

Jerry Colonna:

Well, hello. You know, one of the downsides of recording a podcast is that the audience doesn't get to hear the banter that begins before we hit record. And I will say that this banter that we just went through was among my most favorites. So thank you for joining. And you know, part of that tradition is I let folks identify themselves and introduce themselves because it just helps people identify voices and sort of lands people. So here we are. I am with three folks who together are with a company called Brood, which we will explain in a second.

But in the meantime, perhaps starting on my left, Lizzy, I'm gonna take a moment to introduce yourself and then we'll just turn it to your partners in crime.

Lizzy:

My name is Lizzie Karp. My pronouns are she and her. I am a parent and the co-founder of Brood. I'm also a DJ and really excited to be here.

Gill:

I'm Gill, pronouns are she her. I'm also a parent. I like to say a parent to a fur baby and a skin baby. And I am the Chief Creative Officer.

Emma:

I'm Emma, my pronouns are they and them. I'm the chief of care at Brood. I'm also a full spectrum doula, which means I support families through loss, conception, pregnancy, birth, and the first year postpartum. I like to also call myself the doula wrangler. And I've got a big hodgepodge community of care and family that include these guys and a few other kids and dogs and more.

Gill:

And we're all doula dealers. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Hmm. Doula dealers, okay, we're gonna have to then take a moment to explain what Brood is and why you're all so fixated on doulas, and what a doula is. I mean, I know, but what a duelist is. So I'll toss that out to you all and then we'll sort of dive in. Tell us what Brood is.

Gill:

Brood is a, we like to call it a modern care agency. And mostly we focus on supporting pregnant people through birth and postpartum. And we say that we are the future of family care.

Emma:

And doulas are care workers that again, support families through many journeys in life, we're seeing a rise in death doulas and gender-affirming surgery doulas, but at this point we're focusing on birth and postpartum and full spectrum doulas, which means we support families with education, knowledge, emotional support, physical support, hands-on support, logistical

support, health concierge support, it's an all around support person, and really, like my little shtick is.

It's like if you had an additional partner that was also a walking birth and postpartum book that had zero bias or judgment and was just here to holistically support everyone in the family unit.

Gill:

...who is not your mother or mother-in-law?

Jerry Colonna

Right. And the baggage they're in. Right. And, you know, in our little bantering before when we were getting all set up, one of the things I said to you all was that not only did the presenting agenda, which is our coaching terms for, hey, what would you like to talk about, strike us, but the work that you do really spoke to me and you know among the many ways that I identify, I identify quite loudly as a papa, as a father and my three children are Sam 33, Emma 30, and Michael 26 and of all the things that matter to me in the world, the thing that I have done the most or the thing that I have done that has given me the most pride is being a papa to three extraordinary humans. And see, now I'm going to start to cry.

And I know what y'all do. And I have, you know, their mom and I had to experience challenging births all three of us, the children as well, obviously. It is a gift to human beings to do what you do. So thank you for doing that.

Gill:

Thanks, Jerry. You're welcome.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, yeah. So what brings you here? What should we talk about?

Lizzy:

Well, I hope you know already, we're pretty unique and we'll tell you more about how we started but we're a, we're a threesome of founders and we are deeply integrated not only in the work of Brood. Brood launched in 2022 in spring, like it's, it's a fairly young startup, but we are close, close co-founders, dear friends, we really share a family structure. So our founder journey is unique and we're at the exciting and terrifying early days of launching something that means so much to us. But how the fuck are we gonna do this? Our vision is to bring family care. We're based in Vancouver. It's to bring it all across Canada and into the States and beyond. And we're so committed to that, but these early, or pass out like, you know, first date feeling, that exciting launch. The honeymoon period. And we know we're onto something good, but we're like, oh, well, okay, we just need to, yeah, we're locked in, but these early phases are, yeah, they're tough at times. It's a little untangling. Untangling? I don't know.

Gill:

And then retangling. Yeah.

Emma:

I mean, it's so interesting to see the journey of a family through conception to the first year and years into parenthood, and then to see that reflected in the journey of brood and of startups. It's so fascinating, all the parallels. And I feel like we're in the toddler years. I mean, I hate the term terrible twos because I just think that that's total bullshit. And so rude to toddlers.

Gill:

Terrific twos.

Emma:

Yeah, like we're in those terrific twos. Like we are so knee deep in them.

Like I have Janet Lansbury open and we're flipping the page and referencing different chapters of how we can keep going. But it's been, yeah, it's so interesting. Like the adrenaline of like the first year postpartum has definitely worn off. And now we're like, okay, how do we do this? How do we do this in a sustainable way? How do we make this work?

Gill:

And take the advice that we give to the families and parents for ourselves, which is, if you're in startup land, feels impossible, but really. Yeah, leaning on those sort of different crossovers between the work that we're doing for families and the work that we need to do for ourselves.

Jerry Colonna:

Lizzy, you said something that I want to follow up on. You said we have a family structure. What do you mean by that?

Lizzy:

Why don't we start from the beginning? Let's start from the beginning. That explains it really more. Our origin story is where our family story starts.

Jerry Colonna:

Sure. Which is what Marvel has taught us every superhero we need to understand is what is the origin story, right?

Lizzy:

I've never seen one. We've never seen one. Yeah, we've never seen a Marvel, but yes. Yes, sure. We're great at storytelling.

Gill:

So take us to April 2020. Yes, April 2020. I think we all remember that time or are trying to forget. I gave birth to my first and only child.

Jerry Colonna:  
Pandemic land.

Gill:

The second week of lockdown in Vancouver, BC, which was just behind some other places in Washington, but in Vancouver and Canada, second week of lockdown, I gave birth to Sunny, my kiddo, and nobody could come help us. I had a cesarean section, and instead of staying in the hospital for a few days, I got out of there within 36 hours. I was scared to die in the hospital.

But what I didn't have when we came home was support from anyone, family, friends. Nobody could come over. It was a lot of FaceTime. So like a really terrifying moment in the first part of my parenting career. And I had already hired Emma as my doula on the suggestion slash like, it wasn't even a suggestion. My friends were like, you have to hire this person. I didn't know what a doula was at that time, just like many people don't. And we're trying to change that, but.

I hired Emma and still couldn't have Emma come either. But by the second week, it was more of a life-or-death scenario with postpartum mental health issues. I wasn't able to feed Sunny other than with an SNS system, which is a tube. So I was like, you know what? I think it's worth us just bringing Emma in. So Emma was the first person in Sunny's life outside of myself and my husband. And I'm gonna save my life. So that's like the very first thing that happens. And I'm, yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Okay. Yeah, so Gill, I'm going to ask us to slow down, because we just hit what I often refer to as a speed bump. And speed bumps are those moments where something really important has been said, and that there's something dishonoring and not slowing down, and acknowledging what that moment was.

Gill:

Okay, Jerry.

Jerry Colonna:

So, and you're not doing something wrong. We are all, no, we're all socialized to hit those speed bumps as quickly as we can. And then we say, why did we bottom out the car? So Emma came into your life, came into Sonny's life in a way that in a time of incredible pain and suffering in the world and terrible fear and there's – I'm imagining your isolation and this magical being showed up and if I heard you right saved your life saved Sonny's life.

Gill:

Yep. Just a small, just a small thing. Pretty amazing.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. So that's an important moment. I know that we want to talk about more and we want to

hear more of the origin story but in our process of becoming human beings and because I think we're always in that process, it's really, really important to remember these moments. They are a source of infinite strength and understanding and compassion.

Okay, so there we are. It's April 2020. Sonny's been born. Emma has come in. This is the first time you've come to know each other, is that correct?

Gill:

Yeah, we've had a few path crossings before, but when you can't see anybody else, you become fast friends when they are the only one to be there. So a very special bond was formed. And I don't think without that, any of the rest of this bruised story for us as a threesome would have happened. And I was exposed to the life-saving care of a doula. And I don't, although the pandemic had a lot to do and the isolation has a lot to do with the intensity at which I experienced it. Then watching Lizzy become a parent and use Emma as a doula in a little bit of a less pandemic intensity nine months later.

Lizzy:

I mean...

Gill: Still isolated. No vaccines. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

No vaccines.

Lizzy:

The shock, like the shock was, it wasn't a new thing to navigate, but the, we were still playing the same game. The stressors were the same. I found out I was pregnant the weekend George Floyd was murdered.

Jerry Colonna:

God rest his soul.

Lizzy:

Yeah, and a strange time to imagine bringing someone, it's strange time to learn about being existing inside of you. Just weeks after watching, you become a parent, full of joy and terrifying. We've also been best friends for over a decade. So we have that connection. Found out I was pregnant and knew from early days, okay, well, there's this amazing doula in our community. Emma will have that support, which we would need because the borders were closed. My family's in the States. My partner Pat's family is in Alberta. So we knew the elements we were dealing with. We were going to be isolated. Friends were not going to be able to come into our home. And we were able to work together earlier, like throughout the tail end of...my pregnancy, but strange as an engaged extroverted person, there's so many people who've never seen me pregnant. We had a baby shower on Zoom. Many of those milestones of that life transition were

different, but the, but the care was there.

Yeah, Emma was with me for a day long birth and labor. I feel incredibly blessed to say that I walked away from that. I was not traumatized by experience and was able to, but like by birth itself, the pandemic is a different story. But we had you, and we had this system. We had this care system and this trust that was built. And vice versa, and you can tell a little bit more about your experience, but like we also held you during that time of immense isolation and work.

Jerry Colonna:

Lizzy also held Emma, right?

Gill:

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Gill too. Yeah, we were in a we became a bubble. Yeah, us and our families, the three of us and our families. Yeah. For that whole year and a half. Yeah, first year and a half. Yeah. It continued.

Emma:

Yeah. I...the landscape in which I found these two was I'd been a care worker for a good handful of years, been dueling families. I come from an entrepreneurial background. So it was really interesting for me to kind of understand why doulas have a life cycle of five years or less and then they burn out and never come back to it. I was really kind of pulling that apart in my own mind. I was building my own family structure. I threw the recommendation of someone in my family structure that I supported through her birth and postpartum with twins pre-pandemic she had suggested to Gill, that was the strong arm that Gill was mentioning, who was like, you're just actually gonna do this. Yeah, you must. You must, it's happening. We've crowdfunded, it's happening.

So I came into knowing Gill through a really intimate relationship in my life. And so there was this kind of really strong undercurrent of trust. And I was picking my families and clients really carefully at that point. And I was doing one postpartum family at a time. And that's kind of the landscape in which I walked into Gill's life. And you can kind of start to get a bite-size of an understanding of the honor it is to be able to serve families through pregnancy and postpartum through the impact that it had on Gill and Lizzie. And as they've mentioned, through supporting them, through their acute care crises and just parenting journeys, they held me and we decided to do Brood and through the growth and evolution of Brood. And my work as a care worker, my work in this space has been so deeply tied to who I am as a person and my identity and how I show up in the world.

And so it greatly changed when they came into the sphere of it. It greatly changed my family structure and they douled me through it and they still do. We still have all learned the language of how to care for each other, what help looks like now, you know, it went from me as the care worker to them as the care receivers to a total mashup of that. And, you know, I've had many life challenges and growths that have occurred through that time and they have like acutely

reflected back my care to me and the lessons that I need to learn in understanding and receiving and asking for help.

Gill:

The thing that we all shared because of, in spite of, and like completely inspired by our connection in that time was we want as many people to have this as possible. Like, why doesn't everybody know about this? Why doesn't everybody have this? And can we be the people to help make that happen?

Emma:

And who's the care worker? How do we highlight the care worker? A well-supported, well-nurtured care worker, that bleeds over into their work with families.

Jerry Colonna:

Maybe making a dent in that problem of burnout and turnover in the care worker space. So a lot of love here.

Emma:

Just a smidge.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, and a lot of shared values, and possibly even shared visioning how to bring forth in the world. So what's the problem?

Gill:

Well, we were talking about it yesterday.

Lizzy: We've had great conversations about it.

Gill:

Yeah, we always. There's lots of ebbs and flowing. What would be the top of the tops?

Emma:

You go for it. I think that the, it's like this molten core of who we are is this love and this shared love and each other's children and our larger community. And then we stack things on top of that. And then it's like, ooh, the complexities of who we are as humans and how that interacts with our work is an interesting thing to untangle.

Gill:

So what I'm hearing you say is the crossover of the work life.

Emma:

Yeah. And you know, like, as we, me and Lizzy, we're just talking about this. As we, like, forge a

different path forward, you know, like, a new family structure, a new way of doing business, a new way of, like, caring for care workers and families, like, that's so much forging of new paths. And with that comes unloading baggage and rewriting things. And that's so much hard work and we have to do that in our own different ways, which then bumps into so many things. And so I feel like that's an everyday element.

Jerry Colonna:

Lizzy, you look like you're processing something.

Gill:

This is Lizzie's amazing. We call Lizzie the magic eight ball. She turns things over in her hand, over and over and over. So often, Gemma and I, Emma and I, will word vomit at Lizzie. And then Lizzy distills it and asks us questions back. So could you do that right now for us, Lizzie?

Lizzy:

Which I learned from you. Thank you, mentor. I'm just doing my Jerry impression. And our coach, Linda. Shout out to Linda. Yes. Like this is, we're learning by doing. So we have this really unique special origin story. And then you have the business model that comes out of this, right? Where we're like, okay, so you're running this agency. What if we expand this? We're going to leave our corporate jobs, Gill and I, and we're going all in on this. We've never really run a startup.

Jerry Colonna:

Mmm, anxiety goes up. Keep going. Mm-hmm.

Lizzy:

Yeah, these are the real things. These are the real things. Oh, we do have some startup experience. We've all run our own things, but the way that we're doing this, we have amazing mentors who believe in us, but we are, oh, we're actually running a growth startup. We are fundraising. We did a friends and family round. We are pitching people. We are code-switching, because the way that we talk and work with you care work, and within this new fundraising lens, we're dealing with families.

Families are really fucked up right now. The work itself, the demands of the work are really intense and the skills, skillsets that we have, that we bring, and then the demands of the kids that we so lovingly spoke about, like they still exist, they're three and two and a half. So the demands are like financially challenging, emotionally challenging, logistically challenging. And then because we're so enmeshed in each other's lives, I've used a metaphor is that we spill over each other. We're allowed to, or we have the habit of spilling the anxiety over each other because we're all drowning, or one of us will be drowning at once.

And that's the unique nature. That's the challenge. That's the version of the challenge.



Jerry Colonna:

You know, I heard a few things there that I want to reflect back. And the first thing I want to just identify and lift up is that there are some things that I'm hearing that are familiar and some things that I think might be more of a unique expression of Brood and your relationship.

And so while you're not the first folks who are experiencing the need to code switch, it has its implications for you. So just take 30 seconds and explain, Lizzy, how code-switching shows up for you all.

Lizzy (26:17.81)

If you understand care work because you're a parent or you're passionate about the care crisis and you see the business opportunity, people that we're talking to who get it, really get it. They're passionate, they're curious, and they're really excited about what we're doing. If you are outside of that, there's a lot of education for us to do, and there are different ways to do that. Whether it's validating the needs of parents, whether it's validating the work of care workers and the doula's scope of care. That takes a lot of energy. It's not impossible. We're peers with lots of people doing this work.

So it's really about working on the business and then trying to fundraise for more resources to build what we wanna build as fast as we wanna build that. So whether we're working with each other, helping families, working with care workers, educating families, or we're going out and we're specifically fundraising and we're trying to validate the work that we're doing in this larger I don't know, market sense. That's a lot of the times where I notice that code-switching energy.

Gill:

Where we're moving from like corporate speak to like a heartfelt business model. We're talking to we're talking about like numbers and growth models and talking to. People that don't look like us who are really intense and we need to be in that space and we also need to be in a space where we're like deeply loving and caring for each other and the families that are in our community. So like that's something we experienced and I think Emma experiences an entirely different kind of code switching too if you want to speak to that.

Emma:

I mean there's two versions. The first one is yeah absolutely as a care worker moving into like the corporate world in any sense of it. I had no lived experience. I had no understanding of what that was like.

And so there's been a huge learning and unlearning and rewriting and also uplifting of like, okay, you do know some things. It's been really interesting kind of that journey and that path and what that's looked like. And then I think as a queer and trans person, there's a lot of code-switching in terms of the lessons I know through my lived experiences in these communities and...you know, in the care work I do, in the family structures I do, in like the pursuit of understanding my identity and supporting other families and feeling safe and secure and seen in our and everything we

do. That's a really interesting code switch that has to happen within this team that like sees me and nurtures me and has held me through so many transitions that I've had internally. To then move into other rooms where

there is no understanding or potentially even desire to do that because it's just, it's not the place, it's not the time, whatever. That's been a really interesting code switch that I've had to learn how to do and things I've had to learn to, how do I uplift myself, how do I lean onto Lizzy and Gill? And it's also, I think, speaking for you here, it's a learning for you too as well on how you guys have done that in such different ways for me as time has progressed in the ways that you've essentially done like preliminary code-switching for me or preparing other folks, which has been I think I wish everyone was able to experience that because it's incredible.

Jerry Colonna:

So I really appreciate the extra information about the experience that you're having. And what I'm hearing is that there is, and I really like the way you described it. I'm thinking more about the way you described it, Emma, this notion of it operating on multiple levels. And there is one level that is, I would say, more common, which is in language I might use, would be playing the part of the growth-oriented entrepreneur who's fixated on return on investment. And really, there is a conflict that can arise when it's almost like inside you're saying, just give me the money so that I can do the work. And the way I often suggest that conflict can be resolved. And forgive me if you've heard me use this metaphor before, but it's the importance of balancing content and container. See, what can happen when we step into that place is we can feel that those impulses are in opposition to each other. Oh, today I put on my corporate speak. Today I put on my suit of armor that is designed to convince the other person I'm worthy in some capacity.

And I have found it useful to realize that part of our task in building a business is actually to balance content and container. Now, what do I mean by that? The container is how you do this business. It's the fiscal expression of the business. It is the fact that if you do this business correctly, then a care worker will be able to pay their bills. Right? I mean, that's the importance of the container. And what's really important to recall and to always hold on to this because it can give you some sustenance is that a container that lacks content is meaningless.

But content that lacks a container is useless. And so the work is actually, and this is where I want to normalize it a little bit and familiarize it, the work is to always be balancing those things, to not give up content, right? You're not going to transform the business into a, you know, fentanyl delivery service, right?

Because you're still, you're never going to give up the essence of why you exist, which goes back to the origin story. Okay. And so the goal, fundraising goal is to enable the delivery of content. The P&L report, the profit and loss statement that you produce is in service to just as the work that you do as executives, which may feel a little bit odd to call yourself those words, is really in service too. This is servant leadership in that regard/

And I just, I do want to recognize the other half of this, what we've identified as a version of code-switching. And just speaking from my heart, I can imagine, and this may stem from identifying as a woman, it may stem from identifying as a trans person. However, it stems from. There is an annihilation of self that feels like it's happening. I'm imagining that to be true. Does that resonate at all?

Emma:

Oh, totally. Yeah.

Gill:

And like, how do you it's a constantly like, lifting up and standing up for each other and oneself in that feeling.

Emma:

I mean, even the analogy we're using about putting on this shield to you know, you're worth I'm like, it's like that. But every second of every day, in every single thing you do, which is why it's so tiresome. And why having that, some of that lifted and shared with other people is, it means so much because it's, I think that that's why queer and trans people get worn down so easily is because it's like, that is such a huge weight to carry.

Jerry Colonna:

Right. You know, I've got a book called *Reunion, Leadership and the Longing to Belong*. And in that book, what I attempt to do is to try to make the most of the time is to speak to people who identify as I do. White, cis, straight, male, power and privilege thrust upon me in a ways that I don't even recognize and I don't even feel. And to understand that there is a longing to belong that's implicit in each of us. And I think that part of the work that you're doing is about supporting families in a particular moment which is about creating belonging. And to, without taking away and saying I know the experience because I don't, I can be adjacent enough to the experience to use my empathetic imagination to slow down for that speed bump and honor it.

And this is one of the manifestations of the struggle of being this startup. It's only one that makes this particular startup hard and worthwhile, because that's the crazy fucking thing, is that the worthwhile is always hard.

Emma:

Agreed.

Jerry Colonna:

Because the forces of mendacity are relentless and don't stop. We haven't talked about the lack of good maternal health care. Right? We haven't even mentioned, I mean, which is a subset of the lack of care, which is a subset of patriarchy and supremacy, which is right. I mean, an extractive capitalism that is, you know, I mean, we haven't even talked about the consequences.

I mean, one of my friends is the head of neurosurgery at a major New York hospital, and we haven't talked about the moral wounding that our healthcare workers in the system experience every single day when they're forced to make these kinds of choices where they deny proper health care so that they can maintain a job. Right? So y'all are in the stew.

I mean, you know, when we talk about the unique experiences here, and I think that this is important because we haven't really begun to talk about balancing the closeness, the entanglements, the relationship, but what draws you together is...I'm going to make a Buddhist reference. Okay? So in Buddhism, you're probably familiar with what a Bodhisattva is, but for the sake of the audience a Bodhisattva...is a being who has the ability to escape this mortal world of samsara, an endless cycle of pain and suffering, and chooses not to escape, chooses to take rebirth to work towards the end of suffering so that all beings are released or until all beings are released from suffering. So this is Brood doing business as DBA Bodhisattva Inc.

Gill:  
Oh God.

Jerry Colonna:  
And so tell me again why you're struggling.

Gill:  
Yeah, you know what, it's so funny when you're speaking through that. I mean, remembering why we do it is, as Emma said I think earlier, maybe it was yesterday, like the reason is not hard to remember. Or not hard to call on, and not hard to pull up when we're struggling or in conflict. It's like how do we make it not easier for ourselves, although some ease would be very nice and money. Would be great. We're fundraising. FYI, anybody is how do we make it sustainable for ourselves so that we can keep doing it? Because we are going to have conflict. We're going to spill over each other. Honestly, that's never going to stop. And I think we like we want to keep that going. But how do we straddle those? Big things like how do we straddle you know, being emotional and being within this giant healthcare crisis and just continuing to do it every day more sustainably.

Jerry Colonna:  
Well, you know, and we often work with pairs of co-founders. And they are shocked when we talk about the relationship in language that sounds like discussing romantic relationships. But...

Gill:  
Oh, we love that. We love it. We love it. Oh, we're married. Yeah, we're triplet. We're triad. We're a threesome.

Jerry Colonna:  
Right. And we can joke about that. But the challenge is there's actually more clarity about boundary structures in traditional family and relational descriptions than there are in co-founder

relationships. Because navigating this space of what do I share, what do I not share is hard.

The rules of the road aren't clear. And everything, I mean, the reason I spend so much time talking about the experience that you're having from the importance of the work to the actual experience that you're having is that is like pouring gasoline on the fire of the startup. Meaning the more important the work, the more the intensity of the fire.

Jerry Colonna:

Because what tends to run is when we're in conflict, right? It goes, don't you realize that I'm trying to save lives? Right, now even if we don't give voice to that, that's the feeling. Or don't you realize that I'm fighting for my own life? Don't you realize that I'm fighting systemic oppression? Don't you realize that I'm fighting? And so what ends up happening is the whole intensity levels up from what many startups are, which is, don't you realize that I'm trying to save my parents from devastation and that's why I'm doing my startup right. It's like all of that stuff leveled up. Carl Jung said, "The closer to the light you get, the deeper the shadow."

And I don't feel a lot of shadow work going on here. But what I think may be going on is that because the importance is so intense, the little subroutines that run inside of you that tell you this is about existential threat are always running on high. Does that resonate at all?

Lizzy:

Yeah. Absolutely. I was thinking about the like being at the edge. So we individually and to collectively we are the learning curve is steep. When you said P&L, I was like, I know what that is now, but I didn't know six months ago. And I'm in charge of our books right now. So...

Jerry Colonna:

Right, right. So hold on, Lizzie. What does that feel? What did that feel like if I had said P&L statement three months ago? What did that feel like to you?

Lizzy:

Oh, the imposter syndrome, the... I don't even like using that term. It's the...

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah.

Lizzy:

...feeling underwater, like we have this container. We're learning so much about it so quickly, under-resourced, and that's why in our own ways too, like I really think we're often at the edge. I try to not use imposter syndrome because I know we can figure it out, and we did, and now we know.

Jerry Colonna:

Right, right, right. But it's this edge of insecurity. In coaching terminology, we'd say conscious of

our incompetence. Like we just feel it. Oh, we're at that moment. It's like, oh, we didn't incorporate in this province that we're operating business. What? Who knew that we're supposed to pay taxes there? Right? I mean, like the everyday structure and we can compound that experience if we start to apply some shame.

Emma:

Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah, throw a little guilt in there.

Gill:

Oh, a dash of you each of those.

Lizzy:

Yeah, we've all got some generation on guilt plus being feminized people we take things purse like Yeah, it's a Good rodeo fire. So what's the metaphor now?

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, yeah. So what about letting your co-founders down, that feeling? Anybody have that one?

Lizzy:

Yeah, it's probably the worst.

Gill:

But I will say what's OK. I don't know how many triad co-founder groups you've talked to. What is amazing about it in these edge on fire moments, which are daily, if not multiple times a day, we find ourselves like the triangle is constantly moving on its axis because two people are usually at the base uplifting another. Hopefully, it's not top-down, although that happens too, right? Somebody feels left out or not in the loop. But more often than not, what's been really amazing to be a part of is like, somebody's crashing and burning. My kid's daycare shut down for two months this summer. Well, they picked up the slack. Somebody gets COVID, well, we pick up the slack. Somebody's partner needs support. Well, like what is amazing is it doesn't put one person out. There's still two other people and it's a lot stronger. It's that.

It's just, it's got, you've got more backup, which has been quite amazing. Of course there's challenges. There's more communication that has to happen. It's like being in a threepole. You know, it's a three-person couple. It's a three-person marriage, and probably the most, one of the most important relationships in my life. Love you Brad, partner Brad. But you know, like we're in constant communication about the fire.

And we miss things often and it's challenging, but I will say the triad part has helped, especially in this, what you've really pointed out to us, this intense container that we're trying to uplift and make visible.

Jerry Colonna:

How do you handle as a threesome, how do you handle when one of you disappoints the other? Or when one of you pisses off the other?

Emma:

Okay, two different things. I mean, the disappointing piece, I think, there's almost this piece of learning to disappoint and being able to. Being okay with it? And being okay with it. So I don't think disappointing either of you is the worst thing. I think you have taught me that it's okay to disappoint you.

Gill:

Yeah, it's okay to fuck up. We've been there. Oh, yes. Yeah. But being okay with. Damn it. The two. Yeah, I think like being OK with failure, being OK with imperfection is like something we're we always work on. It's integral. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

What about anger?

Emma:

Yeah, well, as Gill mentioned, me and her are both Gemini.

Gill:

We spicy sometimes. It happens. It's more like a top blowing, not like anger. It's more like a manic energy than a super angry. Although we've been there. I've been there. Yeah, we use a lot of our therapy experience. We have a coach. We are good at taking time out or like giving each other permission to like do something else or take a break or..

Emma:

And we know it's normal, like it's going to happen. It's supposed to happen. It's a human emotion. I think that there's like, there's a permission piece in there where it's kind of like, you're not, this is a part of it, you know? We, like, there's a, you know, let's therapy speak, rupture and repair. It's a constant experience. And I think that...you know, understanding that the cycle of rupture and repair will keep happening and we'll keep getting better at it and we'll keep understanding each other through it. And we want to be here. Like our foundation is so, is so deep to reach from that when we have that cycle of rupture and repair we re-enter symbiosis in a really beautiful way.

Gill:

It sucks, but it's okay. It sucks and it's okay.

Emma:

And it's a part of it.

Jerry Colonna:

Gill, earlier in the conversation, you said something, and I picked up on it. I don't know if it was in the bantering part before we recorded or afterwards. But you said something about deflecting. Do you remember that? Something about what will deflect, I think you said. And I think you may, yeah.

Gill:

Oh, oh, and we were talking about if there was a topic that we didn't want to discuss with you, we would be kind of deflecting. Okay. Pick up on that, Jerry.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. OK. So, so, mm-hmm. So, and this is a feeling. This is just intuition. I could be wrong. But the feeling I get is we come close to hot topics, and then we have to love each other. We have to say, like, Emma, to use your words. It's like we come close to the rupture, but we rush right into the repair. Does that resonate? Okay. So.

All together:

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna

One of the things that family systems can do, I remember I was doing a leading an executive team offsite and I was watching this team and every time the team, it's about 20 people came close to a really tough topic. Somebody would make a joke. And the third time it happened, I pointed it out, and the CEO said, oh my fucking God, it's my family all over again.

So what I noticed about the three of you is that you're incredibly skilled. You access your feelings quite well. You have words. As a parent, one of the most important things my psychoanalyst told me, one of the most important things I could do for my children is give them words, right? Oh, I see you're angry right now, right? Words. You have words. And you have love. And you have shared understanding of the world, and you have a shared commitment of the world.

And again, it's just an observation. I could be wrong here, but leaning into the sharp edge of the disagreements might actually make the disagreements easier. And the most important thing about the repair that follows a rupture is that the relationship can be stronger.

See, if we take a step back and we say, right, and this I'm borrowing from the Buddhist psychotherapist, John Wellwood, who wrote a lot about relationship. And one of the things he talked about was relationship as what he called spiritual crucible. And, you know, if you've read my writing, I'd like to point out that the crucible is not a pleasant experience. You're taking dross, you're taking lead, and heating it up to extraordinary temperatures to turn it into gold. That's what the alchemists did. And this experience is a crucible for each of you. And perhaps the



unspoken, unconscious experience is, well, how do I handle it when my partner so infuriates me? So that how do I extract from that the unmet need that actually lies behind the anger? Or the fear that lies behind the anger?

Now I see you nodding. Am I coming close to something that might be useful? Yes.

Lizzy:

Are we all nodding?

Gill:

Yeah, we're all nodding and like doing this with our hands. Yeah, yeah. I think we're fixers and we're doers.

Emma:

Care workers.

Gill:

Yeah, so it's like, it's not that we don't understand the pain and suffering happens. Clearly, we're in the care work business, but I think that we don't love being uncomfortable for long when it comes to the hard stuff that we do have to deal with as a founder team.

Jerry Colonna:

This may land radically for you, but do you know that conflict can be positive for a relationship? You know that intellectually.

All together:

Yes. Yeah, I know it intellectually. It's really hard. And yeah, totally. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Right, right, right. So it's almost like the work, rather than going to specific instances, I think the work to do with your coach, the work to do with your resources, you have a bunch of angels around you, and I don't just mean financial angels. I can feel it already, I'm drawn in, I wanna be back with you, I wanna help. Y'all got magic powers, right? Because you're pulling people in and you're pulling the angels in. The work is to help you lift up your ability to be in conflict in a way where the love is unshakable. It could, when the stakes are so high for you all, and they're enormously high.

It can feel really dangerous to lean into the conflict. Because what happens if we rupture and can't repair? But if you rupture and repair without, excuse me, a full cleansing, it's a scabbing over of an unhealed wound only to show up in another rupture in another place and another time.

Lizzy:

The what's coming up for me is deep trust in, in the love and the repair capacity, emotionally and logistically to understand the unmet needs of all of us. And something I personally talk about being the parent of a young kid and running a startup is like, I often go to my own therapy and I'm like, I do not know how I feel. And that's okay. And I'm really okay with that. And I understand bringing that energy to this, how that's different. And I think we're all holding so many things that might also be a shared truth.

And I'm also holding the not rush to fix. You're all such great things. We had a big chat yesterday about capacity and we're like, great, we got a plan, talk tomorrow.

Gill:

But yeah, not rush to repair. Cause I do think we're not afraid of, we're not totally afraid of conflict, but I do think we want it to be over. The repair part to be over fast.

Jerry Colonna:

I think, yeah, I have a feeling, and I notice this, remember when I stopped you, Gill, and we went over, slowly over the speed bump? I think it's not conflict, it's suffering. That's hard for you to bear.

Gill:

Mm-hmm. Ha-ha. Ties into the work, doesn't it?

Emma:

And it's like, I think this is a beautiful thing of being in a relationship with people and getting to have a deeper understanding of what brought you here and who you are and how it plays into everything. And this is so interesting. It's so delightful to see and heartbreaking to see who we are as and why we chose each other and why we chose to enmesh together so deeply and knowing that that's such a core piece of our stories.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, your bodhisattva-ness, your commitment to the alleviation of suffering, seems so central to who you are that the impulse might be that if there's suffering, if someone's upset, if I'm upset, then I have to move quickly to alleviate it. When and you know this better than I, so I'm going to mangle this. But when someone who is giving birth is having a contraction. What is the advice that you give to move through the pain of that suffering?

Emma:

Yeah, I mean, you're gonna tell someone to physically go as limp as possible, and then mentally and emotionally lean on your people, whether that's picturing your ancestors or the other folks who are doing this in this very moment with you, or whether that's going someplace that is calm and supportive and blissful, whatever you need to do, but it's a lean in.

Jerry Colonna:

It's not a lean away. No, because if they lean away, the body will tighten. The pain will increase. The fear will increase. Right? And this is true for birth as well as for death. This is true for life.

And so one of the things to think about, about your journey, all of the forces that brought the three of you together in this magical being, this magical experience, because least we forget this, you are trying to do something magical. You're creating something out of nothing. That is magical work. And it's important work.

One of the opportunities here of the spiritual crucible that is this experience is for each of you to work with the parts of you that led you to alleviate suffering. "Oh my God. I found on an unconscious basis the perfect beings to do the work of my life with." And oh, by the way, I happen to alleviate suffering for others in the world at the same time.

Lizzy:

Bonus. And the best days feel that way. We often say our shared frustration is about resources for us to just do this work better and more and more of it. So that's.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah, so a word about that before we start to wrap. Fundraising is fucking hard. Okay, and just because it's hard doesn't mean you're doing something wrong.

All together:

Yes. Yeah. Thanks. Same with parenting. Good reminder. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Okay. And just because it's hard doesn't mean or just because you didn't understand what a P & L statement was three months ago means that's why. Okay. Fundraising is always hard. And right now it's especially hard because the funding community is going through a shock of you mean I can't just roll over and fart and make money. No, you actually have to do the hard work. There is a tremendous amount of shock in the system going on right now.

Jerry Colonna:

And I don't know if you're gonna be successful. Okay? But none of that takes away from the importance of the work. Right? For heaven's sake, do not use funding as validation for self-worth or the value of the work that you're doing in the world. It's just funding. It's really hard. It's really important. Your partners at home might be saying, we need a little bit more money in the house, you know, all of that.

Gill:

Yes.

Jerry Colonna:

But...If there are ways that you could manage with what you've got coming in and that sort of thing, this is the work of entrepreneurship. And most entrepreneurs are like that. That's what the experience is like. I often cite my grandfather as the first entrepreneur I counted, who was an iceman in Brooklyn. And he counted his money every day. How much money did I earn today?

Was it more than I started the day with? Okay, it was a good day. That was his P&L statement, right? And that's kind of business. So I didn't want to leave without the pragmatic piece of this at least being addressed. So you don't feel so, if you were, feeling your confidence shaken around that.

Lizzy:

Feels very good to hear. Perfect time to hear it too. Yeah, absolutely.

Jerry Colonna:

Well, thank you for the work that you do. I am one of the very, very lucky people in the world who does their work and feels better afterwards, after that expenditure of energy than before. Just being in conversation with you lifts me up. Separately I'll be rooting for you. But it's an honor to be with you. It really is.

All together:

Thank you, Jerry.