, um, we're all happy with each other. And there's nothing better than helping each... Each other. Doing that, that feeling, "How was your day?" "It was really good. You know, it was actually really good. It was one of the best days I've ever had." "Oh, why?" "Oh, well, this happened and this happened."

And, and, and they're, they're classed as small things and, and yet what we're discovering is actually those small little bits of kindness are actually the big things. And, and, uh, it's... It's a beautiful thing, actually.

Jerry: It is indeed. I, I'll start to wrap us now by making this observation that, you know, I often speak about how better humans make better leaders. So I want you to know, Dave...

Jerry: I see your leadership through your humanity. I see the good man that you are.

David Hieatt: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: And I deeply appreciate it from all the way here in Boulder, Colorado. I see you.

David Hieatt: Thank you.

Jerry: ... let the people in Cardigan know that [00:57:00] we see them.

Jerry: Thank you so much for coming on the show. Um, it is one of the most uplifting conversations I've had of late, and I really appreciate that.

David Hieatt: Thank you, sir.