

bei-rooted-in-truth-power-with-elizabeth-hanna

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SPEAKERS

Elizabeth Hanna, Jennifer Malcolm



Jennifer Malcolm 00:10

Calling on women who are curious and called to be women warriors are rising in this day of age, to heal and grow together. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome back to the next episode of the Jennasis Speaks podcast The Transformative Power of Women's Stories where every woman has a story and every story matters. That means you. I'm your host, Jennifer Malcolm founder and president of Jennasis Speaks. And with me today is Elizabeth Hanna. And we're gonna call her Liz. She is, so met about a year ago through her sister Jessica, and honored to have her here she is a powerhouse and ready to rock and roll today. I'm gonna read a short bio, and we're just gonna jump right into your story list. Liz's obtaining her master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. This goal took her four years several disappointments and overcoming a range of objections to achieve. she intends to remain in the Middle East at least part time in order to launch her new venture, a line of cosmetics for Lebanese women to help them accept their natural beauty rather than rely on extensive plastic surgery. So welcome, Liz. So much, Jen, I'm so happy to be here. And I'm really honored that some fantastic women on the show. Thank you. It's been fun. And as we've entered into Season Two and the new year here, it's just been fun just to see the gifts of closing out the season one the support, women wanting to really open up and share from just multiple stages and places of life, whether it's overcoming dramatic, traumatic experiences, or just

self image issues and just dealing with all the mental and physical things that women deal with. And so I think the dialogue with you today about the work that you're doing, and your heart for the women in Lebanon is going to be huge. So welcome. Thank you. So let's start. Just tell us a little bit about your background, where you know how you grew up where you grew up your culture. And then that led into your studies and kind of the why of you know, your work today? Yeah, so I'm from Cleveland, and I went to Case Western for my undergrad. So that was not my first choice. I wanted to get as far away from Cleveland as I could for college, but it just didn't happen.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 02:36

It was a fantastic four years really, but I grew up in like a total, totally American household. But we have this Lebanese heritage on my dad's side that I was always fascinated by. And we weren't really exposed to the culture that much. And so ever since I was really little, I was just wanting to know more about Lebanon about my Lebanese heritage about learning Arabic. And I was always fascinated by it. And then once I got to college, once I went to case, I started classes for my like international relations degree. And I fell in love with studying the region like politics and religion and everything. So that's how I got into it. And then now I'm in Beirut, doing my Master's in Middle Eastern Studies. And it's been an incredible semester. I mean, it's been online, the first semester was online, and it was kind of difficult, but just being over there was like, really my like, almost kind of lifelong dream come true that I've been working so hard for it to get there over the last few years.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 03:41

So okay, so to frame that you are actually physically in Beirut, but having to do online because of COVID.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 03:47

Yes, yes. My, my family's like, why are you going over there? You don't have to? You know, this has been my dream. And so I want to go there and practice Arabic. I don't want to just take classes and then not practice it in my daily life. So I'm still there. Yeah. And, and it's been great. I mean, with COVID. We had some lockdowns, and of course, I can't get out nearly as much as I would have last year. But hopefully this spring, it'll, it'll start to turn around. But we'll see.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 04:17

And it sounds like that experience of immersing herself in the culture, the food, the language, just that piece that it goes beyond just book knowledge and what you're what you're learning, and just really jumping into it is the goal.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 04:31

Absolutely. And what's interesting is, I think a lot of the Diaspora like Lebanese diaspora and any diaspora community tend to really romanticize their history. And so, I totally fell into that category where I thought, once I moved to Lebanon, life is going to be great. It's going to be romantic. It's going to be easy. It's going to be this beautiful, exotic adventure and it's just life. Life in a different way. And it's incredible. Don't get me wrong, but It's cool to actually see the realities of it. And it's not always the easiest. I mean, we have power cuts every day over there. And I'm one of the lucky ones where I have a generator in my apartment. So it's not too much of an issue, but other people don't have power for at least three hours a day. And, you know, my washing machine barely works, and that's annoying. So there's music, that make life you know, just regular life over there. And it's not this romantic thing. So that's also been really cool to learn.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 05:30

That has to be like that eye opening experience. Because when you hear Italy or you hear a friend's or you hear grease, or you hear, you know, the Middle East culture, Middle Eastern cultures, and you're like, you do romanticize it. And, and you don't think of just day to day life of I have to at the grocery store and do my laundry and cook and clean and all of that as well.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 05:50

Yeah, exactly.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 05:52

So did you do you have family there that you've been able to be able to in contact with? Or is it pretty blind? Just I'm taking the leap of faith and going over and kind of creating your own experience?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 06:02

I pretty much took the leap of faith. We don't have like, blood relatives over there. No, I mean, I'm sure we do somewhere, and we just aren't in contact with them. We I have some

friends over there and some family friends that introduced me and said, You know, like, go stay with that. And so I've made friends quickly with like, it feels like family, friends, you know, not like other college students. But so I feel comfortable there. And I have a support system there. But it's, yeah, it's not like I'm living with my aunts and uncles.

J Jennifer Malcolm 06:33

Or Grandma, right? Yeah, that's going in there and having the comfort of family taking care of you as well. So to reiterate, when you were growing up here in Cleveland, there was no Arabic spoken in your house, there is no like, create creative cultural experiences of Lebanese. Do you guys celebrate holidays, food, etc. Like that? Or,

E Elizabeth Hanna 06:53

Tou know, I see like my siblings, and I knew like Arabic foods. And that was about it.

J Jennifer Malcolm 06:57

Yeah. I know, your sister, sister. Jessica loves her Lebanese food. So yeah. No, it's good. So the lifelong journey of this desire to go to the Middle East and experience it, did you find support, you know, here in Cleveland for people to be like, yeah, I understand that family, or was it like, this is really left field, it can be dangerous in the Middle East, or there's some, you know, stress there. And, and I'm asking because I've gone to Israel twice. I'm not Jewish. But I did that I had the opportunity to go twice over the last 20 years, and immediately fell in love with the culture, the people the food, the sounds, and, and it was wonderful. And there were bombs and things going off every day. And I never felt unsafe, either. Like you have to be wise, but it's just the same as like going downtown and avoiding certain parts of Cleveland and, and being just wise. But what was the support back here at home of, Hey, I have this dream in my heart. And, you know, a lot of people are like, Oh, I want to, you know, go be an attorney or a ballerina, and I'm gonna go to New York, but you're going on the other side of the world to the Middle East. How is that framed here for you?

E Elizabeth Hanna 08:07

Totally mixed reactions. I say that people who are closest to me and love me and know me, have been so supportive and kind of got it from the beginning. Like even if they don't understand why I want to go there. They like they are really supportive. And they know that that's just been it for me. And then I've got an I say the majority of people I tell of like, when I was an undergrad, like what my future plans were. We're just confused. And like,

how did you get interested in the Middle East? How did you get interested in that? Why? Like, yeah, I do feel saying it's like, really, you so there are a lot of questions like that. I've had a couple like really negative reactions and just strange like some people saying really, really negative hurtful things and not a lot, just a couple, but it's just bizarre. Like why I don't know why people are so concerned about someone and what they're doing, you know, if it's not, I don't know about themselves, but overall, it's been a mix of good and confused reaction.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 09:11

So, how did you handle that negative, you know, like, you know, those things that we've seen those podcasts over and over again of, you know, sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt, but words hurt more than the bruises that you know happened to our body. And when you have naysayers or doubters or worrywarts or any of that that goes against a lifelong dream, like how were you able to face that or how did you navigate your way through that?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 09:35

I think in the beginning, I felt myself trying to always explain myself and justify my interest in the region. And yeah, I think I was always trying to justify myself always and then like once I would like tell my sisters or my best friends or my boyfriend, like Oh, this person said this horrible thing to me. They reminded me something that I always tell my friends and I advise, like my closest people is to filter like filter the unsolicited advice you get. Because, I mean, I think every person who was a hard worker is going to get a million pieces of advice that they didn't ask for, from people who really don't matter to them. And so, I always advise my friends, like if, if you really don't value them, or value their opinion, why do you waste like extra thought on it? And so I had, I needed my friends and family to remind me of that, when people have said, really hurtful negative things, because I'll take, I'll take my family and my friends, perspectives into like, deep consideration, but some random person that I don't even know like, why am I Why don't? Why would I possibly care what they have to say about my work, you know.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 10:56

No, and that's powerful now, and I want to reiterate that, because I'm sure as women, as you're listening to this, there's some piece or you can, you can picture someone in your mind, you have a story, you have an incident where someone came again to negative, and it's really brought you down, or you brought it brought, you know, like doubt, to a dream. And I love what Liz is saying is like, filter through what matters. And if you can just

create a muscle that says, You know what, thank you. But I'm dismissing that because that that voice doesn't matter. That's powerful. That's a powerful muscle to cultivate and to, to relearn. And it sounds like you were vocal peace to those around you. But to remind yourself,

E Elizabeth Hanna 11:37

It's always hard. It's always hard for yourself. Yeah. And it's easier said than done. But yeah, I definitely try to, I tried to live by that, to focus on the opinions of those I love and those I care about, and those who love me, forget all the rest of it. You know, that's good.

J Jennifer Malcolm 11:52

And I think as women, we tried to navigate other people's perspectives and have human compassion. And I feel like I have a lot of wisdom and a lot of areas toward others. But then I'm very short, short minded and narrow toward myself, and to be able to give that gift of compassion and perspective back to ourselves is vital.

E Elizabeth Hanna 12:13

Absolutely.

J Jennifer Malcolm 12:14

So did you have any obstacles, just logistical us to the Middle East that you had to navigate through as well, and especially during last year 20 through COVID epidemic and pandemic, like, walk us through like either normal, what logistics might be as an American woman wanting to study abroad in the Middle East, and then put another layer of global pandemic as well?

E Elizabeth Hanna 12:37

Oh, my gosh, yeah, I swear, like the universe, or God was telling me Don't go because I had, like, every time I thought I had it under control, something new went wrong, and I couldn't go. And so I started really wanting to go to this university up my freshman year of undergrad. And so I thought, like, I'll study abroad, I'll take one semester there, that's perfect, you know, just to get a little taste of my heritage, and this will be great. And the university didn't have a program over there. So I went through this hassle of petitioning to go over there to a school that they didn't have an affiliation with. And they said no, and I was devastated. Because I was like, really, like, it's just all about money for you guys. Like I

was so angry.



Jennifer Malcolm 13:30

Take my money, and let me come take my money. Let me go play.



Elizabeth Hanna 13:34

And so when they said, No, I thought it and I, this is I think this is where I like really developed my backbone because I wanted this so bad. And these people were telling me No, no, no. And so me in the study abroad office, that case, I kind of had some issues for quite a while. And so I like after I pushed this really hard and they were not budging. I said, Okay, fine. I will like unenroll from case for a semester, and I'll go on my own, and whatever, like, that's fine. And so I was starting this process. And then they told me, they like they kind of realized what I was doing. And they said, If you do this, then you come back, we will not accept your credit there. So it'll just be a big waste of time and money. And I was, again tried to fight this and it didn't work. And I got a lot of people behind me I had like families friends. I had my professors behind me writing to the administration and they just wouldn't budge. So I finally decided like, Okay, I'm exhausted. I'll go study abroad and Jordan. This is like the easy way out. And truly Jordan spending four months in Jordan was like the most incredible experience ever. I loved it. So you know, things work out the way they're supposed to. And I would if you know, if I the semester never happened, I would have never had that experience to experience Jordan and I'm so I'm really glad that happened we did. So then I had my eyes set on doing a master's program in Lebanon at the same university. And I thought, you know, this, like, this will be even better, like two years, like I can do two years there. This is great.



15:19

And so I applied, and I was supposed to find out when, like, may or may of this year 2020. And leading up to it, like COVID happened, and everyone was saying, you know, you can't go for at least until January. And I believed it at first. I don't know why. But I was like, Oh, crap, you're right. I'm gonna have to post coded all that stuff. You know, everything was just uncertain. There was there was no answers for anything in life starting in March this year. Yeah. So then I started applying to jobs. And there were like two that I really that I was really interested in. One was in Dubai. And I had the offer, and I was so close to saying yes, because there was this guaranteed amazing, perfect job for me in Dubai. And in my heart, I just I could not say yes, because I knew I would regret it if may came around. And I got accepted to this university. So I said no, which was hard. Then May came around,

because of COVID. Everything was delayed. I didn't end up finding out until late June that I was accepted. And I had no plan. I had no job offer. I had nothing lined up. I was just babysitting my new little niece, which was great.

J Jennifer Malcolm 16:35
By the way, she's gorgeous.

E Elizabeth Hanna 16:39
Yeah, she's incredible. She's the best baby. So I got accepted. And I opened up my email that morning in June, and I read that I had a full scholarship. And basically, like, I almost just cried, I was like, Oh, my gosh, this is happening. Like this is really finally happening. And so I told my friends told my family, all right, like, I'm packing up, let's go. And like, I don't care if there's COVID, like, either stay at home in Cleveland, or I'm gonna stay at home with Lebanon, who cares, right? So I started preparing to go and then the explosion happened in Beirut in August. And like my uncles, and my aunts called me and said, You're not going, my parents said, You're not going. Like, we're not putting like, you're not allowed to go through that. And I kind of was like, you know, I'm putting myself through this program. I have my own money. I've been working since I was 16. And I love you. And you Bye. Oh, then I ended up moving in September, I took some extra time. And yes, then I arrived in September, and it's been pretty awesome. Amazing. Now, did you immerse yourself and get a job as well? Are you just using the money that you saved to just support yourself while you're there as well? Yeah, so I do freelance work as a career coach. And so that's mostly how I support myself. I also have like a, like, a couple hour a week job on campus. And it's really just an excuse for me to get on campus. Because, you know, we're not allowed to with COVID. So now I get to walk around and it's beautiful.

J Jennifer Malcolm 18:21
Like, I have permission, because I'm going to work

E Elizabeth Hanna 18:23
Exactly.

J Jennifer Malcolm 18:25
As you're as you're diving through, like, you know, all of I mean, everything was against you last year with COVID. With it sounds like a different job opportunity. The explosion in

Beirut, there's just a lot of huge obstacles. And where what were you learning or what muscles were you growing in and of yourself? That, you know, you're looking back at, you know, kind of through kind eyes, we've kind eyes, it's hard when you go through the experience, sometimes to see the muscles that we're building or the tenacity, we're building the resilience we're building or, you know, cutting the umbilical cord in a healthy way from our parents and moving on to our, you know, our next life. But what were some of the things that you were learning about yourself through this process? And I love the way you phrased that.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 19:11

Yeah, I think there are a lot of things that I have, like I that I'm glad I wrote down in my notes, I've been keeping track of kind of like my thoughts and feelings the last year and a half or so. And so it's fun to scroll back through and look at that and see how far I've come. So I think one of the things that I've learned and really improved on is sticking to my gut. And so like thank God that I didn't take that job offer and you know, this this like feeling of like, I just can't do it, like I want something else. And sticking to my gut. That way led me to this graduate program. And so and there's been a million other, you know, circumstances where I have stuck to my gut, thankfully. I did it. And I really regretted it. And so I think that that's one of the things that I really learned the most.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 20:05

And I think that's important, because what I'm hearing you say is that maybe sticking to your gut, sometimes you still make some of the wrong decisions. You might make a small like, yeah, I think I'd go for it, and then you regret it. And you can frame that though. And I think that some of those failures, or those, hey, I didn't make the best decision there also gives us a bigger backbone, and more resolve to stay focused. And the eye my eyes on the prize. And when I try to divert, I know, I'm not on the path I'm supposed to be. And I think that's beautiful. Because when you're on a path, you're like, yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes, of course, you're going to get there. But sometimes when you make some slight mistakes, it gives you such deeper resolve, and tenacity to like I'm going to be unwavering in to feel like I'm supposed to do in life.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 20:54

Yes, yeah, exactly. Like unwavering. And like that doesn't mean that I always have 100% confidence, or I always feel good about myself, no way. But at least like, I like, by facing these obstacles getting to like this main goal of mine, I have just built such a deep, deep rooted confidence, where I'm my biggest advocate, and like, don't get me wrong, I have

amazing support system, I have amazing family and friends. But at the end of the day, I'm my biggest advocate. And so like, I've just really kind of learned how to not take no for an answer. Like always pushing myself in to maybe like, take the harder road, it seems like I'm always doing things the hard way. But but it you know, it tends to really reap incredible rewards. and applying for that extra program or applying for that extra internship, even though you're so tired and just want to go to bed. But writing that, like writing that essay to apply is usually always worth it. And so I think just like not taking no for an answer and doing the extra work. And that's, that's been a huge thing for me.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 22:04

Do you feel like that is an innate gift that you have? Or where are you surrounded with? I know, you have a lot of strong business people in your family around you. But was it something that, hey, I have this innate, you know, desire and ability to stand and do the hard work to stay up late and to put that essay in? Or do you feel like you also saw it modeled around you that made that more of a first language and easier for you to cultivate,

E

Elizabeth Hanna 22:28

I think that my role models really had a huge impact and shaping me to be this way. And I know like I know, a few people that have grown up without really those kind of role models. And somehow they like they, they advocate for themselves just like how I'm describing. So I don't think you know, everyone, like need someone to look up to to do it. I think for some people, it's innate. But for me, I think I was really fortunate to have incredible role models. Like my family, my parents, and my older sister, and a lot of people in my family are all in sales. And like they're not just in sales, where, you know, they sell toothbrushes, like they are like the queens and kings of sales. And so in my family growing up, like to have sales skills was the most, most attractive quality I could, like in my mind growing up that someone could have. And so I always heard day after day about, like, it's the end of the month, time to like, hit the quota time to do this. And so in my mind, it was always about selling your, like, selling your skills and your abilities and being your biggest advocate. And so, actually, I was in college at case and I have this vivid memory of being in a class. And the teacher, the professor asking us, what is something that's kind of like almost inherited in your family, like a skill or a trait that, that your family really values. And some people said like, musical abilities, everyone in my family has a musical talent and some, you know, people said different things. And I thought, wow, mine is sales. Like if you're not a sales person in my family, like you're kind of at the bottom of the food chain. Like, like you have to be good at sales. And I said this and to me, it sounded so natural, and I'm sure to other people. They were like, What the hell are you talking about? Like,

that's weird.

J Jennifer Malcolm 24:21
That's awesome.

E Elizabeth Hanna 24:24
Yeah, it shaped me. So like, I don't want to sell products or technology like my family does. And they're amazing at it. But for me, it's about getting myself the best opportunities and creating the opportunities if I don't do them,

J Jennifer Malcolm 24:37
And not hearing No, like not hearing No, like, you're like, Okay, no, I'm gonna pivot. Not that. I'm gonna pivot I'm gonna keep until I can knock that door down. And that's powerful.

E Elizabeth Hanna 24:48
Yeah.

J Jennifer Malcolm 24:49
And I want to reiterate to because my question at the beginning of that segue was about was it innate and you did you have family around you and it's the nature versus nurture. And you had that you had that around? around you had the nurturing quality of family around you that you know, you don't hear no, you're going for it with sales. But you also have recognized that there's other people who don't have that, around them. And they're as successful. And so for the listeners, I because I don't want anyone to be discouraged to hear like, we don't have that support system, and so I can't do it. And what Liz is saying is the exact opposite, you can do it both ways, and want to be very, very cognizant, like, don't feel wrong without hope don't have that type of family support. Because there is that opportunity to create that for your for yourself as well.

E Elizabeth Hanna 25:34
Oh, yeah, I've seen it. It's just some tremendous examples of women and men who have, who have built this kind of feel for themselves without the support system. And without the inspiration and it blows my mind. It's just the most impressive thing. It's absolutely

doable.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 25:52

So tell me about the culture and the women specifically, because I know that your light, like what your next steps are with working in and being in Lebanon is specifically with the women and that's why your story was attractive to, to me. But like just talked about this, the women in general, what are they like, you know, people have, we all have our stigmas, or our identities of what certain cultures are like, whether they're warm weather, cold weather, they're hospitable, whether they cook, whether they laugh, and so we learned that through textbook and education, but we also learn, you know, what we know through TV and storytelling, but you're immersed in the culture. So describe the women that you are surrounded with.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 26:34

So I guess I would say, it's just like in Cleveland or any other city in the US where you have all sorts of types of women, it's all kinds there's, there's really no one way to describe it. Because there's so many, there's introverts, extroverts, super athletic women, there's not you know, there's all spectrums. There's every, you know, end of the spectrum there, which is what I like, it's not this bland culture where every woman is the same. Or we're like how a lot of people in America think that they're forced to be the same. It's not like that at all. So yeah, there's every personality and every interest there. imaginable, really.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 27:18

Which is powerful. Because we, we again, we are so because of limited experience, and I've done some global traveling, but again, you go in through an experience with a preconceived notion of how things are going to be, what the food, the culture, whether, you know, whether you feel safe or unsafe. And then when you immerse yourself I feel like that. They're just humans, and they're just women being women. And you're going to have women of all types. And instead of being so narrow minded, and just being really open to we're just women trying to navigate this planet.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 27:56

Absolutely, one Yeah, one preconceived notion I had was that all Lebanese women love makeup and don't care about their parents a lot. Because this is what I've heard. And so I went over there, like nervous, like, you know, and I love makeup, like, this is what I want to dedicate my life to trust me, but I was nervous, like crap, I'm not gonna be able to go out

on the street without a full face of makeup on, like, I was nervous about this. And I got there. And it's just like home, there's women who love makeup. There's women who never ever wear makeup. There's some women in between, you know, and so I kind of like, laugh at myself, like, Oh, my gosh, I fell into this trap that other people do that I like, kind of scoff at that. But you know, yeah, it's when when something's foreign to you, you make all these assumptions.



Jennifer Malcolm 28:41

So you said, you open that door, let's get into what the ultimate work that you're hoping to do, and how you're laying a foundation with being in the culture and the education, proximity is helping you, you know, guide that path there.



Elizabeth Hanna 28:56

Yes. So ultimately, I want to create a cosmetics company, or a beauty company that encourages women in the Middle East. And really, I don't want to just have my focus be in the Middle East I wanted to have, I wanted to be in the Middle East, the Mediterranean and like West and South Asia. So this kind of large conglomerate of regions, where women often are told what beauty looks like, and that it's like a Western woman with a small nose and big eyes and big lips and perfectly silky hair and medium tan skin tone, not too light, not too dark, and you know, this blah, blah, blah. And so, I wanted to I want to start like my cosmetics company in the Middle East because yeah, that's where I'm at. That's where I that's where I want to be for a while. Then eventually open it up to these other regions into the West cell. So but basically, what I want to encourage women to do is to accept their natural look, which is, again, easier said than done, but embrace it with cosmetics rather than so many plastic surgeries or cosmetic procedures or anything like this. And I want to stress that I'm not at all against these kinds of procedures or surgeries. I mean, I think for a lot of women, it's it's empowering, or it's, maybe it's even healing. And, you know, everyone has a different life experience. So in no way am I against these kinds of procedures. But I don't want women to feel like they have to have them in order to be beautiful. And in order to fit this mold of beauty. But rather, to use cosmetics to dress yourself up when whatever you want. And yeah, so that's my goal. So I'm definitely in the beginning stages of this. I'm doing a lot of research and networking and trying to figure out my first product or two, and hopefully in 2021, will be formulating and we'll see from there. But yeah, that's my ultimate goal.



Jennifer Malcolm 31:05

That is beautiful. And now is in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, are there. Is there

anything like this, there now? Or are you really breaking through in a new area? Or is it just because of the angle of really calling out the beauty of women that the mission of it might be different than what maybe already over there?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 31:27

Yeah. So there's, there's so many, so many cosmetic and beauty companies now all over the world. And so it's kind of a saturated market, and I'm trying to find my perfect angle to make to make it different. And I think like my favorite cosmetic company is Huda Beauty out of Dubai. And I'm just obsessed I will spend all my money with it's just I love her. But a lot of these products are too expensive for women. And so like I kind of have this like this role model of CUDA and Huda Beauty, but but I want to make it a little bit more accessible for women, I want to make it a bit more of embracing your your own look for women rather than looking at who does Instagram and seeing all these beautiful women who likely have had nose jobs and fillers and all that stuff. And again, I'm not against it. But I want women to see all different kinds of faces and how beautiful they are. And when someone who looks like them, like someone who maybe like lives in Syria and loves makeup, but this tired of seeing all these perfect looking, and I have my finger, my air quotes going. Like these women who are, you know, exotically ambiguously Middle Eastern, but like really look Western, you know. And so I want, I want every woman to see someone like, like, who looks like themselves and be like, Wow, that's amazing. I want to like, I want to use those products, right.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 33:14

And I love that the mixture of your heart and your angle on that, because I remember, I just turned 45 this past December. And going into like, after I had my three kids, I was 28. And so I was like, Alright, when I'm 32 I want to get a nose job to flap my nose. I want to get a boob job to get my boobs back up where they were, I want to get a tummy tuck because my stomach's destroyed now from having babies. And was this that the other. And I just realized, like my motivation. And I love that you are you're saying like some reasons that women want to do it is healing. And it is beautiful. And it's a great, great experience. But I know that at that point in my life, I was also struggling with self image, I was struggling with my first marriage, I was just struggling with some internal core issues, that I was trying to find a solvent and a solution to make me feel good. And that motivation is not a good motivation. But if you're doing it through the eyes of healing eyes of, Hey, I just want to feel better about myself. I think there's great ways to use those those modalities, but also just like, hey, if I can apply my eye makeup a little bit differently, or have a shade of lipstick that goes What better with my complexion. And just bring out beauty in simple ways. I think that's gorgeous. And you're beaming when you're sharing

this I'm sharing this with the audience because you can't see Liz's face. Like she's beaming because I can see the passion in our heart in our eyes. About her why behind this as well.

E Elizabeth Hanna 34:53

Yeah. And you know what, maybe I should have shared this I think one of my biggest inspirations for a like how I came to think about this future cosmetics company is how growing up I wanted a nose job so bad I swore up and down and like constantly I was just so aware of it. And I think maybe it was like when I was like 12 ish and I walked past the mirror. And this was the first time I saw my profile, and I almost barked. I wanted to. I said, What is that giant nose? I didn't know how big it was. And it was traumatizing. And so you know, I swear as soon as college is over, blah, blah, blah, getting this and in my sisters and I all joked about it, too. Like we all have this Lebanese knows nothing else about us as Lebanese. It's so white, but this nose gives it away. And so not only like, did I start to accept myself and my face, on my own, but then once I started going to Jordan and Lebanon and being immersed in this culture, like these cultures, I realized like one of the only things that makes me feel Lebanese and connected to my culture is my nose. And now there's nothing you can bribe me with. That would make me want to get rid of my nose. I l'm in love with it now. I love it so much. And so anytime someone over there, wow, like, like, your last name's Hannah, you're Lebanese Really? And like, they look at me with my red hair. I say I turned and I say yeah, look, there's no it's like, they laugh and they're like, Oh, yeah, I can tell like

J Jennifer Malcolm 36:34

Yes. Because your hair and your complexion, you would look more Irish and like Northern European.

E Elizabeth Hanna 36:42

And so I yeah, so now I like had this like, such a source of pride for me, you know? And when you wear it with honor, yeah, exactly. Not everyone will have that kind of story of self acceptance. But hopefully, you know, if, if you like, if you wait it out a little bit, like you said, a lot of times, like when you're obsessing over your, your looks, and other stuff is really going on. It's not your looks right. So get out and finding yourself acceptance is such a such a better way for I think for for most situations.

J Jennifer Malcolm 37:14

I love that you shared that story. That's just, it's just a powerful story of like, wearing with a

badge of honor after real, like traumatized growing up through it. And just, I think that's beautiful acceptance. And I was telling Liz prior to our recording today, I had a call with two Lebanese women and, and I had to cut their call early, and I was jumping on. And they were so excited. I was like, I had to get off the phone with you because I'm getting on to interview a woman who's Lebanese and living in Beirut and, and they were so excited. They're like, go, go, go, go. And I showed her your picture that I had. And like, she's gorgeous. I'm like, and she goes, they go, she doesn't look Lebanese. And I kind of put it in there she was, she has the nose. That was the first thing. And like, and it was just beautiful. Like, I was like, so I was like, do I share that story with you or not, but what you're saying, like you're wearing with honor, because it's such a beautiful, it's a distinguishing factor that brings you into a community of people. That is who you are. And I and they said it very, very complimentary. And I just love that you brought that story because that you know, your red hair and your your fair skin there like she thought and then you're like, Oh,



Elizabeth Hanna 38:27

I love that you strategically didn't share that with me.



Jennifer Malcolm 38:32

Because I didn't know how that was gonna hit. So I went into you finished your story.



Elizabeth Hanna 38:36

Very smart.



Jennifer Malcolm 38:39

That's awesome. I wanted to ask you, because with your family with going into a Middle Eastern culture with, you know, hearing a lot of nose, at what point? And I know he's touched a little bit about this earlier on. But what point do you just say, you know, I have to give permission to myself to cut the umbilical cord make choices, good, bad, right wrong, the other to really just give permission yourself to start expressing yourself. Like, are you still in that journey? I don't feel like you're still on that journey. I feel like you're beyond that journey. But at what point did you feel like, I just need to give myself permission to advocate for myself. And the why behind asking that specifically is I know there's a lot of women that will be listening to this that feel like they have to ask permission of someone, whether that's their parents, whether it's their children, whether it's their significant others that they feel in order to do something. They need to have permission. And can you just talk on that a little bit?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 39:43

Absolutely. I wish there was an easy answer, but I yeah, I think it kind of stinks to have this feeling of needing permission. And I have felt it for a long time. And for me, I think it was slow process of kind of overcoming this feeling of needing permission, maybe like, now that I think about it, it was probably it probably kept like, kind of went away in stages with different people. So it probably went away with my mom first because my mom and I like once I started college, our relationship turned more more into friendship. And so, and we're so close, and I will always want to respect her with my decisions and what I do. But I think maybe with my mom, it kind of started and then slowly with, with other family members or with people at college, or professors even or, or anyone. And I like I think there's still a few people in my life where I find it's difficult, and I'm still working on it, but that's okay. I think it's, it's not going to happen overnight. So like, yeah, I guess, you said, I think you're way beyond this. And I think in many regards, I am but not 100%. I think, I think for everyone, it's a bit different. And, like, for me, I think it's harder specifically with my dad. And it's just kind of difficult to, to put that boundary there. But it's so necessary.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 41:24

I think there's a fine line to between permission and also being respectful. Yeah. Just say, I don't want to breach or harm relationship, I do value your perspective.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 41:36

Yeah. It's hard. And I've seen a few, like old friends of mine, where they just have 00 boundaries with their parents. And it really, it only hurts them in the long run. And so I kind of, I think that maybe seeing my friends go through that and seeing them, like, frankly, not being not, not having the courage maybe to put a boundary there with their mom or dad or whoever. And then the longer they put it off, the harder it is. And so seeing that and other people my age I've kind of, it's helped me in a way, realize, like, Alright, like, I'm kind of doing the same thing is that I gotta I gotta put this boundary down here, but but still stay respectful.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 42:23

No, and that's good. Because my family who's going to listen to this podcast as well will laugh, because I did not do well with cutting a lot of those ties even after I first got married. And so it was like, I did not miss Thanksgiving, I did not miss Easter, I did not miss Christmas, I did not miss vacation. And I never felt like the permission to like, explore, like, we're our family's very tight. And but as a 45 year old woman, I've only sat at one

Thanksgiving table my entire life. And, you know, one Christmas, you know, experience. And so for my children who are now 2018 and 16, of course, I want them at our table and the memories. But I also want to open our arms to say, you know, life is much broader, the world is so much bigger, there's so much more culture and experiences that you can have. And you'll always will have Thanksgiving in our hearts or Christmas and doesn't mean that we won't miss you is something but to really just release in a you know, in a healthy way of like, go and explore. And we're here when you if and when you come back?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 43:27

Oh, absolutely. I'm so happy. You said that. I think that's just like one of the most valuable things a mother or father can do for their kids is to let them go. Because then they'll want to come back to you. And they'll want to spend time with you usually, you know, it's Yeah.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 43:44

So as our listeners are, that are listening in may be curious about, again, the Lebanese culture, the women, you know, are women. Again, you may say, Yep, it's just like America where some women are driven and doing higher education and pursuing careers. Or is there a cultural path that's typical for women to be more of a, you know, I'm going to be a caretaker and a homemaker and a mom scenario. And then the second part of that, do you see a disparity in generations between maybe what some of the younger ones are wanting to do younger generations versus an older generation?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 44:25

Yeah, I'd say I see it more generationally. I like, like, I can't think of a woman in Lebanon that I've met who hasn't wanted to go to college or hasn't gone to college and not that college is everything. It absolutely is not, but who hasn't had a drive to do something, you know, it doesn't have to be college. It could be whatever you want it to be. So, personally, I haven't met anyone who hasn't had their personal drive and like hard work ethic, but I'm sure they exaggerate things.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 45:01

I'm in proximity yet.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 45:04

But you know, like, I have some girlfriends here who didn't want to do who don't want to work or who don't want to go to college and they want to take care of a family and you know, get married and have kids. And I think that that certainly exists in Lebanon, too. But yeah, I think it is more generational. I think. I think the older women tend to say like, when are you getting married? I'm 22. And I'm over there. And like, my old neighbors are so sweet. And they say, What are you getting married? Like, Oh, my gosh, I do need to know. You know, and so it's, I think it's a generational thing.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 45:42

No, and I love that you just hit on your age, because I, anyone who will see your picture as we promote this, and some of the video clips, you know, you are young, but the amount of wisdom that is coming out of your soul and then out of your heart, and the gentle perspective to frame it both ways. Like I love that your perspective of college, but I have friends, which is okay too, or college isn't for everyone, or plastic surgery, not plastic surgery. Like I love that your compassion, your compassion is flowing through, I'm hearing it and I hope our listeners are hearing it as well of not pigeonholing any woman into a box of what they should could do. And and you're just wise, you're young, and you're wise and I am loving this the the flow that's naturally coming out of your heart.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 46:39

Absolutely. I think my pet peeve kind of the last, like five years has been when people pigeonhole women in any way, either to be a homemaker or that you have to go out and do something. And just like, that just drives me up a wall like no, like, there is absolutely no requirements. There's no standards. Like, my cousin always says him and his wife always say you, do you. And that's kind of their slogan. And so my mom and I have adopted this. And we say that to each other all the time you do you, you know, if you don't want to come to Christmas, and you want to go to Hawaii COVID was like you, do you? And maybe you know, maybe grandpa would be mad at you, but you do you cares, you know. And so I think, for everything. Like it's just as long as you're being true to yourself, and you're being respectful to all to all those around you and like you to you. That's really good. So who inspires you? What do you what do you do to get yourself inspired? You know what I was thinking about this before we started recording. And now I'm glad I thought about it because I have two women. One specifically, actually, who I heard on a podcast, it was I think NPR is how I built this. And it was, I think her name is Vicki Skye, I'm not 100% sure, I'm pretty sure. And she is the founder of tacha. The brand Tasha. And I listened to that podcast episode in awe of her determination and her just her complete rejection of the word no. Like how we talked about earlier as she informing this beauty

brand. She faced more obstacles than I could ever even imagine. She maxed up all of her credit cards to fund this company. She had a kid during it and, you know, just went through so much. If you listen to this podcast, you will just your mind will be blown. And after I heard this, I became her number one fan, honestly, like I just was like, Oh my goodness, if she can build Tasha, this, I think she sold it for like, Oh my gosh, just hundreds of millions of dollars and like so successful. If she can do this after like the 10 years she put into it of getting zero returns. Like I can make my cosmetics company I really I can do anything because that was so impressive. That's awesome. Right? So she's my number one role model. Right?



Jennifer Malcolm 49:17

That's awesome. All right, next question. If you could travel anywhere in the world, non COVID. Where would you go?



Elizabeth Hanna 49:27

I want to spend a long vacation in Greece. Oh my gosh. And when want to go to one of those. One of those. I think they're like actually honeymoon suites. But really, I just want to go along, like one of those suites that it's like, you swim out in your own personal bubble. Yeah. infinity pool and like in a cave, but it's your hotel room. It looks amazing.



Jennifer Malcolm 49:48

Okay, so next one. If you were invited to dinner and you can have anyone make you a certain type of food, what would the food be that you would want on that table? No, this is spontaneous.



Elizabeth Hanna 50:07

I would say it would be some kind. Oh my gosh, you know what it would be it would be some kind of amazing salad. But it has to have cut up avocado on it. That has to have cut up mango on it because recently in the last like semester, I've been making these mango salads, which sounds weird, but it was just the best thing. And then like some kind of grilled chicken and I normally I'm not that healthy eater, but to me,



Jennifer Malcolm 50:42

All good, I will, I will, I will I would get play uncle or say Uncle, I won't ask you any more off the topic. But I, I want to just reiterate your aspiration to really empower Lebanese

women. And that it take that seed in that culture in that region, and then going into Asia and into the Mediterranean. If I know you and you're anything like the rest of the family, you're never going to hear no, you're only going to say like not now pivot, let's keep moving. And I cannot wait to see your line and the things that you are going to accomplish in the years to come. So in closing, do you have any remarks to just share with the women that might be listening in that says, you know, I'm just a stay at home mom, or I'm, I'm just you know, stuck in my cubicle, or I'm dealing with, you know, depression or isolation or, you know, this Liz's dream just seems way too big for me to even relate to what's some words of wisdom that you might give to the listener here?

E

Elizabeth Hanna 51:46

First of all, I would say that I feel like that 50% of the time. So really, I can come on here and say all the exciting stuff. But in reality, life is life. And so it's not as usually it's I you know, I heard a quote, actually recently, that things are not as great as they seem. And it's not as bad as they say, I've been thinking about that a lot. Because when you hear someone talk about their exciting, exciting things, usually things aren't as great as they sound. And then when you are going through the hardest time of your life. Usually they're not as bad as they are. And so I try to keep that in mind. But, um, I guess I would say, take it like chunk by chunk, day by day, what can I do today to make myself feel so amazing, and only worried about today? Like don't even give a second thought to tomorrow or whatever. And when I'm feeling really down, I even like take it hour by hour, like what can I do this hour just to make me feel so good. And, and then keep moving along. I

J

Jennifer Malcolm 52:52

I heard someone this past week, and I've not read the book. So if I misquote this, I will figure this out after but it's the book Power of Now. And the same element that stress doesn't exist in the in the now. Stress is what happened in the past. And stress is what happened, and what you what you stress about for the future. But stress doesn't exist in the now. And so you're you're either worrying about something that happened before and you're stressed or you're worrying about something that's to manifest. But it's not the now and so that same perspective of you know, what you said is the same analogy of just focusing in this moment, this hour, this afternoon, whether it's taking a walk, whether it's stretching, whether it's making a cup of hot tea, whether it's journaling, something to just activate, self care, self love, and to reposition your heart and soul. Absolutely.

E

Elizabeth Hanna 53:51

Oh my gosh, I love what you just said. Absolutely. And then last note, sorry, I have I hear a

lot of women actually Like my mom's friends or whoever, you know, ladies who are in their 40s or 50s, or 60s, and they say oh, like Lizzie, I just wish that I did something like this when I was your age. And without realizing it, like they're in a position where they can do it now. Like, I'm not with COVID. But like if they once COVID kind of chills out. If they have kids and they can afford it, take them with you on this trip that you've always thought about or if they're grown go by yourself. There's a huge network of solo female travelers or take your significant other or you just do it because I try to think like, what advice would I give my best friend, someone that I care about and love so much. And if they were telling me all the time, oh, I want to do this, I want to do this, like so bad. And I would always say do it, you know, because I want them to be happy and not have any regrets. So try to give yourself that that great advice that you would give the person you love the most.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 54:57

So good. And I think that's a piece where we're So quick to give people advice and support and love and, but we don't do it. And we shared that earlier On this episode, we don't do that self care and self love back. But I love that you went to that you said because of my other podcast this month, there, there are websites and groups that are solo women travelers and, and different things that you can get involved in pending COVID and all the regulations. But whether it's a book club, or a knitting club, or a running club, or, you know, whatever that is, there's something out there and with intentionality. And again, if you're listening to this, and you don't know where to look, shoot us an email, we will help do some of the research for you and point you in the right direction. For things just activate your heart, whether it's writing, reading, playing an instrument, cooking, whatever that is, but there's something out there and that community of women that can support and activate just that little bit of getting out of the stagnant and, you know, getting the cobwebs off of our souls and our bodies to you know, come alive again. So and it's been a tough year. It's been a 12, tough, 12 months, and we're still going so

E

Elizabeth Hanna 56:10

There's communities of women for every interest in every possible thing out there. Yeah. And so it's great that you have this podcast to shed some light on a bunch of different kinds of different communities to good.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 56:21

Well, thank you so much to connect with me today. You are shining, you're beaming, I am in awe of the work you're doing a new that your story and your heart for work with women in the Middle East and beyond. really resonated with the culture that we have within the

Jennasis Speaks movement, and really just wanting women to feel beautiful inside and out and to have that self confidence and self awareness and healing journey. And I'm honored that you were here today.



Elizabeth Hanna 56:49

Oh, I am so honored to be on. Thank you so much.



Jennifer Malcolm 56:52

You're so welcome. Well, thanks again for tuning in to today's episode. catch us next week for the next episode of the Jennasis Speaks Podcast, where every woman has a story and every story matters. And if you shaking your head and says that's not me, it is you you matter your story matters. And this is a movement that is empowering women to let their voices be heard and to heal and grow together. So have a great day everyone. Talk to you soon. Bye bye. 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. Tell them what you like about it, 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.