

# Rikke Kjelgaard Connection Through Vulnerability

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Yeah, that was Ricky Kel guard on psychologists off the clock. We are three clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and [00:01:00] science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work, and health.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in mile high, Denver, Colorado, and coauthor of ACT Daily Journal.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston based clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the upcoming book Work, Parent, Thrive.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of be mighty and the big book of act metaphors.

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**Jill Stoddard:** I'm here with Debbie to introduce today's episode, which is a little bit of a different kind of episode. , it, it ended up being a little bit less of an interview and more of a conversation between friends and colleagues. And my hope for listeners in this episode is that, , that you'll take something away from this conversation that you might be able to apply in your own life. Like maybe feel inspired to be courageous, to step out of your comfort zone. So, Debbie, I'm curious, , what, what you took away from this conversation that Rick.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, you know, I like that the conversation was a little bit different than some of our interviews, because to me it was very sweet. It felt like a conversation between two friends who were sharing in this very authentic and honest [00:03:00] and vulnerable way. And it was just, it.

Like I was having. Happy hour with the two of you. And I actually learned things about both of you. I've gone to some of Ricky's workshops before. I've never regretted one because she just has such a wonderful presence. And Jill, I know you very well, and I still learned some things about you. I think our listeners will too.

They'll get to know you better on a more personal level. Um, so I just loved that sweetness, but also I did find it inspiring. And I think that sometimes. You know, people are in different places in their life, but often you might be considering something that you wanna do. You know, there might be a possibility of something that you've thought about and it could be something really tiny, , or something big.

And I think the two of you share some examples from your own lives of big things that you've done. , but it could be, you know, taking a class or having a conversation with someone or stepping into a leadership role. , and I think to me, There were some really [00:04:00] helpful and inspiring insights about.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. It's I think that's that's right on is that, you know, whether you've been thinking. Making a big change that feels incredibly intimidating or scary, or, you know, just something small. I just moved across the country. And

so I'm now, you know, in this new place where I don't know, you know, the parents and my kids new school, I, I actually had to take my kids to school for the first time today.

And they were, they were so nervous and I actually cried dropping off my daughter. Who's in fifth grade. and I said to the staff, as soon as, as soon as my daughter walked away, I started to cry and I said, oh my gosh, I feel like I'm dropping her off at kindergarten. Not at, in fifth grade because I could just.

Feel how anxious she was to go into this brand new situation. And this is a situation that she didn't really have a choice, right? She's required by law to go to school and her parents moved her across the country. And so I think whether it's something that you're choosing [00:05:00] to do, or whether it's something, you know, you have to do, like, we encounter so many things throughout our lives that are scary or vulnerable or take courage.

And like you said, Ricky and I each share some examples of that. , and of course the main thread here is how we can use psychological flexibility to be able to lean into those moments in open and values, driven ways to have a life that has meaning and, and fulfillment and vitality.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. Stepping outside the comfort zone and it's, it's always an act of courage. It's always hard. It's, you know, it's uncomfortable. That's, , that's just how it is. And I think that I just also really love that you highlight the importance of social support in all of its various forms and how, you know, reaching out for help or support, or just knowing that you have a community that will be there for you just makes a huge difference.

So I love that you highlight that as well toward the.[00:06:00]

**Jill Stoddard:** Absolutely. I, I don't think that you can underestimate the importance of, and it, you know, community can be even just one other person. And I think sometimes people feel like community is such a big word that it, it means large numbers of people. And I think that that sense of community and support can even just be one other person.

And that's another thing that I have just felt so. Grateful over these past this past week, you know, making this move across the country. Um, we've had a little snafu and we don't have any of our things. And I have friends who are delivering me tables to borrow, and my sister-in-law made us a bunch of food.

And, you know, at one of the most stressful, hardest times in. My family's experience. We've had people who have, you know, really stepped up and been there, but it requires me also being vulnerable, asking for help, letting people know what's going on and what's ha you know, what's happening and why it's stressful.

And, , and I think we talk about a lot of those kinds of things in the episode. And I, and I [00:07:00] hope people will, will, , really give some thought to like how they might step into some of these, these opportunities as well.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, and for your family, you have each other, you know, you're there sitting in the car with your kids as you take them to school and they're terrified and you're terrified.

And it's like, you have that support with each other. And that that's worth a lot.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, we hope you enjoy this episode with Ricky. Kegar

Hey everybody. It's Jill here and I am absolutely thrilled about my guest today. I have Ricky kegar here and I'm going to read you her bio and her bio alone will probably tell you why I am so excited to talk to her. Ricky kegar is a licensed psychologist, peer reviewed act trainer ACBS fellow author, speaker, and chief rock Andro in her own business.

Ricky is on a mission to help therapists thrive and to be brave and authentic helpers trained as a clinical psychologist. She has a 15 year background in the science of human behavior and the practice of behavior [00:08:00] change. Ricky is a popular speaker on the Scandinavian as well as the international stage.

And she is known to bring both passion and vulnerability to her talk. She transforms the lives of her audience by bringing evidence based strategies to her listeners in ways that are edible, manageable and impactful. Ricky is known to leave her audience in tears with compelling stories from her own life and to create extraordinary interactions between people.

And I can vouch for the fact that I have been in many of Ricky's audiences and I always leave in tears and have extraordinary interactions. And one thing that is not in Ricky's bio is that she is also a certified shark diver and rescue diver. So Ricky, welcome to psychologists off the clock. I'm so happy to have you here today.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** Thank you so much, Jill, I'm honored to be here. Literally. I'm just, I'm blown away that you're asking me to come in here. Thank you so much for having me.

**Jill Stoddard:** Well, today is gonna be a little different than some of our interviews. So, you know, the kind of the like typical thing we do is often, , interview authors when they have a new book out [00:09:00] and Ricky does. An act book out that's written in Swedish and the Danish version is coming out this fall. But of course I have not been able to read that book because I don't speak Swedish nor Danish.

, but the reason I wanna talk to Ricky is because she is just a brilliant and inspiring human who has impacted so many people, myself included, and I wanted. Our listeners, you guys to get, , the benefit of her wisdom. So normally I prepare dozens of questions and today I decided not to prep questions, but just to have a conversation.

and Ricky and I, I think correct me if you think this is wrong, Ricky, but you know, we share a similar mission. We both practice act and psychological flexibility in our own lives. And then pretty much everything we do professionally is about bringing that to others. So Ricky primarily teaches mental health providers to become [00:10:00] proficient at clinicians.

And we'll talk a little more about how she does that. I'm sure. , and then I do some of that similar training, but do more so with the public. We're both interested in helping people overcome imposter syndrome, or I sometimes call it like helping people live full size rather than fun size. So in the United States Halloween, we have these full size candy bars and fun size candy bars.

And like everybody knows the house with the full size bars. They're like surprising and special and exciting and maybe even a little. Forbidden. So I like to call that, you know, like we like to help people live full size rather than fun size. And Ricky, what I often hear you say is you wanna help people bring a badass?

And I don't know if you can see this, the listeners can't, but I'm currently wearing bracelet that says badass on it. So I thought

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** course you are.

**Jill Stoddard:** Of course I am. Um, so I, today I thought that we could have a conversation about that. Like how to use psychological flexibility to be a full size badass. How does that [00:11:00] sound?

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** I love that. I love that. Well, and, and so. And, and I I'm, I'm so happy that you, that we're on the same mission, because I think, I think the world needs more full size, bad asses, and people stepping out of all of these rules of how we're supposed to be and, , what we can't and cannot do what we can't do and what, what is what what's possible for us.

So, If I could have an impact on the world, it would absolutely be to have folks do more of that live full size badass lives.

**Jill Stoddard:** 100% and, and I think maybe a, a nice place to start is I've heard you share. A number of your own personal stories. And like I said, I think they're so inspiring. And you know, you really have turned your own pain into purpose, right? Like what you do and why this mission matters to you comes from a place of your own challenge, right.

[00:12:00] Having to become more of a baddest over time. So is that something that you would be willing to talk about and share with our a.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** Sh. Sure, sure. Always like, and I have, like, I have a variety of those, , , stories about overcoming, like one of them that, that you might, your listeners might be interested in is that, you know, when I was very little, I lost a very special person. , actually two, I lost my grandparents and it was just so interesting.

, when grieving all of that, I saw like the dynamics of my entire family. I looked to my parents and they were. Superheroes. My parents are superheroes, but they were taught that it was not okay to be sad that, you know, have to get yourself together and come back at work. , not displayed big emotions. I know my mom went to.

See a psychologist that absolutely lasted and cried and had to kind of stop [00:13:00] the session because they fell apart. , and so when I was little, I was taught to be a good girl who doesn't show weakness. , who helps others? I, I had to parent my parents. I'm sure they would disagree, , because I, that was not what they wanted for me, but I think that was kind of the start for me growing up, thinking that I had to carry the entire world on my shoulders, make sure that I was absolutely under control.

, didn't show weakness. That is a tall order. till starter, it's hard to carry the world like that. So it wasn't until I was kind of fairly grown up. I found out that that living like that is very hard, , and asking for help, I think is so, so important. And I think one of the things that I taught. Well experienced pretty late in life.

When I say late in life, I'm like I'm [00:14:00] 47. I had to count that I'm 47 as of today. and I was, I think I was 42. The first time I asked for help, like. For like, I was 42 before I asked for help. And it came out of a situation where I realized that I had always been told that it was okay to ask for help, but I was never taught to ask for help.

So. You know, bringing together all of these stories that we could go into many of them, if either of them, if you wanted to. But I think that the story for me was that I thought I was supposed to be super woman, super human, which is again, as I said so hard to be, , and then asking for help would be one of like, it's like, it's almost like asking me to speak a different language that I have never. , so I think that is how I bring when we talk about act and psychological flexibility, [00:15:00] that is what I like to bring to the model, to teach people and to practice this myself, being willing to be with difficult emotions, being willing to step back from my inner rules, being willing to show up. As a badass , , and not only tell people that it's okay to ask for help, but teach them,

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. And

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** does it make sense at all?

**Jill Stoddard:** it a hundred percent makes sense. And what do you attribute that transformation to? Like what happened when you were 42 that shifted this for you? And I, I know you also, I don't know if this is the story where you're going, but you have a really powerful story about climbing with your mom,

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** That's it that's

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Okay. Will

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** what happened. I will share that, , that is what happened. So I went to Nepal, , with my mom and a group of, of, of people, , and you know, trekking in Nepal and. Seriously. I think [00:16:00] we thought that we're just gonna go to Nepal, you know, have a little wine, see some nature and what we didn't realize that we were literally climbing mountains and it was so hard and it was, so it was one of the most beautiful trips of my life.

Anyway, I brought my mom, she was at that time 71, and she's a badass. And again, as I said, like, I. Upmost respect and love by my mom and I also on that trip realized that she'd never, she'd always say I could ask for help, but she'd never shown that. And so we came to this place where like, we call it the wall because it.

Felt like a wall and my mom just lost it. She, she, there was like, no way she could get up there. , and so the entire crew came to her and said, you know, please let us help you. We can carry you. We can hold your hand. We could push you. We could carry your stuff. And I watched her. [00:17:00] Like, and I think I'd do the same thing as well.

I watched her say no, it's okay. I don't want to be a burden. And, you know, I chose to come here and I packed my own backs and so forth. And it was just so interesting to witness that. And she was really upset and seeing that of course make me really upset. And it was literally, I'm so glad you remember this story, but it was literally in that moment that I.

I am looking at the person. Here's the te here are the tears deal. Here are, they are, , I'm looking at a person who have looked up to my entire life for their strength. And I'm seeing now that the story that you are not supposed to be a burden and not. Allowing yourself to be carried is literally holding you back.

Right. She's that was like, if we were to stay there, like the sun would go down, , and it would be freezing cold and we would [00:18:00] like, we would be frozen in Himalaya by now. Right. And so I was really upset by watching that and I decided I'm no longer. Just gonna tell people to ask for help. I'm gonna make this my mission to show them and do that myself.

Because I think that is one of the most important things that I can bring to this world is to practice what I preach and to model it, to not just tell people what to do, but to show them myself. And so it was just. That moment. And I, I, I hope you can. I, I just want people to tap into this in their hearts, seeing somebody that you so admire, , and also seeing that what they taught you was.

Not working well, like I, that's not a set of rules that I want to live by that you cannot show weakness that you have to be strong, that you cannot [00:19:00] be a burden. So it was a very strong moment for me. And what was even stronger. And you might have heard this as well deal. As when I came home, I kept talking to people about climbing that mountain as, as a metaphor.



And I talked to people about asking for help, and I set this in so many contexts. I, you know, it was so cuz this was just an important, , experience for me. And so one year later,

**Jill Stoddard:** aha moment. A

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** It was a real aha moment and, and just like having, so I, I remember I stood in front of my partner and for some of you, this is gonna be, oh, of course, everybody can do that.

But for me, I stood in front of my partner sometime later. And I said, right now, I don't know what to say. And I don't know what to do. And I'm. Can you just hold me and like, for again, for some of you, this might be just so easy, but it was [00:20:00] so hard for me because I always have an answer. I'm always the helper.

So. So I kept talking about this and, and a, a year later, my son and I have his permission to talk about this. He had his first heartbreak, he was 16 at this time and he had his first heartbreak and he was like devastated. , and he came to me in the middle of the night. I'll never forget this. He woke me up.

He was having, I think, a panic attack. And he woke me up while I was sleeping and he said, mom, wake up. I'm at my mountain now. And I just can't get up and I need you to help me carry, you know, I need you to help me get up. And for me that all, all this work that I've done kind of fell into place because he didn't have the language to say, like, I'm overwhelmed by difficult emotions, da, da, you know, he didn't have the Lang, he was 16.

And of course, like totally broken, , by [00:21:00] somebody leaving him. but he could speak metaphorically about being at a mountain and he asked for help. So in one way, I'm kind of shameful to talk about all of this, because it's B because it's very personal. And on the other hand, I'm so proud that like, what if, what if you, as a 16 year old were able to say this and not white until you were like 42, like me.

So that's kind of become my mission in life to help people. Ask for help and allow themselves to be carried

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Oh, I love that so much. I hadn't heard that second part about your son and that got that. Got me great too. And this is something I can relate to. So much. And I, I really think that one of the reasons, your stories and trainings resonate so much with people is because these themes are so universal.

And I imagine many of our listeners, , you know, especially women can [00:22:00] relate to being the good girl, as you mentioned. And, you know, for me with asking for help, I wasn't explicitly taught that it's not okay to ask for help, but I had multiple experiences where like my mom just didn't show up for me during really important times when I really needed her.

And so in a, for different reasons, a different learning history, I came to believe similar to you that I just needed to like. Independence and competence my way through everything that like, if I just do everything myself, then I can't be disappointed. I can't be let down when people that matter to me, don't show up for me.

And you know, what's interesting about these kinds of behaviors we develop out of our childhoods is they often work for a. Right. Like being super competent, being super independent helped me to be successful and to achieve some of the goals that I set out to [00:23:00] achieve for myself until that day, where I was juggling so many, you know, balls on fire that they all came tumbling down.

And, and then I didn't really have the tools or the skills to be able to ask for help. It felt so unsafe and scary and vulnerable. , and what I also realized is. I found myself being drawn to people and professions where like, you need me more than I need you. I mean, think about being a therapist, right?

I get to sit in the comfortable chair, where you, as the client are talking about your challenges, your vulnerabilities, and I'm the helper, which means I don't have to ask for help and be vulnerable. And even in certain relationships, I found that I was drawn, you know, in romantic relationships, I was often drawn to, , you know, kind of like a broken bird type.

Like, Ooh, I can, I can fix you. And then I don't [00:24:00] need you as much as you need me. And when that day came that all of those flaming balls came tumbling down, you know, I was in a situation where I also didn't really have like the appropriate people to ask for help because I had surrounded myself. With the help ease rather than the helpers, if that makes sense.

So it's kind of this like, right. Like it works until it doesn't and then when it doesn't whew, you know, it's like, it's really, it's really quite quite a thing, but I will say, I think, you know, having that awareness. Being mindful of like, what is that suffering that's showing up and the willingness to feel discomfort and to do something different.

You know, I just, I feel grateful for act and psychological flexibility every single day, because like you say, like you'd still be sitting in the Himalayas, you know, frozen to death on a mountain and I don't know what the heck would be going. With me, [00:25:00] if I didn't, you know, if I didn't have this way forward, once I realized that I was really being handicapped by this, this independence and competence my way through life, you know?

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** I'm sobbing here on the other side, cuz I'm just so I'm so unbelievably moved at what it is that you're saying and the vulnerability. , that's one of, one of the main reasons that I adore you, Jill, is that like the vulnerability that you're sharing with me and your listeners right now about your mom not showing up and about these pattern in your relationships.

It's just so, , I don't know if this makes sense, but I wanna say beautiful and heartbreaking at the same time. And I think it's so recognizable for so many people that you, you come to a place in your life where you see that this is no longer working. And I, I, and I wanna invite people to see that it doesn't mean that you have to give away all of your strategies. you know, you're you, you and me, Jill, we're still being good girls in many contexts. Aren't really like it [00:26:00] it's, it does work in some context to be, , you know, , this good girl, but that doesn't show vulnerability. In some context, it does work sometimes, but it doesn't work as a general rule. So we'll have to be able to discriminate between when is this working for me?

And when is it not. When am I superwoman? And when am I a superwoman in a way that is more vulnerable so that we can be everything and not this or that. I really, really, really love that. And I think that, , one of the things that you said that just touched my heart, when you talked about surrounding yourself with people who kind of more needed your help, , it, one of the things that I've also learned is. And, and I, I don't know if this makes sense outside of my own head, but sometimes I think that we're not asking too much, but we might be asking the wrong people. And I think it's so important in our lives to learn like people, people want to be there for us. And some [00:27:00] people are there for us in ways that doesn't really fit with what it is that we need.

It doesn't mean that they don't love us or, , want to be there, but they just can't carry us the way that we need to be carried, or they just can't be there for us in the way that we need it, but surrounding ourselves with people who can do that. So I love to hear that. It sounds like you've surrounded yourself with people who will carry you as well.

**Jill Stoddard:** I haven't. And I have to say, I, I love this segue because one of the things I've been thinking about a lot is the power of community. And, you know, at the time all the balls came crashing down. You know, my husband is one of the people, of course, who is, is in my corner and loves me to death. But we had to do a little work around our dynamic because the dynamic was not one that I'm the one who needs help.

And he's the one that's the helper. And, and we were able to do that and we're stronger now for it. , so I think on the one hand, you know, [00:28:00] there are some people who. , I don't know, maybe brought up to speed if that's the, the right way to say it, but that it's possible. It's possible to change a dynamic.

It doesn't mean you just have to like bail, right. We don't have to blow it all up and start from scratch. , but I think, you know, one of the most powerful influences. and me living full size has been in finding community and in, , even within our ACBS community, which is how Ricky and I really know each other, the association for contextual and behavioral sciences, which are, , professionals who practice and, and teach et cetera, and do research on act and psychological flexibility.

, when I joined the women's special interest group, the women's SIG in ACBS. I love this community and this organization, and I wanted to be more involved and I decided to run for a spot on the board. And the way that works is you, you know, you fill out all the requisite paperwork, and then there's a small committee that takes all the people who have.

Been [00:29:00] nominated. And I, I think I nominated myself and then they picked two people from that larger pool to actually go on the ballot. And then the, the larger, , membership votes on those two people to see who gets that position. And so when I decided to run for the board, which required a lot of courage and vulnerability, I had a lot of imposter thoughts about like, who am I?

I'm nobody. I haven't done enough. No one knows me. , , what business do I have thinking that this is something that I can be doing. And my fear, you know, of course, was I wouldn't be chosen. And that's exactly what happened. I didn't even get put on the ballot that first time.

And oof, that was an ego blow. Right. And it proved everything I thought I knew to be true. And so then when the next year came around, there was no way. I was gonna put myself through that again, you know, the inner critic showed up to try to protect me from being from failing again and being humiliated again.

Right. And it was the women in the [00:30:00] women's SIG who, and I don't even remember how this happened. I feel like it was via email on a list, serve conversation. I'm not sure, but all these women who came up and said, No, you must, you, you, you must run again. You know that you belong here. You're good enough.

You're , you know, this is, this is available to you. You can do it. And like also you're brave and you can handle it if it doesn't work out again, right. You're strong. You can handle that outcome. And so at a time where I had trouble. Harnessing my own psychological flexibility. This community surrounded me and lifted me up and really gave me the courage to run again.

And that time I did get selected for the ballot and I did get selected for the position on the board and it's been really life changing for me. It's a way that I've been able to provide service, but also just to get so much. Out of the community. And if it hadn't been for that group of [00:31:00] women, I am quite certain that I would have continued to live fun size, which is not fun at all, you know, and like hide in my quiet little corner feeling like I'm not good enough and I'm not important enough.

, and so I'm curious, you know, I think your, your mountain story, there were so many people. Involved that that helped. Right. So I'm curious what your thoughts are about that this, this role of community in, in bolstering, being a

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** agree. I so agree because again, like if we go back to that mountain again, we would've been frozen, dead out there, still there. , and it was because of the group that we got up and because of the help. And I think that sometimes we find ourselves as if we are alone on our metaphorical mountains and we forget to look around, , and see.

are there anyone here who can help me carry and help me get up? And actually a, another thing that I'm kind of, , I'm so passionate about, is [00:32:00] that, what, what, what do you think happens when you actually ask for help? Like, I have never had anybody within my community say, oh no, you're a burden. I don't wanna help you.

, or some somebody, something like that. People want to help each other. And actually, I think you're gifting them by allowing yourself to be carried. So whenever we are asking for help, we are giving others an opportunity to care for us, which I think is actually kind of a gift. So I think again, community is so important and I've found so much.

Compassion within the ACS that, that you are in from Jill. Like you've been, I remember the first time I met you. , and I remember where you sat in the audience and I remember you coming to me and sending me your book and you are just one of these people who I, , who I always picture. So, so sometimes I'm, I'm, you know, when I'm training, I get.

it's [00:33:00] not, sometimes I get imposter syndrome. It always happens, but I'm like, oh, I am sure that I have nothing to bring. I don't know what to say and what if I fall off stage and all of that. So I always imagine a group of people that are kind and compassionate. , That as if they're there supporting me and you are one of them.

And so for me, whenever I have to kind of, whenever I'm stepping out into the world and it doesn't have to be like on stage literally, but whenever I'm doing something that might feel scary or, , that, you know, evokes this imposter, I think about people who will support me. So I contact them psychologically, if you will.

And imagine that they're there having. And it also means that I also have a group of people who are not part of my community. Like I have come across a variety of people who have not treated me well and kind who I don't want to be like. And they, what they have [00:34:00] taught me is like how I don't want to be in life and how I don't want to be a person.

Wanting to bring others down. And so whenever I do something, I actually imagine this group of people that I don't like, they're like outside. I sometimes see this as a, as a, as an arena, , where I'm on stage and I, and I put them outside and inside, I bring the people that I think will support me. And some of them are.

Actual people like yourself. , and my mom and, and others are more like avatars, but it's actually very helpful to surround yourself with community even when they're like, not literally in the same room as you. I don't know if that makes sense, but imagining the people who will care for you and support you, cheering for you.

And I'll sometimes say this, you, you you've heard me say this before, but. I'm a big fan of queen and what, you know, just imagine Freddy mercury going, oh, like there's so many singing already and there's so many, , doing [00:35:00] music. I should just, you know, I don't wanna be a burden. I don't, I will just, you know, play small.

What a shame that would've been Jill start, like, what if you didn't, , apply for that position again? Or what if you didn't write your books or what if you didn't bring whatever is like what a shame it would be. So I think that. , you know, giving people a voice and seeing that you are all little free mercury , I don't know if that makes sense or little Beyonces or whatever you want to be, , and seeing that you like go on that stage and you don't have to be as Beyonce or as free mercury, you could be yourself and imagine the people in front of you cheering for you, because what happens when we start hiding.

Like that breaks my heart. When people start hurting, like you, I don't wanna, , share anything here on public podcast, but some of the stories you've told me, Jill is just like, heartbreaking about not feeling supported on your journey. And I hear [00:36:00] that from so many and I've had that myself and like what happens when people start hid?

The small lives that they're living and it breaks my heart. So here's an invitation to all listeners, regardless of you being a professional act therapist or interested in act or whatever it is that you are doing to get on that stage and have yourself be heard. And if you and listen, if, and if there's nobody there cheering for you like me and Jill will,

**Jill Stoddard:** Absolutely. Yes. I

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** can borrow us.

**Jill Stoddard:** you can borrow us. And I, I had a client, a wonderful client who I loved working with, and I, I, I think I I've written about this. I, and, and I, I may have talked about it on the podcast, but, , She came into session one day and she had had a really successful week and doing, you know, engaging in values, driven actions and whatnot.

And, and when I asked her, you know, what, what was it that, that helped her to be successful? She said, well, I just thought WWJD. And I had this moment [00:37:00] inside my brain. Where I thought. So normally that means what would Jesus do? And I thought, oh my gosh, I've been working with her for so long and she's religious and how did I not know this?

And I am the world's worst therapist. And as I'm spinning out in my head, she says, you know, what would Jill do? And she went on to explain that through the week, she sort of carried me on her shoulder and when she was faced with a choice to avoid or to do, you know, a more. Badass full size living kind of thing.

She thought, what would Jill do? Or what would Jill want me to do that kind of thing? And I loved that so much that I have now adopted this with other clients. And I don't, I don't pick who the J is. I don't say, Hey, everybody think about what would Jill do? I, I ask them to pick a J. So for me, it's often WW, O D what would Oprah do?

Because I love Oprah. And to me, you know, Oprah is somebody who has endured [00:38:00] racism and poverty and sexism and abuse and body shaming. And she's never let it stop her. And she uses her power for good, you know, even though she's. Lifted up some, not so savory characters by accident in the past. , but you know what I mean?

Like she generally uses her power for good and she doesn't let these obstacles get in her way. And you know, when I had an opportunity to do a TEDx talk, I had, this was during the pandemic. I had gained a lot of weight and, and my body and weight have always been a real challenge for me. I, I grew up my.

Parents. I talk about this on my website. I don't think I've ever talked about this on the podcast, but my parents who were otherwise kind and loving people used to call me Tubby little tub at Tubby Tubby two by four. And there was a lot of shame around the size of my body and, and food. , and so I had this opportunity to do this Ted talk and oh, now you're, I can hear you're crying and it's making [00:39:00] me cry. I had gained quite a bit of weight during the pandemic. And all I thought was, I can't like I can't, oh, I am crying now. I can't memorialize myself forever on video as this big tub, ATT you know, this whole history just came smashing around me. And in that moment I thought, what would Oprah do?

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** Yeah.

**Jill Stoddard:** Or what would Oprah say?

What would she say to. first of all, she would abso freaking, literally do that. Ted talk, you know, this was a bucket list, professional dream come true thing for me. Right. She would absolutely do it. And she would say to me, Jill, you are so much more than your body and it is your mission. To share psychological flexibility with the world.

And this is an opportunity to do that. And even if it helps just one person, you've gotta do it. And I did it. And you know, that video I've since lost a lot of weight and, and not that there's anything wrong with being in [00:40:00] a larger body, but this is just the thing, like my sort of like shame that my history



has kind of put, you know, made me internalize and that video lives on my website.

And it's honestly, it's hard for me to watch. But I am so freaking proud of myself that I did it. And I wore a bright red blouse and I wore leopard print shoes because I wasn't just gonna do it. I was gonna do it like big and bold and, and not hide. And that entire thing came from this one client coming into session

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** you Ted Xed. Full size.

**Jill Stoddard:** I TEDx full size because WW O D.

And so, you know, I wanna encourage listeners to think about this. Like, who is your J or your O right? When you feel stuck, when you have a, a dream, an aspiration, like something you wanna do out on that stage, living [00:41:00] big, having your voice, being Freddie mercury. who is that person for you and what would they do if they were struggling in the same way?

And what would they say to you if they knew you were struggling in the same way?

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** I love this piece of perspective, taking so much. And I just wanted to pause for a second. And like, I hope that you notice yourself, Jill, that you are somebody's Oprah.

**Jill Stoddard:** Hmm.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** You like you were, you were that somebody for somebody else, and that is amazing. And I think like knowing you that if you could have made one impact in this world, and if just one person said that it would've been all worth it.

And, uh, so, and I wanna and wanna invite people to realize not, not only to find your, who is your, like, what would they say, but also reflect that you are somebody's. Oprah or you are somebody's deal like somebody is looking up to [00:42:00] you, , and going, Hmm. So I know my kids will often say like, what would mom do?

, and, and clients would, you know, say that, what would, what would, you know, my therapist say? Or, and, but just, you know, if in doing this

perspective, taking piece, , who would support you and, and how can you ask for guidance? From them, but also notice how you are somebody's rockstar,

**Jill Stoddard:** You know, I think of, , so, so, you know, I have this tendency to zip up my, my suit of armor, right? Put on like my rhino suit, where I am not vulnerable. And I, you know, I'm independent and competent in all of those things. And what I really desire is to be more like you in terms of being open and vulnerable and emotional and Kelly Wilson is another example of that for me. and, you know, there have been times where I've been teaching and I've thought, oh, there's this story I want to share, but it feels so scary and vulnerable, and everyone's gonna [00:43:00] judge me and think that I'm an emotional basket case, you know? And it is often that I will think like, what, well, what would Ricky do?

Or what would Kelly Wilson do? In these moments because they show their emotions. They cry every single time they're up on stage. And I never look at them and think they're weak, emotional basket cases. I think they are freaking bad asses, like holy cow, that you can get up in front of people and be so raw in the service of helping others.

Like that's how I wanna be. And I it's taken. Time to peel that suit back. Like it's more, maybe more like an onion, cuz I feel like I have to do it one layer at a time. Um, but I, I do it more and of course those feared outcomes, you know, they don't come true. And if anything, the times where I've been the most authentic and vulnerable and emotion, emotional, those are the times I get feedback saying, you know, this was so impactful for me.

This was so [00:44:00] powerful, you know, and that's, I think you've had that impact on many people who have, who have sat in your audiences and had the benefit of learning from you.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** Thank you for saying that I'm just, I'm blown away by that. And I, I, I just, I hope that you revisit what you have done throughout this podcast, cuz it, it really wants my heart to hear you say that you want to be authentic. You want to show yourself emotional. You want to be able to express that and you just did.

Like literally in this podcast, you shared so much stuff that is personal vulnerable. , and I cannot imagine a single person not thinking that you are an absolute, brave, badass for doing that.

The thing is that I think that. If there, if there were ever wasn't one more invitation to give people is to not wait, but to like, and this might sound like a cliché. This is actually a [00:45:00] Gandhi quote, but be the change you wish to see in the world, , to, to, to practice it. Like if you want more kindness and compassion in your life.

Practice it yourself. if you want, , more vulnerability in your life, practice doing that and find the arenas in which you can do that. So back to you, you

**Jill Stoddard:** I love that. Well, and, and I think that, that what, that, that goes along with what my next thought was, which is two things. One is sometimes you won't get the outcome you want, or sometimes you'll get the feared outcome, right? Like you ask for help. And once in a while there's a person who says like, no, sorry.

I can't do it, but we underestimate our ability to cope with that. You know, we think it would be the absolute end of the world to have any kind of quote unquote failure. And, and, and the podcast makes me think of the podcast in that, you know, there are so many cool, interesting, famous, bad asses that I wanna talk to on this podcast.

And [00:46:00] in the beginning it was like, I, who am I to talk to that person? They're, they're more important. They're more famous. They're I'm too small to think I have any right. and, you know, using these things, you and I have been talking about today, I just did it anyway. And lots of times I got yeses from people I never in a billion years thought would ever wanna talk to little old me.

Wow. And I've gotten a lot of no's. And even though that stings in the moment, it's fine. Right? Like the

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** You're still standing

**Jill Stoddard:** I am still standing. And even though it stings a little, I also still feel like proud of myself that I went for it. You know, even if they say no, and if I had let the fear of the, no, hold me back, I never would've gotten the yeses.

You know what I mean? So it's, it's like this, , , um, so, so we don't always get the, the outcome that we, that we want and we can [00:47:00] handle that.

And I think really what's more important. And this is a real shift. I think culturally is this idea that, that we need to focus more on like choice and process and steps and action and hold those outcome. Really lightly because we don't

really get to control them. And if we think about like values and the me that we wanna be and you know, how, what we want our lives to look like, I think when we can really focus on like this thing I'm going to choose to do or, or choose not to do and hold those outcomes more likely, we're more likely to, to persist and to keep going.

Cuz those are the pieces we can actually control.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** I love what you're saying. And I just wanted to, when I heard, just talk about like all the nos that you, well, you, who are, who are you to ask these superstars to come on your show? I it's so interesting cuz I, I, I, my thought was, [00:48:00] I wish you could see. What I see when I see you. , and I think that this is important that we were talking about this.

Sometimes you were like, what would Oprah do? But also like, what would, what would they advise us to do, but also like, look at yourself through somebody else's eyes, like seeing what it is that they. See, , connecting to that love and seeing yourself like that is something that we use, you know, they're still, but when we work with, with acceptance and commitment therapy, there's a lot of exercises where we actually see ourselves from the outside and see ourselves on, look at ourselves with love and kindness and just know that.

Whenever you need it, you can borrow my eyes. and I will, I will look at you with, with love and compassion and kindness. That's, that's how I see you. And anybody listening to this, you can borrow my eyes. , that perspective I think is so, so important. And what. I love that you were saying [00:49:00] about persistence and, and allowing yourselves to get these nos, like life will throw us nos, uh, and.

Coming back to what you said about transforming pain into per a purpose. It might be provoking for some people. If you have had something horrible happen to you, and we talk about transforming it into something, but it is truly possible to learn from all of these nos that life had given us all of these hard experiences.

Like. I might, if, if, if the things that happen throughout my life, the, the losses I've had, the heartbreaks, the setbacks, the people rejecting me, people leaving me all of that. If that didn't happen. , I, I might not know the things that I know today, so I'm not saying I'm happy that shit happened. I don't know if we can say shit on your podcast.

I just said it twice. I'm

**Jill Stoddard:** Have to just rate it E for explicit, but we've already said badass several times. So we've, we've already, that ship has sailed.[00:50:00]

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** Yeah, that shit a sale, but you know, we can't, we can't prevent that from happening, but what we can look at is like, we can learn from it and we can stand up stronger. And I know that is possible for all of us.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Do you wanna share the story? I think the other thing that I learned from you that was really powerful was the, the email that you got. So one of your,

Like one of your narratives is the I'm too much.

And you actually got feedback from someone, you received an email. If I'm remembering this correctly, where essentially they were. You're too much. And, and this like, oh my God. My biggest fear about myself is coming through. Would do, would you feel willing to, to share that story and what you did with.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** Oh, sh yeah. C. So what happens is that, , I, on my website there's, there is somewhere on the website. It says like Scandinavian is leading company in, in actress, something like that, [00:51:00] like the copy on your website. And, , and it, the copy on my website. Cocky in that way. It really was. And so what happened was that a colleague, , actually reached out and said, there's a group of us who'd gotten together.

And I didn't know who the group was. , and I, and I was just so confused. Like, we're wondering why you'd write that. Can you show data? Like, can you prove this, , This person clear clearly doesn't I don't think this person knows me because it ha it absolutely broke me because I was like, oh my God, I have hurt people by saying something on my website by, by talking, , about myself as if I am somebody I.

Is now like pissing off people. , and who is that group? Like, there was this thing too, like who is that group? And have they met? And you know, all of that started, like, I felt like if we go back to the Savannah that the entire tribe had kind of moved on and I was left alone to die. , and it evoked like a [00:52:00] massive, , grief and shame.

Like I was so shameful and I was like, oh my God, In that moment, I was like, okay, I'm gonna, I'm gonna change the copy and say, I can train people in act like Moderat, you know, I was just gonna play it small

**Jill Stoddard:** a mediocre trainer.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** a mediocre

**Jill Stoddard:** if you want.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** and I, I might be able to help you sometimes, maybe a little bit. , and and it was, so it was so hard because at the same time, what I do.

Is I teach people to play big. So it was like it, this was hard. , and I remember like going then, I thought, okay, I'm just gonna leave the ACS. I'm gonna leave this community. Cause cuz clearly I have broken, , the trust with the tribe. So the tribe here being like unbelievable. The community of ACVs is so big.

And this was like one person and one small group. But at that time, of course, I did not see that. I felt like everybody hated me and I am, [00:53:00] I am apparently, then I am too much. , and I am wrong. And the things that I'm doing, so this kind of, , contaminated are like spread through everything that I was doing and I was not worthy.

And it literally, like, I think I. I spent a week in bed crying. Like I was ready to leave this and to work. To just quit my job and do something else. , and then I, yeah, it was just horrible. And then I went to this world conference, where this is where you and I often get together. Isn't it. And I just remember I was gonna do a thing where I was gonna sing at the stage with this party night.

And I sat at this table where all the superstars are. And this is interesting. Cuz if you ask the people on the table, They would not see themselves as superstars, but that's how I see them. So I sat there and I was just, I sat there because of us going on stage. And so I just sat there for a moment and I turned around and I sat jokingly, oh, this is what it's like to sit at the cool kids [00:54:00] table.

And this colleague of ours, , Joanne Wright, she hurt that. And she took my hand and she looked at me and she said, Ricky, You belong here. And, you know, , this was at a party. She had no idea of , the history, the things that just happened before that.

But one person taking my hand saying you belong here. Had such a profound effect. , and so another mission I made it my mission to be that person, to then invite people, to come to my table to be that person who says you belong here. Like you don't have to be a superstar. You don't have to be known for anything.

You don't have to be big, small. You don't have to have any, , you know, there's nothing you have to be. You are welcome at my table. And I think like if more of us could be that person who takes somebody's hand and says you [00:55:00] belong here, , that is something that I think will, could, could change the world and could change our community.

So the person who. Rejected me or the person who sent that email, , is also welcome at my table. I won't offer them a lot of, , energy. I'll say that they're all welcome, but this is not a person I will spend time on. they taught me how I definitely don't want to be like, why would we tear each other down?

Why would we write emails like that? Why would we bring together groups to talk about? Like, I don't get that. But what I do get is that we all have the capacity to take somebody's hand and say, you belong here.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Oh, I love that so much. And I think if I had to take a guess at why do we cut each other down? You know, to me, that's probably a version of experiential avoidance where these [00:56:00] people were feeling threatened. It was. And about you. It was about them, their insur. And acting out in a way to try to manage that.

You know, those insecurities, that feeling of being threatened in a way that I would like to think probably wasn't values consistent for them. And you've really transformed that into your own. I don't wanna be experientially avoidant in that way. I wanna connect with my values of inclusion and belongingness and compassion.

And I think that this is the perfect place for us to. Wrap up and I want to make sure people know where they can find you. So, as I mentioned, Ricky has a book. So if we have Scandinavian listeners who, , read Swedish or soon to be Danish that is available, , she also. Teaches a lot. So if you're a mental health provider, who's been wanting to up your game and act, and you just wanna get more of Ricky, you can find [00:57:00] her at her website and it's Ricky kegar.com.

Will you spell it for folks?

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** So it's R I K K E K. What is it J I have to, yeah. K K J E L G a a R d.com. I hope there is a link on your, uh, on your website. So it's

my

**Jill Stoddard:** will be. Yep. Yep. So we'll link to all of that. Um, in the show notes and Ricky has also written, , an essay that's part of a, a compendium. What, what do you call that one? It's a book full of essays. Um, I'm oh gosh.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** an anthology.

**Jill Stoddard:** An anthology. Yes.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** yeah.

**Jill Stoddard:** you. So there's an essay where you share, you know, some of your story.

And can you give the, can you give the title of the book cuz it's this very empowering book for women. Do you remember it off

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** an apparent it's called passionately striving. And why? , and it's an anthology for women who mightly persevere. , and so my chapter is about, it's actually [00:58:00] literally called turning pain into purpose, and it's called the way you get up when life knocks you down. And if. Finish with this anecdote.

It was actually because one of my sons, I overheard a conversation where somebody, I was at a conference, I brought my sons and somebody turned towards my son and said something like, oh, you have a pretty cool mom and something like that. And, and, and they, they asked, what's the cool thing about your mom and, you know, my ears, like, they just got twice as big as it, cuz I was, I was like ears struggling.

, and my son, he took a while. Then he. The cool thing about my mom is that the way she gets up when life knocks her down and it's just like, it went straight to my heart. So that's why the chapters call that because that is one of the things that I really believe to be true in this world, that life will knock us down.

And it's it's about how you get.

**Jill Stoddard:** a

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** You will get up, but it's about the, how you get up. , so [00:59:00] if, if I could make any impact in anybody's life, it would be to get up each time, life, knocks them down and think about how you wanna get up and play big and be mighty to use your



**Jill Stoddard:** live full

size. Be a

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** full size, be a badass.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yes. So I will link to all of those resources in our show notes. And you can find more of ricky@rickykegar.com. Thank you so much for being here. This was such, I knew this would be a wonderful conversation. I really, really appreciate it and appreciate and love you so much.

**Rikke Kjelgaard:** And thank you so much for your vulnerability. I hope you revisits this podcast and see yourself. Jill starter. You are such a authentic, brave, badass, and I'm so glad to have in my life.

**Jill Stoddard:** Back.

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