

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 364: JERRY COLONNA

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Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast. I'm your host Whitney Johnson, CEO of Disruption Advisors, where we help you build high performing people and teams, -- because organizations don't disrupt, people do. Meaning, the fundamental unit of that disruption - it's you. I want to start today's episode with these words - true transformation, begins with a broken heart. It's something you'll hear our guest today say a couple of times, this idea that a real crucible moment begins when something inside you breaks. When a force fundamental to you and your soul says - no more. Jerry Colonna has taken that message and run with it throughout his entire career, from the hallways of venture capital to his current venture in coaching. Today, he's out with a new book on healing that break, titled *Reunion: Leadership, and the Longing to Belong*. But how do you harness the power of a broken heart in the first place? How do you turn that into fuel for true transformation? I hope you enjoy.

Whitney Johnson: Your story is my story, reverberates in me like a mantra. That's something you say throughout the book. So, will you tell us your story of how you wound your way through the storied corridors of venture capital to become a coach and an author? How did that happen?

Jerry Colonna: Don't make me cry. Not at the stop at the start of this.

Whitney Johnson: Crying is, we like crying. Crying is good.

Jerry Colonna: Amen. They're tears from heaven, aren't they? What caused me to pause Whitney was when you added coach and author. So, I'm going to respond to your question kind of out of chronological order. I have wanted to be an author since I as far back as I can remember. And I wrote about this a little bit in my first book, *Reboot*, and I talked about both going to libraries and bookstores and reading as a sanctuary from the pain and suffering of my household. But also using words as a means to complete the process of growing up myself. So, if you want to take my breath away, call me an author, which is what you did. Okay. So, the storied part of my story. Yes, successful VC, first iteration of the internet as I often joke with my children, I invented the internet. You can blame me for ads. Not true. But, um, it's a useful dad joke. But that began in 1994, when I transitioned from being a journalist in the technology space into becoming an investor. And kind of miserable. At my first investment firm, I

stood out because I was a dedicated dad. I mean, I had partners who sent me as a joke, a Mother's Day card, because I would take days off to see my kids in kindergarten and things like that.

Jerry Colonna: There was a time when that stuff would happen. And then I stumbled into a delightful partnership with a fellow named Fred Wilson, who is kind of a legend in the business. He taught me so much about being an investor. And another dear friend at the time, Brad Feld, we weren't partners, but we partnered on a lot of activity and a lot of investment, and these were my formative male friendships as well as my partnerships. The problem is that by age 38, all of the unfinished business of my childhood had caught up to me, and I had a second bout of profound depression, my first being at 18 years old. And by the time I was 38. I needed to stop what I was doing. I needed to start all over. All right here comes a brand reference. I needed to reboot myself. Because it wasn't working. And I had that cognitive dissonance that outwardly it seemed to be working, but inwardly it was not working. I cannot talk about becoming a coach without noting that break. Because it was in that break and my broken heart that led me to seek out the things that turned me into a coach, literally, the training programs that I went through, but also equally important was the diving deep into psychoanalysis that I went through. Which at psychoanalysis and Buddhism for that matter, all of which combined to save my life.

Whitney Johnson: Do you remember, Jerry? You said you were 38, which is interesting from a developmental standpoint because you were approaching the age of 40, which Erik Erickson says is an important age.

Jerry Colonna: Yep.

Whitney Johnson: What are some things that were, what were some indicators that you, you realized, oh, I've got to do something. You said you were depressed. Were there, are there some things as people are listening to this, that they might wonder if this is happening for them, that they could say, oh, maybe I'm having the same experience, but they're not quite ready to know, or they don't quite yet know how to recognize those indicators.

Jerry Colonna: Sure. I mean, there were some obvious things and, you know, to set the stage a little bit, the venture capital firm that Fred and I founded in 1996 was called Flatiron Partners. By September 2001, we had begun winding that down because of a, our prime investor was J.P. Morgan, J.P. Morgan Chase. They had shifted their strategy. That caused a shift in our strategy. But as you recall, even prior to 9/11, there was this sort of profound shift going on. Everything that was hot in the internet became cold. And it was, it was a very challenging time. During that time, really beginning the previous fall, I had massive difficulty sleeping. I had insomnia. Part of it was anxiety, but a large part of it was dread. I would dread, and this continued into 2002, I would dread going into the office. I would come into the office, and I would actually literally close the blinds to my office and just lie under my desk.

Whitney Johnson: Wow.

Jerry Colonna: So, I was really in this profound depression. And to be fair or to be clear, I was in therapy at the time, so it wasn't like, oh, I needed to get my butt into therapy. I was in therapy. But I think that the most challenging experience was that the more success I had, the worse I felt, which was a real hard thing to make sense of. And the more people would praise me, the worse I felt. And so, the result was this, almost, my teacher and friend and mentor, Parker Palmer, describes his own depression in similar language being crosswise with oneself.

Whitney Johnson: Wow.

Jerry Colonna: Right. And so, you keep moving in a particular vertical direction. But the feelings are going in a horizontal direction. You're going in the complete opposite direction. And so, feeling in quicksand. Feeling like nothing I could do could make it better.

Whitney Johnson: You're just lost. Because if you're doing this, you're just lost.

Jerry Colonna: That's right, that's right.

Whitney Johnson: Thank you for sharing that.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: So, you're having this experience, you're trying to make meaning, you're 38 years old. You're presumably on the top of the world. You're working with people that you like. You're in therapy and you're still struggling. And so, you do even more work, which you said started to lead you in the direction of becoming a coach. And this is your reboot process that you talk about. How did you decide to become a coach? What happened? How did you get to that place?

Jerry Colonna: Well as my other teacher, Pema Chodron says, you know, it all starts with a broken heart. You know, for me, I'm in this zone of really trying to make sense of what's going on, these conflicting feelings. I was also 40 pounds overweight. I was just not making progress in trying to be happier and trying to understand what was going on with me. And with, it's with hindsight that I can say that the things that had been set in place in my childhood were finally coming home to roost, if you will. I could no longer deny that I needed to deal with these things. And then famously this, this one day I'm in an office in Manhattan. I kept an office there, and this young man came to see me, and he was lost. And he was in his 20s and he was an attorney. He wanted to leave the law firm that he was working at, and he wanted to network with the XVC to find his way to a startup, and I asked him a question innocently enough. I said, why did you become a lawyer in the first place? And he started to cry and tell me a story about pleasing his father. And a light bulb went off and I started sitting with that. And then I reached over, and I grabbed Parker Palmer's book, *Let Your Life Speak*, which I had read just a few years before and was so profoundly moved by it. And I gave him my copy and I said, you know, here, this might help you. And I turned away. After he left my office, I turned away and I wrote to a friend of mine who was a coach. And I said, Chris, I think I need to train to be a coach. And she said to me, well, it's about time. I've been waiting for this moment. And I started investigating programs, and I stumbled upon a program that really spoke to me. It was sort of not the usual go to Columbia University's executive education program. It was much more heart centered than that. And it was the program I needed at the time.

Whitney Johnson: What was the program? Just out of curiosity, is it still around?

Jerry Colonna: It's called, it's not around anymore. Or they may have just the Indian iteration of it, but it was a program called Coaching for Transformation from a group called Leadership That Works. And, you know, it was a certified training program. It was a yearlong program. It was very traditional in some ways. But I think what really spoke to me was that notion of transformation, versus say, be better at what you're doing right now. There was an implicit question of is this actually what you want to be doing right now?

Whitney Johnson: So, in my parlance, it would be is it time for you to disrupt yourself? And if it is, exactly how do you do it?

Jerry Colonna: That's right, that's right. Or even more. There's a whispery voice in your head that tells you, you know, it's time to disrupt yourself. Maybe it's time to pay attention to that voice.

Whitney Johnson: Stop ignoring the voice. All right, so continuing on with this, your story is my story. You have written a new book, which we're mostly going to talk about today. It's called *Reunion*. Where did the impetus for this book come from?

Jerry Colonna: Well, let's quote Pema Chodron with that. It all starts with a broken heart. In this case, it was my daughter's broken heart. More than even mine. You know, I write about this in the introduction. In the summer of 2020, not only were we in the midst of what seemed like this endless pandemic, like what was happening to us, but the protests over the murder of George Floyd were growing. And there's this dichotomy that existed in that people were gathering to protest a murder, in ways that folks who look like me, and I identify as white, cisgender, straight, male were not necessarily protesting before. Not in the numbers that were coming out with this murder. And the dichotomy was we weren't supposed to stand closer than six feet apart, right? It was a strange time, and I and my now wife were living on a farm where we still live in Colorado, didn't feel safe, but we were safe because we were surrounded by 40 acres. And my daughter Emma, who is one of three kids, who is fierce as anything, Whitney. She is, and she doesn't put up with any nonsense, even from her dad took to the streets and started to protest. And one night she starts texting me. She's she in a crowd of about 5000 people were marching from Brooklyn, from

Brooklyn's Barclays Center, where the Nets play, to lower Manhattan. The location, the headquarters of the New York City Police Department. And they were crossing the Manhattan Bridge. And she's describing to me what's going on over text, where a phalanx of police officers from Brooklyn on horseback were following the protesters, but they were being met by a phalanx from the other side.

Jerry Colonna: And so, they were trapped. And then she started dealing with pepper spray. I'm a guy who'd kind of made his notoriety talking about better humans being better leaders. I'm a guy who tries his best to live up to the aspirational value of calling forth the best of us by calling forth the best in me. And something that my daughter would say to me all the time, which was dad, it's not enough to be an ally. You have to be a coconspirator. That phrase kept coming back to me. And here I was. I mean, at the time she was 28. My fierce 28-year-old daughter who had, who has dedicated her life to teaching. Economics teaching. Teaching in economically challenged communities who almost got tossed out of high school for arguing against the SATs because they were fundamentally imbalanced and for the privileged, was putting her body on the line. And so, I had to look at the question of what was I doing? For some unclear reason, the good Lord gave me the ability to write a sentence that people find compelling. And so, my task was to use the talents that I have been given. To push for a world that my daughter would be proud of. And I happen to be in this mode of being a leadership coach person. So, I'm going to turn my angle of attention, my angle of approach. To that question. What is a leader's responsibility? In a world riven by strife and disunion. Where it's somehow normalized that children are shot in school.

Whitney Johnson: So that's why you wrote this book?

Jerry Colonna: That's why I wrote this book.

Whitney Johnson: So, one of the things that was interesting to me as I read your book and you've talked about a broken heart a few times now, you talked in particular about a broken heart with your family of origin. And you talk about this idea of reunion and othering, which I think you'll talk more about. But there's, you make a very provocative statement, which I'd like to spend a few minutes on, which I'll read back to you. "Living into possibility, manifesting my part in the seed bed of loving, beloved community and inclusivity requires that I reunite with my ancestors to do the work of turning them from ghosts into ancestors. Then, and only then, can I turn the silent ancestors into whispering and wise elders, all while feeling their hands on my back." So, will you tell us a story about one of your ancestors, and how you've reunited with them as a way to be more connected to yourself?

Jerry Colonna: Sure. I would say that there are three ancestors that I spent time in writing this book really trying to understand. The first was my father. My mother's father, Dominic Guido and what I wanted to understand. So, I grew up identifying as an Italian American and all that that implies. And for those who are of Italian American heritage from Brooklyn, you kind of know what I'm talking about, whether you're from Jersey or wherever, you know what I'm talking about. And Dominic came to the United States in the early 20th century. He was 16 years old. He became an entrepreneur. And a lot of this I kind of understood and I wanted to understand a core question, which was. What did he leave behind? Why did he leave southern Italy? And what did he encounter when he came here? And so, I really wanted to understand the conditions. We talk about leaving poverty. But what was it like? And I ended up really coming to an understanding, reuniting, if you will, with the discrimination that southern Italians faced relative to the northern Italians. And that Southern Italians, I mean, it was up until the 1950s that malaria was a massive problem in southern Italy. The 1950s. This is where that part of the family is from.

Jerry Colonna: So, understanding history and using active imagination to imagine what it was like to be a 16-year-old kid on the streets of New York, trying to make his way and create enough prosperity to bring over a woman who would become his wife, to bring over an uncle, to bring over an aunt, a cousin, and all of those people. The other ancestor that I really had to come into relationship with was my father. And my father died 31 years ago. And he died before I had the possibility of asking a set of questions to him. And he suffered from alcoholism and depression. My mother was bipolar schizoid affective disorder. So, I really never understood what was it like to be married to a woman who would regularly be hospitalized. But the core question I really grappled with stems from the fact that on their wedding day my father's mother, the only woman he knew as his mother was so angry about their wedding that she stood at the back of the church and in Italian screamed, Putana! Putana! Whore, whore! Calling my mother a whore because my mother was pregnant at the time. And then screaming out, you're not my son. You were adopted. And that's how he found out he was adopted.

Jerry Colonna: Now this is a story I grew up with. But like in so many families, this is a story that was actually never explored. If dad were alive today, I would say to him, dad, what did that feel like. And to what degree did that impact your depression and by extension, my depression? The last ancestor that I ended up connecting with took a lot of bravery on my part. Now we understood, growing up, we understood my father's lineage. We understood that he had been adopted. We understood that he was adopted at 18 months old from New York Foundling Hospital. Now, the reason I stress 18 months is that for the first 18 months, he bonded with the woman who was his mother. For the first 18 months he was William Michael Heffernan. He became Jerome Vito Colonna. And this, the last ancestor that I really connected with, reunited with, was his mother who died in 1988. And I went on a pilgrimage to Ireland. And visited her grave. And as I write about in the book, I walked amongst the bones of my kin. I walked in the churchyard to feel what it felt like to have the sunlight come in on that spot. So those are the ancestors that I most profoundly connected with.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. You know. I will tell you when I read this, and I want you to maybe pull this thread through for everybody who's listening, so they really understand the why that you do this. But I will tell you as I think about myself and my own life. And, you know, I work with someone who specializes in family history, and she's been writing up the stories of Lily and Gerard and George Wilson and John Nuttall and Christine Hubbard and Joseph Walter Bryce and all these stories. And I will confess that there has been an element of me as I've looked at these stories, I thought, these are nice. These are interesting. I'm glad that I have these. But I haven't been plumbing them for who am I, because of who they were. I hadn't been doing that. And I thought that what you said was so interesting, which is, I'm quoting you again and see if I get this right, "choosing who they become is our work to do. This is the work of descendants, and that if I can accept the parts of myself, accept my ancestors that will allow me, if I stop othering myself, if I stop othering my ancestors, I will stop othering other people".

Jerry Colonna: Right. I would alter that just slightly. What I was interested in was trying to understand and come up with a thesis for creating the conditions in which those of us who hold power can do work that is more than performative. Okay, more than checking the box. And so, I was interested in, and I want to be clear, I see this book as a conversation starter, not a conversation ender. I see this as an offering of an idea, not the definitive answer. But I believe that there's something powerful in welcoming in the parts of our family tree that we have ignored. As one of my colleagues wrote in her essay, in the afterword, what happened to my queer ancestors? Because they existed. Even if we didn't talk about them. What happened to those who loved differently? Who lived differently, who colored outside the lines, if you will, so that I could come into a new relationship with them. There was a very interesting question that helped provoke this for me. And it was in a book called *Are Italians White*, which explored the journey, as the authors would put it, the journey towards whiteness for Italian immigrants in the United States, because, of course, they weren't always considered white, just like the Irish weren't always considered white. They weren't necessarily black, but they were in this sort of nether Netherland of what does it mean to be white? And the question was from the author's words. Why was it that my ancestors' experience of being oppressed didn't generate empathy and understanding? Why is it that it generated distancing and division? And I thought that was a very, very interesting question. You know, as a Buddhist, I'm trained to try to seek out compassion and empathy. Your story is my story. Why is it that so many of my relatives living in past didn't see a relationship between their experiences and our mutual ancestors' experiences. I have an ancestor, for example, who was transported to Australia in the early 19th century for stealing a cow to feed his family.

Whitney Johnson: Very Jean Valjean.

Jerry Colonna: Very Jean Valjean. Why is it that understanding doesn't create a natural, empathetic bridge to those who today are trying to overcome the very same kind of poverty, the same kind of oppression? And I think a lot of it has to do with, we made it. Quick. Shut the door. Because if we don't shut the door, we might be kicked out.

Whitney Johnson: Hmm. So, you asked this question. I want to see, just I'm going to read the question then get your thoughts. You asked the question, what do I not want to know? How does it serve us to not know? And what would you lose if you named the forces that held you back and held you up? Thoughts?

Jerry Colonna: Well, I want to acknowledge the person who sort of prompted that question for me was James Baldwin. And Baldwin, in an interview in *The New York Times*, was speaking about writing and his impulse to

write. And this sort of even goes back to me being able to name myself as an author. He felt compelled to write about things he did not want to know which I think is just a fascinating construct. Because I have learned through my own psychoanalysis that confronting the things that I do not want to know actually helped me overcome depression. Right. By working with the facts and the perceptions that were so uncomfortable that I could come into realignment with, I could rise above that. And so, I think that there's, you know, that question is part and parcel of a belief system that I have, which is sometimes families keep secrets from people and experiences that we don't talk about. Because they don't fit the comfortable narrative. So, I cite examples in the book of clients and friends who might have uncles or grand uncles whose depression was so bad that they killed themselves. But this family story is, oh, no, they had cancer. Oh, whoa, wait a minute. Yeah. No, I mean no. Yeah. And I think there is, there's something profound. And if we just expand this on a countrywide level, there's so much the country doesn't want to talk about, about our history and it annihilates people. It erases their existence. It can cause a feeling of a community wide gaslighting.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Oh, no, no, no, that didn't happen. Actually, no, it did happen, and we need to take that in and acknowledge that. So that we can grow from there. Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: I want to ask you a lighter question, because we've been going very deep. Tell us, we're starting to wrap up, but tell us a little bit about your farm in Colorado. What does it look like? What does it feel like? Why is why does it make you happy?

Jerry Colonna: Well, it's 40 acres. I'm staring off the Rocky Mountains so I can see the Rocky Mountains from my office. There's snow cover today. We have now four horses, and I want to be clear, these are all my wife's horses. I am deathly allergic to horses, so I sneeze as soon as I come close to the barn. And we have two cats who also live in the barn because I am allergic. I'm allergic to anything. Any animal with hair and with fur. The best way to understand it is that the center of the farm is 150, 180-year-old cottonwood tree that um was kind of a mess when we bought the farm. We purchased it in 2020 and um I saw potential in it, and I had a contract to build a platform underneath it which we refer to as a meditation platform. And you have to envision this tree is about ten feet around, okay, with this huge canopy. And it is an incredibly peaceful spot because it's really almost at the geographic center of the 40 acres. And from that spot, I can just really breathe. Much of *Reunion* was written under that canopy. It's been too cold lately. But once the weather warms up and we're starting to get there, that's the spot I do my morning meditation.

Whitney Johnson: Sounds like a holy place.

Jerry Colonna: That's exactly what it feels like. It feels like a place where ancestors can gather.

Whitney Johnson: So, one of the things coming back to the, your story is my story. You said it's the foundational component of systemic belonging because it fosters empathy, knowing and connection regardless of power dynamics. Doing this work doesn't guarantee success. Not doing it guarantees failure. For someone who is thinking, okay your story is my story. What are some things that you can do to action on what you're talking about here? This idea of reunion.

Jerry Colonna: Right. So, reunion is such an evocative word, it's probably worth connecting to that. And I want to note that in the last chapter of the book, I open up with a poem by Bell Hooks called, *When Angels Speak of Love*. And she writes, "when angels speak of love, all things are union. When angels speak of love, they say all things are union and reunion. There is no separation. There is no end to Paradise". I think implicit in that wise elder's instruction is a pathway to our own reunion, to our own sense of systemic belonging. Which is to reunite with that which has been dismembered, that which has been disconnected, that which has been made separate from. And if we think about this in terms of our society, I'm not naive. I know that tribalism and what John A Powell the scholar, would call systemic othering has been a part of the human experience. For as long as people can recall, it's manifested in lots and lots of different ways, most of which involve pain and violence. Okay. I'm not naive. I know that that is a part of the process of being human. But there's this sort of implicit, possibility. It's almost like a wishful remembrance of call it the Garden of Eden. Where there is no separation, no end to Paradise. When we were all in

united, united in our common humanity. Even as we acknowledge our differences. So that's the connection. If we can feel that empathetically then I have a lot of hope for our ability to overcome that which divides us.

Whitney Johnson: Thank you for describing that. So, you talked about the Garden of Eden. That's the genesis of this. So as people are thinking about this notion of reunion and union and I, I loved that poem that you shared, what are 1 or 2 things that we can do?

Jerry Colonna: We're so reactive these days. This side is wrong. This side is wrong. There's so much suffering. I mean, what week is it? What school shooting did we just have? Right. If we can slow down and just look at our own reactions. Look at the hardening of our hearts that happens as a consequence of coming into contact with suffering. If we can then call upon the better angels of our nature and imagine as my friend Joy today, whom I wrote about in *Reunion*, as if we can imagine, she is an immigrant from Zimbabwe, growing up and living in Ireland, raising her son, her son and daughter in Ireland. If we can imagine that our stories are more similar than they are different. Not that we are the same because we're not the same. But that our stories, our wish for love, safety and belonging. Then I can imagine us being in dialog. And you want to get pragmatic. Okay, I'm 60 years old. Whitney, for at least half my life, if not longer, we have had a problem with immigration policy in the United States. And we are allowing the problem, the policy problem to divide us as a nation. Yeah. And the result is that children are suffering. So, if we start, we do a little reverse engineering. Let's imagine we want to create a world where children don't suffer. Let's start with there. And then we look at our policies and we say, well, different story but not so different, right? What united my immigrant ancestors with the immigrants on the southern border of the United States is a wish for love, safety and belonging. Okay, so let's establish the truth of that and then craft a policy. Not craft a policy that says you're different. You're scary. I have to protect myself from you, right?

Whitney Johnson: So, grounding it in love, grounding it in our stories are similar. That deep empathy. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: That's right. Imagine if government set policy that way.

Whitney Johnson: Those were the first principles.

Jerry Colonna: Right. Let's set a first principle. 1 in 4 children in New York City are living below the poverty line. 1 in 4 children. What if we had a policy that said, in the richest country in the world, in the most advanced century the world has ever seen? No child should live in poverty.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: How can we get there?

Whitney Johnson: Mhm, right. And that's the union and the reunion.

Jerry Colonna: That's the union and reunion. That's right.

Whitney Johnson: You know, when I read your book, it just felt so poetic to me. Will you talk about that? Like, is that something that you do consciously? Is it subconsciously? Tell us more.

Jerry Colonna: It reminds me of a question somebody wrote to me one time and he said, why do you write so beautifully? And the first response I had was, I have no, I don't know any other way to write except like that. But there's actually a deeper process there, which is that I'm trying to bypass a little bit of the prefrontal cortex and get to the heart. Because I, and this goes back to even how I coach, I think true transformation begins, as I said with a broken heart. It begins at the heart. And there are really, really wonderful books that live in that, egoic, not egotistical, but that egoic, here's how to do things. Like I'm reading a fantastic book right now called *One Nation Under Guns*, which is about our long-standing relationship with guns. It's an incredible book. But it's a recitation of facts with a narrative that goes with it. And I believe that art is essential for transformation. I believe that experience is essential for transformation. And so, what I'm trying to evoke is an experience, a feeling. And, you know, you shared with me that in reading the book, you started thinking about your ancestors in a different way. And I just pat myself on the back. That's all I wanted.

Whitney Johnson: Well, it worked.

Jerry Colonna: Right, I don't I don't want I don't need to have you come to a particular conclusion. It's not designed to convince people of something. But it is designed to offer them an experience, if you will.

Whitney Johnson: And based on what you just said, it's not surprising that you quoted, well, your foreword was written by Parker Palmer that you quoted Richard Rohr. So just these deep experiences and feelings that people have. All right. So, last two questions for you. What has been useful for you in this conversation? And when I asked that question, it's not necessarily something that you said or that I said, but maybe an idea that you had or a connection that you made that you hadn't thought of before.

Jerry Colonna: Well, I can't recall if it was before or after we started recording, but you paused very early on and you told me how beautifully written the book was. And then you called me an author. And I would say it wasn't intellectually helpful. It was emotionally helpful. You know, I'm kind of on an edge here with this book. I'm doing things that; I'm pushing an envelope. I'm asking people to consider things in a different way. And to be received like that is reaffirming. It, I said it, its life affirming.

Whitney Johnson: Any final thoughts.

Jerry Colonna: I didn't get to say I'm grateful for your work.

Whitney Johnson: Oh!

Jerry Colonna: I'm grateful for who you are in the world. I'm grateful to be a kindred spirit in trying to make the world a little bit safer for leaders to be a little bit less harmful in the world, and to suffer just a little bit less. So, thank you for being my kinfolk.

Whitney Johnson: Oh. Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

It's not enough to be an ally. You have to be a co-conspirator. I'll be carrying those words from Jerry's daughter, for a long time. It's some of the most useful advice we can hear as leaders. It's not enough to command from the rear – you've got to pick up the flag and fight. When we have this unfinished business, as Jerry would call it, this disconnect between what we aspire to and what we're actually doing with our hands, the cognitive dissonance can be... unbearable. You're moving crosswise with yourself, your problems spreading outwards even as you achieve new heights. Think about that high-powered attorney, who started to cry when Jerry asked him why he was doing any of it. His paystubs were hefty, no doubt, but he couldn't escape that basic desire to make his dad proud. Jerry's message is a holistic reunion, not just with the parts of our society we've been estranged from, but also with the ways we've disconnected from ourselves. True transformation begins with a broken heart, and what better way to break a heart than loneliness? For more on overcoming this pervasive feeling of imposter syndrome, and even accepting it, there's my talk with Seth Godin, [episode 303](#). On harnessing the transformative power of a startup and venture capital, there's [episode 296](#) with Brad Feld and Matt Blumberg. And for a crash course on navigating the inner world of your self-talk, I'd recommend [episode 157](#) with Susan David. Thank you again to Jerry Colonna and thank you for listening. If you enjoyed today's show, hit subscribe so you don't miss a single episode. Thank you to our producer, Alexander Tuerk, production assistant Etta King and production coordinator, Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this has been Disrupt Yourself.