

212: Feeling Your Emotions (with Gina Brodtmann)



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Jen Riday

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Jen Riday: You're listening to the *Vibrant Happy Women* podcast, episode #212. I'm talking with my friend, Gina Brodtmann, about how we're handling the emotions and the decision-making surrounding the COVID-19 virus. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday, and this podcast is for women who want to feel more vibrant, happy, aligned, and alive. You'll gain the emotional, physical, and spiritual tools you need to get your sparkle back and ensure that depression, anxiety, and struggle don't rule your life. Welcome to the *Vibrant Happy Women* podcast.

Hey, my friends. So, we are in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those are the craziest words to be saying on my podcast, but I think it's important to talk about it. I think a lot of us are trying to process a lot of big feelings. Our brains are on high alert trying to deal with the decisions, and the emotions, and all the information coming at us. It can be very exhausting and emotionally draining.

So, in this episode, I decided to chat with my good friend, Gina Brodtmann, who you have heard from before on episode 105. She and I both have teenagers who are headstrong, and so we have a shared experience of trying to get our teenagers to stay home and follow the shelter in place, stay at home guidelines.

We've both experienced big emotions, and we did that back and forth with each other through Marco Polo. I think our sharing on this episode might help you if you've experienced some big emotions. I share how I processed my fear, and how I processed a day of deep sadness for the suffering that was happening and going to be happening. So, if you've felt any anxiety, or fear, or sadness, or stress, or worry, this is the episode for you. Let's go ahead and dive into the episode.

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Hey, everyone. I am here with my friend and former guest on the podcast, Gina Brodtmann, and Gina, I'm going to have you introduce yourself.

Gina Brodtmann: Hi, I'm Gina Brodtmann. I live in St. Paul, Minnesota here in the Midwest. Just one state over from Jen. I'm married. I have two adult stepsons and one little boy who just turned four years old. I am a stay-at-home mom, though I do kind of do a little part-time work for my family retail shops working from home.

Jen Riday: Awesome. Awesome. Gina and I, even before we hit record, were comparing stories of our teenagers. How old are your stepsons, Gina?

Gina Brodtmann: Almost 19 and 20. Gosh, I can't believe that. Yeah.

Jen Riday: So, at the time that we're recording this, we're just on the front end of COVID-19, and being told to self-quarantine essentially, and we're both finding it tricky. How do you navigate this with teenagers who insist that they're invincible, that they don't have the virus, that their friends don't have the virus, and want to go out?

But before anyone in the listenership answers that in their minds, Gina and I both have teenagers that wouldn't exactly do what we ask or want to do their own thing. So, Gina, I'll let you answer first. How are you guys handling it, and what have you experienced with your teens?

Gina Brodtmann: It's been a progression. They've definitely, like a lot of the world, come a long way in the last week. A week ago at this time, they were like, "What?" We said, "Can you wash your hands, and let's start thinking about it?" They're like, "Because of the virus? What?" It's like they almost kind of joked about it like it was ridiculous that we were bringing it

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up, and then as the days have gone on, they've gotten more serious about it.

They intellectually are acknowledging that older people especially are dying from this or getting really scary complications, but they just still don't seem to click in the impact that they can have by social distancing. So, we're just having a really hard time convincing our 19-year-old to not go to the gym, not go out to eat, and things like that. Although now, as of today, those options are no longer available. They're closed.

We try to give them the information. We send them articles. Have conversations, but I'm in a unique position that they're my stepchildren. So, it's been hard. It's been hard because also, I just happen to be a rule follower. I'm an upholder on Gretchen Rubin's Tendencies. I'm like, "When someone tells you to wash your hands for 20 seconds, that means 20 seconds."

So, I'm sitting there just saying, "There's rules, just follow the rules," but I think that there's natural tendency for teenagers to want to rebel. For sure, my teenagers are like that. As soon as they hear a rule, they're like, "Okay, now, I'm definitely not doing that." It's been tough.

Jen Riday: It's hard when you feel all the pressure, this one decision could affect so much, and then you're at the front end not knowing the outcomes and trying to decide. So, I'll share my experience. My oldest has his own apartment, knows not to come share his germs. That apartment has a lot of teens going in and out of it like teenagers probably do. My 16-and-a-half-year-old has been here, except he's been coming and going.

Finally, today, he asked again if he could come and go, and I said, "No." Then the next thing I know, he's going out the door with his stuff and said, "I'm staying overnight with my friends. See you after the pandemic." I let him go. It's not the first time he's stayed with friends, but I'm now doubting.

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I'm just sharing how I feel. So, those out there listening might be able to relate.

I'm doubting. Is that the correct choice? Should I let him come and go and just infect us, assuming he would catch it or carry it, or not? It's a tough call. One day, when this is all over, I don't want to look back at this decision and regret it because there's a lot of family bonding time that can happen during this time as well. I know that's less important, but looking at the big picture of things.

Gina Brodtmann: Totally. Yeah, I think it is really a tough call, and we're all functioning at this higher anxiety level right now, and the last thing any of us need is a big blowout over something in the family. We all need to do everything we can to stay calm, especially, I think, us mothers. So, I don't know if putting your foot down would start a little war in the house. There's an argument for avoiding that in my opinion too. So, I don't know. Yeah, I don't think there are super crisp right and wrong things about all this right now.

Jen Riday: I don't either. I don't either. He left on good terms. He just said, "I'm going to stay with a friend." I'm like, "Uh, okay?" I don't know what to think. So, maybe I'll update everyone later what I decide to do if he comes knocking at the door. It's so tricky. Anyway, Gina, I want you to walk us through some of the emotions you've experienced. Maybe your phases of coping and coming to terms with COVID-19, so people might relate to that.

Gina Brodtmann: Sure. Yeah, it's been a roller coaster, which I'm sure a lot of people can relate to. I was actually just on vacation, and so I left to go to Florida on March 4th. My family and two other families, our kids and husbands, all met down in Florida at a resort. I was texting them before we left. "Are you guys worried about this? I'm sort of wondering should we be flying? Should we be in the airport?"

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At that time, there were very few cases, but they were definitely here in the U.S. by then, and they were both like, “Oh, I don't know. I think we're on the way beginning of this. I don't think it's going to escalate anytime soon. I think we're fine to go.” I was nervous because we're staying at this all-inclusive place where you're sharing all the food with everybody. I knew that there had been a couple of cases in Florida.

So, I think I just, at that time, kind of thought, “Well, I'll just trust if my friends are not too worried, I think I'll just drop it too and just try to have a good time.” A lot of people have had to do saying giving up this vacation that you saved up for, and that you were so excited for, is not an easy decision. Back then, just a week and a half ago, it felt fine to go.

The day before we came back home was the day that they announced all the NBA was canceling its games and March Madness was canceled. My husband is a huge basketball fan, so that's our filter with how we hear a lot of stuff. That was when I was like, “Oh, crap. We need to get. This is a lot.”

When you're on vacation too, you intentionally try to avoid the news and stuff when you're on vacation. So, I was, of course, trying to stay just informed enough to make sure we were safe, but I think I flew home on what was probably the last normal day in the airport. There were a couple people wearing masks and stuff, but the airports were just sort of normal and flowing, and it wasn't big lines or any sort of feeling of panic or anything.

But my friend who was down there with us flew home a couple of days later and said it was really different already by that day. So, I got home on the 11th. That was when I had my couple days of panic. I would say the 12th and 13th were the two days that I was sort of freaking out. I was obsessively Googling things.

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I was messaging you, Jen, on the side, and just trying to wrap my mind around how serious is this, how quickly is it going to happen, and just feeling all my feelings, and it was scary. It was a really tough couple of days. My husband at that time was still not really that bought into it. So, I didn't feel like I could connect with him. Every time I would bring up how serious it was to him, he would be like, "I don't know. I'm not sure," and he downplayed it a little bit still back then.

So, I was very, very grateful to have you to talk to because for me and my process, I need to get science-y and hear a lot of facts and numbers. After those couple of days, I came to peace with getting it, really, that I'm going to do everything I can not to get it, but if we do, I think that our household would be in the 99% of people who would be just fine.

My little guy does have a virus-induced asthma. I started thinking of the worst. I'm looking ahead at Italy, and starting to see things really ramp up in Washington at the time here in the U.S., and saying, "What if my four-year-old, Luke, is having a bad reaction and asthmatic reaction to either this virus or just any flu that comes along right now, and we had to go to the hospital, and the hospitals are full?"

I was letting my mind really panic, but I think letting out some of that panic, I don't know, I just moved through it, and it was really strange. I woke up, whatever it was, that third day, and I just felt at peace with the situation. Not that I'm happy about it or anything, but I just felt like, "Okay, I have my mind wrapped around it, accepting that we are going to be shutting things down, that we're going to be quarantining."

I just got to a place of acceptance, I think, and I think this has so much uncertainty. We all crave certainty, but I feel like I'm somebody who craves it more than most people. It's one of my issues in life, and why I can drive toward some of my unhealthier ways of being a perfectionist and stuff because I'm trying to control things all the time.

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So, this is really pushing those buttons in me of just it freaks me out not to be able to know, or not to be able to have some expert that can tell me what to expect, and what's happening, and for sure what the answers are. If I just follow the rules, I can know I'll be safe. I don't get any of that. None of us do.

Jen Riday: So, you went through a day of fear. Have you been through any other emotions?

Gina Brodtmann: Oh, for sure denial. I think with the fear, just this anxiety, almost like an anger. Well, there's another one. I went through anger about wanting to control when I went through my rule breaking thing. That was tough even with my teenager to be like, "If we're not all going to follow the rules, this isn't going to work," and just wanting to be mad at somebody.

I've gone through sadness. My dad has cancer, and so he's one of the immunocompromised people, and so he's quarantining. He's totally taking it super seriously, so that's great, but definitely fear and sadness about worrying that something could come across and get to him.

Then just the heartbreak of all the people financially, that their lives are being coming to a halt, or they're not able to go to work, they're not able to pay their bills, they don't know how long it's going to be this way. So, I definitely tap into my sadness when I think about some of that too.

Jen Riday: When your emotions come up, what tools do you use or strategies do you use to handle big emotions?

Gina Brodtmann: I'm a huge believer in sharing, inventing. I think it's super healthy and cathartic to find trusted people and let it all out. The good, the bad, the ugly. Even some of the judgmental or angry thoughts

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that I'm having, I have enough safe people in my life. Maybe not completely to one person.

My husband, for example, he's really great at hearing my fears and stuff on certain things, but when it comes to money, that's too much of a trigger for him. So, I can't let my money fears out with him. I have to do that with somebody else, but finding the people that I can be like, "I got to let this out." Then there's something after letting it move through me that there's this big release afterwards.

Jen Riday: I like how you have a circle of support. You know what your husband can handle. You have your mom and others that maybe can talk to you about other parts. I think that's cool. I'll share a story about my emotions with this.

I went through a lot of fear because I was tracking the data long before. Well, not long before the media, but before it really ramped up, and I felt like I saw what was coming, and so I was panicked very much in advance of others. Gina, can you remember when I was first panicked?

Gina Brodtmann: Yes.

Jen Riday: What were your real thoughts? You can be honest. Be honest.

Gina Brodtmann: It's hard. I'm being honest. It was a mixture. It's like you want to self-protect, and you hear somebody saying this, and I'm like, "Okay, I know Jen is very smart. She's very educated, super intellectual, and she's saying all this stuff is going to happen," but this was a while ago. It was way before my vacation even, and I just thought, "Yeah."

I probably was thinking some version of that will happen, but it's not going to be that bad or something like that. I think that's what I told myself

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because I was like, “I can't let that in,” but there was definitely a part of me that as soon as you brought it up, it wasn't like I could really push it out. It was sitting there in the back of my mind always then.

Jen Riday: Yeah, yeah. Oh, well, you're being kind. I thought people might've thought I was a bit crazy. But anyway, I kept tracking those numbers for many weeks and following the media, but what ended up happening, which helped me realize that was a mistake for me, is my anxiety, which I'd never have had in my life like that, ramped up to a point of non-functioning.

So, there was a day I took a four and a half hour bath and just worked through the fear. Essentially, a really long meditation and allowing myself to feel it. Then, Gina, you were privy to what happened the next day. Long story short, I was super, super sad. Let me preface this part of the story by saying I had warned my parents what was coming, and my dad quoted something to me about fake news, and I think they thought I was crazy.

Then I called my mom about a week later to see if she might've started to take it more seriously, and she told me she was in Tucson, and that they were going to the theater that night, and this is when social distancing had already begun. I was completely flabbergasted. I immediately messaged a few of my friends, Gina included, and I was just laughing at the ridiculousness of it that my mom would do that.

Eventually, on the day I decided to feel sad, I think I felt sad for everyone who's going to suffer. I believe that my mom was coming home that day after this long trip through multiple airports, essentially, to kill my dad who has a heart condition. So, at the time of recording this, they're still healthy. She's been home two days.

Anyway, I messaged Gina on the day I was really feeling sad. Sad for my housekeeper who no one wants to have her come right now, and she

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needs that money to feed her kids, and sad for everyone who will suffer and be in the hospital dying alone, and funerals where no one will be able to be there or attend. I just felt all the sadness, and I went on Marco Polo with Gina, and I looked horrible. I said, "I'm coming on here looking the way I feel. and I just cried on the whole thing." Gina, honestly, you probably thought I was crazy.

Gina Brodtmann: No, I didn't. I wanted to cut in, but I was trying to let you finish. You didn't look horrible. You were this beautiful, open, broken-hearted person who was sharing the sadness. It was really sweet, and it was an honor that you shared it because it was so vulnerable, and so honest, and so what we're all trying to push away right now.

I know all of us are trying to let in the fear but keep ourselves protected because we just got to get through the day. But if we open our minds and our hearts up enough, they would have the right to think about I think there is so much heartbreak, and that there's so much more that's going to come out.

Just all of the cases, and all that this is going to affect, and all the people who are going to be feeling regret if they did go out, and then infect somebody. I think you are somebody with this big, huge heart that has this mission to change the world and make life so much better for women and people. When you have a big heart, you have big feelings and big empathy. So, I actually thought it was beautiful.

Jen Riday: Well, thank you. It was awkward to watch it back, but I felt it was important for me. Some of our little Marco Polo group had been feeling stuck and experiencing brain fog and exhaustion. I know that a lot of those symptoms are because emotion is getting stuck.

So, I felt it was important to show people that it's okay to feel, no matter what it is. It's all okay. Just let that emotion happen because the next day, I

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felt so much lighter. I felt like I was down to 5% anxiety levels instead of 100%. I felt a sense of hope, a sense of excitement to be with my kids. Everything shifted because I took the time to be with my emotions for those two days. It made a big difference.

Originally, my theme for the April podcasts, or most of these podcasts right now, was going to be about decluttering and minimalism, and you're a queen of doing what's really important. So, now that you're in your home environment, how are you managing that environment in a way that feels grounded and centered for you?

Gina Brodtmann: Without sounding insensitive to what's the hardships out there, I'm an introvert. So, this, in some ways, is an introvert's dream to just get to be home, and nobody is going to knock on the door, and I don't have to chit chat if I don't want to, and I can just be with my people, and have phone calls or Marco Polo conversations, and go deep there, and read my books, and all that. I'm not feeling any stress from the social distancing aspect, but I do feel, and this was part of my, I think, little epiphany about having no control over the situation. Then I stopped and said, "Well, wait a minute. I do have control over something, and that is my home and my environment." I certainly don't have control over the people in it, as I was saying with my stepson, but I have control over providing some sort of feeling of comfort, and peace, and calm in this anxious, uncertain time. The feeling of uncertainty, is that word keeps popping up in my head, and so I'm like, "Okay, there's total uncertainty as far as the future with COVID-19, but where can I create certainty that there wasn't yesterday?" I've just started doing it with little things like going around the house and saying, "We've never decided where we should keep the dog's leash. Let's pick a leash spot and put it there." Now, it's just those little, mini moments of frustration that you feel when you can't find something you're looking for. I've been making spots for things that don't have spots, and doing a way more regular job of picking up clutter, and just having it be where you walk into a room, and it's just like, "Oh, my mind can relax because everything is in its

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place, and it's just calming and hopefully beautiful." There's certain spots that I'm trying to decorate up a little bit better, switch some things around, or open the windows, let the sunlight come in. So, I've been doing some of that, but then totally decluttering. I think especially here in the Midwest where it's been winter forever, and we're all just so ready for spring, we're all in a spring cleaning mood anyway. Then the idea of a virus, I think it's just probably adding that ickyness factor where we're like, "Let's really clean super good." So, it, to me, has been very satisfying to clean. My house has never been this clean. I've been stuck at home all week, and I've been having this energy that I need to let out somewhere. So, I've been putting it into my house, going through drawers and closets, and just mopping in spots that I don't usually get to, and that, yeah.

Jen Riday: In the past, I think on episode 105 when I had you before, we might've joked that you and I, one day, we wanted to be minimalists together and form the Vibrant Happy Women Commune where we had less stuff. Well, I know maybe realistically, we're not doing that, but just in general, even in non-COVID-19 times, what methods do you use to declutter?

Have you ever come across a block to decluttering something? I know a lot of people, when they start to declutter, they feel a sense of fear and worry about letting that thing go because they might need it. What are your thoughts on that, and how do you do it so easily?

Gina Brodtmann: I think just now that I'm on the other side of living more minimally, and I'm not an extreme minimalist or anything, but I do try to be pretty intentional, especially with my son's toys and art supplies and things that you actually use things more when you have less of it, when you can see it and it's displayed beautifully. When it's all shoved in somewhere, you just open it, and you're like, "None of that looks fun," but when you have just a few little art supplies and they're nicely arranged in this little cart that I

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have, it's enticing, and he goes to it and wants to grab it. So, yeah, I think I've just seen at work.

We've probably all heard of the capsule wardrobes and stuff. I don't live at that extreme by any means, but it's very true that the less clothes I have, the better I feel when I open my closet because I'm like, "Oh, there's just everything that I actually love, and it's not filled with a bunch of stuff that maybe I'll fit into someday, or I wish that was my style, but I don't actually feel comfortable in it," or whatever it was.

So, I think that if I could give somebody advice, I would say just try it, and I promise you'll like it. I've never talked to anyone who's tried to declutter or be more minimalistic and who's regretted it.

Jen Riday: Isn't that the truth?

Gina Brodtmann: Everyone I've ever spoken to said, "Yeah, I wish I would've done this sooner. Oh, my gosh. I feel this huge weight off."

Jen Riday: I get a thrill out of letting things go because I know every item takes a piece of our time and energy. You have to maintain it. Even one item in a room is moved, your brain is noticing. Even if it's at the subconscious level, if one thing is different, your brain is going to pick up on that because it's a function of survival to find what's different or new. I'm like, "Wow, every little thing out of place is affecting our energy, whether we realize it or not."

So, moving forward, Gina, we know it's healthy to have a vision for our futures. Even if it doesn't come true, it's nice to have a destination we're working toward, and part of what makes COVID-19 so hard is this lack of certainty about any predictable destination. So, what kind of future are you

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imagining for yourself, and how far does your future go? What does it look like? Big question.

Gina Brodtmann: It is a big question. If you would've asked me a week ago, I probably would have had some more stuff to say, but it's funny. Not to be contrary in here, but I almost want to say that I am just finding so much peace in just focusing on today. Something I can share here is that I've been trying to get pregnant for a couple of years, and it's been a big struggle, and a long journey, and it can be all-consuming. It's just something that's on my mind all the time.

I have to say, these last two weeks, I have thought so little about that subject. It's actually like this weight off my shoulders. I'm just going day-to-day, sometimes even moment-to-moment, just taking the next right step, just focusing on reminding myself, "Right now, we're all healthy, we're all okay. Everyone I love is safe. We have enough food. We have all the supplies we need. It's beautiful. Spring is here today."

That has been so wonderful to be in that energy. I'm honestly not used to it. I'm much more used to projecting out into the future, but I feel like this is teaching me something. I've tried so long in my life to try to meditate, and be in the present moment, and all those things that all sound good, but I really struggle with it, and this darn pandemic is finally the thing that's helping me to do it for the first time on a more regular basis. It's not just a moment. I'm just sort of living day-to-day like this. It feels good.

Jen Riday: It's funny. As soon as I asked that question, and we paused. What are you envisioning for the future? I too have no vision, and I'm a little startled because I've always had one, but I think you're right. We don't know how long it will go or what it will be. So, yeah, you're forced to come to the present, which is really such a relief to just live in this moment, like you said.

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Gina Brodtmann: Yeah, it really is.

Jen Riday: Yeah, that's beautiful. Well, Gina, this is awesome. I love you. I love your energy. I'm so glad you would come and chat with me today.

Gina Brodtmann: Of course, I love you too, and anytime. I love chatting with you.

Jen Riday: I hope that episode inspired you with some tools that can help you to process all the big feelings you might be experiencing right now. All your feelings are allowed. Please allow yourself to feel them, and focus on them, and not just numb against them with things like Netflix or chocolate.

There's a place for both, of course. I like to tune out with some Netflix too, but schedule some time each day to feel. This will help you prevent yourself from getting short tempered or more stressed and frazzled. It will help you to be grounded and centered for your kids, and loved ones, and just for yourself. So, take the time for that.

Also, if you feel like you want some additional support, I am doing weekly coaching calls in the Vibrant Happy Women Club where you can share something you've been struggling with, or a thought you've been having that you don't like, and I can help you shift out of that and get back to a state of grounded calmness.

Additionally, I'm going to add some extra support in the form of a weekly live Zoom guided meditation where we'll come together, and I will lead you through a meditation to bring you back to calm again, and again, and again. Finally, in the club, we also have soul circles where you can meet with about 15 other women from around the country and around the world to support each other, to talk about the podcast episodes, to talk about what

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we're talking about in the club, to grow together, to make this a productive, positive time.

So if you'd like to be a part of this positivity to counteract any fear you may be experiencing, please do join us in the Vibrant Happy Women Club, and that is at Jenriday.com/join. We would love to have you and welcome you with open arms.

My friends, it has been an honor to be with you this week. I will be back again next week talking more about some tips to handle our experiences with the COVID-19 virus, and with being at home, and with having emotions. I hope that you will keep rocking it and being as vibrant and happy as you can in the days to come. All my love. Also sending all my prayers, and I wish you all the best. Until next time. Take care.

If you enjoy this podcast, you have to check out the Vibrant Happy Women Club. It's my monthly group coaching program where we take all this material to the next level and to get you the results that will blow your mind. Join me in the Vibrant Happy Women Club at Jenriday.com/join.