

Sicilian DNA-with-nellie-calanni

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SPEAKERS

Nellie Calanni, Jennifer Malcolm



Jennifer Malcolm 00:10

Calling all women who are curious and called to be women warriors are rising in this day and age to heal and grow together. I'm your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome to the next episode of Jennasis Speaks podcast The Transformative Power of Women's Stories where every woman has a story and every story matters. And yes, that means you. And I am excited today as we have started 2021. we're showcasing some of the Jennasis and Associates team members. And Nellie is newer to the team, she started last fall with us, but really stepped up to the plate of feeling the desire to share her story, which is a unique story that we've not showcased yet. And loving to have her here with her smiling and being face and honored that you're on their team with us because you work hard every day and really appreciate you so welcome.



Nellie Calanni 01:01

Thank you so much. I love being a part of the team. It's been a great few months, I feel like I've actually been part of the team for much longer than that.



Jennifer Malcolm 01:07

I agree. I feel like yeah, learning curve that you had was very minimal. And you fit right in with the culture and in a virtual world. And it's really worked really well just with getting

you onboarded. And your fingers are in so many different projects across the board. So it's been a lot of fun.

N Nellie Calanni 01:28
Yeah, I love it.

J Jennifer Malcolm 01:29
So I'm going to read a quick bio about you. And then we're just gonna get started with your story. Nellie Calanni is born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, and the first American born member of her family. Raised by a family of Sicilian immigrants, Nellie has always taken pride in her close knit family and the culture that has enriched her life. Nellie is a 2012 graduate from Baldwin Wallace University with a BA in marketing and a 2014 graduate from Kent State University with an MA in mass communication and journalism. With nearly a decade of experience in marketing, Nellie has been able to fine tune her creative copy writing skills for any industry. She loves reading, learning new languages, all things Cleveland sports and spending time with her family. And as we said, Your family is extended to the Jennasis family. And so welcome.

N Nellie Calanni 02:20
Thank you happy to be here.

J Jennifer Malcolm 02:22
So good. And I love that we have so many people on our team that are bw grads, and I love that piece because we have that affinity Yellow Jackets For Life and that, again, instant connection with graduates in the program, no matter what program is at BW, is just one connection as well. So So

N Nellie Calanni 02:43
Yeah, I love it.

J Jennifer Malcolm 02:44
We normally I start just kind of with these interviews with you tell us about yourself or your family. But the focus on this one really is about the multi generational aspect of your family, that you are first generation here. And just love to hear that piece. Because when I

met you, I know that we were looking to go to Italy this this year. And that's going to be postponed due to due to COVID. But you speak fluent Italian, you're so engaged and involved with your family. But I'd like for you to start kind of back in the journey so that the audience really gets the experience and understanding of you know how you guys came to the US?

N

Nellie Calanni 03:23

Absolutely. So it all started with my great aunt, who is thankfully still with us. She just turned 90 in October. So she kind of pioneered the whole journey here. My great grandfather, so her dad, he actually already had a sister that was in America in Cleveland. I don't know too much about her story, but I know that she was here much earlier on. And I know that her and her husband were not able to have children. So she asked her brother, if any of his children would be willing to come to America and live with her so she could sort of adopted child into her own family. And my great aunt was kind of the one that was volunteered to go. It wasn't necessarily her decision. But it was actually a crazy process. So she was asked to do it at age 19. And there was a whole paperwork process she had to go through. I mean, it wasn't just like how it is now where you can just kind of get a passport and get on a plane and go. So the process started when she was 19. And it actually took seven years for them. Yep, to get her to actually go over and have everything in place. So she was 26 when she came here and it was 1956 and she will also tell you that the dates were April, April 14 through the 26th on a boat. Yep, it took that long for her to get here. And then she settled in Cleveland with her aunt. And after two weeks of being here, she found a job at a sweater factory, where she worked for many years. She met my great uncle at church. He was a Cleveland native. And after a couple of years they were married and they moved from where she was at her aunt's house in Euclid to Warrenville heights. And then after some time in Warrenville heights, she moved over to the west side of Cleveland and North Olmsted, and that's where she's been since since 1970, I believe.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 05:36

And it's funny because you shared a picture of you and your aunt, a few weeks ago, when we were doing some team building activities. And she's, she looks like she's like 60. Like, she looks so beautiful. And you're standing next to her and we're like, whatever age potion your aunt has, can we please? A little bit of that? So yeah,

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Nellie Calanni 05:57

She looked great. I mean, she thankfully, she still, you know, walks around fine. She has

her medical issues. My uncle has been passed away now for 18 years. So she's been on her own in her house, wanting to be independent for all that time. And, you know, we're there all the time. And it's great that we're close to her because we're able to help her with things. But yeah, she still runs the show. She's still she's still the leader of the pack here in the family.



Jennifer Malcolm 06:31

That's awesome. And what part of Italy is your family from originally?



Nellie Calanni 06:34

So they are from a small town in Sicily called porphyry. sheep. It's in the province of Messina. So we are not in the boat. We are the island off the tip of the boot for anyone who's not familiar. So yes, we are we are southerners.



Jennifer Malcolm 06:50

That's awesome. And I shared with you that my mom's side of the family is on the relooking at the boot on the right side of the boot in a small fisherman's village. And it's going to escape my mind right now what the name of that town is. But my mom was able to go back about 15 years ago with some friends and my dad and went back to her great grandfather's fishermen, fishermen village, and just the uniqueness of it, then that was kind of like her bucket list my parents 50th wedding anniversary this summer. And that was the reason why, you know, just gearing up to go again. So it'll be a delayed a delayed trip. But I love that we have the those Italian connections, here's a little more resent, and a little more direct connections and that, but I love that connection with you and I as well. So tell us about how, when your aunt came over and she married your uncle, what then caused or was the reason why other families then came from Sicily over to the US. Was it. Job? Was it opportunity? Was it just family? What was that part of the journey that, you know, got the rest of the family over as well?



Nellie Calanni 08:04

Yeah, so the main thing for my aunt then was family, she saw that a lot of other Italian immigrants who had come over to this area, you know, they were bringing family members over. And so she was able to convince my grandmother, her youngest sister to come over with her husband. And at the time, her three children, one of them being my dad, the oldest. So she really was like, you know, come here, you can get a job, you can have a good life for the kids. And it was, you know, hard for them because they were a

family of six. And everything that they knew was in this little town. So they were all just kind of taking a chance to come over. But thankfully, my aunt was able to go back to Italy help my grandmother with all of the paperwork in the process. And they came over so they were here in 19, I believe 1971. And they actually lived with my great aunt and uncle for four and a half years before they found their own house and our homestead. And my aunt's house is not anything stately by any means. I mean, it is a small two bedroom ranch house and they made it work. And then my grandmother ended up having one other son in America. So it's a total of four children and three adults living in a two bedroom ranch in North Olmsted. And eventually, my grandma, my grandfather was able to find work at Davis bakery over on the east side where he worked for over 30 years. And he'll tell you he's the the proudest to have worked there. He loved it. And they actually after a couple years after he was able to save enough money from the job that he got, they bought a home in North Olmsted almost almost across the main road. They can essentially walk through each other's house

J

Jennifer Malcolm 10:01

That's awesome. And how old was your dad? Then when, when your grandma came over?

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Nellie Calanni 10:06

My dad was six,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 10:07

Six. Okay. And it's funny because I'm, you know, born and raised in Cleveland. I've never lived anywhere else. I live in Olmsted township now, which is directly south North homestead. So I'm very familiar with the area. And when you say, you know, you move from Sicily to North homestead, or just like to the east side, then to North Olmsted. I like, why would anyone ever do that? Like not that it's a bad it's, it's a great neighborhood, but like, right, Italy, and it being romantic and right, great food and smells and sounds. And I know, that's our perception of it. But I'm like, really north on set, or even if I said, Olmsted Falls or Olmstead Township, right. But compared to Italy, like that's a big jump.

N

Nellie Calanni 10:47

Well, that's what you would think. And now more so it is like that. But for them, it was post World War Two. So it was a lot of, you know, war torn area, and not a lot of jobs and not a lot of opportunity. And for them coming to Cleveland was. That was the romantic idea. It was flipped. So I know that they don't regret that move for a second. I mean, I certainly

am glad that they don't, because then I wouldn't be here. And I wouldn't have such a strong connection and such a strong appreciation for having family Italy, I think it would have been a lot different had I grown up there and been born there. And you know, wouldn't necessarily be this disconnect, where it's like an opportunity to go back. And it's an opportunity to get to know other family. I just wouldn't have had that. So for that I'm definitely thankful.



Jennifer Malcolm 11:46

Well, it is a matter of perspective, because you're talking, you said in the 50s. And it's post World War Two, and, you know, it went all over Europe, Europe, Europe was touched, you know, all over. Yeah. And the devastation, just the trauma, the lack of jobs. So I'm sure as a young, you know, married person, it is the, you know, a dream, and it was resized, and it and I love that you say all these years later, they've never regretted it. With A. family being first and having family here and to create that unity over here, but also being purposeful, about provision, an opportunity for, you know, the next generation and generations to come. And that, that's really sweet. Because you could tell that that is a cadence in their story that, you know, really navigated them to make those decisions as well.



Nellie Calanni 12:38

Yeah, absolutely.



Jennifer Malcolm 12:40

What are some stories that as your family came over that might have incited laughter, culture shock, things that were unexpected? Because it is very different culture and language barriers and things, you know, this Lord, but do you have any stories that you could share about your family's experience when they first got here.



Nellie Calanni 13:00

So, I mean, I think they would be much more authentic coming straight from them. They do, of course, have their stories that they've shared. My aunt had a great story about meeting my uncle, they were just at church, and he noticed her and after six months, they were married, after meeting. So they have really great stories like that. I hear stories all the time about how, when my grandfather was going to work on the east side, he would sometimes bring my dad with him when my dad was younger, so he could learn to work. And they would take the rapid all the way from the pure test station to the east side, and just stories about how they would ride back at night on the rapid and, you know, I think

my favorite stories that they tell, though, are kind of like the community stories. My dad since he came here so young, you know, it was and and being the oldest, he was the one that kind of had to learn everything right away. So he got into school, and he started speaking the language, but he'll be the first to tell you that there hami downs, were not really that cool to anybody else. The other kids weren't really sure what to do with kids who couldn't speak English as their first language. You know, if you still ask my grandmother today, like, Oh, do you want to order a pizza, she'll, she'll laugh. My grandmother has never ordered a pizza from out anywhere, anytime in her life. So it's a lot of, I think, than having to get used to the culture. But it was so great having my great aunt and uncle already here and my uncle was American. So he kind of really took them under his wing and teaching them what school was like and what work was like and how the community kind of operates. So they did have a native here that was part of the family and willing to help so they they always share great stories. But all their stories are just so positive. And I'm lucky for that as well, because I know that's not always necessarily the case for immigrants of any country. But they came to a place where there were already Sicilian immigrants, Italian immigrants, and so they felt a little bit more at home in that sense.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 15:18

And I think that's been a huge draw of Cleveland in and of itself, because there's a huge Italian, you know, community. There's a huge Slovenian community there. Yeah. There's all sorts of pockets. And especially, and they're so prevalent today. But back in the, you know, 40s 50s 60s, it was really, that neighborhood that your deli had to do with your culture and your grocery stores had to do with their culture and that the churches had, you know, we're in the language of where you came from. And, and so I think that piece coming over and finding that community in Cleveland was really notorious for those pockets within it.

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Nellie Calanni 15:59

Yeah, absolutely. It was, it was very welcoming. I asked my aunt all the time, you know, she really came across, you know, any discrimination or anything like that. And I think like, aside from some weird looks, sometimes because they couldn't speak the language they were they were lucky enough to not experience too much of that.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 16:19

That's awesome. And I think it's great because I jotted down you're saying that your your grandmother has never ordered a pizza. So does she make it from from scratch?

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Nellie Calanni 16:28

Oh, yeah. She i don't i don't know if she's ever. I don't know how many loaves of bread she's ever bought in her life, either. You know, she, they make them. So that's the other thing too. And I think even like, as I was growing up, and I would have friends over, I think they were also kind of like, oh, like, This food is made here. Like, we're not just going to go out and get food. So yeah, food, food is a big, big part of that, as I'm sure anybody who can stereotype an Italian person would tell you,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 17:01

Which is beautiful, because our one of our recent podcast release was Lela, who's a Jamaican chef. And that same piece of you know, she grew up in Jamaica, and she was like, we everything was either grown on our property or obtained really local, everything was fresh. You did it and buy meals. And you know, she said, exactly, it was it wasn't until her 30s or something that she had gone out to breakfast, cuz that was a foreign idea that go out to breakfast when you have eggs and flour and bacon all at home. And, and so it's it is and I think that's beautiful. What are some favorites? And I'm going to go a little off topic here. What are some favorite meals or dishes that your family is either known for or has passed down from generation to generation?

N

Nellie Calanni 17:48

Yeah, so more so for my grandmother will get like the lasagna and the homemade macaroni and the homemade cavatelli. Those are kind of her big things. And then my mom, and this is one of my mom's favorite dishes is called pasta for now, which is just a baked pasta with bechemel sauce and meat sauce and hard boiled eggs. Which sounds interesting, but it's fantastic. And I think, you know, it's funny to hear when people think of traditional Italian dishes, they think chicken parmesan or eggplant parmesan or past Alfredo. But those things really aren't native to where they come from. Those are just kind of Americanized dishes that people came up with, and kind of put that Italian spin on it. But really, my mom will tell you to bit my parents have their own garden, my grandfather built the garden from basically no yard in their house in North homestead. And the most important part to them is not necessarily a dish, but the ingredients that go into the dish. So they will have fresh tomatoes, fresh peppers, fresh eggplant, zucchini, beans, all of the vegetables, you can think of even lettuce. And that's kind of like the heart of where all the cooking lies.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 19:11

So good. And I remember the story because my mom tried to bring this back when they came back from Italy, is that the dinner aspect is your evening event. So it's not it's not a Hey, let's sit down and, you know, pound some food and clean up and go on with the evening. Like, it is an entire experience of 234 hours of you know, food and wine and conversation and pausing and junk connection. And have you guys carry that tradition on? Is that a normal aspect or is it as needed or as holidays or special occasions?

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Nellie Calanni 19:48

Yeah, now it's more so for holidays. You know, we've as nice as it would be sometimes I just don't think in all the years now that my parents have been here and my grandparents is just kind of, we make the dinner we eat the dinner we clean up, you know. But I know I talked to my uncle in Italy, my mom's brother very often. And he finds it so funny that we just kind of are like, yeah, this is what's for dinner. And that's it. He will tell you about the wine he's drinking and the meal and the people that he's with. And, you know, sometimes they usually don't start eating dinner, especially in the summertime until like eight or 9pm. And it kind of just goes on through the night. So he thinks it's funny that we eat dinner here, like, you know, anywhere between five and seven, typically, you know, yeah, it's totally different over there. They I think they appreciate the process of eating the food, because they put so much love into making it.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 20:47

Absolutely. When you put all the hard work in, and you're not just, you know, throwing things together, and you're working on the combinations of flavors and textures and smells. It is like you don't want to rush through it either.

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Nellie Calanni 20:59

Exactly. Exactly

J

Jennifer Malcolm 21:00

But we're the opposite. So in our house, this was something I started about six, seven years ago. And when I got remarried, and Chad came into our family, he thought it was so foreign, but when I got divorced, and I was the single mom and I would plan you know, a dinner so you know, roast beef, or chicken parm or, and I love, love, love to cook, but the kids would come home from the off the bus, and they'd be starving it like three. So they would you know, have their toast or they'd have a bowl of cereal, they'd eat some granola bars or have goldfish. And then when I would go to have the dinner, they were like, we're

really not hungry. And so I like was so upset, because I like meal after meal after meal would just go into the refrigerator and, and then at like seven or eight, they're hungry again. And so I flip flopped it six or seven years ago, and I have a hot meal on the table, usually by 3:30 in the afternoon. And we eat dinner together. And then we evening, if they're hungry, and they want to snack later on, that's totally fine. But I'm not a breakfast person. So I usually eat lunch around 10:30 or 11. For like, we usually eat two meals here. And everyone thinks that's so foreign. And I'm like, but it works for our family. And it's quiet still, like they're not into the hubbub of homework or have to go shower or a product gun. And so we're kind of so your uncle would really make fun of us at 3:30-4 o'clock dinner, our family doesn't our neighbors make fun of us. But it works. It works for us.

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Nellie Calanni 22:30

Whatever works.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 22:31

I'd like for you to transition because I know that family is such the core of who you are. And I love like that's my mom, my mom is and I don't know if it's just her personality, if it's the Italian, her Italian roots, or whatnot. But I know that your family is at the core of your heart and mind. And that going into the pandemic early last year, you know, you had some things to face and jobs innovations. So share with the audience a little bit about that personal journey for you.

N

Nellie Calanni 23:01

Yeah, so I will start in the summer of 2019. So I lost my job at an agency that I had been at for almost seven years, it was my first job out of college. And it came about pretty unexpected. And so that was a that was something that I really had to take in and process my feelings about. And it was kind of, it's the first time I've ever ever experienced anything like that. And like I said, it felt just very unexpected. And I didn't see it coming. So I wasn't really sure where that was going to take me. And then towards the latter half of 2019. I had lost a loved one a dear neighbor who was like another grandmother to our family. And another close friend of mine, his mother passed. And just all these all these things were kind of happening at once. And I thought to myself, well, I'm just so lucky that my family, you know, is intact right now we're good. And then and I was experiencing a lot of anxiety around this time, it was a lot of kind of having to revisit what I want to do on life, second guessing, you know, should I be in the marketing or social media field. But ultimately, I knew that I always knew that I wanted to pursue writing. And so I just did what I normally do in situations just because of my personality, I just kind of jumped right in and

I was like I'm gonna try to tackle on freelance opportunities, because it seems like a very flexible way to go. And it's something that I know I want to do and I know I can explore things without necessarily having to be tied down to another full time position at a different organization. So I started that process and then at the end of 2019. Actually, as soon as the new year, hit 2020 Which we were all looking forward to. And I was definitely looking forward to it because I was like, I just lost my job. You know, I've gone through so much at the end of 2019. I was like, great, fresh start. A week into the new year, my grandfather got very sick, and nobody knew what was wrong. But to make a long story short, from January through March, he had been in and out of UH downtown, a local hospital in Westlake and in a nursing home. And thankfully, someone was able to figure out that he had had an infection develop around his heart valve that he had surgery on a few years ago. And it was really causing him to deteriorate, and no one was really sure why. And at this time, he, he already had dementia. He has had dementia now for about six years, I want to say actively. And for those people who aren't really familiar, dementia is just a syndrome. It's a set of symptoms where people experience memory loss, they're not able to do everyday activities on their own necessarily anymore. And it's really just kind of a deterioration of the brain and how people perform their everyday lives. So he wasn't able to drive anymore, and things like that. And a lot of people most commonly associated with Alzheimer's. So if that's more familiar, so he had been going through all these things, and we were back and forth at the hospital, but the entire time I was thinking as much as I wanted my grandfather to be okay, I was so happy that I wasn't in another job or even in the job that I had had. Because from that moment on, it was on us every single day at the nursing home when my grandmother needed to go home and have a rest or every day at the hospital. And we were always just there we my grandmother can't drive. So we were always driving her back and forth. Every other family member back and forth. People in nursing homes and hospitals were so sick of us, I'm sure. Because we were all rotating in and out like we were the doctors and the family. Every You know, every hour, they had to meet somebody new, I am the granddaughter, I am the son, you know. And we were all in on what was going on with him. So that was very difficult. And my grandma, my grandmother had never, I think it had been over 25 years since they had last spent a night apart. Wow. And the night that she ended up spending apart from him was the night that they decided they were going to shut down nursing homes to visitors because of COVID. And so we we were all panicking. But again, I mean, by the grace of God, he was able to transition to home health care. And the day after that happened. So we got him home, we and my dad will say this, my dad is the primary caretaker at this point, you know, he'll say that if we would have left my grandfather in that nursing home for even a couple more days, there's probably no chance he would have made it. Just because with dementia, familiarity to him is so crucial. And if my grandmother is not there, or even another family member is not there, and he he just can't operate the way you normally wouldn't. So we were very lucky for that. And that's something that I am grateful for. And I know a lot of

people did not get the chance to do that with loved ones. So for me, that was very important. And again, it was another learning process because I had just lost the job. And now it felt like we were losing my grandfather. And luckily we were able to bring him home. And he's been home since. So and he's gotten much better. And you know, his dementia is still there. It's not, that's not going to get better. In terms of his physical health. He's pretty stable right now. But, you know, it, really the whole process really allowed me to sit back and say, you know, if I hadn't have lost my job and was, you know, just things hadn't happened the way that they did, I wouldn't have been able to spend time with him. I see my grandparents at least three times a week. And I'm just there helping with whatever I can my parents are there almost every single day. So, yeah, it's, it's really put a lot of things into perspective. And, you know, with COVID We were so worried when all the guidelines hit, you know, everybody heard don't go around to elderly family members. We it was a little bit different of a situation for us because of the language barrier. And because my grandparents can't, couldn't really help themselves on their own like my dad always need to be there. Phone calls are to help coordinate doctor's visits, or even to just help my grandfather get out of bed, and things like that. So we were all very careful, we formed a very tight, pod, and safe pod of people. And thankfully, we've been able to maintain that sense. So they've all been, they've all been clear, and now they're signed up for their vaccines and everything. So we're happy that that's in place, that's one extra way to keep them safe. And yeah, we've just, we've been really lucky to spend all this time with them.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 30:31

And a really honor your journey, because, you know, we, it's been traumatic throughout the podcast, but when something happens, such as you losing your job, and really feeling, you know, that devastation or emptiness or lost or anger, that somehow life gradually pushes us to exactly where we're supposed to be.

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Nellie Calanni 30:54

Yeah

J

Jennifer Malcolm 30:55

We surrender. And when we trust and doesn't mean that we are, we're not mad, or we're not hurt or not disappointed, it's not negating our feelings, right? There's, there's positions that I've been that had not been thrust out due to whatever reason, I would have stayed in a comfortable position. And when you're thrust out the opportunities, or open doors, or new experiences, new people, that's how we met you and how you joined the

Jennasis team. And exactly, it's, it's the beautiful part of somehow life just navigates us. And it's like that wind behind us or the river flowing, you know, gently and prodding us along. Because we are caught, we get comfortable in our own skins and our own schedules and our own processes. And the beautiful part is that through disappointment and through, you know, losing this job in life presented you exactly you were supposed to be for your family, and to be there in a very unique way for your grandfather and grandmother. And a gift that is, and they're probably your first choice in 2019.



Nellie Calanni 32:03

No, no could have, I could have never predicted that.



Jennifer Malcolm 32:06

How often pre COVID will go back to you cuz I know that everything's been shut down. Have you gone back to Italy? Do your parents go back to Italy? Do your family does your family come here? Just that kind of bridge between Cleveland and Sicily?



32:20

Yeah, so I have not been back. And I'm almost ashamed to say it I have not been back in over 20 years. So last time I was there, I was eight. So I think just life things got in the way, you know, I, I played sports as a kid. So then all of our summers instead of traveling, you know, we're dedicated to sports and other activities and being with friends. And also it wasn't cheap to take our family of four. It's, it's my parents, myself and my brother back to Italy every summer, that just wasn't always feasible. My mom and my brother were back most recently in 2016. And they spent quite some time there. And my mom had gone back and forth more than anyone else, because my mom's entire side of the family is over there. So she would go back much more often. We have had some relatives come over here as well, the uncle that I communicate most with my mom's brother, he's been over here several times. So we are lucky in that sense that we've kind of had that, that connection, to have people come over and go there. But my goal is to get back there. Later this year, if not early next year, there are so many other things I want to explore there, I'm really only explored our home, which of course is a gift and a blessing. But I would love to also explore different parts of the country. And now that I'm older and now that I can speak the language much better than I did when I was younger, I feel like a lot more comfortable by going there and you know, exploring everything else the country has to offer.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 34:02

And that's awesome. And I told I told you this last fall, I was like, well, we'll bring you on our trip and you can help navigate language barriers, and food barriers, and...

N

Nellie Calanni 34:10

I'm not perfect. I'm not perfect by any means. My my language is a blend between our Sicilian dialect and actual Italian so I don't I'm not sure how useful that would be. But, you know, I try all the time. That's why I try to talk to my uncle so often, because he speaks you know, such crap or Italian and I want to be able to learn from him and kind of fend for myself.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 34:34

That's great. So I know you said before that when your aunt moved out, and you're kind of across the street and walking distance, you describe that because I know in your pre interview you were also talking about just a community aspect of people living closely and that you weren't you were never babysat by a stranger or someone that you hired that it's often used. So what does it culture, what did that culture piece look like for you guys?

N

Nellie Calanni 35:05

So we grew up with? I mean, of course, so my parents also live in North Olmsted. And so we're all within a five minute radius. I live in Lakewood now, but I'm there, you know, I'm there all the time. Yeah, we always had somebody my dad mostly worked nice to when I was younger, he worked in the restaurant industry. And after my mom had her two kids, you know, she stayed home with us most of the time. So we were also lucky enough to have a stay at home mom. But when other things were needed, my dad's siblings would step in my grandparents, my aunt and uncle. And it's funny, our community was so tight. When I was younger, and there you know, there was Grandparents Day at school, I would bring my grandparents but then I would also bring my great aunt and my great uncle. And people were like, oh, okay, and these are other grandparents. And I was like, No, I have another set of grandparents in Italy. But we're subbing in, because, you know, it's like everyone is everyone washes over each other. There's not really like, yes, my great aunt is my great aunt. But, you know, we consider the elderly and our family, you know, and those who watch over us, and are there for us and guide us. And yeah, we've all been very close. So even my dad's my dad's siblings, my aunt is actually the only one who kind of had the travel fever, who had the dream of living somewhere else. So she lives in California. But, again, if I couldn't picture living anywhere else, honestly, I, you know, I've been lucky in my

life to travel and there are places that I want to travel to. But for me home, is not about a geographic location necessarily, is about where my family is. So I could never see myself living anywhere else.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 37:01

How do you feel that your family story has really allowed you or developed you into into the woman that you are?

N

Nellie Calanni 37:10

Yeah, I think a lot of it is revolved around resilience. You know, my aunt and my grandparents came over here with basically nothing. And they raised all their children here, and all their children are successful and, you know, have lived very fruitful lives and us as grandchildren, we've done the same. I think, speaking from an oldest child perspective, I'm a lot like my dad, in where he kind of was given all the responsibility at a very early age. And now I feel like since I'm the oldest grandchild, I feel the same in giving back in that sense, like, I've seen how much my parents have taken care of my grandparents and everything else. And I kind of want to do that. And I'm also so I'm the oldest grandchild. And then it's my brother, but then we are the oldest grandchildren by a lot. And so when my cousins were born, we kind of more felt like we were raising them, we were helping to raise them. So every generation has kind of raised each other, which has been wonderful. And my mom came here when she was 21. She didn't speak English. And I appreciate every day, the fact that she went to school to learn the language. And some of her best friends that she's met for life at that school, are not from an Italian culture, her best friend is Palestinian. We had Greek, Colombian, Hungarian, all kinds of different people walk into our lives because of my mom's willingness to go to school and meet other people who were also learning the language. And that's really shaped that's really what shaped me is seeing how kind of everyone else in my family has been able to step out of their comfort zone and thrive from it. And I see that and I hope that I take that with me and I can hopefully give that to my children someday.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 39:13

Well and just listening to your story, you can see all of the heart connections, the deep love, respect and gratitude, willingness to step in, even if it's not your responsibility, willing to have that community aspect and deep familial roots that goes beyond a self centric or even a your mom, your dad, your brother and you centric attitude. And that, yeah, I'm going to help raise my cousin so that my aunt and uncle can go and do their things or help your grandparents. It's beautiful. And truly, you know, I see pockets. I've seen pockets

of that throughout my life. But it's very rare when you see that kind of jabs of commitment and sacrifice and love deeply Love and respect to work hard, be there for each other, love each other through things and sharing that peace.

N

Nellie Calanni 40:08

Yeah, thank you. Yep. It's not always pretty. We, you know, we are very passionate. You know, we are we're just there for each other. And I think just the tightness of it also makes it so easy for our emotions to play out, you know so heavily when they do. But I wouldn't have it any other way.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 40:32

What are a couple of your favorite traditions, could be holidays, it could be trips, it could be food.

N

Nellie Calanni 40:38

Yeah, so I think. And this isn't necessarily a tradition, but I think just my favorite thing is having communication and conversations with my grandparents and my great aunt that are in Italian. I mean, they can speak, they can speak English. I mean, they get by now and you know if it's broken, but it's, it works for them. But still, when I'm having my main communication with them, it's in Italian, and they're talking to me in Italian. So I appreciate that, I think more than anything, because it's always kind of kept my brain moving. And it's also helped me because now in communicating with my grandfather, it's easier for him, I think in his brain to revert back to his native language. So instead of speaking to him in English all the time, I'm speaking to him partially in Italian. So that is kind of my favorite thing that touches all of that. But we really, you know, we really don't hold on to too many, like specific rules of traditions, but just knowing that we're always together on Thanksgiving, and Christmas, and Easter, and for every birthday. Those are really my favorite things. They're not, they're not specific to us as an Italian family. But I think just kind of having had that throughout my entire life. Like, I can't think of one birthday that I've had in my life where my grandparents weren't there. So if it's things like that, that I'm really thankful for, and that we appreciate throughout our life,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 42:13

It's beautiful. As we wrap things up and start heading to the close, and in light of what the pod this podcast represents, to empower women and to encourage women and to get women out of stagnation or to get women just thinking above their, their current

circumstance, or what can be. What would you say to women that are listening, that they might be able to learn or glean, or a parting word of wisdom to give to our audience.

N

Nellie Calanni 42:44

I think the biggest thing is, if you are lucky enough to have family that you're close to really cherish that, because having that support system of people that know you and and have known you since the day you were born. That's very important. You can learn a lot from them. So I will say never, never shy away from what your family can teach you. And also when you are going through adversity, like how I did and losing my job, it's so important just in general to have a support system, whether that's family, whether that's friends, whether that's, you know, colleagues that you have met throughout your life or a significant other, it's so important to find that and so, okay to ask for help. During those times. I don't know what I would have done had I not had my family and my friends and my fiance to lean on. And I don't necessarily know what I would have done had I not been comfortable and vulnerable enough to reach out in other ways for professional help in helping guide my emotions, and in guiding kind of where I saw my future for myself, and how I could really take a look at the positive versus the negative of all those situations. I embraced yoga, I embraced meditation, I embraced a lot of self care. And I think that a lot of women feel like either they don't have time for that, or they just don't know how to do it because they're trying to be strong, but you can be strong, and do both of those things. And you can you know, working for yourself and supporting yourself and finding those other outlets to guide you through it is it's so necessary, I think to just be your best self.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 44:35

Now and I love that because that is a you know, the theme of this podcast is self care, self love, self forgiveness and vulnerability, you know, breaking through the barriers through fear or the unknown, and that you can see the fingerprints of that all throughout your story and the woman that I've got to know over the last six months, you know, It's definitely a part of your story and who you are. And you have become one of our master writers for our company and our clients. And I think that piece too, of pressing through and stepping into things that are unknown, and what we think is successful, or what we think is what we always wanted, can be completely packaged in a different way, with the same amount of fulfillment and joy, and, and freedom and just for you the flexibility to work remotely for us to have that time with your grandfather every Friday, you carve that out every Friday to do it. Yeah. And just that, that life balance of, you know, not what you expected in 2019, not what you have mapped out for how your your work or your career would be but the beautiful part of pivoting and being resilient and being curious. And

embracing self care is definitely seen and you're gleaming through it.

N Nellie Calanni 46:02
Yeah, thank you so much. I appreciate that.

J Jennifer Malcolm 46:04
Before we close up, can you give the audience a little glimpse or a little taste of your Italian? I'm gonna put you on the spot.

N Nellie Calanni 46:10
Oh, my God. Oh, my gosh. Okay, let me think of something I want to say. All I'm thinking about right now is lunch.

J Jennifer Malcolm 46:21
You could describe what you're having for lunch. Okay, and the translation...

N Nellie Calanni 46:49
So what I said was today for lunch, I'm going to make a sandwich and a salad tonight for dinner. I am going to prepare maybe a soup or some pasta because it's very cold outside.

J Jennifer Malcolm 47:02
The only word I picked up was pasta. Thank you so much for being a part of our team and for sharing your story. You stepped up early January to say you know, I love the opportunity to share being first generation into America, your love for your grandparents, the tightness of it, and really honored that you were here with us today.

N Nellie Calanni 47:24
Yeah, thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity. And I'm so glad to do it. And I hope anyone listening just really remembers how important family and the support system is and that they you know, can be grateful for that and it will help them moving forward.



Jennifer Malcolm 47:39

Well, thank you so much. And I hope that you've enjoyed this podcast with Nellie today, where every woman has a story and every story matters. And I know that this story will resonate with a lot of caretakers, young women that are maybe in between career paths. As a young woman, old woman doesn't matter what age and just the beauty of who you are. So thanks so much for being with us today, and we'll catch you next week. Thank you for listening to the Jennasis Speaks podcast. If you love the show, one of the best things you can do is to share it with a friend and tell them what you like about it and how it inspires you and invite them to listen. Subscribe to the Jennasis movement to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.