

S1:E16 - healing-from-past-secrets-by-shining-light-into-dar...

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SPEAKERS

Laura Steinbrink, Jennifer Malcolm



Jennifer Malcolm 00:10

Welcome to the Jennasis Speaks podcast, The Transformative Power of Women's Stories, a platform that empowers women storytelling, to promote collective vulnerability, acceptance and healing. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. So 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 I'm super excited through COVID world. But today, my friend Laura Steinbrink actually had courage to come out to my house and into our studio, and actually do a live recording. So welcome, Laura. Thank you. And I'm going to give a quick introduction about Laura. And we're just going to jump right in. So Laura is the owner of Emerald built environments and software startup brilliancy. Emerald has worked with more than 380 projects across the world, including two facilities receiving first of their kind, LEED certification brilliancy. Her second business is a digital platform and mobile app that enables people to connect electric gas and water utilities in one place. There's also an amazing corporate citizen, volunteering with the adoption network of Cleveland starting point and the Leadership Center. So welcome, Laura. Thank you. So for context, Laura and I have known each other since I think 2011. And we are in some networking groups together, eo Cleveland, and we just went golfing the other day together. So we felt after after the golf course we could survive being in the studio together, but just really honored that you're here.

L Laura Steinbrink 01:53
Thank you for having me.

J Jennifer Malcolm 01:54
You're very welcome and honored to call you my friend first. I know that through the last several years, especially the last 12 months, I will say we You and I have had more in depth conversations, more hearts to heart, more the wisdom and your soul. And the kindness and compassion in your heart humbles me and really honored to call you my friend.

L Laura Steinbrink 02:20
Thank you.

J Jennifer Malcolm 02:21
So today is about you and your story and what you're comfortable to share in that share. And I want to I know you're born and raised in Cleveland, and want you to start kind of what you wanted to share from the beginning of who you are as a little girl and will evolve from there. Okay, all right. All right. Yeah, so, um, you're welcome. Kinda ready. So that like, that's a given here in the studio. So it just, it's all welcome with tears.

L Laura Steinbrink 02:50
Yeah. Oh, I know. So I was born in Cleveland, um, I was born and placed for adoption immediately. And that's all good. You know, like, right. It's great because another family got to take me home and welcomed me into their world. And so that's the life I always have known. I was I've always known that I was adopted to parents with a biological child, my older brother. And I grew up here and pretty much always been here, except when I left for college and a few years after college, right. So we hear stories that some, you know, adoptees, you know, find out at age 8 12 16 18, happenstance. But your your adoptive parents told you early on? And was that? I know, it's hard looking back as a child, like, what was normal? not normal. But was it just normal to you the K I am adopted, I have a mom and dad who did want me and like, how, how are your motions on or maybe it was just normal. Um, so I always knew I don't ever remember being told when there are pictures of the like, cake that they had, I think, I don't know if there was like a shower or celebration when they brought me home, or whatever. So and you know, as a like, little girl or whatever, you probably like looked through the picture. So like, I always knew it, and I remembered it. But I always also knew because my parents have biological child, like, I

knew I was different. Sure. And so I think like that part was probably always there. Um, but when I was a teenager, I had a situation that sort of jelled for me, like an urgency to address the topic. Okay, so, if you're open to sharing, what was that urgency that you're like, Hmm, I may need to dig a little deeper. Yeah. So um, I have a her I had, I still have. Still dealing with herniated discs in my lower back. And they were so bad when I was in high school, I wound up having to have back surgery, which is really not a normal thing for teenagers. And when I was going through that process, they told me that, you know, this was a congenital issue. And I was like, What is congenital mean? Sure. And they're like, oh, that means, you know, is probably inherited. And I was like, Oh, so you know, that was like, mind blowing explosion. And I was like, what else is wrong with me? Right, and I burned off, you know, like, teenage brain, like, probably just spiraled me out, as you know, into this, like, what else is wrong with me? Um, situation. And so I at that point in time, just had to find out, it was like, I couldn't do anything else. But find out. And so I went on a mission at age 16. To find my biological parents.

J Jennifer Malcolm 06:01

And I'm sure there's that trigger. That is like a light switch that goes off, like, Okay, I know, I'm adopted, I'm in a home. I'm in high school, going through sports have a back surgery. And then when that light switch goes on, like, Alright, what else could be wrong with me? And I can't pass it to people who are my caretakers, parents. To dig any more into that? Like, that would be like a burning fire in my soul?

L Laura Steinbrink 06:29

Mm hmm. Yeah.

J Jennifer Malcolm 06:31

So how did your adoptive parents react to? Hey, I'm going to go on this quest to find my birth parents.

L Laura Steinbrink 06:37

Yeah. Well, so pretty much say my adoptive mother was not very on board with that. No, no. I mean, she did her best not to be against it. But she could have handled well.

J Jennifer Malcolm 06:53

It's hard. I'm sure that's as as a I mean, I wouldn't looking at, you know, we both have five,

we have five kids between the two of us. And five teenagers. Your oldest is 20. Right? So but five, teenager ish. And I can't imagine that any of them at any point. And we know that our kids moon does. We know that our kids have challenged us. We know that our kids overwhelm us. And we absolutely love them. And we want the best for them. And we will give heaven and earth to pave way to make their lives better. So I'm sure it was very bittersweet for your mom. Like and there's there had to be a part of her that like I understand. But it still hurts like hell.

L Laura Steinbrink 07:36

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure. Um, if so. But they I mean, but they enabled it to happen. So you know, Ohio had closed adoption records. So I think I was brought to Ohio intentionally to be born here.

J Jennifer Malcolm 07:54

Because by your birth mom.

L Laura Steinbrink 07:55

By My birth mom because of Ohio had closed adoption records. So at that, what that means is like supposedly should have never been able to find this information out. But there was this organization just being formed adoption network Cleveland, back in the well, I don't even know if Betsy was forming it back then. But she was the person that you know, founder of adoption network, Cleveland, um, and I was happening to work with her mom at the clothing store is like, you know, everything is just so serendipitous, right, the way things happen. And we worked at this clothing store after school and met her mom and my parents, like knew her father, because my dad was a lawyer. Her dad was a lawyer, bla bla bla bla bla, next thing, you know, there was this underground network of nurses who worked at Metro where all the babies would be born, I know. And that's where I was born. So they would find the original birth certificates. And they would call you and tell you what was on the original birth certificate. And then I would go down to kuvo library where they had phone books, from cities all across America. And I would search through the phone books for the last names. And then I found the last names of the birth mother because there was no birth father listed on my birth certificate, but I found the birth mother, a bunch of them in Minnesota, and I start calling.

J Jennifer Malcolm 09:15

Unbelievable. Alright, so one, it sounds like the Underground Railroad, like this secret

society of nurses who are in the basement of Metro, you know, having these adopted, and they wonder what was in their heart like, everyone wants to know where they come from. Everyone wants to know and have closure. Whether you fully reunite with, you know, birth parents, my sister, her youngest is adopted from the Philippines. It's all he's always known. He's been adopted. He's Filipino, my brother most Filipino. He looks just like Jake, my brother in law. But they've always been very open. Like you have another mom. She's on the other side of the world. And as he's getting older, he's asking more and more questions and my sister is doing great. She's doing great job navigating, you know, she said, At some point I think we'll go on a quest and I'll go to the fell back to the Philippines and, and meet his birth mom, but just know that there's like this underground tribe and claiming of nurses. And that you literally had to go name by name old school. There's no Google to like search and do hardcore investigation. How long did that take you?

L

Laura Steinbrink 10:22

Um, I feel like it was two or three Saturdays, trips down to the library and my father, who's just brilliant, and very just curious. So her. Her family last name is Lubavitch. And so he sent me to Pennsylvania, and he sent me to Wisconsin and Minnesota. And so I was looking in major cities. Sure. So I started probably Pennsylvania first because it's closer to Ohio. And then when I struck out there, he probably then sent me to Wisconsin, there might have been another step in between. I don't recall that part. But then I remember I went to Minnesota, and I started in Minneapolis and St. Paul. And that's where I found out.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 11:04

So you literally like, dialing up the phone.

L

Laura Steinbrink 11:07

so I took my 10 cents, right? Because it was 10 cents. Okay. On the Xerox machine, you have to remember, right. And so my dimes, yeah, all these things. We don't use anymore. Change. And so I would take the copies of the pages, and I bring them home and cell phone. Right, right, right. And, um, and actually, I sat on it for a while my parents were going for their annual trip out of town. And they made me call before they went out of town because they didn't want me to do a walk around. So I called One Sunday afternoon. And I was like, and what I did is, I called a couple of people. And I told them, I was looking for her and I was a friend from high school, okay, and then I found one that knew where she was and had her phone number. And so when I finally called her, I said, I was born in 2:52am. On June 16 1971, at Metro General Hospital in Cleveland, I was placed for adoption, I think you're my birth mother. Just like that.

J Jennifer Malcolm 12:11
Like, Oh,

L Laura Steinbrink 12:13
it was like quiet. And she was just like I am. And you are and, and I've, you know, always hoped that you would call me and I'm so glad that you did. And I've thought about you every day and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So it was like very welcoming.

J Jennifer Malcolm 12:29
Wow, like that. I mean, it could have gone either way. Yeah, right. Just connect change the number. So that's powerful. So how did you bridge or build that relationship with your birth mom?

L Laura Steinbrink 12:41
Um, so she like I said she was welcoming. So it was interesting, because like, shortly after I was born, so she has a daughter who is four years older than me. Who she has, right. Um, so there are a lot of questions in my mind. I'm like, okay, you had one and then you have had me and why didn't you keep me what's wrong with me? So unfortunately, this creates more of a segue reinforcement to the what's wrong with me problem, and abandonment and abandonment. Right. And, but, and so, but she remarried shortly after I was born, and I'm like, Okay.

J Jennifer Malcolm 13:22
It's so nice.

L Laura Steinbrink 13:23
It doesn't add up. But anyway, so she but and then that husband should have been married to that husband for like, 15 years, and he died in a motorcycle accident. So then she had just remarried and that guy didn't know about me. So I called she was like, Yeah, but not a good time. So, um, she wanted to write me a letter, but my parents didn't want her to have my address. I can't remember long story short, we gave her somebody else's address. When she was like the conduit. And but then eventually, she was allowed to have my address. And we were pen pals, because you didn't have email. Right? In 1987. Yeah.

J Jennifer Malcolm 13:59
So you're still like 16-17 years old?

L Laura Steinbrink 14:01
I was 17 years old. It was 1987. Yeah, yeah. And that lasted all through the college all through the 90s. And what are they in that email? I'm number like 93. Four. I was in.

J Jennifer Malcolm 14:19
I remember having email, my first email in college. So I was 94 to 98.

L Laura Steinbrink 14:24
yeah. That was trying to email and letters Christmas cards. Right. And then in 2004 we met in person and she and my biological sister flew to Cleveland for like a day. And we met

J Jennifer Malcolm 14:46
And how was that? It was

L Laura Steinbrink 14:47
kind of cool. It's kind of weird. Now where you're where your adoptive parents with you or a dad? My dad was.

J Jennifer Malcolm 14:53
Okay. So how are your your adoptee? So Are we clear on when we say your parents. So how are your adoptive family Parents during this time of pen pal, Christmas cards, emails, were they excited for you? Were they? I mean, I'm sure there's a piece of protection, there's a piece of jealousy, there's a piece of loss that could be there, but how did they navigate those emotions?

L Laura Steinbrink 15:17
Um, so my, and I call them my parents, right? They say, are they, me? Um, and are they tears, the tears. So I mean, they, they, they wanted to be supportive, right. And my dad

really was, and he was curious and whatever, but my parents don't know how to do emotions. And my mom really doesn't, and my mom for as much as she tried, um, she needed me to be something that wasn't and needed me to feel something and hurt and that maybe I couldn't. That's, um, and that was, you know, dating back to the moment I came home, or I needed to be nurtured and loved, right. And she needed me to fill a hole in her heart. And so I think, then, when I started down this journey at 16, it just reinforced challenges for her. And she, and that was shouldn't talk to me about it. Wow. So she wouldn't honor the journey for me. She doesn't. I mean, she'll, she doesn't say Phil about it, but she doesn't support it, she's right, give life to it, breathe into it.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 16:46

But you and you've shared with me, you know that, that emotional piece that your parents, especially your mom could or couldn't give you, you know, you you felt from a young age, like, you filled a hole, you just had it, you filled a hole in her heart, which is great. But that did not mean that it filled the cat you know, the, the volcano or the the the mountain the Valley of love or support that hole in your heart that you also needed? And has that? Did that improve as things got older? Or did you kind of because now you're an adult woman? You know, is that improved? Or is that just kind of like, you're you're there? I'm here and I love you, mom? And I'm so I'm really powerful question. Share what you're comfortable enough? You're good? No, no, it's good or Good, good.

L

Laura Steinbrink 17:46

um, you know, I sit at 16. So I find out you know, I have these herniated discs. And it starts this journey to Who am I what was wrong with me? And you know, I find the biological mother and you know, I start therapy. Let me thankfully my parents were wise enough to recognize that maybe some extra help Sure, would be helpful. Um, and I do, definitely thank them for introducing me to that. That tool. Yeah. I'm in life and, and I've stuck with therapy like, to this day, I swear by it and different models of it. I mean, I've at this point in time at approaching 50. I've probably done it all. I guess I could write a book. Yeah. Right. And the different mechanisms of their mechanisms and what they're good for, and like, different chapters, and, like, we're not whatever I mean, at different points in time, like, I think I think I am a therapist. Um, but no recommendation,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 18:52

if you ever was Laura and say, you know, what, have you ever tried therapy? Or would you be open to therapy, she probably won't punch you in the nose. Because she knows more about this space than most people. Yeah. Or in a good way.



Laura Steinbrink 19:03

Or if you're ever with Lauren, like you tell her that you think you should figure your life out of my face? No, I'm so. Sorry. Um, but where was I going with this? Um, you had a really good question in there, your mom and the chasm, the chasm, the hole in your, your heart and as an adult, okay, so I'm at, I think more recently, so, in last three years, I've gone through like another round of discovery, because sort of at each layer at 16, it's this like, I'm adopted, and I have to deal with this and what's wrong with me and I have to find this birth mother. Then I find her and I'm like, okay, maybe I can continue on and I'm like, a little bit healed, right? So I'd go and then and then I'm going to get married and then I like think I need some more therapy, and I should talk about that. And so I, you know, sort of like, revisit this whole adoption thing. And you know, I do some more stuff around there. And then I have babies and like starting on things are starting to like just a little bit more complex and I don't like I'm touching on some things and there's just this thing in there, but I'm not really figuring it out. And so there's a lot of like, there's a black hole that is there in my 20s. And in my 30s, and really, okay, and in my 40s, but I don't really know what it is, but I do know what it is, but I don't know what it is, right? But it's there, and it's growing well, and through this time, and my mother, um, by the end of it, I'm screaming at her, like screaming at her, she tells me it comes over. I remember one time I'm in my apartment, because I'm getting divorced number two, right. Um, so we can see now how some probably problem of that black hole in my life has manifested itself that I'm not making some good choices and whatever. But I'm down cleaning up dog crap off the floor, behind the counter in the kitchen, and I popped myself up, and she comments about my hair being messy. Now this goes back to the little girl who never could be quaffed perfectly enough, who always had to be perfectly quaffed to walk out the door who never got to pick her own clothes. It felt like right, she would probably tell you I did right. But it never felt like I had my own image. My own whatever I had to be her little doll Chucky doll Yeah. Right, she would grow my hair. And it had to like flip out at the bottom. And she will put a curling iron on it and like, right, like, it just it makes it hurt my stomach when I think about it, right. And that was my everyday existence as a little girl, right? Every day. So you know, so that popped my head up. And she makes a comment about my hair's not brushed. And I just explode explode at her like a crazy person. Like a crazy right and right. But then so that was like, I don't know, call that 2014 Sure. 2017 One morning, minding my own business and I get a phone call for my cousin. Who is my age? Right? She's has the same last name as me because our dads were brothers. Sure. And I didn't change my last name. When I won whatever my maiden last name. And her is her middle name on her Facebook page. And anyway, she had been approached by some women in Atlanta. Okay, who had no my brother, okay. And, and he's older my biology or my parents biological son. So you were adopted? Yeah. And they had been he had been sexually cyberstalking them in Atlanta. And wanted my cousin who they thought was me, his sister. Yeah, because of the last name Yeah, to warn my brother that they were going to go to

the police and file some sort of restraining order harassment. And to get them to stop. I think they knew him through church or through something and so they were trying the peaceful route for her. And so she's like, Laura, what should I do? And I was like, I got this Don't worry about it that that you're family. Right? We're good. And but and you had no recollection of this stuff happening in Atlanta. Yeah, I just didn't know but but I did know about my brother and his tendencies in this way because between the ages of eight and 14 my brother's actually abused me for six years

J

Jennifer Malcolm 19:50

Okay, so now you are dealing with identity, sexual abuse, finding your birth mom jealousy from you know your adoptive mom. And did your so what did you do with this information? So your cousin calls you tells you this? You're now not surprised to hear this about your brother? Because you know, there's past history. You experienced it? Did you share this with your family? Or did you just kind of keep it?

L

Laura Steinbrink 24:33

Oh, no, I did. Well, I mean, unfortunately it kind of was like what do you call the straw that broke the camel's back like it but thank God because like the black hole life and now is finally like abrupt what it happens in the science fiction movies is a blow up or load or break embrace it but it goes away. Right, right.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 24:55

Um, so it's gonna be scientific. It is not even remotely. This two folds are dying. But it's our best attempt at laymen's if something

L

Laura Steinbrink 25:08

is dissipating. Um, we're time warping through. We never we never pretended to be scientists. No. But, um, so, I mean, yeah, so I, you know, first told my brother, you know, all sorts of expletives about what he is, and how could he do this? I mean, I've, I felt extreme guilt and shame, that guilt really guilt like that. Because I hadn't done anything about what had happened to me that he was going to go do this to other people. And I felt like, this was my responsibility. And I had to, like, I just write it was just awful. And then so I told my parents. Now the reality is that I believe fundamentally, I had told my parents right before I got married the first time when I was 30. Sure. 29. They don't remember they don't they claim. I didn't tell them. But remember that therapy? I told you, I want you right before I was 30? I, I know I told them. Yeah, they claim I didn't tell them.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 26:07

I never talked about it growing up. You never said anything. Your parents between eight and fourteen.

L

Laura Steinbrink 26:13

There was one time they caught us. And they pulled us both aside. And we both denied it. Because, you know, this is what happens. He would tell me I'll get in trouble. Right. And I was afraid to get in trouble. Because I was supposed to be the good one. Right. And the perfect one. Oh, we always expect more from you, Laura. Because by the way, my brother's death. So that's right. Right. So I always had the you're not deaf. So we expect more from you. Part of the whole area, though,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 26:43

I want to I want to say this to you didn't get caught? You didn't get caught? Your parents walked into something that your brother was doing to you?

L

Laura Steinbrink 26:53

Yes. Well, this is true.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 26:54

So I want you to hear that. Like, you didn't get caught doing anything. Something was happening to you. Yes. And I did forget the element of your brother being deaf, because you also your parents never learned sign language is what you shared with me. So just that modality of communication? Mm hmm. And they raised them to be in a hearing world with lip reading with library. And did you learn to sign language?

L

Laura Steinbrink 27:22

No, we tried to learn when he was like, 13, one summer, and he told us to stop because we were so bad.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 27:28

You're bad at it.



Laura Steinbrink 27:30

I mean, but we didn't need it. Like we already had our communication.



Jennifer Malcolm 27:34

So at the 2017 your cousin calls you confront your brother? What happens then?



Laura Steinbrink 27:40

So I told my parents, I mean, they, you know, like one phone call, I tell them, they, you know, kioware like a shock. They didn't quite know what to do, because they're hearing about what I'm saying about Atlanta. And then they're hearing me telling them about what happened to me. and telling them I told them before, and they're denying that they heard it and in before and so they get start getting defensive. And that's really probably not the response that would be helpful to me right now. Sure. And so that just sort of spirals in the wrong direction. But either way, you know, the catwalk has already opened up inside me. So I'm like in a fit of rage, right? And I'm just in all sorts of sort of crazy nutjob situation. I mean, literally, yeah, off the off the rails. Um, but thank God because like, you know, then I go right back into the therapy and I have all sorts of good new therapies now. I meant to the little girl like, you know, healing visioning therapies and in the being hypnotized, like, beating pillows with brackets therapy, and like screaming at people therapies, like, I mean, in private screaming and actually screaming at people like applying for mother. I mean, I will,



Jennifer Malcolm 28:57

but that had been stuffed down into your soul and your body, your emotions for 30 plus years. So yeah, all of that. Oh, yeah. So you're finally at age approximately 45 saying, I'm getting this out of me. And, yes, you've done therapies, you've got tools through the years to help you overcome certain things but never getting to the root of the demon that you know has been haunting you forever. Yeah. So I want to go back though, because you said that your brother You know, son of the another previous podcast on sexual abuse, talking about how contriving and controlling the predators sexual predator sexual, you know, one that is doing the sexual abuse does the don't get me in trouble for a good girl for positive affirmation. Thank you so much. You've really helped me through X, Y, or Z and how paralyzing That, that feels as an eight 9-10-11-12-14 year old girl that's stifling the voice stifling the the emotions that are normal and healthy of, of wanting to run, scream get away, but also having that positive reinforcement. So you're getting mixed messages at a young age and trying to figure out how to navigate those. Yeah. So 2017 you get into

therapy? How does the story proceed from there?

L

Laura Steinbrink 30:36

Um, I mean, I like this like a full time job. I mean, I was committed at this point in time that we are going to be, we're going to work this program, we're going to work it hard, because you know, this was I also was just wrapping up divorce number two, like I got divorced in 2015. You know, that's not a badge of honor. Well, no, I have two teenage boys at this point in time. If two businesses like I'm like, I'm a gentleman, by the way. So like, I like to do everything and twos. I'm a mom of two. I have two dads, and two dogs. I have two boys. Two jobs.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 31:12

Two jobs to businesses,

L

Laura Steinbrink 31:13

Two businesses, two divorces. Haha. You know, it's all fine. But you know, so I'm, like, committed to like getting through this and like solving it. So I would like literally, I would just like go in there. What are we going to work on today? We have got to get this out. We have to get into just desperate, right?

J

Jennifer Malcolm 31:31

So during the years of growing up, and as you're transitioning, finding your birth mom, meeting her physically, what was it that you didn't feel the ability to share the secret about your brother? That shame? embarrassment, if I ignore it, maybe didn't happen? denial, all the above?

L

Laura Steinbrink 31:52

Um, so I mean, I think is a little little girl like an eight. Um, you know, there was the honest to God, truth is I didn't feel safe to I didn't feel safe to share. I didn't. I lived in fear in my own house. Um, and I don't mean that fear. Like, I wasn't, yeah, I feel safe. I, I live in fear of getting in trouble. Um, because I was expected to be the good woman to be perfect. And I was by far a good imperfect child. When I trust ma'am. And mother would probably like, well, her eyes if she was here, like, how does she think this but it's how I felt. Yeah. And they were there my feeling and it's because I believe I didn't have the nurturing I needed. And I was in my own little world. And I was like, you know, like, it started the first time he

violated me. We were in the car in the car driving to my parents to the grandparents house in Indiana, in a car driving to my grandma's house in the backseat. Like you're not getting a backseat in the woody station wagon, right like in the in the wind in the you know, you know how it was like the big station wagons back in it. Like, and if I mean. So if I'm right there, like in, in the bubble, and I'm being violated, like, right, then where am I gonna be safe, right?

J

Jennifer Malcolm 33:29

You're in a car with who's supposed to be the safest, safest people on the planet. Something's happening, right, literally right behind your parents back. And it had to be shock and shame and awe and confusion and anger. I'm so sorry. Did you share any of this with your birth mom through the years?

L

Laura Steinbrink 34:02

No, no,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 34:04

I understand that by you coming out. And sharing some of the stuff now I know is some of the first times in a I'm gonna use the word public manner that you really sharing it. I know you've you've you've had the courage to face it in therapy and in counseling and with your parents and through some friends, but I know that you're not on your souls and here's my cause in life is to bring this truth to the table. It's just you're dealing with it one day at a time. So your parents reaction, kind of sweeping under the rug or dismissing? You know, how is that from 2017 when you confronted your brother and Atlanta is coming out with this these allegations, you're losing your shit with your mom in anger and ungrateful emotions, But how did that navigate? It's now almost 2021, the next few years with interacting with your parents, and how did that transpire?

L

Laura Steinbrink 35:11

I'm, with my birth parents, I'm sorry, Your adoptive parents, adoptive without, I mean, it's alright. So well, there was a lot of I mean, it's okay. So three years. So, um, there have been a lot of difficult conversations, a lot of difficult conversations, I'm asked my parents to go get counseling. Um, they went, I don't know, once or twice, we'll give them a gold star that they went, I got some letters, I give them a gold star they tried. But, um, let's just say it takes a lot of work. I've been to therapy for 30 years, and I've tried a lot of modes, you're not going to get it right on two levels. So I did recently have a conversation with my mom,

where I said to her, I've come to the conclusion that we're just going to have to agree in order to maintain our relationship, that we're never going to talk about this. And that we're going to have I've come to accept that you are not capable of giving me the empathy and the compassion that I need from you, right? And I'm willing to accept it. Right? The Hurt said, hurt. Yeah. Well, it's sad. But she's not. And I can't fault her for that. Because this is what I know. People hurt people. And she didn't have a great life. And her mom wasn't a great mom to her. And she didn't have the benefit of 30 years of therapy. She didn't have, she had trauma in her life, too. And she doesn't have the tools I have. And so she can't meet me where I am. And what's more important to me, is to try to preserve it, then to still be mad at her for failing, or lose and lose a relationship. So it's not easy, though, to try to move past it. But I am at the point where I do call it forgiveness. Maybe it's forgiveness, but I think it's acceptance. I'm just accepting that she can't. And it's okay. And I know why. And I know why she couldn't be the mother that I needed her to be. Um, and she certainly tried, she tried to do what she thought was right. And right. Yeah,

J Jennifer Malcolm 37:48

I wish I would know more about, you know, my mother's story growing up, she was an only child. But moreover, even my two grandmother's I'd love to learn, you know, because people do hurt people. And, you know, I grew up in a very loving home, and a very safe home. But things still happen. And you we question, and I and I question, you know, is this the way that I am? Or is because of something that happened, you know, in my parents lives, or their parents lives, that is trickling down and coming out sideways, but no one's really talking about things. And so there's a lot of that generational herd and you sent me the best I think, was yesterday, one of the best little quotes, there was like, hurt parents.

L Laura Steinbrink 38:40

Get yourself fixed before you have kids so that you don't like hurt your kids or something like that.

J Jennifer Malcolm 38:45

Yeah. So it's like, and again, like, you know, we're in our 40s. And we have, like I said, five teenagers, young adults between us. And, you know, we thought I thought I was invincible at 22 I thought I was invincible at 25. You know, and I'm having kids and I thought it'd be the best mom, and that my dark side or my demons or my wounds or my trauma, I could hide, or I could stifle, or I could ignore, or I could dismiss it. And it always comes out somehow, truth always comes out. Pain always comes out. And it's like, we're wired for this level of authentic relationships, that squeezes out all the junk in us that we're supposed to

walk around and hold cool and yield, which we're not we're far from it. But they're we're on this journey of our souls and our bodies are wanting to heal and we're Kubrick shot that whole time for you. I don't have time for you. I don't have time for trauma I don't have time for to discuss, you know, my anger my divorce or my loss or my affair or my date rape or my the death of a spouse. or any of those that we don't time for that. So we stifle it down. And I really appreciate to say, I don't know if this is forgiveness or not. But I know that I have to accept this to preserve the relationship with my mom. And in the meantime, I'm going to continue to get therapy to myself, and try to get through that. You're badass woman. You're a badass on. So you're, you didn't tell your birth parents, but then there was a new right. So there's so many layers there a story. So that another added piece of this is that you also got into quest to find your birth father. Yeah. So you found your birth mother at age 16-17 through the clean Cleveland Public Library and dimes and phone calls. So what made you continue to pursue and at what point in your life? How old were you when you wanted to find out about your birth father?

L Laura Steinbrink 40:59

Well, I mean, since I was 16, right. I mean, takes two to tango. Right? I was not the Immaculate Conception learned. You're not. You're not a you're not a baby Jesus. No, no, no, no. But there's a baby mama mystery.

J Jennifer Malcolm 41:15

A baby Norman?

L Laura Steinbrink 41:16

Yes.

J Jennifer Malcolm 41:17

Baby Norman. All right. All right. So I there was no father listed on the birth certificate. Like what the right How is this possible? Well, you know, apparently, you didn't have to list one. So was she raped? Was it a one night stand? And she didn't know who he was? Was she hiding something? Like, what? More questions right More questions? So then, you know, I'm certainly I asked her in the letters back in the 80s. Can you please tell me about him? and master deflection, Master of deflection? He said she was just recently remarried though to Yeah, yeah. Right. Like, yeah, huh. Right. And, you know, she and she had this daughter, so I, so, for better or for worse, My mind goes to the negative so I, you know, in the back of my mind, what's wrong with me? Right, you know, I have these medical issues.

What else is wrong with me? And so I assumed, probably, you know, subconsciously, I you know, probably wait, right, right. Just make more it would go along with my negative Nelly storyline, right. We'll just work better. All right, well run with that. All right. Um, so as you know, just little nuggets, you know, that was always saying you always need the one on the shoulder. So what so you know, it's just in there, but like no solution to the story, but you know, it's just there. Don't know who the birth father is. Don't know who it is. And, um, continues on and then you know, this movie city slickers comes out in like, 83, right. And I know there have been a few movies in my life, where I just watch this movie, and I am like, mesmerized by it. And it like just touches me. And I tell you, the baby Norman comes out. The cow. Oh, that's like one of the first times a real birth is like seen in a movie. I have to go to Colorado to go meet the baby Norman. Wow. I have been you talked to any of my friends from college. I was with them. When I watched this movie. Laura wants to go to the Grand Canyon for it was first her 40th birthday didn't happen. It is now my 50th birthday. I shifted by 10 years. She wants to go to the Grand Canyon to meet the baby Norman. Wow. Any of them will tell you this. I've been saying it since 1980 or 92. Whenever I came out the baby Normally I'm gonna go meet the baby Norman. I'm going to meet the baby Norman. I'm going to meet David Norman. Okay, what do you want to do for your photographs? I want to go to the Grand Canyon. Maybe Norman, right. Okay. Yeah. Go to El first thing I go to family picnic. They give you this DNA kit? For ancestry.com. I sit on this thing for like, six months. On Saturday morning. I'm looking at it. I'm like, What do we got to lose? Not much. spit in the DNA to send it off. What do you know? Wow. There are a lot of people who I am related to. Wow, there are a lot of people now let me tell you my adopted family. I can count on both sides of the family. first gen like the first. Both sides, right fingers and toes. All of the aunts and cousins are fingers and toes varies on both sides. And other side is blown out. It's like 40 people Wow. Like Yeah, the big trees inside and I'm like who's belonging to who? And I am like, Oh, I'm not Serbian. That explains why I burn before I tan because by the way, I am 25% Swedish. Oh, wow.

L

Laura Steinbrink 45:03

Oh, did you ever have brown eyes? It got shortchange. Anyways. So aunt Rosalie is in there. So then I find someone else and I find someone else. The man's name is Norman. No, it's not. Yes, it is. Literally.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 45:24

Yeah, this like an E learning Colorado. burning in your soul is his name is Norman. And he lives in Colorado. And I was conceived in Colorado. So this movie was made for you.

- L** Laura Steinbrink 45:37
Yeah, it was.
- J** Jennifer Malcolm 45:39
So if you met this one yet?
- L** Laura Steinbrink 45:41
No, but I did send him a letter A couple weeks ago, but I don't really expect him to write me back. But I did send a letter. That's all because I said, I will regret that if I don't send it. I don't think I mean at this point in time. What do I have to lose? Right? Like I've been through it all right. If he wants to join the journey, great. Did your birth mom Oh, by the way, have three more sisters. So there's four people that have after me and them.
- J** Jennifer Malcolm 46:08
Wow. That is that's no, it's beautiful.
- L** Laura Steinbrink 46:12
Beautiful. Beautiful.
- J** Jennifer Malcolm 46:14
So does your birth mom know that you reached out to your birth father?
- L** Laura Steinbrink 46:19
She technically does not know that. I told her I was going to we will she told me that she was that that was okay. Okay. Well, until you can. Yeah. Like you're right. I'm, they met on a job site choose plumber. And he was amazing. Oh, and by the way, when I was in college, and I spent my semester in London, he was apparently in Germany, for the US Army overseeing the tear down of the wall. Yeah, East Berlin and I actually was at the wall.
- J** Jennifer Malcolm 46:50
Okay, so you could have literally walked past them and the baby Norman. Okay. That's, that's crazy. Well, we'll see how this journey continues. You might have to have a part two

with Laura here. Can you share because I know this is something that you and I both have talked about off the books. You both you and I both have experienced their own therapy and counseling. But what does the audience might be like? What the heck is girl therapy? What does it even mean? You know, because it sounds odd. Sounds a little weird. You know, in your best words, layman terms. Because you know, we're not practitioners. What's your best way to describe what girl therapy is?

L

Laura Steinbrink 47:32

Is that what she does? So what she's calling us out? little girl a little girl? A little girl? Yeah. Oh, my God, it's best. I first met it through like a meditation like, thing. Louise Hay, it's on YouTube. It's where you envision that you're your little girl. And you as a little girl, and you go back, and you're remembering what it was to be that little girl, little girl and you're either giving her compassion and love. Or you are having her give you compassion and love because sometimes she needs to give you direction and support. And sometimes you're holding her like, right, like you're having her compassion left holding her. But yeah, so it's like, you have to kind of go back or you're, we're, you're going back and remembering like what was actually happening right back then and getting in touch with the feelings because they get like, boxed up and bogged down. Yeah.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 48:43

And then we make them out, right. And those are the things of like we put in a box, we push it down. And then you know, three years later, three years later goes by something else happens. We put that on a box, we push it down. And so our adult self now is filtering through, you know, layers of these boxes, emotions, and they do come out sideways, things come out sideways, or I call them for me trigger trauma triggers. Yeah, so I have a reaction to something that doesn't even make sense, my very emotional, I'm very angry, or I'm very scared, or I'm sobbing or whatever that is. And I'm like this, this situation here does not warrant this emotional reaction. But when you go through this journey back through suppressing emotions, situations and putting them in boxes, it does make sense, right?

L

Laura Steinbrink 49:36

Or if she wasn't nurtured well enough, which might have been my case, she didn't have ever the tools that she needed to develop. And so she still acts like she sits. And then the adult acts like she's six. So it doesn't process the emotions, right.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 49:54

And I just recently I'll share a little bit of my experience. I just recently did another therapy session. And it was I was observing myself and I was fully awake. So I just had my eyes closed. And it's just, you know, remembering myself as a six year old, 12 year old 16. And it wasn't even, like, prompted, like, tell me when you were six, it was like, give me you know, a memory of, you know, sometimes we were young and, you know, an age popped up. And, you know, it's like, what do you see? What do you see in her eyes? Is she happy, she sad is she excited. And it was interesting, as I progressed from, you know, under 10, to 16, to graduation, through marriage through, you know, a couple years ago, when I was remembering, and again, it's your subconscious. But there were times where I had such a light in my eyes. Mm hmm. And such hope. And other times where you could just see like, I had a smile always had a smile on my face. But there was no light in the eyes and just bringing and it's almost like those, the chain is, is broken on some type of emotional level, and it's going back in, like, fixing these breaches or, or cracks, to heal our subconscious and our emotions. It's powerful and powerful. So fast forward, 2020. Where are you at on this journey with your birth mom, your birth parents, your brother, your boys, you I guess that you're a badass woman, you've gone through a lot. And you are one of the most resilient women I know. You are confident you are a blast to hang around with. And how do you feel, you know, your day to day? And I know you're still just starting with some back issues. But you know, fast forward to 2020 today, and you know, who are you today? And what's your walk in life look like right now?

L

Laura Steinbrink 51:50

Um, I feel good. Like I do, I really feel good. Um, it's been a grueling three years, and I don't know that I'm done. I don't know that I will ever be done. Like, I believe that life is a lesson, right? And our opportunity is to just keep learning and growing, right? So. But I do feel like I am coming out of a tunnel, like out of a chapter is coming to a close and there's a new, I don't want to call it new beginning because I don't think I'm starting something new. I just think I'm coming through something. Um, and I'm optimistic and I'm hopeful. And I definitely feel like an amazing level of calm that I have never fought before. Awesome. Never. I mean, I still get agitated, and I'm sure I still yell at people and raise my voice. But my thinking is, like 3000 times more clear. I have seen like, the way I can, like, do stuff at work is like so much better. I don't know. Like, I just feel like a different person. different posts. And it's beautiful. Because you give me you know, we were just having dinner the other night, but you you're able to frame situations. In such wisdom nuggets like your zeal, I feel like what? No, I feel like it's full like jackass like comedian like no. Like, what are the things to not allow people to take away your power. And it's in a gentle at least it comes across as gentle and wise.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 53:40

so we're at dinner the other night, you're talking about a situation with one of your ex husbands and they're in my phone is wanting to want to say better never have to say oh my god. So I won't even say which one was one or two. But how you framed like, it was so kind and but it was your power. It was like So tell me, you know how you want me to help tell me how you want me to, you know help in a situation where I'd be like, back off jack. I love how you frame conversations or texts. And you I've seen you do it in Yo, I've seen you do it in business. I've seen you do it in networking. I've seen you do it. When you're like huh, you tell like you're not really happy or someone's pissing you off. But you you can frame it in a way that it doesn't take away your power. You're not small. And you are using your words to put to position the conversation in a really strategic way. And you have a gift for that. And I want to compliment you on that.

L

Laura Steinbrink 54:47

Well, I want to thank you for that because I think I've had to work at that because I do not know that five years ago people would say that about me. I think they would say that I was off the rails and I was inappropriate and whatever.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 54:59

I put it situations with you too. They just spout it off. We're all there. But you, you've done amazing work to raise two teenage boys by yourself. Because a lot, there's a lot to be complimented. And I want you to feel that love and admiration for me to you. Thank you. So as we're wrapping this up, I always want to end with What gift you want to give to the audience. What do you want the women to hear? from your heart to theirs that may just shift one little piece in their mind that hurt their soul, their spirit, to activate courage, voice, truth, power, alignment community, and it doesn't have to be anything big. It can just be something but I'd love for you to kind of give some last closing thoughts to the audience.

L

Laura Steinbrink 55:52

Oh, thank you. Um, okay, so a couple of like, things that I think, at least for me, when I think about this, so first thing is definitely this whole concept of tools and therapy and things that I've learned like this has been a journey, right? It's 30 years since I first started really trying to dig into this. And it's definitely therapy. It's meditation. I tried the journaling thing, it does not work for me. Sure. Say, I mean, I tried it, but doesn't really work for me. But I'm in different modes of therapy. And I've had different therapists. So I just think that

there are things and books, I love books and articles, and community around like the whole adoption network people in and then there's a community of survivors. I've been on the sexual abuse side, like it's just people I've met, like, the number of women who stories I have heard since I started talking about it, it is so depressing. It is so depressing how many people so I think just using your voice, but the I guess what I want to say is that using the tools that are available, really has helped me and when I finally started using them, and like leaning into it, it's one I started to get better. And so I would just encourage anyone that is struggling to just really just take a moment for yourself and just do the work and to use the tools and if one's not working, then try another one. If the therapist isn't working for you try another one. And if that book didn't work, try another one. Like, because there's so much stuff out there and there are ways you can feel right? That's one thing. Um, and this whole, like, for me the this I mean, the whole adoption thing, like I, it was really easy to talk about it like it's an easy topic. Everybody knows about it. I mean, maybe people you know, actually it was it was interesting. My my current therapist is very supportive. And was even this this last week, she was like, that's interesting that people will say that to you. So it was like, Oh, you were lucky to be the people will say to me, Oh, you were lucky. So lucky to be adopted by my parents. Sure. Um, who? by people who know my parents. Sure. Um, yeah, right. I was right. Lucky. And I was so lucky to get adopted into this family that has so much trauma in it. Like was a really lucky like, I was really right there, like, I don't know, what type of look are you talking about? I got, um, but so, um, that family that I was adopted into, has a deep history. Um, so my aunt was abused by her father and brother and she has been a huge resources to me and my other aunts from that side, who's married into the family has been like, so helpful to me. And I'm so talking about the issues and like, we are working really hard to break the cycle, right. And so to have like, a network, like within the family who's willing to talk about it, and to work about taking it out from under the rug has been like really sore. Not everybody's not going to have that. But if you can find it, like it's been really helpful to me in this journey, too, because I do think the more especially on the sexual abuse side, because it's an unseen and a non bird thing and it is really damaging.



Jennifer Malcolm 1:00:02

Yeah. And it causes people to isolate, and go into silence. And when you activate the voice in the community, I was just on a zoom call the other day with three other women talking about, you know, some of the, the podcast and the stories and gathering and, and I said the reality is I am learning very fast as, as I'm talking more publicly about women's issues and women's sexual abuse and trauma and deep grief and rape, and that my gut says is about 90% of women. I got 90 my gut, I could be wrong, I'd love to see the data has had some form of sexual abuse, and molestation, date rape, rape, almost right. Like, when I was on phone was like, This man was on top of me in college, unless I screamed, it

was going to happen. Like that's a trauma. I mean, that's trauma. So did she get raped? No, what, but I would put her in that 90 90% of women who have had some sort of sexual trauma, abuse in their life is my gut. So I could be totally wrong. And again, I'm not a scientist or a black hole specialist, like we talked earlier. But the more I'm talking, I think that more women will share their stories. And we'll find more and more women who say, That never happened to me, there are stories under there, cuz it's, keep it quiet, Be the good girl stay silent, and you just do and you don't want to be the woman in your 30s 40s 50s 60s. That's for the first time coming out and saying, Hey, you know what? My dad abused me or my uncle abused me, or I was date raped, or was roofied. Or was this you don't have that stigma. And that's my gut 90. We'll see as we continue to move forward through the series, less sickening. So, I am honored that you were here today, and your tears of truth and healing. Like, as you're even crying today, like your eyes are bright. And you still have the smile on your face. And honor that you have the courage to share your story and your journey with me and with the women who will be listening to this as well. So I appreciate you. Thank you. very welcome. So thank you today for tuning in. And we look forward to you experiencing this podcast with Laura as I share her story with you guys. And look forward to connecting with you next week. and have a good day. Alrighty, 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.