

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

Debra: Excellent, excellent. And at the end of the program, I'm going to let you tell our listeners how to get a hold of you, but I'm looking forward to the conversation. I consider myself as somebody who is audacious too, so I think that's one reason why I was very excited to interview you.

So Jennie, the first thing that I'd like to ask you is, and hopefully it's not a hard question, but I seem to meet so many people that say they're coaches. How do you differentiate yourself from all these other people that are hanging out nameplates saying, oh yeah, I'm a coach? What does it even mean to be a coach? Tell me more about this and why should somebody come to you, Jennie?

Jennie: Really, really important question, and it's one of those that I think every coach ever has struggled with. In fact, coaches become kind of a four-letter word these days instead of five letters, because it's so overused and it's so misused. What a coach means is somebody who is exceptionally good at asking the right question and using their intuition in the right moment, to draw out the answers in their clients. That's really kind of a superficial answer, but that's what it is. It's different from a consultant. Whereas a consultant is somebody who diagnoses problems, offers solutions and then is part of implementing those solutions, a coach is not part of implementing your solutions. What a coach does, is make sure that they hold you accountable, keep your feet to the fire.

Now, how I differentiate myself, I'm not the gentle encouragement cheerleader kind of coach. I am much more in your face, in your space, no BS-free approach. I like to push my clients with something I called a cathartic shove. Sounds a little violent, I swear it's not violent, it's cathartic. It feels really good. But I push you out of your own way, faster than you're ready for, because I know you can handle it.

Debra: Jennie, that's a very interesting point. Especially at times when I'm trying to evolve, and not that I'm not always trying to evolve, but right now I'm really sort of looking at my career and trying to evolve and figure out, how do I add more value to certainly the community that I care about. I'm very, very committed to the community of persons with disabilities all over the world, but I'm also very committed to social good and having the most impact, the most positive social impact as possible.

I wonder sometimes, because I was raised -- I don't say this woe is me; it's just that I'm really doing a lot of soul searching about who am I, these days. As a small child, there was a lot of abuse in our house for a lot of different reasons. So

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

I learned some real great ways to protect myself, and one way I protected myself was I became the "nice girl". So I tried harder at school and I did all these things and I tried to figure out what somebody wanted to hear, to make sure that I kept everybody good. I sometimes reminded myself, there was a cartoon I saw once where the little girl put her hands over her ears and started saying, let no bad happen, let no bad happen, let no bad happen.

And so I think it's interesting, and I actually have a coach that I work with. It's Doug Foresta, who happens to be my voice coach, sort of my life coach and he's my producer of this podcast as well. The way he speaks to me is very interesting. Because of the way I was raised, I don't like somebody getting in my face, from almost a male perspective saying, you bad girl. So he has a way of saying things to me in a way not only are respectful but they're very authentic.

And so I love your style and what you do, because I think one reason why we need coaches are because -- one thing that I'm trying to do right now as an adult in her late 50s, is I'm trying to make sure that some of those protection skills that I created as a child, that they're not getting in my way now. I find that very difficult, and so sometimes if you don't have a coach that is going to be there and really support you being really authentic with yourself, I think it's difficult because they're so engrained in you.

And so I'm curious, how do you deal with things like that, when you coach your clients?

Jennie: Well yeah, I love that you bring this up and I appreciate your vulnerability of sharing all of that, because working with a coach is giving another person a permission slip to put a mirror to your nose, to let you see your stuff and deal with your stuff. It's really important but it can be really hard. I like to say coaching creates tears, because you're facing your stuff. But it's not a therapeutic process, necessarily, where therapy is really trying to understand why and dig into where that all came from and understand the root causes and patterns. Coaching is really asking, okay, I see why, what are we going to do about it? And that's one of the big distinctions.

So one of the ways I deal with things like that as they come up, is I talk about Hilda. I talk about that voice in your head, which is a silly kind of playful -- okay, I'll just say it -- semi-ridiculous idea on purpose, because we're all filled with that voice in our head who tells us, like you were saying, that we have to be perfect. I don't want to rock the boat. I want to be a good girl, a perfect child. I

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

want to make sure I'm paying attention and keeping everything easier, so that my life is just a little bit easier. And that became a way that you approached things.

I call that Hilda "I shouldn't" Hilda, who's constantly telling you what you should and shouldn't do, based on how you're going to be perceived by the outside world. And you want to make sure you fit in and stand out at the same time. Good luck with that. Right?

Debra: Right.

Jennie: And Hilda, her whole job is to get into your head and make you feel self-conscious. Make you feel really small, so that you don't do anything risky or big that could possibly have you fail. Unfortunately, if you listen to her, you also won't succeed, but Hilda's okay with that.

Debra: Right. And Hilda actually will -- maybe sometimes her job is partially not to have us succeed, because we don't want to be too big for your britches, as I was told many times as a child. I was going to ask you this question, so you must be psychic, too. I like how you addressed this in a way already. But sometimes coaching can feel like you're actually going to a psychologist or psychiatrist. I think that's very interesting that you said that is not what coaching should be about.

Tell us how our listeners could use your book, Hilda, to really start this process with themselves and really start digging into truly understanding who we are and what we bring to the table, and how do we get out of our way? I'll give you an example before you answer it. I travel a lot internationally, and a lot of times when I was going to be taking a big trip, maybe I was going over to Qatar or Singapore or -- didn't even really matter where I was going. I would get this feeling in the pit of my stomach of dread that something's going to go wrong, something's going to go wrong. And so what I did, which I've always done, which is one reason why I've been so successful, is I ignored the voice and I just went anyway and it was always an amazing trip and I learned a lot, met wonderful people.

But one day, I bothered to say, "What is that? What is that?" If I had to visualize it, almost like that dark cloud. And so I sat down and I meditated and I really concentrated on it and I actually was going on a trip to Turkey and there had been some violence in Turkey. So I actually had reason to be afraid, but I really dug into it and said, "What is that about?" And so all of a sudden I got this memory of my father was traveling to Chicago, and my father had to travel for his work

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

periodically, and my mother was mad at him and she's yelling at him, "You don't love me, you don't love us," it was this huge knockout, drag-out fight for days and days. Anytime my father was going to go on a trip. I realized that somehow, I had attached those memories with me traveling.

And so I thought, "Wow." And as I dug into it, now I don't have that dread. What's interesting, Jennie, is on that trip to Turkey there actually was a terrorist attack 20 miles from where I was staying and it scared my husband to death, but that's the world we live in now and I don't want to be afraid to do something. The people in Turkey were amazing, beautiful souls. I was so glad that I went. I remember somebody in the audience had said to me, it never occurred to us to think -- this one woman said, it never occurred to me to think of my child born as a disability as a blessing that could change my life. And I thought, just that one comment was worth my trip to Turkey.

But how do you use a book like Hilda and also your coaching, Jennie, to help us have those kind of experiences, where we can learn to get out of our own way?

Jennie: Yeah, I love these stories. It's so amazing. So here's Hilda's jam. This is her whole approach. I like to think of her as a demented documentarian of your life, if you will. So she's gone through and collected every experience you've ever had, and every experience she's ever noticed. It could be the experiences of your family, like you were saying your father when he traveled to Chicago, she put that into her documentary and kind of filed it away as, this is a piece of information that made Debra feel this way. So I'm going to file this away in case I need to make her feel that way again. And so she's got that kind of cued up on her demented documentary.

Now, why it's demented is she's kind of picky about what she puts into the documentary of what you get to see. She downplays your successes, downplays the moments where you feel empowered, and amplifies the moments where you failed and amplifies the moments when you were fearful.

When it came time to look at this, instantly she's like, oh, let me trot out that documentary footage and show you, remember how that felt. Because this is what Hilda does. The bottom line. This is what you'll learn in the book and working with me as a coach, is that Hilda fills your brain with a bunch of messages, a bunch of thoughts. If you're like most people, they're thoughts in your head. Why would your brain lie to you, right? You assume they're true.

Debra: They're on my side, right?

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

Jennie: Right, exactly. But now I'm naming this a silly name like Hilda, apologies to anybody named Hilda, you can call yours Jennie. But I'm naming her Hilda; you could name her whatever you want. That voice in your head is filling your head with all of these messages, designed to make you feel bad. And if you feel bad, that feeling is how you determine what action you're going to take. So thought to feeling to action.

Well, if Hilda's driving, she gets to plant these thoughts, which make you feel crummy, which makes you act a certain way. So if she had won in this situation, she would have said, "Travel is dangerous." You would have felt scared and in danger and decided it's too scary to do it and you would have decided to stay home. Instead, there was a moment somewhere in there, Debra, where you say, "Hm, disagree with you on that one, Hilda. I disagree with that thought. I hear you, there's some truth to what you're saying, but it's also true that I can do this," which made you feel a certain way and made you act accordingly.

So that's really what the book does, is I've given a lot of different examples of the different devious ways I've seen Hilda show up in my life and in my clients' lives, and figure out, okay, what are the thoughts she's trying to plant there, why is she trying to make you feel that way? It's really kind of crummy, right? And what can we do to combat that? How can we hit her with a comeback so she's not so effective next time?

Debra: Right, and also, I wonder if there's a place to honor her as well, because in the example that I gave, my Hilda is trying to protect me but my Hilda is a little girl of say, six or seven years old, that was scared. And so it's not -- I don't want to say it's relevant, but is there the opportunity to honor those feelings? What I've always said is, and somebody wrote a book about this and I love this book title, "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway."

Jennie: Yes. No, I think you're spot on, Debra. Here's the thing. And I say this really early in the book, too. I say, Hilda means well. And you're probably thinking, wait, what now? How is this woman who's saying all these negative things and making me feel bad, mean well? Well, she means well because her whole job, her sole job in your life is to keep you small, to keep you safe, to keep you stuck. That's all she wants to do.

Now, she goes about it in a really crummy, kind of cruel, mean girl sort of way, I admit, but she does mean well. So we can have empathy for the fact that she's showing up. And here's the other really positive thing about Hilda. When she shows up and she's really loud in your head, it's because you're doing something

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

that matters. Hilda's not showing up when you're going to the grocery store or something.

Debra: Yeah, good one.

Jennie: She's showing up because you're about to leap over a Grand Canyon or something. She's shaken up a little bit. So when Hilda is voicing her nonsense in your head and trying to convince you that, you can't do that, you shouldn't do that, you don't know what you're talking about, you don't really want that. When she's filling your head with those kinds of messages, it's because she's freaking out and she wants you to stay safe. You have to decide whether or not you're going to listen to her. And by differentiating her happy nonsense from your truth, you're going to be able to make decisions based on your audacity.

Debra: That is so good, that is so good. I keep hearing you use the word, which really speaks to me, your small self. As I have walked my own journey, sometimes that small self comes out and it's like, who do you think you are? These are all the reasons why you're not good enough. You didn't finish college, you're overweight. It's funny, and I have started talking more about my journey with depression, and I think my depression is tied to my Hilda. Sometimes I wake up and it feels almost like there's a dark cloud hanging over me, for all kind of different reasons, and I'll think, okay, is that real?

So I think we're a complicated species. We're complicated human beings, and that's why I think if you can find the right coach, they can be the best thing that you ever did in your life. They can allow us to get out of our way. I mentioned one time I had great success with that one dark feeling, but there's others that I need to overcome. I worry so much about my daughter with Down Syndrome. She's 29 years old. She's in this place of she's not a kid but she can't do things that other adults can do. Maybe she's not going to go out and get married and have her own children and get a PhD and create the cure for cancer, but there's so much she can do.

Sometimes, I think our lives are so complicated, and that's why having a coach that will say, "Who are you?" and "What is stopping you" and how do you quiet the Hilda. Love the Hilda to silence. I don't know the right way to say it. You probably could say it, since it's your book. Go ahead, Jennie.

Jennie: No, I mean, that's the thing, is we need to recognize Hilda and figure out how to deal with her. Because the truth is, she's kind of your best friend/worst enemy all wrapped up into one little cartoon character who lives in your brain. We need to

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

figure out how to deal with her. If your best friend or your closest confidant said some of the stuff that Hilda says to you, you'd probably have a few choice words to respond to that. I call that a comeback. If my best friend in the world said some of the crap that Hilda said to me, I'd have a few things to say to him. You know what I mean? I would be like, wait, I'm not taking that lying down. Let me defend myself, let me explain my thinking, let me come back. Let me hit you with a comeback. That's what we have to learn to do with Hilda.

Eventually, you're going to figure out that she's just tricky. She's going to use everything she can come up with, be it putting you down and making you feel self-doubt or convincing you to second guess yourself or question your next big idea or to distract you with shiny objects so that you procrastinate and you put stuff off. She's going to do everything in her arsenal that she can come up with, to keep you safe.

But serious badassess, people who are audacious, people who want to change the world in some way big or small, like yourself, are aware of her nonsense. And what I love about this book is it does two things for everybody. One, it makes you feel like you're not crazy, you're not alone. That who do you think you are you mentioned right there, just so you know, that's the very first Hilda-ism in the book, is that part of Hilda. Who do you think you are? Everybody has heard that. And yet when we feel it and we hear that noise in our brain, it feels like we're the only ones that feel that imposter syndrome.

Debra: Yes, yes, so true.

Jennie: Right?

Debra: Yes. Doug Foresta and I were talking about it earlier, the imposter syndrome. Yeah, who do you think you are? So powerful. Very powerful.

Jennie: It's so true. And you talked a little bit earlier about that perfect child syndrome kind of thing, like behave yourself, behave. That's that behave noise that Hilda has implanted in our head, is something that once upon a time worked really well for you as a child and kind of getting through a tough childhood, but now it doesn't suit your needs and is getting in the way of what you want to do.

So this book and my work is all about pointing that out, raising your awareness to it so you can laugh at it a little bit, like laugh at yourself, laugh with yourself and laugh with all of us, that okay, you know what, I have a Hilda because I'm human.

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

I'm human. But now we can come up with a counter-action to shut her down, so that we can keep doing exactly what it is we want.

Debra: So Jennie, tell me how our listeners can find out more about your work. I know you said the book is on Amazon and other channels, but how can they find out more about the work that you do?

Jennie: Yes, thank you. So there's two websites I would send you to. The first one is CoachJennie.com. That's where you can learn about absolutely everything Coach Jennie, Audacity Coaching and everything that I'm doing. But if you want to get your hands on this book, I really feel like that's step one. So just head on over to HildaTheBook.com, and you can get all of the details of the book. You can also download the handy dandy Hilda cheat sheet, so that you can have a really great picture of the four different Hildas. I call them I can't, I shouldn't, I don't know and I don't wanna Hilda.

Debra: Excellent, excellent. I'm definitely going to head over there and get Hilda the book, because sometimes my Hilda is much louder than other times. I also find it interesting, the different voices that speak in my head, because sometimes I have a knowing -- for example, when my daughter was born with Down Syndrome, we did not know she had Down Syndrome until she was four months old. They had given me my baby and I was lying in a hospital bed, and this little thought among millions of other thoughts, floated through my head and said, she looks like she has Down Syndrome. And I remember thinking, what? What does a baby that has Down Syndrome -- I mean, it was like I didn't know where this thought came from, and I immediately dismissed it until four months later, when the doctor was telling us our daughter had Down Syndrome, and I remembered that thought.

So sometimes it's interesting, trying to understand who is talking to us, which is another reason why I think people would really benefit from having the book as well.

Jennie: Absolutely. And you know, some people have taken this to another step. I talk about for me, there's two voices. There's my voice, my truth, and there's Hilda. I have clients who actually feel like they have a committee. One of my clients talks about how she's got Hilda who naysays, but then she has Gertrude who is constantly over-analyzing, and she's named all these different voices. You can take this wherever you want it to go, and it's playful on purpose. It's ridiculous on purpose. Because the idea of these thoughts in our heads, we take them too seriously.

HUMAN POTENTIAL AT WORK

Host - Debra Ruh

And because we're taking them seriously, we're letting them affect our feelings and letting them affect our actions. If you stop taking them seriously, if we make it playful, if we make it accessible to everybody, Hilda will become a household name and then she's not going to have anything on anybody anymore. That's my dream.

Debra: Well, I think you're doing really, really powerful work, Jennie, and I was really, really thrilled to have you on the program today. You are not only fulfilling your dreams, but you're helping others fulfill their dreams, and I don't think anything is more worthwhile than that. So thank you for your work, Jennie, and thanks for being on the program.

Jennie: Thank you so much. This was such a pleasure.

Debra: Yeah, you were wonderful. So when we celebrate and accept ourselves and others, we can all reach our full human potential, despite our Hildas. So thank you for listening to the program today, and Jennie, thanks for the work that you're doing. Talk to you again.

Hello, thank you for listening to Human Potential at Work. If you're interested in exploring a conversation about my work, I would love for you to visit me on my website at www.RuhGlobal.com, or you can follow me on most social media platforms at Debra Ruh. I'm available to speak, to provide strategic consulting, and certainly to talk to any brand about the social impact you're having as a brand influencer. Thank you so much for your time and for helping me make a difference in the world.