

Ep 182 Chip Conley

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SPEAKERS

Chip Conley, Jen Marples

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 uplevel 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 Jen merpels Show. Chip is the first man on the podcast, because you're gonna be like, wait a minute, Jen, what's different here? There is a male on the podcast. And so chip, if there was going to be one guy on the show you are. You're going to be the one. I've been stalking you on LinkedIn. I've been I've known about everything you've done, just because, as we were chatting offline, I've been in travel and hospitality. Is kind of how I started my PR firm. So I always knew who you were, and kind of knew, kind of checked in with what you were doing. And of course, now that you are basically the king of midlife, there was no question that I had to have you on the show. So for those of you who might not know who chip is, Chip is a hospitality industry Maverick. He is a New York Times best selling author, and here's one of the books here, learning to love midlife, which we're going to get into today. He's the founder and CEO of modern elder Academy, which is the world's first midlife wisdom school. And he's an all around badass, and he's, I want to say you're one of the most authentic men I've come into contact with, because I truly, and I don't blow smoke up anybody's ass on this show. You truly speak from the heart, and you tell it like it is, and you're so raw and real in the book and on LinkedIn is where we first started connecting. You're so real on your journey and everything that we face in midlife, and especially being a man, which I think is really important, I'm going to ask a very specific question later for all of us women to take to help with the guys in our lives, but just thank you for that, because I know it's really hard to show up like that, and because you're showing up like that, I firmly believe you're helping to change, to let our guys out there be vulnerable and know that they need help, and help is there for them, for the taking, and the more we lean in, you

know, obviously, the better our lives are going to be. So with all of that, thanks for being on the show chip. I'm just thrilled to have you here and thrilled that you're the number one and maybe the only guy that will ever be on the show. Oh,

Chip Conley 02:57

wow. I'm an honorary, honorary woman. I love that. As you know, I have been going through health issues, and so I've been on testosterone blockers because of stage three prostate cancer. We're starting with that, and therefore I have only one to 2% of my normal testosterone because of these hormone blockers that actually slow the cancer growth. And I've been having menopause, because that's another that is the other side effect. And so long story short is I am an honorary woman these days.

Jen Marples 03:31

I love it. Well, welcome to The Club. And I know you've, you've had conversations with some of my friends in the midlife space, like Julie Gordon white of Manoel, and you're with Marianne Larusso on her podcast. So I just, I love it. I think, you know, we're all in this to destigmatize, and you say to, like, rebrand midlife. I'm here for it, and that's why I'm doing all that I'm doing. And I need to give a little shout out to our mutual friend Isabel Manchester. Hi Isabelle. Our sons played soccer together, and then we're like, yoga besties now, so we kick each other's asses if we don't go to yoga, she's one of my favorite people. So thanks Isabel for making this beautiful connection. So let's get into all the things. So you started off in the hotel business, and now you're running this midlife you know, wisdom school take us through the trajectory of how you started and then how you got to where you are now, and had this awakening to be the guy who's going to tackle midlife from a different angle. I

Chip Conley 04:23

started joie de vivre, a boutique hotel company in San Francisco when I was 25 or 26 bought an old pay by the hour motel called the caravan lodge in the tenderloin, turn it into the Phoenix, and it became the Rock and Roll hotel of San Francisco, and almost 40 years later, it's still there. And Isabel is one of my partners on this, and she hangs out in the tenderloin, so she's got courage. Long story short is I did that for 24 years, and I loved it until I hated it. And it was in my late 40s when the wheels on the wagon going down the hill were sort of falling off, and I was lost. To be quite honest. I. Lot of things were not going well, and I had an NDE experience, ultimately a near death experience, where an allergic reaction to an antibiotic. And that's when I sort of realized, like, oh my god, midlife sucks, and I guess I'm having my midlife crisis. And I lost five male friends to suicide age 42 to 52 during this time. So long story short, I was in this place of thinking, oh man, how am I going to get to the other side of it? And I was able to get to the other side, but I think the NDE helped. At age 50, I had ended a long term relationship, gotten my adult African American foster son out of prison. He had wrongfully been there, sold my company, no longer in the current role that had defined me for 24 years. And I had two years between 50 and 52 to have what Mary Catherine Bateson originally called and I like to popularize the idea of a midlife atrium. So the midlife atrium is the idea that if we're living longer instead of having two additional bedrooms in the backyard of life, as if you're going to be old longer instead, let's re architect your life so you're just in midlife longer. And if that's true, then what you need to do, especially in your early 50s or late 40s or maybe mid 50s, is ask, how do you want to consciously curate the rest of your life? And so I spent two years doing that. I loved it, and I all of a sudden, I went from being in this place

of like crisis to Chrysalis. And realized maybe midlife is a chrysalis and anti crisis, and it's that in between stage between caterpillar and butterfly. And then, just to finish up, I spent the next seven and a half years, starting at age 52 helping the founders of Airbnb take this little tech startup and turn it into the world's most valuable little hospitality company. It was during that time I wrote a book called wisdom at work the making of a modern elder. Because they called me the modern elder, they said someone who's just curious as they are wise. And that's when I started to ponder the idea of creating mea, the world's first midlife was in school. I want

Jen Marples 06:50

to just go deep into something, and now we're going to go into the book. But you bring something up about kind of that midlife, that turning point, you had a near death experience, and I've talked to so many women over the past three years with this podcast, and I feel like these turning points show up in different ways. They can be near death. A lot of women have health crisis. I had my own complete and total burnout when I couldn't get out of bed. Do you think, or is this what you're finding with all the people that come to the school, that there's this big turning point, like something actually happens that stops them in their tracks? Or are most people coming and going, oh, you know, I think I want to do something. My gut is telling me, probably a lot of people have this turning point of death or a divorce or a job loss, something big that happens to spread them into action. So I'm curious, sort of, what you're seeing at the

Chip Conley 07:39

school. Yeah. I mean, there's sort of two flavors here. One is someone whose life is and this is the minority whose life is going well enough, but there's feeling a little stuck, a little disillusioned, maybe a little bored. They don't know how to go curate the rest of their life in a new way. And then there's the larger group of people, which is people who are going through some kind of transition. And let's face it, there's a ton of transitions in midlife, and they are looking for a new roadmap and some tools that will help them to understand, Okay, I am newly divorced. What's that gonna feel like? I have just retired at age 50. What's that gonna feel like I'm an empty nester. My husband and I are like, just getting to know each other again, because we had three kids, and now we're realizing we don't need we don't know each other. So there's a lot of things that happen. Parents passing away, so that's the primary reason people come is because they're going through some kind of transition, and that's why one of the three key pillars of the program is navigating transitions. But the umbrella of the whole thing and the other two are cultivating purpose and owning wisdom, but the overall umbrella of the program is really the idea of, how do we reframe our relationship with aging? And Becca Levy at Yale has shown that when you shift your mindset on aging from a negative to a positive, you gain seven and a half years of additional life, which is more life than if you actually stopped smoking at age 50 or started exercising at age 50. So this is a big deal, and we are sort of the little living laboratory for her academic research.

Jen Marples 09:12

When I read that in the book, maybe I kind of knew something. I knew I didn't know that exact stat, and it kind of just stopped me in my tracks, because I've heard that, you know, being in community and having community and connection sort of supersedes like if you're obese or if you're a smoker. I saw a TED talk on that, but the reframing the aging, I just, I don't think I'd ever heard it that way. And let, let's dig into that, because I'm, you know, you're not too fucking old. That's my that's my mission. Because it

really is. It's so easy and it's so hard at the same time. Because women come to me and they're like, Jen, I just don't want to turn 50. I'm scared to turn 50. And it's layered for all of us, and it's really heavy for women turning 50, as I'm sure you know and see, with everyone who who you come into contact with, because of what society has told us, right? Last

Chip Conley 10:00

weekend, we had someone who won a contest. So we did a contest called Life begins at 50. And we had 160 people write essays, 500 word essays about why they deserve to actually have their birthday party, their 50th birthday party at our new mea Santa Fe campus. And this one, Gabrielle won, and she just had eight friends here and had their 50th birthday party at MEA. So the idea of looking at menopause or even divorce, we need to have rituals. We need, you know, you should have, like, if you're going through menopause with other women doing the same thing, have a menopause party, have a divorce party, have an empty nest party. In this case, have a 50th birthday party and go through something together that allows you to feel a deeper sense of connection.

Jen Marples 10:46

Oh, I love hearing that. And, you know, I just started kind of getting into this work a few years ago, and I'm 55 in November. You look good. Thanks, Chip. You are my new guy. BFF, thanks, doll. So yeah, 55 this year. And I firmly believe I feel like I look younger even than I did 10 years ago, when I went through my whole midlife bust up. And I'll tell you about that, the Cliffs Notes version, because I think there's a story in here for you to also talk about the chrysalis, because I know that's been part of book. I was like, do I tell people I'm 50? Do I put that on Instagram? Do I have a 50? I had a huge 40th birthday party in the Mission District, and I had everybody there, and I, like was, you know, personalized everything but 50, and for me to not have a party, because that's I'm a party girl. It was big. And I look back on that. I give that, I give that girl compassion, because it takes, it does take time to kind of unpack. I want to talk about this age fluidity before I forget. I have to say this to you, because I know I'm gonna forget how to write this down, because I've quoted you on this podcast saying this. It was something you wrote in LinkedIn, LinkedIn post, like, maybe a year or so ago, you had said, I am every age that I've ever been, and that just hit me over the head, because I was like, just kind of unpacking. You know what it means to be over 50, and I'm like, but I feel like sometimes I'm 16, I'm with my son listening to Pearl Jam, and I'm 22 but when I'm helping a client, I'm every day of my age when I'm using all my wisdom to help a client. So you know, we all go back home to visit our parents for like, 15 so I found that concept fascinating. So can we ta fucking old, and age does not define us

Chip Conley 12:37

to be. Age fluid means you're not defined by your chronological age or your generation. Now let's recognize that we are moving to a more sophisticated idea of age, as if there's not just one age. So chronological age means you know when your birthday is, but biological age means you could have a biological age for your heart or your liver or your pancreas. I mean, they now actually can tell you these things. There's a biological age, there's also a psychological age. There's also a cognitive age, in terms of how fast is our brain aging. So, long story short is, you know, just having a chronological age alone feels limiting. But the other thing that's really interesting is that we are all the ages we've ever been. We know what it feels like. This is why, as we get older, we have the wisdom of every age we've been in. You know, if you've metabolized it, that doesn't necessarily mean a 70 year is wiser than a 30 year old.

If the 30 year old has been actively developing his or her wisdom and the 70 year old hasn't well, then 30 year old might be wiser. But the raw material of wisdom is life lessons, and you have more life lessons when you are older. So long story short is eight to be age fluid means that you have the ability to think of your age as being a wardrobe or a costume that you can put, put on or take off, depending upon whether you're going to Burning Man or whether you're giving the eulogy at a French funeral. Okay, that's age fluid, and that's you're all the ages you've ever been. I think there's sort think there's those are sort of similar. Midlife chrysalis really is just trying to rebrand the idea that, what if midlife is yes, we know the U current of happiness research does show between 45 and 50, the low point of life satisfaction for adults, but on the other side of 50, people get happier with every decade. So if that's true, then maybe midlife, the core of midlife, around 45 or 50 or early 50s, is a time of being in the chrysalis, and it's a metamorphosis time. It's a time when the caterpillar is turning into butterfly. And if that is true, then we need to maybe own this and say, like, okay, midlife has its downsides, but guess what? If you can get through those on the other side of it, people get happier and happier. And people in their 60s are happier than 50s, 70s, happier than 60s, and women in their 80s happier than 70s. So long story short is these kinds of things. This kind of data is just not out there. We have a very ageist message in our society, and as I talk about in the book. It's like our body and our looks and our beauty and our brawn, that's what defines how people see us, and that's how we define whether we have value. The truth is, you know, what's most important as we get older is not necessarily to remain youthful. And I'm not saying you shouldn't do the cosmetic things to make yourself stay looking young. Perfectly fine to do that. But if you're spending all of your time on that and you're obsessed by it, man, are you going to be upset, you know, over the course of time. So what really need to do is, like, look at it and say, like, Okay, well, yes, I am getting older, but I'm also getting better in all these other ways. You know, I'm getting better when it comes to my emotional maturity, in terms of my spiritual curiosity, in terms of my relational health, in terms of my social relationships, I'm more culturally curious. I am more able to tap into my intuition. And so what I really wanted to do with the book was to help people to see like, yes, there's some things that get worse with age, but there's a ton of things that get better with age, and we have not given enough attention to that, which is why I branded this idea of pro aging as opposed to anti aging, products, services and messages.

Jen Marples 16:08

I love it so much here, because everyone knows this is a podcast about midlife the attitude is the biggest thing. If you would have told me even eight years ago that I wouldn't care anymore about the physical appearances of having to work out, like, maybe once or twice a day. And, you know, there's this whole thing that I look back on. I'm, like, if you would have said now that I don't exercise. I just don't care, like I used to. I care about my appearance only in the sense that I'm going to get up, I'm going to look nice for you today, because I'm not going to show up and be distressed, you know, but I don't live my life by it. And that's just especially for women, what we've been taught, even for guys, you know, it's, it's like, look good. And this and that, I have a 19 year old son, he's got his colognes, and he's like, Mom, you like my fit like you can very much see. I mean, that's we're all puffing out, you know, be peacocking is the word I'm looking at, or younger. And I remember a doctor had said to me, she's like, Jen, once you kind of get through menopause and you get to this other side, she's like, it's a great place to be. And I'm sitting there like in tears, can't get out of bed, almost suicidal, because my hormones are going up and down. And I just I couldn't leave it until I was there and actually just saw her, had an event, and thanked her again in person for I said I hung on to that every single word. But

what I want to kind of dig in with you, because you said this in the book, was, so youth is wasted on the young. I can't remember what that, yeah, yeah. So it's the same thing, like, why can't we have this confidence now with, like, saggy knees knowing, like, I can't do anything about saggy knee skin, because I, you know, I'm almost 55 and I spent my life in the sun growing up in Hawaii. I don't give a shit about them, but you care so much when you're younger, it's like, we just have been there and not wasted all that time. And I know there's because we're trying to find a mate, and there's really all that stuff, but want to just hear your story, because you said in that one chapter about, like, just when you got confident, like, now everything's starting to sag.

Chip Conley 17:59

Yeah, there's truth to that. That's why we have to actually have a sense of humor. So having a sense of humor, you know, Joni Mitchell said, along go, happiness is the ultimate cosmetic. And there's some truth to that. You can see a radiant 75 year old who's more beautiful than a 35 year old who's had a lot of work done. And so, you know, learning how to just get comfortable in your skin's key learning how to have a sense of humor and to not be so self conscious is key. One of the chapters in the book is about having no more fucks left to give. And I'm not talking about your sex life girlfriends. I'm talking about your sense that there are things in your life that mean something to you and matter. And you're going to love those and focus on those, but you're not going to actually focus on everybody's opinion of you or everybody's all these different things that you obligate yourself to. Instead, you're going to say, like, Okay, what does matter? And for everything else, I have no more F's left to give for the things that don't matter in my life. And that doesn't mean you're an angry person. It just means that you're learning how to be an editor. The first half of our life we accumulate the second afterlife we edit. That's how it works. It's been but nobody teaches us that, and that's why mea exists, is because no one takes you to midlife school. Yes, it's great. We have podcasts like yours. It really is a wonderful books. And yet it's one thing to hear it and to read it. It's another thing to live it and to be in a workshop with 20 to 25 people for five days and go through a bunch of methodology and experiential learning and but freaking fun time that makes you feel like you're in midlife summer camp, and then come to the other side of that and say, like, oh my god, I have a whole new perspective on life. And a collection of friends that know me better than my best friends do. Midlife wisdom schools like mea, there were in the early stages of them becoming a real thing in the world. I

Jen Marples 19:57

got a midlife summer camp. I just sort of perked up a. Like, Oh my gosh, I've got to kind of get myself down there. It is really important. And I've talked to many people about this and myself. I think we all go through this. You went through this from the 20s into our 40s. We're doing that thing that society told us to do, right? So it's the achieving, checking things off the list we're building. Some of us are, you know, they're getting married and having kids, and then you kind of wake up one day and you look at some of these things, of like houses and cars and this, and where you are in career and everything friends, and go, am I really happy? We've been checking off the boxes that society told us to check off, because that was supposed to equal happiness. And so you talk about this in the book, I know there's so many women who are kind of on the cusp and they haven't, like given themselves permission to, sort of allow themselves to think about new things, because that first, those first 20 something years, what do you call I wrote it down here. It's like we go from being logical to lyrical. I loved that. Can you, can you expound on that? Yeah. And as

Chip Conley 20:57

you get older, you learn how to actually alchemize both at the same time to be logical and lyrical all in the same sentence. So yeah, one of the things that's very true of adult development as we move into our 20s and 30s is we're comparing ourselves a lot, and comparison is the recipe of suffering, and so often we're sort of very self focused on, what does it take to make me happy? Is it the right husband? Is it the right clothes? Is it the right car? Is it getting my name in the paper? That's what people hire you for. And there's an element of all of that is very externally focused. I don't want to say that this is a bad thing, because it's just a normal thing, but for many people, as they move into their late 30s, into their 40s and 50s, they start to look at this and like, Is that all there is is my job just to be, you know, as David Brooks says, you know, just climbing the wrong ladder, how do I reevaluate what's important to me in my life and then consciously curate My life accordingly. And that's really what lots of great books help you with. And that's what me does. And to be logical and lyrical, these are two sides of the brain. The logic side is your left. The lyrical is the right. One of the beauties of getting older is we learn how to do four wheel drive of our brain. We're able to do both and to sort of weave them together. And that's that's what's so beautiful, and that's when a person's present, you can sort of feel like, wow, this person's like, not compartmentalized. When we're young, we're compartmentalized. We act one way with one group of friends, in a different way with a different group of friends. As we get older, we just sort of show up with who we are, and we are the combination of introvert and extrovert, gravitas, you know, depth and levity, humor and lightness, masculine and effeminate, curious and wise. So the best part about getting older is you learn how to become an alchemist of these different polarities inside yourself.

Jen Marples 22:57

Oh, my God. I love this. I love this. I love this. A couple things popped up for me because I work with a lot of women. So, you know, ~~I'm currently running a mastermind right now, everybody who works with me,~~ I naturally attract, like women late 40s, 50s, and that's by design. And women have fear. So I want to talk a little bit about, because you talk about, you know, really stepping into who we are, and we have to have this growth mindset and be able to to embrace fear and change and all that kind of good stuff, because we're not going to get to the other side unless we do. It sounds so easy reading it. It sounds so easy saying it, but we know it's really hard to really tap in and listen to yourself and show up as as your authentic self. What are your tips and tools like? What? What do you guys teach? I know you probably have a million examples, but,

Chip Conley 23:42

well, I definitely have a million examples of people, and then maybe two or three tools I'll just pass on right now. First of all, one of the key things to know is it's been talked about a lot, which is, you're the sum of the five people who are closest with you. So if you're feeling stuck, or you're feeling like you're living a life that doesn't feel like it's yours really you better start looking at the habitat you're living in, whether it's the community you live in, the spouse you're with, or not, your best friends, your family, and you might have to do some editing there. It doesn't mean you get rid of them all together. It just means you start to prioritize other people in your life with whom you have a more simpatico, more congruent relationship with and if you can do that, you know your change gets a little easier, because you start to emulate those people around you. One of my favorite questions to ask for people around the age of

your listeners is, 10 years from now, what will you regret if you don't do it or learn it now? 10 years from now? What you regret if you don't learn it or do it now, because anticipated regret is a form of wisdom. It creates a catalyst. So when I was 56 or 57 I moved to Mexico from San Francisco because I just wanted to live there, and I loved it down there, and so I did, and ultimately we created an mea campus there. But. But soon after I moved there, I was like, I realized, like, Oh my God, I feel too old to learn Spanish. I feel too old to learn how to surf, even though my home and our mea campus is next to a well known surf break. And then I asked that question, 10 years from now, what will I regret if I don't learn it or do it now? And that woke me up to saying, I don't want to at 67 feel like I spent the last 10 years wasting my time when I could have learned how to surf or learn Spanish, because it's not going to be easier at 67 so I think what a lot of us need is the social support and the group of people who we want to emulate. Then we need the catalyst, the thing that gives us a sense of purpose and the sense of like, okay, I'm gonna kick ass, I'm gonna go out and learn I'm gonna learn Spanish, I'm gonna learn to surf, and if I don't like either one of them, I can quit, but I gotta at least try it, and that's what we teach at me, is the growth mindset. How do we move from a fixed to a growth mindset? Because if you do that, you actually open up options and possibilities of things in your life that you wouldn't have done otherwise. For a lot of people, they're sort of bored because they've stopped trying to learn something new. So one of the things that's really woven into our program is trying something for the first time in Baja that might mean learning how to surf, or baking bread with a group of people collaboratively, or learning improv, or learning to speak from what we call the third Vault, which is not your facts, your stories, but actually the essence of who you are in Santa Fe it might be learning to paint or learning equine assisted learning, learning how to course mirrors your emotions, learning how to do some mega hiking, because on our campus, we have dozens and dozens of hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails. Learning something new is a really important thing, because what it does is it Stokes your curiosity and openness to new experiences. And those two qualities, curiosity and openness to new experiences are positively correlated with living a longer, healthier, happier life.

Jen Marples 27:08

And I talk about that too, a lot about just getting out of your comfort zone and trying something new, and then also not attaching so much meaning to it. Because I think too. And I can speak for women that, gosh, if I take a yoga teacher training, or if I go to school for this and I'm locked into that for the rest of my life, but I love the concept of just this growth mindset, because that you're just taking one step, and it doesn't have to mean anything except that you're taking a step, you're trying something new, and that gives you, you know, more courage to try another thing, and then new inputs come in, and then all of a sudden, you know, You know, you wake up like me. I thought about my podcast for years before I started years but I was taking some steps. And then finally, you know, I had to hire myself a business coach so she could kick my ass to get me to do some things. But I remember, and I'll just tell you the story, because I know, you know, you're from San Francisco and lived here like I went up and I went to beta brand in the mission by myself. I had a minivan at the time chip. My husband's like, are you going with anybody? I'm like, No, I'm going to this live podcast recording. It was one of those warm days in the city. You know how those warm days in the city are, the energy's high. People are everywhere, chatting with the cute bartenders at the place. I saw a friend of mine who was one of the podcasters, and this is I'm trust. I'm getting to a place here, which I think is really important, is I had this evening of coming back to myself, of I'm not a mom, I'm not a wife, I'm not the woman who owns the PR firm, and I was in this big transition, and I walked away that night going, there she is. There she is. And it still gives

me chills talking about it, because we will tamp ourselves down and we get comfortable. And I think that's I want you to talk about this too. We I get so comfortable that that can be even more death to find than having a near death experience. Because you're you're just comfortable enough not to change your life. But you know something's not right. You

Chip Conley 28:55

know comfort breeds apathy. So I'm not saying you shouldn't have comfort in your life, but I am saying be careful with comfort, because also when it comes to your identities, what I loved hearing you say a moment ago, Jen, was you started reciting some of your roles. Women have more roles than men. And there's a wonderful writer named Connie Zweig, and she wrote a book called The inner art of aging, and she talks about going from role to soul, but women have more roles than men, partly because women are better at multitasking and because there's caregiving often written into a woman's life, whether it's sandwich generation older or younger or siblings, there's a lot of roles women have. So being able to get to a place in your life to actually do a role inventory. What are all the roles that I inhabit, which are the ones I enjoy, which are the ones I do out of obligation, which are the ones that I have no idea why I'm still doing I did it a long time ago. It doesn't have to be obligatory anymore. I think doing a role inventory is one of the most. Important things women can do more so than men, because, quite frankly, the men's role inventory is simpler. I have a career, I am a spouse and I'm a father, and that's about it. Sometimes there's other roles. I'm a marathoner or I am a little league baseball coach, but generally speaking, men have fewer roles, so the inventory is less interesting. The women's role inventory is really interesting. Another thing that a lot of people don't know about women in aging is that women's level of confidence in the workplace actually grows into their 50s, whereas men start to plateau and decline. So women, the beauty of you getting older in the workplace is often you have more confidence. Yes, you may be invisible. The number one fear that women have in midlife is invisibility. Number one fear for men is irrelevance. So yeah, but neither one's very good. But you can be visible and you can be confident, and you have the talent and you have the wisdom. So you know, if you can sort of edit a few of your roles, you will actually have some time affluence as well, which is something that women desperately need. We think of the word affluence, we think it's all money, but if you're rich, it's about how much money you have in the bank. If you're wealthy, in my opinion, it's how much time you have on the calendar. Wealthy, in the end, is more valuable than rich, because at the end of your life, you still have money, you just don't have any time. Time becomes more valuable. It just

Jen Marples 31:27

made me think of one of the stories you shared in your book, and I want to flash the book because this is also on YouTube, learning to live midlife. We're going to link all this in the show notes, because this is required reading for all you listeners, you're going to have to go buy this. There was a gal who I can't remember what kind of career she had, and she really downscaled. And I think she was, Oh, God, now, why is it the anecdote she she stripped down her life. I think she was, like, going to be a comedian or an actress or something, but she scaled everything back. Went from like the house to like the small apartment, and might have moved out of the city. And I apologize. I like, I just actually read this little anecdote this little anecdote this morning, and I highlighted it because I thought it was so great. It was the courage to go after what you wanted in this realm of being wealthy because of the time doing what you want and stripping away actually bring up a lot of stories like this, where people feel crushed by the burdens of the modern trappings of the house and the cars and this and like just scrambling to keep

that going versus following your heart and passion. Having said all that, it's really hard to at especially, you know, the mid 50s, where a lot of women, myself included, send a kid off to college. I have two more behind. There's all these big bills, there's all this stuff happening aging parents, there's all the things, chips, all the things, and so it can feel hard to put yourself first. It can feel like I don't have the time, I can't do this right now, and we get really stuck. But what I try to preach, and I know what you are, is that there's so much on the other side of saying yes to yourself, and maybe it's baby steps today and some bigger steps in a couple years, like once the kids are out of school, if you're paying for their school, or what have you. I have a couple women I'm working with right now that are succeeding and doing things despite really quite, if you think about them, tragic circumstances. But I think this midlife phase, we've got this wisdom and this steadiness where we can deal better with what life's throws are away, which can be death. It's like death of a parent a child. I mean, like, big stuff that people are dealing with, versus when you're 25 that could just shut you down. And so we have the steadiness, not saying that it's not going to be horrible and suck for a while. But there's this, this ability, I think, to bounce back versus when we were younger. divorce, and I just sold my business, and, you know, my oldest child. Child has now become gender So there is this you brought up, was it the transitional IQ that you were talking about, like being able to kind of transition TQ,

Chip Conley 33:43

the TQ, yeah, we've trademarked that TQ is transitional intelligence. We live in an era in which we're going through massive changes, culturally, socially, economically, globally, and then we go through all these personal changes. And so 50 years ago, no one needed to learn about TQ transitional intelligence, but today, you do. And basically any transition has to be stages to it. And I, for those who really want to learn this more, go to the bottom footer of the mea website, and you'll see a resource called the anatomy of a transition, and it'll actually tell you about this in more depth, the three stages are the ending of something, the messy middle and the beginning of something. And once you understand those stages and what the coping mechanisms are for ending something, for being in that liminal, transitional middle stage, the chrysalis stage, and then how do you start something and do it well as a beginner, to me, that's my God, I wish somebody had taught this to me in college or graduate school or but that's part of the reason that me exists is because, yes, people say that all the time. I wish someone had taught me to this. And then, 50 years old, and I had, you know, just went through a divorce and is going through like, and my parents just passed away. It's like, okay, you're going through a life quake, what Bruce Feiler calls a life quake, which is multiple life transitions simultaneously. But nobody has been taught these things. I think

Jen Marples 35:15

it's so important, everyone should check out the resource, and we'll link that in the show notes as well, because I think that's really important. Tell me, if you see this with the students that come to mea, that people are succeeding, there are so many things happening all at once, like I have somebody that I'm working with right now that, yeah, I was crying when we were doing her photo shoot, because, well, there was a six year old photographer. There's me, who's almost 55 she's launching her business for the first time on her own, a divorce, a death. And I was like, everyone coming together to do this, and she's doing it despite the odds. And I think that comes with midlife. And we were all kind of teary eyed about it. And I said, this is the beautiful piece of it. It just doesn't feel like, like there are it's the perfect storm. I don't know anybody who isn't going through some type of a storm, if it's with parents

and kids and all that you just mentioned. But I love this framework of this transitional to understand that we're doing it, and then we're going to get to the other side, God, we're all going to have to take a field trip. We're going to have to take a field trip down to maybe

Chip Conley 36:13

let's do a Gen private retreat with you and your listeners and friends. We do that all the time. The other thing that I think I've learned at mea is just the value of moral beauty. You know, moral beauty is when you show up and you see someone who's courageous, kind, compassionate, resilient, has equanimity in their relationships, and you realize, oh, my God, I can be that too, and that's really what we need more of. We live in a very as you know, a polarized society and a lot and our worst behavior as opposed to best behavior, and a tendency to assume worst intentions as opposed to best intentions. And all of that has led us to a state of realizing that, how could we actually be in awe of each other, and how could we astonish ourselves? And that's what we need for the person who's in midlife, who's bored, that's a great question for you. How might you astonish yourself in a way that actually would make your life better?

Jen Marples 37:18

God, I just got chills, and you made me think of something. I do a lot of events, and I we're going to take it off the vision board, and we're going to do a retreat. We're going to do a retreat. We'll have to pick which one to come to. We're going to do a retreat that you're not too fucking old, hot pink retreat. And we're going to, you know, come back to ourselves. And I started doing events years ago, just on a hunch that I know you mentioned this to you. We've been disconnected for a long time, and it kind of, it's before social media, everyone is feeling disconnected. I think social media, for as much as it's made it feel better, it's made it worse, it's like this balance of it's a fake connection. And I have people telling you all the time, like, I cannot do another zoom, I cannot do another group, anything. I need to be with people I feel that. And when I do bring women together, it never fails, we're crying. And you just, you said this like we need to be in company of each other to see what's possible and to be in that energy. Because it is, it can be fucking hard. It is hard, but it doesn't have to be so hard. And so we can do it so much better when we're together. And you know, I go deep really quick with people. I know you go deep with everyone there. Actually, it's really, I have to just tell you a funny aside. So Dan Cressman, who went to your retreat with Michael Franti, so I go to Susan hauser's yoga studio. That's where Isabel and I practice yoga. So she plays the song that Dan wrote in your class with Michael Franti about Rhett Susan howler's Yoga blah, blah, blah. So as an aside, I don't even know how old Dan is, like, he and Victoria are ageless to me because of how they live their life. And, you know, I'm friends with their daughter, I'm friends Victoria, so I just love all of this so much. We have to be in community together and kind of widen the aperture of our friends and who we're hanging out with. Like you said, one thing I wanted to mention too, because you said you mentioned somebody who could be like in their 70s or 80s. 80s, looking beautiful and radiant, because, you know, beauty comes from within, versus somebody in their 30s. And so I just have to share this little anecdote. I just came back from Hawaii, where I grew up, and my mom still works. She's 78 she had a heart attack in February. She's fine, but she was chatting with her colleague. They run a real estate firm, and I was going to be using their office. And I was just standing aside looking at my mom, and everyone thinks my mom is ageless, and my mom is like, I'm gonna start crying. The most amazing woman. And I was looking at her, I'm gonna start you're gonna make me cry. Chip, no. And I'm like, she's 78 and she's doing the thing she was

working within a week of this heart attack, she took care of my dad last year. Had all this shit going on, which I think was the reason for this heart attack, and yet it's not stopping her. She's like, you know, why not me? I'm running this office. She loves to mentor people, and she's just vibrating. She hasn't had a lick of anything done. And I'm like, Look at her. She's 78 and so I immediately took to everyone I was writing my mastermind. I'm like, if anything says you're not too fucking old as my mom. Um, 78 and, you know, and my she's cooking food every night for everybody, running her business and doing this, and she's the most lovely person. But it comes from, it comes from within. I talked to you for five hours. I have to show the book again. Yes, this is the book learning to love midlife and up to 12 reasons why life gets better with age. We've cut we've touched on most of them because I wrote my note. Of my top ones. We can't talk about all of them today. There is one, because you're a man and you're a man on our podcast, and you do the work that you do. I want to ask a really important question about the guys in our lives, because I have not talked about this on the show, and you touched on this, that this kind of the 50 phase. I mean, a lot of stuff goes on. It's a high suicide rate. My husband has had actually quite a number of childhood friends and fraternity brothers commit suicide. It's actually quite staggering and astonishing. It's heartbreaking. But I know a lot of our men feel lonely and they're struggling. And unlike women, we tend to get into community and talk more about it. So what Chip? What can we do to help our guys navigate midlife?

Chip Conley 41:04

And then the mea, yeah, you've pointed out something that's very interesting, and what I've seen at mea with the men who come is just how transformative it is to have real conversations for women. You know, girls were socialized to be vulnerable and to be open, to sharing, you know, what's going on in their life, and to maybe seeing their friends as like an emotional insurance policy. For men, it's more like, there's a lot of posturing going on. There's a lot of feeling like, Okay, where do I fit on the pecking order? That's for women too, but, but, and for the men's side of things, if they're not feeling good on the pecking order, they just get silent and live a life of quiet desperation. And long story short, is the most important thing we can do for our men is to respect when they're going through a difficult time, make sure that they know that they're lovable no matter what's going on, especially performance wise, if they have gained a few pounds, if they and that's very true for women too, but if they've lost their job, they don't have a million or 10 million or a billion dollars in the bank, how do we help them to see that they are lovable for just who they are. How do we create deep and meaningful conversations with them about topics that are important to them? And then how do we help give them a sense that being vulnerable is courageous. Brene Brown is a friend and been a big supporter of mea, and she says that midlife is really about the unraveling, the midlife unraveling. When she first said that, I said they're like Renee. Nobody wants to unravel that so they're losing their mind. And she said, Chip, if you've, if you've ever looked at the word Ravel, it means so tightly wound you can't get it undone like a ball of string. And I think both men and women are overly raveled. But for men, my God, it's even more evident. You can see it in their shoulders. You can see it in their anger, and sometimes it's bodywork. So for a lot of men, they just, they're still into their body. That's like, they're into their body, body in terms of performance. They're not into their body in terms of nourishment. And so like, how do you give your husband a once a month, once a month, a massage you don't have to give it to them. You could have a massage therapist give it to them. How do you get them to a place where they start to unravel and be less tight. Oh, I'm just thinking

Jen Marples 43:25

about what I'm dealing with in my own household. I've been married 27 years, and, you know, met his babies in our 20s, and I think, to your point, I'm going to send Jeff, my husband, to Emmy. I think he needs to do something. Because men, they're not they won't go seek the help. It's hard like they won't seek out that support, and they have, especially a lot of guys, right? A lot of our guys listening are carrying this burden, and they think they're the only ones in it of, oh, the bills and the this and the college, and I'm relying on the family, and it's, it's kind of how we've been socialized, and I can see it too, admittedly, and I'm glad you said this about loving them no matter what art, because society has programmed us, if our guys are suffering, or there's a job thing or a financial thing, or the markets tank, and it impacts all this stuff, it's this whole thing, but like, our guys are supposed to be providing and if they're not, so it's all that stuff that's been just programmed into us. We want our guys with us. We want to support our guys. So what would you what would be the final piece of advice for for us, if they're resistant, most women I know are kind of doing a little bit of self help or some type of introspection, but guys are like, No, I gotta work. I'm taking care of the family. I'm not gonna I'm not gonna go do something that's for me. Here's

Chip Conley 44:38

a little exercise. Sit at dinner with your husband or your spouse, your partner, whomever, and say to them, let's think about this in advance, and let's come to dinner tonight with this idea who's a role model or mentor in your life that you have most admired, and maybe as again, we're thinking, I'm assuming a heterosexual couple here, for those who don't know it, I'm gay, so I'm not. Trying to be homophobic by doing this, I'm just saying like averages out there are, there's more heterosexual people, so maybe you as the woman, say who your role models were and why you like them, and then it's his time to do it. Let's hear what he says, and I will bet you that the people he thinks of as a mentor or role model, we're not just a robot. We're not just somebody who just succeeded and burned the house down in the process of succeeding. They are people who are human, and why he likes those people, and typically the probably a man, but it might not be. He might choose a woman. Is that the you push it to human qualities, and then without actually making him feel badly. You can then say, look at our two examples, both of us. It's like the people we most admire are people who are the most human. How do we you know, and again, this is an interesting conversation. How do we become more human? And that's where he either may like, say, like, What are you talking about, or he might say, like, yeah, you're right. I want to feel more comfortable in my humanity and who I am as a human and then, then the door has opened.

Jen Marples 46:04

I love that. Oh God, we are ending on a such a strong note. So I'm going to ask you a final question. Then have you do my final statement that everybody does, and this one will be an easy answer for you. What do you think the best thing is about being in midlife?

Chip Conley 46:17

The best thing is to know that your best years are ahead of you in terms of life satisfaction. Love it.

Jen Marples 46:23

Okay, so every guest completes this phrase, because it's you're not too fucking old too fuck

Chip Conley 46:33

we'll finish on that

Jen Marples 46:35

mic drop time to teach class. I love it. Thank you so much for your time today. Chip, it's been amazing.

Chip Conley 46:44

Thank you. Bye.