

# Ep 197 Geno LaPlaca & Shirin Aryanpour

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midlife empowerment, turning pain into purpose, emotional intelligence, conscious parenting, cancer survivor, community building, spiritual awakening, trauma recovery, intentional living, women's connection, service and joy, self-awareness, personal growth, resilience, leadership

## SPEAKERS

Jen Marples, Geno LaPlaca, Shirin Aryanpour

### Jen Marples 00:10

Jen, hello and welcome to the Jenn Marples Show. I'm your host. Jenn Marples, founder of the Jen Marples agency, mentored to women worldwide and your number one champion and cheerleader dedicated to helping you embrace and rock midlife. The Jenn Marple show has one goal, to empower you so you can go out and empower the world. So each week, I'll bring you conversations with incredible women who will inspire us, educate us and motivate us to live our best lives. I also pop on solo to share my best advice, tips and tools to help you unapologetically go for your midlife dreams, embrace your age and become unstoppable. If you are looking for a change, ready to up level your life in business or pivot into something new, then this is the show for you. And know this, you're not too fucking old to step into the midlife spotlight and claim all that you desire. It's your time to shine, and I am so glad you're here. Hello everyone, and welcome to the Jenn marble show. And today I have two amazingly gorgeous guests, and they are both dear friends of mine. We had a conversation last week during lunch that needed to be shared with all of you here today. So we made a miracle happen. And three ladies got together within like, 24 hours notice, and we made it happen today for you. Because I know in my heart this is a conversation that needs to happen, and the conversation that's happening today is how to turn your pain into purpose. And so two of my dear friends, Hannah veba la placa hanno for short, and Shereen aryanpur are on the show today. And just to give you a little bit of a background on these gorgeous souls, Shireen is the founder of illuminate her illuminate her path, and it's a transformative digital platform dedicated to empowering women and fostering meaningful social connections, which we love, that we love, that so much. She's a former physical therapist and a two time cancer thriver, so she calls cancer survivor thriver, which I just love. She's a mom of two, and I've also proclaimed her to be sunshine in a bottle. So that's my new name for you. Sheree, and Hannah is also sunshine in a bottle, and she's the most soulful, warm woman I know. Our kids went to school together, and we've just become really dear friends. And I just adore you, Hannah. And she is a change maker. So he knows a change maker who inspires individuals towards radical empowerment. I love that she's an executive coach, and she guides high achieving women to step into their power so they lead with confidence at work and home through conscious leadership and empowered parenting. And I just love this all so much. And you know, obviously, by their descriptions, why they're on the show today. And what I should say about Hano too is that she very recently lost her mom, and she also is still recovering from really

bad concussion that she had last year. So I've given you a little bit of insight into what the pain is for these two women, and we're going to get into how they have turned this into purpose. So ladies, welcome to the show. Thank you for being my friends, and I love that we all live together in the same community, and that we all are on the same empowered path to empower women, illuminate women, and let women know that they can do whatever they want. So I love that you're here today. Welcome.

**Geno LaPlaca** 03:32

Thank you. Jen, so great to see you. Hanu,

**Jen Marples** 03:36

let's start with you. I want you to share the story that you shared with me about this pivotal moment in time that you had after your mom passed, and how you had a deep reflection on who you are and what you wanted to be in the world, and how you truly, really took that pain of losing a parent your mother, and turned it in to your purpose and everything that you're doing today to help empower women. Yeah,

**Geno LaPlaca** 04:00

so where do I even start? Let's go from the part where I thought, you know, I was in a thriving, successful career in finance. I was a CFO at a hedge fund, then I became a consultant for top, leading investors in the world, and all of a sudden, my mom gets cancer, and the fixer and the I can do it all thriver and me try to do everything in her hands to save her. But when life comes and life goes, there's so much that you can do. And after her loss, it came something that I probably have never felt this deep, and that loss, that sadness, that grieve, it was something that for the first time, I couldn't turn into, oh my gosh. How am I going to be happy? How can I fix this? Right? You don't want to fix your sadness. But the person that you love so much so that made me kind of have that moment like one, starting to recognize that I had some emotions, also connecting with my children, and while connecting with my children, I recognize that the relationship I had with them, it wasn't what I thought it was, it was very control. It was like I was trying to form these little children that would look like me or better than me. And that took me into a path of, oh, I can fix this too, whatever. They're not good, you know, I'll be a conscious parenting coach, and then I'll fix them. And in that journey of trying to learn how to fix my children, I recognize that it wasn't about them, it was just about me. I was not connected to myself, therefore, I couldn't connect to my children. I didn't believe in them, because deep inside, you don't believe that you're good enough, right? I still hadn't done enough, even though I had a successful, thriving career, I wanted to do more, so that kept going and going, and I got certified in more things, and I started to go deeper, but just to learn more about me, and the more I learned about me, I was kind of shocked that there was no kindness and compassion to myself. There was this inner critic over there, always, and that inner critic was criticizing the people that I love the most, that turned me into seeing others, and my ability to start recognizing that when we start to connecting with ourselves in all our aspects, right? Because sometimes we wonder, like, What do you mean? Connected to myself? I know who I am, right? And mostly we play these. We know our roles. We know we're a mom, we know we're an executive, we know we are a wife and this so those are the rules that we have in life, but the deeper inner essence, that's the part that I was finally able to connect with myself. Then I started coaching, and I started to realize that it wasn't just me. It's like every woman around me didn't have that. What was so powerful is that when you start to see your own light, you can shine your own light on others so they can see their own light. And this is simple, as I can see you Jen and I see what you're doing. I can see

Shereen and I see what she's doing. And what inspires me is to show more of you to the world, not the opposite that was before, maybe, or that could have been for some woman, oh my gosh, I can't believe she's doing that. Why? Why is she doing that? How did she start that is the inner critic that we have inside us, and then it turns around and it does it to the world. That's how my pain of losing my mom, and then I lost my grandma, who was also very dear to me, and she was my safe person as a child, and recognizing that in those moments, in your last days in the world, and you're still holding pain, and you're still not seeing yourself, and you have not done the work to live a life that is present and with purpose, you start to wonder, what is it? What Why am I here for? And when you ask your why, why am I here? Why did I come to this world? Everything just changes, because it's not about what you're doing, but how present you are and how authentic you are and how kind you are with others and yourself. And it starts from within. I feel that's kind of the journey one. It was a journey of pain. And then I had my concussion last year as well, and it was a deep, dark night of the soul. For six, eight months, I couldn't see light, I couldn't be with people, I couldn't be out. And it was a lot of introspection. And even in that moment, my patterns of doing and fixing came to try to fix everything within my head, and it wasn't happening. So learning there that when you allow yourself to connect with yourself, you learn more about yourself. You learn who you are, who to become, who you want to be, and how you want to live your life. And that's when my purpose became I want to empower women. I have three daughters, so Nothing excites me more than making sure that they are empowered and the world they live in is by other. Empower women, because this is how we make change. We become change makers when we lead others into their own power. So.

**Jen Marples 10:00**

Oh, I love that. There's so much there, and I love what you're doing. And we're going to dig into some of these recurring themes as we go on in our conversations. The power of presence is really powerful. And I just want to highlight something. We're all midlife listening. Everyone who's listening is in midlife or beyond, and we've all had some type of pain. It can be current pain that people are living in right now. It could be something from the past, but there's something that we've uniquely experienced that maybe we're not addressing, or we haven't come to terms with, or we have come to terms with it, but it's there. I think I haven't found somebody yet who's in our age range who hasn't dealt with something pretty major. And the opportunity here is we all talk about kind of flipping things, like things happen for us, not to us, and looking at this inflection point of these pain points as a way to drive us into our purpose. And I just that's why we're having this conversation, because they've all heard it from me on this show, multiple points of pain, and it's the reason why I'm doing what I'm doing. I don't want any other women to suffer, and I know you are. We are all aligned on that path. So thank you for sharing all of that and also helping other leaders dig deep, because the more we can empower other women, then every single one of us has impact on so many people, people that we know and so many that we don't know. So this is sort of like the work of our lives. It's really come face to face with that pain, and how can we turn it into purpose? So Shereen, let's talk about you. So you are a two time cancer thriver. You have made some big changes. You used to be a physical therapist, and now you are running this platform, and your whole mission is to eliminate women and to shine the spotlight on other women. So take us through your journey and how you came to that pivotal place of, okay, this is what I'm meant to do, and I'm going for it.

**Shirin Aryanpour 11:57**

Well, hello, beautiful ladies, first of all, thank you, Jen for having us. This is an honor, and I love just being around mission aligned women, because that's what we are all trying to do, is empower and inspire others. As Hannah mentioned, there are these moments in our lives. I call them, you know, like our spiritual awakening. And at that moment, you're not you don't know that it's happening, or it's a moment of in a you're in this in this pain, or in this pit, taking these life lessons. And while you're in it, you start having those aha moments, I will take you back. A little about me is that I've always been on a survival mode since I was a little girl, growing up in Iran during a war, and living in a country where women were oppressed, didn't have the freedom, or their just basic human rights. And coming here my teen years against survival mode, learning the language, dealing with the cultural shock, trying to understand who I am as a teenager. Is this going to be my permanent home? Trying to connect with girls. At that point, I knew deep down that I had this gift of healer. I didn't know then, but as I was growing up, taking care of my grandmother, I know, and I think it's a cultural thing too, where the elder that you live with, that wisdom gets passed down without even realizing that you're surrounded by these strong women in your lives. As now being in midlife, you realize that right, but not when you're little. And I as a physical therapist, even growing up, I realized I'm in this community or culture that I wasn't even taken serious. As a physical therapist, I worked with a male PT who was the owner of the clinic, even my patients would think that I'm an aide. Oh, which is our aid? No, I'm the PT. Oh, are you the egg? No, I'm the physical therapist. So even being raised, even here in this culture where I just started noticing that there was a discrepancy, right? So as I became older and started this nonprofit organization, I realized that observing going on medical missions that still were in this world not equitable. And as I was fundraising for this nonprofit organization going on medical missions, I was. I diagnosed with breast cancer, and as as I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and the universe slapped me down, and I was facing, I guess, death, that was my moment of spiritual awakening. What's going on? Who am I? What is my purpose? What am I doing? What if I die? What's the legacy I'm going to leave behind for my children? These are the questions that most of us have in the back of our minds, but you don't really think about it till you actually get hit, or, in my case, get slapped down. Oh, I've been a giver all my life. Time to receive, it's okay, what's important. And while I was taking my lessons, it really comes down to the simple three things, to love, to connect, to serve and repeat. There's nothing more powerful than those three that the rest is background noise and to live a life with purpose. I started digging deep, and I realized, with all the wisdom and the experiences and everything I mean, we're literally having a conversation in 10 minutes and wrapping up 50 years right, 50 years plus of wisdom and experience that. How can we create an equitable world? What is the legacy we can leave behind within this short life given to us? It has to start from our home. It has to, like Hannah said, you have to first find that light from within. You have to believe that we each do have a gift we each matter. We first have to dig deep and love yourself so much that you can spread that love, find that light within you, so you can just vavoom and sprinkle and shine it on others, right? So that's where I started coming forward, and as I started taking notes. This woman's revolution happened in Iran in 2022 and it was the first in the history of woman led revolution where these women so courageously and really standing in front of gunpoints and literally fighting for their basic rights and freedom, and here we are for the life of privilege, sitting here, and I was so angry that I was like, I can't, I can't crying and the trauma of My past coming forward, and I realized I have to even turn my anger into purpose, and that's where I came up with this. You know what started hosting these small sacred circles throughout history, women, tribal women, sat around the fire and shared the wisdom. Those were our ancestors. And if we can recreate that, this strong bond and this collective divine feminine energy, where we can create this ripple effect so we can

nurture and heal and create a peaceful world, because our humanity right now is suffering. It starts at home, and we will have those women leaders where we can heal our world. So here I am, illuminate her path. We're all illuminators, and we can do that one heart at a time.

**Jen Marples 19:06**

I love that. Thank you for sharing all that, and thank you for also bringing up a really big point that I think a lot of women are going to resonate with, and that was living in sort of trauma and survival mode for a really long time. Obviously, you know, your family came over from Iran. Other women are in relationships. It's relationships with parents. It's how we were told how we had to operate. I'm sure you see this a ton Hannah with I mean, I had to do my own unpacking with being in survival and trauma mode based on, like, my childhood, and it takes a lot to recognize that. And when we had our lunch everyone, I made a point saying, like, we've done a lot of work, and I understand that a lot of you listening, you might not have even touched on any of your trauma or your pain yet, so this might be the first time you're even considering it. A and B, hopefully you're now going to be made aware that it can be something that makes you who you are, and it's going to make you great at what you're doing now or what you choose to step into. Because I truly am a believer, and I know Hannah and Shereen are that what happens for us are the exact right experiences we've had, the exact right parents to allow us to do our work in the world as we're doing it today, instead of looking at the pain. And I wanted to say something too, Shirin, when you said the anger, because there is a lot of anger right now. No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, there's a million things to be angry about in the United States, a million. And how do we, you know? And I'm going to ask you this question, kind of like, how do we take that anger and frustration and instead turn it into something positive? Because you can just get lost in the abyss and doing that and just Mindlessly scrolling and getting mad and sending like memes and videos to friends. That's not going to get anybody anywhere, right? And it's just going it's just going to keep you sharing, like in this trauma response, and also it's just going to end up being a big waste of time, because it's going to take you away from what you want to do. So he know, I would love to know how you feel, how we can turn sort of because it's very present for all of us, that anger. I mean, it can just be inequality. I mean, just looking at the Nike ad we're recording this after the Super Bowl, it got me fired up about women's rights, and I'm looking at my girls, and we still have pay equality, and we still have to fight so much harder. So how do we take that anger and sort of flip it and turn it in to something positive

**Geno LaPlaca 21:38**

when we start looking at pain as a portal of growth is when we can start shifting it first one of the things that happen with the trauma that you mentioned. We do not believe in ourselves. We don't have emotional intelligence. What does that mean? Or resilience? Right? Some people call it being regulated, emotionally regulated. I like to call it emotional intelligence, because this anger has a message for you. Something doesn't seem fair. Any emotion has a message for you. So when we start to recognize within us. And you talked before also about being present. When we become present, what that means is just simply notice. We start to notice our patterns, our emotions, everything, and then we start to welcome them. And it sounds kind of weird to say that, right? Like, how am I going to welcome that I'm angry and pissed and trigger and all this? But if the way our psyche works is that our subconscious is geared by this automatic stuff trauma that we had, so our body always is going to be working in that pattern. So until we become aware, you cannot change something that you don't know



it's not working. But in order to change it, you need to feel safe. And in order to feel safe, that part of ourselves that feels anger needs to be recognized and appreciated. Because in the case of Shireen, that anger was coming from a place of protection, protection to her for what happened, and protection to all these women. So that is a purpose, right? Where is it coming from? And then I understand who you are. I understand where this pain is coming from. I understand where this anger comes from, and then having that moment of we turn it into what we want, finding meaning in our pain, because we're also in this culture made to believe that life is painless, and then we suffer more, and then we're in The Pursuit of Happiness, never actually learning to handle our fears, our emotions and what's in front of us, because we want to be out of here. So when we learn to be with what's happening, we become aware of what's happening within us, in learning what we can change and how we want to change it, and this is where we have choice. When we start to observe. I like to call myself. I am the CEO and founder of my life. But what does that mean? It means that my mind is the chief strategies officer. My heart is my mission and purpose in this life, and the chief marketing officer is how I present my life and what do I want to attract however I present it, but only if you start as a CEO, noticing what's happening in your body is your chief operating officer. Everything operates through your body is your vessel, and what makes everything and all these roles. That you have as a woman is how you're servicing the world. So only if you start to notice is how we can make a change, just like you would do in any business. You start to notice, you make sure this is what I want and what's not what I want, what is aligned with me, what is aligned with my purpose, and that's how we turn it. And the other important part is letting go of people's opinions because we're so focused, learning about ourselves is also recognizing that is not the external world. Because we're so focused to what are they going to say about me. What are they thinking about me? What if this but when you learn who you are doesn't matter what the world is saying, because you're anchored in your own values. Oh

**Jen Marples 25:53**

God, there's so much there. I love that. Thank you for saying all of that, and it's really an important point about the fact that our society tells us we should always be happy and that we should never be sad, and we everyone walks away and goes shopping or has a cocktail or travels or does everything to avoid their life, instead of looking right at your life and walking through the flames and the fire and the pain and all of that to get to The Other Side. And y'all, everyone here, we've all done this work, and it's hard. So we don't want to say, people want to say that it's easy. It takes

**Geno LaPlaca 26:29**

practice, practicing to be in it, and knowing, oh, it is happening for me, for you, it will be different after your son went to college. Will be different with your daughters. You had to go through it so trusting in ourselves, believing in ourselves, that we can do hard things too.

**Shirin Aryanpour 26:48**

And I must add to that. I mean, Hannah, you beautifully said that that it is about growth, and that if we don't take that step forward to the unknown and risk it and be okay that this is about, I mean, it's all about the growth mindset to be a little more flexible and not rigid thinking and and being okay to risk and go forward. Because life is a refinement process. And in order to feel joy, it is sometimes, through those pain, those moments of pain, that you are able to even recognize those joyful moments, and that this society, like you said, Jen, it's so much about band aiding, instead of healing Our wounds and

**digging deep and not victimizing myself.** A lot of times I notice that I see women blame, blame, blame, rather than look within gratitude the world of I am gonna find gratitude for every moment, like it, this moment, the gratitude that we have being together and that it's okay letting go of the past. It's okay that release, like you were saying, Hannah, to letting go and being present and taking notes of how am I going to move forward and even learn from the mistakes. We don't make mistakes. I tell my kids all their time, I made a mistake today. It's okay. I'm not perfect, and to the day I take my last breath, I'm going to make that mistake. But along the way, it's that path. It's that journey to getting to the source, to the essence of who you really are. It's already there. Your soul's there. It's just peeling those layers back. So this judgment that people do, it's really projecting their own insecurities. So it's really not about you, it's about them. So recognizing that, sitting with that being aware, like Kenil said, just being aware. It's that pivotal moment that Jen, you were talking about. And I think it's fun. I love seeing the deep connections that woman this, observing this shift in the era. I mean, those ads were so cool. It was about time those \$8 million 32nd Super Bowl ads were well spent. Finally, about shining the light on women doing their breast cancer. You know, breast screening, pre breast cancer prevention. Dog, oh, my god, tears all over me. Flag Football for women. I mean, that's a shift, just even seeing that right, just just to act so we are, honestly, I think, that positive mindset that we are. Hopefully on the path of creating that equitable world, but there is a lot of work to be done, and hoping that today, we've inspired whoever is listening to find that gift within them and shining the light on I

### **Jen Marples 30:17**

love all of that. I wanted to share one reference point when we are kind of in our deep, dark phase that we've all been in, and everyone listening, you could be in it right now. It is hard to see 100 steps ahead, and so the first thing to do is to do what you need to do, and that's if that's getting help, if it's going to therapy, whatever you need to do, because it is hard. And I've shared here, and I'll share it again, that when I was going through this big, Pivotal phase, when I shut down my first business, and now I know I was going through perimenopause, and I was burned out, and all of that, I thought everything that was wrong with me was somebody else's fault. It was my husband's fault. Is where I lived. It was kids. It was my parents. I was looking externally instead of shining a light back within. And when you actually take that time and you know, it's, it's you, like you're saying, kind of like we are the CEO of ourselves, it's nobody else's fault. It's nobody there's nobody else here except for you that's living the life that you're living. But I have such compassion for wherever anybody is right now in the journey? Because for me, it's been now almost 10 years since I had sort of that. I'll just call it my midlife crisis, my breakdown, whatever you want to call it, I had to put Humpty back together again. Then it can be a very tender times to give yourself grace and just get the help that you need. And so Shereen, based on what you do, you knew, you instinctually like, I need to bring women together. You knew there was going to be something powerful, and it I've experienced many of your events and all of us coming together. So building on from what Henna is talking about, you know, we have to meet our anger, meet our pain, in order order to move forward. I would say the next piece of that is to align yourself with other women, because we cannot feel like we're all alone in this world. And so when I just quick caveat for if you haven't heard my stuff about this, dear listeners, you know, I had my own like, a hypothesis that women were feeling really connected and start disconnected rather and really alone. And this was pre COVID, when I started having my first sort of gatherings. And I was right. It was within one dinner. It was we didn't get through introductions before people were sobbing and crying and laying out all their pain. And it's because, and this is pre, you know, social media, yes, but pre pandemic, women are desperate for

connection. We need real, authentic connection. So if we are to heal ourselves and turn our pain into purpose. We also need to align with other beautiful women and be able to have these safe spaces to share. Shereen, can you kind of go into a little bit of what you've seen transpire because of your events, and tell us, you know, really what you think about the power of women coming together? I

**Shirin Aryanpour 33:00**

I truly believe that the sense of community building community, we cannot live alone. That's just not human nature and the essence of just that. So I it's not about me. I just know by now my superpower is this organic way that I'm able to just connect people without any honesty, altering whatever agenda. It just happens organically, and when I say that means people who have a book release have come to me just and I Okay, so I'll go back. I truly also believe it's a cultural thing too. I grew up in a household our door was always open to everyone neighbors, and my love language is food and making food and sharing my food. We love that, you know? I mean, even throughout history, you think of they always say, sit around the table or the spread. That's where magic happens. When family connection happens, it's around the spread. So think of this events, or illuminate her path events, or illuminator events. It's really about just sitting around that spread. And when we walk in, we put the titles behind, we put the who and who, and walk in as just humans. And when we're sitting together in a safe and I love saying that, because it's truly energetically, you can feel that we're in the safe space where you can be yourself. And when people open freely, the ones who do when they're comfortable doing there's a lot of times I've seen that women just come and observe sit, but it's that taking the first step, like Jen you said, there could. Be a lot of listeners right now where they don't feel comfortable being seen. I don't know where to start. They get overwhelmed. A lot of people. It's a lot of stimulation when they're in these big events. How am I going to walk in? What am I going to wear? But if you put that aside and give yourself a chance, hey, I'm going to go to this event with no expectation other than I just want to learn and I just want to feel connected, even if it's to one woman. And I always at the end of events say, hey, spread the goodness to five women in your in your tribe. The reason I say five, it just feels doable. There is no magic number to that, but when these women come and you share, I've seen it, it's feels transformational. I mean, that's how Hannah and I connected, that's how you and I connected Jen through, you know, shooting at his home's free to be book talk that she had at my house, and it just about community building, and that's all there is to it. And I just feel like, if this ripple effect, I host, the next person goes, Oh, I would love to host. And the other person goes, this is what we need in our community to empower the women so we can just like uplift. And you, I already see it. It's magic. Well,

**Jen Marples 36:22**

I'm so glad you're doing that. We all are. It's really powerful. And I just wrote this article about, I can't remember, it was a friend of mine who wrote the article on Medium and Dave Moore, and he was referencing this study that was done about how many friendships were actually able to hold, and it's something like around 150 and that includes your deep, deep, deep, deep, close, way back when friends to maybe, like, say, the moms at the school. It's not that many people. And in this day and age, social media and we think we have all these connections and relationships, we're not actually able to hold all these relationships, A and then B. This article is also saying that, because of social media, we actually have these superficial, what we might call friendships, where you don't actually know the person, so you could be following somebody, even if they're famous or not, or influenced or whatever it is, you're invested sort of in what they have to say in their lives, but it's a one way relationship, and all



this to say is that we're spending way too much time online. We're on our zooms, we're seeing each other's faces, and we're connecting. So that's actually 99% almost there. It's good, but when we're just kind of on screens and you think you're getting a social connection, it's very damaging, because we need to your point to all of our points here. We need to be together in community. It's been this way since the dawning of time, and just because technology is what it is, it can maybe make us communicate about something, to bring us together easier, and spread that word out. We do need to be together. I have yet to be at an event where women are buzzing after being together. And I always encourage meeting new people too. And I love when women come in. I just spoke at an event last week. I love when women come in not knowing anybody, and they're like to what you said, Shereen, like, I'm just going to be here. I just want to meet one new person. Like I'm getting emotional thinking about it. It's really simple. It's really simple in theory, but it's so hard. Why is it so hard? Like, why is it so hard? Because

### **Geno LaPlaca 38:29**

we sometimes focus on what the other people are thinking about me, instead of trying to show myself and where is this base? This is rooted in how we were conditioned as a child. So this is where the whole trauma comes. If you had a controller Mom, if you had a critic Mom, if you had the guilty mom, so we're always thinking they are judging us, and the other person are thinking the same instead of being within ourselves and having this ability to connect, because that's how these awareness, we become aware, not just like you said, How would I know if I've never gone through this pain, just assessing everything within us, our health, our mental health, our body, the environment that we are at home, the relationships that we have all of these gives us or take away energy and work. If these are disaligned, not aligned, what happens is we cannot function well, so then we cannot give to someone else. I cannot connect with you. If my body is in pain. I cannot connect with you if I'm traumatized by something and I haven't worked on it, I cannot trust you. If I have fear of trusting other people, or I am judging you. If I think I'm perfect, right? So we have also the opposite, I think I'm perfect. This. Therefore I'm judging everything that you do the way you do it, because it's not the way I think you should do. So we have always one side or another the way we cope. And that's why this emotional intelligence allows us to integrate who we are, because there is an understatement and overstatement of emotions. So the the first one is we think, if it's overstated, we're the victims. Everything is to us. Everyone's doing it to us and all that. If we're on the other spectrum, you're perfect. I don't even feel anything. I override my emotions, and I never allow myself to feel because I'm just moving through I'm that fighter, and emotions are overrated. But when you actually sit with each of those, you start to learn about yourself and how you function in the world, and then you can connect, because you also start to recognize the emotions of other people. If someone tells you something, you know it's not about you, if you believe it, then it's because you believe it. I always tell my kids, if someone tells you your blue hair is horrible, what would you think? And they say, Well, I will think they're crazy, but what if I tell you, Oh, you're so dumb. Do you doubt it, or do you know it has nothing to do with you? So it's about your internal belief about yourself. So what do you know that is true about yourself? So you don't start to absorb what the world is showing to you, like you said in all these relationships that you're having, either online you're Are you comparing yourself, or are you looking at someone and being inspired? Where is the line in that connection? So this is how we start to notice the being aware of ourselves. Is the first step to empowerment. It is the first step to moving on and then making a choice. We cannot be empowered unless we make our own choices, coming from a place of authenticity and from our heart and purpose.

**Shirin Aryanpour 42:19**

I love that. And I must add to that, Hana, I love what you said. I've been working on this for past few years being a neutral observer. A neutral observer, just observe. And it's really hard.

**Geno LaPlaca 42:35**

Really hard is like the hardest thing to do, especially within your family, because that's exactly where you're the most comfortable and more familiar, and that's where you're going to show your triggers and your pain points. But if you start to observe yourself the many times that you say, Why? Why? Is a word of judgment? Doesn't matter how you're asking it. It always has a word of judgment. If it's curiosity, it would be how and what. What

**Jen Marples 43:07**

just popped up for me was when I was going through one of the men Well, the big, the big sort of pivot time in my life that I mentioned before where everything was everybody else's fault. I did consciously know that I needed people, and I needed to involve myself in ways that were nurturing and fulfilling. So that looked like, for me, like a yoga retreat, committing to myself to go to like this different yoga studio, and show up every day and do some things for me that I hadn't allowed myself to do before. And so Shereen and one of the things too, you know, in finding these new people and groups, I know now how life changing it was, but then I didn't, and I'm sure you see this a lot with the women that come to your event, so maybe they're coming in from a different thing, like, Oh, I'm going to see somebody speak, and it's less about the person speaking, or the book or whatever the Topic is, and it's more about that community and connection and tapping back into yourself in the sense that you're allowing for new experiences to happen and to meet new people, and then you come away with this awareness of because I've seen this happen a time that why don't I do this all the time? Why am I not out and about all the time, and why am I not connecting all the time? I'm just curious, from when you started your events to like where they are now, are people repeat coming back, what kind of transitions and transformations are you saying in the women that are in your world

**Shirin Aryanpour 44:34**

that's beautiful? Yes, a lot of actually repeat. I try to keep it this flow where it targets different type of interest, right? So people don't feel like, oh, it's always a book talk, or it's always a yoga reading, or it's always it's not like you said. It's not about that. It's about creating this space where people feel, see. Seen and connected in a just simple human, basic connection. There's so many things out there, right events where, oh, it's about networking or entrepreneurship, or it's about galas. I try to create a space where there's such diversity and people with such different backgrounds. And also I'm loving seeing generational like kind of brought her daughter last time. I love that because it allows this again, like tribal where women and girls and everyone would use to sit together, and we learn from the elders, and the elders learn to connect even with the younger. So what I'm seeing is this flow of natural connection where people walk away and even as simple as a hug, right my shimini hug, and I'm just like you share this, this moment of, oh, I needed that. I just needed that simple hook tonight, and nothing else, just connecting to someone as simple as that. I've gotten people text me back say, Oh, my God, I felt so elevated walking away, but just being myself and felt so comfortable. And that is what we all need, and the community, the sense of love and connection and being ourselves in a way, because, especially as

a woman, we are trained to put our needs last as mothers, wives, givers and learning now, which is this, I love what you're doing, Jen, because women in MetLife are we are just scratching the surface. We are just finding our powers and the skills and the wisdom. Wow, watch out, because it's finally time to shine a light on ourselves, guilt free, and I don't like that word, I just don't like the word guilt, but it's true. Finally, we're able to shine a light on ourselves, and it's so exciting. I just feel like it's so fun. I mean, life is such a gift. It's so precious. Every single day you wake up, you tap your feet down, just even if you wherever, whoever's listening, wherever you are in your life, start with, put your feet down, kiss your hands and say thank you. I am healthy. I am here when I was going through my cancer journey, I didn't even have the energy with all the chemo the second time around that I was going to radiation, I had second degree burn everywhere. I was dying of pain. I hadn't slept for three months, and I kept telling myself, how am I going to function again? What if this comes back again? I mean, like you said, Jen, your mind plays these crazy thoughts come and go and like you said, I know you gotta learn like, I'm heart LED. I think a lot of times you gotta also find out, like, innately, I'm a happy soul. That's just a gift Thank you universe that gave me. But not everyone's like that. But if we all pause and say, I'm going to be kind, I am going to live it day by day, and then it builds up. I had the energy to walk only 10 to 15 minutes. Okay, y'all who don't know me, I am that girl who's five people in one. I play tennis, Pickleball. I'm out on the I hide this that for Sherini to be down and can only walk 1015 minutes and be exhausted. Okay? I cook for not only myself and the family and the neighborhood that I feed. I didn't have the energy to do anything, but I had to believe and fight for my kids that they need their mama. And I want to live this life to the fullest, that one step that you can take for yourself is the best start. So it's not about my event or Jen's event, or he knows event, or whoever's event, or that event or this event, even your neighbor, your friend, who you feel the most comfortable walking in with your messy hair, in your PJ and say, I need to just connect tonight. Forget that cocktail. Whatever it is, we started a Mahjong group. Girl, it's not about the mahjong. It's those conversations happening around the table. It's those two hours where we give ourselves to vent. And connect. And the module on part is one, but that's one thing you can take away from all my experiences in a very humbling and I'm still learning, is be kind to yourself, let go of all the pain, learn from it, and take one step at a time, kiss those hands every night. Love yourself so you can spread the light and the love you have within you. That's just what I can give today.

#### **Jen Marples 50:31**

Well, Shereen, that was beautiful, and I had the chills when you were speaking. And it's funny, because one of my last questions I wanted to ask each of you was sort of your final piece of advice on how to turn your pain into purpose. And you answered it, you said by kissing your hands every day, like putting your feet on the ground. And I think that's that's beautiful. Thank you for sharing all that. Hello. So what do you think, what would be your best piece of advice for somebody listening right now, to turn their pain into purpose?

#### **Geno LaPlaca 50:58**

One of the things is, I think we forget to remember that this modern life has taken away our village. It wasn't designed like this, that your family was going to be in another state, in another country, or whatever, and that we are supported by this village. There was this study done as well, and having quality in relationships, it gives you seven years of life, seven more years of life. Better than taking out the sugar, working out, going on your walks, doing everything, biohacking, whatever it's the

relationships and pain is inevitable. That's part of life. Suffering is our choice. So that's the key and important part, that in midlife, what we have is we have these amazing experience already of having tried the different buckets and places and things that drain us or energize us, like these circles of women or the ones that don't, what does really resonate with me, and that ability to look within and say, I feel so comfortable doing this and taking that power to choose, as woman in midlife, I think that is our greatest power, To become the CEO of your life by choosing. I choose with intention. Because Can you imagine your life if it wasn't intentional? Imagine your husband. I'm going to be 98% faithful to you. That's my intention. You don't want to do it halfway or even like close to 100% so that to me, when I found meaning in life, I want to know that every day that I go to sleep, I live with no regrets, that I went in peace. And if something happens, my kids are going to be happy with who their mom was. My husband's going to be happy with the wife, hopefully yes and then, but every conversation that I had, I was able to touch someone right? So how can I live that life if I'm rushing, if I'm hurrying, if I'm not paying attention to what's calling me? Because your body is just communicating to you, Hey, pay attention to me, You're doing too much. Your mental health is saying, Hey, I have a lot of anxiety. Can we be more present? I have a lot of depression. Can we just come back from the past and be here our body is so strategically and our mind communicating to us, be here with me so you can live an empowered life.

**Jen Marples 53:41**

Oh, God, I love that you made me think of something Bonnie Wan, who was on this podcast before her book behind me life brief, it's such a great book, and she brings up so many great concepts. And one of the concepts was, and you just explained this as living our life by obituary values versus resume values. Yeah. And so it's exactly what you're saying. So it's not like what looks good. Well, she was the CEO of this and the Dodson of that, and like she always looked great and always wore Donna Karan and blah blah, blah, versus like she made me feel seen. She loved her children, she gave her heart to everything she did. I mean, that's the shit you want to hear any eulogy, not like she was organized and stayed on task. I mean, hello, that's that could be a whole complete other podcast episode. Yeah.

**Shirin Aryanpour 54:27**

I mean, literally, it's all about how you make others feel. The three of us talked all day. Whoever's listening, hopefully the stuff we said in it's how we make them feel about themselves. They might not remember all this stuff that we said and on. One more thing, Jen this life of service, one thing I've learned all these years when I went to these medical missions, took students and went to these developing countries, it was very humbling. It wasn't what we did for them. One is what they did for us. It was very, very humbling that we were in the middle of Senegal, in a village, and we saw people were so happy. So the definition of happiness to just pause and realize, who are we to with all this stuff and this and that and travel, it is in you that happiness is how you tap in within yourself, especially when we serve others, it gives you this sense of joy and purpose that I matter because I help someone, even whoever's listening, give your 10 minutes attention. That service could be as small as checking on your neighbor. If you made an extra food, go drop it off at someone. You don't have to go all the way to Senegal. When you help and serve others, it gives you this joy no one can touch or tap into ever. It's like the secret joy that you're like. So whoever's listening, volunteer half hour, one hour somewhere that actually is somewhere where you might not feel comfortable, because he might surprise you, and you might find superpowers within you you didn't even know existed. And it's really good to surround

yourself with people who are not like minded, because you will talk about that growth mindset. You would find things about yourself will take you to a whole different level.

**Jen Marples** 56:40

You brought up something really interesting, and it's a great way to be sort of one of the last things we discuss, and that is when you are sort of in the depths of going through something. So any of you listening, if you're going through something, a sticky wiki thing right now, the best way to start feeling better, and I've read this, and there's science on it, and it's to your point is to start helping others to get out of yourself. It doesn't have to be major, like you said. It could be checking in on an elderly neighbor, it could be dropping off some food. It could be donating some clothes to your church, but just to get out of yourself for just a little bit. And then by doing that, I feel because I've been volunteering since the dawning of time, and I haven't been good about it lately, and now you're reminding me I need to do some stuff. Is that it also reflects back to you what's important to you, and maybe shows you a new avenue. So we started off the whole conversation, and this is all around turning pain into purpose. And maybe you don't know what your purpose is, but this is, could be a good way to start if you're in the depths of things, just to get out of yourself, like Shereen is saying, and look around and see who else needs you. And this doesn't mean to, like, put yourself and deplete yourself. This is something small, but it can be one of these steps on your path to figuring out your purpose. Well, clearly I could talk to you all forever, and I have to cut us off, so I have one question for each of you, part

**Shirin Aryanpour** 58:03

two.

**Jen Marples** 58:04

Yeah, we'll have a we'll have to have a part two. And I knew this was going to be sold. I knew this was going to be a long, juicy conversation, and I know this is going to impact so many. So my final question for each of you, I'll start with you, Hannah, is, what do you think the best thing is about being in midlife,

**Geno LaPlaca** 58:18

the experience and not caring anymore. What other people think about you? I

**Jen Marples** 58:24

love. How about you? Sharing? What's the best thing about being in midlife,

**Shirin Aryanpour** 58:29

being comfortable in my own skin? I thought my 40s were amazing, and I went through all my cancer journey and the crazy shit show, but yes, just being comfortable in my own skin and learning that not everybody's your people, and it's okay. I'm okay with that, dropping the whole people pleasing department like Anna was saying it's okay, and and loving them from afar. And not everybody vibes on the same frequency as you do. And these women's events, you're not coming to be best friends with everybody. You're coming to be in community, which adds to your longevity, people. And that's what Hannah was saying, that seven years is seven years. I'll take a girl if it's just gonna add to my life. Thank you. I'll take it.



**Jen Marples** 59:25

I'll take it too. Okay, you all know everybody finishes this sentence on the show. Start with you. He's not too fucking old too,

**Geno LaPlaca** 59:33

believe and love yourself.

**Jen Marples** 59:39

You're not too fucking old, too,

**Shirin Aryanpour** 59:42

dying. Bri, and move on forward.

**Jen Marples** 59:47

Oh, I love that. Oh, my God, ladies, it has been incredible chatting with you. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for being on the show today. I know we are going to leave women, hopefully transformed and. I give them some hope about turning pain into purpose, and it's super powerful, y'all. And you can tell that these ladies are heart centered, open hearted women, and I love and adore each of you madly. So tell everybody where we can find you, support you, and get more of what you're doing.

**Geno LaPlaca** 1:00:18

Oh, see on the notes, and you can find me on Instagram, be kind and present, and then on LinkedIn, he nueva la placa. I have a landing page that will be on the notes, but working on on our web page, yeah,

**Jen Marples** 1:00:34

I love it. And how about you, Sherine,

**Shirin Aryanpour** 1:00:37

I'm same along the lines. I'm on LinkedIn, under shivane Arium, and also my Instagram illuminate her path. And my website is going to be live soon under illuminate her path. So the best way is illuminate her path on Instagram so we can share the events. And I also have a newsletter, so you can private message me if you want to be part of that newsletter, where I share from my heart and the upcoming events, and I'm happy to add you love to have you in our sacred women's circles. Oh,

**Jen Marples** 1:01:15

I love it. And we're going to link all that in the show notes. And one thing that I think it's really cool is that both of you your Instagrams and how you sort of built everything is Be kind and be present and illuminate her. Is it? Illuminate her? Illuminate her path on Instagram. I'm gonna follow you, obviously, but illuminate her path, your living and breathing, your purpose everyday, ladies. So thank you for your work in the world, and I love you, and I'll see you very soon. You.