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Mon, 9/12 10:39AM • 1:00:16

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

women, feel, space, community, business, pandemic, midlife, highbury, person, people, support, pivoting, life, love, create, co working space, membership, world, big, creative

SPEAKERS

Jen Marples, Grace Kraaijvanger

Grace Kraaijvanger 00:00

ideas become actions become. concepts become businesses become art become real faster than you think. And I think the number one way to take something out of the idea phase into the next step is to share it

Jen Marples 00:25

Hello, and welcome to the Jen Marple Show. I'm your host Jen Marples, a former public relations agency owner turned business and life coach and motivational speaker dedicated to helping female entrepreneurs achieve the business and life they desire in their 40s 50s and beyond. Each week, I'll be bringing you conversations with incredible women who are rocking entrepreneurship and taking courageous action while also dealing with all that midlife entails. I'll also be dropping in solo to share thoughts, advice, tips and tricks that will help you live your best life. If you are thinking about pivoting in your career, starting a new business or looking for a second act, stick around as I guarantee you will be inspired. And know this, you are not too fucking old. Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Jen Marple show today I have a most fabulous guest and her name is Grace cry hunger weight. So you see her name spelled out when you look in the show notes because I had to ask her and this is a woman I've known of and followed for years. She is the founder and owner of the hive RAID, which is an online membership community that supports female, creative female entrepreneurs, I'd say creative female entrepreneurs. It's a very important distinction because I know that's what reached out to me. And what kind of drew me into the high rate was that it was a really wonderful actually, I'm going to give you guys all a backstory and grace is going to tell you the entire story. But she used to have two locations, one in Mill Valley here in Marin County, and then one in San Francisco. So obviously, you know where this story is gonna go COVID rethinking pivoting, she's going to tell us all about it. But what I found so fascinating and fabulous. It was really a one of its kind or first of its kind, I want to say hub for women of all walks of life, to come together to work with each other in these creative capacities. Because we all know women, women are creative and fabulous. And she had the most beautiful offices, most M is going to Fandral for a minute like the most beautiful offices attention to detail better than I've ever seen. every little nook and cranny was Instagrammable, but also fostered this creative, wonderful connection and community. So I just want to lay that out right now that we are in the presence of the creative genius here. And that's why I know it's in her heart to support fellow creatives. And I've put myself in

that camp. So with all of that grace, welcome to the Jen Marple show. I am so excited to have you here today.

Grace Kraaijvanger 02:50

Oh, Jen, thank you what a beautiful introduction. That was just fantastic. I feel so welcome. And I've been very much looking forward to doing this show with you. I admire your work so much, too.

Jen Marples 03:01

Oh, thank you so much. And Grace is one of those women who we are in the same communities. No, so many of the same people. And I actually was signed up to go to an event but the family had COVID. And I couldn't do it that we've never actually met in person. So I'm joking that I'm not actually joking. I'm doing this podcast so I can just talk to incredible women and meet all the women I want to meet. And there you have it. And then you guys get to learn something and pick up a couple of tips along the way. But with all that grace, tell us about you. So what did you do before you started the Highbury and I know you had these two beautiful locations and you had to do a bit COVID pivots. So let's start at the very beginning. And what did you do before you came up with the hybrid?

Grace Kraaijvanger 03:42

Okay, so I'll start from the beginning, kind of the the very beginning, but I promise not to make it too long. When I was about four or five or six years old, I took my first dance class, my first ballet class, and I felt so in love with ballet fell. so in love with dance that became my lifelong passion. I was just absolutely obsessed as a kid with wanting to be a ballerina. I studied dance very seriously. I studied classical ballet and other forms of dance. And I went on to be a professional ballet and contemporary dancer. And the reason that relates to the Highbury is that I got a very early view into what happens and what it feels like when we're passionate about our work. So once you've tasted that, and once you know what it's like to be passionate about your work, it's very difficult to go back or to go in reverse and not be passionate about your work. So I had my career as a ballet dancer, modern dancer, I was living in San Francisco. It's very difficult to sustain yourself in the expensive city of San Francisco on a freelance dancers salary. So I was also doing I learned a lot about marketing. I had a marketing degree in college I learned a lot about marketing. I was doing marketing for tech companies as a consultant and freelancer. I'm kind of as like my day job might be Almost like as the way some other dancers would pick up like waitressing jobs, or Pilates instructors, I did marketing consulting. So I was able to have this wonderful career doing something that I love. And I was deep in the trenches of technology companies, dot coms, doing marketing work for them. I've always had this part of my life that was my, you know, my analytical business side. And then my creative side, as those life chapters continued on, and I had two amazing kids that are now one in college and one about to graduate from high school. But at the time, when they were in elementary school, I was trying to put all the pieces together. At that point, I had pretty much retired from my dance career, but I was looking for so I was doing a lot of marketing work. And I was looking for something that gave me that light, and that creativity and that juice and that fuel that my dance career had given me. And I really wasn't finding it. To tell you the truth. This one particular consulting project that I did is the one that really pushed me to make a big change. And one of the reasons it pushed me to make a big change, I was doing marketing consulting for a company that was based in Connecticut. And this was way before the pandemic way before we all got used to being on zoom all the time. And so since I was distant from their office, I was doing a lot of

them were old fashioned conference calls, but I was working from home. And I started to find that I was getting really down on my skills on my confidence, I was really starting to feel like I didn't have much to offer, you know, just just that in that way that like our inner critic voice can get really loud. I was in a period of my life that was like that. And when I started studying and really trying to understand and dig deep into what was going on with why I felt so I had such a lack of confidence. I felt really uninspired. What I realized that was what was missing for me was the fuel and energy and inspiration that I used to get from the dance studio, you go into the dance studio, you'd be around other artists, you'd be around other choreographers, there's musicians, there's light and bright you feel this energy of creatives. And I wasn't getting that when I was working from home. So I was feeling pretty flat and uninspired. I realized that if I could add that I didn't want to go back to the dance studio. I knew that that part of my life was behind me. But what I really wanted was to create that creative energy again and create that creative community again. So I started to play with what that would look like for someone that's working from home feeling pretty isolated, feeling like a bit uninspired. And I had this Lucky Strike of finding my very first what became the Highbury my very first Highbury space I opened in 2014. In a small it was an art gallery, I had a small loft within this art gallery, and it was my petri dish to kind of ask myself this question of if I am feeling like I need creative community, I need inspiration. I need it from other women that are trying to create meaningful work within the framework of their busy lives. If I need this, does anyone else need this too? So I opened up the space in Sausalito as it was really an experiment. It was a question of like, am I the only one feeling this way? The answer was a resounding yes. Not a resounding yes. Am I the only one feeling this way? But a resounding YES to like this is a problem. This is something that women needs support. And this is a challenge that many women were experiencing. And so from that kind of small petri dish of a concept, the hybrid membership quickly grew. I opened another space, as you mentioned, I'm in downtown Mill Valley in Marin County and Bay Area, Northern California. And then we just the momentum was just growing and growing. And it was what was so beautiful is, you know, we started to define the container of what the Highbury actually was. And at that point, it really was the first of its kind co working space and inspiration lab and community dedicated to creative women entrepreneurs. And when I say creative women entrepreneurs, I mean, entrepreneurs, writers, artists, coaches, consultants, nutritionists, accountants, anyone who's looking at their work through the creative lens and wants to create work that works for them that's meaningful to them that works in their lives. So we just had this enormous energy. And you know, 1000s of women were raising their hand and saying, like, Yes, I need this community. So when we defined it as a co working space, what we started realizing was the co working space itself, and it was so beautiful. You're right, thank you for honoring that. I wanted to create a space that the kind of space that I felt, I had been yearning for women in the community, we were yearning for a space that made us we were able to embody our work like it. We needed a space that felt that creative energy that felt that creative fuel, and I wasn't feeling that in other co working spaces or other shared office spaces. I didn't feel like it was the spaces that I was seeing around me. They were At the same as what we were doing in terms of a metaphor for, you know, light and bright and filled with energy and filled with art, like I wanted the space to reflect the values of what we were creating, that I used to say at the time is that, yes, we are a co working space, but that's transportation that is a vehicle for something so much deeper and so much more important. And that so much more important thing is how do we elevate women? How do we elevate each other? How do we support each other? How do we get our voices and visibility out there? How do we get the confidence and the mentorship and the resources, and the funding and the partnership and the collaboration, all this whole ecosystem that we need, as women entrepreneurs? How do we create

space for that both literal space, and then this metaphorical space that comes from community. So that's how we started. That's how I started my journey. And what's been really interesting as a founder, you know, they always say that you teach what you need to learn. And I created what I needed to survive, I created what I needed to give me that creative fuel and to help me find the confidence in my voice. And that helped me to like really deepen my sense of belonging. And through that exploration of what I felt I needed as a creative entrepreneur, the hiring evolved. So we went on to that first space in Sausalito. we outgrew within one year, we went on to open that second space that I mentioned in downtown Mill Valley. And then about three and a half years later, we went on to open a yet another space on the waterfront of San Francisco. Those spaces were phenomenal. But it wasn't just the space. That was the magic. The real magic came from our glue as a community. What made this community so vibrant, was that we had a total commitment to kindness. And I started seeing again and again these examples of what happens when kindness takes the lead through that kind of nuance, or new way new value way of looking at Creative women entrepreneur communities, we started to get a lot of attention. So we hosted Dr. Jill Biden, we hosted Diane Von Furstenberg, we hosted Marie Forleo, we hosted Dr. Tara, Ray Trent, these incredible women visionaries that just kept this kind of contagious feeling of what can happen when women are supporting each other. That's the backstory. But the main through line of what it means to create meaningful work and to create work as an artist. And it was really born all of those years ago, when I was little kind of back in the dance studio.

Jen Marples 12:38

Well, I love it, you bring up so much. And I'm just so happy that you you have the courage to do that. And of course, you know, necessity is the mother of invention. So I think every single time I have a day someone will spit back something that I said I'm like, Oh, right. I said that's because I needed to hear it. So it's like everything I'm doing everything you're doing. It's because we need it. We want it and we know that so important. So that community in that collaboration. Well, I know you had a big challenge thrown in there, like many entrepreneurs during the pandemic. So take us through sort of what the world looked like, from taking the high rates in person to your online right now at this point, right? There are no physical locations,

Grace Kraaijvanger 13:18

there are no physical locations. And I'll tell you, I'll tell you the story. And then I'll tell you kind of how we've evolved. And I hope that this story can inspire. There's so many entrepreneurs, artists, writers, performers, actors, mothers are so many people that were so deeply impacted by the pandemic. So I'll tell my story. And then we can talk about, you know, how that can weave into hopefully inspiring others. I mean, I felt like I was, let's say, mid 2019, I felt unstoppable. I mean, I was so ready to grow the high rate and to continue. I just knew that if we could keep spreading this magic and keep spreading this momentum, through beautiful space and community. I just knew we can make an enormous impact. So I don't know if I've ever been as fearless as I was that you know that kind of mid early to mid 2019. I had been eyeing this just stunningly perfect, beautiful space at the Fort Mason Center for the Arts on the waterfront of San Francisco. It was ironically a space that I had performed as a professional ballet dancer, I performed in the theater in that arts campus. And I just knew that it was the perfect place for us to expand this vision. So I worked really hard over about a year and a half or so of presenting to their board and it was it was not your traditional commercial leasing deal. So it was a lot of presentation, a lot of talking to their board, a lot of talking to the leaders within the organization. So I worked my booty off

to get that space. We opened the space in November 2019 And I poured my heart into just making it the most stunning space I could imagine and it was soaring ceilings and views of the bay. And it was just again, like, I mean, I just had this feeling of like, the whole question, what would you do if you cannot fail and like, we will not fail like we are off to the races. And we kicked off that launch that opening of that new location again, with, like I mentioned, you know, I think it was the first week we were open, we'd gotten a call from Diane Von Furstenberg team asked me if I could interview her there. I was so flattered, it was so exciting. We had a packed house. And then, a few months later, Dr. Joe Biden, same thing, we get a call from her team, we're interviewing her just like, the space is packed to the gills with people that are just so excited for this new community space, the student energy. So when mid March 2020, when we get the notice that we all got that it was time to go home, and shut up, shut our doors. Like many of us, I thought we were shutting our doors for two or three weeks, I wasn't afraid. It felt like you know, we were all just kind of doing the right thing. Well, you know, like, I don't need to tell everyone how that played out, there was over 18 months of forced closure. It I think we were all like pivoting and pivoting and pivoting, when we first closed the doors to both spaces for the pandemic. And we already had, even before we opened the San Francisco space, we were kind of long before we already had a digital membership. So what our digital membership was meant to do is meant to take everything that was happening in the spaces, all the programming all the guest speakers, and put them out, you know, globally where people that weren't local would be able to be part of them. And that was really well received. But it was, it was a very new offering pre pandemic, and it was a small subset of are a tiny, tiny, tiny subset of our revenue. So most of our business was built on people using our in person environment, they're using our co working spaces, we had a membership model, kind of like a gym, where people would buy a membership in order to come use the space at different levels, depending on what they needed. So when we first closed down, I looked at our digital membership as something that would keep my current members and current community happy and engaged and connected. I never thought that it would be our primary membership. And I never thought that this you know, I'm sure there's many listeners that can relate to this, like how could we have ever guessed, the longevity and the impact of the pandemic. So, initially, my plan was, I'm going to keep everyone connected, we're going to do virtual co working, we're going to stay accountable with each other. We're going to be supporting each other through what was a really dark time for our community and our society as a whole. Little did I know like I said that. And then over the course of so March 2020, all the way through to 2020 into 2021. We were getting more and more people that were raising their hand saying you know, I've always wanted to be part of the Highbury, but I didn't live in the area. So I'm actually looking at this as like a silver lining. I know that has been overused a little bit. But there were some people coming toward this thing. I've always watched what you were doing, I've always wanted this kind of kind creative connection. But I didn't live in the Bay Area. That was very motivating for me to continue to pivot, like we said, and to expand our offering expand our programs. Yet, I still was operating with the assumption that we would get those spaces back open, fighting, fighting, fighting, I mean, and we're those of you that are listening that went through this like You're like negotiating with landlords, you're applying for PPAs you're applying for every grant, you can get your hand like the main source of our revenue, just dried up the moment those doors closed. And so I was scrambling, scrambling, scrambling with the objective to just stay alive stay in the game until we can get these doors open again. So I worked really hard. It was July 2021. So some you know over a year later, and then we finally get the doors open. And we're following all the protocols that we've got sanitation, you know, sanitation stations, and we're making sure that people aren't using conference rooms within a

certain amount of time together because they would have shared air we're thinking about things that I just never ever want to think about thinking of things that actually keep people separate when our whole community our whole space was predicated on things that keep people together. The model of our business was like be shoulder to shoulder be hugging be sharing be like in the space together and so, so to try to redefine that in a post pandemic way. It was such a challenge. I found myself and this is where I learned so much more and deeper on what my job is to support creative entrepreneurs because I found myself getting so burned out and just defeat after defeat after defeat. The final defeat came kind of the biggest blow came. We'd gotten the spaces open It took a lot of time, resources, perseverance to get those spaces reopened. And again, that was July and August 2021. And within a few weeks after we reopened, the Delta variant, had an uptick. And then there were closures again, and there was fear again, and there was like, it felt like it all happened all over again, and we had just reopened. The short story is that we just didn't have any more gas in the tank as an in person, brick and mortar, you know, you can only sustain that kind of overhead for so long. And we had, you know, we were running on fumes as it was. So we had just enough in the tank to get reopened. And then when the belt a variant hit, I just remember shaking my head and being like, we've hit the end of the line. And that was an absolutely I don't know, if I can convey the kind of grief that I felt knowing that there was no longer a choice, there was no longer like, more perseverance, more grit, more gogogo, like more creativity, like I just knew at that moment, we had hit kind of the point of no return as it related to our in person spaces. was so sad, announcing, you know, I wrote the email announcing what was that we were going to be closing the spaces and I worked on that email for probably 40 hours, I just couldn't it just finding the right words to convey to this community that I had loved every morsel of building and connecting what it has done for me, though, I knew there were a couple of truths that I knew along the way. And one was that I felt like I was being given this opportunity to walk the walk or talk the talk of what I had said in the past, which was, these spaces are a vehicle for something deeper, there a vehicle for something even more meaningful than beautiful space. And that is how we can elevate the voices of women, how we elevate creative women entrepreneurs to take their work to the next level. And I felt like I was being tested and like, Okay, you said that the spaces were just transportation for something more meaningful. So if the spaces are being taken away permanently, can you walk the walk of that? So that became like a personal challenge and personal commitment of how can we continue this momentum, and this meaningful impact that we had brought to 1000s of women entrepreneurs and artists and writers? How can we continue that journey without these spaces? I mean, I had no choice but to dive deeper into what it means to create a global online community. I think one learning one thing that came out of it for me, in addition to tons and tons of learning on what makes for engaged community and what makes for interesting digital experiences, and what happens whenever when so zoom fatigued, and how do you keep it interesting and not boring. And I learned all of those things. But what I think one of the most meaningful things that I learned was that, as a teacher, I could feel the grief. so profoundly, that happens when we put our dream out there. And it doesn't go according to plan. And I think it was a really important lesson for me as a mentor, as a teacher, to know like, what it feels like, there really feel like your dream has been shattered. Or that you feel like it that you put so much work into something and it didn't go your way. And I think I was meant to learn that lesson, in order to be a better teacher. So many of us entrepreneurs are going to go through the muck of it. And we need to know from others that there is a there is another side, a light at the end of the tunnel. And I think you know, if there was any reason that I can come up with that I was meant to learn this very painful lesson, that maybe it's that I was meant to learn it so that I can teach it.

Jen Marples 24:00

Well, I 100% agree. So I want to say a couple of things. So first of all, I read your letter. And I know it took you a long time and I felt it and I did I would agree. I think everybody grieved with you. Because I know like having not met you but having been in the world of the hybrid, getting your emails and following on Instagram. It was your baby like it was your dream. And so as a business owner, you feel that and just like oh, and you know when you're at the end, but there's always that learning. So I love that, you know, you shifted your perspective, we and you're actually able to now impact more women because of it. Right? So you're exactly expanded. Now. There's no doors, there's no walls, there's no nothing. The world is the oyster and so any woman can come in confidently and safely and I know you've also mentioned you're going to be doing some in person events. And you have because you had this retreat that I couldn't go to because my kids was COVID. So you are going to be facilitating ways to get women actually physically together. But the way the world Because now, I think you know, it's that big, greater purpose. And so they're all tests. And so I'm just so glad you're so open and honest with that, because there's so many entrepreneurs that listen to this, and we're all tested retested daily, right, daily, right? It's like, there's the big ones where you're like, Who the hell am I doing? What am I done? And then there's just the little things that pop up. And it's important to know, just to kind of flip that perspective, like you're saying, like, what is it teaching? What is this showing me? And then you kind of you go back in, like you said, the point, a really important point I want to underscore is that you really went back to your why. Exactly. Yes. So yeah, we all need to, and I personally have just gone through this, too, because you can get busy doing all these things. And you almost you don't even know that you're losing sight of it until something pops up. And you're like, you always have to go back to that why it's what I counsel women, I'm sure that's what you Councilman to do. It's like, go back to the why, like, meditate on it, the quiet in it. And then like the path unfolds,

Grace Kraaijvanger 26:02

I mean, I couldn't agree with you more. And I think that, you know, especially like, in these times, when we have social media messages coming at us all the time showing us how perfect someone is, you know, how perfect they, they started their business, and they're making seven figures in less than six months, and they're on vacation, and Capri or whatever it is, or you know, it all looks so easy, and so perfect. And they have a perfect filter. And, you know, their hair's done, and but the reality is, is that entrepreneurship isn't like that. And frankly, nothing that is meaningful or substantial in life is like that, that's not real. So I think when we can get closer to seeing and what you're doing, what I'm doing is we're opening the doors to other entrepreneurs saying like, hey, it's not always easy. entrepreneurship can feel like death by 1000 cuts, sometimes, you know, like, sometimes like, I'll get a kind of complaining email in our customer service inbox. And that's like enough to, like, affect my mood for the rest of the day, if I let it right. So there's, there's gonna be there's gonna be constantly stimulus that's coming towards us that can feel like one more mountain to climb as an entrepreneur. So what helps us I think, is to see and feel the support and encouragement of other entrepreneurs that have climbed that mountain and are pulling us up along with them saying, like, you can do this, you can get past that, that day to day, whether it is like a minor defeat or a customer complaint or not getting the funding that you had hoped for, or having a business partnership, you know, fall apart, there's all these things that can happen. And when we support each other in the collective, we're able to kind of inch by inch, lift each other out of those things.

Jen Marples 27:39

100%. So I'm just going to do a little PSA right now that the most important thing you can do as a woman in business is surround yourself with other women who are in that ring with you. So they know exactly what you're doing. They know why you had to cancel those dinner plans. Because you know, your email newsletter didn't go out or I don't know someone's sick. And there's 1000 reasons why and they won't, they won't ever question it because they're out there doing the same things you're doing and they understand. And also you need mentors, you need to be surrounding yourself with women and looking up towards women who are where you want to be further along. And ahead of you, they've done it. And they're going to show you the way. And they're also going to offer you advice and inspiration and help they're going to take you there with them. We're never meant to do any of this alone. And so I so resonate with you wanting to bring women together. I mean, that's what I do. I bring women together. And we all know everyone wants to be together. We don't have to test it anymore. Because we just know, we don't want to be together. I mean, it's just the facts. So if you take one thing away from this, it's find your tribe find the group that's going to support you know, for a lot of us, a lot of you listening, it's not going to be your BB or immediate circle, you've got to go out and join something like the hybrid, or join a mastermind group, or look for a networking group that's gonna help you expand and stretch and offer that support that grace is talking about. So I know you talk to a lot of women. What do you think this is specifically for midlife women? What do you think the biggest challenge right now is for the midlife woman.

Grace Kraaijvanger 29:09

I'll start with an internal challenge. And again, I learned this by experiencing it myself. I think the greatest internal challenge is confidence. I know for myself, I can be very hard on myself. I'm working on it, working on it. But there's, there's a lot there's that voice in our head can get pretty loud, sometimes pretty noisy. Sometimes it says, I don't have what it takes to do this. And I know you talked about this so much in your work with like all of the reasons and rationale that we can come up with internally without I don't want to say without external forces because I think that society has spared us a lot of these things. So I'm not putting the blame on us as individuals but inside in our feelings we can come up with some barriers like I'm too old. I don't have the right skills. I don't know enough technology. I've never started a business before or like all them the Are we out of ways that we can say that we're not ready to do something. And what I think is just so unbelievable about mature experienced women who are either entering midlife or in midlife and beyond, we've amassed this completely unique. What's what I think of almost like as like the unique DNA strand of skills, knowledge, talent, grief, pain, experience, experience, personal experience professionally, like we've experienced so much, that makes us the only person that has a unique perspective that we have that you have that I have are the only ones that can do it just like that. Because we have we've amassed this experience. But what we can do sometimes is we discount that, we discount that as well, I did this but not that I did. I had x experience, but not y experience. And what I what I'm Hope so hopeful and encouraging us all to do is like, we take all of that experience in our toolkit forward. So we take that all with us. And we bring that forward into our new experience. So we actually have, again, we are the only ones with this unique potential, because we are the only ones that have had this unique way of putting our lives together. It makes us the perfect person to do what we're trying to do. But I do think that that inner critic and that competence, that again, I'm just like it's layered in ageism, it's layered in, you know, some of the many,

many ways that we can be kind of taught by society that we're not ready yet that we need more. I hope that women like you, women like me, women that are listening to this, that we are part of undoing some of those dialogues, whether they're internal dialogues or external dialogue.

Jen Marples 31:45

Yeah, there's a lot of work to be done. And it's funny because, you know, on the outside, you look like this fabulously competent person and you started your business and pivoted and this and that people say back to me, and I was actually crying in a mastermind call weeks ago. Because I do I always present as a strong when I want to save the world, someone read my aura, and I know this about me and the empath I want to, I want to save the world. It's a heavy burden, Grace, I'll have to have to have to worry about this, but But it's always I'm that person when they say you know, check on your strong friends. And the point of all this is that we're all human. We all have those days, where you have to dress yourself into the part almost of like, I am this confident woman, I do know what I'm talking about. I have all this experience, because you know, you through menopause and you know, you there's hormones, there's a lot of there's a lot that goes we have to deal with. So and again, this is underscores again, why do we need all those women's surrounding us to be like, you're fabulous, you can do it, you're just having a moment that you can get back on that horse, but it is hard. And I'm so glad you brought up the other piece too, just how everybody thinks everything is pretty, pretty perfect in the Instagram world. And it's it's not I mean, it's good branding. It's all of that. And it's and that's why if you're being honest, I have whole podcast episodes dedicated to how things have fallen completely apart. And it's okay and you need to go ask for help the inner critic, the societal sort of what's happening outside we just had, we have to tune that out and realize the inner critic, it's just trying to keep you safe. And so just knock it off your shoulder. And it's not it's not even having confidence. Like it's just having courage. Just have courage to try one thing, right?

Grace Kraaijvanger 33:28

I used to say yes, I used to say and it really is like a it's a somatic truth that fear like when we feel fear, we feel like our nerves, let's say like stage fright. For example, I was a dancer. So I spent a lot of time in the wings with stage fright. Um, you're about to go on and you feel this that kind of like butterflies in your stomach, right? That's like, that's nerves. And then fear feels a little lower fear feels kind of more in your gut where you're like, I'm afraid that I don't know what to do next, or I'm afraid of what's happening next. But what I think is really interesting about that idea is that exhilaration and the feeling of feeling alive also lives in that same place in your stomach. So when you're feeling excited, you get that kind of like, what my kids used to call nerve iden like nervous excited belly, right? So when I remember that, like the feeling of fear and insecurity lives in the same place in my body as the feeling of exhilaration and vitality. That's like a different way like Oh, I know that I know that place in my body. I know that feeling. And I can choose to look at it as a way of being curious being excited about sub creating something new being expressive, versus feeling like I'm stuck in that pit of fear.

Jen Marples 34:36

I love that perspective. Everybody rewind that and take notes. I'm really hurt that way put that way before it is because it does make you feel alive. Right it does. It's just it's flipping that a little so the body wants to say and wants to keep you alive but the you can also use that energy. I got on the wings with you like when you said you're waiting to go on stage for anything like to go speech. We all have To do a

debate in high school, everybody has had to stand up at some point in time and speak and do something. And there's a mile that terror that sort of happens. But then you snap into it, you get out there you do your thing. And then how amazing do you feel when you're done? Like remembering how amazing you feel, instead of like that scary part. Just think of how amazing it feels when you've taken an if those are really big steps, because that's what is that the number one thing people are afraid to do is speak in front of groups. It's like, Give me death instead of public speaking. I don't mind it. But I know it's but you have to work on it, too. And it's still nerve racking. I mean, even when I do it, it's nerve wracking. it's nerve wracking.

Grace Kraaijvanger 35:35

Totally. I mean, I think I think it's really important for all of us to remember that. So often we like you were saying, like, we put people up on a pedestal and say, well, she must be so competent. And she's able to speak like this. And she wrote three books, and she's running her business. And she's, you know, has her face forward on Instagram, she's doing real everyday, or whatever it is, like, whatever the visibility comparisons are. Even before this, I love being a guest on podcast, it's one of my favorite things to do. I was nervous before this I hadn't done in a while. So like, it's a balance. And this is one thing I'm really interested in doing. With the hybrid community, I want to balance the fact that it's our job as women, it can be our job to support each other, lift each other up, like you said, like encourage each other remind each other that you could totally do this, you can be a guest on a podcast, you can do the keynote speech, you can speak at TEDx, you could you can start, you know, one business a second business, like you, it's our job to encourage each other. And the balance of that, I think that the other side of that is it's also our job. I don't know if job is the right word, I'm going to kind of play with that. But it's also, I think, a valuable, impactful thing to do to show the vulnerability to so when I can say to you, for all of your listeners, that I still get a little nervous before I jump on a podcast as a guest, then that opens it up for the person listening to go, you know what, I didn't think she got nervous, I get that. Okay, well, then maybe I do have the strength to do it. Because that is an exponential contagious impact. So when we start sharing our vulnerabilities coupled with our commitment to encouraging each other, we start to open up a lot of possibility in there, right? Oh, yes,

Jen Marples 37:15

I love that. So let's all commit to showing a little bit more of the struggle. I mean, I have written down it's funny because I actually, I mean, this is going to air you know, after but I just, you know, I dropped my girls off to their first day of high school, they're twins, and then my son's junior year. And so admittedly, last week, I shot and I wrote a whole newsletter on it, about how I had to say no to a business, something that was really looking forward to do for work, looking forward to do and the old mean would have like, just ignored my family and done it. And I said, my girls need me they're sensitive, it's tender. This is a whole big thing that I just kind of forgot. It was such a big emotional thing for them. And so I just was very open on it. And I have never had so much response from a newsletter and for the post and people texting and because we're all human, exactly. So we've got to say it's like, and I wrote it, I said, I'm giving you all permission to be human to counsel thing, if it's gonna take you away from your kids, or it's never not feeling right. Like we have to give each other permission to do that, right.

Grace Kraaijvanger 38:14

100% man and, and especially if we think about like work, and business is really just humans relating to each other, right? So we really relate to each other when it feels true, when it feels authentic, when it feels like it resonates with something that could happen in my life and in your life. So if I hear that story of like that you had to change something because you needed to be there for the kids first day of school. I relate to that. And all of a sudden, that brings us even closer and closer. And so I think what's interesting is we're starting to shed some of the old marketing concepts of shiny storytelling. And we're starting to be more drawn to the authenticity the truth. I follow Mel Robbins on Instagram. Well, I think one of my favorite things about her is that she's not wearing makeup or any of that she just jumps on the camera and says what she wants to say. And it makes me feel like I know her. I know her as she is. So I don't know, someone that has, you know, prepared with a zoom filter and had their makeup done. And it's like very, you know, like, I know her as she is and it makes me feel closer to her. Right. I don't know her at all. But I feel like I do because she opened herself up in a more authentic way that's very relatable. So I think it's interesting. And this isn't just for women entrepreneurs, but I feel like so many creative women entrepreneurs are drawn to that authenticity. And then if we can not only be drawn to it, but emulate it, it just starts to change the way that we market our businesses show up in public show up with our voices, like we're giving ourselves permission to keep it real, and it can be very attractive.

Jen Marples 39:47

Well, it is and I was a guest on a podcast and all we did was talk about more about branding and authenticity and we kind of pulled apart you know, because my tagline is you're not too fucking old and it was very intentional. To pick effing parks, you know, I mean, I don't spell out the whole word. As you know I use Asterix, but it's very intentional, because it's provocative. But we got on a whole subject is a little tangent and just about being authentic. So this is a really great business advice for everyone listening, staying true to who you are, I know who I am. So when you talk to me on a podcast, you see me on social media, you see me speak at an event, you see me yoga class, you see me in the car, like, wherever I am the same person, I'm not making myself be somebody who I'm not. Right. And that's you freight. And that's what I coach women on all the time is if you've got to be authentic, and you've got to have the courage and you cannot care what people think. And then like you're saying with Mel, you know that if you met her, she'd be great to talk to she's not putting on some type of thing. Because the worst thing in the world is when you admire somebody, you meet them, and they don't meet your expectations. They're like, Oh, you're meeting and you're through that. I mean, that would be like, so depressing when that happens, because you know, but so that's not that's them not being authentic. So they're presenting one way to the world. And that's not who they are. So it's really powerful when you step into who you are. And you go all in on that. And it's you. I am Jen, in a bun without makeup with makeup, like wherever you see me, I'm the same person, like I'm not changing filter, no filter, sweating, like people see me around town, they see me in all aspects, I don't care, like I don't feel like I need to be made up every single time I like to get dressed up. And you are also going to see me sweaty with mascara running down my face, either hot yoga class, it's just stepping into who you are. And really not caring what anybody thinks that it's going to set you free to do whatever you want, and really spread that whatever message you want to spread.

Grace Kraaijvanger 41:35

Totally. And I think so often what we feel like is missing. Like, sometimes when we reflect on where we are in our lives right now, whether it's our business lives or our personal lives. So often what we feel like

is missing is there's often like, I have heard my own voice say and, and I've heard 1000s of women say it was like, I don't feel like it's fully me. I'm not being fully me yet. And I used to think of it as if we think of a closet. So I used to look in my closet. And I had you know, I was a professional dancer. So I had like things that I wore to dance class and to rehearsal. And then I had this marketing consulting day job. So I had like, at the time, you know, dating myself by saying this, but I have like my banana republic suits or whatever, you know, that I wore to like my argument and

Jen Marples 42:16

tailor to suit and tailor.

Grace Kraaijvanger 42:19

Right? So you have that that side of our life. And then I had kids that I have this kind of mom's side of my closet, you know, then I had like date night or so you feel like you can feel like your costume changing. And that's when we start to feel like that can feel very disparate on so well then who am I I'm having to put whether it be this persona and this persona. And what I find that so many, especially well, humans, and just when humans are looking for their next chapter, they want to feel integrated. They want to like I want to be one person that has multiple facets to it. And well, you know, they have multiple interests, multiple passions, but I'm one person. So I don't feel like I'm like going to my day job and then doing something I really love at 6pm and then switching costumes to something else. We want to feel integrated. And I think when we start to build our businesses in a way that allows for our true personalities to come through that authenticity creates that integration that we're often craving, like just let me be just one person, one interesting person one multifaceted person throughout all the areas of my life.

Jen Marples 43:26

I love that you said that I'm seeing this pop up interestingly on LinkedIn and people are posting their like headshots and this and that better showing tattoos or dreadlocks or whatever. And you know it because you're and it's our generation too. It was so prim and proper, and like pan. You guys were all midlife here. So yeah, we all started off in like the 90s with the pant. And I worked in Hawaii and I still wear pantyhose. lasses. That sounds off, you know, and it's like, who are you? Who are you? So we haven't we all had to put on the uniform, right? We're coming out of the whole crazy, you know, 80s greed is good. I don't know. So we're women. We're dressing like men basically swell to like make ourselves look like men. And then now we're at a place where it's the both end right? You can wear the two two, you can wear the kimono you can wear the business stupid, they're all parts of you. You're not putting something on that's yes, yes, exactly. This time in life. We just don't have time. We're just and we're not we're not here to live our lives to be somebody else to impress other people. I we could talk about this for hours because it's a really but it's a really important point. So it's an I have women a woman, I was texting back and forth with her. I just met her she's like, just was so bummed about turning 50 I said Hang with me. And you're gonna be you're gonna think it's amazing. And she's like, I don't think so. I don't think I can do it. I said just come into the world of me. Because I always claiming my age when and I always say if you can if I can do it, you can do it. And it's like, we can't fight getting old and it's a gift, right? I mean, I think of the COVID times getting older as a gift.

Grace Kraaijvanger 44:56

100% It's a gift. It's our opportunity. Unity, I think many of us feel like there's something left inside that we haven't yet expressed. And this is our opportunity to express it. And whether it's expressed through a book or a business or, you know, the way that you raise your family or whatever that is, I mean, getting older gives us this opportunity to kind of to continue to excavate like, what is that? What are those things that I've always wanted to do? Or to say or to be? You're like, we get to inventory those things and bring them forward?

Jen Marples 45:25

Well, that leads me to my next question. So say there is a woman out there right now who's got something burning on her heart, she knows she wants to do something, doesn't know where to begin, what would you say to her,

Grace Kraaijvanger 45:38

I would say, number one, ideas become actions become, concepts become businesses become art become real, faster than you think. And I think the number one way to take something out of the idea phase into the next step is to share it. So when we when we work in the vacuum, when we work alone, behind our computer without sharing our dreams, our art, our concepts, our ideas, when we when we keep them all inside, they can feel very stagnant, harder to grow inside, like a dark petri dish, right? Like, when we share them in community, that adds light. To them, it adds, it's almost like a plant that adds water. So I would say the number one thing is when you want to take something to the next level, even if it's the next level, inside your own brain or heart of like, the next level can be like, I explored it further, that's taking the next step, when we take that out of the isolation of our brain, and we share it verbally with, especially with a kind community that is created to elevate ideas created to to be the inspiration lab that kind of pulls, pulls inspiration out and reciprocally pushes inspiration through when we share it, we've already grown the idea that just the simple act of of sharing, whether it's your big dream, or I'll say your little idea, like I used to always say, I couldn't believe how many times women would say to me, Wow, I have this little idea that I got like, that little idea is your big idea. Like that's, that's the thing, that is often the thing that you want to do want to share want to express. And the only thing that's between it being a little idea and a tangible action is expressing it is sharing it. So ideas kept to yourself can die in a vacuum, ideas shared and community can become the next layer. So I would say the number one thing is, don't do it alone, express. Speak your ideas share what's on your mind. And I'm so amazed especially as it relates to midlife women and and beyond. Mentorship becomes very reciprocal, where it's not a one way street of like, I have an idea. And I'm looking for someone to help me excavate and take that idea to the next level. It's that I have an idea and you have an idea. And then conversation through the collection of our wisdom and experience, we can grow that idea collectively with this very reciprocal community minded mentorship. I mean, there's so much energy in that it's like it that's like an infinite ecosystem right there. That's just, it's really a giant wisdom share, that we have this opportunity to do when we're in community. I think that's so exciting.

Jen Marples 48:36

I was listening to some podcasts when guys were talking and I was it occurred to me that the men have kind of boys had that old boys club that old boys not network. And they've done traditionally what you just outlined, right? There's always like the mentor, that's what these two guys were talking. It's like, and I see you like the younger guy of these three well known guys and like he's coming up and they've

mentored him, and they were pulling these out. And it's, it's something that's just expected. And it's always been done right with the guys if it's just on a golf course, or whatever it is. And so women have to be intentional about these communities. And really, it's something that's always been done and it's obviously greatly benefited men for right it's because that's how they rose in business and socially and all this stuff. And so the time for us to do this is now and it's always traditionally been done. Guys have done it. So it's it's more important now than ever to do it because you have dreams. Everyone out there. You've got dreams, you've got goals. I got my thing go with my podcast because I hired myself a mentor. Yes, I asked to jump in it did exactly what you said I had to tell somebody and then that person also held me accountable and act and helped me show the way because she had a podcast. So all of this I think we have a huge theme that we're unpacking here today, you guys it's mentorship and community and other supportive women. So let me ask you this question, and we've talked about it a little bit but I want to hear very, I want to hear a specific answer. What do you think women can do better to support each other?

Grace Kraaijvanger 50:02

I mean, I think women are extraordinary at supporting each other, I really do. So I feel like innately if we look at kind of what our go to places like, I'll give you an example. When I do work with women in our community on what their deeper Why is for their business, or their art or their book, I do this exercise, it's called so that you can watch and so you kind of look at like, well, I have a community for creative entrepreneurs and you would like so that you can watch so that I can support women so that you can watch so that I can help women get to that. So it's it's this kind of way of peeling back the onion to get to your deeper why. What I am stunned by is most of the deeper why's within the community of women that I've done this work with, it always comes back to supporting other women. Because I think that that's innate, I really think it's instinctual in a way. So I guess that what we number one, what we can do is recognize and realize that most of us are just put together that way that we want to help each other. The way we can continue to help each other is by modeling, again, that reciprocal mentorship that it's okay to ask for help. It's okay to not have it all figured out. I tell my members, like my favorite thing that has ever happened is when a member launched her email newsletter and it had tons of typos in it. I was so proud of her because she just put it out there and I wanted to consume it, I wanted to share it, I wanted to tell my friends about it. I don't care about the typos, I care about the content in it. So I think when we can model for each other and create safety and permission, in just putting the work out there, and not hiding behind perfectionism and not expecting it to be you know, polished right away. When we can model that and and encourage each other, just that we start to pull away some of those barriers, the barriers of time or the barriers that that again, a society is put on us. I think encouraging not just encouraging women to put their voices out there women to put their work out there women to create, but encouraging them to do it somewhat rapidly fast, like without perfectionism. Just just do it just knowing that there will be a fleet of people behind you going like I've got your back. I don't care about the type on the newsletter. I'm just glad you did it. I'm glad you put it out there.

Jen Marples 52:13

I'm so glad you said that. It is very powerful to have those women supporting you. And I'm constantly saying to just you know Done is better than perfect. You got to start and if you look back look at anybody's businesses say this to like when I'm counseling when when I run my mastermind, look at any business, big or small. Everyone evolves, everyone has to start somewhere and then you iterate you

update, you get better at things you decide. You're going to use Grammarly on your newsletters for typos, you know, learn along the way, maybe you just keep going. But you got to start somewhere and ain't nothing going to be perfect. And for sure, whatever you start today, it's not going to be the same in a year, no matter if you think it's perfect or not. So just give yourself a break.

Grace Kraaijvanger 52:58

Give yourself a break and go for it. 100%.

Jen Marples 53:01

So my final question is for you. What do you wish for women at midlife?

Grace Kraaijvanger 53:06

Ah, I wish that. And this it's interesting because it's again, we teach what we need to learn, I wish that we could we would believe that we can have exactly what we desire, what we what we dream, I wish that when we come up with a vision of what what our own unique version of, quote unquote success looks like that we collectively and individually believe that it's possible. Because I think once that belief has taken root, then all the other work, all the other kind of barriers are eroded. We just follow that star, right? So I guess my biggest wish is for the belief that what you are dreaming up all of your listeners out there, what they're dreaming up or what they're hoping for, or what they're yearning for what they're craving, is entirely possible, and well within reach of what you can create. And then the second I'm just going to add on to that. My second wish is that as a society that we fully honor what we were talking about earlier in this podcast, which is that when you amass years in your life, you also amass wisdom, and you also amass experience and you also amassed grief and resilience and grit and perseverance and love and passion and blah blah blah. And so I want that culmination or collective spirit of wisdom to be celebrated. That is my wish that we are celebrating the fact that as we're talking about this audience of midlife and beyond that as a as a midlife and beyond, woman that you're celebrating and being celebrated for that wisdom. It's extraordinary. I have a I really had members of all ages but we had a number very it was very, very active with us who because she was almost at when she joined. And I used to joke with her that she was my chief wisdom officer. I wanted that, that feeling that reciprocal maturity that that feeling of that she was sharing with me her was and she there was, you know, she, she would tell us that she was insecure about social media or insecure about technology, like, it didn't matter. Because what she had was such a more profound wisdom, I can teach her how to use Instagram, but I can't teach her that was that deep wisdom that she has from a lifetime of experience. So my wish is that that's deeply celebrated, both inside communities of women like the hybrid, and then of course, at a much bigger external scale as a society.

Jen Marples 55:44

Oh, I love that you said the eight, the 80 year old member, I actually interviewed my mom to be on the show, because I'm going to occasionally pop in went look at the generation before us. And you bring up such a good and very important point about that wisdom skills can be taught and I've had multiple entrepreneurs on her saying, You quit hire midlife woman every day of the week and twice on Sunday, to work at a company because of everything you just said. There's life experience a new skill, anybody, our kids are learning new skills, right? When school age, everyone can enter, you have this capacity. So everything isn't this big struggle when you're in your 20s, because you haven't had any experience of

any kind, but you get to 5040s 50s, whatever. You've got all these decades to back you up. And if it's just a new skill, we're always learning new skills. So that stop you don't let yourself get stopped from applying for a job because you don't know Google Drive. Or it was something that you can take an online class, it's all out there. It's all out there to learn. So just nobody stopped themselves. But what you offer is everything you've just said, I think it's so beautiful and so lovely. It's that wisdom. Because we're not I'm just this I'm just a mom, I've just done this. It's like just stop that already. There's no just anything you've conquered so much new adult so it's, I could go off. I feel so passionate about that. Final question for you. What do you think the best thing is about being at midlife?

Grace Kraaijvanger 57:08

Probably the same answer. Probably the same answer. Certainly that wisdom, I think what some of the painful experiences of my life, particularly in the last five to 10 years have taught me one thing that it's taught me is the importance of play, the importance of humor, the importance of keeping things like allowing things to be light and imperfect. Sometimes as I think as a mom, humor helps as a partner, as an entrepreneur, like just like allowing there to be I remember one time, someone asked me five years ago what I did for fun, and I really didn't quite have the answer at the ready. And it taught me certainly over the pandemic, I started to realize that going to the farmers market every Sunday with my dear friend going for hikes with my husband inserting fun into the the workday that at the time during the pandemic was really painful, like I needed to have elements of play in order to keep my juices flowing. So I would definitely I think that that's something that I have learned and carried with me. The other piece that I am excited about, and I'm not sure if this is just for midlife, but I think I certainly have placed more importance on in midlife is is this idea that as you're creating your next chapter in your career, that idea of community and how it can create that ecosystem that can answer all all of your questions like anything that you're not sure about don't know how to do not sure what to do next, that ecosystem can be there for you and it becomes really solid in that life because you're you again, you're with people that have amassed a lot of experience, though that wisdom piece is going to keep coming up for me again and again. I've just like that's it that is a superpower.

Jen Marples 58:55

What a great way to end. My final final question is Where can we find you support you and find out more about the hybrid?

Grace Kraaijvanger 59:01

I love that. So follow me on Instagram at the Highbury so at the Highbury on Instagram and I do, I've gotten into real then I'm doing more video work. And so just what I love for Instagram to be is your quick inspiration hit from the hybrid, and then go to the hybrid.com. And check out our community membership for creative entrepreneurs. I run an incubator, I launch it one or two times a year. So keep your eye out for the hybrid incubator. I'm a big proponent right now of the hybrid model of you can have a digital membership and in person experiences and events too. So check out the hybrid.com for our in person retreats and events and new programs that we'll be putting together.

Jen Marples 59:43

So exciting. Grayson has been an absolute joy chatting with you today. And I think I think we know we could talk for about three more hours but unless I have to wrap it up so we'll have to have you back on

but thank you so much for sharing everything being raw, being authentic, sharing your wisdom. I think wisdom is our key message Are today everyone and I just adore you and thank you for doing what you're doing in the world to support women

Grace Kraaijvanger 1:00:05

likewise you and thank you so much for inviting me and I love this conversation I look forward to many more and I really love the work that you're doing so thank you so much

1:00:14

thank you