

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jen Riday

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You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 263. We're talking about what to do when you feel like you don't fit in or that you don't belong. So 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 friends, welcome back. We are talking in this episode about what you should do when you feel like a fish out of water, when you feel like you don't belong. I think we all have moments in our childhoods or in our teen years when we felt that way.

One of my memories was when I decided to go to a music camp. I drove three hours from my teeny tiny hometown in Southwest Iowa to the big city of Iowa City where it was a college town. Everyone was different and there were people with piercings and dyed hair and emo and dreadlocks and all the things I didn't see in my small hometown and I felt like a total fish out of water. But I took the leap, I stayed for the two weeks of the music camp, I learned a lot, not just about music but about people and who I was in the midst of it all and started to explore who I wanted to be.

And I feel like life is a series of that exact scenario, a series of things changing where we get to examine how do I want to show up in this situation? How do I want to show up with these kids? How do I want to show up now that my kids are teens? All my kids are leaving the house, what am I going to do now? Maybe I'm going to start this new career. Maybe I'm going to change careers. Maybe I want to, you know, we do these things over and over again. And I think it's beautiful because we get to explore who we want to be.

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

So in this conversation with Alberta, we're going to be talking about some of her scenarios of being that fish out of water like when she came to the US when she was about 10 years old. She came from Ghana, Africa to the US, and how that felt for her. So we talk about that and other situations. And you're going to learn and just think about as you listen how you can apply a teaching that her parents gave her and that is this. You belong wherever you go. How would your life change if that felt true for you right now? You belong wherever you go.

Different socioeconomic statuses, different education levels, different cities, different countries, different everything, you belong wherever you go. Wouldn't that make it so much easier to try something new, to take a leap into the next version of yourself? So I love this conversation with Alberta. But before we dive in I want to introduce her. So a little bit of Alberta's information, she is descended from royalty. Yes.

We're not going to talk about this in the episode but if you ever have the chance to get to know Alberta personally, ask her about being descended from royalty, from the line of Prempeh that makes her royalty. Isn't that fascinating? Anyway her name is Alberta Prempeh McKnight. She is a graduate of the Vibrant Happy Life Coach Certification. And let me tell you this, Alberta has amazing energy. I felt it immediately.

She holds big space, big compassionate space for you to explore, and think, and feel in a safe and supported way and that'll come out right in this interview, you'll feel that energy, such pure good energy. Alberta's work right now on the world with her coach certification is to help women step into a life of purpose and joy, kind of like the work she's done for herself. Alberta has a master's in public health and a master's in education from Boston University. She has two kids. She lives in the D.C. area.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

And when she's not coaching and just being her awesome self she loves to read, and do yoga, and bake, and spend time with her family and friends. You're going to love Alberta's energy, just relax and feel into it and let her energy nurture you. She has that amazing capacity that's really a rarity on this planet, makes her a phenomenal human, a phenomenal friend, and of course a phenomenal coach. So let's dive in, how to handle feeling like a fish out of water.

Jen: Hey everyone. I am talking to my friend, Alberta McKnight today. And I know her from the Vibrant Happy Women Coach Certification. And she is super awesome. Well, we're going to be talking today about what to do when you feel out of place or when you're starting something new. And Alberta was describing this and she said it's like being a fish out of water. So, Alberta, I want to dive in there and just have you describe what is it like being a fish out of water? Why is it so uncomfortable to start new things?

Alberta: Great question. So for me it's when I'm starting something new, each and every time it doesn't fail, it can be something I've done a 1,000 times but have stopped for maybe a week, or two, or a month and I'm starting it over again. And then right then and there I feel like a fish out of water. I don't know what I'm doing. I have all these thoughts in my head like I'm not doing it good enough and what have you. So that's the feeling that I have when – that I describe as feeling like a fish out of water is just the unknown, like a new baby.

So what I've learned over the years through my continuing education and of course reading and what have you is that it's a really very normal feeling. And I think for me what's the greatest, I've learned it. I've been through an education. I've had tools, resources to help me ground myself when I feel like a fish out of water during those moments.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

Jen: So that analogy fish out of water, we know it's when you feel awkward, but when you think about it, a fish out of water, they've lost their lifeline and they can't breathe, they're panicking and they're flopping and they feel like they're about to die. So what are some of the tools you use to face those moments when it's super scary, and new, and awkward, and you feel like you're about to die from, you know, the scary?

Alberta: I think my practice of yoga has helped me very much center and just breathe. The first thought for me is just breathe. And oftentimes also acknowledge I feel like a fish out of water. Just by saying that or just acknowledging that I'm feeling uncomfortable in this situation calms me. That allows me to focus on a different thought. I think about what feeling do I want to generate right now? And oftentimes in those situations for me it's calm, I want to be calm.

But always telling your truth, honestly in any situation that I've been in, when I feel awkward, when I feel uncomfortable I just name it. I'm feeling very uncomfortable, people. And it's funny because as soon as you do, do that others around you relax and then you're relaxed and it's just, it's fluid from there.

Jen: That is awesome. I love that. I'm feeling uncomfortable, people, do something here.

Alberta: Do something.

Jen: Well, so you've had some really unique experiences with feeling like a fish out of water. So let's start with your story of coming from Ghana to the US.

Alberta: Boy, the first experience of that was clearly being on the plane for the very first time was like well, what am I doing here? And then going to

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

London, we stopped in London and visited a family member. And it's just the newness of everything. And it was just, it was overwhelming, it was exciting but it was also a feeling of do I belong here? And that feeling was even more pronounced for me when I came to the US and had lived in the US for, you know, after some time of being a teenager.

I had my teens here, my formative years were in Ghana and so that feeling of do I belong, do I fit in, oftentimes comes up especially when I'm, again, starting something new or in a new environment. And what's great for me is then being grounded with my family. My family very much grounds me. They really did instill in me a sense of yes, you belong wherever you go, you may have to work and you have to read the room a little bit harder than most but don't ever feel like you do not belong.

But it still doesn't stop you from questioning. And when those questions come in my head, again, I fall back into as now as a grown woman, the resources that I've cultivated over the years. And it's all mind related. It's about really training and retraining my mind to looking at what's most important in my life versus what's lacking because again what you focus on expands. And so I do my very best to always focus on the good in my life and just the tools that I've developed or I've learned over the years and they're all mind related, just focused, expand.

Jen: Yeah, I love that. Well, so you kind of asked two questions I think all of us ask. And that kind of can cause us to feel like a fish out of water when we're focusing on these two questions. So those were, do I belong? Do I fit in? And so when you have those moments, well, can you think of an example when you felt particularly like you didn't fit in? I mean as a teen I think we all are there. But if you had come from Ghana and were in the US, and also as a person of color, I don't know if that added a factor.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

But tell us a story of how you used kind of your mindset tools, your faith, your family to answer those questions yes, I belong wherever I go like your family taught you to say?

Alberta: It's so broad and deep. I studied – so of course being Ghanaian; I came here not knowing anything about anything that differentiated me from the next person. What I was really focused on in Ghana and it has a differentiating factor is – and it's here too, but it's not as pronounced as economic status. And education, really you could be, if you're from a poor family but you are bright and hardworking, that's what would come across to other people in Ghana. And so coming here because of the race was very, very new to me, it didn't exist.

We had biracial kids, people and we had white people but there was never this idea that one was so much better than the other. And it wasn't as pronounced. Maybe it was there but it wasn't as pronounced as it is in this country, as it became for me in this country. One thing that was even more funny actually, I remember playing Barbie dolls with some of my friends, I was maybe 12 or 13 and we were all Black kids here. And someone just described me in terms of my color as chestnut.

Jen: One of the other kids?

Alberta: Yeah.

Jen: Oh my gosh.

Alberta: She was like, "But Alberta, your color's chestnut. And she's this color and that person's that color." And I was just like – also then I went home and I asked, "What's chestnut?" And my family looked at me like, "Why? Why are you asking that question?" And I just said, "Because somebody said it."

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

Jen: Oh my goodness.

Alberta: I know. “Somebody said my color is like chestnut.” And my brother and sister were like, “Okay, whatever.” They just totally did not pay any attention or go any deeper than, “Okay, you’re just crazy, crazy little kid.” But that stuck with me in a really profound way in that it was another person of color, Black girl, trying to define my color, or that differentiating factor. So it was always, and I feel like in America there are so many layers to it in this country versus in Ghana. I mean colorism is there, believe me, it’s there. People are trying to be lighter skinned and what have you.

But there’s a psychological component to it here that I’m thankful that my family very much grounded me in the culture of knowing that you belong no matter what color you are. And my family background, Jen, is very diverse. We have people who are Filipino. We have people who are German. We have people who are Canadian as well as Black and white Americans.

And so the diversity that exists in my family actually in many ways has grounded me also to be in a space no matter what the spectrum in terms of color may be to feel comfortable to show up as a person who genuinely believes in the human race versus some construct that has stuck to advance other groups.

Jen: Right. So for those – in case there’s someone listening who doesn’t understand that concept, explain how the idea of race is actually a construct and not based in science.

Alberta: I’m not a scientist. So I’ll just put that out there. But having studied social and cultural anthropology, and I think actually that’s the other layer to my education that has allowed me to step into a space and be like hey. And in part because I learned that we are – there’s one source, if you really, really do your research in terms of the source in human development. It all

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

started on the continent of Africa. And that, especially as women, we carry one element, I'm not sure exactly what it's called, it's mitochondria or something like that.

Jen: Yeah, mitochondria, yeah.

Alberta: Yeah. And we share the same thing, you and I Jen and another woman, we share the same element. So that automatically makes you my sister in so many ways. And so I think for me my education in anthropology and having come from Ghana to this country and seeing the differences or the constructs that have been developed and me questioning, or wondering where do I belong, forced me to look deeper. And to then see that really at the end of the day we're all the same people. And we're human, we bleed, you bleed, I bleed, my sister, my brother bleeds. We're all human.

And so having that perspective as we're all human allows me to be in a space or engage another person and do my best to hear what that person's saying versus me coming into a situation already having decided what that person's going to say.

Jen: Yeah, that's cool. So that idea your parents gave you of you belong wherever you go, it's kind of cemented because you know we're all part of the human race. You believe that, you know that in your core and then it helps you just show up as yourself no matter who you're around, or what they look like, or what they act like, or socioeconomic status, or anything, right?

Alberta: Anything, absolutely. And it doesn't still preclude me from feeling like a fish out of water. I could still feel that way and I could call it out and make a joke that would relax me and hopefully would relax the people around me and for us to then move beyond that to begin to find out, okay,

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

what are the commonalities. And even the differences and how I can learn from your differences as well as how you can learn from mine.

Jen: Yeah. Well, I have an example of fish out of water coming to mind, I think. You made a comment about eight weeks into the Vibrant Happy Coach Certification program. Yeah, I think you're laughing. I think you know what you're going to share. So go ahead, share away Alberta.

Alberta: Well, I don't know exactly what you are thinking. But I remember me at some point really being very transparent in how nervous I was and also recognizing that I was the only Black woman in our group and how I did question whether I will be fully embraced and welcomed and in part because there was so much going on politically around that time. I think we were very much at the cusp of when the Black Lives Matter movement was really taking off and a lot of the atrocities that had been taking place against Black men, Black boys were being highlighted.

And then here I am in this group of really wonderful women, and of course I couldn't help but yeah, very much recognize that I'm the only Black woman in this group. But I've always oftentimes been the only Black woman in certain settings. But at that time it was even more sensitive about it because of all of what was going on politically.

Jen: So what helped you stick it out? Did you just have your mantra again, I belong wherever I go? That's so cool if you were doing that, I don't know, what was the strategy?

Alberta: My color, or me being Ghanaian or a Black woman has never really stopped me from being in any settings. And maybe that's what propelled me forward, the idea that yeah, I belong wherever I go. But also I came to learn, I came to grow. So nothing was going to stop that.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

Jen: Yeah. And you're concerned that you might not fit in or, you know, how would people receive you, what was the result?

Alberta: Okay. So our course was all through Zoom. We would meet Thursday evenings with a structured assignment and depending on the assignment we would have discussions about it. And I think always our focus was how can we best support the clients that we would engage? And I think one thing I've learned as a coach is oftentimes you can't coach someone past the point you haven't been.

And being vulnerable because being a coach when you have a client, they are being oftentimes their most vulnerable selves. And you have to be able to hold space for that individual. And so if you aren't able to be in a setting where you yourself allow yourself to be vulnerable, my opinion and I could be wrong and other coaches may disagree, I don't think so, but assuming that other coaches may disagree. If you as a coach can't be vulnerable I don't see how you could fully receive your client and his or her vulnerability.

And I think our setting really, that particular setting we were all being very vulnerable, very honest about certain aspects of our lives. And at that moment that issue of do I belong here was at the surface for me and I localized it. And my fellow coaches like all sisters received me so lovingly and it was great. And again I think it's all about being present. It's all about being who you are. And yeah, my coaching sisters, buddies were most welcoming.

Jen: Well, yeah, if you call them sisters I guess your fear was eventually allayed. That's beautiful.

Alberta: Totally, yeah.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

Jen: I love that. Well, so you graduated from the coach certification and what do you do now, how do you use what you've learned?

Alberta: So I am, you know, the mind experience, being centered, knowing how to focus, refocus on what's important to you is something that I very much use, I think, Jen, you call it the thought table, supporting others to really thinking differently, seeing things from a different perspective. For me this work that I'm doing is service to humanity, is service to going back to the full circle of we're all humans and we're all here to learn and grow. How can I be of service in that way?

Jen: Yeah. So who do you help and what do you kind of help them to achieve?

Alberta: So I have this thing of saying I support women to be unapologetically strong in who they are so that they can take action to create the life they envision with confidence and joy. That's my work.

Jen: That's beautiful, unapologetically, that's a great word, beautiful.

Alberta: And I think for me that's so important because I've been in spaces where I dimmed my light to be present or to support others into feeling better about themselves but that wasn't supporting me. And having gone through that and seen that with my own friends and family members, I'm like, "No, we can't live this way." I don't want to live that way anymore. And so I am stepping up. I am being unapologetic about who I am and where I want to be. And I want to take more people with me on that journey.

Jen: Yes, for sure. So if you're working with someone and they're about to step into the version of themselves that they want to be but they have those questions, going back to those questions you've had and we've all had, do I

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

belong? Do I fit in? Can I do this? How do you help with those limiting beliefs?

Alberta: One book that we read and I love was Gay Hendricks, The Big Leap. I think this was with you one of the most powerful books I've read. And to your point about limiting beliefs and what limiting beliefs at times serve to do we think that it's protecting us. It's the monkey mind. It's the chatter in our head saying we are about to do something that's so important to you, that's when it comes up. And when it comes up what do you do? And the work that I do really is to support you to begin to look and shift, and look at things differently.

Your book or your work on the thought table is one area that really, really I think supports clients in beginning to go beyond the trouble at the border, for lack of a better expression.

Jen: Yeah, when they hit those upper limits you mean?

Alberta: Yes, the upper limits, when they hit the upper limits. And when you hit the upper limits it just means that you are now at a space where you are excited, you're ready to jump but you're fearful. So we use tools. That thought table tool is one. I love your BE HER tool where you really examine and just the superhero stance is my favorite. And so I bring such excellent tools into my practice to support women in really standing strong in who they are and to be unapologetic about what they want to achieve in their lives.

Jen: Yeah, that's awesome. And so for you, becoming a coach you must have crossed through an upper limit. I know that I've certainly done it. I went from, I guess to kind of illustrate what this means, I was a stay-at-home mom. And at the end, before I became a coach there were moments

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

of that part of my life when I was actually doing in-home childcare in addition to having my six kids.

And so you better believe, I had some upper limit issues when I first became a certified coach. I didn't feel I fit in, I was just a mom and everyone else seemed so much more smart and more advanced. Never mind that I had a PhD in human development and family studies, that's what our brain does. It tricks us into thinking we don't fit in, we don't belong. And then I did my work, I used my tools, I got through that. And then I think there is always a new upper limit that we face though. How much happiness are we willing to allow ourselves to experience?

And so one of my new upper limits is my salary is growing right now. I'm paying myself way more than I ever have. And there is a discomfort there but how can I do that when my employees don't make as much? And there's always a new upper limit. But I think that's how we grow. And I'm curious what your upper limits have looked like and how you have experienced that same concept.

Alberta: Oh my goodness. So I have been laid off a couple of times. And what that experience did to me was again dimming my light, questioning whether the work that I want to do, that I did, whether I belonged in that culture. And what those experiences also did for me was allowed me to look at my life and where I want to go. It's funny because I asked the universe to – that I want something bad, would allow me to get up and be enthusiastic every morning.

I look forward to talking with my clients every day knowing that they are stepping into their vision. That thrills me. That feeds me in so many ways that they are succeeding. And those times that I had been laid off made me feel like I couldn't, I had nothing to give to the world. And that I was useless or what have you. But that was me at that point and my upper limit in that I

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

knew I needed to get out of this way of being, of seeing myself as small because I knew deep down that I was much bigger than I was saying about me.

And so I had to take the leap. I took the leap of saying, “Hey, I know what I have to give to this world. And what I have to give to this world is supporting women specifically in being the best of who they are.” I’ll be everyone’s cheerleader as a woman. And oftentimes that’s what we need in life. And so this is where I really get my joy, supporting others in being the best of who they are. And so my experience of having been laid off pushed me to redirect my dream to really say, “Okay, this is what I’m called to do.”

Jen: Everyone, I don’t know if you can tell this about Alberta, but I quickly identified that Alberta holds space like none other. She’s got such a compassionate, loving, high vibe presence that’s just – I feel like your clients must – I mean all of the people in the program as we did our peer coaching and whatnot felt it. But your clients must just be nurtured just to be in your presence because that’s how all of us felt I feel like, so way to go, Alberta, for just being you, yeah.

Alberta: Thank you.

Jen: And what if you hadn’t taken that leap? All of that natural ability wouldn’t have blessed as many lives or maybe any in the same way.

Alberta: And I would have been miserable. I mean the pure truth, I would be where I was and I would be unhappy. And my kids would be unhappy because you know what? When mom’s unhappy, who else is unhappy? Everybody in the household is unhappy. And I didn’t want to be that woman especially I’m a mom of a daughter and a son, I love them both. But I felt even more compelled to be a better person, a better woman because of my

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

daughter. I just want her to have the best representation of who she could be as possible. It's her choice, whatever she decides to be in her life.

But I felt that it was my responsibility to be the best representation for her and that meant really putting me first and figuring out what brings me joy. And what brings me joy is supporting other women in living the best lives possible, in a more sustainable way. This coaching is not superficial; it really goes deep into the source of the individual so that whatever you do at the end of the day it's everlasting. And if your coach doesn't transform you in a way that's consistent and everlasting, even after you've left her presence or his presence, I don't know what kind of coach you've had.

Jen: Yeah, thank you. So Alberta, I am guessing there are people out there that want to experience this transformation of not only being in your presence, which is a transformation in and of itself. But figuring out and going deep and taking that deep dive to understand who they are, what they want to be and what it would look like to become their best selves. So if someone listening says, "Yes, that's me", where can they follow you, or reach you, or learn more about you?

Alberta: So yes, you can reach me at insighttransformationalcoaching.com. I know it's a mouthful. I'm also on Instagram called Insight Transformational Coach. So you can find me there.

Jen: Thank you, Alberta. Thank you for coming on and just showing us kind of what to do with those thoughts of do I belong, do I fit in and also your example of taking the leap and doing what you love. And showing your daughter what that looks like, I love this. Thank you.

Alberta: Thank you so much Jen for having me. This was – you are so amazing, honestly. You always continue to bless everyone that you come

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

in contact with. And just your generosity is just – I want to be that. I'm working on being that.

Jen: You are that. I love you. You're amazing. You are that. You guys, Alberta is our welcome wagon, our welcomer for the Vibrant Happy Women Club. And she is so good at that. You bless everyone with your presence, Alberta, for sure, so well.

Alberta: Thank you.

Jen: Alright my friend, thank you. Take care. I'll see you around.

Alberta, I love her, she is amazing. I hope you loved her energy as much as I do. And after we were done with the 'interview' we kept talking. And so you'll find a blurb after this as well. We both just felt such a juicy vibe talking to each other. So listen to the little blurb after this, you'll get a good laugh like we did. I get ridiculous and I even sing a song. Anyway I didn't know if I wanted to include that but enjoy that.

Also if you would like to be a part of the Vibrant Happy Life Coach certification or even just think about it, if you would like to take the leap and become the next version of yourself, a person who does what she loves, who has tools to handle any situation, who can hold space for other people like Alberta has learned to do so well. Go learn more at jenriday.com/coaching. We would love to have you at any time it feels right for you.

I can promise you this, nothing you do will change your life more. That's all I can say, it's absolutely true. It changes my life every time I teach a class. Each class has 10 women and we really get to know each other in such a

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

vulnerable, authentic, beautiful juicy way. Well, my friends thank you so much for listening. I hope you loved Alberta as much as I do. And stay tuned for that funny clip at the end. 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.

Alberta: Oh my gosh, I'm wondering if I gave you good stuff.

Jen: You did.

Alberta: I felt great.

Jen: No. I felt the vibe. I felt the juice, that's always a good sign, the spirit, whatever words you use.

Alberta: What I was saying, I was just like – my goodness, Jen, you are the most amazing woman, one of the most amazing women that I know. And I can't begin to tell you just how amazing you are, honestly. I just want to clothe you, whatever, in this, all of what you give and what you're making me feel right now.

Jen: Thank you. This is the beauty of a podcast, you might want one someday. You get to connect with the most amazing women and then you feel this energy across the miles. It's fascinating and beautiful. Do you feel it?

Alberta: I totally feel it and that's why I'm just like, I just want to hug you right now.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

Jen: Yeah, it happens all the time, I'm telling you. That's why I love podcasting, yeah.

Alberta: Oh my gosh, this is like – I'm just like – I feel warm and just like cotton at the same time, like cotton candy at the same time. It's just the best feeling.

Jen: Well, yeah.

Alberta: Can we just keep [inaudible]?

Jen: Well, some people – there's all the different words for it. Some say it's God, or the spirit, or some say it's the high vibes, that's always fun too. The feeling is the same no matter what people use for the words to describe it so yeah.

Alberta: Yeah. Well, what amazing, like I remember listening to you when I was going through my moment, and I was just like, yeah, this is it. You made me feel like home. And I just love that. This is, honestly, anyway, everything happens for a reason and that moment, I don't know how I connected to your podcast but that was the starting point for me saying that, "Wow, you made me feel like home." I felt connected. I felt seen. You have no idea in that moment what you talked about grounded me in a way that said, this is normal, you're okay.

Just to be a fish out of water and someone saying, "No, you're fine, this is normal." And then for you to be able to take that deep breath and say, "Okay, I could take a step and I could keep going." And this is what I really love about the work that I am embarking on is supporting women to see, yes, you're okay, you're normal. And let's just take steps. Let's just take one step at a time.

263: How to Handle Feeling Like a Fish Out of Water (with Alberta McKnight)

Jen: And now cue the song, you know the one by, I think Andra Day, And I'll Rise Up, you know that song?

Alberta: Yes.

Jen: I'm not a very good singer. Well, that's a limiting belief. Here let me try again, and I'll rise up. Is that better? Oh my gosh, I'm so embarrassed.

Alberta: No, you were great.

Jen: I'm going on American Idol next, you can come with me.

Alberta: Please do. At least we'll be entertaining together, if nothing else we would have entertained, that's all that matters.

Jen: Yes, totally.

Alberta: Oh gosh, this is so awesome.

Jen: Well, thank you so much, I loved it. I love you, you're amazing. I loved everything about it.