

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)



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Jen Riday

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You are listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. I'm Dr. Jen Riday and today with the help of a couple of great friends we're going to talk about creating emotional safety for ourselves and for others. 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. I've been thinking about emotional safety lately and how there are some places and some circumstances in my life that facilitate emotional safety, even some people where I feel more emotionally safe. And there are some circumstances, places, and people who do not facilitate me feeling emotionally safe. Why is this important? Well, after going through this pandemic we all know the importance of regulating our nervous systems so we don't increase anxiety, and depression, and overwhelm, but so we can get back to a state of rest, restore and relax.

When we are safe it's easier to help others feel safe. When we feel calm and grounded it's easier to help our kids feel calm, and grounded, and regulated, our spouses, our friends, our loved ones. We perform better. We show up with more focus, so many benefits from feeling emotionally safe. So, I've brought on two fantastic friends to help me talk about this today. First Dr. Laura Froyen who is a conscious parenting coach and Janna Denton Howes who is a desire coach.

Both of these women are highly compassionate, empathetic, and intuitive and I love them for it. So, these are to me the world's greatest experts to help me talk about creating emotional safety. I want to encourage you to find a quiet place and really listen with your heart so you can tune in and

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

start to discern, to intuit where you might need to create more emotional safety in your life and how you can do that.

Because as you'll learn in this episode, we come to the conclusion that we each are responsible to create that emotional safety for ourselves. A very empowered position to be in so we don't have to wait for others to do it for us. You're going to love this one. Let's go ahead and dive in.

Jen: Alright, so I am here with my very good friends, Janna Denton Howes and Laura Froyen and they're amazing. And rather than botching my introduction because they have so much greatness, I'll forget some of it, I'm going to let them introduce themselves. So go ahead, Laura, then Janna.

Laura: Yeah. Hi. I'm Laura Froyen. I have my PhD in human development and family studies with the specialization, marriage and family therapy which is just a long complicated way of saying that I really see children and parents as embedded in systems. And that if we want to raise happy healthy children and have flourishing, vibrant, loving parents we really need to take care of the whole system.

And so, as a conscious parenting coach I help parents have healthier, more conscious, and compassionate relationships with the people who are most important in their life, their kids, their partners, and themselves. That's what I do. And I do that on my podcast, The Balanced Parent.

Jen: Thanks, Laura, well said.

Janna: And she's amazing. She's incredible. We're just all blessed to be in her presence today.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Laura: Oh, Janna and Jen, the feeling is mutual.

Jen: Thank you. And, Janna, introduce yourself.

Janna: Yeah. So, I am Janna Denton Howes. And I talk about sex.

Jen: Woohoo.

Janna: Quite specifically.

Jen: Yeah, in what context? So that would be interesting.

Janna: In the context of I help women who haven't traditionally liked sex all that much, or looked forward to it, or felt like they were sexual beings. And maybe felt really closed off in that area of their life, guilty, shameful, resentful, all those things towards their husband. So yeah, that's what I do. And I hope I can bring some confidence, some joy, some anti-shame to the world.

Jen: Yes, anti-shame, here comes the shame. That's our theme song.

Laura: And Janna, you do that so beautifully. I've always felt so safe with you.

Jen: Me too, for sure.

Janna: [inaudible]

Jen: Alright, everyone. So, I asked Janna and Laura to join me on my podcast just 12 short hours ago. Well, no, 24, 24 hours ago and they said yes. And our topic is something I've been thinking about which is emotional

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

safety. Throughout the pandemic my experience of the pandemic has been having a heightened nervous system, and I've started to notice when I go to my office where there are no kids to interrupt me or no one's going to say anything, I feel that nervous system kind of regulate and come down, the stress comes down.

So, I've started to think about how can all of us, whether we have an office or not, create emotional safety in our lives and why it's important. So, I brought the two most compassionate, emotionally safe people I know on to help me talk about it today. So, I'm really excited. So, let's start out with you, Janna, why do we need emotional safety do you think?

Janna: I think it's necessary for us to grow and to question, and learn, and be here for what we're designed to do, whatever that purpose may be. Because if we have the opposite, which is fear, and judgment, and shame, then there's no opportunities for us to question, and learn, and develop, and be in collaboration and connection with other people. So how do we create that? That's a great question we're going to discover today.

Laura: Yeah, I just want to jump in, Janna, I so agree with you. I think that so many of us, folks come to all three of us for change, for growth. And change is a vulnerable thing, a very vulnerable thing. It's scary to look at yourself and think about how you might be contributing to the problem, how you might not know what you need to know. You might have to learn something new, it's scary and quite vulnerable. And in order for you to be vulnerable you need to have emotional safety. Yeah, it's critical.

Janna: Yeah, what do you think, Jen?

Jen: Great question. Well, I feel like I need emotional safety for me to fully switch into a state of rest and restore. And that's the same state where I feel more intuitive, where I have an easier time with self-love, where I can

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

show compassion to others. When my nervous system is amped up or I feel a little afraid of something, I'm not as present to be compassionate with my kids, with my spouse, and with myself. So, it's a big piece of happiness for me.

Laura: I so agree. I mean just even hearing you say that. I know that for me personally when I'm not doing well and I haven't felt seen and heard for a long time, it's so much harder for me to be emotionally present with my own kids. It's hard for me to be conscious, and aware, and intentional in my parenting and in my partnering, and what I say, what comes out of my mouth.

And those hurts are kind of, if I'm stuffing stuff or not feeling well regulated in my emotions as opposed to kind of holding my emotions behind a dam, or locking them in a closet, that they come out, they come sneaking out into my interactions with the people I love.

Jen: And I love that you use the word, regulated. Because the old school way and even my past way of looking at kids would be they're misbehaving. But now I'm coming to see they're picking up on emotions and they're probably not very well regulated because of stress at school, or someone had volume in the room right next to them and made them uncomfortable. How do you define that idea of regulated and how can we apply it more easily? Because it's becoming more of a norm in society, but I don't think we all understand it fully.

Laura: Yeah. Janna, do you want to talk about regulation, well-regulated or not so much? I can see your face.

Janna: Yeah. No. I'm just, that's my thinking face.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Laura: I've got it.

Janna: For me I think I look at it through the context of needs. What do I need? And I think as women we're often told not to have needs, that we should just put everybody else's needs before our own. And so, a real prerequisite to being able to be regulated is to know yourself. And what do you uniquely need in order to be regulated? For me I need a lot of alone time. An exorbitant amount of alone time.

Jen: Ditto, we're all nodding our heads, yes.

Janna: Yeah. I also need environments in which it's safe for me to talk about my mistakes or the darker parts of me to be really open and vulnerable. And what I need are for friendships, which is why I'm friends with you, is those offerings of me too, that me too reassurance is so emotionally safe for me. So, the opposite of that would be, oh gosh, I backed my car into my neighbor's car, and I just feel the warm wash of shame. And for somebody to say, "That's too bad that you're having that experience." Versus, "Oh my gosh."

I haven't backed my car into my neighbor's car, but I know exactly what you're feeling because, and then to tell a story of shame as well. For me that is just such a critical part of feeling safe.

Laura: Yeah, there is this Brené Brown cartoon, one of her very first famous cartoons on YouTube where the person is down in the depths of their depression kind of in a cave and someone is calling down for them, "Hey, are you okay in there? Are you doing okay?" And that real empathy is climbing down that ladder and joining them in the cave in the dark spaces. That image just came up when you were telling that story, Janna. I'm a visual person sometimes.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Jen: I love that.

Laura: For me well-regulated means that we aren't stuffing our feelings or denying our feelings, that we are allowing them, we're noticing them with curiosity and compassion. And we are allowing them to flow through us. So, from a research perspective, most feelings last no more than 90 seconds. And if we can just kind of stay with them, feel them, we'll notice that kind of natural ebb and flow.

But most of us didn't grow up in homes where that was really allowed. It was, "Stop that right now." That's what I heard. Or "Big girls don't cry. Don't be a little baby." Things like that, "Put that away. I don't want to see that." And we've been talking about shame. And the other piece of it that comes from my community a lot is that I think sometimes in the peaceful parenting, respectful parenting world we get this really firm message that we need to share our calm with our kids, that we need to be super even keeled, the cool, calm, confident leader and we do.

But many of us don't know how to do that and so rather than in the moment, regulating ourselves, noticing what we're feeling, taking care of our needs like you were talking about, Janna, we just stuff, we bottle it all up, stuff it down. And then use the sweet, but fake and inauthentic of, "Sweetheart, I can't let you draw on the walls right now, let's draw on the paper."

Janna: I know that voice so well.

Laura: Yeah. And we've all done it too when it's really we're on our last straw and it's all we can do to get that out. But really what would be more authentic, more real, more human, would be to – which is different than – you hear the difference that we do? The energy is different. And breathe, take that breath, and say, "I'm feeling really frustrated right now. I just

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

cleaned that wall and now there's crayon on it again. I need to figure out something to do with these crayons so that you can't get to them. I can't let you keep drawing on the walls. Walls aren't for drawing on."

And maybe you're saying this in your head, but I've got to figure out some way to hold this boundary. This is on me. I can't expect you, my beautiful, wonderful two year old who's just doing exactly what a two year old should do, to not draw on the walls. I mean, gosh, a wall is a giant canvas for a two year old who's got crayons in their hand. Of course, they're going to do that. So, I need to figure out some way to either keep that from happening or to meet that need in the child.

And so, part of this emotional safety is when we give ourselves room to notice our unmet needs and make space for our feelings and emotions, then we become more open to others' unmet needs. It allows us to see them more clearly instead of seeing a two year old scribbling on the wall being a bad kid, we see a two year old scribbling on the wall who has a need for big, bodied movement and drawing on a big space. And then we can get out rolls of paper, tape them together and then they've got a big space.

But we can't do that if we're stuffing our own feelings and not really regulating ourselves.

Jen: So, to help our kids learn emotional safety we need to, yes, model it but really, we need to create it for ourselves and then it's a natural product of that?

Laura: Yeah, embody it.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Janna: I have a question. How do you be in relationship with other people and feel that emotional safety if they are not grounded?

Jen: You guys are looking at me, aren't you? I can answer this.

Laura: I have some ideas too.

Jen: I would say as sad as this is, and I have a bit of shame to admit it, but I think anyone who listens to my podcast would know this. I don't always feel emotionally safe at home, not because I'm emotionally abused necessarily. But more because my husband grew up with enough trauma that he learned ways of coping with that, that affect how he interacts with me. That is why I find more emotional safety at my office. And the way I cope with it though is really, really meeting my own needs and really, really regulating, letting emotions move through, tons of quality self-care.

And I truly believe I don't need another human being to be happy. I stand on my own. That doesn't mean I don't want other human beings. So, I have lovely Laura and Janna, and my best friend, Kit. And so, I do have that connection. But I don't try to force it, or demand it, or feel resentful that it's not happening in my marriage per se. So, I don't know. Does that answer your question, Janna?

Janna: Huge. So, there is this piece of being emotionally safe with other people. But then it's connected to our own sense of individualism, our own being alone with ourselves. Yeah, I guess that's what grounded really means is that you're, yeah.

Laura: This is when I think reparenting and re-mothering is so helpful. Because we grow up and we expect our needs to be met by others. And as we grow and we start learning about healthier relationships, we do start

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

understanding exactly what Jen said, that really, we're responsible for meeting our own emotional needs. That those are ours. And it doesn't have to be sad. It can actually be quite beautiful and empowering. That within me I have everything I need.

And even if I didn't get the parenting that I needed, even if I'm not getting the exact responses that I need, I can give them to myself. So, cultivating a wise compassionate inner parent who you can go to, to get that support, and that validation, and that empathy I think can be quite lovely too. And doesn't have to be feel – I think it's a mistake to think that that this is lonely, or sad. I think some people can come to this conclusion of no one's ever going to meet my needs so I may as well meet them myself. And it's different than that. It's qualitative differently.

More of a piece of, I know just how to meet my needs because I'm me. I know just what I need right now. Yeah.

Jen: Yeah. I love that. And that's why I quarterly try to take a week away and why I have this office space. This might sound funny, but I truly feel as if I'm having a love affair with myself. I really do, I really love my own company, I adore it. And so, I don't know what that's about.

Janna: I love my own company too. I think I'm wonderful to hang out with.

Laura: You are. I mean, and that's how lovely is that? Because you know what? Our longest relationship that we will ever have in our lives is the one we have with ourselves, really. It's always there for us.

Janna: And my guess is that all three of us have gone on quite a journey to get to where we are. I just don't want anyone listening to think, well, I actually don't like my company, or I don't like being alone and then feeling

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

there's something wrong with them. And certainly, there are times when I get frustrated at parts of my personality. Why do I have to be so sensitive? Why can't I just let things roll off my back? There are definitely moments like that. But I really do like being alone. But if you're listening and you're kind of on the journey still, it's okay. It's okay to be on the journey.

Jen: Yeah, for sure. Janna, I wanted to ask you specifically about this idea of creating emotional safety around our bodies and around sex. Because that's an area where there's a lot of shame and a lot of fear for many women.

Janna: Yeah, it's interesting. I was trying to understand the difference between emotional safety and physical safety. I think a lot – I'd love to know your thoughts about this, a lot of what I talk about is physical safety first because it is that more primal, more I don't know, base need. And then we're able to get to emotional safety. Or maybe it's emotional safety first. I don't know. Maybe it's not linear like this.

But understanding yourself, and your needs, and your boundaries is so critical to be able to have an intimate experience with anybody. I think it's Brené, I think we're just going to quote Brené Brown a lot. She said, "The most boundaried people are actually the people who can be the most intimate with others." And when it comes to sex and your body, gosh, can you get any more intimate with somebody? So, knowing yourself and what you like and what you don't, being able to communicate that clearly is such a prerequisite to anything.

And I think the emotional safety piece comes in when there is that vulnerability that you are allowed to be who you are, just who you are and be accepted for that. And not only accepted but be valued for that. And I think in the marriage relationship, which is what I specialize in, it's not only that, it's an appreciation for your differences. So, seeing each other as

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

complementary to one another. For me that brings tremendous emotional safety.

Jen: And for you, Janna, was it always emotional safe in your marriage?

Janna: No, definitely not. I got married really young. And I don't even know if that's – because I see people who get married older, and they have the same challenges. So, I think not knowing myself was a real detriment in the early days. And so, I knew something was off. I knew things were off in my relationship and my sex life. But I wasn't able to articulate that. And so, I was chronically unsafe both physically and emotionally.

My husband had a lot of anxious attachment which made me feel like I was put into a box that I had to meet his happiness needs for everything, not only in a sexual experience but just in daily life. Going out with friends was a real trigger for him, me going out with friends. But I didn't know that. I thought that was a normal experience of a romantic relationship. And it wasn't until some big light bulbs went off in my head that I was able to start creating emotional and physical safety for myself.

Jen: And the safety came from you though, you had to decide you wanted it and you had to create it with your boundaries?

Janna: 100%, yeah, I was the spark of change, completely.

Jen: How about for you, Laura, when are some times in your life when you haven't felt emotionally safe and how did you create that for yourself?

Laura: Yeah. So, I mean I really think that emotional and physical safety really go hand in hand for me. I think our nervous systems are very deeply, those two things are deeply integrated with each other. And so, I think that

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

it's really quite necessary to be thinking about both of them. There have been moments where I certainly haven't, I mean, yeah, I grew up in a setting where I was the most emotional and sensitive of anybody in my family, feelings continue to be something that's rather uncomfortable for my family to discuss. And I had a lot of them.

And so, I think there was this element of feeling emotionally unsafe a lot growing up for me, in my life there has been kind of a constant search for people who will finally get me. And I've found some here. But really the biggest growth for me is understanding that I cannot keep looking for that outside of myself. I really have to start looking for it and creating it within myself. And that when I put pressure on other relationships, so when I put the pressure on my husband to meet all my emotional needs, to say a perfectly crafted and delivered therapeutic validation phrase.

Maybe one of my colleagues would have been able to do, that's just not realistic and it's so much pressure. And it feels like a love test to both of us, one that my husband can never meet. And so, he was constantly feeling like he was failing because he couldn't figure out how to show his love for me in a way that I really thought I needed. And so, in figuring out how to meet my own emotional needs, validate myself, comfort myself, have deep compassion for myself. That really freed things up in my marriage and in my parenting too.

Lots of us grew up in codependent relationships where we as kids were responsible for our parents' feelings. And if we don't want to perpetuate that again we've really got to get a handle on this, on meeting our own emotional needs.

Janna: I have a question for you, Jen, actually.

Jen: Sure.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Janna: I just feel like you're the queen of this, you're the queen of grounded-ness, and boundaries, and all these delicious things, and self-care, and creating emotional safety for yourself. When did you learn it?

Jen: That's a funny question. I learned it when my pain became so great, I couldn't tolerate it anymore. So that day was a day I had my sixth miscarriage on Christmas day. And we drove an hour to a hospital, and I was upset that my daughter was in a poopy diaper. She was going to have a rash by the time we arrived. And I said something. And because it was a stressful moment and my husband's not great with stress for the most part, he was triggered, he responded. It was a knock down drag out fight on the way to the hospital.

And my story was, I'm having a freaking miscarriage and he just called me that name, not okay. And I went alone into the ER on Christmas day, and he sat in the car. It was just so starkly awful and clear to me that that was not okay anymore, that that's the day I said, "That's it, I am going to be happy no matter what. I am putting myself first no matter what." And I didn't look back. That was the moment. It's clear as day, so yeah.

Janna: I have a moment like that too. I wonder if that's just part of it, that we have those bottom out, horrible times where it almost triggers ourself to say, "No more."

Jen: Yeah, what was your moment?

Janna: My moment, I had two moments when it comes to sex anyways, and that's where I've done the most growth in my life. One moment was I realized I could just never have sex again unless I really wanted to. Anything else was non-consensual. And so, I wrote out a script, I read it to my husband, and he freaked out because sex and love were connected for him. And his masculinity and who he was as a person and his importance

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

in the world was connected with sex. So, I ended up sleeping at my friend's house that night.

That was the first time he had ever talked about divorce. That was that one moment and I felt so calm. Did you feel calm, Jen, or the sense of knowing?

Jen: Absolutely. Absolutely, grounded, and clear, and powerful.

Janna: Powerful. And he was a tornado of emotion. I mean he was raging, and crying, and begging, and threatening and all sorts of delightful stuff. And I was able to actually be with him in compassion because I wasn't wrapped up in it. I was just so done. What about you, Laura, have you had a moment like that?

Laura: Yeah, when I quit my job. Yeah, so I was a professor. I had worked for 10 years practically to get this dream job. I was pregnant. I was in a car accident, healing while you're pregnant is really hard. So, after I had the baby then things were really messed up. And I had to kind of recover from the car accident twice basically. And I was in bed, and I had just finished – I'm sorry, I'm going to cry. And so, I had just finished nursing Evie. And we had had to hire a nanny because I couldn't carry my child.

I couldn't walk and hold her at the same time. I was too weak. And this word has been taking me time to say but I was disabled at that point in time. And I was just done. I couldn't do anything more. So, if I went to work, I was back to teaching at that point in time, if I went to work, I was just – I had nothing left for my family. I couldn't stop being a mom. I couldn't stop being a wife. I couldn't stop being a person. And so, the professor thing was the only thing that could go. And so, it went, and I was just calm, this is it, this is what's right.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

And I had been through academia, you've got your degree with assistantships, the academia has invested in you, now you have to give back. There's just lots of pressure. I had papers in the works. It was hard to say goodbye. People were not happy about it. And that sense of just, I was able to be super calm, and yeah, I understand, and this is what's right for me and just reset the boundary, set the boundary.

Jen: Wow. Well, this blows my mind. These stories are all so powerful and I'm guessing everyone has a story like this. We just have the luxury of getting to share it.

Laura: I'm guessing that there are people listening who are in it right now, who are literally having that experience in their lives right now.

Jen: So collectively what advice would we give to someone who is ready to create emotional safety, or at least they know they don't feel emotionally safe? I will add that when I feel emotionally safe, I feel really calm, and grounded, and centered. So, I feel it would be something that's the opposite of that if people are unsure. What do you guys think? When you're emotionally safe how do you know?

Janna: I think it depends who you're talking about. If it's with a friend it's a feeling of if I'm not safe, it's like I am getting very depleted. And it's very one-sided and it feels uncomfortable. It's just like an inner ickiness that this isn't, I really don't want this to happen again in the future. So, if it's with a friendship there have definitely been friendships that I have had to let kind of fizzle out naturally just because I don't think it's good for anybody if one person is feeling emotionally unsafe.

In a marriage it's a little different because there's this commitment there and it's a different type of relationship. So, I wonder, just because we've all had the shared experience of that energy of creating a boundary, of this

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

knowingness. I guess my question to both of you is do we need to wait for that? Does there actually need to be the energy there and motivation?

Laura: Does everybody have to come to a crisis point in order to start enacting this?

Janna: I mean I want to say no, I'm just curious about it.

Laura: So, I think it was that knowingness, that done feeling, that confidence of this is what's right for me right now I think can come from that place. I think it's harder perhaps if you haven't had that, kind of that breaking point, that tipping point moment. Because you're unsure of yourself, can I do this? Can I have this boundary for myself? Am I allowed to do this?

Janna: That's what it is.

Laura: Yeah, this kind of just questioning and this, ooh, this feels different and radical. And is this okay? And then that's just more opportunity for noticing, curiosity, sitting with yourself in that. And so, I think it's harder to start trusting yourself.

Janna: Is this cultural conditioning as well or what women face?

Laura: Yeah.

Jen: I think so. And I think there's also a buildup to getting to that point where prior to my big low point and shift, I did self-care for years. I had learned to love myself. So, I think the path doesn't always have these big peaks of change. But it can just be slow and steady too.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Janna: Or can it come from externally? Maybe someone's listening to this podcast and just being able to reflect, do I feel emotionally and physically safe right now in all of my relationships? Maybe you've never had that opportunity to pause and reflect. Maybe you never even knew that that was a possibility for you. Maybe you didn't even know that it was a thing. So maybe it can come from things we read, people we meet, resources we seek out as well.

Jen: And sometimes you just come across something. I remember Laura, well, we were having a conversation the three of us, and we came up with this idea that we have the right, I think you said, Laura. We have the right to feel heard, and seen, and valued at home. And that was kind of a crazy concept to me. I always thought your spouse was someone you had to tolerate sometimes. And that is true.

But maybe part of the secondary question is do you feel seen, and heard, and valued in your friendships, in your marriage, by your kids, at home, at your job? And maybe that's the requirement for emotional safety.

Laura: Yeah. I want to be super clear for parents, we cannot expect, so when those relationships – I think it's really important that we don't put on our kids to make us feel emotionally safe.

Jen: True. I should have added adult children perhaps.

Laura: Yeah, it's true, Jen. And I mean and it's not, it's important to talk about. So, it certainly is not I'm trying to come down on you or anything. It's just I think lots of parents do feel undervalued and unappreciated by their kids. And when that feeling bubbles up, that sense of resentment, I do so much and all they do is complain. That's our cue that we're looking for our value, and our worth outside of ourselves. And those are invitations to

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

actually not go seeking it from our kids, not seek that was a great dinner, mom. Or, wow mom, you made these beautiful cupcakes.

But actually, go to ourselves and be like, “Yeah, that was a yummy dinner.” “My cupcakes are beautiful.” Get it from us and if they weren’t, even if it was the ugliest cupcake I’ve ever seen, you know what? I’m freaking worthy of love and kindness, it’s just within me. So yeah, but yes, I do think we all deserve to feel heard, and seen, and valued in our homes and our kids do too. I think that kids get left out of that equation a lot.

Jen: Yeah, for sure. And how do we define it? My husband is a very great lover, my kids’ friends listen to this podcast and now they’re snickering. But who’s to say that that’s not the way he shows that he sees and values me? I need to be better at receiving that love and not just assuming it needs to come in certain forms. And like you said, I give it to myself as well. So, I guess I kind of believe in that statement, we deserve to feel seen, heard and valued but also, we can give it to ourselves, and we can receive it in different ways, yeah.

Janna: It’s such a balance, isn’t it? My husband and I have been doing a lot of renovations around the home. And so, we did a back patio together. And because he was the one who was actually up on the ladder putting the nails into the wood, he got all the praise from people. People come over, “Ooh, John, so awesome, looks so great.” But in the backend, I paid for all of it, first off, just saying. And also, there was a lot of my thought that went into it, the design of it.

I was the one who picked the wood. We discussed the kind of cover we would have, so it wasn’t too loud when the rain came, but provided that shelter for us, the size of it. So even though John, my husband has a lot of traits that are very rewarded in the world, he’s the doer, the spontaneous one, the fun one in the family. I am the quieter, more sensitive, more

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

intuitive one which I have equal value. So certainly, I can look within and do that myself.

But also, I brought this to my husband's attention. "Hey, John, what I need in our partnership is for you to see me, to value me and to acknowledge that I am an equal partner in the things that we do together." And I do that for him. We want to model what we want to come back to us. So even though sometimes his spontaneity drives me crazy, I see the value in that for our family.

And I felt like it was time to just be really clear that here's what I need you to say back to me, "Janna, I value your more sensitive intuitive gifts. You have value in our relationship. I see you for who you are, even if the world doesn't necessarily value those kind of traits." And so, it's been a really exciting and cool change in our relationship.

Jen: And again, you were the foundation of creating that emotional safety for yourself instead of waiting for others to do it.

Laura: I really love that, Janna, that it's okay to ask for our needs to be met.

Janna: Very specifically. I will tell him, "John, this is what I need you to say, Janna, I see." I will give him and then he'll repeat it back. And some people say that's not authentic, that doesn't mean that it matters. I think that's garbage. I think my husband will just not say it if it's not true. But if he truly feels it, why not tell him exactly what I need so that he doesn't have to read my mind? And I feel that's something we practice in our friendship too. We let each other know what we need out of the conversation.

Laura: I was one of those people, Janna, for a long time who thought, I don't want to have to tell him what to say. I want him to know what I need to

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

hear because that means he loves me, because if he really knew me, if he really loved me, he would know what to say. That's just not true. It's illogical. He's a different person. What feels good to him in terms of appreciation, and valuing, and acknowledgement, is radically different than what I need and it's okay. That doesn't mean that he doesn't appreciate me.

It means that the words for expressing it he would likely choose different words. And sometimes I need specific words and it's okay to give him those specific words.

Jen: I love this. So, I've heard us, if we were kind of creating a list of things people can do, one would be to assess, do I feel emotionally safe? Number two, what boundaries do I need to set to feel emotionally safe, like an alone time, a space where no one bothers me, even if that's the minivan. And then number three, asking for what we need. Wow, a novel concept, yeah.

Laura: Yeah, so uncovering your needs first, so uncovering, what are my unmet needs? What are my needs?

Jen: How do we answer that, Laura? How do we know what we need if we've never done this work?

Laura: What are we feeling resentful about? And I mean our intuitive muscle, this is something that Janna is so brilliant at teaching. But we as women, I think have been trained to ignore, and subdue, and push away our intuition since the time we were little. From the time grandma walked in and said, "Give me a hug." And we said no, and our parents shamed us for not wanting the hug. And it starts so young, especially for our girls, that intuition just gets shamed out of us, gets pushed to the side.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

And so, learning, I guess, I don't want to brush past the beautiful process of tuning into your needs, that is a practice and a muscle building activity in and of itself. So, it's not so much how do you figure out what you need, but how do you give yourself the prompt, and the time, and the space to discover what you need? I think that's more important than anything else that. Because it's hard at first, it's hard to give yourself permission to even ask what do I need.

Janna: And it's ever changing. So, I love that, Laura, focusing on just the process of discovery is actually the most critical part. Because our relationships will change, our hormones will change, our age will change, our life circumstances are going to change. And hopefully we will evolve. So just the process of evolving will create new needs for us.

Laura: Yeah. And we'll get better over time. I think too we get impatient with ourselves. We're very impatient beings. Okay, I know the things, I listen to the podcast now, let's do it. But it takes a long time. If you are listening to this and you're 35, you've spent probably 33 of those years suppressing your intuition. So of course, it's going to take time to figure out how to listen to it again.

Jen: And even practically speaking, space and time, space and time are the beginning of it.

Laura: Dedicated space and time. And it's an epidemic right now when it comes to women, a lack of space and time.

Jen: Absolutely.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Laura: It's crunching our souls, it's hurting us. The research that's coming out on women right now out of this pandemic, it's bleak and dire. And we need help.

Janna: We really do, we need each other. We need other women around us that are going to lift us up and who are going to support us and be a safe space to discover emotional safety because you need safety to discover it. What does it look like to be in community with other people?

Laura: And permission, other folks who are standing up with you and saying, "Yes, this is important. Yes, we matter." It's okay. And we're taking this space and time right now. It's hard to do on your own. It feels radical when you're doing it on your own. But when you're doing it with others, it feels safer.

Jen: Yeah, for sure. You have me thinking about the Vibrant Happy Women retreat. There are women there who tell me it's the first time they've ever done anything alone. And it blows my mind, and you can see them release the layers of stress and the tears fall and they leave with their shoulders back with clarity. And I think deep down the reason I even have this podcast is I want every one woman to feel that confidence, and that groundedness, and that community and that clarity that feels so juicy.

Laura: I'm so excited for the retreat, Jen, I'm so excited, I cannot wait for it. During COVID I've done a couple of solo little times away. I'm so ready to be with people again, to be in a space that feels safe physically. Because I know you've got a lot of plans in place to make it, and emotionally. I'm very much looking forward to that time.

Jen: I'm excited for your parenting workshop there, Laura.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Laura: It will be fun.

Janna: Jen, I have a quick question for you about that. What have you learned about the women who have made this a priority for them? What barriers have they had to overcome to make the investment, the financial investment, to make the boundary with their partner, that they are going to leave, to set up childcare? That's a really big step. So, I'm wondering just if someone was listening to this thinking, oh gosh, that sounds so amazing. I really want to go but all these other fears, what would you say to her?

Jen: I would say, and what I've heard is these women just take the leap and then they figure out the rest after the fact. They sign up and then they're like, "Oh, okay, now I need childcare. Mom, can you come stay?" Or "Hey, I signed up for this. I need it, I just went through a pandemic, honey, I'm going to this." And they tell that they're going. And if it's financial, there are ways to find that money. Some people have done door dash to earn the money for the retreat.

Laura: Or sold stuff on Facebook. But what it sounds like you're saying is that there's that moment of certainty. And that joining, saying, "Yes, I'm doing this", joining gives you that certainty and then figuring out the details. I also want to just say that some of the best things I've ever done for my husband's parenting has been leaving them alone, and not micromanaging it, not making meals for them and not telling them the calendar and who's got a birthday. Just they will figure it out. If they don't make it to the party, that's disappointing.

If they eat chicken nuggets for five days, that's food, that's protein, great. But letting them figure it out, it has boosted my husband's confidence, it's been beautiful for their relationship. And so, there's that piece of it too that I think is quite lovely.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Jen: That's absolutely true. And now that I look back the reason I can leave so easily to go places and have my husband say, "No problem", is because I had to do it that first time and be very scared. And he had to learn he could manage them. And there was one night when they were up way too late playing video games on a school night, but they survived. And I came back happier and now I can leave with no problems because we both know the other person can handle it so yeah, that's awesome.

Well, I feel emotionally safe with you both. I feel emotionally juicy now. I love that connection I have with you both. Any last words of advice from either of you about emotional safety?

Laura: Yeah. One thing I've been thinking about this whole time that again, imagery really matters to me. It's something that really helps me. So, one thing that I know about myself when I'm not feeling emotionally safe, I feel closed off. Kind of there's this contraction within me that it's almost like you know those flowers that close up in the evening, where they close up? And some are, they kind of close up or a time lapse of a flower closing. And when I'm feeling emotionally safe, I feel like I'm blooming, I'm open and can receive and can give more freely.

And so that for me, that imagery as a check-in is always really helpful. So, I'm in a space, am I like a bud or am I like a flower that's bloomed? And how does that feel? And what do I need to do to feel safe opening? Yeah, those are my last thoughts.

Jen: I love that. Let's be a blooming flower. How about you, Janna?

Janna: I really can't think of anything to wrap this up with so I will with just vulnerability, that I don't have anything wise to say here except for thanks, Jen, for facilitating this conversation. This has been so wonderful. I just think you're brilliant. So that's my final words.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

Jen: Aww, thank you.

Laura: Me too, Jen, it's always a thrill to get to talk to you and the space that you create on this podcast is so incredibly safe.

Janna: It's so safe.

Laura: We met because I found your podcast and then realized that we were practically neighbors. But it is, it's just always been a very safe place for me.

Jen: Thank you.

Laura: Your voice is a safe – and you tell the truth.

Janna: I find when people tell the truth, I feel really safe with them. So, I love your truth telling.

Jen: Thank you. I love you both so much. I love both of you for your compassion, and your intuition and juicy, I love it. You guys, if you want friends like this...

Laura: Have a podcast. That's how you met us both.

Jen: Set the intention, they will come, I really believe it, yeah. Thank you both, I appreciate it.

Janna: Thank you.

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

I am so grateful for Janna and Laura, and that they're my friends, that they're so compassionate, and loving, and warm, and emotionally safe. And I didn't always have that in my life. I didn't even know it was something I would want in my life. I think a lot of times we understand we want to have likeminded friends. We want to find friends who love self-help as much as we do, who love a good Brené Brown book. I'm so grateful that I found that.

And you know what else? I found that by meeting so many of you who are listeners, I feel like we are kindred spirits, heart-centered loving friends who want to feel emotionally safe with each other. Now, if you want that in your life set that intention. I want to have emotionally safe likeminded friendships. Set that intention.

Maybe you go so far as to join us this year or next at the Vibrant Happy Women retreat where I can tell you this, it is a healing and emotionally safe space, everyone feels it, everyone adores that feeling, that friendship, that camaraderie where we can all heal, and grow, and up-level our lives together. It's very special, very, very special and I'm grateful to be a part of it. You can learn more about the retreat and sign up to join us at jenriday.com/retreat.

And you might choose to do more of that virtual friendship building. And you can do that by joining us in the Vibrant Happy Women Club and that's at jenriday.com/club. You deserve to have emotionally safe spaces, friendships, and relationships in your life. And those begin when you decide you want them and you're willing to go out and get them. I really believe that.

My friends, I love you so much. I honor you for the work that you do to increase your happiness, to feel emotionally boundaried and safe, and to create those spaces for your loved ones in return. It's a beautiful thing that

295: Emotional Safety (with Laura Froyen and Janna Denton Howes)

you do. I love you all. I will see you again next time. Until then make it a vibrant and happy week. 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.