

235: Living Your Purpose (with Deanna Singh)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jen Riday

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You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 235. We're talking about finding and living your purpose and that it isn't as hard as you think. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday. 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, Jen here and welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women. I am so excited that school is about to start here in Verona, Wisconsin. Only my youngest gets to go back in person, but I always look forward to change.

And in the fall I like that feeling of change in the air, even though it would be a heck of a lot more fun if all my kids were in school. But hey, I'm not going to complain, whatever version of school your kids are going back to. I want you to take a deep breath and set a commitment, make a commitment right now to create some back to self time happening right next to this back to school time. Come back to yourself while your kids are going back to whatever version of school it is, back to school, back to self.

We're on our sixth month of this pandemic. And the way I see it, women, moms are burning out. We need a break. So how are you going to create a break for yourself this September? Well, I want to challenge you to not only create space for yourself, to maybe do your self-care, exercise, maybe you go on more walks, whatever it takes, find that space. But to also begin to think about the contribution you're born to make.

Can you make a contribution during Covid? Of course you can. A lot of us get stuck wondering what's my purpose, what am I born to do? What should I be doing with my time? I want to challenge you to throw all of that

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out the window and just do what you love, take your next best step into anything that feels exciting to you. Want to read a book, read a book. Want to take a nap, take a nap. Want to go run a 5k, go do that.

You could do something really crazy like me and sign up for a yoga certification. Now I'm like what did I do, what did I do? Well, I'll let you know when I'm done you guys. What have I done? I found this site, it had everything I've ever wanted in yoga training and I thought I'm signing up. And then I remembered, oh yeah, six kids, Covid, I run a business.

We just started the brand new Vibrant Happy Women Coach Certification last spring, we're in the second round right now of the club. But thank goodness, I'm growing my team, I can create pockets of space for myself, so much fun. So I want to challenge you to find something this September that juices you up.

Now, Deanna Singh, she is my neighbor, she's from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and we recorded this at the end of 2019. Well, I had a schedule all planned out and we were ahead of schedule. Here we are, we're airing the episode. and I'm excited for you to listen because Deanna has unique experiences that she experienced in her childhood that combined to give her a perspective that's unique that help her make her unique contribution.

She combines all of that with following her passions and following her heart and recognize as you listen that you don't have to find that one thing, just do anything. So think about this for yourself as you listen. This is one woman's story, and ask yourself, what is your story? And while you're listening ask yourself, I wonder how this could inspire me to take action? What could my story be? Well, let's go ahead and listen and maybe you'll find some clarity.

Jen: Hey, everyone, I'm talking with Deanna Singh today who is obsessed with making the world a better place. And she builds or breaks systems to

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create positive change. She is the Chief Change Agent of Flying Elephant, an umbrella organization for three social ventures which Deanna will tell us about in a moment here. She coaches, consults and runs a children's book imprint and she is a doula. Her goal is to help others thrive.

Deanna is almost my neighbor, she lives in Milwaukee with her husband and two boys, Zephaniah and Zion. I love those names. Welcome to Vibrant Happy Women, Deanna.

Deanna: Thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here with you.

Jen: We connected over email and we haven't met in person but we probably should someday being so close. Before we hear your story let's start with a quote today.

Deanna: Sure. So the quote that I have and I go to quite often is, 'nothing will work unless you do'. And it's a quote from Maya Angelou and I love it because it always just puts me back into this idea that I can have a ton of ideas, and a lot of dreams, and a lot of aspirations. But the only way that they're really going to come to fruition is if I put them into action. And so I love that quote, it's one that I use quite often.

Jen: I love that because your interpretation when you said it, nothing will work unless you do the work. My interpretation was nothing will work unless you do, as in take care of yourself. So it could be both ways, right, take care of yourself and take action?

Deanna: Absolutely, and I love your interpretation of it too. I need to remember that when I'm thinking about it also.

Jen: Now I want to read the context, what did she mean? That's funny.

Deanna: Awesome.

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Jen: Well, let's hear your story, Deanna. You're doing really cool things. You obviously are very socially conscious, you want to help others. Where did that start for you in your life?

Deanna: Well, for me a lot of what I do today comes and roots from my background. So I come from a biracial family, my mom is African-American and my dad Asian-Indian. And they really impressed on me at a very young age this idea that I was only as good as, or things were only as good as how the things were for other people around me. So they impressed upon me that you don't measure your success just by how things are going for you. But you really measure them by what's happening in your larger community, what's happening in your family.

And so that idea and that mentality I think stuck with me. And as I've grown throughout the years I've had just these tremendous experiences, and opportunities, and blessings, and I've had all of these adventures. But many of them I was the first in my family, so the first in my family to go to college, my first in my family to get a graduate degree, first in my family to travel extensively abroad. Just a lot of firsts.

And for me it's always been, well, I might be the first but I don't want to be the last. So what does that look like? What does this look like to live a life of service to others? And really try to multiply the blessings I've been given. And so when I think about where does this come from, why am I so passionate about it? Why do I think about that? Why am I so obsessed with it? And I really think it has to do with the fact that at a very young age I was taught that there's lots of power in that and there's lots of joy in that. And that that can be a guiding force, a really good guiding force for your life.

Jen: So what was it like growing up with an Asian-Indian father and an African-American mother? And where were you growing up?

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Deanna: Sure. So I grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I spent some time in India when I was very young too. But the majority of my time was right in the city. And for me, I always tell people that was one of the – I mean luckiest things that could have happened to me because I grew up at the intersection of east and west. And my parents are these two phenomenal people, they're hardworking, they're exceptionally gracious. They're super smart. And I had an opportunity to just watch how they lived in the world.

And one of the things that was unique about my experience is that my parents actually opened up our home to basically anybody who needed a place to stay.

So until a few months before I went to college we had on average in our little three bedroom ranch house, about 30 people living with us. And some of them were family and some of them were friends. I tell people I spent a majority of my childhood sleeping on the floor with my sisters at the foot of my parents' bed because we had people living in all the other spaces in our home. But they did that because they really wanted to help families, they were really committed to helping families get on their feet.

And so watching that and watching people trying to make a difference in their families lives and kind of get that grounding really had a profound impact on me. But I always tell people there were super fun things about living in a biracial home too. So if you came to our house for thanksgiving for example, you would get mac and cheese and greens, roti and saag. If you were here on a Saturday morning you'd hear Patti LaBelle in one room and the Guru Granth Sahib coming from the other room.

It was just this really dynamic constant, yeah, just constant influx of culture, and food, and language, and life, which was awesome.

Jen: It sounds like your parents were really open to blending culture and people. Were there ever people staying with you that weren't as open and

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they were like the others and this culture is better? I'm just curious if you ever saw that.

Deanna: Sure, definitely. I mean I think from my perspective one of the unique things that I can bring into conversations and situations is that I was often the bridge builder between those different cultures and those different things that were happening. And so people wouldn't understand, why are you doing that way? Why would anybody do it that way? And so being the person, because one, I was the only person in the house who really had a very strong command of both languages.

And so being the person who had to interpret those and help people find that understanding, and help explain things, and be the one to ask the questions so that I could properly explain what was going on. I think gave me some good insight into not just how we're different, but I think even more insight into how we're the same.

Jen: That's beautiful.

Deanna: Yeah.

Jen: So share one colorful or fun memory you have of those years and the fun chaos you were living with.

Deanna: Well, so one of the things that my family likes to talk about is because I was the eldest child in the home and I had the language and everything. Is I could really be the one to determine what the flow was going to look like in our house, not just for myself but for the other children. And so there would be times for example, my mom would say, "Deanna make sure that all the kids after they eat that they have their vegetables and they do this, that and the other thing."

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And then my mom would leave and then my grandmother who only spoke Punjabi would say, “Well, what did your mom say you’re going to eat tonight?” And I would say, “Well, she said that we should all make sure we get at least one or one and a half scoops of ice-cream, she left it in the freezer for us.” And I could cheat, because even though she was in the room she didn’t know what was being said. And so I like to think that I would loosely interpret what was going on around me.

Jen: So you had a lot of power as a child in that dynamic and you could be creative. But I suppose you still had to be respectful in your way as well.

Deanna: Yeah. I would say that that was probably one of the greatest atrocities was trying to change up what we were going to eat or fix when we had to do homework or those kinds of things. But I think you do even if you don’t have the cultural dynamic in your house. But for me actually it was a great honor. And I think one of the things that I would be called to do with, especially with the younger children in the house was to help them navigate this new space.

A lot of times we had children who were immigrant children, is the first time they had ever had any kind of experience with America. A lot of them didn’t understand the language. So being the one who would go with them to school their first day, introduce them to their teachers, explain what children were saying and what their homework meant. And kind of providing that extra hands-on process and support as they were trying to learn a new culture was also pretty awesome.

Jen: So when did you know that you wanted to keep doing this kind of work as an adult? Was there a time when you said, “I’m going to keep helping marginalize people and help people navigate change, and space, and equality and all of the things that you’re doing now?”

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Deanna: There isn't like one very particular moment. But one that I love to share is I remember when I was leaving for college, I was the very first, you know, I was the very first person in my family. It was a big deal, everybody was super excited. And I remember going to get my grandmother and my mom and my grandmother were going to drive me from Milwaukee to New York. And I was 16 years old, so I was super young.

And looking back on it now and now having children I'm like, "Why did I do that terrible thing to my parents?" But I remember that day like it was yesterday. And one of the things – it was like 5 o'clock in the morning, we go to get my grandmother. And when we pull up there are so many people outside. It's like we're having a block party. And I'm thinking what is going on?

And I realized what happened, my grandmother who we affectionately called big mama because she had such a big personality. She had woken up earlier, so it's already 5:30 in the morning, she had woken up very early in the morning, went around to all of the neighborhood and knocked on their door and told all of them to come outside and wish me good luck because I was going to college.

Jen: Oh, that's so sweet.

Deanna: It is so sweet, it's so, so sweet. And there's many other kind of portions of the story that make it really funny. But I remember very clearly driving away from there and thinking, wow, there are people on this block who are smarter, who have worked harder, who have done more. And they're never going to get this opportunity, and I'm going to get it. And I remember thinking in that moment, how do I multiply these blessings, experience and opportunities? That was like a real moment for me. And trying to think about how am I going to do that? How am I going to do that?

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And over the years as I've had more experiences and learned things and made mistakes and all of that, I think that's when it solidified to me that it's more than just multiplying. It's really about shifting power and that's how that purpose statement really came to be. So I could point to a lot of different stories, but that's one that for me is at least like a pinnacle moment.

Jen: Well, say that purpose statement or mission statement out loud for us so we can hear it.

Deanna: Sure, yeah. It's to shift power, to marginalize communities.

Jen: So you went to college and what did you major in there to help you with that process?

Deanna: So I went to college in New York City, I was in the Bronx, I went to Fordham University. And I majored in urban studies. So I spent...

Jen: Perfect.

Deanna: It was wonderful. I mean I spent just as much time in the classroom as I did in the city learning about how cities come together, and how communities come together, and how change happens. And where some of these kind of the roots are of some of these social issues that we're dealing with today. It was awesome.

Jen: If you were to summarize, this could be an impossible question, but maybe you could summarize some of the biggest social issues affecting urban areas today, what would be your big five? Or if you need more we can go to 10.

Deanna: So I think there's a number of things that are really big challenges. One of them is just economic disparity. So we see that there

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are people who have all of the knowledge, all of the passion, all of the desire to be able to move into these economically viable arenas, but don't have the same kind of access points. And so I think that that's a major place for opportunity. So I like to talk about what our opportunities are versus what our challenges are. So I think that's one huge one.

I think another one is just in our social determinants of health. So thinking about health in a much more broadly understood space. And so what does that mean? And there what I think about is being able to access resources, again, that would allow for people to have better health outcomes, better outcomes when it comes to education, better outcomes when it comes to just even increasing what their social network looks like.

So I think that those are two that are really – are ones that we have to figure out how we're going to tackle down.

But I think another kind of space where I think there's a lot of opportunity is really thinking about how we look at this idea of diversity, equity and inclusion. And I think particularly amongst some of the marginalized communities, the communities that are being left on the fringes. How do we rethink the systems that we currently have in place so that we don't have these margins, so that everybody can come into the center and really enjoy the benefits of being part of those processes?

Jen: Awesome, I love that. And what changes do you see coming down the pipe currently or in the future that are taking that hard look at diversity, equity and inclusion, and changing those access points you talked about or changing the access to resources like you mentioned?

Deanna: So I think one of the big things is knowledge. Whenever there's going to be a big change or there's a shift, it comes from a cultural understanding that's shifting. And so that precedes any – any shift that we have. So people focus on policy. I think that's extraordinarily important.

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People focus on legal implications, really, very, very important. People focus on research, oh goodness, very, very important. But I think the biggest change comes when we have decided as a community that some things are just not acceptable.

And so for me the most encouragement that I get is when people don't just write something, or like something, or put a sad face on Facebook about something. But when people really deeply immerse themselves in becoming more knowledgeable about where these disparities exist.

Jen: That's so true. That's so true. And I feel like – I grew up in a rural area, very, very rural and then I've been in cities. I have a similar story, first one to go to college, first one to go to grad school, all of that. And how do you tackle that knowledge piece when there is so very little cultural interaction with different cultures, when people live in a place where everyone looks and acts the same as them? That's always my question of the year, how do I help? I don't know if I want to keep this in there because I might offend someone.

Deanna: Well, I think there's a lot of ways that we can really press into this idea of creating a more inclusive education of what is going on in the world. I think one of them is through literature and that is why I have a company that's really focused on bringing positive images of children of color into the forefront. One question that I will get from journalists all the time whenever I talk about the children's book.

One question that comes up is people will say, "Well, Deanna you have these books that feature positive images of children of color." And there's children of color of all different ethnic backgrounds. And they'll say to me, "So do you think that white children would benefit from these books?" And I almost have to chuckle because it's a little bit absurd. Because what I want to say back is, "Well, when there are books that have white children in

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them, do you think it would be okay for children of color to read those books?”

I mean you would never ask that question. And so it's the same thing. And I think for me at least, having more books that feature children of color and making that part of the norm and part of what children are exposed to through literature allows for them to grow up in communities where they have just more understanding and more appreciation.

If you go your entire elementary career, you never read a book that has a child in it that looks any different than you do. You never meet anybody whose any different than you do, you never have any experience of any food, or language, or culture that's anything different than you do. And then you go to college, that culture shock is incredibly hard, it's really hard to navigate. When you go into your workplace, that culture shock is really, really hard to navigate.

We have amazing places where we could provide that kind of knowledge, and experience, and opportunities for our young people at really young ages. It's just whether or not we're going to do it, whether or not we're going to broaden our libraries to include other children.

Jen: For sure, and not just our libraries but mainstream TV. I watch Gray's Anatomy and I love, love, love all the strong black characters on there. Because I think it's so important that both white and black and all races see themselves reflected in strong positions of power in regular TV and media, don't you think?

Deanna: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean what does it feel like if you are a young girl and you never see – you have this dream in your heart, you want to be an astronaut, you want to be something. But you never ever see anybody who looks like you who's a woman, whose doing that. Well, then it starts to influence whether or not you think it's possible.

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Jen: Yeah, for sure.

Deanna: That's just human nature. And so of course we need to have representation across all kinds of different things. People are differently abled, we need to have representation of people of differently abled in different positions of power. We need to have, yeah, just everything, why not? Because when you look around the world we all are really very different.

Jen: It's true.

Deanna: You're all bringing something to the table and we all deserve to be looked at positively.

Jen: Tell us more about your coaching business and your doula business. I love what you're doing with the children's books.

Deanna: Thank you. So both of, you know, really all of the businesses I think have this underlying theme of coaching or trying to help people thrive. So in the coaching and consulting business I really focus on women and people of color. Again, because the social enterprise sector, which is what I'm helping grow, right now is a relatively new sector. But it's also one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. So businesses that are created because they're trying to solve for a social issue.

And my thought here is that instead of us thinking about diversity, equity, inclusion and trying to backtrack, like we're trying to do it in a lot of other sectors. That we really have an opportunity here to bake into the DNA of the social enterprise space, this more inclusive idea of diversity, equity and inclusion. And so what I try to do in that space is try to help embolden people who want to go into that area and want to go into that field. And really want to make a change in the world and want to do it in a sustainable way, help them get off of the ground.

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So I work with a lot of entrepreneurs. But I also end up working with a lot of companies who also understand the benefit of going into this space and want to see their employees be more engaged and really want to make an impact on the world. And I help them add this line item into the work that they're currently doing. So that work is great. It's fascinating. It's always so different. And it's always so fast paced. It's really, really very exhilarating work.

And then what I do with coaching with women who are going through the birth and labor process. For those of your listeners who maybe are not familiar with what a doula does. Really a doula is about helping a birthing person go through the process of feeling that self-efficacy. And being able to advocate for themselves in the room. Somebody said this to me the other day and I have not had the time to research it. In the birthing room only 30% of it is medical. The other 70% of it is like what's going on in your headspace.

And so we really try to help with some techniques that people can use to get into a good space. And have the birth at least as close as they can, the birth experience that they intended and that they wanted. And what we have found with our clients there, again it's this one-to-one model. So for every person who can afford it. we then provide services to women who can't afford it. Is that it doesn't matter where you fall on the economic like, you know, from your social economic standpoint, it doesn't matter.

All of the women who come to us are people who want to make sure that they have healthy babies. And they want to be healthy through the process. And there are some things that they want to articulate and they want to feel comforted and they want to feel supported. And it's just been very beautiful and very powerful, one, to be there in that moment when a child is being born into the world. But two, for me, I think what's more – I love the babies and I am so excited about the babies and it's an awesome perk to be able to hold babies as like the end of your workday.

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But what I love the most is watching women come fully into their space of power and realizing I can do this. I am doing this. I'm going to do this. And that being able to experience that over and over again brings me great, great joy.

Jen: That's beautiful. It just strikes me that you used the word 'marginalized' earlier. And I love the contrast, space of power. Those two are such perfect opposites, marginalized and space of power. And just helping everyone have that, that's beautiful.

Deanna: Right. Everybody deserves that. I mean do you know how good it feels to feel like you have some kind of control, that you are directing where your life is going, that you're helping other people who are in your path? I mean everybody deserves to have that feeling.

Jen: I love that. Well, you're doing good work, Deanna, that's awesome.

Deanna: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Jen: Let's talk about all the busy stuff you're doing in your life and how you balance or try to balance it.

Deanna: So one of the things that I don't do is try to balance it.

Jen: Good.

Deanna: I learned a long time ago that the idea of balance was driving me insane, because it felt like something I just could not achieve. And so I started to stop saying the word 'balance' and started instead to use this idea of harmony. Now, you might hear that and just be like, "Those are just words, you're just being, you know, you're just changing the word, there is nothing really big going on there." But for me it's made all the difference in the world.

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And so what is the difference for me between balance and harmony? So balance is like everything is even and everything is kind of on the same plane. Whereas harmony is much more about, no, this is fluid. And there is going to be times where I am doing a lot in the doula space and there's going to be times where I really, really need to be spending a majority of my time with my family. There's going to be fluctuations. And what I am responsible for is making sure that I'm keeping a harmony.

And if I think about it from that way then it's not that everything has to be even, it's that I'm keeping harmony. And that language, and that word has been so helpful. So even when I'm talking to my husband and I say, "Hey, you know, I feel like things are off, like my harmony is off. I have to make some adjustments." Or, "Hey, going into this next week, this is what it's going to look like. How are we going to keep harmony in our family?" It's just been incredibly freeing for me.

Jen: That's a cool word, because when you think of people singing harmony or playing harmony, one note can stand out more as the melody and the other can be supportive. But you can reverse those two and then maybe the alto becomes the melody and soprano becomes the supportive role. So I like that, it's cool.

Deanna: Right, right. It's just a nice way, again, to remind yourself that things are going to ebb and flow and, yeah, you just have to make sure that you're managing and monitoring that.

Jen: Well, so hearing your story of always having people around and being a bridge builder. I am assuming you're an extrovert, is that true? And the second part of that question is, what's your favorite way to relax and recharge?

Deanna: So I don't know if I'm a full on extrovert. I used to say, "Yes, absolutely." But I almost feel like maybe as I'm getting older I am becoming

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more introverted, or at least maybe appreciating the times where I get to be more introverted. So I love meeting people, super charged up by that. And so I think that's classic extroverted. But I also really appreciate the moments where I can be quiet and where I can spend some time in deep reflection. So I think I have a little bit of a blend or maybe I am growing into being more introverted or something. I am not sure what.

But for me one of the things that I think brings me back and gets me grounded is that time to sit and think and to – I'm not good at meditating. So I wouldn't say be quiet, that's not necessarily it, but time to think, time where my time is not being demanded by other people or being influenced by other responsibilities. I really, really treasure that.

But the other things that I do to try and keep that harmony and to really make sure that I'm spending time kind of just recharging, I'm a big traveler. So for example, my family and I, we planned around it both financially, but also with just our time and our work schedules and all of that to be gone for six weeks this summer.

Jen: Wow, excellent.

Deanna: Yeah. So we spent six weeks in Mexico. My children took classes. I took classes. It was fantastic and it was so good for us as a family. And so we do, do, we're very intentional about making sure that we go on at least one international trip a year. And making sure that we do some domestic trips as part of that. So that's one really major thing.

But the other kind of more day-to-day type things, we have a very intentional, everybody knows it, like snuggle schedule in the house. So we know when it's snuggle time and everybody knows what that means and everybody really looks forward to it. So that's a big thing for us. And we also spend a lot of time dancing. We like to throw random dance parties.

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Jen: So tell me more about the snuggle schedule, how frequently, how long, what does it look like? Yeah.

Deanna: So everybody's alarm clock goes off in the house. It changes at different times of the year depending on what's going on. But right now everybody's snuggle alarm goes off at 6:30am. And what that means is that we all make a beeline back to the largest bed that we have in the house.

And we all get into the bed, get under the covers and we have one big question, it's a big question we'll ask for the day. So what are you going to do to make somebody smile today? What is something that you're working on that you're really excited about? Is there anything that's bothering you that you're trying to work through? Whatever it is, we have one big question, everybody gets to answer the big question. We giggle a lot, we might do a little bit of planning, but we try to reserve that for non-snuggle time. And that's how we start our day.

Jen: I love that and I'm thinking how do I fit eight people in my bed?

Deanna: It can be done, I know, I know it can be done.

Jen: That's beautiful.

Deanna: But it's really awesome.

Jen: It is.

Deanna: And when I travel, one of the big questions, especially that my children will ask is they'll be like, "Okay, well, when are we going to do snuggle time?" So even if it means I'm calling on the phone or it means we're not all in the same space. So when I get home, you guys can stay up for an extra 15 minutes or whatever, and that'll be our snuggle time. Or

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we'll make sure we snuggle for longer on Saturday, whatever it is. But they're just as invested in making sure that we don't lose that time.

And it's important, it's now wonderful and lovely, which is this touching time and so it kind of fulfills all of our need for [crosstalk].

Jen: Yeah, and you're talking, yeah, that's brilliant. That's brilliant. Well, tell us about a time when you knew you needed to do something, or you felt intuitively, or inspired to take an action guided by God, or the universe, or your heart, and how that turned out for you?

Deanna: You mean today, this week, this year? Because I feel like every single day I am trying. I am trying to live in that space. I think one perfect – really literally everything that I do comes back to this idea of how do I shift power to marginalized communities. And I think that that is God's purpose on my life. So every time I'm stuck or I'm like should I do something or am I doing the right thing, I always come back to that.

And I just spoke at a wonderful, wonderful church and I shared this story about how one of the kind of questions I reflect on a lot is am I doing the most I can be doing? Am I using all the things that have been given to me? And even though it's a question I ask pretty frequently it's also the scariest question that I can ask, because so often the question is like, I'm like, "Yeah, the answer has to be yes because I'm doing a lot and it's whatever." And then the answer is, no, no, I've got more for you. Like there's more that you could be doing.

Jen: That's scary, yeah.

Deanna: And it's terrifying. There's times where I'm like, are you sure? Are you sure? I feel like I'm good. We're good. And the answer is no. And just how hard it is to accept that sometimes. And how I want to fight back against that. And how my mind wants to say, no, it's enough, or whatever,

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whatever excuses I want to have. I've run from that question sometimes, even though I know that that's a question I should be asking. And so I know I'm not answering it very specifically. And it's because literally I try to make everything come back to that, and everything come back to that guiding force.

Jen: I love that you have a mission statement that it's like the litmus test for every decision you're going to make. Am I shifting power to marginalize communities? Your purpose is so clear. So tell us a time when you decided not to do something because it didn't align with that purpose statement.

Deanna: Oh my goodness, so there's been so many times where I'm like, you know, I'll tell you about a specific one. So without being too specific, but I was in a position where I had a lot of influence, I was in a very well paid position, really highly visible. I had a lot of say in what was going to happen. And I was so excited because I thought that the company's vision and mission aligned perfectly with my own. And so it didn't feel like those two things were in a conflict.

And so I accepted this role and got into it and started doing it and had built a team, all the stuff, all the things that you do when you're in a big, big role. And I realized though unfortunately as I got more into it and saw the way that things were being done. So I think there was some shared understanding of where we were going to go. But the way that things were going to be getting done wasn't about shifting power to marginalized communities. It was actually about doing the exact opposite.

And as that became clear to me, and there was a couple of instances where I was like, wait, is this, you know, I was kind of questioning. And I'm like, no, no, it's not. And I don't know, but I had this icky feeling and it was getting bigger and bigger. And then there was a couple of things that really solidified for me that like how we were going to get there was completely different. And so I decided within like – oh my gosh, I think it was maybe 24

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hours, maybe 48 at the most, but I'm pretty sure it was 24 hours, that I was going to leave this position.

Nothing made up, I'm the major breadwinner for our home, I've got two small children, there's all this. Just all the things, all the things. And I've gotten to a place like earlier in my career, that would have taken me months, maybe a year to come to that decision, to understand that that was not in alignment. But now I'm really good at it. Now it's like I've practiced it enough, I know. And when I start to have that feeling I have to be really vigilant.

And I know that the longer I stay in that space the worse it is for me, and the worse it is for those around me. But yeah, having to do that was really tough, it was really hard.

Jen: That does sound tough, especially when you're the breadwinner, wow.

Deanna: I had a lovely team that I had recruited and so I have people that are counting on me. And so again, and I think one of the most beautiful gifts that happened out of that experience, lots of things. But one of the most beautiful things was I had one person who came up to me and was like, "I needed to see that." Just somebody reported to me like, "I needed to see that, I needed to see that somebody could have that courage to know who they were and stand in that integrity."

And it wasn't my intention, it was like I know who I am and I know what I have to do, and I'm going to do it. And I'm going to do it in the best most kind loving way that I can do it. But to be able to be an example for somebody else, I think that was just an added win, somebody was watching. And yeah, and I was able to do that.

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Jen: That's awesome. Were you able to speak your truth and let them know why you were leaving?

Deanna: Yeah.

Jen: And hopefully they learned from it.

Deanna: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that it supported a growth opportunity. And the question, I think the reason why I would wrestle in the past and whatever is, you also have to wonder, well, can I stay? Can I make a change? Can I be the difference? And sometimes the answer to that is yes and sometimes it's not. And I think in that situation it was when it became clear to me that there was an interest in going in a different direction. And that's okay, but I just can't cosign on something like that.

Jen: Right, good for you, integrity.

Deanna: Yeah.

Jen: Yeah. Well, favorite things, your favorite book currently?

Deanna: That is like an impossible question for me.

Jen: I know it is.

Deanna: You know what I just reread though, that I really enjoyed with my son? I reread *The Alchemist*.

Jen: It's a good one.

Deanna: And I've always loved that story. It's a book that I like to give to young people, particularly when they're making a transition either to school or out of school. But I love this idea that we all have a personal journey, this

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idea that we have to be on a quest for that personal journey. And that sometimes the personal journey we might think we're going in a line but it's really a circle. How often we circle back to things that we have experienced earlier in our life and they become part of our testimony and become part of who we are and how we become stronger.

And I just love that story, it's beautifully written of course too. But I love that story of the personal journey.

Jen: Like HGTV but for life.

Deanna: Yes, right.

Jen: That's my favorite storyline in any book or movie is the rags to riches, or not necessarily riches, but the growth, the growth journey, yes.

Deanna: Absolutely.

Jen: Your favorite happiness tool, you're not a meditator you said, but what shifts your mood fast?

Deanna: Dancing, absolutely.

Jen: Yeah, that's great.

Deanna: Absolutely, yes. If I really need to get out of a funk and I need to get out of it fast I will turn on some Prince and I will dance.

Jen: Yeah, yeah, for sure, for sure. Favorite easy meal?

Deanna: So we have been doing a lot of meal planning. And what I'm so happy to report is that literally for the last four months every meal that we've had has been an easy meal in this house, which has been just such

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a joy. But I think my favorite thing to make are bowls and really the beautiful thing about making a bowl is you can put anything in it. So I like to do Brussels sprouts with some quinoa, with maybe some raisins or sweet potatoes. Any mixture of those hardy delicious vegetables brings me just so much joy.

Jen: That's great. That sounds delicious. What's your favorite kitchen gadget? If you're doing all these easy meals you must have a gadget you like.

Deanna: I love my rice cooker. I love my rice cooker. I do not know what I would do without it. Now, I shouldn't be eating as much rice as I do. I've never been able to not burn rice, not get it stuck to the pan. And that rice cooker is just perfect, it is perfect every time.

Jen: Yeah, rice cookers. I love that.

Deanna: Amazing.

Jen: So what is your favorite life hack?

Deanna: So there is a webinar that is my most downloaded webinar because I think it's such an easy tool. And it's this hack, it's the 15 minutes purpose. So a lot of times I'll have people say that the number one reason why they can't live in their purpose is because they don't have any time. And I get it, schedules are really demanding. We have children, we have work, we have family, we have community, we have all these different things that are demanding our time.

But I tell people that one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is just 15 minutes, just say, "For the next 30 days I am going to spend 15 minutes on this project, or this idea, or this dream, or this whatever goal that I have." And then do it, give yourself that gift. And I am blown away, not only with

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what I have been able to do personally, that's why I know it works, I know why it's so effective. But blown away by what I've been able to learn from other people that they have achieved.

People who have wanted to write a book for the last 10 years, they finished the outline and the first couple of chapters. People who wanted to start a company, they write their business plan and get an investor. People who want to design something, they have some big idea, they want to design something in their company and they do it, and they have a prototype by the end of the month. Just these amazing things that come out of just having 15 minutes a day to focus on it.

Jen: 15 minutes a day, okay, that's easy, we can do that.

Deanna: Yes, very easy, very easy.

Jen: Do you want to just tell us where it's at as well?

Deanna: Sure. If you go to deannasingh.com and then you go to our training page, so you can backslash training. You will see all of the trainings that we offer. And one of them is the free purpose webinar and another one is a free webinar just on how to use 15 minutes.

Jen: Well, Deanna, the big question, what does it mean for you to be a vibrant happy woman, is there a formula?

Deanna: So I love that you ask this question about formula. For me the formula is purpose plus joy plus love.

Jen: Yeah, such a service mindset with all of those words, I love that.

Deanna: Well, thank you. I do think that I feel very fortunate that I fit into this category, that I am a vibrant and very happy – a very happy woman.

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

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Jen: Awesome. Let's have a challenge to our listeners and we'll say goodbye.

Deanna: So my challenge is to take some time, get a pen and a piece of paper and write down what you think your purpose is. I define purpose as what do you think you are uniquely positioned to do here in the world. It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be grammatically correct. It doesn't have to be something that sounds like change the world. But what is your purpose? Write it down, put it on a piece of paper, put it someplace where you can see it.

And then try to think about how you can redirect the things that you're doing with your day and how you're spending your day to get closer to that purpose.

Jen: Perfect. That is a beautiful question and I can't wait to try it myself. Well, Deanna, thank you so much for all you're doing in the world to shift that power. And thank you for being on Vibrant Happy Women.

Deanna: Well, thank you so much. I wish you all the very, very best. And I'm so happy that I had an opportunity to join you.

Alright, so let me ask you, as you were listening to Deanna talk, did you think of ways that you could contribute without attaching all kinds of meaning to what's your purpose, or what are you born to do? What about what do you enjoy doing? What do people say you're good at? What are your talents, your gifts, your super powers? What experiences in your life make you unique? And how could you take what you've learned from those experiences to help someone else get through the same thing?

I really have a belief that every struggle I've ever had happened for a reason. And I've seen over and over again as I learned to follow my heart and take the leap into the unknown, and use what I have to help others,

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people are waiting to hear a message that comes from my mess, turning your mess into a message, happens all the time. I'm sure many of you listen because you know I have tricky kids, or an interesting scientist husband. Or because I'm not afraid to share how I've struggled and made it through things.

You can do the same thing. There are people out there waiting to hear from you, who could only learn what they need to learn from you. It's kind of like each of us has a song that we're born to sing. And if we don't sing that song our music will be lost forever, kind of fatalistic, but also I believe kind of true.

So I want you to put your hand on your heart right now and answer a question. If you could do anything at all right now, and it doesn't have to mean this is a decision for the rest of your life, but if you could do anything at all right now, what would you do? Now what comes to mind? Take note of that, maybe jot it down, tuck it away.

Another question, what have people told you you're good at? Maybe you're a good listener. Maybe you're good at giving advice. Maybe you're good at asking questions. Maybe you're good at holding space. Maybe you're good at math. Maybe you're good at chemistry like my friend, Cara, who is solving a chemistry problem for me as we speak. Side note, I want to know if EMF protection is real, so there. Anyway, what are you good at? And how might someone in this world be waiting for you to share what you're good at? So simple.

Now another question, keeping that hand on your heart, what do you love to do? What could you talk about all day long if someone would listen? What is that topic that you love so much? Think about these things, let them percolate. Trust me my friends, if you have felt empty, wondering what's next, wondering how you should contribute there is something for

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you to do. And you could sit back and watch Netflix and bake brownies, or pet your cats, that's all fulfilling and valid too.

But if you have this nudging feeling that there's something more you want to be doing with your life, listen to that, journal about that today. What is it?

For me I remember getting to this place in my own life wondering how am I going to contribute? What am I born to do? And my daughter, Cora, the youngest was 18 months, was like I'm ready for my big girl job. I've done the parenting thing, been there, done that. I'm ready for some fulfillment, some meaning using my talents. And so I started to just ask that question, what should I be doing? What's right for me?

I went to yoga class, I listened, I walked, I meditated. And then finally that fateful day came when at the end of my yoga class in shava-asana pose, I heard that whisper in my head, you should be a life coach. I had no idea what I was doing. I took a leap, I enrolled in the certification. I got some clients almost immediately, it felt really fulfilling to help them. But the whole time there was fear along for the ride.

And I want you to tuck a nugget of wisdom right now into your back pocket and that is this. When you are inching closer to singing that song that only you can sing, or living your purpose in that special way, you will have more fear.

Fear is an indicator, in my opinion, that you are on the right track. If you're not scared it's not getting you enough out of your comfort zone. So follow your fear. Now, I'm not talking about dark and evil fear where you know something's terribly wrong, go hide in your closet. Talking about that fear that's mixed with excitement. When you feel that, that's an indicator you need to follow the fear, because there's good amazing juicy things on the other side.

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If I had never taken that leap to become a coach, I wouldn't have met 200 amazing podcast guests. I wouldn't have met all the hundreds of women in the Vibrant Happy Women Club. I wouldn't have gotten to work with the brand new Vibrant Happy Women Certified Coaches, plus a new round that is starting soon. All of that, all of these amazing women whom I love so dearly, I wouldn't have had any of that joy.

I can't even imagine, if I hadn't taken the leap to become a coach I would be sitting right now reading some new book which is a lot of fun, but in the end it's not a human, it's not a person, it's not making a difference in a life, which feels so fulfilling. So I want to challenge you to think about what do you want to do? What is your next best step? How can you follow the fear? And it doesn't have to be forever, but what is one thing you want to do to make the world a better place? Think about that.

And I will see you again next time, until then make it a vibrant, and happy, and joyful fear filled, follow the fear, week. Take care my friends.

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.