

Ep 152 Natalie Nixon

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SPEAKERS

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Hello and welcome to the Jen Marples Show. I'm your host Jen Marples, founder of the Jen Marples agency mentor to women worldwide and your number one champion and cheerleader dedicated to helping you embrace and rock midlife. The Jen Marple show has one goal to empower you so you can go out and power 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 uplevel your life and 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 Jen Marple show today I've got a gorgeous guest, her name is Natalie Nixon. She is the creativity whisperer to the C suite. I just love this a creativity strategist. So we're gonna get into what that means in just a minute. But I'm gonna give you a little bit of this Queens background because she is incredible. And we are lucky to have her on the show today. And you'll know why in just a moment. She is the author of an award winning book called The creativity leap, unleash your curiosity, improvisation and intuition at work. And she has been ranked among the top 50 keynote speakers in the world let that sink in by real leaders, and she has been valued for her accessible expertise on creativity, the future of work, and innovation. And she is the CEO of figure eight thinking. And she advises leaders on new ways to reframe futures by applying wonder, rigor and foresight to amplify growth and business value. Now I have the honor, I had, I should say, the pleasure of being in Natalie's company at a retreat, and she spoke and took the whole group through an exercise. So we're gonna kind of get into how she unlocks creativity. And folks, and I want you to give us just a quick overview, Natalie, of how you got into this because I do think everyone listens to creativity. And you're like what you can do work around creativity, if you're not an artist, or you're not a dancer, and everybody thinks creativity means I don't make any money. Or maybe I'm one of the rare few in advertising who can make money because of creativity. And so what I love about you is that you're taking this thing that you're saying that's innate in all of us in extracting it to help us all be better, do better, be more creative and be more successful in business in life. So I can't wait to dig into all of that. But how did you get to where you are now? How does one become a creativity strategist? And how to naturally become the creativity strategist and the CEO of a great thinking. First

03:00

of all, Jen, thank you so much for inviting me to be on your show. It's a real treat, and I am excited for our conversation. My journey to becoming a creativity strategist has been an incredibly loopy one. And it really has been a result of me committing to follow my heart and my intuition, which meant in reality that I have done a lot of different things, including having been a middle school teacher worked in the fashion industry versus an entrepreneurial hat designer then and global sourcing, living in Sri Lanka and then Portugal and traveling throughout Asia, making bras and panties for the Victoria's Secret brand. I was also an academic. So I was a professor for 16 years, the first 10 years, I taught the business of fashion. And then I created a strategic design MBA program, some colleagues at Thomas Jefferson University, my leap into embracing being a creativity strategist, came after giving a TEDx Philadelphia talk in 2014, where I was proclaiming that the future of work is jazz. That Talk catapulted me into getting invited into companies to help them do what I was talking about, which was that basically saying, Hey, guys, the most innovative companies, or those that work improvisationally, and I was helping them do that through a heuristic, which is a fancy way of saying a template mapping and from the way jazz musicians work. And I was doing so much of that my husband, John, about six months after the talk, when I was kept on getting these invitations to facilitate, to speak to consult, he said big this is like a thing you should formalize it and I said, Okay, so I just created figure eight thinking as this little thing on the side. And I woke up a year later and realized I was actually having more fun with my side hustle. And then that began my journey to commit to well, what is this figure a thinking thing going to look like? I actually made up my job title creativity strategist. I decided to do a mash up of two areas didn't mentions of myself that I love and that I'm really good at. And I remember when I first started going to cocktail parties or after work receptions, and I would stand in front of a mirror at home before I would leave the house and I will repeat to myself over and over. Hi, I'm Natalie, I'm a crate. Hi, I'm Natalie, I'm in creativity to the to the word finally just rolled off my tongue, which is what we often have to do when we commit to recreating ourselves re envisioning ourselves. But the work of doing creativity strategy really came as I began to be invited over and over into companies to help them build air quotes, cultures of innovation. And I started realizing that everyone was running and racing to do the I was often let's say, innovation theater without really having great communication, great level setting, and not knowing what we meant by innovation. And I had this creeping sensation that we were starting in the wrong place, we actually needed to start with building a creative capacity. But I also realized, in the hallowed halls of corporate America, if I lead with, we need to start with building the creative capacity of our clients, our managers, our people, they will look into like a three heads because most people, you know, to your point earlier, when they think about creativity, they only think of artists, and they don't self identify as creative. And that began my journey of figuring out how to offer up a simple, accessible way to for all of us to think about creativity, that would democratize creativity. So what I do in my work, as a global speaker, or writer and advisor is to help people think through questions like, what's our next what's our purpose? What's the business that we should be in versus the business we've been churning in, but all through the lenses is, as you said, in your intro, through wonder, rigor and foresight, dig into

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wonder rigor a little bit, because I know that's really sort of your trademark phrase. And I think it's really cool. It's just it just begs the question, wonder rigor, like what is that we don't wonder is we kind of know

what rigor is. So like, how does that work together? And how is that the framework for what you do? Well, the

07:07

definition that I landed on to define creativity is that creativity is our ability to toggle between wonder and rigor to solve problems, produce value, and generate meaning. Now, wonder is something I think most of us get, we think of creativity wonder, as I define it as about density, and all and asking big, what if questions, it's about pausing, because it's really hard to wander when you're going 80 miles an hour. And it's about suspending judgment. This also requires a lot of curiosity. So that's wonder people get that one, I think about creativity, the rigor, dimension of creativity is equally important. But it's the part that we typically forsake when we think about creativity. So rigor is about focus, discipline, skill, mastery, time on task. Rigor isn't very sexy, it's often very solitary. And it is essential. And when I remind people, okay, if you have at some point, or currently in your life, you have some sort of artistic practice, or you're athletic in some way, you totally understand what I mean by wondered rigor, you totally understand that. If you study dance, before you get invited to audition to leap across the stage, you spent months years, you know, really honing that skill, if you are a soccer player. Same thing, right? When we zoom out, we look at wondering rigor from those places that we get, okay? That's what we mean by you need to toggle between one and reader because if you're only in the Wonder dimension, then if your head is in the clouds for too long, you're not anchored. And the thing that will really make it sustainable. And if you are too much in the trenches, and the rigor dimension, you can get really myopic, and probably even more, unfortunately, you can burn out. So what's missing in a lot of our personal lives and in our work environments, is this balance between wonder and rigor. In fact, a lot of our work organizations are conflating rigidity for rigor. They think they're being rigorous focus, discipline, time on task skill, mastery, but actually being rigid. And the difference. I'm from Philly, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we have this mythology that every February or so the groundhog will come out. And if it sees its shadow that will tell us how many more weeks or not we have of winter, the groundhog is rigorous because it's taking into account its landscape, right? So in rigor, we're accounting for the environment when we're being rigid. We were saying no, we said we were going in this direction, we got to keep going this direction to save face, even though what's really needed some tweaking and pivoting and changing.

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Ooh, I love that I can see you know, we're probably everyone listening. You can see where you've had this in any aspect of your life. It could be A Gosh, it could be baby with your family and with your kids, it could be work, it could be with exercise, just anything you're doing. And I love that analogy because I think we can all anchor in, like, you're not just going to wake up and run a marathon tomorrow like that, just if you haven't been running, are you running long distances? So there has to be that wonder like, What the What if what you're saying, what if, but then I gotta anchor that into I gotta train.

10:23

But it's got to start with the dream, right? It's got to start with that, that hopeful, audacious thoughts that occurs to you. And then going back and forth between that rigor in that wonder, take

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us through then the process **so many different types of women listen to the show.** Some are entrepreneurs, some work in corporate America, and I think we all want to be improving and doing things with the best we can we all want to get our gold stars. And I know that's like the perfectionist thing. And it's, I think you just said something earlier about that. You don't want to be stuck in any one way and be afraid to go, Okay, well, I put all these eggs in this basket. But this wasn't the basket I was supposed to be. And I've just kind of gone through this myself of like we all and I talked to a friend last night about a huge rebrand she just did with her company. So I know your process probably helps people get to that place. So what's, you know, **what's kind of a simple process where we can use your methodology to attack and let's just use work or career.**

11:21

I've had those moments actually the inflection point, the crossword rooms I was at when I decided to leave a 16 year career in academia, to become an entrepreneur. I had what I call my first world existential crisis. I was like, if I'm not a professor, what am I you know, and like, calm down girlfriend, like life will go on, right? But for whatever it is, for each of us in those moments, it seems pretty major. So there's two frameworks that I'll share. **The first is really coupled with the Wonder rigor framework, because I realized it wasn't going to be enough for me to tell people, okay, toggle between wonder and rigor to solve problems. and off you go, you know, you'll be creative.** How do you do that in a consistent, sustainable way. And **that's where I introduced the three eyes,** which is actually probably the subtitle of my last book, **which is that the way you can do that balancing and toggling back and forth is by committing to inquiry, deep curiosity, which starts with self inquiry, the ability to ask yourself questions and being brave enough to also ask others questions, improvisation, which is about a commitment to being experimental, try new things.** And really, that I like to use the design and design thinking framework of prototyping, small, ugly, rough draft, mock ups have an idea, don't let perfection be the enemy of good. **And the third eye is intuition.** And intuition is something that I am increasingly interested in researching, reading as a big part of my next book. And intuition, as I think of it is about pattern recognition. It's soon as I call them brain feelings, right? **Intuition is that nudge that should go left? Not right, I should work with her, not him. And it turns out, we are hardwired with this antenna inside of us** called the vagus nerve. It's the longest cranial nerve, the extend from the medulla oblongata, down through the heart, into the gut. And now we know about this, this second brain in our in our in our gut because of the complex nerve system extending from the vagus nerve. And I'm just talking to a friend of mine, a very smart woman named Eve DeRosa. She's a professor at Cornell, she's a neurobiologist, we went to college together. And she was telling me about how the nerve system from the vagus nerve even extends into the lungs, in addition to the heart and through some of our other organs. So it's a really interesting, my words, not hers, antenna interior navigator, right. So that's what I think of, of the toolbar intuition. And it turns out, other **researchers have learned that there is a correlation between paying attention to your intuition, and cognitive, rational decision making.** So while we might want to say, Oh, that's so woowoo, and we can't prove it, and what's the data and blah, blah, blah. And actually, now, scientists are learning that there is a correlation. So that's the three eyes coupled with wonder rigor. The other framework, which is actually a part of a course, I have developed, I have a course called The Wonder rigor lab. And it's a self paced course, that takes people through four modules to go from an idea to an actionable thing and magick the actual thing image, it could be a product, it could be a service, it could be an experience, and it really comes from that existential moment I had when I was making the decision to leave academia where I had stories that I was telling myself as well as blatant

stories from my mom or expectations from society or family, a black woman with a PhD, I worked full time while I earned my PhD in four years, I was one of two full time, black professors at the University where I taught at the time, I had a lot of ego attached to that career path I had sacrificed a lot, I was very proud of what I had to accomplish. And then I was thinking about leaving that. So here is the other way I like to help people begin to apply creativity. It's called the LEAP method. So no surprise is related to the title of my book, The creativity leap. And in each of those letters, stands for a series of exercises that I've designed. The L is about leveraging everything that you've experienced, and that you have been able to accomplish in your past. So the L leveraging is about back casting, and doing some deep reflection about taking stock and taking inventory. The ease of after we've done the back casting, we do some forecasting, the E is about envisioning, where do I want to go? What do I want to be? Who do I want to be why? And being incredibly preposterously audacious about that, it's so important to be preposterous, because you will always have to whittle down at a down based on limitations of budget and time and other sorts of resources. The A is about asking, asking yourself, but also asking others primarily for help. I don't know about you, Jen. But when I stepped out on my own, I got very good at asking for help. Because I knew I didn't know what I was doing. There was no shame to my game. And a book that really helped me is a book called The Art of Asking by Amanda Palmer, who is an artist, singer, punk rocker, incredible story, but she was just incredibly audacious about the way she used, for example, Twitter back in those days, to ask her fan base for help. And then she ended up doing one of the first successful million dollar raises on Kickstarter, asking for money asking for help. With that book, The Art of Asking by Amanda Palmer was super helpful to me. So we have leveraged envision, ask, and the P is about prototypes that we've backcast, then we do some forecasting. And then we begin to ask for some advice and help, we then begin to do rough draft ugly mock ups of this idea. We do what I call, oxygenate your ideas. We have all experienced those moments, we think, oh my gosh, this idea. So good shirt shaped helped anybody, right? When someone steals it can't think like that. First of all, if you look at anything you've ever been a part of, it never looks the same at the end, as it did in the beginning. So you got to get rid of that mentality. But give it air, give it light, give it critical questions. I prototype the course the Wonder rigor lab, I designed all these exercises for the people who opted into the course, to begin to develop small prototypes, putting out queries on Instagram, sharing a doodle sketch of your idea, taking a picture of it on your phone and taking around to some people at lunchtime getting feedback. I mean, really low stakes, rough draft versions of your idea. Because what you have in your head is not always what a what you think you have manifested and put out physically. And secondly, it might not be what people really need and want, right? And after all, isn't that why we're doing all this work to produce the stream right to to provide value and all sorts of ways for people. So anyway, that's the other framework that I found to be incredibly helpful to people is the LEAP framework, which is, again, is broken down in my course the Wonder rigor lab, it's leveraging, envisioning, asking, and then prototyping. Whoo, that

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is such great advice. And that's such a great framework and step because at least you have that process. And it's always nice, I think, too, and especially because most women are listening or midlife. So when you're doing that backfill that What did you call that the history of casting back casting, there's so much there. Yeah, there's so much there, because we've been around for a while. So there's so much there. And we've had one or two careers or a blend of something at this point in time. So a couple things popped up for me, the ego, I know the ego is a real son of a bitch. And the ego can stop you and

I've talked about it before on the show can really stop you from moving forward because we're afraid of what people think which is our ego. And like you when I shut down my first PR firm and actually just launched another PR firm. So I've come full circle, but with a different lens, a different backstory, like the whole nine yards. But when you shut and dismantle something down, like I greatly relate to what you just said about like leaving, like I'm professor, this is what I do. That's what I was I'm like, I'm the crisis communications person. This is what I do, I hope which is my clients. I'm like, I'm the shiny thing. Our person, you mean, I'm going to do nothing for a minute. And so it's a huge it's like an ego death. And I know and I talked about, I really want to talk about this because it stops so many people from moving forward, especially women, like, we'll just, we won't stop something because of it and our societal expectations of which we have many. And that's a whole other podcast episode. And then there's the, you know, the peanut gallery out there. Everyone's saying, I think you said like your mom, your husband, your people, like, well, you're gonna leave that great thing, like, you've just worked so hard. But there's only one life to live and you got to do you. And so I love that you've got this framework. So you work with so many people. **So what do you see? What's the secret sauce to finally kind of put ego aside and just say, dammit, I'm gonna go for this thing.** Because my intuition, and that's gonna be my next question. **My intuition is tell me to do something. Because usually I find most people, it gets really loud, you can ignore it anymore. But there's, we'd still try to talk ourselves out of it. So how do you talk people into it? And how do we get rid of the ego?**

21:03

Fortunately, for me, my husband was actually my greatest cheerleader my to this day remains one of my, my biggest encourager, so **it always helps if we have that sort of person in our life, who is witness to our genius is witness to our sweat and tears and see something in us that we don't even identify it right, that helps.** But short of that, one must have a sense of humor about oneself. And so there's a phrase that I, when I find myself up at the tower, on top of the metaphorical tower, and I need to get tucked down from the tower, right, I have a phrase that I pull out of my ear, which is, oh, don't take yourself so seriously, that for me, it might be something different for each person. But for me, it makes me giggle. And it helps me to like, take a breath, and relax, right. So there has to be some elixir that you have in your life and your mind and your head, a mantra, a phrase that you can use to help you tone it down, and zoom out. The other thing that I do is I do a lot of experiments in my life and my work. That's why I have such a very diverse background. But **I also like to do this mental experiment of imagining myself at this crossroads that I'm in and I do a mental exercise of imagining, okay, what if I did do this? How do I feel I don't even think about what would the outcome be?** I don't I don't think about like the tangible, you know, air quotes, important stuff, I think about how would I feel, I start there, and that pathway, and then I go back to where I am all stressed out and confused and lots of unknowns. **And I think about okay, what if what if I don't do that? How do I feel? It's two years from now. It's five years from now.** And again, I go back to the I shared earlier part of our conversation, Jim, which is that I really committed two years ago to honor my intuition and to honor my gut, which is not to say that that's an easy thing to do. It's super hard, because it's so murky and ambiguous. But it started for me when I was a sophomore in college, and I called home another first world existential moment. What am I going to major in, I call them to my parents, I didn't want to disappoint them. They had sacrificed a lot for our education, I wanted to get a good Gob at the end of a very expensive education. And I seem to be very disinterested in everything that seemed to be impressive, was interested in economics and political science. And I call them I don't know what to major in. And this is, in the days when there was a

phone in the kitchen and a phone into your bedroom. Each was on a phone. And they said, Well, what do you like? And I didn't want to answer because I thought they would they would think what is she doing? What is she doing up there? And I started to avoid the question. I started thinking stalking talking about the stuff that I try but wasn't that good at it? It's about it was boring. They asked me what do you like? What are you interested in? Finally, I confessed. I really love anthropology. I just took this intro course it's so cool. And I've been loving these Africana Studies classes. I'm going on in life. My mother and my father almost at the same time said, that's what you should study. And I was like, what? So you'd be okay, if I study that maybe even had a double major than that. And my father said, Natalie, if you study what you love, you will have to turn away opportunities because no one will ever have to tell you to get up earlier, stay a little longer work a little harder. And maybe sometimes to their chagrin, I took their advice my whole life. So I'm telling that story to also say you have to be still you have to really do that mental experiment of projecting yourself into those two future scenarios and pay attention to how does it feel and my mother years ago told me she said now late when you don't know what to do, don't do anything yet. Because there's constantly other variables at play, unbeknownst to you, that are going to affect your decision, it will become clearer. And so I have also taken that advice, it's okay to say I don't know yet it's okay to do nothing and to use your sense making pay attention, observe, ask for help, you know, this is data that you're collecting, a pattern will emerge, that will help you and direct you to the way you should go, again, isn't necessarily the easiest thing to do. **But I gotta tell you, Jen, following your heart is a much more efficient way to live. Because I'm 54, solidly middle age. And we all have family members, friends who are like, you know, freaking out because they try to do the right proper thing. And now they're at this point where they need to wrestle with what do I want wrestling with their intuition, so it's a much more efficient way to live.**

Jen Marples 26:04

I love that. And thanks to mom and dad, I was also liberal arts, major English and I love to read but it served me well. I mean, you know, you never know it's a bit. It's like, do what you love, like, well, I love to read. Yes, Junior High read, like the whole library, you know, like, I love to read, like, why not? It's easy, right? Put a math class in front of me. And that just made me tremble in my boots. But I can write a 25 page paper about why I don't want to take that math class. So I love thankfully, it's so nice to have supportive parents too. It really is, man, it helps. And it's just a total sidebar, I've got a son who's applying to college. And it's really interesting the pressure that these kids are under to kind of have it figured out and I said, you know, you kind of have your idea. But I don't want you so locked into your idea that you're not going to give yourself permission to change. So I'm, we're both my husband and I are in alignment, like we want you to go take a bunch of different classes, if you think it's going to be business great. There's so many different ways to go. But you're not going to have it all figured out son at 18 and part of college, it's, you know, experimenting and changing. And I think in this day and age, and I love what Chip Conley is doing, like at the modern elder Academy, it's you know, we still we get to keep learning and changing and growing. And I look at my son and like God, you know, remember, we all got, I don't know, maybe we all had our first quarter life crisis at 25 of like, what are we all going to do? And we're like, 20, that's a baby. Oh, my God, I think that I think we needed to have it all figured out, because now we're all figuring it out again, in midlife, and no matter what we're doing. And I just actually hosted an event last night, and one of the women asked a question, and it was actually a statement. She just appreciated being there. But she had said, it made this point that really when you get to midlife, no matter what you're doing, things need to take on more meaning and it's exactly what

you're saying, I'm really listening to your heart and to your soul to your gut. So with all of that, and I know it's it can sound easier said than done it and it is kind of easier said than done having this because we know you've done a work and you take big companies through it, you take other people through it, I've taken myself through it. So it's not this overnight thing. But what I want women to really walk away with from listening to this today is their intuition, and really listening to it. So and then we talked about it a little bit. But imagine there's women going Yeah, I can't listen to my intuition. I've got bills to pay, I've got mouths to feed, I'm running from X, Y, and Z. And I've done this thing the whole way. And they're on that hamster wheel. Where can they start to tap in because Natalie, what I have found when I sit and get quiet with myself, the stuff that's talking to me today is the same stuff that was talking to me for years. But you have to give it space. So what would you say to those ladies listening right now,

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not to terrify them too much. But if you don't commit to pausing, you know there's an incredible book, The Body Keeps the Score, your body will break down, and your body will force you to sit your ass down, which is not the way you want it to happen. And it doesn't have to be going on a long, faraway expensive retreat for a whole week then you're like I can't afford that I can't afford the time. It's these micro moments it can eat us up. You know what I have? Right here. I have a five minute sand blast. So I'm an hourglass. It's a five minute stained glass. So I'm a big proponent of daydreaming. And I give these away sometimes as gifts. And I started out some has to do in the morning and I do in the afternoon but it's a reminder for me to just sit there. I don't have to meditate because of meditation to me. I'm not going to fake the funk. I find meditation really hard because as long as I was back, focus back I actually get my mind permission to one I listened to this morning to like all the sounds in the House Oh, that's what the heaters selling like the boiler is selling like an A little bird like somehow likes the winters some are far away and oh, look at the the raindrop just dripping down the windowpane just five minutes, not five hours, seven hours at 30 minutes. So whatever way you can hack, that time, it adds up, and you'll begin to look forward to it. So the my fear tactic is, you don't want your body to tell you in a moment of breakdown, give yourself those moments, it could be in the bathroom, right? We have these wonderful slash sometimes threatening smartphone devices, you could put a timer on for five minutes, right? Take Daydream breaks. And also, movement is also really weird that will get you into your thoughts. For me, it's dancing. It's something that sometimes it's because in the in the movement, you're not consciously thinking, right? Our bodies are designed to move. There's all this research about how important it is to walk past some of the greatest thinkers, Einstein and throw. So many other people walked and we are meant to be ambulatory. So if you're not a runner, or you're not a dancer, you're not a swimmer, whatever your your thing is, you can walk around the block, right? All of those micro bits are ways to hack that piece into your life hack allowing your vagus nerve to do its work and to be more to to it, so that you can pay attention to your intuition. I always remind people intuition is like a muscle. It's like a sonar. The more we use it, the stronger and clearer and louder it gets, the more we ignore it. The more flaccid and dimmer it gets, it's always there. But it's just a matter of you committing to be still listened to let yourself move, go away, come back. And the answers will appear. They really will.

Jen Marples 32:06

I love that you mentioned that about movement and just kind of getting out of your zone. I swear I have my best ideas in the shower, on a walk, going to yoga during yoga. But unfortunately, I can't have my phone and take notes in yoga, which defeats the purpose of yoga, but I'm like God, I hope I remember these thoughts when I leave and like frantically like jotting them down. I love that. And that's really a great tip to to just take the five minutes. It doesn't have to be a big thing, like, especially if you go to retreat, then you're going to demand from that retreat or this big action, clarity, and it's not going to come in one week. It's

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a matter of facts. And as you leave more questions, you feel more befuddled. But life is this big project to manage? And how do you manage a project project management is reverse engineering to all its components, just take the next step, the next step and the next step. That's what you have to do.

Jen Marples 32:58

We're recording this in January. And so this question just popped up for me because I'm I am so impressed that you're a top 50 speaker in the world. And I'm myself and pursuing speaking and hosting events and doing all these things. And we're everyone right now is in this hopefully in this big, audacious dreaming mode. Like you're like the big wonder, right? Women are wondering if it's speaking or whatever it is for them if it's starting a new business or changing companies or what have you, either how or what was your method to just put yourself out there like you had your big, audacious goal, I'm assuming speaking, what's interesting, too, is that you started it and didn't really think anything up and then all of a sudden, boom, it was something. But I know you've had other probably times you're like, Okay, I really have this scary, audacious thing. It could be a book, there's like people writing write books speak. What sort of your method? Or what would you tell us share your little bit of advice of how we can kind of take it out of our head? Like, no, I possibly couldn't do that, too. You know, why not? Me? Yeah, I can do this. Yeah.

33:57

Well, I think it's a great question. Like, why not me? What if I did? What if I don't, which is also a really good question to ask yourself? What if I don't do that? And again, that to me is always that mental model experiment, the two future scenarios, how do I feel right? And something my dad used to always say to me, try the worst thing that can happen, it should just end right back where you are, that's not so bad, right? Just try it. And it goes back to don't take yourself so seriously. But for me, let's just take for example, the speaking but everything that I've done. First of all, I was a professor for 16 years, so I literally was speaking every single day to some of the most devout critics in the world, right? People who did ages of 18 to like 25, right, who were looking at me like I'm sad. I have to I have to really find all sorts of interesting ways to explain why one plus one equals two and five different ways right? So I already was unbeknownst I was honing This way to practice communication to people who were not like me to people who were not necessarily buying into the idea, who had different ways of processing the information. So that helped. Then I remember this director of a strategic design MBA, during the last six years of my academic career, our program was hosting this women and tech conference at the university. And I was kind of wandering around and peeking my head into different sessions, I poked my head to one session, I happened to poke my head in a moment where someone in the audience asked the panelists, how did you start speaking, because, you know, you know, there's, there's one thing

speaking to students at the college and graduate school level, and in giving academic papers at conferences, but I think, to speak in plain English in compelling ways. And this person responded, Well, the way you speak, is yet to speak. And she said, don't expect to be paid right away, volunteer to be on a panel, if they don't get paid volunteer to moderate become a known entity in the sector in which you, which is your jam, which is your area, which you enjoy. Eventually, you'll be invited to speak, eventually, you'll be offered some money, like, Oh, that's nice. Thanks, I'd expect that. So literally, for me, I took that advice. And I started, I started thinking, I would like to speak more. And because I was kind of an accidental academic. And I always was super interested in connecting the dots between theory and practice. And I thought, especially with the strategic design MBA program, there was so much there that I thought could be a value to people, and practice in industry in business. So I took that to heart, I started volunteering, and like this person said, I begin began to become a known entity, and then I started getting paid. And at first, it wasn't a ton of money, maybe it was \$2,500, but got up to \$5,000, increase, etcetera, etcetera. But that's how it starts. And you learn so much you learn so much by observing other people you learn. By taking courses and coaching you learn by gosh, video was the best teacher, I hate watching video of myself speak I hate it. I don't ever like to do it. But I learned so much about oh, did I do that? I should have said this. Okay, next time, I could do it this way. Right? Those are the ways that you that I have found at least that you enter it, that you hone your skill, even Western figure a thinking again, I started it. And it was after giving this TEDx Philadelphia talk, getting invited to companies and beginning to increasingly get invited to do more of that. I

Jen Marples 37:47

love it. So what were the what were those three bits again? It was why not me?

37:52

What if I tried? What if I don't? Why not me?

Jen Marples 37:56

I love that those are the three framework and that's for anything. I mean, that was me sitting on a podcast for two years before I was like, alright. I had to hire a business coach. She's like, What the hell are you waiting for? It's time It's time. It's time rice. And so here we are, like, you know, two years later, so it's with anything. So everyone take note of this? And I really love that. What if I don't do it? What if I don't? Hmm. And run everything in your life through that filter? Oh, yeah. God, I love this. I have a couple final questions for you. This is one of the questions I actually asked my group of panelists last night at this woman of impact event I co hosted. And I loved everybody's answers. And I'd love to hear yours. So we're all busy, right? I mean, you've got a lot on your plate, you're doing a lot of things. You've got family, you've got responsibilities, and I feel like we all have, as entrepreneurs, we have even more responsibility and so much more to do than even we did like 20 years ago. And of course there on the fact that we're at midlife and there's all that stuff. But as an entrepreneur, just women in general, you're gonna have to be an entrepreneur. It's hard sometimes to get up every day and do the thing where you just want to stay in bed and like Netflix and chill. But we got to get up and do the thing. How do you keep yourself motivated in keeping up and doing the damn thing every day?

39:19

A couple of things I do I have a practice of prayer and prayer for me in the morning centers me and I didn't grow up Catholic but I've I've always been infatuated with the theater of Cathars. I love the incense and the ritual and my husband grew up Catholic, he's from Louisiana. So I don't have rosary beads but I have these 10 things I go through everyday. They're kind of my own kind of invisible rosary beads of actually this I'm going to make myself a 10 beaded little thing that will help me so prayer grounded and gratitude really helps me and actually I can share with you Jen if you wanted to share with with your listeners in your community. I created this diagram called the CQ diagram CQ stands for your creativity quotient. So just like you have IQ, measuring intelligence, you have an EQ, your measure of your emotional tolerance, I believe we have a CQ. And this diagram is a series of concentric circles. But the core of building creativity is gratitude. Because let's just take this ordinary pen, if I began to examine all the inputs that make this pen possible, someone had to design it. Someone, there are people at a factory, who put it together, there are people on shipping docks, and loot boxes, there are people who have decided to pay me money so that I can afford this pen, I was blessed to be in a society where I could have access to education. So I know how to write and use a pen, right? You go on and on. Gratitude is the beginning steps of becoming a systems designer, seeing yourself as part of a larger hole. So one thing I do when I am feeling like, I start there, I start with being grateful for every little thing, I had a myomectomy back in 2010. And the healing process is a bear. It's it's six weeks, it's like a C section got the baby at the end, couldn't make a bed, couldn't walk without pain. And I began to be so grateful. We're going to take stairs again. And you know, the incremental basis and as I remind myself of a low point physically, and all that I can do now, right? So gratitude is one. The other thing is I have little ritual, that was one ritual, whenever something positive comes through for me, it doesn't have to be Oh, I got the summons. Like yesterday, this proposal be something really small someone, someone that I had a really cool build on something I posted or I had a great interaction at the grocery store. I do a happy dance movement is really, really important to me. So I have a happy dance that I do in my office. So I have little rituals that help me and the, again, the movement piece also I look forward to movements. So I do hip hop dance classes. Now that's the only good thing in my day is a great hip hop dance class dancing to Megan the stallion, which was phenomenal, right? Where I go to my ballroom dance class. I have an electric bike that I bought two years ago and I'll zip around that a little bit. So anything that helps me to become attuned to being alive, not focused on the thing, but back to basics is what really helps me Oh, I

Jen Marples 42:19

love all of that. And I just did my column dancing you're getting me like I have something parked out there. People have on the on the show have heard me talk about salsa dancing. It's probably something I need. My husband has brought it up and you know, I'm right outside San Francisco and there's a lot of salsa dancing around and I want to go explore that. So maybe I'm gonna add that back on the list. You

42:39

should it's so much fun salsa is a very, very joyous dance Marang is super easy, but shot is a little hard and Sasa you know, it's a little bit more keep in mind, but you totally should. should do it so much fun.

Jen Marples 42:53

I have like four left feet. My husband's actually he took like dancing or something.

42:57

Well keep this in mind. Walking is controlled falling. So dancing is just controlled following with little razzmatazz.

Jen Marples 43:07

That's all for the cuter outfit, I guess. Right. Exactly. I have two final questions for you. What do you think the best thing is about being in midlife

43:16

to me. So I wrote a personal essay A couple years ago called Why I love getting older. That's for a great platform called 4050, which is to celebrate women in their 40s and 50s, etc. What I love about getting older is the perspective that I gain. That's the simplest way I could say it is that I understand things now that I didn't have a clue about in my 20s. And the essay, I have my little formula of like each decade that I know today, I think you're 20 suck. Because no one takes you seriously, you really don't know Jack, but you have all these great ideas. And a lot of us don't have like the funding to like make the film so your 20s like your 30s are for seeding, seeding, family singing career, your 40s are when everything begins to catalyze, right, the metamorphosis really begins and the 50s are just so awesome. And I can't wait to the 60s, the 70s, the 80s. But I love getting older and I love this stage in my life, because of the perspective that I have. I truly don't take myself as seriously. And I'll take other people seriously, which is a stress relief. So that's a big part of what I enjoy about this stage of life.

Jen Marples 44:32

I love it. Love it. Love it. Love it. All right, everyone finishes this sentence on the show. And it is I'm not too fucking old too. So

44:41

I love the prompt and what I thought of is I'm not too fucking old to keep going. And I would add an addendum to that. And I've earned the right to say no, I'm not to fucking go to keep going. And I've earned the right to say

Jen Marples 44:56

no. Oh, I think no is our friend that needs to be on. new best friend. Yes. And I say it a lot here on the show and just in life. It's if you say no, you get to say yes to other stuff, you get to say yes to yourself.

45:08

Totally. I love that. Yes. Love it. All right. So

Jen Marples 45:11

where can we find you support you get all the things we'll link all of that in the show notes to everything you you talked about the even the book he mentioned. So but let everybody know where we can find you. Go

45:21

to figure eight thinking.com with the number eight, and follow me on LinkedIn. I'm on Instagram on Instagram. I'm not W Nixon, sign up for my Ever wonder newsletter. And stay tuned for my next book. My next book is something I'm writing right now this year, it comes out in 2025. And it's a provocation on a new way to think about productivity through the lenses of movement, thought, and rest. I call it the motor framework. My goal is to make productivity sexy, because it has the modern productivity hasn't changed since the first industrial revolution. And because we have ubiquitous tech that can take over basic tasks, unprecedented burnout, which we have to address and hybrid work. We have the opportunity to reframe productivity. So that's what my next book is about. So in other words, it's a build on my creativity leap book and, and wonder and rigor and the three eyes.

Jen Marples 46:18

I love it making productivity sexy. That's the title I should be doing.

46:23

I love the book up. I don't have a title yet. Thank you for that idea.

Jen Marples 46:28

It makes it tivity sexy, because it's like the least sexy thing if you're like productivity or like, Oh, you just Oh, but think of

46:35

the word produce. Like that's the whole point of sex. Is that the whole point, but it's what are the outcomes of sex?

Jen Marples 46:43

We're gonna take this book and a whole new direction now now.

46:45

Right, right.

Jen Marples 46:46

I love it. Well, it has been such a joy chatting with you today. Thank you for sharing all your beautiful knowledge and wisdom with my listeners and I will look forward to seeing you real soon. I

46:55

hope. Thank you so much for having me didn't