

# Episode 77: Sub-routines, Ancestry, and your Leadership, with Jerry Colonna

The more I shone, the worse I felt. It was safer to be anxious than angry. Belonging, good-enoughness, and Jerry's core question for sitting in stillness.

**Mandy:** Welcome to Enough, the podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mandy Lehto, ex- investment banker turned executive coach. This is a show for high achievers in fast paced careers whose lives look shiny and successful on the outside, but inside, they secretly never feel good enough, no matter what they've achieved. Sound familiar?

What sets this show apart from all the usual leadership podcasts is my focus on the parts of success that we don't talk enough about as high achievers. Things like perfectionism, burnout, bore out, high functioning anxiety, people pleasing, self-doubt, and more. And feeling successful, but empty on the inside.

Expect a mashup of coaching, psychology, a bit of nerdy research. That's me with my PhD hat on. All woven together with compassion and a dose of dorky humour. And I always make it radically practical. My guest today is Jerry Colonna, the CEO and co-founder of executive coaching firm, Reboot. And the author of two exquisitely written, sometimes even poetic, books.

The most recent being Reunion, Leadership, and The Longing to Belong. In his previous career, Jerry co-founded Flatiron Partners, one of New York City's first VC firms in 1996. And after the dot com crash, he went to JP Morgan Partners. As a coach, Jerry is sometimes referred to as the CEO whisperer. And you're going to get a sense of the radical self-inquiry process that he uses, because he's going to do it to me. And I had no idea it was coming, so wait for it.....

Radical self-inquiry is a way of coaxing out what Jerry calls our sub routines, and those are the programs that run under the surface that we've likely picked up at a young age. What I like about Jerry's angle is how he brings in our ancestors and our lineage. So listen to how this underpins our entire conversation.

And getting back to sub routines in case you're scratching your head thinking, Huh? What? Wait. Here's a few examples if it helps. Okay, number one. I'm only good enough when I'm achieving. Another one. It's safer to be anxious than angry. Or how about this one. When I'm successful and rich enough, I will never have to feel powerless and unsafe again.

Jerry and I talk about some of the subroutines that are running in our lives. So what programming was running him, for example, when his first PE firm was collapsing? It was a tough time in New York, and he pushed himself so hard that he wanted to end his own life. By the way, there are mentions of suicide in this conversation.

I'm curious about what are those hot little motors burning beneath the willingness to push oneself to the brink. So what in Jerry's verbiage is the subroutine? And there can be many operating at once, by the way. Both Jerry and I share some deeply personal stories in this episode, but my invitation as you're listening is to think about what is coming up for you from your own life.

A little bit of context if you haven't read Jerry's books. His first one, Reboot, is about radical self-inquiry. And being able to see ourselves clearly as a result. And the second book, Reunion, is about how we can use that self-aware leadership that we've developed since reading Reboot to create more systemic belonging.

Because when we've reunified with those disowned parts of ourselves that you'll hear more about today, then we can create more welcoming environments in work and in society. Both books are highly worth reading, by the way.

I drop us into an ancestor story. That started on a mountain ledge in Arizona.

Let's dive in.

So I'm sitting on a mountain ledge in Sedona with a spiritual teacher and my back is leaning up against La Cachina, which is this hill, quite a substantial hill that's apparently imbued with lots of feminine energy. And the spiritual teacher, Teo Alfero is conducting a meditation and I got nothing, Jerry.

I'm sitting there thinking, this is such an opportunity. It's a super achiever. I mean, here's my chance. I can really get an A in this and I'm sitting there, I feel my feet sort of dangling over the edge. This was not a health and safety thing. We're sitting on this ledge, me and a few other coaches and I finally just resigned myself that it ain't going to happen for me. So, I'm just enjoying the sunshine on my face and I felt a little uncomfortable. I had a rucksack on and I sort of turned around and as I turned my head, of course, there was nothing there because it was just a mountainside behind me.

But as I turned around, I had this very bizarre sensation. As I turned around, all of a sudden, I could see, in my mind's eye obviously, but in these sepia tones what I knew to be my lineage in that moment. There was me as a little girl and I recognized my mom and my grandmothers and a couple of people that I recognized from poorly taken black and white photos, and on and on and on they went until they were the size of little Playmobil people right at the end that I couldn't see anymore.

And it took my breath away because I was not expecting that. There were no mushrooms or anything involved in this journey. It was something that I didn't see coming. And there I was with my little pigtails and my little polka dot dress standing in the front there and looking quite joyful about the whole thing.

And I felt this sense of something. I can't identify what it is. Is it a sense of belonging? These were simple people. Nobody in my family had ever gone to university except my father. I was the first woman to ever go to university in my lineage. And I had a feeling, it was a very visceral feeling. And it was time to close up the meditation and have a packed lunch and sit there and sort of talk through.

But that never left me. My intellectual brain wanted to understand what was it about my people and belonging and what was I supposed to do with this information? I mean, I'm trained as a historian, although I went into banking. So there's something about history, lineage, ancestry, but I've put it in a cupboard under the stairs because there's so much pain involved in sitting with lineage and family. Alcoholism, abuse, poverty, lack of education, no opportunities for women for example, coat hanger abortions. So as somebody who wanted to leap out of that world, it was best for me just to put that in a neat, tidy compartment and tuck it away and think, that has nothing to do with me.

By way of introduction, hello Jerry, I'm Mandy. Hi!

**Jerry:** Hi Mandy

**Mandy:** That is what prompted me to reach out to you, because you have woven ancestry, exploration, understanding who we are and what we do with that in such an unusual, potent way that I wanted to bring you on to talk about this. So, I shall draw a breath and have a drink of water and just see what's landing from that.

**Jerry:** Well, how do you do? It's a delight to meet you and all of your ancestors.

**Mandy:** Thank you.

**Jerry:** Where shall we begin? I was making notes while you were speaking, things that were occurring to me. And first of all, thank you for seeing the connection between Reboot, my first book and the work implicit in that and explicit in that, and Reunion. Because both books come from my unconscious and they seem perfectly connected to each other to me, but sometimes folks need to squint to experience the connection.

And thank you too for the kind words about my writing. As you know from reading Reboot, writing well matters greatly to me and being recognized for the artist that I want to be.

It's a little hard for me to say the artist that I am is really powerful for me, so thank you for that. The thing that occurred to me as you were telling the story about being at Sedona was, oh you got ambushed by the ghosts in your lineage who are asking you to be to turn them into ancestors. And I'll say a word about that because I imagine some folks listening don't know what I'm referring to, but I write about this in Reunion. I set about on a quest to try to understand this notion of belonging. What does it mean in our experience, both as leaders, but also as adults navigating a world that is so riven and that belonging implicitly promises that we can find a way past the division. So, the first question I started to ask myself, well, who the heck do I belong to? Which is not a question that as a white, cisgender, straight man, I am confronted with. I am socialised in a patriarchy to not ask that question, to just simply move through life, assuming that I belong and, and be affirmed for that.

I want to acknowledge that when I started to unpack it, the question of to whom do I belong, I started to think about this notion of those who came before me and where they go, the ancestors (and sometimes I'll use the word elders) in my life. I realized that those of us in our past, their stories and their experiences are more often than not glossed over and mythologized, or to use the term I use in the book, dismembered from our experience.

They are yearning to connect with us. And, you know, I, too, have not done psychedelics. I am not talking about some woo woo crazy experience. I am talking about this notion of using radical self-inquiry, the process I coined from my first book, Reboot, to actually extend that awareness beyond my own experience of me into the connection with 'how did I come to be?' How did my belief systems, my subroutines, to use a term we'll get to at some point, to understand how I relate to the world. And that remembering turns ghosts into ancestors. And I'll say one more thing and then Turn the mic back. Your image of hiding things in the cupboard reminds me of a story I touch upon tangentially in the book. That brilliant Disney movie Encanto with songs by Lin Manuel Miranda. There's a great song in there called We Don't Talk About Bruno. And Bruno is an unremembered ancestor who is a ghost, and you know what he inhabits? The spaces in the walls that we don't actually see. He lives in the home, in the ancestral home, haunting people, simply wishing to be remembered.

But we don't talk about Bruno. We don't talk about, to use your framing, alcoholism. We don't talk about suicide. We don't talk about those who may have suffered, say, systemic othering, and those who may have perpetuated. systemic othering. We don't talk about those experiences. Actually, a couple of months back, I was on a podcast interview talking to the interviewer and he told me the story of his grandmother who passed at a hundred. And just before she died, it came out that, unlike what she had said all along, which was that she was Polish, turns out that she was German. She had participated, because that's what she needed to do to belong in the regime in World War II, and prior to, but she needed to deny the reality of that, and so the entire family went through this sort of earth-shattering experience of saying, wait, we're not Poles, we're Germans? This to me is a natural continuation of that process of really asking the core question, who am I? How did I come to be? And why do I do the things that I do?

**Mandy:** I'm a fan of exploring why we do the things that we do and why we might have certain beliefs, like I'm not good enough or I'm unworthy unless I'm constantly achieving and hustling. I asked Jerry to define the term that you heard earlier, subroutines. Jerry, what does that mean?

**Jerry:** I use the term subroutine, which actually comes from computer programming, to define the software code, if you will, that runs constantly beneath the operating system, beneath the application layer to define who we are.

So, a subroutine for me might be that it's safer to be anxious than to be angry. Because when I was a child, anger would always end with violence. So I would prefer to be anxious, even though it's kind of a crazy construct, because who wants to be anxious? But I would prefer to be anxious than to allow myself to express my anger.

Right? And that's simplistic, you know, we can spend a couple of hours just talking about that. We won't. Another subroutine that really defined my 30s was the sense that if I had enough money, then I would feel safe from the fears and terrors of my childhood. And, you know, I use the metaphor of when I was a boy, my grandfather - my mother's father - always seemed to have enough and I associated the fact that he also loved lemon drops, these little hard candies, I always associated lemon drops with grandpa's safety. My grandparents' home was the place of calm in my childhood, as opposed to my own home, which was marked by violence and mental illness and alcoholism.

So as I grew into adulthood, I found myself speedily chasing lemon drops, which then led me into a career as an investor. I was a venture capitalist for most of my 30s, until the point where in order to feel safe, I was working myself to death. And I pointed that out because I think a lot of people suffer from this kind of perverse logic, or as I'll point out, the logic of a child, right? See, if I pray hard enough, mom and dad will stop fighting. If I'm a good boy or a good girl, then all these good things will happen. And in the pursuit of being a good boy or a good girl, I end up twisting my own experience. I deny my anger, deny my negative feelings.

So back to my 30s, I got to the point where the more success I had, the more I shone as a bright, shiny object. And the more I was an object of other people's projections of what success might feel like the worse I felt because there was such a profound dissonance and disconnect between the outer experience of me and the inner experience of me. To the point where the only way I could resolve it was self-hatred.

The only way I could make sense of this dissonance was I'm a fraud, I'm really broken, I'm ashamed of who I am. It's so counterintuitive to the narrative that we live with in our society, which is that the more outward success that you have, the better you will feel about yourself. Despite the fact that all these outwardly successful people, from athletes, to finance executives, to business executives, to politicians, anybody who's truthful will tell you that's just not true but we still carry the myth and we teach the myth to children. So that's a kind of encapsulated experience of what my 30s were like. It led me not only to be suicidally depressed, which is something that I grappled with all of my life, but ultimately wisely led me to leave that career despite the fears that it invoked. "Oh my God, am I going to have enough lemon drops?" I could then step into the rest of my life and have a margin of equanimity between this feeling inside and the way I was being externally.

**Mandy:** Jerry's got me thinking about some subroutines, my own and those I often hear from coaching clients, though I didn't know to call them that. So here's one of mine that's similar to Jerry's. Anger. So, historically, I stuff it down, I paste on a stoic face, I don't talk back, because anger and speaking up have historically been punished. Growing up, I was like one of those fire swallowers in the circus. Stuff it down, stuff it down, stuff it down. And I can see how that pattern played out in my adult life. For years, maybe even decades. I'm still untangling it and I suspect I'm not alone.

Okay, how about this subroutine? It's better to be small than a show off. Don't get too big for your boots, because if you do, you're breaking an unspoken family rule that you mustn't leave others behind. You might have a big education and a glass box office, but don't go being all fancy now and thinking you're better than us. Be big by all means, but stay small. Quick sidebar, if you haven't read Gay Hendricks's book, *The Big Leap*, particularly chapter 2, he talks about something called the ultimate upper limit problem. Highly, highly recommended. Trust me.

Okay, let's go back to another subroutine and I'm curious what Jerry's going to say about this one. I must constantly be working. I do, therefore I am. Worth is conditional, meaning if I'm not achieving and being productive all the time, I lose status and relevance which is not acceptable.

Also, in my house growing up, I don't know if this was similar to you, but resting was seen as laziness and that should be avoided at all costs. We even had a sign in our kitchen that read, them who works, eats. So, Jerry, what are your thoughts on this particular subroutine? Untangling identity from productivity is like getting an octopus out of a string bag.

Joe: First thing I'll say is that that subroutine is a very popular subroutine. It's probably specific to your experience and your lineage, but it's also generic in general. You could even trace it back to the Calvinistic

worth work ethic, the Protestant work ethic, right? My outward success is evidence of God's grace, which, trigger warning, I'm about to curse, is a mindfuck, okay? Because we all know that outward success is disconnected from how a person truly is, right? You can be in the Western world's eyes poor and be of high integrity. And you can be incredibly wealthy, billionaire wealthy and lack integrity. And yet that's not the construct that we work with so let's acknowledge that.

**Mandy:** Is it also possible that there are other subroutines? Layering, almost like Venn diagrams, because bringing in that Calvinistic work ethic, you know, being raised as a Scandinavian, you should be the best and be successful, but don't enjoy it by God. Do not make a spectacle of yourself. So, it's right, right. Don't be the poppy that stands up, you know, and so how's that for a twisted, perverse construct that traps one. So, yes to all of that. And yes, the Venn diagrams and the layering in of multiple and oftentimes conflicting subroutines. Right. So there's that, but you were going on the path of how to untangle.

How did that play out for you if you're open to sharing that story?

**Jerry:** So I often tell the story of my decision in February 2002 to leave the job at J. P. Morgan. That I had just started in January of 2002. So, that's the framing. September 11th had happened just a few months before my first private equity firm was kind of being absorbed and collapsing.

The first wave of internet investing was collapsing. I was a rock star in the first wave, you know, so tough time. The fall of 2001 in the United States in New York City was nightmarish. When I made the decision that I was not going to renew my contract at the end of that year, I have a good friend, he remains a good friend, and he was my colleague at the time, and when I told him that I was going to step down, he said to me, what if nobody calls you?

And you know, that gave voice to that fear of the loss of status that you were talking about, or that, you know, the loss of relevancy in the world. And when I found myself responding with a healthy dose of anger, I knew I was on the right path, if you will because the right path was, what the hell?

Right? What? I'm literally thinking of killing myself. And I'm worried that somebody's not going to call me. Okay. So, in that experience, this is the story I tell myself about the Buddha, because that was the year I started studying Buddhism. Everybody knows the story of the Buddha growing up as a prince shielded from the pain and suffering of life by parents who wanted to keep him safe and make sure that he stayed a royal and did not become what his destiny was, which was to be, to be a spiritual leader.

And of course, one day he spies an old woman walking outside the castle walls and in an instant understands. The suffering of life, birth, old age, sickness and death, and it just throws him and he goes wandering into the woods but he never releases himself from the suffering until finally, one day, as I tell the story, he sits under a tree and says to hell with it, I'm not leaving until I figure it out. And after several weeks of meditating, he wakes up to the Four Noble Truths. I tell that story in this moment because, for me, I entered a period of sitting under the bodhi trees saying to hell with it. I'm not going to move. I'm not going to do spiritual bypassing and take Psilocybin. I'm not going to, you know, do that. Now, I did a lot of therapies. I did dance therapy. I did art therapy. I traveled, so travel therapy. But mostly, I drew, I created calluses on my buttocks sitting on the meditation cushion, doing the thing Blaise Pascal once said. All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit alone in a room, right?

And we can make it non-gendered. We all need to sit still and experience the things that we have been terrified of, so that we have a chance. to rise up from the Bodhi tree and actually get on with the process of being the fully grown adults that we're born to be.

**Mandy:** Can I ask you a sidebar question? So you had that brick wall moment because you were thinking of killing yourself. I had my own version of a brick wall moment where I collapsed. I had pushed myself so far. My body was giving me signs, signs, signs. Like, no, we're good. We're pushing on. We're pushing on. We're pushing on. Because I always push through until I didn't.

**Jerry:** And I'm wondering. Was that like your dad?

**Mandy:** I never made that connection.

**Jerry:** Sorry.

**Mandy:** Yeah.

Jerry: I, didn't mean to intervene. It just, it literally came up from the depths of my being.

**Mandy:** I suppose my addiction was to use achieving and doing as my numbing agent, rather than whiskey. Mmm.

**Jerry:** like that ancestor.

**Mandy:** And interestingly, I didn't ever connect the dots, but my father collapsed and hit his head and he died at the age of 53. And I just turned 53 not long ago, so a lot of this stuff is, is coming up

**Jerry:** Very fresh. Yeah. So let's just pause and acknowledge him and his experience and the subroutines that drove him and what, what affect that had on his daughter.

**Mandy:** What occurs to me is he hated silence. He hated being alone. Whenever he was at home alone, the radio would be playing, the television would be on, there'd be this cacophony of noise. He couldn't sleep. He felt haunted in so many ways. And, I realize that my addiction to achievement has also made me equate sitting in silence or sitting with myself, sitting and not doing with - what's the point of this, this is a waste of time.

When I was in recovery from burnout, I did it performatively. Thinking, if I do this, I'll tick the box and Jerry, I'm going to be the best damn meditator. I bought the cushions, the apps, the Lotus candles, I went on multiple classes, I was going to go and star pupil this, which is hilarious.

**Jerry:** You were on a mountain ledge in Sedona.

**Mandy:** I did ecstatic dancing in the nude, you know, I spoke to my lady parts, I did all the things. And the question that I originally asked, which is much less interesting than where this is going now is. Do we need a brick wall? Do we need a collapse? Do we need to hit our head on the counter? Do we need to collapse in the gym? Do we need to get to the point of no return before we listen? That is a question that is such a conundrum for me. I don't know. Would I have listened? Would you have listened when your star is rising and your body is sending up signs that you're not happy or this isn't working for me?

Thoughts? Comments?

Jerry: So yeah, so two thoughts. One of the reasons why I coined the use of the word subroutine to describe these processes is that it's value neutral. And I think that's really, really important. And I often say that, what we're doing, by the way, is what I describe as radical self inquiry, and that interjection around your father, which came from an intuitive place inside of me, is a kind of following the trail of breadcrumbs that the feelings are leaving, versus what the cognitive mind wants to talk about. The performative, let me get an A kind of mind. Okay, one of the things that happens when we start to do radical inquiry is that the mind is very, very clever and is going to throw up defenses.

And one of the defenses might be, well, how is this productive? Mandy, come on, okay, how is this achieving? You've got a podcast audience, you better produce for them, right? So, you're laughing because you recognize that feeling. Okay. So that's one defense mechanism. Oh, yes, another deeper defense mechanism I heard is in I was addicted and I had to overcome my addiction to achievement.

Now, I could be wrong here. I could be projecting my own experiences, but I'm going to go with it. So, I recognize that following the subroutine can feel like an addiction. Okay, and the problem I have with that word is that it's judgmental. Some, even the language of disease, implies pathology and there's an even more subtle subroutine, which runs like this.

See, you're really broken, see, despite all your achievement you're broken. You can't even not be addicted to burnout, okay? So, I want to sort of pause on that, because when we go down that path, and I often joke it's the path of self-help books - why do we read every book on diet and still need to diet? - there is something really important in recognizing that when behaviours persist, they persist because they provide a benefit which is contrary to the language of addiction.



To be more precise, when you, when you speak to, to neuropsychiatrists and those who study the brain's addictive behavior, they will talk about, for example, the dopamine hit that comes from performing in a particular way. The equivalent analysis would be to ask oneself, which I often do, my infamous question of how have I been complicit in creating the conditions I say I don't want?

And everybody hears that question. It's all over the internet now. Everybody hears that question and often go to how have I been responsible, which is actually not the word I chose. Right? But the second question I ask is equally important, and it goes to this point. What is the benefit of that behaviour? That is confusing to people, because they say there is no benefit to me being burned out, or driving myself to the point of exhaustion. But to go back to my lemon drops example for a moment, the benefit to me was coming closer and closer to the safety that I had projected onto my grandfather. See, once I understood that's what I was really after. In your case, your pursuit of achievement, which resulted in burnout may have been the unsettled ghost of your father. You, like a good girl, trying to heal dad. See, if you were really successful enough, maybe he wouldn't drink, or maybe he wouldn't do whatever behavior, and I'm making that last bit up because I don't really know you, but you see the interconnection between this?

What I don't want to do is invoke in you self-denigration. Look at me. I'm addicted to bad behavior, ooh I better go castigate myself by working more. By pushing...

**Mandy:** ...myself on the treadmill. By working more. Oh, yes.

**Jerry:** Brilliant. I'm going to launch a podcast. I'm going to launch a business. I'm going to launch this. I'm going to... What if you're already enough? Then can you enjoy the work without putting your existential self on the line and attaching your worthiness to your success?

**Mandy:** I called my mother on my 53rd birthday to thank her for her labour, pun intended, 53 years ago. And she shared something. She said, there's something that I want to tell you. She said, your father always resented you. Your father resented your existence. I wasn't sure what to do with that information.

And she said, well, he was the one who made me pregnant. I wasn't really sure about how to handle that, but he said, even when you were a little baby, he would resent you because he was trying to go to teacher's college and he wanted to teach high school, secondary school. And because you were coming, he had to go to the local teacher's college, which meant he could only teach elementary school. She said, that's why he pushed you so hard. I was living his unlived life and nothing was ever enough because obviously to put that pressure on a young person. I just found that out not long ago. I'm still metabolizing that. And it wasn't my intention to make this podcast about me, which is another subroutine playing out here. Don't, don't take up too much space.

**Jerry:** That's what happens when people talk to me. Don't take up too much space. That's what happens when they talk to me. Don't worry about it. I should have known better. I should have known better.

**Mandy:** But it's this inquiry as well as looking at oneself in that radical self inquiry of understanding how these things that feel so uncomfortable that you don't know what to do with them, how those play out in our lives and in our leadership. And I really appreciate you going here as, as much as my palms are sweating in this moment. It's a good discomfort.

**Jerry:** I want to say that I feel honoured that you've shared that much of your story with me and I take that honour quite seriously. And I will confess, again this may be my feelings not yours, but I will confess that I'm angry at your mother for saying what she said. And I'm a little suspicious. And the turn of phrase that you use was about how he got her pregnant. And I don't know the circumstances and I don't know the situation and I want to give your mother grace, but it kind of reminds me, if you remember the story in Reunion, where my father's mother stood at the back of the church on the day he was getting married. And she was so angry at him for marrying my mother. She screamed out putana, putana, putana, which in, in Italian means whore. And then announced that you're not my son. You were adopted.

And, there is a weaponization of truth telling that devastated my father, because he came to understand that at 18 months old, he had been given up for adoption by his first mother, to whom he no doubt was attached. And then at 21, given up again, denied, if you will, by the only mother he really knew.

So what I will do is say a prayer for your mother, who's unresolved experience with your father may have been weaponised against you.

**Mandy:** Thank you.

**Jerry:** She may be trying to have a deep conversation, not only about your father's feelings, but perhaps about her own feelings. Because he wasn't the only parent whose life changed and not only are you carrying the unfinished business and you inadvertently or purposely reflected Carl Jung's notion that the worst thing a parent can do is to ask a child to finish their unfinished business.

Maybe at 53, that's no longer your task. You see how it's different than being addicted to work or addicted to achievement to the point of burnout. It's a deeper level of understanding what actually, what the subroutine is running.

**Mandy:** Ooh, time to take a breath. So Jerry was taking me through some radical self-inquiry, but I hope it got you thinking about what subroutines might be running in your life. And when you probe at them a little bit, it can help you understand why some behaviors are showing up in your very grown up life these days.

Tamu Thomas was talking about this in episode 75, where she learned to work herself to exhaustion because it was role modelled to her by generations of women in her lineage. Dr. Lalita Suglani in episode 76 talked about it too, where her dad immigrated from India to England at the age of 17 and was in survival mode, probably for decades, nobody talked about feelings.

Nobody talks about Bruno. And in that case, in her home, Bruno was feelings. It was brushed under the rug. Thinking on my own, family life growing up, I had so much anger and disgust with my father growing up. I moved out and to the other side of the planet as fast as I could. And not only that, I distanced myself from my dad's part of the family and probably judged them, too, for their alcoholism and like, very provincial way of living.

That was what I was thinking at the time. I didn't want to associate myself with that style of life, that way of living in the world. What Jerry's inquiry has got me thinking about is a deeper understanding of why I always needed to prove myself. It's like I was pushing against those things that I was trying to get away from.

Or why feedback and criticism and my corporate job stung as much as it did. Why I would replay those thoughts at three o'clock in the morning. Oh, what could I have said differently? What could I have done differently? Or why failure made me so anxious? Or why I found resting so difficult? Or why I bent over backwards to be so accommodating all the effing time.

Once I understood this connection between my dad resenting my existence - he even told me once that he wished I was never born - my subroutines start to make more sense. And Jerry's right, I don't need to judge them by calling them addictions and maybe at the age of 53, maybe I can loosen my grip on them, let them go.

None of this is about blaming caregivers or excusing bad behavior. And if I understand Jerry right, turning my dad from the "bad guy" in my mind to an ancestor, is about thinking through the subroutines that might have been running in his life too. So, I've started seeing him as a product of his lineage as well and his behavior makes more sense. Again, it's important to say this isn't glossing over it or excusing it or some kind of toxic positivity skip over, but it's deepened my understanding and complexified him as a person.

By the way, this stuff is deep work and this podcast is under no circumstances any kind of substitute for therapy. Coaching sometimes hits on deep themes that we as coaches can redirect to therapists. That also feels important to say. But a lot that emerges in coaching conversations is stuff that you can take to a therapist to work through.

Maybe stuff that you didn't even know was there. The thing with this hustle culture is so much of these subroutines can get praised. So that's a third thing that feels important to say. So, in thinking how these things spill over into work behavior, and you might be thinking what is all the relevance of this, Mandy?



Think about it. Do you feel safe being visible and speaking up at work? Do you constantly need to hustle and grind to prove yourself? Do you push your feelings down? Do you struggle with confrontation? Get curious. Let's talk about Bruno. Before we close, I asked Jerry to offer some ideas on how you might start identifying and addressing your own subroutines.

So, his books are one obvious option, but Jerry, what's one thing that someone listening could try?

**Jerry:** I would go back to that Blaise Pascal quote and practice the art of sitting with one's own feelings. The thing that was really hard for your father, you know, if you think about wisdom, traditions, whether they're religious in nature or philosophical in nature, many of them circle around the same advice and guidance, whether it's the Desert Fathers tradition in Christianity, or to thine own self be true. Shakespeare quoting the Oracle at Delphi, I think it was. All of these traditions suggest a similar process, which is sit under the tree and inquire within.

To do so you are going up against so much socialization. So, let's make it even more pragmatic. Let's imagine somebody's been listening to this experience and they might in fact be your prototypical audience. They're a senior level executive at a Deutsche Bank. Let's just name one. Okay. And they're like, I'm at midlife. Is this all there is? What the heck? Notice the impulse of so many people around you who are doing psychedelics. Notice it, right? Notice the impulse to go on meditation retreats. Those are all worthy areas of inquiry. But behind that area of inquiry is a deeper inquiry, which is how am I actually feeling?

You know, I don't know if you experience this, Mandy, but when I work with clients, they'll often say, I'm at this crossroads, I don't know what to do. And I will point out that the muscles associated with answering the question, how am I feeling, are probably the most underdeveloped muscles. in the entire system.

So how the heck do you expect to be able to know what you want to do if you don't have a baseline of knowing how you're feeling, right? And, so, what I'm trying to do is transform how am I feeling from some sort of airy fairy sitting on a mountain ledge in Sedona listening to your ancestors experience into something really pragmatic and basic, which is it's a root.

Question, should I stay or should I go? Should I leave my job or should I stay? Should I leave my marriage or should I go? Should I trans, change my career and study and be something else? And the first question is to sit with, daily, how am I feeling? Oh, I feel pretty miserable. Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

That's a good sign. That tells us something. I feel a tightness in my chest every time I think about going into the office. Hey, that's a warning sign. So I want to experience the tenderness, if you will, of just paying attention to your feelings in this moment as a guidepost for what to do.

**Mandy:** And then the inquiry into what those subroutines might be, and the way that you link that to my father, my mother, certain situations, there's, that's right.

It sounds like a slow process for somebody who wants speed, but necessary.

**Jerry:** We can close with this. Let me give you a different word than the framing slow process. Imagine it as a lifelong practice. One doesn't complete yoga. One doesn't meditate for a few years and then stop because you're done, one doesn't finish growing up. It's a lifelong process. So, it's just, it's a lifelong practice. So, practice, practice the art of radical self-inquiry. Practice the art of growing up.

**Mandy:** I ask every guest to leave a brick of wisdom for a listener. Something that may have jiggled loose in this conversation, a quote, an observation, some gift that you would like to leave for a listener.

And I invite you to go with your gut, what would you say?

**Jerry:** Don't be afraid of sitting alone. Don't be afraid of sitting alone with your thoughts. That's the best way to get to know those feelings. Every wisdom tradition in the world, every elder in the world, has gone through that process. You're part of a really great lineage when you lean into that process.

**Mandy:** A lot to digest in this episode. I hope this has felt like having a big holiday meal where you loosen your belt buckle and you just lay on the sofa and let it sink in, digest it all. This might be a listen twice

episode, or if you're somebody who likes to dive in via text with your orange high letter, you can head over to my website and find the transcript of the episode under the listen tab.

You'll find all of Jerry's details in the show notes, including his social media handles and his books. And do follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn and let us know what resonated from this episode. We're curious. Before you go, who came to mind as you were listening? This podcast grows because of the generous shares of people like you.

Thank you so much in advance for sharing. And if you haven't already, please subscribe. Please hit the follow button before you leave Spotify or Apple Podcasts. I have some humdinger episodes coming up, including something brand new, so stay tuned and let's do this all again in two weeks.



