Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 158: JEN GOLDMAN-WETZLER

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast, a podcast where we discuss strategies and advice for how to climb the S-curve of learning in your career in life, disrupting who you are to Slingshot into who you want to be.

I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, and today our guest is Jen Goldman-Wetzler, an expert on conflict and organizational psychology. Jen is an adjunct professor at Columbia University. She's been a counterterrorism research fellow for Homeland Security in the US. Speaking of conflict, it is everywhere. It is inherent in the process of climbing an S-curve. There will be challenges, there will be friction. Conflict is a constraint, so what do you do with that conflict? Does it stop you or does it become a tool of creation? Dr. Jen Goldman-Wetzler has an answer. She has the answer. She is the author of the new book, _Optimal Outcomes: Free Yourself from Conflict at Work, at Home and in Life_, which was recently named as a Financial Times Book of the Month.

WHITNEY	Welcome to the podcast Jen.
JEN	Thank you so much for having me, Whitney.
WHITNEY	Very first question for you is tell us where you grew up and what you wanted to be when you grew up.
JEN	I grew up in the Bronx in New York City in a little red brick apartment building near the Hudson River. And I wanted to be an interior designer. So one of the main things I remember growing up was I didn't want to live in that apartment building. I wanted to live in a house and I spent a lot of time building little houses out of Lego's and designing rooms. It turns out, you know, I've spent now the rest of my adult life, not designing rooms, but designing, uh, organizations and, and really helping people build relationships, which I see as connected.
WHITNEY	Oh, I love how you drew that connection. That's very interesting. So designing, from designing houses to designing organizations. So how did you then get to studying conflict?
JEN	Well, it did all begin in childhood as many things do. I grew up in that little red brick building, uh, in a family of, uh, screamers and door slammers and there was a lot of conflict at home. Mostly garden variety, but nonetheless, I really had to learn from a very young age how to deal with it myself. And I learned also from my grandmother Florence, who was really the first, what I like to

call conflict whisper that I knew. Really just by her very presence she was able to calm the rest of the family down. And um, she didn't have to even say anything, although sometimes all she did say was, you know, "sha, sha" and you know, we'd be driving in the car, would be my dad in the front seat and my, driving, and my mom next to him and my brother and me in the back seat with my Grandma Florence right in the middle.

And we'd drive, most Sundays as when I was a kid we would drive from the Bronx to the countryside in Connecticut, to visit my aunts and uncle and cousin. And invariably, you know, there would be just conflict every which way in that car. And my dad would do the classic thing of threatening to turn the car around and stop driving and, um, and Grandma Florence would just say "Sha, sha" and then tell me and my brother a story and, you know, everybody would come down. So I think, uh, it was a combination of learning how to deal with conflict, just myself inside of my family's system. And then also having grandma Florence as that role model.

WHITNEY   So what does "Sha, sha" mean?

JEN   Well, it's Yiddish for shush, shush. (laughs)

WHITNEY   (laughs) It sounds so much more romantic when you say sha, sha.

JEN   (laughs)

WHITNEY   I like that better.

JEN   It's funny, she grew up on the Lower East side of Manhattan. Her parents were immigrants and she never really spoke Yiddish, but there were some things that she did say. And, and teach us in Yiddish and, and I think that was one of them, just saying shush, but in this very calming Yiddish way.

WHITNEY   I'm going to remember that sha, sha.

JEN   (laughs)

WHITNEY   All right. So your adult life, you, you had this formative experience in your, in your family life. Talk to us about how you came to study conflict as an adult and now about this book, how this book came about called *Optimal Outcomes*.

JEN   When I got to college, it was pretty clear to me that I wanted to study social psychology mostly by a process of elimination. You know, I remember sitting down with that catalog, course catalog and kind of going, "Nope, Nope. History, Nope. Political science. Nope." And I was very lucky that I went to Tufts university and Tufts had a, uh, it was part of the consortium, continues to part of the consortium at Harvard Law School, the program on negotiation at Harvard Law School, eventually a couple of years later, I found my way there and facilitated workshops and ended up serving on the faculty, uh, uh, at the, for first year law students.

I was teaching the *Getting to Yes* material, *Difficult Conversations* material, which is really essential to the win-win principled negotiation methodology that's taught all around the world today. Um, and this is, you know, late nineties, and I realized it didn't always work, it just didn't always work, even inside of these very lovely organizations where my colleagues and I would go and teach this methodology, teach salespeople, teach lawyers, teach people dealing with contracts where it should work.

You know, there, it wasn't like these were war torn countries we were going into. Um, but I did see that it just didn't always work, even when people applied it with the best of intentions and the kind of largest, most robust skill sets. And so my question was, why? Why doesn't it work? And I

decided to go back to do my PhD in organizational psychology, and I really studied, why do people get stuck in intractable conflict? And it was really out of that question that I decided after those five years that I could spend the rest of my life looking at, why do we get stuck and still not have the answer to, well how do we get out?

WHITNEY   How do we get out? That is the question. How do we get out?

JEN   Yes. Well, we practice, we practice. And so *Optimal Outcomes* has eight practices in the book that are all dedicated and they're all interconnected. So it's not like it's a sequential step by step process, um, but it is a set of eight practices that will help you free yourself from conflict when conflict resolution efforts fail.

WHITNEY   Before we go to those practices, um, what... Can you talk us through one or two situations where you said this, this *Getting to Yes* isn't working, there's an anomaly. What were one or two of the anomalies that you saw that made you say, "I've got to go back and study this more." Can you think of one of those anomalies?

JEN   Yeah. Yeah. I mean the one classic one, I still remember it. I was at a large pharmaceutical company and we're teaching the methodology and a woman raised her hand and said, "But what about when, you know, you're really, really angry." (laughs) And, you know, my colleague and I kind of felt like a deer in headlights. Like uh-huh (affirmative) that's a really great question. (laughs)

            So definitely emotions. And of course other colleagues of mine at the program on negotiation at Harvard Law School have, have written much more about emotions. Dan Shapiro has a book called *Beyond Reason*, and Sheila Heen and Doug Stone and Bruce Patton have written the book *Difficult Conversations* now 20 years ago, that does touch on emotions for sure. And I wanted to go deeper into it. I mean, my entire dissertation was all about the emotion of humiliation and the role that it plays in exacerbating long-term conflict. So, you know, I spent five years thinking about really difficult emotions, like humiliation and rage and anger. So that's, that's for sure, one.

            It's just people getting really, really triggered and so what do you do when you're triggered? So triggered, that the, that all the Buddhist philosophy that you've learned and all the meditating you've done doesn't help, what do you do then?

WHITNEY   Yeah. That's so powerful to me because I, one of the things that I've been thinking a lot about over the last couple of years as I've been trying to climb my own S-curves of, of, you know, making progress as a human being is that, it's interesting when you think about this idea of basically getting to yes, all of that works when I'm not triggered. Right?

JEN   Right.

WHITNEY   But when I get triggered, what do I do? 'Cause nothing matters when we're triggered, we can't see beyond that place where we are so emotional that we don't, we, we can't even function. We revert to probably when we were three or four years old.

JEN   The beauty of knowing what you just said to be true is that there are few things you can do. One of them is I call the work in, in *Optimal Outcomes* practices because it really does take practice to do them. And the reason why it's helpful to practice is because when you're stuck in long-term conflicts or recurring conflicts, it's basically because you've been doing the same thing over and over again. The conversation may sound slightly different. It may be about a slightly different issue than it was two weeks ago, but it's more or less the same because the way we get stuck in these conflict loops is that our conflict habits interact with other people's conflict habits and that forms a pattern of interaction that becomes self-perpetuating. And so the key to breaking free from that conflict loop is to first of all notice what conflict habit you've been using, whether that's avoiding other people or blaming other people or even blaming and shaming yourself.

Or, for some of us who have really been steeped in that getting *Getting to Yes* methodology and principled, any kind of principled negotiation, a win-win methodology. For some of us, our habit is relentlessly collaborating or seeking to collaborate relentlessly with other people even when they're unwilling to cooperate with us. So just noticing what habit you've been using and then note, asking yourself, "Well what habit might the other person, might they be using?" We can only take our best guess. You don't know for sure unless we're them, or we ask them.

WHITNEY   All right.

JEN   And then to notice what the pattern is and then we can say, well what else could I do instead? What would be pattern breaking here?

WHITNEY   Okay, so if I can recap quickly for our listeners. So we've got these, these habits, these conflict habits and you're going to talk about maybe one or two practices that we can do, but the habits you just mentioned are shaming, blaming, overly collaborate and what's the fourth one?

JEN   Avoiding or shutting down.

WHITNEY   Avoiding, okay. So quick little plug for you right now. Hey everybody. I took the quiz. So Jen has a quiz on her website. What, what are, we'll, we'll include it in the show notes, but what is it?

JEN   So optimaloutcomesbook.com/assessment or you could also go to optimaloutcomesbook.com/resources and then there's a ton of other resources and the assessment is there as well.

WHITNEY   I took the quiz. It was very interesting and I would really encourage all of you to take the quiz. So just in case you're interested, 'cause you probably are, my main one was shaming and my secondary one was avoiding. So that was really interesting for me, to discover and maybe you can talk just really at a high level about those four different habits and what, what those are exactly for people. You need to all go read the book, but just at a high level, I think that would be helpful and interesting.

JEN   Sure. Absolutely. So the first one, we blame other people and our, our intentions are good. Their to win the argument, particularly for people who know if you know about yourself that you're competitive. Then sometimes what happens is when we habitually want to win an argument in any situation that we're in it turn, it kind of gets warped into blaming other people, which doesn't help us resolve anything. It just typically produces one of two things. Either the other person blames us back and then we're stuck in a blame, blame pattern.

Or the other person shuts down and avoids us. And that also doesn't help us get what we need to get accomplished most likely. So we're kind of stuck there because they're avoiding. The second habit that we get stuck in is shaming and blaming ourselves. So again, it's kind of on a similar continuum because we're still in a blame mode, but instead of blaming someone else, we're blaming ourselves. So we're saying to ourselves things like, you know, on the positive side, well-intentionally, we're saying, "Oh gosh, I can't believe what just happened. How can I learn from this? How can I do better next time?" And so that's, that can be helpful. But when we do this in a habitual way, we end up getting caught in the negative self-talk and, you know, stewing in that, in that blaming and shaming of ourselves, which doesn't resolve anything. It just keeps us stuck in that conflict while we spin out.

The third habit is avoiding to the point where if we're doing it in a habitual way, in a, in a particular situation, in a recurring way, we are shut down to other people. And so again, our intentions can be good and avoiding conflict can be healthy and helpful. For example, if you're in a situation where you don't care that much about the issue at hand, you don't care that much about the people that you're dealing with, in either one of those two situations avoiding could be healthy and helpful, but when you're doing it in a recurring way, what typically happens is that the

conflict is still there, it's bubbling, it's brewing, it's ready to explode, and then eventually it typically does explode and then you have to deal with it and clean up that mess after. So again, not resolving anything.

And then finally, relentlessly collaborating, which is somewhat counter intuitive. But this was absolutely has been my experience working with a ton of people, particularly in the tech field. In any field where you've been taught that collaboration is key to getting your work done and, and where that actually is true, that collaboration is key to getting your work done. So people have kind of grown up in these kinds of organizations from a young age in their careers. And also now, you know, millennials and people younger growing up learning this from, you know, day one in school.

It can be very helpful obviously to learn how to collaborate and try to create win-win solutions where everyone's happy with the outcome, but when other people are not willing to cooperate with you and/or for whatever reason, the solutions that you or others are bringing to the table are not producing a resolution the way you expect, it is totally fruitless to continue to try to offer option after option after option. And we see this on the international stage, we see this inside of organizations, we see this in family and close relationships. So, you know, you're not resolving anything if you're just sweetly offering option after option and the other person is just where other people are, are shut down, or blaming you back.

WHITNEY   That's so helpful to be able to hear those four. And I know for me, just being aware of what I do from a conflict perspective has been helpful. I, even not knowing you know exactly what the practices are, it's very helpful. What's yours, what's your main conflict habit?

JEN   Mine is to me, not surprisingly, although two colleagues of mine, I had a colleague once say, "I can't believe this is true. Is that really true?"

WHITNEY   (laughs)

JEN   It is blaming others. And you see that in the book. There's a story that runs throughout the book about my conflict with my mom.

WHITNEY   Uh-huh (affirmative).

JEN   And you know, she and I were definitely stuck in a blame, blame pattern.

WHITNEY   So now that we know, now that we're aware of what we do, you alluded to earlier in the conversation, there are some practices that we can implement to help us change those habits and get into patterns that are productive, are constructive, allow us to actually, you describe it, not just resolve but to be free of conflict. Can you talk us through one or two of those?

JEN   Well the first one actually is a practice of noticing how you're stuck. (laughs) So I want to make that very clear that some of these are very simple practices, right? Just noticing how you're stuck. Because if you don't notice the pattern that you're in, it's basically impossible to figure out how to break that pattern, right? Like just logically. So you need to know what pattern you're in, in order to then be able to think of ways to break that pattern. So noticing, "Oh, I'm using blame." And so, and I, I, you know, and these are all pretty different, these four habits are all pretty different. So like it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out, oh, the other person is shut down or the other person is you know, blaming me back or whatever.

Helpful to just notice at first and there's no need at first to do anything except just notice that pattern.

WHITNEY   I like that. I like that idea of just notice because I think sometimes when we become aware of something, we think, "Oh I need to do something immediately." And it's just enough to be aware of it initially, right?

JEN   Yes, absolutely. And I mean you just, you just said it so beautifully. Sometimes the pattern breaking thing to do is not do anything at all. That's the beauty and the power of this work is that if we've been doing, doing, doing, doing, just sitting and pausing is the thing to do. And out of that, we notice things in the situation that we couldn't possibly have noticed. And I've seen this happen so many times. I mean, I've taught this to hundreds of students at Columbia and clients of mine and I can't tell you the power in those moments where someone just, a light bulb goes off and they haven't... Nothing has changed. The only thing that they've done is stop long enough to notice the, the situation in a different way. So to answer your question, that does get us to the second practice in the book, which is all about mapping out the conflict.

And basically the reason why mapping... Well like, I'll tell you what mapping is and why it's so important. Mapping simply requires asking yourself who is involved in this situation and what are any factors, maybe they're events, maybe their background influencing factors, anything in this situation that you think might possibly be influencing it or influenced by the situation. Your job is to take out a piece of paper where you can do this online. There's really cool online conflict mapping software on optimaloutcomesbook.com in the resources people want and just write down as many of those factors and those people and groups as you can on this map. And ideally you know you'd want to like put circles around the people and then lines to show how the people in factors are connected. Just expand your thinking, be creative, put anything on that map that will help you think about the situation in a different way.

WHITNEY   Okay. So I think it's a really interesting exercise and I actually did it with a conflict that I'm having right now and I found it very helpful. You talked about how when you start mapping that out, you'll see other players involved in an, you know that you hadn't expected to see, some, what could be interesting is if you could maybe share a story, either the story with your mom or a story with a client or one of your students where there was a conflict and they thought that the conflict was just between them and another person. But when they started to map it out, they saw that there were many, many forces at play. Can you share a story around that?

JEN   I'm happy to talk about the conflict between me and my mom 'cause it's just so universal.

So my mom and I were really stuck in a longstanding conflict. And as so many of these conflicts go in many ways, you know, it's about nothing and it's also about everything. So one particular day, you know, we were just screaming at each other on the phone and I threw down the phone, and you know, burst into tears and we didn't talk for a few days after that, but of course the entire time I was just stewing and it was mostly about that she always wanted me to call her. And I felt like she kept telling me that I wasn't a good enough daughter, I'm not good enough at, you know, paying attention to her when my life was just so full of being a mom and working and just felt like every single second was, I was just doing my best.

And so we were definitely locked in a blame, blame pattern. And when I mapped it out, it turns out it's not just about me and my mom, but I put all the rest of the family members on that map and saw how, you know, my kids are on that map and my husband's on that map and he's very calm and you know, how could he help? Just seeing my husband on that map, it was like this rock, he's a very calm person. Just seeing him on that map helped me see, "You know what, maybe he is someone who I could have help me here." (laughs) He's kind of a bystander looking on the situation and he would try to help on occasion. But learning from him could have been something that, that, that's helpful. And mapping it helped me to see that.

Also seeing... Something that was so powerful was to see where my mom grew up. I put Brooklyn on the map, which is where she grew up. And I put Grandma Florence on the map and my aunt Shelly on the map and you know, my mom's brother and my aunt and my grandmother had all

passed away and my mom had spent a lot of time on the phone with them when I was a kid. And I knew that, I remember that. And I realized in that moment of mapping that she just wanted to connect with me because they were gone and she wanted to connect. And it just, that's what mapping does. It gives you empathy for other people in a way that's just not possible before you've expanded your thinking in this way.

WHITNEY   One of the things that I found when I was doing the mapping is thinking about, and you've touched on this, this idea of a family where you're, and I don't mean just when you're in a conflict with a family member, but in conflict with anyone, whether it's at work, whether it's in your community, et cetera, is when you start to map and see all the different forces at play for that person, what their childhood was like, what their, their parents' childhood was like and how that informs and influences who they are and the ghost or the demons of, of lives past if you will. And how that's influencing how that person is showing up. And for example, if a person has the, the blaming or the shaming or the avoidance, you know, what is happening and why is that there and why are they so steeped in that behavior?

Like you said, it allows you to have very different compassion. It was interesting, I was sharing with my husband and my daughter after reading your book and, and talking about this mapping exercise, one of the things that my daughter who is taking a gap year, she's about to go to college at UVA, she's a very wise, soul. She said, "You know what I think would be interesting mom, is if you were to draw out that map with a person that you are in conflict with and they drew out a map as well. And then you could compare your maps and see what happens as a way for you to strengthen that relationship and as a way for you to help wage your way through that conflict." And I thought that was really interesting and I wondered if you've seen that happen as well or if you've probably done it and I'm just coming to it thinking it's so exciting, but I'm just wondering what that looks like for you when, when you've done that with people or if you've done it.

JEN   Well, unsurprisingly, your daughter is a real innovator. (laughs)

WHITNEY   (laughs)

JEN   Like mother like daughter I suppose.

WHITNEY   I'll let her know.

JEN   (laughs) That is a fabulous idea. I am sure that someone who I've taught the process has done that and I have not done that. I should put that in the postscript of the book

I think it requires a certain level of, of relatedness and a strong enough relationship to be able to make that request of someone else. But absolutely. I mean what a, what a fascinating thing. That's the fascinating thing. I mean I think your daughter and you have just really hit the nail on the head about what's so powerful about doing mapping is that it's just your perspective.

And that seeing how other people see it is their perspective, and I mean, something I think is equally as fascinating is you can, and I have absolutely seen students and clients do this. You can create multiple different maps that tell the story multiple different ways and you will get multiple different insights from doing that.

WHITNEY   Yeah.

JEN   I tell one story in the book about a student of mine who was involved in a very, very large and very longstanding intergenerational conflict in his family that spanned from Haiti to New York. And you know, he went through probably like seven different drafts of his map before it dawned on him that he needed to put himself at the center of the map in order to make sense of this very complex situation. So there's also, you know, something else just interesting about the mapping is

that it helps both to expand our thinking when we're stuck thinking that, in a black and white way, that it's just about me and my mom, but actually it's more complex than that. And the opposite is also true.

So in the case of this student from Haiti, he was so overwhelmed and I imagine there may be listeners who are in this situation as well. You're just in such an overwhelming conflict that involves so many groups of people. And this is not only true in large families, but it's also true in large organizations and internationally. That it's just mind boggling. I also remember a client of mine who was involved in a large conflict having to do with the mayor's office in New York City and she was just so overwhelmed. And so mapping, what it can do has really crystallized your perspective and give you a sense of here's where I would begin, here's where I might focus my attention first. Maybe I'm going to, you know, maybe I've been focusing on this one group of people and how they're dealing with another group of people and maybe I realized I just have to start with myself or maybe I realize I just have to start inside of that one group and not worry yet about the other group.

WHITNEY   One of the things you said in the book I wanted just quote you and then before we have you go to the final practice that you're going to share, I know there are eight but we'll just do three for today. But one of your quotes, which I love is "The greatest leverage you have for freeing yourself from a tricky emotional dynamic lies in your ability to put your own emotions to work rather than trying to get someone else to change." I think that's really powerful and it really reinforces what you said is practice number one is just be aware of your conflict habit. And then practice number two is to start to build that map and look at what your perspective is. And once you are aware of that and own that, then you're, you're in a better position to change, change that habit. What's your third practice you'd like to share?

JEN   Shadow values. I differentiate between two types of values. One is called ideal values and these are things that we care about in life and that we're proud to say really matter to us. So typically things in an organization like customer first, innovation. Right? On the personal side, things like adventure, spirituality, healthy living. So we're happy to talk about those.

Those ideal values are in contrast to what I call shadow values. And these are things that we really care about in life that we are not happy to admit that we care about. We are not willing to admit we care about them. And not only are we not willing to admit them to other people, but we are not even often willing to admit them to our own selves.

So these things are driving our behavior and we're not even aware that they're driving our behavior. And that gets us so stuck on that conflict loop because it's, these things are oozing out. So what are some examples of classic shadow values? Things like status, power, financial security, competition. And the funny thing about ideal and shadow values is that they can totally differ person to person. So, you know, a shadow value for one person can be an ideal value for someone else and vice versa. I've had people, I've done this exercise for now so many years, and with groups of people, and I have people anonymously go up to flip charts and list out their ideal and shadow values and then we take a step back and we look at what patterns do we notice on these two flip charts. And literally you see the same ideal and shadow values on both lists. Even things like love as a shadow value, right?

So some people grow up with in a family... You know, if you've grown up in a family where love was maybe there, but people didn't talk about it, people didn't say, I love you. It can feel really vulnerable to admit that, that is something that you care about. The power of acknowledging our own shadow values is this, first of all, they've been there all along. It's not like once you notice them, now they're suddenly there. It's that they were always inside of you. But once we acknowledge them, we have the power to notice there's not necessarily something that's so horrible about them and we can actually choose our thoughts, our actions and our words based on, based on these shadow values, we can choose how we want to deal with them. So for example...

WHITNEY   Before you do that.

JEN   Yeah.

WHITNEY   Before you use that example.

JEN   Yeah.

WHITNEY   Can you just connect the dots for us?

JEN   Yeah.

WHITNEY   Why do our shadow values lead to conflict?

JEN   So if I really care about being recognized for my achievements but I'm unwilling to admit that even to my own self, it's kind of just buried down there. And I say that I'm somebody who cares about doing a job, well done. And that's my ideal value is kind of excellence, let's say. But my, shadow value is recognition. So I might be going around inside of my organization either, you know, showing off about my achievements or asking other people for their approval in kind of stealthy ways. Right? I'm probably not necessarily coming right out and saying to my boss, "Hey, it would be really nice if you would give me the award for like, best employee." (laughs)

WHITNEY   Right.

JEN   I'm probably not saying these things directly. I'm doing them in these kind of stealthy maneuvers that are probably pissing off the people that I work with. Confusing my boss. Why am I acting like this? They're pointing their fingers at me saying, "God, she's so snooty." Or like she's like thinks she knows everything. Why is she always acting that snooty way?

               And it's because there's this shadow value driving my behavior without my realizing it. And of course everyone else around me realizes it. They don't know though what it is. Because I don't walk around with a sign on my head that says, you know, this is my shadow value.

WHITNEY   Yeah.

JEN   So, but they're pointing their fingers at me accusing me of this, of being a certain way that I don't want to be acting, right. I don't want to be coming across as I'm so snooty. But it's because I care about being recognized. And you know what the truth is? Is it so bad to want to be recognized in some cultures, maybe in some national and in organizational cultures, maybe. And that's why we drive these shadow values down because we've been taught at some point along the lines of our lives that they're not okay.

WHITNEY   Interesting. Okay. So once you know what your shadow values are, then you're going to do things that are in conflict with what you say your values are. It creates this dissonance. And because they're sort of this desperation for validation in some way, it really puts people off because we're not at our best self in that moment. And so that's leading to conflict. Okay.

JEN   That's right.

WHITNEY   I got it. All right. You can go through and look at what your values are. And one of the things that I noticed for myself is that you're like, well how do you know what your shadow values are? At least for me. And maybe I, I'd be curious to see what you find. Is that your, ones that you know are kind of your stated values that you're comfortable as you go past them and you're like, "Yeah,

that's me." So like mine were achievement, affiliation, wisdom. Those were all my stated values that I'm perfectly happy to trump it to all of the world.

The ones that were my shadow ones. And I wonder if there's any on, uh, connection between the word shadow and shame, but my shadow ones were, and these I think are the ones that we start, we see them and we resonate with them, but we feel embarrassed that we resonate with them. So there's something, there's experience that I had with these ones and mine were affluence, status and recognition. And so that was really interesting for me. And so what you're saying is I need to be aware of those things. And anybody who's struggling with any of our shadow values is we need to be aware of them because if we're in conflict with someone, it's quite possible that our need for those things is somehow embedded in the mix and if we can be aware of that, that will help us pull ourselves down from that conflict precipice, if you will.

JEN   Yes, and I would say it slightly differently and just say it's not that you need to be, it's that if your goal is to free yourself from a conflict situation that's been recurring frustratingly over and over and over again, you're having the same exact fight with someone or you just can't figure out how to disentangle yourself or even trying to resolve something and it seems like no matter what you do, you're not resolving anything at all. If that's your goal, then it helps to become aware of what your shadow values might be. And by the way, I love Whitney that you identified what your shadow values are. I'm curious if you did that in the context of the particular conflict that you were thinking about. I always encourage people, you know, our value... We have multitudes of shadow values inside of us and different ones of them are more and less relevant depending on the situation that we're, or the context that we're in. So if, so, if people want to think about what their shadow values are, you can think about them in a global general way. And it also can be very helpful to think about in that particular situation. What are my shadow values? Right.

WHITNEY   Oh, that's interesting. Okay. That's super useful. I did not think about it. I thought about it in a global stance, but now that you said that, I'm like, "Oh yeah, I can see how those things are playing out." So that's interesting.

It's so interesting. It's such good stuff. Okay. Where can people find you, if they want, I think they can find you at optimaloutcomesbook.com, but where can they find you? Obviously for everybody who is, not obviously. For everybody who's listening, Jen has graciously agreed to make three signed copies of her book available. So if you're signed up for the newsletter, you will be, and we're going to do a giveaway. You'll be eligible to get one of her books. It is really, really good, and if any of you are trying to figure out how to be conflict free, which is pretty much all of us, you're going to want to listen to that book. But how else can people find you, Jen?

JEN   Well, the best way is on optimaloutcomesbook.com, you can sign up for the newsletter, goes out with great tips, um, to help free yourself from conflict twice a month. And also of course online on LinkedIn at Jen Goldman-Wetzler and also Twitter and Facebook and Instagram as well.

WHITNEY   Fantastic. Um, any other thoughts that you would like to share, um, or advice that you would like to share as we wrap up?

JEN   I think the main point of *Optimal Outcomes* is all about, like I've said, is about doing something different than you've done before. So if you would like to free yourself from a recurring conflict, just ask yourself, what would be pattern breaking here? What action could I take that would be different from what I've done before? And take that pattern-breaking action. Think ahead. There's other practices in the book like think ahead about what that, what potential unintended consequences could come from you taking that pattern-breaking action. So of course think ahead before you take the action, but then, you know, take a pattern-breaking action, taking into account some of those unintended consequences that you might identify and there's tons of resources to help you do that online and in the book.

WHITNEY   So I guess my very last question for you is, as you've done all of this research and this is really become your life's work, what has been one of the most profound differences for you and how you conduct yourself on a daily basis as a consequence of this work that you, you do? How has it influenced you in your life in how you will live your life today?

JEN   That's a great question. I'm going to answer in two ways. The first is just constantly reminding myself. The first thing that came to me is just constantly reminding myself that life is practice. It's just all about practice. And so we, we take action, we learn from it, we dust ourselves off, we get back up again and we practice again.

              So that's the first thing. And related to that, the second thing is courage. Just having the courage to flex those muscles. Try something new. You know, I started doing CrossFit while I was writing the book, which is something that was totally outside of my comfort zone. I'm a big like walk/runner and I've done that for many, many years. But doing CrossFit and lifting like a big barbell over my head was not something I was ever, had ever done before. And it kind of went along with the writing of the book because the book is very much in the last chapter in particular, I write about the courage that it takes to do something different, to break a pattern. So, you know, sometimes it can help to do that physically by doing something that's totally outside of your comfort zone, but you know, there's no doubt about it. The, the practices that we're talking about are ones that will really require courage.

WHITNEY   Jen Goldman-Wetzler, thank you so much for being with us.

JEN   Thank you so much for having me Whitney.

When emotions are high, when we're triggered by what is happening, a resolution may seem impossible. We can get trapped in cycles of blame and shame and the entitlement we try so hard to fight as we move up our S Curves of learning takes over. With these practices, it's possible to take a step back, see others as people, not objects, and move forward.

Couldn't help but think of my conversation with Donna Hicks in Episode 92, that without preserving the other person's dignity, you will never truly resolve the conflict. And Asi Burak, Episode 15, who creates games that put players inside high-stakes conflicts and forces them to make choices that not only have a huge impact on the game, but in the real world as well.

Having a practice for dealing with conflict is especially important now. Emotions are high, we're in a constant tug of war between fear and hope in our brains, and you might be in the middle of a conflict right now with someone you're sheltering in place with. If you've been feeling triggered, use these practices. You may also want to re-listen to Susan David in Episode 157 where she offers valuable tools on how to work through feeling triggered.

You can be surrounded by whirlwinds of craziness and still be at peace within—in the emotional eye of the hurricane. Just as you work to keep yourself physically safe, may these practices help you stay emotionally safe.

Thank you again to Jen Goldman-Wetzler for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Whitney Jobe, manager and editors Macy Robison and Melissa Rutty, content contributor Nancy Wilson, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.