

# Ep 133 V2 Shannon Watts

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## SPEAKERS

Jen Marples, Shannon Watts

### Shannon Watts 00:00

If we don't think about our desires and our passions and pursue them, we won't live a life that is fulfilling. Ultimately, you know, we all want to be able to look back at the end of our lives and know, we pursued those things that made us burn. I just meet so many women who have so much inside them, but they don't uncover it. They don't discover it during their lifetime. We deserve that. As women. We deserve to pursue the things that we're passionate about. And I am not saying that every woman who has something inside them has to change the world. But you should bring your gifts to your family and your community and your state and maybe yes, your country in the world, whatever that ends up looking like for you. But don't let that spark die out. Because at the end of your life, you will regret it.

### Jen Marples 01:03

Hello, and welcome to the Jen Marple Show. I'm your host Jen Marples, a champion of midlife women and cheerleader for all women dedicated to helping you embrace and rock the second and best half of life. Each week, I'll bring you conversations with incredible women who will inspire us educate us and motivate us to live our very best midlife. I'll also pop on solo to share my best advice, tips and tricks to help you unapologetically go for your dreams, embrace your age and become unstoppable. If you are itching for a change, ready to pivot or looking for a second act, stick around as this is the show for you. And know this you're not too fucking old. Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Jen Marple show today I have a most fabulous guest, her name is Shannon watts. And she is the founder of Moms Demand Action. So you probably have heard of that, because that was Shannon's mission and her purpose and passion back. If we can scroll back to 2012 when Sandy Hook happened, which was traumatizing for every single one of us out there, especially mothers because my kids were all the same age of of all those poor children who perished in Sandy Hook. So Shannon is the one who took one for the team and stood up and said enough and formed Moms Demand. So I know I have been following Shannon and Moms Demand for I guess now over a decade. I was following Shannon online and like you know what, she's a bad ass, mid lifer that needs to be on this show, because I consider you as she wrote, by the way. So I just I need to tell you that because you've done such amazing work in the world. So I need to have her on here because we need to hear your story. And I know you've recently sort of stepped down from running the organization, you're doing some new things. So we're going to get into

all of it. But what you all need to know is that and I wondering, Shannon, did someone bestow this upon you? She's been called the summoner of women's Audacity?

**Shannon Watts** 03:05

Yes, actually, my my friend Glenn and Doyle has referred to me as that. And I love that because we all have that inside us. And what an honor, it's been for me to help so many hundreds and hundreds if not 1000s of women walk through that door in the last decade, it's really been the honor of a lifetime. I didn't know that I had that audacity inside me. I really had to summon it to start Moms Demand Action. But we all have it inside us. And we can use it to accomplish big and small things. And I think a lot of us start to realize that and feel that in middle age.

**Jen Marples** 03:47

I love this. And I love Glenn and Doyle and I'm so glad she was the one who gave you this I should have known that because I've been following Glenn and since she was just on Facebook since the dawning of time, she's my other she's another Shiro of mine. So it's no doubt I'm just not shocked that you guys are friends. And we're going to really get into that because I think that's really transformative. And it's really important for women to hear especially in their life. Because you know, my moniker is you're not too fucking old. So that is like to do whatever you want and that's just to sit on your couch and be than just sit on your couch and be and if it's to start a worldwide movement then now's your time to start your worldwide movement. But before I'm I get into it, I also want to let everyone know that you were named a Time magazine 100 Most Influential People, and you're a Forbes 50 over 50 change maker which thank God they finally did the 50 over 50 Because I was done with the 30 under 30 like give me a break because there's so many incredible women doing so much 50 and well beyond 50 And you wrote a book fight like a mother which I love because fight like a mother is just I think those are just fighting words and I know like if you want if you want it to get done ask a mom moms will get shit done. So it was fight like a mother how a grassroots movement took on the gun lobby and why Women will change the world. Ha, lay Lujah. So Shannon, this my official welcome to the show. I'm so honored to have you here today because like I said, You're a Shiro, I've been following you and absorbing you and being in this world of Moms Demand for over a decade now. So I'm just so excited to get into it with you today and share your brilliance and your audacity with my listeners.

**Shannon Watts** 05:22

So thank you, it's such a thrill to be here. For those

**Jen Marples** 05:25

who might not know, take us through a little bit of your background and how you came to start Moms Demand.

**Shannon Watts** 05:33

So I had been in corporate communications, or you know, something like 15 years, and I was taking a break from that career, to blend my family with my husband's family. We had been married only a couple years prior. Both second marriages, I had three kids he had to ranging in age all the way from elementary school, through college. And so I thought, I'm just gonna take this break, and I was actually starting to apply and looking at other opportunities in corporate communications, and I was at home all

my kids were at school, I was folding laundry in my home in Indianapolis. And there was breaking news on the television in the background that there was an active shooter inside a school in Newtown, Connecticut. And like so many moms and women and others that day, I just sort of stopped what I was doing and watched this horrific tragedy unfold. I was so devastated that 20 children and six educators have been slaughtered in the sanctity of an American Elementary School. I cried all day, I went to bed in tears. I woke up the next day full of rage, I was so blinded by my anger, that I didn't really know what to do. And I thought, Okay, I'm gonna join something like Mothers Against Drunk Driving. You know, if you grew up in the 80s, you know how influential that that organization was, culturally, legislatively. It was like this really pissed off group of moms who were doing all kinds of things to bring attention to these preventable, senseless drunk driving deaths. And I felt like why doesn't that exist for gun safety? Because I couldn't find anything like that online. I had 75 Facebook friends, I'm not sure why I thought my call to action on a new Facebook page I created was going to get traction, but it did it went viral. I think in part because I did have that background in communications. And in the next couple of weeks, what I thought was going to be an online conversation began turning into the largest offline organization in the nation, led by women.

**Jen Marples 07:41**

I want to rewind back to that, that point of rage, because I think I remember when Sandy Hook happens, and I remember, just my kids were about the same age at that time that that happened, and crying for a week straight, you know, just like you just being completely traumatized. And I was actually surprised that people weren't traumatized by it. And so the sad and tragic thing is we continue to be traumatized because of everything that's going on every day. Um, you know, the stats, I think we all know the stats, I mean, I think isn't gun violence is the number one cause of death. For children right now in the US, which is just insane. My own children have been part of an active shooter situation at the school that they went to that was one safe, it touches everyone in every community. And it's really scary. And the fact that obviously, all of our kids now it's like, oh, safety drills, like it's just become par for the course. And it's just, it's just not okay. So thank you for, you know, taking one for the team and going out there and doing it. Because my second question for you, then is going to be, I'm sure you encountered resistance that I can't even imagine, because your big foe was the gun lobby. How was that?

**Shannon Watts 08:50**

You know, I think I was emboldened a little bit by my naivete. I was sort of living in a bubble. You know, I was this white suburban mom, who was suddenly afraid her kids weren't safe in their schools not realizing, you know, that this was an epidemic that black and brown families had been dealing with for decades, or if I'd realized that I hadn't acted. And so I really didn't realize, first of all, that this had become a third rail issue, not just with Republicans, but with Democrats too. And I also didn't realize that I would immediately begin getting threats of death and sexual assault. So I went into it not knowing much about the issue, not knowing much about organizing or the legislative process, and certainly not realizing that I was going to spend the next decade traveling, using an alias with, you know, a security guard. Had I known a lot of those things. You know, I might have been more hesitant. I'm glad I didn't. Certainly there was a huge learning curve. But if you think about it in terms of, if I lose my children, I have nothing left to lose. Whose, what option do you have other than to act and to be willing to stand up to extremists whose goal really is to silence and intimidate us. And when 120 People are shot and killed

in this country every day and hundreds more wounded, and as you said, gun violence is now the leading cause of death among children and teens in this country. What option do you have other than to act?

**Jen Marples 10:28**

Right? Something came up when you were just saying that of the fact that women when faced with the injustice, it's like, haven't we been the ones all along who have been fighting for massive change? And I see, and I know, you see some of your contemporaries and whatever aspects are relevant may be like, we've got me too. We've got our children dying. We've got our laws being repealed in the country, we all know, Where was his way, there's so much and you know, it's kind of like, it's like, we're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore. And I firmly believe you've been at this a while. But I firmly believe that in 2021, multiple structures and things were getting broken down, I firmly believe so many of us were sort of tapped. I just saw women rising in a way I've never seen before. And I've kind of put myself in that category. I happened to be focusing on midlife women, but I said, you know, we're the change we want to see. So if there's this injustice, there's injustice is everywhere, that we've got to be the ones to act. And I think you said you're just you're mad, and you just you've got to be the one to do it. And if you think about am I qualified, or this, that and the other, and maybe you're qualified because you care, you're just you're just we're just all qualified to do this. And I just think it's really beautiful, because I think I've been exploring this theme of duality of like, two things can be true at once. One thing over here is like, you can feel like everything's falling apart. And the other thing over here is, but women are amazing. And women are taking strides and making some incredible shit happen, for lack of a better term, like really going out there on a limb and fighting. And so I love to see this. It's like women rising, we know there's something that needs to happen. And I'm a little metaphysical in that realm of like, we're going to be the ones to make the change. So I have a question for you. Because I know, you were able to do it, I was kind of able to get up and do it. And I also, by the way, have a PR and communications background. So maybe there's something in our background paradads. And if we've done PR I think everyone out there who's ever done is if you know, you know, I think it gives you a special skill set and maybe like a little bit of a toughness. But for a lot of women listening who might feel helpless. What would you say to them? Like everything feels I know, for a lot of women so insurmountable. Like how can I, myself, Mary, and you know, Indiana, like make it possibly make a difference when it seems like everything is breaking down, left, right and center? What would you say to Marion, Indiana who's like, how can I make a difference, but I'm so overwhelmed, and I don't feel like I'm qualified.

**Shannon Watts 12:56**

I really think that it's a story we tell ourselves that holds us back. And I meet so many brilliant women who feel afraid of stepping out for so many reasons, you know, criticism, not knowing enough judgment. They want to cross all their t's and dot all their eyes, they want to know everything there is to know before they step out. They say they're gonna delay it until they're ready or until their kids are older, or until their husband wants him to do it. Whatever the reason is, I think we can find so many reasons to delay. But we all have a spark burning inside us. You know, for me, it was my communications background, my interest in journalism, telling the story. Activism, you know, I was raised in Rochester, New York, where I was taught to really see people like Harriet Tubman, and Susan B, Anthony, and others as heroes, because they lived in my town. So I think all of that came together to create this fire

inside me that when I allowed that spark to be nurtured, it sort of lit a flame and other women too. If we don't do that, if we don't think about our desires and our passions and pursue them, we won't live a life that is fulfilling, ultimately, you know, we all want to be able to look back at the end of our lives. And know, we pursued those things that made us burn. I just meet so many women who have so much inside them, but they don't uncover it. They don't discover it during their lifetime. We deserve that. As women in our generation, you know, in Gen X. I think it's taken us to until our 40s to kind of figure that out because we're still, you know, sandwiched between the traditional boomers and the more avant garde millennials and so I feel like I have both of those things in me. You know, it's a very long way of saying we deserve to win pursue the things that we're passionate about. And I am not saying that every woman who has something inside them has to change the world. But you should bring your gifts to your family and your community and your state. And maybe yes, your country in the world, whatever that ends up looking like for you. But don't let that spark die out. Because at the end of your life, you will regret

**Jen Marples 15:22**

what you just said, reminded me and I can't remember who said this have was something to the effect that you've got something you know, burning deep inside you. And if you need if you feel like okay, you can't access it, or it's too hard for all the reasons you said we haven't we do a really good job of talking ourselves out of things. This woman was saying she's like, the most radical thing we can do as women is just be ourselves and be sort of fully present and be fully healed. So to your point, we don't have to go out and save the world. But if you show up, Shannon and have Jen shows up as just, I'm fully embodied, and I'm standing up for what I stand up for, and I am a supporter of the people in my community. And I'm just saying hi to folks around me like that, in and of itself has this ripple effect. Because somebody else would be like, oh, gosh, you know, someone said hi to me today. And we I think we discount those really little things because we always feel I was just having this conversation, we all feel we have to save the world. Not like, I'm gonna save the world. And then I've got these kids and then this and then that. And then you can just crumble down and like not do a damn thing. But just realizing just what you're saying, knowing that you're kind of you're worthy. You don't you don't need any more degrees, you don't need any more education. We're all at this, especially in midlife, perfectly equipped to do whatever we want. And what we want could just be just to be sorted through that upstanding citizen in society and just being a nice person and just being present relevant. And that has this ripple effect. I think we underestimate. Because we've been taught, like you said, the ad is the more and more and more and the checklists and the achievements and all the things that we're supposed to be doing realize a lot of that's just a crock of crap. And if we can just show up fully embodied that actually, that's a radical act.

**Shannon Watts 17:05**

Yeah, I had a conversation recently, with a friend and we were talking about, we always feel like we're being told to do more. And I think, you know, we can do more, but we can also do less. But we have to do different. And continuing on this metaphor, like if we want to live on fire, that might just mean going to therapy. That might mean having the tough conversation with our parents. It might mean ending a relationship. But it also might mean, you have this passion inside you for helping women figure out what to wear, trying to get some clients and marketing yourself and being brave and being okay with failing.

Or maybe it is, you know, starting an organization or becoming a volunteer or an activist, whatever that is. But I don't even know that we have been given permission to think about those things.

**Jen Marples** 17:55

I would agree. Because we've been told I talked about this a lot. My whole thing is, you know, we're always totally like I say, you're not to fucking Altair, but it's really, that's my rallying cry. And it's really representative of, we've all been told, You're too fat, you're too thin, you're too loud or too quiet, or to this or to that. I've been told everything in the book. And the thing is, we just have to toss that aside, because that's society. We're not saying that to each other. It's that patriarchal thing. It's what advertising has been telling us since we've been reading magazines at 12, or 13. So there's all this external noise. And we have to learn to just shut it off. And that's why I feel like at this stage in life, to aligning yourself with the right groups of people, the right friendships, and like you're saying, you had to get out of relationships and things that aren't serving you, that includes friends, you've got to like fill the plate up with people who are supportive of you and kind of doing the damn thing. And it could just be like, I want to go get fit great. You need people to help you do that or start a business or whatever it is, I firmly believe that that's so important. And we just have to give ourselves permission and know that we're worthy just by being on this earth, like your friend and my muse. Glennon, Doyle would say, You're, we're worthy just from waking up in the morning. But we've been told that we've been battered down pretty much by everything in life, saying we're not good enough. And we need X, Y, and Z to do the next thing. So I'm so glad you brought that up. Because it's a crying shame for any of you listening to think that you're not going to go out there and do the thing you want to do or offer up the thing that that special thing that only you can deliver to people. So this is a great entree into this question I want to ask you, which is being called the summoner of women's Audacity. What would you say to midlife women to help them unleash their Audacity?

**Shannon Watts** 19:43

Well, I think at least I hope that what I have done sets an example you know, I'm not a unicorn. I wasn't this amazing leader who was expected to do great things and everyone was just like, Oh, of course Shannon did this. And then the opposite is true. I struggled My whole life with ADHD, untreated ADHD, I barely made it through high school. I barely made it through college, I found out as my brain matured, that it got easier to manage. And in fact, it's sort of this is cliché, but it has become my superpower through Moms Demand Action, because I can focus so long on one thing, you know, hyper focus, but don't think that what ever you see as your personal failings or obstacles or drawbacks, those things are a story we tell ourselves. And it was a story I told myself for a very long time. And I'm so glad I didn't listen to my inner critic, or the external critics. You know, when I started Moms Demand Action, I had plenty of people say to me, you're not the right person. You don't know enough, this already exists. We don't need this, you can never do it, it won't work. There were so many people telling me I couldn't do this, including myself. But at the end of the day, I didn't listen to the naysayers. I listened to my gut. And what was the worst thing that could have happened, I could have failed. And I just would have done something else. But I didn't. And again, I'm not saying you have to do what I did. You don't have to take that kind of giant project on. But don't tell yourself that you can't do whatever it is you're passionate about.

**Jen Marples** 21:26

I love that, I will say working with so many women, that our inner critic is probably the biggest one that's sitting up there on your shoulder. And when you do go to try anything new, and especially the people closest to you are probably going to be the ones that tell you you're crazy. You're not going to make money at it. Or Who are you to do that. Or they just, they just know you how you've always been. So they cannot wrap their heads around you doing something different or trying to level up or step up and out. And it's rattling. So I love all that you said, because we've just got to give ourselves permission. Full stop, and know that you've got something to give and know that you might you're going to encounter resistance. And then you say if you fail, we've all failed a million times and other things, but it's not really failure, right? It's just it's a stepping stone on the road to whatever you're doing. And you just take the lesson, and you keep on going. I love this part of the conversation. So I want to talk a little bit about what you're focusing on today. Because I was as I was stalking you online, and I get your substack and all of that. I of course perked up because I saw you posting a little bit about menopause and midlife. And I'm like, Oh, I wonder if she's coming over into this side of the world where we're all talking about midlife and menopause and all of that. So what are you interested in now? And sort of what's next?

**Shannon Watts 22:45**

Yeah, you know, I decided to step back from my role as a leader at Moms Demand Action after nearly 11 years, it'll be 11 years this December. And this is my last year, I have always seen a founders role was finite. I never imagined I would do this my whole life. And after we passed federal gun safety legislation, I just knew in my heart, it was time to step back. And I'm so excited about all the other things that I'm thinking about. I really thought the first thing I would do is take a year off and rest. But I got a call. I was running on the treadmill. And I got a call from Maria Shriver. And she said, What do you think about, you know, writing a book about women and leadership. And so I dove right into that. It's a much different lifestyle. You know, I was working with a team, I had crises unfolding every day because of all the gun violence in this country. And I was traveling all the time. And now I'm doing this very solitary thing of staring at my computer and thinking of things I want to say. So that is really interesting. And a fun phase. For me. I, as you said, started a substack I was trained as a journalist when I went to college. And so writing something that is at a creative outlet that I have missed for a long time. So I'm just posting a couple times a week on substack. For my book, I'm having a lot of conversations with some truly amazing women and I'm making sure that I'm taping all those so you know, I can release them. Part of the book promotion and as podcasts, I'm still thinking through that. But I just you know, I like online and in my substack to talk about issues that impact me that impact women of all ages. I am a mom of five, who children are who are all now adults and so I have some some wisdom to some hard earned wisdom to share. And I am going through menopause. I have found it to be a very strange experience because my doctors don't seem to know how to help me or be willing to help me and that's really strange because I know there's a lot of data out there that shows that me having access to treatments will not only prevent suffering from symptoms, but you know, protect all of my organs and I really would like to do that before it's too late. So I'm just kind of sharing those experiences that I'm having. And as a woman and as a mom, it's really a fun way to connect with people other than just talking about gun violence tragedies, that will always be important to me. And I will always be promoting gun safety and the people working on it. But I'm having a lot of fun in this role of, hopefully empowering other women to take risks and leaps in their life.

**Jen Marples 25:26**

Well, I love it. And we get to, we get to pivot, and we get to change as many times as we want. So I firmly believe that we get to be somebody was, I posted something about your bit not too fucking old. She's like, we're not old, we're dead in the grave. I'm like, exactly, we have like 80 more chapters left, if that's what we want. And so we get to do whatever we want. And I'm glad you're focusing on women. And I want to talk about the menopause thing for a minute, because it's very deep and layered and nuanced. I saw that post that you did, putting on your creams and all of that. I think the more we talk about it, the more we demystify it, there's like shame around it. It's all of Gen X, there's 50 or 60 million of us who are dealing with the symptoms of perimenopause or menopause right now. And it impacts there's and I won't go into all the details of the Articles and women opting out of work and how, you know, CEOs of companies are like, I feel like I'm going crazy, and it's a hormonal thing. And it's situational doesn't mean it's the rest of our lives. So there are resources out there for everybody. And some things you should be asking your doctor and going to get what you need. Because it's really a journey. I want to ask you this question. What do you think, apart from giving ourselves permission are the biggest challenges right now for women in midlife?

**Shannon Watts 26:37**

I do think it is accessing information. I think we don't necessarily have this red tent. For this age. Now this red tent being this idea of women who would come together and share information about menstruation and childbirth. And I think that needs to exist, I'm seeing more women step into that void, to figure out how can we share in communities. There's a lot of loneliness and isolation because of social media, because we move around a lot because of COVID. And this is a time when women our age should be coming together and community and sharing. And I say this as an introverted only child, you know, who really hasn't had a lot of friendships, I've been so focused on my work, and my family and my husband relationship with my husband. And something that I am committed to now that I am almost 53 is having more friendships. I've done a lot of interesting things in the last year I was I was preparing for this transition from Moms Demand Action to whatever's next. That includes a psychedelic journey, the first in my life, it includes going to a retreat that was a circle of mostly women, that perfect strangers, I drove to Ojai and spent four days in this circle where we just shared and, you know, I went into that experience, very closed off and came out feeling very changed. I have girlfriends near where I live now. And I go on hikes with them. And we've been on vacations. And so I just think creating this community having these conversations, sharing information. It's something that we have to prioritize in our lives.

**Jen Marples 28:24**

I'm so glad you said that, because I am coming off of a weekend where in one day, I don't normally have this many social commitments. But one day, I drove really far away to have lunch with friends, because we're meeting in the middle friends 20 plus your friends and within this little circle, we hadn't caught up really for six months. And this is to your point about friendships and not blowing those things off and going, Oh, I don't want to drive too far. One woman's mother's cancer had come back, her child tried to commit suicide and that same child was going off to college. Another one is a single mom lost her job has been trying to find a job for six months. Another one had like a minor stroke and had like a death in the family and is contemplating sort of retiring, but then not knowing what she wants to do with the rest of our lives. And then all the stuff that was going on with me. And that was just in one afternoon. The summary of all that is that if we're not connecting with our friends, we feel isolated and

alone. And I feel like it's the single most I think there is science behind this. It's the biggest predictor of sort of longevity and happiness is your community and your connection and having friends. And I do feel and let me know what you think. I feel like we feel more alone now in our connected society than we ever have before. We were all connected.

**Shannon Watts 29:38**

I agree with that. And in part we you know, we do move around a lot which you used to kind of grow up in your community stay near your family. And that plus we talked about COVID Plus we talked about feeling like we can just scroll and we're somehow connected but that doesn't bring us gratification. And then you know we get busy with with raising our Kids and work. And I think once you get to age 50 or so you feel like, if you don't have friends that you can already rely on, maybe you can't make new ones. And I am proof that you can. Because all of the women that I do things with I met in the last few years, it is a discipline, you have to kind of commit to it. And and it's something you deserve. You know, it's going back to this idea of you deserve friendships. It's not as a too intuitive. It's not as easy, I think as you get older. But there are things you can do. And that means continuing to reach out and committing time to it to create a community. And it doesn't matter how old you are, you can do it at any age

**Jen Marples 30:48**

100%. And my listeners have heard me say this before that when COVID started, you know, we didn't know what was going on. And we just had no idea what's going on. I threw myself into some groups and masterminds and this and that. And I actually launched my business in my podcast during COVID. And I have met people probably same as you all over the world. Some I have never met in person, I maybe never will. But I consider them dear to me. And we support each other. And I you said you're an introvert. And so it's I know, it's really hard to do for a lot of people, I'm pretty extroverted. So I'm the one who's grabbing people, I'm the one who's creating events, because I know the importance of these connections, because I think I put mine together my first women's event right before COVID. And that's when I had that same AHA see that women are feeling so alone. But why we're so connected, but it's not the deep authentic connection. So the second piece of that that I wanted to ask you is, or share and kind of get your feedback on is it's not just the surface level, we can't have these surface level relationships anymore in midlife, they need to go deep, it's better to have two friends that go really deep than five superficial friends. Because there's simply too much going on right now. And I think that's what we're craving, we want to know that you had a fight with your husband, we want to know that you're having financial trauma, I need to know that you're having trouble, you know, managing your aging parents, because it can't just we're beyond pretty, pretty perfect. It gets us nowhere, it just gets us more and more depressed. Do you think that's the case? I mean, what have you seen with you and your friend groups?

**Shannon Watts 32:16**

I do, I think the bigger your friendship net is, the better, you're going to have some surface level friendships, you're gonna have people who you know, cancel things, that's just par for the course when you're creating friendships. But, you know, I recently went on vacation with four or five women, three of whom I really didn't know at all, one of whom I'd never met, we just sort of all showed up at the same place. And I had more fun that I've had in so long. And I think in part because it, it felt playful. You know, we were in Mexico, and we were doing really races in the pool. And you know, we we were sort of

letting loose. And that's just not something I necessarily do with my husband. It's just a different dynamic. It's certainly not something I do with my kids. And I realized I had been missing out on that for a long time. And it felt regenerative. And I want to keep having those kinds of moments. And I don't think you can replicate that with anyone but friends. And these weren't even as I said, these weren't best friends, these weren't close friends. But we spent four or five days together and we really bonded. I love that we can't discount fun. And I feel like, again, it's the pressure that we put on ourselves. And we've got to do that, again, to take these things off the box before you're allowed to have fun. Versus when you realize if you allow yourself to have fun, and go do those fun girl trips and do all that that actually makes you better in all aspects of your life.

**Jen Marples 33:42**

So we need to go relax and have fun. And it's really important is having this conversation specifically with somebody about it's about coming back to yourself because you said it. It's like I can't do this with my kids or my husband. And I'm gonna say too, I truly believe you can go and you can meet strangers, and you can go deep and like be closer to them than people you might know, for 20 years. It just depends on that wavelength and kind of where you meet people. So it sounds like you had that exact experience. You roll up, you're like Where have you been all my life? Let's go Let's swim in the pool. Let's have fun. Let's dance on the table. So it's being open to that. And I think also just expecting that you're going to meet amazing people. And this realm of friendship and women. What do you think that women can do better to support each other specifically in midlife,

**Shannon Watts 34:29**

we have to have those connections in order to encourage one another. So it's a little bit starts there with having these communities. But I think we have to pull people up with us, you know, when we are rising. I think that's a big part of this. Something I'm really committed to is using my expertise and my knowledge and my connections to help women decide they want to run for office, you know, at any level. I'm on the board of eMERGE America and I really get a lot of joy out of doing whatever I can to help women prepare for and then actually to promote women when they decide they're going to run for office at any level, you know, everything from school board and city council to Congress. But I think we should think about what skills that we have, you know, kind of going back to that spark that's inside us. How do we use that? How do we nurture it in ourselves, but also identify it and nurture it and other women? I referenced? Generally, this idea of what if you're really good at fashion. And the reason I referenced that is because I have a friend who comes to my house twice a year and helps me go through my closet and figure out what outfits go together, what do you not have the unique going into this season, she's just brilliant. And I don't have that skill set at all. Like if it were up to me, I would just wear the same color, and probably a sweat suit all day, every day. And I said to her, you know, this is your passion, you should be paid for this, you should find other clients. And I had a conversation with her where I talked to her about the marketing skills that she needed to promote herself, I connected her to women, I knew who would use her services, and now they're clients. And I'm just trying to keep encouraging her, you know, she feels very fearful of kind of stepping out there putting herself out there, she doesn't think she knows enough, or why me, you know, a little bit of imposter syndrome. And I can see that she's brilliant. And I can see that she could be very successful at that. And she can't see that yet. So I'm going to keep helping her until she, you know, has the client base she needs and feels like this is something she can pursue.

**Jen Marples 36:37**

I love that. And it's really important. And I'm so glad you brought that up. Because I always preach that if you see how you can help people connect, encourage, because we all need that encouragement, I'm sure you need that. And I know I need it. And I'm the one who's doing the encouraging, but we all need it. And whenever anyone stepping into anything new, no matter what you've accomplished, you're always going to be stretching yourself if you're going to this next thing. And it's so important that we support each other doing that it's one of my banging this drum all the time. And if you see that, we all have those women that we know that are like, genius, but we've got to drag them along, like how can I help you? What do you need? Because it's women won't ask for help. I think we're really giving, giving, giving, giving, giving, and really good at not asking for help. So what do you wish for women in midlife,

**Shannon Watts 37:28**

I wish that they would get to do something that they look back on at the end of their life. And they say, you know, that was really audacious that was really courageous. And that doesn't mean they have to be successful, even if they failed, that they feel like they pursued something they were passionate about. And again, that can be a small thing. That can be a big thing that can be additive, or it can be taking something away. I think it's really important that we feel like we've taken risks in our life. But I also think it's a really important example for our kids.

**Jen Marples 38:00**

I love that. A final question before a final final question. What do you think the best thing is about being in midlife?

**Shannon Watts 38:08**

Oh, I feel like I finally have some chill. You know, I was very reactive. I think as a human being until midlife, I wasn't able to have that sacred pause, if you will, whether it was with my husband, or my kids, my colleagues, myself. And I really can now think about how I want to respond to certain situations, respond in a more mature and measured way that is based on wisdom and security. You know, I'm a much more secure person than when I was younger. I feel healthier than I've ever felt in my life. I feel more powerful than I've ever felt in my life. I have more autonomy. I'm not so judgmental. I'm listing a lot of things, but I just, this is my favorite time of life. So far, I wouldn't trade anything to go back to being in my 20s or 30s. I have the added advantage of being an empty nester. And I feel sort of like I'm living when I didn't get to live in my 20s which is really a fun time of life. And and you know, I have great kids who who are friends now. So I love being 52

**Jen Marples 39:21**

I love that a lot of my guests have said some of the same things. And what makes me really happy to hear is that nobody wants to go back. Nobody wants to go back to 20s 30s I mean want to go back to 40 So I want you to finish this sentence every guest does so you just complete this. I'm not too fucking old to

**Shannon Watts 39:41**

do the biggest thing I've done in my entire life.

**Jen Marples** 39:45

If the mic wasn't connected, we make a big bang. We dropped that mic with that one. I love it. That's exactly how I feel. I don't

**Shannon Watts** 39:53

feel like the best days are behind me. I

**Jen Marples** 39:55

feel like they're ahead of me. Oh, Amen. Hallelujah. I feel the same way and I want that for everyone listening, that's where you're listening to this show. We know that, yes, midlife comes with a lot of stuff. But it also comes with so much opportunity. And if we look at the bright side and open ourselves up, anything is possible, I truly believe anything is possible. It has been incredible talking with you, Shannon, thank you so much for being here. I'm so honored that you're on my show. And I know that women listening are just going to walk away feeling so inspired and ready to take action and have that little bit of courage to go towards something that they want. Remember, you guys, it doesn't have to be anything big and give me the smallest most fabulous thing in the world. And it's gonna mean everything because you believed in yourself. And so thank you for leading the way and being audacious. I love that word for you. So where can we find you support, you get all the things?

**Shannon Watts** 40:49

Thank you. Well, let me say back to you, you know, I really appreciate what you're doing. Because I think you're sort of playing that role that we were talking about before, creating a community where women can share information. And so that's such an important role. Thank you for doing it. I am on most social media outlets at Shannon R watts, including substack, where I post a lot about the issues that we've been talking about during this conversation. And so find me on social media, the book I talked about, that I'm working on will be coming out in 2025. So maybe we can have a conversation, then when it does, because I think it'd be really relevant. But yeah, I would love to see people on substack and on Instagram and not so much on Twitter anymore. But I love having online conversations and hearing about other people's experiences.

**Jen Marples** 41:37

I love it. Well thank you for all that. And for sure when you have that book, we will have you back on to talk about it. And since I found out everyone that you knows I'm in Northern California, and so it was Shannon. So now my my mind is spinning of ways to do things and connect with and love to see

**Shannon Watts** 41:52

you. Our kids say yes,

**Jen Marples** 41:56

I will be looking forward to that. Well, Shannon, thank you so much and I look forward to seeing so much more of you. Thank you