**Overcoming working mom burnout**

**Episode 4: Valuing our mastery and stepping into our power to support other women with branding expert Juju Hook**

**Juju:** My name is Juju Hook, and I have a 20 year old son named Christian, who is in his freshman year in college. I am a brand strategist. I was an agency owner for many years, and now I work with women generally over 50 and branding themselves or branding their small businesses.

**Jacqueline:** Great. Thanks so much. So briefly, describe your journey to where you are now. What was your process to coming to this place?

**Juju:** Oh my gosh, it's been a long journey.

**Jacqueline:** And don't tell me it, wasn't straight and narrow. I've been having this discussion. I don’t know why we think it's going to be straight and narrow for a career. And it really isn't and motherhood throws in a whole other, wrench. So go ahead.

**Juju:** It really does. I always knew that I wanted to be a writer. I have an undergraduate degree in creative writing and I came out of college and worked attempt jobs straight out of college to try to, get my footing and. Ended up in a marketing department, fulfilling a role for marketing manager while they were doing a job search and long and short of it ended up getting the job.

They tried to re they tried for, I think, six or seven months to replace this woman. And they couldn't find a suitable replacement. And by that time I was already doing the job. And so I got a marketing manager job very early. It was in my early twenties and ended up going back and getting an MBA, which was definitely not on the list, but I was so consumed by the potential of what could happen next.

And I was an ambitious young woman. I was a fast tracker and so I worked my way up to VP level and never really loved it. I didn't love being an executive. I. Did adapt pretty quickly to the financial lifestyle of it though. So it was very hard to extract myself from it. After about 10 years, I ended up as a marketing manager at jacuzzi and managed a number of their brands and then got pregnant.

So I was in my early thirties, almost mid thirties when I got pregnant and I just didn't want to travel internationally anymore. It was a really demanding position that I was in . And so I left there and I opened my own agency and I had Jacuzzi as a client first. So it really helped me kick off a new business.

And then for about 14 or 15 years, I ran a boutique branding agency and my specialties were banking and automotive, which are the industries that I came up in and understood best. And I did really well. The agency was really good to us financially, and I met a lot of awesome people and I did a lot of great work.

And just about the time I was approaching 50, maybe 47, 48, I lost my luster for it and started to have a lot of feelings around. Is this all there is. And am I just going to help, continue helping big corporations instead of stuff, dollar bills in their pockets and just had a lot of sinking feeling that I wasn't where I was supposed to be. And it made me feel agitated. I was doing all different kinds of things to cope and make the feeling go away. And eventually I decided to a trip, my clients, and to help the folks that were working with me and for me find other jobs. And I shut down the agency and started to work with other midlife women who were feeling the way I was feeling and to help them launch businesses and launch brands.

And it's just been amazingly rewarding.

**Jacqueline:** Great. And your storyline reminded me, and you hadn't mentioned this yet is your book, which I'll let you say the title of, cause it's a long one and I'll mess it up. But I remember in your book the principal of the school, telling you to get a job so that you didn't bug your son so much.

**Juju:** So the book is called ‘Hot flashes, carpools and dirty martinis. The quintessential guide for turning midlife into primetime’. As I approached 50, our son, came into adolescence, into puberty. And menopause and puberty is not a great mix. It's really, it's extremely volatile.

And I know there are a lot of women who are deciding to have kids later. But I was very involved in Christian's life and I think the more dissatisfied and really bored that I became with my own career, the more involved I got with him and I had created a life for myself inside my agency where I didn't have to work a whole lot.

This was the goal was to get to the point where I did strategy only and where I was still making great money, but I wasn't having to show up because zillion hours a day, and to solve that whole, no more hustle dream. But when I did that, I was really without purpose. And I don't think I was really in touch with how invasive I had become in Christian's life.

And the principal noticed and called me and said, what's going on at your house. And Christian seems to be under a lot of pressure. And, he's, he seems really stressed out and I unloaded about Christian's commitment level and what I was concerned about for him, which is, what if he always skates through and what if he just has a mediocre life and what if he doesn't step up to the challenge and blah, blah, blah.

And the principal just said to me, hey, listen I couldn't say this to every parent, but you and I have a relationship and I don't think this is about him. I think this is about you. And it was a real slap in the face in the moment. And he said, Christian doesn't really need you that way anymore.

At this point you're guide rails, right? He doesn't really need you to be involved. He just needs you to be available. And he challenged me to go do something that frightening go do something that, that terrified me was actually what he said. And so I decided to write a book. I had wanted to write a book since I was, a child.

And so I set out on a journey to write a book and ended up on stage speaking and did the things that terrified me in it. And it led me in an entirely new direction. And I'm forever grateful for his appeal.

**Jacqueline:** That's great. And I love the book. That's how I found you. And it's full of really practical advice and questions, all our beliefs about midlife and aging and what comes next.

So I've really appreciated that book and appreciated finding you as a branding coach as well. Some of what use some of what you say that makes me want to, how much of a perfectionist are you and was that also putting pressure on your son? Because I've started to own that part of who I am and I worry about the expectations I put on everyone around me.

**Juju:** I'm not sure if it was perfectionism that drove me as much as the belief that my productivity level was somehow tied to my worth as a human. I used to think that I was really pressure prompted, that's what I told myself, that a deadline would pressure me. And I call them werewolf cages. Very often I have to build myself a werewolf cage, so I get things done. But I also think that being in an agency environment for so many years, and even in a marketing department environment for so many decades, that everything is deadline driven.

And so that cycle of creating and producing and hitting these amazing highs and then collapsing and then doing it all again, it becomes a really common cycle in that industry. And I think a lot of other project driven industries. And so I don't know how that was wrapped up in my perfectionism.

I do know that I grew up in a house with six boys. My dad was not really interested in me when I was a young girl and I always really strived to be taken as seriously as they were. And I think the productivity and the thought of doing something worthwhile and wanting people to see me and respect me and, for me to have my seat at the table that really drove me.

And my husband has also very much of a type A and our son is not a type a kid. And so I think that was a real learning experience and still is a learning experience for us around how different he is from us and what drives him. And because that's so tied into my self worth, it's really hard for me to, pull myself back from that as a parent and not put that pressure on me.

**Jacqueline:** So let's talk let's take a little bit on the parenting role for a moment. I will get to your role as the coach and all the clients that you work with because you see so many people struggling and I'm sure patterns in those struggles, but let's stick with Christian for a moment because you shared with me before we got on there that, as a parent, you are struggling in this moment.

So tell me a little more about that.

**Juju:** Yeah. Christian went off to Boston. And then COVID hit. And fall semester of his freshman year in college was done from the kitchen table. It was very angsty and very depressing for him. He missed his high school graduation. He missed prom. It just was a really difficult time.

He had a breakup with his first love and he and I were trapped in the house together from August till, through Christmas. And it just was real tensions mounted, as the time went on. And so when January came, they had, they gave the kids an opportunity to come to campus.

And it was really hard to let go. It wasn't at all, how we expected things to go. We couldn't travel with them. We didn't get to see who he was moving in with or where he was going. It was just a real unsettling separation for us. He was thrilled, he just got on the plane and waved goodbye.

And they didn't have in-person classes. And so he continued to study online through spring semester and they did give us money for credits for summer semester, because we had agreed to pay for the online classes. And so our agreement with him was you gotta go somewhere too, right? You gotta use the money, the extra money that they gave us.

And so I think he has a real challenge for him. The online school. It's not what he expected it to be. I think the level of demands from the university and what the program's and I just think it, I think college is a shock for a lot of kids. And this situation makes it that much more shocking.

And so he's struggling emotionally and he's struggling mentally. And that's a really hard thing to be distant from. So I thought that he would go and everything. I can't say, I thought everything would be great, but I did think it would be easier once he moved out. And I have to say that this is, this has been one of the hardest periods as a parent that I've had yet.

Yeah. I think the level of worry that you have about your kids once they leave, it's just a different kind of worry. And knowing that he needs to individualize it and knowing that he needs his time away from us and that, he has to make choices and he has to be allowed to fail right.

Or not. And not reach out is really hard. In fact, I was just telling someone the other day, it's trying not to call your ex you're just constantly want to dial the phone. And I know I shouldn't do this cause it's not going to go well. It's not going to be good for me.

And I'm going to be sorry I did it, but it's really hard not to. Yeah.

**Jacqueline:** You mentioned that, just that additional stress and of supporting him in the best way you can. And again, just learning what is the best way at this new phase in life is always hard. You mentioned that has led you to take a bit more space in your business time.

So that's one of the things I think a lot of women are leaving their jobs to run businesses and they're often leaving their jobs because they're burned out. And that's a part of burnout is that it does lead to a change in a job because if you can't change the situation at your work, that's really the principal cause for burnout is when you leave.

So often they're coming in then running businesses. But to me running it's an, a business has its own burnout risks. So maybe you could talk a little bit about that and how maybe you've prevented that cause you've taken a little break,

**Juju:** I have suffered from burnout a number of times in my career.

Burnout for women as especially the women that I work with that the first feeling that comes is resentment, I feel resentful put upon, and I know that resentment really results from one of two things, which is an inability to set boundaries or a lack of self-care. And without those two things, it's just really easy to feel pressured and over committed and that.

I have experienced that a number of times in my career, especially in situations that I didn't want to be in this time was a little bit different for me because I had chosen my path very carefully and chosen this business very carefully and really curated my clients. But during COVID I was leading a group of 15 women in a program called the Cut.

Every one of them business owners, every one of them building a personal brand. And when COVID hit, almost all of them had to pivot. And so there was this massive amount of space that I was holding for all of these women, really trying to remain calm and I'm a strategist. So it was all about solving problems, right?

How do we strategize and how do we get you from A to B and get things turned around and get some money coming in the door and all of these questions that were prevalent for everyone during COVID. At the same time, my husband runs a business. And he had, when COVID started almost a hundred employees, it was really taxing on him.

We're apart during the week, he runs a business in Arizona. I was in California where I ran my business and where Christian went to school. And so that was really taxing. There was a tremendous amount of space. I was holding there. And then I was also holding space for Christian. And when things started to die down around COVID and once we got vaccinated and things started to open up and it wasn't really necessary for me to be there that way.

For so many people, I crashed. And it was just this feeling of which I think happens so often, right during the stress we're handling it, we're in it, we're plugging away. And then you get this moment of respite and I just crashed. And I did what I think a lot of women do at first, which is that I stopped doing what I said I was going to do, or I stopped doing the things that I had committed to at full force, but I didn't claim it. And so then in there's always a bit of self-sabotage right. Or guilt or whatever it is, I have all these things on my plate and I just need a break. And that created real conflict for me.

The not claiming it, I felt guilty. So here I wanted to relax and I couldn't relax. And so I had a therapist who helped me with that and said, listen, if you're, if you want to step away, you need to claim stepping away and what that looks like. And I kept all my coaching contracts and I kept the group open that I'd started, but I decided that for an undetermined period of time, I wouldn't seek any new business and I wouldn't do any promotion, no social media, no nothing to generate business because that's really where the pressure is.

And then I would just serve. And so I've been in that space for about, five, five or six weeks now. And I'm just really glad that I did it. And I needed this space to, to go through what I need to go through, to be a parent, to Christian as an adult. And that, that really is a transition that I needed space to make.

And it's a painful transition for me, much more painful than I anticipate.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much for sharing that Juju because it is it's hard. And I think, when I hear what you said about you made the choices to make this life for yourself, and then when we feel burned out for it, there is a lot of concern that we've done the wrong thing.

I don't hear you saying that. I really think that the way you thought through it was great and you need to get help to ask a therapist. I think that's what I see in all my coaches, all the coaches get coaching, right? You guys know how beneficial it is. So you do it for yourselves. And I think that's so important.

**Juju:** I think, I have struggled with mental health issues from the time I was very young. I was a very depressed young woman. We had a lot of chaos in our house. I grew up in a real kind of codependent, enmeshed, emotionally chaotic family. And by the time I was 11 or 12, I was very depressed.

And as, as a high school student really depressed. And as a young adult, I was, saw a therapist and was on medication and all different kinds of things. And I would say early thirties, I really learned how to put my mental and emotional health first. And I think it became really aware to me.

I became really aware of the fact at that point that if I didn't handle that first, that nothing else could follow, it was just the way that I'm wired. And then I started to learn the tools and to invest in all different kinds of learning experiences around how I could maximize my mental and emotional health.

And when this hit this last time. And I started to feel the depression, which I haven't felt in a very long time. I knew, if I don't do something about this, if I don't handle this, then I'm going to, I'm going to get sick or I'm going to let someone down or I'm going to create a crisis. And so I did, I reached out normally I would have reached out for a coach, but in this case, I reached out for a therapist and I did because for a couple of reasons, first of all, I knew I was feeling depressed, but also because I didn't really feel square around the decisions of letting go, I only have one son and I've never been around anyone who's done that. Really being close proximity in terms of, a kid going off to college and I didn't have this kind of relationship with my parents was a totally different situation. So it was never modeled for me. And I wasn't sure, what, where was I over-correcting and where was I maybe preventing him from being as resilient as he could be?

Where was I playing out my emotional issues in his life. And I think having a therapist to bounce that stuff off of has really been beneficial.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much for sharing that Juju. And I think it's so important for women who have experienced burnout to be able to recognize, burnout symptoms again. I have this fear I've burned out once it's going to happen again. And I can see why, cause I'll go into something with so much energy and ambition and the same scenarios will happen and I'm learning to try not do things in the same way, but at the same time also learning to recognize like the cues that I experienced. And I was chatting last week with a head of a school and an academic school and she had burned out previously. And then now was on a sabbatical because she started to experience the same thing. So I was saying to her, what are your cues? And she was like, oh, I start missing meetings. I start being late to meetings. So she just had this little thing that was her cue. Me, I think it's I get anxious when I drive, I start to feel really tight in the chest when I drive the car and I'm like, oh that's my trigger.

And that was my trigger when I went into burnout was definitely struggling to breathe and things like that. It sounds like you have the same you can recognize when you're feeling depressed.

**Juju:** Yeah. And mine's really all around sadness and a kind of an apathy. So what happens with me is that I just have these feelings of, I don't want to participate.

I'll have meetings or things coming up or things I'm supposed to do. And my constant thought is I don't want to do that. I don't want to go. I hope so-and-so cancels. I hope this happens. And there becomes this resistance to experience because all of the experiences require something of me and I don't have anything left to give.

And so I think recognizing that, and then I think also, pervasive sadness, It signifies all different kinds of things. And I know when I'm not in a good spot. And so does my husband, we've been together for 22 years and he also said, hey, listen, you're, I think you're going down a rabbit hole here. I haven't seen you like this in a long time. And so I'm reaching out for help for me is I don't, there's no stigma around that for me at all. I think there is a stigma around not doing what I'm supposed to do, always back to that productivity. And so this idea of claiming it and saying, this is what I'm gonna do.

And, I also want to acknowledge that I'm really privileged to be able to claim to be in a situation where I can say at this point in my life, hey, I'm going to pull back. Not everyone is in that position. And so there, I think there are probably all different kinds of interim ways that on a spectrum from that women deal with burnout.

**Jacqueline:** Thanks for mentioning that, choice situation too, because I was posting on that, around the great resignation and it's great when people have that choice, but not everyone does.

**Juju:** Correct. Yeah. And hopefully with the great resignation people who didn't have choices before will have better choices.

Now, I think this is the first time in a long time that the workforce in America has really pushed back. And it will be really interesting to see how it all shakes out in terms of what becomes required of employers in order to keep people.

**Jacqueline:** So let's talk a little more about your business and your clients, because as you mentioned, your you're very much helping midlife women pivot, and I love your whole message so that the rest of our lives are going to be so enjoyable that we're going to want to live those next 30 40 50 years. That's just such a message that I believe in too. So it resonated so well with me. And again, it's not everyone that's looking at post-menopause in that way. I appreciate that you're in that space. So how often are women pivoting because they're experiencing burnout and I think for me, I called it my midlife crisis, and that's why I resonated with where you were, but actually now I've been learning about burnout I recognize it was burnout and that feels a better term to me. Tell me about how often the women you're working with have experienced some sort of burnout or crisis?

**Juju:** A lot. So crisis is an interesting word, right? Because women perceive this different ways. I think the reason that it comes in midlife is because we are suddenly presented with a set of transitions all at once.

Here you come to a certain age and you're in perimenopause or, heading into menopause needs to begin to have all these physical changes and emotional changes around hormones. And then body shape changes. So a lot of women start to feel self-conscious around that or to feel invisible.

And then, our relationships with our parents change. If they're still alive. Most of us enter midlife with both of our parents alive. And by the time we leave midlife our parents are gone. And those of us who have kids, same thing, we enter midlife with our kids at home and then there's this big transition of our kids out of the house.

And I think that all of that then affects our relationships with our partners if we have partners. And so there's just this massive amount of transition and the transition often feels like loss, and we're all taught when we're young women that I'm gonna grow up and I'm gonna go to college and this is going to be my job and I'm going to start a family, and this is what my life's going to look like.

Whatever these dreams that we have and the plans generally about 50 years long, but nobody talks about the fact that you're going to hit 50 and B need to do it again. And we have this impression I'm going to go through menopause and I'm going to die, but you don't die because there's another 35 years to go.

**Jacqueline:** Or another 50 as AARP are advertising it.

**Juju:** Exactly right. So it's just not a conversation that a lot of people are having. And so the women that I'm working with really often, what happens is they get the impression that they're finished with what I call their mastery. So like with me, it was very easy to say, I don't want to do branding anymore.

I'm done, I've been doing this for 25 years. I'm out, I'm going to close down the agency and I'm out. But what I find is that women don't really want to begin again. What they want to do is experience life in a different way. They want to be turned on again and lit up again and in control of how they expend their energy.

And so those pivots, if you can stay in your mastery, but deliver it in a new way, often times the burnout will shift. So I have women who maybe are corporate accountants, who then decide that they're going to be CFOs for hire for small businesses or women who are, I have an amazing client who is a trauma therapist for many years and got to a point in midlife where she had just been exposed to and absorbed trauma from so many people that she just didn't want to work with trauma patients anymore, but was really excited to become a coach and work with women who were well, right, to go next level.

So I think that the burnout is very common and it comes in all different kinds of forms. I'm sick of this, I'm over it, or I can't take anymore. Or is this all there is right. Is this, what's the purpose, what am I doing here? I think it's very common in midlife.

**Jacqueline:** And thanks for describing it in so many different ways. Cause I think that can be really helpful for people to hear those different questions and go, oh yeah, that one's me. Cause I think sometimes people don't recognize necessarily with where they're at in terms of burnout.

**Juju:** I think a lot of times midlife and I believe that there's a physical trigger for this in menopause.

We have an amazing desire to circle back. So there comes this thinking about things that we maybe gave up or that we didn't give a try to when we were young that we wish we'd try. I always wanted to write that book or I always wanted to paint or you, you just hear a tremendous number of people write hooking up with their high school boyfriend get remarried again. There's this really strange circle back to unfinished business. And I think some of that comes from burnout as well. Some of it I think is quite natural, but some of it comes from burnout as well. And so women, they feel dissatisfied or they feel unfulfilled or they feel agitated or they have this sense of wanderlust or all these things that come up and it's presented as a problem.

And my perspective and my goal with all the women I work with is not to see it as a problem, but to see it as an opportunity and as a place to pause and decide, okay, what's my 40 year plan.

**Jacqueline:** And I think one of the beautiful things you do in your coaching and in your workshops is talk about mastery and our superpowers. And that, that was just something I didn't really see that I had. And it was so helpful to hear other women claim their superpowers and then realized what was mine, because I think I was trying to throw the baby out with the bath water saying, okay, I'm done with that. I've burnt out from that. It's gone. I'm not that person. Whereas you really show, no, this is a mastery like you described that you can now apply in a different way.

**Juju:** By the time you're a midlife, you've mastered all kinds of things. It doesn't matter what kind of career you've had or whether or not you've had children.

If you just, by virtue of the fact that you've walked, four or five decades on the planet, you've gotten really good at certain things. And the idea that those things can only be played out in one way is part of burnout. We become really fixated on what it is that we're doing.

That's causing us some degree of distress and you're right. So we throw the baby out with the bath water, I'm finished with this. So we're just not really super excited about beginning again. And so then there's this strange distress too around I'm done with this, but I really don't want to start something new. That seems so hard. And so then we feel depleted by our options.

And what I love about pivoting with the mastery is it's not really about beginning again, it's about opening doors in a new way and maximizing on all the time that we've put in, now comes the payoff, right?

**Jacqueline:** And that's such a hopeful approach. So tell me a little bit about what are the main problems or patterns particularly in your working mum clients as they're trying to pivot, to having their own business.

**Juju:** So most of mine, most of the women I work with their kids are either teens or they're launching like Christian is. Especially the women with daughters, I noticed that there's a real lot of emotional enmeshment in what their daughters are experiencing and what they're experiencing. In other words, I don't know where my kids' emotions and mine begin.

And so as teens are going through high school and experiencing an angst and challenges and things like that, I think moms are experiencing them too. And I noticed that it really contributes to this feeling of being overdone. I think the women who are a little further along like me, there's all, there are all kinds of issues around your kids, launching just all kinds of issues or failing to launch and moving out and moving back and all of these kinds of issues.

I think too that there becomes more and more of a requirement, especially here in the states for our kids to be occupied and entertained all the time. We're at a young age, you're committed to all of your kids' activities. And as teens, it's on a different level, right?

You're really showing up for your kids in all different kinds of ways, based on what it is that they desire to do and how they're going to express and how they're going to show up. And it's just, it's a lot, it's incredibly demanding. And on top of that, most of the women who I work with are really driven.

That's how they end up with me is this idea of I've accomplished this and this and this and this. And now and it's uncomfortable for them to feel stuck in that way. So all these women who are driven and then they have driven kids or they're driving their kids. It's a lot, it's overwhelming.

And I just don't think men experience it in the same way and they don't shoulder it in the same way that women do.

**Jacqueline:** And maybe I was a little different in that sense, because I have a seven year old. I know a lot more women who are having kids later, but I think that was part of my struggle in burnout was that, my kids were still so young and I was at the top of my career and should have been able to just fly at that stage.

I'd invested so much in, I should have been able to start coasting. I burned out my, my daughter was still in, in preschool. We still had a nanny, and I actually, that was what happened is she went into preschool full time.

So I let the nanny go. And then it was just like, oh my God, everything is on me now.

**Juju:** And it's no wonder, it's no wonder women burn out. And one of the things I always say to the women I work with is would you put this on someone else? Would you, if you had a friend or someone you cared about, would you say here's all the things I want you to do, I take care of all of this and you would never would, you would never put that on someone else.

And it's funny when I remember when I was a young executive, my boss told me I can't get promoted until you can do my job. So I'm going to teach you how to do my job, and then I want you to take everything in your job that you don't want and let's pass that down to the first person under you.

And in this way, everyone can advance. And it's a business, absolutely beautiful strategy inside an organization, but it doesn't work in real life for women because there isn't anybody to pass anything on to. And so it's just escalating and escalating. And as you're moving toward the height of your career, then your kids are also experiencing new level challenges.

And it's just no wonder that women burn out. And if you look from the outside in, it's shocking that women do as well as they do, to be honest, I think that the requirements are outrageous

**Jacqueline:** We're resilient.

**Juju:** Absolutely. Yep. Yep. No doubt.

**Jacqueline:** So one of the things that you really recognized in me and shared about yourself as well is, my struggle to be able to pivot, to launch a new business was about my lack of self-belief.

And that's something you also own in yourself, you call it my grand canyon. So talk a little bit about that. How often that is a barrier in the women you work with. How do you help people? It's a big one, right? It's a big canyon. How do people get out of it?

**Juju:** I would say that self doubt or some form of self doubt or some form of a minimized self impression is part of the struggle with every woman I coach without fail.

Part of it is just a monster voice in our heads, right? That this idea of the moment that we step into something bigger than we're in now, there comes a time and our brains don't really do well with risk, right? Your brains is just a prediction machine and just wants things to be the same day after day.

And as soon as we make these pivots or we make a step, then your brain starts to cry out. Don't do that. Whose idea was that this is a terrible idea. And we come to take those thoughts as truth, and they're not truth. It's just it is literally the way your brain is designed to work is to stop you from doing these things.

And so that, I think at the minimal level, everyone's going through that. But then most of us as young women, we developed some issues around our worth. We live in a world where we're valued less. And so these things that women want to do by the time they're in their fifties, they often feel audacious to women or who am I to want them?

Who am I to have this? Who am I to choose to do something? Just because it makes me happy. And it's irresponsible for me to make this change or to open this business. And we have all these kind of lies that we tell ourselves about what we're supposed to be doing and what's necessary in order for us to be worth something. And it's hooey it's. Every single woman that I work with, I think perceives it in some way.

And for some women, it manifests itself in all different ways. For instance I have some women who I coach who just don't charge enough. So their self-worth issues essentially bleed over into how they're valuing the services they provide. So they set up businesses for themselves where they can't profit, and they step out of the frying pan and into the fire. So now they've left corporate and they're in their own business and they're in a money trap. And the way out of the money trap is to increase their prices to market level or to create a premium brand. And that issue of self-value or self-worth prevents them from doing that.

They can't ask for the money. And so really often my coaching centers around dealing with that very issue that you said, this is a self-worth issue for me. It's a perception issue, or a self doubt issue. And when that is addressed, everything else begins to expand.

**Jacqueline:** That's true. And I think what I appreciated about how you coach me was to say, it's not going to go away. You're not suddenly going to be yeah have self-belief for the rest of your life. You described it as how quickly are you going to climb out of the hole?

**Juju:** Yeah, that's exactly right. It doesn't go away and it doesn't go away for anyone.

This is the one thing that I felt like I really had to share with our son when he was growing up, that I wish someone would have shared with me when I was young, is that this insecurity that you're feeling, everyone feels. It's just part of the human condition and we feel so isolated in it.

We feel so alone in it. And when you recognize that everyone's feeling it and just in different ways, it's just manifesting itself in different ways and every human, but we're all afraid that we're not a lot enough and that we're not going to be worthy of love and that we're going to be judged.

And we don't want to feel those things. And we do a tremendous number of things to avoid feeling those things. And when you recognize that's not going to stop and the real key is how do I keep going? Even though I feel that way, right? How do I get back up when I get knocked down? How do I step through the fear, even though I'm feeling it, how do I bounce back, I think the other thing that happens when we make these pivots and midlife, especially for women who start new businesses is we have a little bit of success entitlement. If you have achieved mastery and you've gotten to a certain level, and then you decide to open a business, there's a sort of this feeling of I can do this. It's this really strange teeter-totter of, I'm not enough and I should be successful in the first month. And I can remember when I closed down the agency and switched to this online business model on my first thought was this is going to be really easy for me. I've been doing marketing for decades.

I got a leg up and it was not easy. There was nothing easy about it. But then we tend to see things in terms of success or failure. And we forget that life is just a series of trials. We try and then we course correct. And we try and we course correct. And we try and we course correct.

And if our sense of self is attached to our results, It's very hard to make the course corrections, because what happens is we try, we perceive failure. We go into a hole, right? We lick our wounds. We suffer. We crawl back out. We try again. And it's a very painful process versus I'm going to be curious, right?

I'm going to try these things. I'm curious about what works and what doesn't, I'm going to make some moves and I'm gonna try the next thing. And the women who can stay in curiosity versus judgment, they get further, faster with less pain.

**Jacqueline:** So one of the things I was thinking about is that, many mums do set up their own businesses to gain autonomy and live the values that they want, that maybe where they had conflict in values in the workplace they were in. They have autonomy. And so that can prevent burnout. But do you think we're losing our opportunity to sit at the corporate table and make change there?

**Juju:** Yes and no. That's a tough question. I think sitting at the corporate table and making change there, I think that's, it's a worthy fight. I don't think we can give up the fight, but I don't think so many women are leaving corporate and going into their own businesses that we can't still fight the fight.

And every industry has an opportunity to create a more diverse slate of people at the top. I don't even think we have an in a single industry in America that's that is diverse at the top. And I think there are ways to do that without sitting at the corporate table.

So I'm really reticent to say that women should stay in so they can do it for other women. I think that in my mind, that's real dicey. I have a client, a beautiful client, named Joan Hutchison who teaches self-care as a form of activism. And this idea that the way that we fight back the way that we push back against the patriarchy, the way we get our seat at the table is by being well is by being fully in our power. And so I think does some extent, it's dangerous to say, even if I'm burning out or even if I'm distressed, or even if I don't like this, I got to stay in it.

For legacy reasons or whatever. That's hard for me to say, I will say this when I switched to, I worked corporate first, I was an executive first and then I opened my own business and I think I had as much influence in the corporate world or more as an agency owner than I did as an executive.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah. Yeah. And I think that's part of what I was imagining you would answer too. I knew you'd present both sides.

**Juju:** Yeah. I really do. I think as an agency owner, I had the ear of the C-suite of all the companies that I worked for. And so to be able to influence that way, I was, I think it was every bit as powerful as being in the C-suite.

And I know that's the case with a lot of women that I work with. I think the other thing too, is I would say that probably 80% of the women who I work with have businesses that serve women. So I think that's another thing that happens is women come out of corporate and they have this feeling of, I want to work with women, right?

I want to be in a safe space. I want to be how I want to be and say what I want to say. And I can't always do that in a room when there are men in the room and the idea then that at a certain point we pivot and we push other women up or we help other women, I think may just as effectively help us get seats at the table.

And I'm grateful for the women who are duking it out in the corporate world, I'm really am grateful for them. And in every industry, they, the scientists and, the engineers and the mathematicians and the coders and all the women who are really pushing things forward in industries that are tough, but I worry about telling women stay in because we need you, if that makes sense,

**Jacqueline:** I totally agree. But I do feel like we can still have influence from outside. It's definitely a question that I keep asking myself is, I was just getting to the table. I was just starting to be in a position where maybe I could have made change and I feel like I lost that opportunity.

But on the other hand I'm bringing myself to the work I do with women who are still in academia, in such a more supportive way than I could ever done it within because I had to still compete with them for grants. I still had to compete to get my promotion. There's not that in academia, there's not that way of being able to like, become a manager and let go your own path sort of thing.

You have to continue to focus on your career in a somewhat egotistical, selfish way to succeed. And you just don't have the bandwidth to help other people, even if you are in a leadership position.

**Juju:** I think that happens in corporate a lot as well. One of the things I do think entrepreneurship provides is for women is money. And that's another way over time that women will change things is by having money to invest back, right, in all these different industries. And part of the reason why gray divorce or, being divorced at a certain age over age 50, or I think they define it as more than 20 or 25 years in marriage is because the uptick is around women being financially fluid.

In my mom's generation, women would have never left their husbands because they wouldn't have had a way to support themselves, but women become more and more financially flush. And I think entrepreneurship is a way into that. And so one of the things that happens with women as they build their businesses and they become millionaires and they do these things and then they turn around and use the money to influence in different ways.

And so I think some of these things require us to think bigger and to have confidence in women at a different level that we can be game-changers from any angle.

**Jacqueline:** That's awesome. And I totally believe that too. One of the books you had recommended I read was around understanding those money stories and working to prevent them. So a really good tip in that book was that you actually started to check your bank account every day and that you got control of your money stories. I found that a very helpful exercise because I had chosen my life as a professor in a sort of public health servant, because I didn't want to have the same attachment to money and possessions as my parents did, who were very much in accountancy and in business, I was rejecting that way of living.

And so it's difficult than when you have your own family and you're trying to provide for them. And my husband has his own business and his focus is to earn enough money to provide. So his kids don't grow up the way he grew up again with no money. So you just see these stories and how they connect.

**Juju:** The ideas around money are so powerful. I have women who I will repeatedly say, this is not the red cross. You don't run a not-for-profit, you don't have volunteers.

You don't have donors there's that you run a for profit business. And if you don't turn a profit, your business can't, you can't stay in business. So it's not going to do anybody, any good for you to undercharge or undervalue yourself. But it's a lesson that doesn't come easy for a lot of women, because we're just taught icky things about it.

I'm watching so many women take things next level, and step into money.

This is another thing that very frequently happens with the women that I coach is that they have very interesting stories around money that were taught to them from a young age. So you couple of these stories around money and with the stories around self-worth and those are things that need to be tackled, right?

Once we recognize, hey it's on me to make this money. And if I provide the service, I deserve the money and I'll do good things with the money and I'll feed the money back into society this way. Then we can really start to, to exist in our power, to operate in our power. But I think those money stories, right along with the self-worth stories or the self-doubt stories are things that prevent women from moving on.