

305: Raising Authentic Teen Girls (with Eliza Reynolds)



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Jen Riday

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You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. I am Dr. Jen Riday and today we're talking about how to help ourselves and our teen and tween girls to be authentic and real and let go of those social shoulds. 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, there my friends, I'm recording this just after the holidays. And my thought for you today is I hope you're taking care of you. I've noticed a huge influx of self-improvement and diet posts all over social media. And there comes this pressure sometimes at the beginning of the new year to do, and achieve, and become. And that's fantastic, if you're feeling that, you go.

On the other hand I want to challenge you and encourage you to surround yourself with people who nurture you, people who lift you up and help you naturally want to be better in a healthy way rather than a striving and got to do this and pressured way. That's why I love my guest today, Eliza Reynolds because she has created a community for girls to do just that. And as you know, I have created a community for women to do that in the Vibrant Happy Women Club, community, support, people who see you and hear you.

Spaces where you feel nurtured and held are essential especially now. Let's try doing our new year's goals and our new year's intentions in a new way rather than the pressure and the striving to do it from a place of gentleness, and love, and really just support.

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Well, my friends I am super excited about today's guest. Eliza is the founder of something cool and I'm going to let you hear that from her. Let's go ahead and dive into this episode.

Jen: Hey, everyone, I'm talking today with Eliza Reynolds. And we're talking about teen girls. And so many words and ideas flood to mind, many of them stereotypes, maybe some of them with some truth about what it means to be a teen girl, to have a teen girl, to be the mother of teen girls. And so I'm excited to have an expert here to talk to us about that. And I will go ahead and let you introduce yourself, Eliza.

Eliza: Hi, everybody, I'm Eliza. I'm a professional mentor aka a professional big sister. And for the last 15 years I have been working with thousands of pre-teen and teenage girls, or folk socialized as girls who are tired of faking it, whatever it is. Whether it's obsessed with how they look, wanting to feel more confident at school, feeling anxious. And who want to feel more confident in being their real selves. And so my amazing company, Badass Girls provide intergenerational mentorship experiences online and on in person retreats during the summers.

And I actually started doing this when I was 15 years old. So I've been doing this since I was a teen. I am 30 now. So I teach it actually with my mom, I don't know if you know that, Jen. But my mom and I wrote a book, *Mothering and Daughtering: Keeping Your Bond Strong Through the Teenage Years*. And my work really began with mothers and daughters and changing what can sometimes be a painful inheritance around that relationship, how we can do it better. And from there I got really passionate and obsessed about doing things differently with teenage girls.

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I've worked for Planned Parenthood, did a lot of interesting things and Badass Girls has been our latest adventure providing these circles of support for pre-teens and teens.

Jen: So great. So you mentioned Mothering and Daughtering, that's your book. So many eye rolls happen when moms start to talk about their teen girls. Why is that notoriously often a difficult relationship and what can we do about that?

Eliza: Yeah. So I think it starts with a story we tell ourselves. And this can be difficult because we can then feel like we have so much reinforcement, and behavior, or a lived experience. But it starts with a story because I would say that 90% of us listening in to this conversation would start with a negative stereotype when it comes to mothers and teenage girls, whether you have one, whether you were one, whether you're watching a poorly written joke on a TV show. What we see again and again, and we hear again and again is it'll be awful.

Teenage girls are mean, bratty, selfish, self-absorbed, judgmental, it's like the movie, Mean Girls just plays on repeat and that there's no way to avoid it. What you have to do is survive the teenage years. And then one day if you're lucky, maybe sometime in their 20s will actually want to talk to you again. And it'll be so exciting. And so that's where I began with this work actually when I was 15 was I felt, I saw, I experienced the negative stereotypes being a teenage girl myself.

I remember I turned 13 and one of my best friends came over and he was like, "Congratulations, now you can slam the door and roll your eyes." And I was really confused because I was like, "Come on, there's got to be more to it than that." And one more story.

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My mom, this was actually right around the time I turned 13, so this infamous beginning of the teenage years she always told this story and it stuck with me so deeply because she was in the grocery store. And she ran into a friend, not a close friend, more like an acquaintance. They were catching up and she went, “Oh, right, you have a teenage girl. I am so sorry. How is it going?” And I think people listening in won’t be that surprised. It felt almost like she was saying you have a disease or a very bad pet, with a level of like checking in.

And bless my mom, she would always say from this place, “Actually it’s going so great, Eliza is amazing.” Because she refused to throw me under the bus, so to speak, as generations before had done. And she said, “Yeah, it’s intense sometimes but it’s also creative and exciting and difficult.” Like life is sometimes, so it begins to me with trying a different story and noticing how we talk about teenage girls. I do think there is a very gendered lens to this. And the teenage years are intense. We know this. We could go into it.

The rollercoaster of hormones, and emotions, and then all of the choices that come up and the growth of into more independence, and trying to figure out healthy dependence, all these things. Now, this is my big theory in working with thousands of pre-teens and teens for 15 years is that teenage girls trigger the heck out of us. It’s got more to do with us than it does to do with them. So the very thing that our culture, our dominant culture is most uncomfortable with are a lot of the things that teenage girls are going through in their development.

So let’s start with the big feelings, the feelings rollercoaster. Anyone who’s got a teen or been a teen know, oh my God, when it is sad it is so sad. When it is happy it is so happy. When it’s angry it’s so angry. The big intense waves. How many of us adults truly got the support in our own teenage years to know that all feelings are good feelings? Yes, we don’t

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want to do harm with them, but the truth is I think so many of us got told there were good emotions and bad emotions, almost like it was split into a binary of two lists. It's better to be nice. It's better to have other people like you.

When actually all feelings are good feelings. And when we shut down some of the ones that we're more uncomfortable with which often are anger, sadness, etc., get put into the bad emotions category in our culture. Then they don't go anywhere, they just fester. And so [inaudible], I'll do a quick list like sex, sexuality. They're figuring out their sensual sexual self. Dominant culture tends to be incredibly uncomfortable with conversations, healthy conversations about sex, pleasure, intimacy. And our teens are in the middle of figuring that out.

Alcohol, substances, spirit, purpose, all these things, huge questions on the threshold to adulthood, our teens are in the middle of. And often we didn't get the support as teenagers to then get in the muck with them in a healthy way. And so we kind of regress to our teenage years, freak out a little bit and don't know how to find our own center. That being said, the other piece I'll say about mother daughter relationships is I don't think mothers, parents, people raising pre-teens and teens have the support that they deserve.

We're talking about it more say in the postpartum, our younger years, then we get teenage years, and we just say, sink or swim parents, it's kind of going to suck, get through it. But I think you all deserve more support, you're freaking rockstars. And this is where we need to look at what's the village of support that helps you raise a teen and that's what I'm really passionate about.

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Jen: So much here. So you mentioned all the feelings being allowed. I thought of Serena Williams, in a tennis match she got angry and just said something to a judge and she was – I don't know – docked a point or something. And John McEnroe had – or is it Macintyre? Anyway, a male tennis player threw totally horrible tantrums, throwing his racket on the ground and the judges would allow that because he was a male. Serena was a female, also African American. So shame on you, don't you dare speak back. It's a huge issue.

We want our teens to learn this, but I feel as a group maybe generationally people my age, Gen X maybe, even obviously Boomers probably. We're all learning this as well as adults how to allow our big feelings, how to be okay talking about sexuality and pleasure, how to unleash ourselves from patriarchy, and rules, and conformity. So how do we start as adults so we can better do this for our teens?

Eliza: I love that you're asking that question. It's such a vulnerable place to be too and I want to honor that if anyone's feeling a little bit uncomfortable. Oh, wait, I have to go look at those places in me? You've so got this. And folks have often heard of inner child work, with a concept of relating to yourself when you're really young. Maybe it's play doing fun things, being creative. I'm really here for inner teen work. I think so many of us have a part of ourselves, you might call them, there's often psychological theories and approaches based on this, that didn't get fully met and developed.

And so a part of us kind of got stuck in the teenage years. One example that I see of this very frequently is how we talk about what we call toxic mean girl culture. And rarely do I have to explain what that means unfortunately. I wish I did. But really it's the negative dynamics, and we can see the social dynamics in middle school and high school that are stereotypically and realistically prevalent.

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People often say, “Okay, you survived one middle school or high school as a girl. Oh my God, I’m so sorry, it’s my kid and now I have to go through that.” But it’s a thing that stays there. I’ve got to say, some of the most stereotypical toxic mean girl behavior that I see is with adult women to adult women.

Jen: Oh, yeah, I’ve seen that.

Eliza: Right. And we can all see the toxic mean girl that never left middle school. She grew up but she didn’t really learn how to, for example, be collaborative rather than competitive, how to be discerning, rather than judgmental. A lot of these things we didn’t learn because wasn’t modeled for us, wasn’t taught to us. And so we internalized some pretty negative stuff. And that’s one example to me of how we can get stuck in a social dynamic and never really grow into an emotional, intelligent, mature adulthood in certain specific areas of our lives.

And so to me that means going back and taking some of the practices or wishes you’d have for your kid, or really kind of the medicine that you want your kid to have and giving it to yourself as well. So that if you notice, when my kid has a meltdown teen tantrum and they are so angry, and frustrated, and tired, it triggers the heck out of me. I get shaky, get a little scared because anger was really hard in my home and I felt scared when I was growing up when someone was angry, so I just don’t know what to do.

Instead we could start to be, okay, maybe this is an invitation for me to go and notice my own relationship with my anger. How do I healthily express my anger, where did some of that get shut down or blocked rather than making the blame on your kid that they have a problem with anger. We can start with ourselves and then have a more active assessment. So that might look like talking to friends about it, journaling practices, therapy,

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coaching. There's so many ways we can go into our relationship with ourselves.

But it means basically reopening that chapter in our lives about our teenage years which can feel exciting, can feel fun, it can feel creative. It can also feel really painful and really tender if some of those times were hard, or a lot of the adults in our lives at that time didn't know how to accurately meet our developmental needs which unfortunately can be pretty common.

Jen: These patterns pass on, and on, and on unless we start to see them. That's beautiful. So I have a 14 year old teen, my only teen, I have a tween as well. It's so funny, I consider myself a fairly emotionally intelligent individual. I understand we're going to have big emotions. I understand we should allow all the feelings. Yet the other day, it's so funny, my daughter loudly kind of said no to a request she would normally honor, something maybe like unloading the dishwasher.

And before I could even get my brain to fire properly, I had this automatic response, that was exactly what my mom had said to me, "Don't talk to me like that." So it came out of my mouth. Then that's so fascinating. So you're saying, when we have these automatic patterns we might have learned or we feel triggered by something our teens did that we can journal, do inner teen work. So what does that look like, inner teen work, really the nitty gritty of it? How would I have done that in that situation?

Eliza: Yeah. So inner teen work would have been because you said the thing, because the reaction happens, the reaction happens. You said the thing, might have looked like a pause, love the pause tool, taking a breath. If you have the capacity, turning to your kid and going, "Well, I'm noticing something. I just said something that my mom used to say to me, isn't that

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so weird or so interesting? And I'm feeling a little shook up. And I'm going to go take a moment. And I want to come back to this conversation."

So that's the first thing is you're an adult, taking space from the kid. And then you're going to get your needs met by another adult or go meet your own needs solo. So then it might be looking at what are your self-resourcing or centering practices. Could be a walk in nature, it could be going to bed with your journal, it could be calling a friend, it could be texting your coach, or your therapist, or a partner. For example it could be talking it out. Sometimes there are unfelt feelings that get stuck.

It might be going, "Wow, how did I feel when my mom said that to me as a teen?" It's about giving that teen, that inner teen a voice and meeting that teen as the adult that you are now so that we can retroactively give ourselves what we didn't get then. And that's part of the medicine, it's really hard to give, almost impossible to give to our kids or the young people in our lives what we haven't received. The great news is we can go back and receive it I think. But that would look like where is the stabilizing support, whether I'm getting it from myself or from somebody else.

So in that solo time, again, need to figure out what's the need or the big thing that's coming up for me, what got stuck back there that wants to be expressed? And either you meet that for yourself, which would look like you're journaling, you could write a letter to your inner teen. You could let your teen write a letter to you. You could imagine that they're telling you how they really feel. And then you get to step in as the big sister or aunty, who's loving them back and saying, "Yeah, you get to say that. You get to feel how you feel. I've got you."

Or telling it with somebody who's another adult who can meet you as an equal to support and love you. And then that can actually move through.

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And it's less likely to be a reaction in the future. What we want to try not to do is process it too much with our kid or with a young person because that's not their job. And then we can come back whole, more integrated from whatever happened in the past. And that's the goal is to not have those pieces or places in ourselves stuck as unconscious repeating patterns.

Jen: Yeah, that's great. And you used the words 'move through', so I just want to make sure we're on the same page and our listeners understand. So all of those memories from our teen years are still in our brain. And because everything in the brain, the neurons are all kind of wired together, we can have kind of a reaction from a past experience, it will affect our reaction today. So that's what's called being triggered. And when that happens we can do this inner child work to kind of rewire that. Is that how you would kind of describe it in a simple way?

Eliza: Yes. Totally. Well, I think when I use the word 'move', the thing is feelings move. They're kind of like waves of experience. So why don't we imagine a wave in the ocean. And when a feeling shows up, you've probably seen it if you've seen a little kid, they're very good at moving waves of experience through. So I think it's a wave, but also it's a neutral term. So it's not a big bad thing. It's like there's a wave. So for example a wave could be sadness.

So you see a little kid and say they hurt their knee, they're probably going to lie down, and scream, and cry. And then when they're done crying, they've actually reset their nervous system, meaning it's helped them feel good again because they actually moved the feeling. And tears have an ability to literally release stress.

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Now, imagine that you didn't get to cry. So the brain is part of the body. So it can be in the brain, it can be other parts of the body. It can actually kind of get stuck. We have the research on it that shows it gets stuck. So when something moves through we mean that a stress cycle or a feeling actually got to complete when many of us are carrying around in our bodies, uncomplete experiences which actually can look like trauma. That's kind of what trauma is in many definitions. It's an incomplete stress experience.

And then with the result, something that feels traumatic, or difficult, or hard to meet in ourselves. And so moving through could look like you could move your body, you could shake it out, you go for a walk, you could have a dance party in your bedroom and sweat it out. It could look like journaling and just noticing the feelings, playing beautiful music, could look like prayer or meditation. There's lots of ways. That's why I said notice what works for you. And not everything is going to work for everybody. And not everything's going to work at the same time.

Different seasons of our lives, different ways in to help an incomplete experience, complete can be more helpful than another.

Jen: That's great advice. So we as adults can learn to allow all of our emotions without judgment, let go of that inner mean girl through a number of exercises and tools which you just talked about. What is the process of teaching this to our own teen girls in addition to obviously modeling it for them, hopefully which is the biggest one?

Eliza: Yeah, I was going to start there, Jen, it's the biggest one. Because I find again and again that teens like the rest of us humans, and especially young humans are sponges. We take it in by osmosis, so again and again I will see my pre-teens and teens who I work with, noticing that their parents, or guardians, or supportive adults say, then also noticing what they do. And

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they're much more likely to do what the parent does and suggest than do what they say. So this isn't about perfection. There's no such thing as perfect.

However it is about doing your best, showing up again and again to be kind to yourself, to be vulnerable, to be imperfect with your kid, all that is great lessons for them. And the next thing is mirroring them, mirroring their feelings, being an advocate for them, making sure this negative story isn't repeated again and again, about standing up for that negative stereotype about teenage girls.

But we actually come back to the relationship and the mother daughter relationship thing here, Jen. Because I could tell you a million strategies. But if the relationship isn't strong I think people listening in will know this because we've probably dealt with difficult patches, it kind of doesn't matter what you do because they're probably not interested in anything you say. If you've got a kid who's pissed at you for whatever reason, and we can get into some of the reasons why, you have to reclaim the relationship first and then some of the strategies that are going to be really effective.

I come from an attachment perspective around the teenage years which is very different than, you know how we talk about attachment theory is often thought about as co-sleeping and little kids. But it centers the relationship rather than the 10 perfect steps to have a good relationship with your teen. There's kind of no perfect tip that's going to work if you haven't done the relationship work.

Jen: Well said, yes, agreed. So one of the things I've been thinking about lately is kind of this word 'differentiation'. So as a parent I experienced this more so with my first two kids because I hadn't had teens before, and they were pretty close in age. There is tremendous pressure outside of us

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through the neighbors, through my parents, through my faith community of how kids 'should behave'. So they should not be having wild and crazy sex. They should not be doing drugs. They should not be breaking the law. They should not talk back my parents would say.

If fact I've had people, older people say I should be spanking my kids. And there's this element, older element of our society where teens need to be controlled and pushed into becoming good members of society.

Eliza: You were parented in that way, Jen, that was familiar to you as a teen? I'm just curious, that kind of pushing and control.

Jen: In some ways yes. My parents pushed the values of hard work. And so there was some control around that, how many hours I would work. They took their values and pushed them, and I think we all do it. So just speak a little bit about differentiation and how we can step back and watch and observe who our kids are going to become and how they might have values different from ours.

Eliza: Yeah. So I think it starts, the central approach there that I would offer is curiosity. And we can't do that perfectly, but I'd say the opposition of curiosity is agenda. And agenda can be tricky because of course you want the best for people that you love. And then the tricky thing is sometimes we think we know exactly what that looks like. And I invite you to be curious about letting your kids show you who they are. I love the word 'soul' here, which might resonate with some people.

Let them show you their soul, they've kind of always been who they are. And that's why we do the inner teen work, we do the inner relationship work with ourselves, that we can to the best of our ability keep stepping back in

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the right ways to let them blossom and flourish with your support but not with your projection onto who they should become.

And when it comes to the value approach that is controlling, what I would say is that it doesn't tend in my experience to be a very effective parenting strategy. Because where there's a more authoritarian approach there can often be rebellion.

Jen: For sure.

Eliza: And yes, safety needs to be centered, and parents need to step in and say, "Yeah, sometimes the answer is because I said so", absolutely. However what I find again and again is where there is a hard line, zero tolerance, my way, or the highway, that's where I see my kids rebel. And then parents actually lose the deeper contact, connection, and trust with their kid over the long term. So I'd look at really, what are your values, ideally the central one is keep the kid safe, because safety is important.

In the teenage years it's real, we have cars entering, driving entering. We have in some cases in communities there are substances. There can be physical intimacy, sex, we talked about. So that's really, really important. However, look for where your kid comes alive. They say in our community, what lights you up. Where are they still lit up? Mirror that back to them. And mirroring it can be, "Oh my God, it was so fun to see you playing your guitar yesterday with your friends. You just looked so happy. How did it feel?"

And then they get to notice, wow, it felt so good. And you're mirroring it back by noticing where their soul comes alive, where life feels juicy, and present, and real to them. It's going to be different kid to kid. So you're helping them, they need to find the way to their own truth, to their own

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version of what is being real. Of course doing your best to teach them some really important things that developmentally, I mean the teen brain doesn't become fully developed, our lovely prefrontal cortex which controls things like decision-making, the bird's eye view.

Understanding consequences, that actually develops fully around 25 or 26. So I think that's really important for parents and adults to remember so that in a good way we can cut them a little bit of slack. This does not mean, oh no, if someone does harm, there isn't consequences, there are. But remembering, they don't have the brain literally that you are working with. So they actually might forget to call us sometimes despite best intention. Really the brain is still figuring itself out.

And so I find that can be helpful for parents or people raising pre-teens or teens. Because remember, even if they may present more and more like adults, they use the language, they know they're so mature, they're so amazing in some moments, also not so amazing [inaudible] in teens. Remember you are the adult, they are not yet. And so even though they may seem so much more mature, they're not an adult yet. You are and so your job is to hold that grounded presence to your best and not take it personally.

And while it does take a village to raise kids and we want community involved. I think in an ideal situation you are the captain of the team. That's what we call it when folks come work with us and we come in as mentors, and big siblings, and big sisters who work with teens. We always call the parent or the guardian, "You're team captain, thanks for tagging us as coach. We're honored to be part of the team.

And you're the one who is leading us. You're telling us what's the best thing for your kid, what you need, what your values are and seeing if we're a

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good fit for that rather than anybody else coming in to tell you what the best way is to raise your kid.” At the end of the day trust your intuition. I believe you’re a parent for a reason.

Jen: That’s so cool. So you’ve been leading Badass Girls for 15 years or when did that begin, this mentorship program?

Eliza: Yeah. So I’ve been doing mentorship for 15 years, the last three or four years it’s been called Badass Girls. But I’ve been circling up with pre-teens and teens, and having the honor of listening to their hearts, their fears, their feelings, their brave, awkward, amazing questions for 15 years.

Jen: I love what you named this program because there is this idea, hopefully it’s slowly dying of a good girl. Our girls need to be good girls. And if I were to kind of go back, I have done kind of inner teen work. But my teen, I think a lot of teens want permission to just kind of go wild. That’s part of that differentiation, to be a badass, to be strong, to feel your feelings, to have big feelings, to challenge. And what a cool thing to have the team captain/parents saying, “Hey, you can be a badass, go for it.”

To have the permission, to see it being done around you, can you share a couple of success stories of girls doing that and stepping into that power?

Eliza: Totally. So I love that you’re [inaudible] badass and I want to talk about that first just because I name all of my programs, listening to what my girls have told me year after year. And it became the word that just flowed off their tongue when they described their sheroes. They described the women in power and leadership roles, the women who inspired them to be more of their real selves. Now, I love that also the way that we use badass, it inspires people, I think it invites people to think a little bit because understandably it’s a word that makes us feel a thing usually.

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It's like a big yes, or a kind of no, or I don't know if I'm a badass. I get all different types of responses from people because often badass was used as kind of – I remember when I said it to my mom first. She's in her late 60s now, and she was like, "Like a rebel without a cause? What?" She thought of leather jackets, smoking. And I was like, "No." But I'm so glad that we're talking about it because to my generation and to my girls' generation it means something different.

And one of my favorite pages on our website is our about page where it has all of our mentors' different definitions of what being a badass means to them. And it still makes me cry every single time because they're so beautiful and I love our mentors so much. But to me as the founder of Badass Girls, what being a badass means to me is being your whole real imperfect self. And that terrifies me. It's one of the hardest things I've ever done, to not be perfect, to be sensitive.

I'm an incredibly sensitive person with a lot of feelings. I am soft a lot of the time. And yeah, I'm fierce other times. And obviously I care a lot about this work, but we actually attract, a lot of people who work with us are shy, sensitive, introverted. And I think it's a juxtaposition to our stereotype that we're trying to move away from, that being a badass only looks one way. And that actually to me being a badass is being your real self, whatever that is for you. And it might be different than me, it might be different to the mentor next to me and so on.

And so I mean I have endless stories of our girls working with us. I think the ones that had had the most impact on me, one is that in our community periods aren't bad or shameful. Everyone gets to feel whatever they feel. I cry every time we have pre-teens in our community who get their period for the first time, and they hop into our community message boards to post about it, to be celebrated by their peers or their big sisters. And it's not hiding, it's just to be yeah, this is the fact of my body.

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And we've been talking about it. They know all the ways to take care of themselves. And they get so much choice around it, that always makes me cry because I felt like I had to hide it. And I felt like my body was kind of weird and gross. That was kind of the ongoing joke for me as a pre-teen and teen. I think for me again and again, I'm thinking about one girl.

I mean we start with pre-teens and folks work with us all the way to the end of their teens, I met her when she was 11, and her body image stuff was really bad. And the diet culture in her home was hard. And she really had a hidden eating disorder. And she's become one of our mentors and she now leads body jiggle happy parties.

Jen: Oh, that's great.

Eliza: Everybody can jiggle out their bodies and bodies are private spaces. And so it isn't about how you look. It's about how you feel. And she taught the most amazing workshop last year where it was all about dressing yourself in a way that feels true to you and choosing colors that make you happy. Where it's not about being sexy for a dude. But it's about being your real self. And then somebody who resonates with that is going to be a great fit for you anyway, rather than changing who we are.

And so she's gone through to now have the most healthy eating patterns, delicious relationship with her body. And that's one of so many but that's what I love is our mentors are actually all humans who have been through our programs. And so then they go on to be trained intensely by me for two to three years. And some of the most overqualified 19 year olds I've ever met because they've lived this. And I think it's so powerful, moving back to what we talked about before that it's so hard, maybe almost even impossible to give something that you haven't received.

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And so what I love about our mentors is they went through the pre-teen and teenage years with healthy support. They had me and they had our team. And now they get to give what they got, they get to say, 16 year old who's terrified of getting bullied the next day at school, 12 year old who is having your first acne breakouts and feels so self-conscious. I've got you. I can't make your life perfect, and I can't make it easy. However, what I can promise is that you will never be alone. You are loved, matter and you belong.

And we're so often taught to betray ourselves as pre-teen and teenage girls, to take everybody else's feelings above ourselves, you're said to be the good girl. And it's time for the era of the good girl to really officially die. Let's just put a nail in the coffin on the good girl and let's go to the real girl, the real one who gets to be however she is that day, that moment, that morning. And I want it for boys too, I want it for folks of all genders. I think we have different stories that get placed on us through generations.

And I want there to be spaces where folks of all genders, boys too get to feel how they feel. We have a different issue with boys where they cry, and they get called a sissy or whatever other gendered word that then comes back on teenage girls. So I want all of us to get more real because I think when we're connected to the authentic truth of feelings, this isn't to me just touchy feely stuff. This is actual stuff, and we have statistics on how this changes the world.

We have statistics on how confidence, healthy relationship with self, healthy relationship to boundaries results in everything positive from declining teen pregnancy rates, to leadership, to innovation on climate justice. I mean just the results are endless. And I think it's time to invest in our pre-teen and teens more, not less and not just hope they get through it, and we can kind of check out.

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Jen: Yeah. And the investment now pays huge dividends in the future because it breaks the pattern, then those teens when they become parents have a whole different way. What a world it would be if we could all be fully authentic and real, how beautiful. That's my goal as well. So, Eliza, you are doing amazing work in the world. Clearly you're living your purpose and I feel honored that you would be on our show, thank you so much.

Eliza: Thanks so much for having me, it's been a delight.

Hey, I hope you loved that as much as I did. The wheels in my head are really turning. I love doing Vibrant Happy Women. And my work is to help women. But how cool is it that there is a person out there doing work for teen and tween girls? What would our world look like if all the girls that are growing up right now knew how to be true to themselves, to honor how they feel, to honor what they want, to even know what they want, to have emotional safety and create it for others?

I would love to see what that looks like when they become moms and grandmas. And how this would trickle down into society.

So I love the work Eliza is doing. Well, my friends I hope you will take this opportunity to do this for yourself as well, allow yourself to feel those big feelings and express those feelings, to challenge the status quo, to honor what feels true to you in your heart and in your core self, and live that life, to be free. Ultimately I think that's what we long for, to live the fullest expression of who we really are and that is so liberating and beautiful.

My friends, I love you, go be true to you and I will see you again next time. Until then make it a vibrant and happy week. Take care.

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

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