

310: What Does it Really Mean to Be Authentic? (with Amber Price)



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Jen Riday

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You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. I'm Dr. Jen Riday and on this episode we'll be answering the question, what does it really mean to be authentic? 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.

Well, hello there. I am so excited about this episode because the guest, Amber Price is an old friend of mine who used to live in Madison, Wisconsin. Our kids played together, and she moved away sadly. Well, we have reconnected, and Amber and I are talking about authenticity today. It's so interesting to ask yourself, am I truly being authentic? Am I truly being true to me? Well, it's an important question and we talk about it from every angle in this interview so stay tuned for that.

In the meantime, I want to share our review of the week. This review is from Your Elect Self. They wrote, "Jen and her guests overdeliver in every podcast. There are so many golden nuggets in every episode. I don't listen to a bunch of podcasts but this one makes the cut every week." Thank you, that really made me blush. I am grateful for you listening. Everyone, I love reviews, they make me feel validated. We all want some validation. Also, they help our podcast to reach more people. Learn how to leave your review by going to jenriday.com/review, we would love it.

Alright, well, Amber, my friend and I had a fun conversation, and I can't wait for you to listen. Here we go.

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Jen: Alright, everyone, I am here with an old friend, not old in age but old in many years ago, Amber Price who used to live in Madison, Wisconsin. And I'm super excited to talk with her today. We're going to talk about being authentic, being true to yourself, ending the comparison and the people pleasing so we can all really essentially be our best selves and share our gifts and talents with the world. So, Amber, welcome and go ahead and introduce yourself.

Amber: I think you summed it up perfectly, we're old friends but I am a little bit old too.

Jen: Yes, me too.

Amber: I'm not really but I've been going to school for a little bit with 20 year olds and I'm in my 40s, so I do feel a little bit old. But anyway, I'm Amber and I am a mom of four. I live currently in Utah, and I am working on a PhD at BYU out here in marriage, family, and human development. I got my master's in April and now I'm working on the PhD and studying what you said, you summed it up perfectly. Kind of my catch all phrases would be authenticity and connection and how those two go hand in hand or fight against each other if we're not doing them.

Jen: Yeah, it's huge, huge. Huge for me. In fact, before we even turned on the microphone and what I've heard my listeners say is I'm very authentic. Sometimes to my detriment, I cackle, and I say weird awkward things sometimes. So why is being authentic so important, Amber?

Amber: I was just going to say, yes, you are authentic. You are somebody who I think of as authentic, in my own memories of you are like Jen is who she is, and she just says what's on her mind. And it makes it easy to connect with you. You and I have barely talked, I moved away from Wisconsin, what, 13 years ago. And we talked on the phone not too long

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ago, a few months back but it was the first time we'd talked in a while. And it just felt so natural and easy to talk to you because I know that you're comfortable with who you are and so that connection just flows naturally.

And I think that's the point of authenticity, when we are comfortable with who we are we're willing to share who we are with another person. We're willing to let them see us for who we are. We're not, you know, if somebody is not comfortable with who they are they're going to kind of put up a wall and hide who they really are. And you just can't get that connection that you would otherwise get. You really can't connect with someone who won't let you see who they really are.

Jen: Okay. So, my brain's like, but wait, I haven't always really liked myself. So, you're saying if you like yourself, you don't have to totally be enamored with yourself. Where is the line where you're real but maybe you still have sometimes negative self-talk for example?

Amber: Yeah. I actually think that's one of the best parts of authenticity is that it's knowing who you are but as part of that it's knowing what your weaknesses are too and being okay that you have weaknesses. Being authentic means not being blind to the things that you are falling short on and then being willing to work on them. Being willing to say, "I can see this flaw in myself. I'm okay that I have that flaw because I am a human being. Human beings are flawed. But I do want to work on that in myself."

Jen: That's true. I do, do that. I don't hide anything. It's like, oh yeah, I'm weird. Okay, I do hide a couple things because they're just so ridiculous. Anyone who knows me from high school knows what I'm talking about, the Molly Brown story, it's horrifying, it can never get out.

Amber: Now everybody's going to want to know.

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Jen: It involves poop, that's all I'm going to say. Okay, authenticity is huge. Brené Brown talks a lot about it. Tell us what you've been finding out recently in the research about authenticity.

Amber: There's so much, it's like where to even begin. But I mean authenticity, like I said, my focus with authenticity specifically is connection with others. So, I mean I'm in a program that studies marriage and family. So, my focus tends to be around that but of course it's going to impact your marriage or your relationship with your partner. It's going to impact your parenting and the way that you connect with that, you know, with your children. It definitely impacts your sexuality. A sexual relationship is highly intimate, highly vulnerable.

So, if you can't be authentic it's going to be a challenge to really engage in that relationship, yeah, I know, that's the hard one, right?

Jen: Every woman's sitting here like, oh, what, I'm supposed to be proud of my stretchmarks and belly? So, authenticity means what, we're like, yeah, here I am?

Amber: Ideally, yeah.

Jen: Oh my gosh, I have work to do.

Amber: But I mean let's be honest, all of us have a ways to go. I absolutely have a ways to go. And I study this day in and day out and I recognize that, yeah, I'm flawed too. And I struggle with body image and things like that too. But again, I recognize that in myself and that's okay.

Jen: Wow. So how are you teaching your kids to be authentic? I have always remembered you, Amber, as a fantastic mom. First of all, you must have tremendous energy because the amount you got done in a day is

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triple what I feel I could get done in a day. And that's kind of saying a lot really.

Amber: It's funny because I would have said that about you too, high energy, high energy for sure.

Jen: Okay, your high energy was productive high energy, mine was [crosstalk]. So how are you teaching your kids to be authentic as a mom who is highly productive?

Amber: I don't know. That's a good question. I think more than anything, when teaching somebody to be authentic, meaning just being authentic, hopefully letting them see my own struggles. Letting them know that I'm not perfect as a mom. They definitely know that. Apologizing when I fall short. I mean my boys are so sick of hearing me talk about all of this because I do talk about it all the time. But I hope that it's rubbing off on them. One thing I do think with them that comes up quite a bit is comparison, I mean that's a natural thing.

I have a 14 year old and I feel like he especially is always saying, "Me and my friends were talking about who has it harder, boys or girls because blah, blah, blah." And I'm like, "Well, why does it matter? Why do we have to draw that comparison? You are you, your friend who is a girl is who she is. You both have experiences that are good. You both have experiences that are hard." It is what it is. We don't have to do that comparison thing, although it feels natural. But anyway, so that's a conversation that's had a lot in our house.

Jen: Oh, my goodness, so, so true. I want to come back to that topic of comparison. But first sticking with authenticity. So authentic is being the true you. Let's talk about the alternative. Have there been times in your life where you didn't truly reveal the true you? And maybe you sharing them

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will help us recognize them in ourselves or stories of other women if you have those as well.

Amber: I mean what comes to mind first, so one of the things I really like to talk about, or research, or look into is ways that we're kind of hindering our own authenticity. And one of those from a scholarly perspective, you call it emotional fear, Jen. I think that from a more general term maybe we call that codependence, or maybe kind of like when we rely on other people, like our relationships with other people to define who we are as part of our identity. So, I think we do it sometimes as wives. I think we definitely do it as moms. I am so and so's mom and that's who I am.

And that can be harmful. I mean it's wonderful to be the wife and it's wonderful to be the mom. But if that's your whole identity it can become damaging. But for me, I had a relationship, and it was not a romantic relationship, it was a friendship that had started to kind of suck who I was right out of me. I identified so closely with this relationship. It was so important to me to be part of that relationship. And there were so many rules around that relationship.

It wasn't a healthy relationship but there were so many rules and things around it that I've started to try to morph who I was to make sure that I wasn't going to break a rule or do something, take a misstep. And I really felt I started to lose a little bit of who I was. I almost couldn't even remember who I was anymore in some ways because I was being so careful to be what this person thought I should be.

Jen: Wow, that's huge.

Amber: Yeah, that was a rough one.

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Jen: Wow. So how did you recognize you were doing that? Was it an energetic thing? Did you just kind of start to feel lousy? What were the cues or signals for that?

Amber: I mean the truth is I didn't notice it as well as I should have. It went on for a number of years. There were a lot of tears in my life relating to it. And I am not a crier. I cry about a few occasional things but in general not. And so that should have been a major red flag to me. But the truth is I didn't really see it until the relationship ended for other reasons and then I looked back on it, and I was like, "Oh my word, what was I doing? What was I thinking?"

And honestly that's probably a lot of what spurred my interest in research into authenticity and genuine connection. Because that's not genuine connection.

Jen: Yeah. Well, so my mind is totally circling. When have I not been authentic? I think in high school we all try on so many identities that we have no clue, we're just trying on clothes essentially. But at some point there were people I recognized I felt good around and people I would end up feeling drained around. So, I had a friend, a mutual friend I think, I won't say any names.

Amber: I already think I know who you're going to say, anyway.

Jen: Yeah. So, I felt like I should be a good friend and it was the right thing to do from some external measurement of I should, she needs. But at some point I had to come to terms with the fact that I didn't feel good around her. I felt drained, and empty, and I was always trying to keep her happy, kind of similarly. I was trying to do it nice, not to prove something to her. But at some point I had to start taking care of what felt good to me. So, I suppose,

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do you have – is there research or your own thoughts on authenticity, it feels good to us, is that true?

Amber: Yeah, it does for sure. I think we know it when we feel it. We know the things – I don't know, I think if you can think about what are the things you do that make you feel most alive, that make you feel most who you really are? Those are the times that you're being authentic. And it might take a little while to sit back and think, what are those things? When do I feel most authentic? When do I feel most content with who I am and things like that?

Probably it's going to be around people who you love and feel that connection with because you do feel you can be yourself when you're around them. Or for me I love to be around other people and have really good conversation, really connective conversation. That to me feels very authentic. And that's not going to be the same for every person. I think most of us probably enjoy good connecting conversation and things. Some of us might want only one person there. Some might want more, whatever it is.

But you know those times where you're like, "Boy, that just filled my soul." That's when you're being authentic.

Jen: Yes, [crosstalk] soul, yeah, not draining, interesting. So, you mentioned you know the things that make you feel alive. What would those things be for you? Just a little list.

Amber: Well, I just said...

Jen: I know hot chocolate.

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Amber: Yes, a hot chocolate, honestly, I drink it every single day, even in July. In July I sit on my back deck at nine o'clock at night, it's still usually pretty hot and I drink my hot chocolate and I love it. And I realize that's weird.

Jen: And is that homemade or do you like a certain brand?

Amber: Yeah.

Jen: Yeah, tell me.

Amber: Yeah, I use the Nesquik sugar free, it's not even good stuff, and I love it.

Jen: Easy, okay. So, the other things that make you feel alive? I think it will spark us to think about what might that be for me.

Amber: I mean I said being around people. I went to lunch yesterday with a friend. I love that. I love sitting and talking to a friend. That's one of my absolute favorite things. And my parenting, it's being in the kitchen with my kids for me is a favorite, reading with my kids is a favorite. And again, these are things that might not be for other people, but they are for me. That's my authentic self. I think that when I went back to school, so I went back to school right about three years ago. And I was surprised how much that opened me up.

There I was, that was my authentic self. I loved the learning. I loved engaging in it. I was like, "I just re-found myself." And again, that's not going to be the truth with everyone. I just love it.

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Jen: Re-finding myself, that phrase, it's a mom thing. Losing yourself and finding yourself. What is it about parenting that made you or makes women in general lose a piece of themselves?

Amber: Oh boy, that could be a whole podcast in and of itself. I think that we get so trained in our brains to think that we have to give, and give, and give endlessly. And of course, there's beauty in sacrificing for your kids, and for your family, and things like that. I'm not saying to not do that. But we think that we have to just give up who we are in the daily tasks. And it's easy to do that because there's always something on the to do list, always, always, always and 10 things that you're leaving undone. And so, we forget to take care of ourselves or to remind ourselves.

I actually, I had a friend stop by, it was a couple of years ago and she was kind of in between jobs, kind of trying to figure out what she wanted to do. She'd been working in one and had another opportunity. And I remember I asked her, I can't remember exactly what I asked her but just like, "Well, what do you want? What are your desires?" And she just started to bawl. And she was like, "I don't know. I just don't even remember. I don't know anymore." And I just thought, I don't think she's alone in that. I think a lot of us do that as we sacrifice for our families.

Jen: Did you ever have a moment when you realized you had started to sacrifice too much and you put a stop to it and said, "Okay, I'm starting to do these things for myself?" I feel every mom has that moment.

Amber: I do and maybe this doesn't line up perfectly, but a moment comes to my mind instantly when you say that. It was a Saturday afternoon. I was mopping our kitchen floor. I was grumpy. And I just kind of was pondering on that and I thought I'm grumpy because I feel like everybody around me is grumpy. One of my kids is being grumpy. I don't even remember who was grumpy that day or whatever, but they were being grumpy. And I

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realized in that moment, I am only allowing myself to be happy when everybody else around me is happy.

In essence I'm taking responsibility for their moods. And it was bringing me down. And that was the moment I knew something needed to change with myself. I needed to take responsibility for myself and not for the people around me.

Jen: And that's what you call emotional fusion or codependence?

Amber: Yeah, that would be, yeah. Yeah, that's a perfect example of it.

Jen: For me I had to get to a point of so much misery and pain that things had to change. So that came on, I had a miscarriage on Christmas day, and it was awful. And after that I remember vowing, I literally vowed I was going to put my happiness first. And I had never even thought of that concept before. So, I don't even think I was to the place where I wasn't going to worry about other people's happiness but at least mine was going to finally come first. And I didn't care who I hurt in the process. I had to or I wouldn't – really didn't want to be alive anymore at that very moment.

So, I started the yoga, and just noticing what feels good. And then here we are. I love talking to you too just like you said you love talking to women. I've found something I love and I'm podcasting.

Amber: Yeah, I love that.

Jen: Yeah. My other things that make me feel alive would be pickleball. That's been really weird. I was a high school and even a college athlete, not D1 or anything, but D3, C team. And there is this competitive side that I had totally lost, and it started to come alive, and I didn't know it was in there. Kind of like what you were saying, there are pieces of you that have

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come alive. So pickleball, boardgames and other things have fallen away that I thought I should want which is I needed to travel all the time because successful people travel.

Well, I hate airports. No thanks. I don't want to look at architecture. So, I think authenticity comes back to what feels good and choosing it over and over.

Amber: Yeah. I knew I wanted to make some changes in my life. And so, I decided September was going to be my get out of your comfort zone month. I actually did that. I started the month out really with just small changes, somebody asked me to lead the music at church. I had never done it and I really didn't want to. But I was like, "Hey, I'm getting out of my comfort zone. I'm going to do that."

And I had a certain type of sweater, okay, this is silly, but I really like the cardigans that go all the way down to your knees. But I had never worn one because it just felt a little gutsy, which is silly. But I was like, "I'm going to do it." So, I bought one and I wore it. It's my favorite sweater now. And anyway, I just did a few things like that and as I did it, that's actually the month that I ended up deciding to go back to school. And I was in the process of applying by the end of the month.

But it was just trying those new little things all of a sudden sort of opened my eyes to the possibilities and things.

Jen: Wow, your brain was like, if she can do the knee length sweater, what else can she do? I'm going back to school.

Amber: Yeah, it was a crazy month.

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Jen: What was that like going back to school? I mean that's way out of the comfort zone, you were in grad school with 20 year olds like you said, a mom of four. And that had to be scary, right?

Amber: It was scary. Honestly, it's still scary. Every single day it's scary. I've thought a lot about it, and I think the word inadequate sums it up, I feel inadequate more often than I wish I did. And I think it's probably my least favorite way to feel. But I just plow through it. I mean I feel inadequate for a moment of each day and then the rest of the day I enjoy it. And so, I just continue forward and it's hard, but it's been great. And again, I think maybe authenticity, it's not the final solution. Life isn't going to all of a sudden be all roses and sunshine just because you're being authentic.

It's still going to have all of the challenges. It's still, you know, school's still hard, doing what I'm doing, it's still hard but it feels so much more right because I'm being authentic to who I am as I do it.

Jen: And I think what you said, I don't remember your exact words but it's uncomfortable, you might have moments of where you think, I'm not good enough, I'm inadequate, I think that's your word. But there's also another voice in your head that's saying, "I'm going to do it anyway. This is important." So, for me one of my biggest sources of inadequacy has been my family life. And it took a while and a lot of diagnoses to recognize why. Within our family we have ADHD, anxiety, depression, autism and now some version of a schizoid disorder, one of my kids.

I'm like, wow, this is a mental health soup. So, I'm grateful to have an excuse maybe but even in the moments my inner voice will say, "They're going to mock you. They're going to say this is all because of your bad parenting." And I always have that voice come up, but I shove it back and I say, "Well, so what? There are so many other people out there with mental health challenges. If I speak they'll know they're not alone. I have to do it."

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So, there is always a conflict in my brain between hiding or standing out and being authentic and true. Do you find that to be true for yourself as well? How do you deal with that?

Amber: I'm just barely getting started in talking to podcasters or putting out a website, or things like that. And honestly I am scared. It is scary. I know it's what I want to do. I know it's what I'm supposed to do but it is scary. So, I guess that's a good message for anyone. Maybe we see people doing things that we think are great and we think, she's so wonderful, she could do this. But you don't know what she was afraid of or what was hard for her in the background.

Jen: I'm afraid of these lines on my neck. I have a retreat, we're recording this before my retreat. I'm afraid, I just think it's important to express fears too. I'm afraid I'll show up and people will say, "Whoa, she's a lot heavier than I thought. Influencers should not be heavy." I have to squash these negative voices, I just shove them back. And I'm like, "Well, I'm giving some other heavier person permission to do this as well."

I have a friend, we both have Maggie. I've always admired how she could let her house be destroyed by a ton of kids who would come and visit. And of course, she cleaned it up later. But I thought, she's giving me permission to have a messy house. And now when I have a messy house I say, "Hey, I'm giving some other woman permission." So, I kind of like to come forward with flaws with that story of giving other people permission.

Amber: I do too, yeah. I like that a lot, yeah.

Jen: Okay. So, we have so many concepts of what a good mom is, and a good woman is. I feel that can be a big topic in some cultures more than others. But how do you combat that? What does it mean for you to be a good mom or a good wife? Or should we cast that thought out altogether?

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Amber: Yeah. That's actually one of the main things that I often talk about with women is, I think we get these shoulds, shoulds have come up a couple of times in this interview. We have these ideas of what we should, 'should' be doing, or what we're supposed to be doing. And a lot of those go to motherhood or womanhood. I mean you could list off how many things that a woman should be doing. You should cook a good meal. You should have the laundry done, folded, put away. You should look good while you're doing everything you're doing.

You should be able to do the fourth grade math that your kid's got, needs help with. I mean if we try to live up to all those things that we think other people want us to do, we can't because there's a million other people who all have ideas of what we should be doing. You'll never live up to it. And so, you're just doing yourself a disservice when you try to. I mean there are things that you probably want as a mother, or as a wife, or as a woman that are good and valuable things. So, you almost could say, "I should do this because it's good and valuable."

But you just kind of need to step back and say, "Why am I doing this? Am I doing it so that other people see me as good? Or am I doing it because it feels genuinely good to me right now?"

Jen: Yeah, wow. So really it comes back to intuitive wisdom, what's right for me. Because we all have different experiences, lives, talents, thoughts. And what's right for me right now is not stressing out about x, y and z and playing lots of boardgames. And the way I was raised, my mom might frown on that. I should have my house spotless first and I don't want to.

Amber: But there is that should, I should have my house spotless.

Jen: Yeah. To acknowledge how she's changed. She knows now that I don't value the same things. She doesn't say anything. She's doing really

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such a good job of seeing what I do value and praising that. So, I love that she's shifted.

Amber: That's cool, yeah.

Jen: Well, so, Amber, you're helping women with authenticity and these important topics in the world. Tell us more about what you're doing these days online and of course you're working towards your PhD. But you have a program that helps with this.

Amber: Right, yeah. The program's not released yet. I'm hoping to release it in May, and it will walk through it. So, I've got a website that's got articles around all of this that people can read. But I also recognized that not everybody wants to get online and read a whole bunch of things because we're all busy. So yeah, I'm working on creating a course that really looks at five or six ways that we hinder our own authenticity, some of them we've talked about today, the shoulds is actually one of my areas, comparison is one of the areas.

Body image or objectification is one of the areas, emotional fusion is one of the areas. The one that we haven't talked about is gendered expectations, kind of the box. Well, I guess we did touch on that, the box we put ourselves in. I'm a woman so therefore I must... whatever that is. And how each of those really, when we allow those things to be happening in our lives it really does diminish our authenticity. And then just how that can limit our ability to connect with other people.

We talked about when you don't feel authentic you're going to hide a little bit of who you are so that other people don't really get to know you at the level that they could. And you miss out on those opportunities to really form deep and meaningful relationships, whether that's with your spouse, or your partner, or your children, or your friends, or even God, whoever it is.

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You're limiting that ability when you hide who you are. So that's kind of my goal, is to help people see the ways that they're doing that because we're all doing it.

I can see it in myself. I do it all the time. I'm challenging it but I'm doing it. And so, I think the more we can recognize it.

Jen: Yeah. Answering the question, who am I and then how am I hiding that from other people? That's a lifelong question.

Amber: Yeah, it is, it really is.

Jen: That's neat.

Amber: But it's a good one. It's a fun one to be on instead of letting other people decide who you are, why don't you decide for yourself?

Jen: Yeah. And then for me it really comes back to, well, I'm going to be the person that feels the best. It doesn't feel good to clean my house all the time, playing Kingdomino feels great. I love that game. Following what feels good and to have the permission to do the same. You know what inspires me the most to keep doing this is hoping my daughters in particular, but my sons as well, will grow up to do the same thing. Breaking the pattern of pressure, and shoulds, and shame, and all that stuff that keeps us authentic as you know, yeah.

So, if people want to follow you on social media, what's your Instagram handle?

Amber: I'm on Instagram under amber.a.price. So amber.a.price with the two dots between it. And then my website is just amberaprice.com.

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Jen: Oh, easy peasy, thank you.

Amber: Easy, yeah.

Jen: Alright, one last piece of advice for our listeners and then we'll say goodbye.

Amber: I think when it all boils down, when I boil it down, anything I'd want to say, I think it comes down to that you are an incredible person. Each woman who is listening to this is an incredible person and she has unique abilities, and talents, and gifts to offer to the people around her, whether that's her family, or the neighbors, or her friends, or the community at large. And so don't hide who you are. Let other people see who you are and bless other people's lives with that. It'll make you happier, but it will also really bless the people around you, and that matters.

If we all did that, how much beauty and joy would we be putting out into the world if we would really use our gifts and talents to do that?

Jen: Yeah, huge question, let's all answer that for ourselves in the days ahead. How much would the world be blessed if we would actually be who we really are? It gives me chills. Well, Amber, this was great, thank you so much, I appreciate it.

Amber: Yeah, this was wonderful.

What did you learn from that conversation? How would you answer the question, are you being authentic? What needs to change in your life to truly be authentic, to be true to what you really love, that inner voice that tells you what you really love? Like Amber said, so many women have no

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idea what they love, what they want, what they like. Let's all set the intention together to find out, to prioritize, noticing what's really true for us to being authentic. It feels amazing to live that way.

Well, my friends, I will be back again next week, until then make it a vibrant, happy, and authentic 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.