

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 134:

The Power of Being Who You Are with Shazia Imam

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J: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 134, all about identifying who you really are, what you really want, and moving in that direction with conviction; stay tuned.

Intro: Welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, stories of vibrant women living happy lives. And now, your host, Jen Riday.

J: Hey, Jen here, and welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women where you can come and remember, "Hey, I need to take care of myself, I need to put myself first sometimes so I can show up with more light and enthusiasm and happiness for my loved ones." Thank you for being here. Today, I have a fantastic guest. My friend, Shazia Imam, is going to be talking about the steps of identifying what you really want and moving towards those goals with conviction. I love talking about this and you're going to love this episode. But first, I want to read our review of the week from Nola in Idaho. She said, "Dear, Jen, a huge thank you for the good and important work you are doing. I found your podcast as I was struggling with depression, perimenopause, relationship breakdown, and still trying to be a wife and mother. You and your guests gave me so much inspiration, insight, validation, information, encouragement, I can go on and on. I am grateful that I was able to listen to others and to be reminded again of what is possible. Thank you- Nola." Nola, thank you so much for leaving that review and I appreciate you taking that time. Everyone, I would love for all of you to leave a review. It just kind of gives me some validation for what I'm doing, lets me know you're out there and that it's making a difference for you. I read every single review, and you can leave yours by going to jenriday.com/itunes.

So have you ever experienced a time in your life when you realized you are not doing what you really want to be doing? Those expectations and 'shoulds' of our world can press on you until you eventually lose track of who you are and the things that light you up. Well, my guest today, Shazia Imam, will give you step-by-step tips to help you find yourself again so you can be your authentic self. You're going to discover how to schedule time for what you love without feeling guilty, an emotionally decluttering process that puts you in touch with your true feelings, how to uncover those things that hold you back from making forward progress, and why you need to identify what you actually want and how that will skyrocket your happiness. I am super excited to talk to Shazia, you're going to love her; and side note, she is the host of the Feminine and Fulfilled podcast, I highly recommend it. But without further ado, let's dive into this fantastic interview with Shazia.

I am here with my friend and fellow podcaster, Shazia Imam. Shazia is the host of the Feminine and

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Fulfilled podcast. And everyone, take a mental note that you need to go over and listen to that because she interviews amazing women; it's kind of similar to my podcast with her own little spin on it. But, Shazia, I am so honored to have you here on the show today, thanks for coming.

S: Oh, thank you for having me. And thanks for mentioning my podcast because one of my first guests was Jen and you were fantastic.

J: Yay! (Laughs)

S: So if you're going to head on over, you can check out Jen's episode which is episode 3 and she talks about happiness and a bold approach to balance. So that is a must listen if you're going to check out the podcast.

J: Ooh, I want to go back and listen to my own episode; a bold approach to balance. I'm always readjusting my balance.

[Laughter]

J: It's so funny. Well, Shazia, let's have your favorite quote and then dive into your story.

S: Okay. So my favorite quote is actually interesting. It's an inspiration that came to me just a few weeks ago and this is what it was, "I can be nothing more than who I am."

J: Mm, yeah, cool. Okay, how did you come to that and how did it help you?

S: You know, I was in this place where I was, you know, full transparency I was kind of drowning in self-doubt and feeling bad about myself and just feeling like I wasn't making it, comparing myself to other people in my field, other people in this world, and feeling like, "Well, you know what? I don't know if I'm even meant to do what I'm doing," which my passion is really helping women, connecting women to their dreams, really allowing women to feel connected to themselves so that they can make a difference in this world. Because the more connected we are to ourselves, the more that we can do what we're really meant to do.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: And I was in this place of deep self-doubt and I've been going on for quite some time. And one night as I was lying down to go to sleep, this inspiration came, literally these words came, "I can be nothing more than who I am," and I had to write it down in my journal in the dark. I grabbed my journal from my nightstand and I just wrote it down real quick, I was like, "Hopefully I can read it in the morning," because I didn't want to let it go. I knew it had come from some divine source and I knew that there was something very powerful about it. And when I woke up the next day, it just rang so clear to me that I can be nothing more than who I am and I am perfect just the way I am.

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J: Ah. That brought an image of Mister Rogers to my head, I love him, and you're like, you know... I think he has a song, "You are perfect just by being you," (Laughs) I love it.

S: Yes, yes!

J: Hmm, well, tell us what your journey has been like to get to this place of truly accepting yourself just as you are. I'm sure there was a before, just as we all have. (Laughs)

S: Yes. You know, it's interesting that this was the inspiration that came because this has really been my journey is about the self-acceptance. So I always was trying to be "perfect", that was a large part of my journey and that started from being really young as a child growing up in an Indian family where the expectations were very high. It wasn't, "Good job for getting an A," it was expected that you would have straight A-pluses, it was just unsaid; my parents didn't even have to say it. So there were a lot of expectations growing up that I would get good grades, which I did, I would go to a prestigious college, which I did, and get a prestigious degree, which I did. So I went and I got a degree in Industrial Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech, which is one of the top schools for that degree, and I went on to get a job at one of the most prestigious consulting firms in the world, one of the largest and most prestigious at Accenture. And I was, you know, checking off these items on my list of what it means to be successful and one of the next things was getting married. So...

J: (Laughs). I knew you were going to go there, isn't that funny?

[Laughter]

S: I don't think that this list is, you know, independent to me, I think a lot of us know about this list.

J: Yeah.

S: So here I am, 22, and I'm already thinking about getting married and, you know, checking off that next box. So I find a great man and we get married. And if I'm going to be completely honest, I kind of knew it wasn't the best fit for me, but he was this nice South Asian man and educated and I felt like, "Okay, this is what I need to do next to check off the items because then after that, it's, you know, buy a single-family home, have some children, throw some beautiful dinner parties and make sure that I am still skinny and smiling throughout," right? That's kind of...

[Laughter]

J: Oh my gosh! I mean, when you put it on paper, like that... (or I'm putting it on paper while you say it) but when you list it like that, it's so freaking absurd! But I think we're all still clinging to this, it's crazy; and stay skinny, oh my gosh, that's so funny.

S: Let's not forget about that you better look good while you're doing all of these things too. So... (Laughs)

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J: Yes, yes. Well, did you have an arranged marriage with him?

S: I didn't have an arranged marriage.

J: Oh.

S: You know, my family is definitely more cultural, you know, coming from that Indian/South Asian background, and I am an observant Muslim so I don't date, but it wasn't arranged, it was more like a courtship is what you would call it.

J: Ah, nice.

S: So I didn't have an opportunity to date a whole lot of men, but this was still a courtship, we got to me. So it wasn't like my parents who my mom and dad did not see each other until the night of their marriage.

J: Whoa. (Laughs)

S: So they got... can you imagine? (Laughs)

J: Yeah, I can't. Oh my gosh, you'd be so nervous like what if they, you know, I don't know, have bad breath or... (Laughs) They're... I don't know.

S: I know. And my mom was living in India. Just to take a tangent, my mom was living in India at the time. She was 18 years old, she'd never left her home. My dad had already come to America so he went back, his mom had found a good bride for him, which was my mom. They met that night and my mom was subsequently going to be moving halfway across the world with a complete stranger to spend the rest of her life with.

J: Oh! (Laughs) Oh my gosh, did it go well for them?

S: Not really. (Laughs)

J: Oh, shoot! (Laughs)

S: I know. You know, the statistics are interesting, they're about the same with a love marriage, so the success rates are 50/50. And with my parents, they are still together because they really have that cultural notion of staying together no matter what. They stayed together for my brother and I, they are still together, and as my dad says, they are still working on their matrimony 40 years later.

J: Ah, oh. Well, at least they're trying.

[Laughter]

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S: Kind of. (Laughs)

J: So you married this guy and then you're checking off the boxes, getting ready to have the home, the single-family home, the children, and throw the dinner parties and stay skinny. So what... what happened? Did it work out?

S: So what happened is nothing I could have ever imagined. So we got pregnant, which was very exciting and I couldn't have been happier, and one day (or one night, I should say), everything suddenly changed. And I went into labor, and when we got to the hospital, the OB told me, she said, "Your son..." or at the time, she said, "Your baby will not survive."

J: Mm.

S: And I remember crying in my husband's chest and just feeling like, "What is going on?" So when I delivered and our son was born, he was so perfect. The moment I saw him and held him and held... and I saw his little toes and his little fingers and his little nose, I just felt this immense love for this little baby that I knew would only be with us for a short amount of time. And the blessing is that we got to spend a few hours with and we held him. We held him, we looked at him, we looked at this little life in our arms, knowing that we would not be able to continue with him in this life. And that was one of the hardest things is to watch your child slip away in front of you and having to bury them; and it was very difficult. And at the time, I didn't understand the immense gravity of what had happened and what was going to happen because I really believed we would try again, we would start life again, this would be something that we would look back on in grief, but our life would continue; would continue against this checklist that I had. And about a year later when we started trying again, we went to this neighborhood that we had been looking at. It was the neighborhood we wanted to buy a home in, it had the ideal everything we had been looking for. And a house had come on the market and we looked at it, it was perfect, it was great, we were ready. And on the way home, you know, I looked at my husband and I said, "When will we sign the contract?" you know, "When will we submit?" and he looked at me and he just said, "I want a separation."

J: (Gasps) Whoa!

S: And I was... that was my exact reaction, I was like, "Whoa! Whoa, whoa, whoa!"

J: Oh my gosh! Did he say why?

S: No, the doctors had just that week said, "Go ahead, start trying, everything looks good," because I had had some medical issues after my delivery. And so here I am, I'm being the green light, we find the house, everything looks like okay, life is starting again, and he just says, "I want a separation." So I said, "What... what do you mean? What's going on?" and he's like, "I just I don't see us together and, you know, I don't think that this is going to work out." And I just looked at him and I thought, "What do you mean?" We had been married for 5 years, I imagined spending the rest of my life with him, and here I

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was with everything that I had set up in my life, curated really in my life, just falling apart one after the other. And I was suddenly alone and that is not at all what I had expected. Almost reaching 30, I did not expect that this is where my life would be that I would have to start all over.

J: Ooh, wow. So what was your emotional response when this checklist is disintegrating before your eyes and your reality does not match your expectations in any way? How did you feel?

S: I was severely depressed, severely depressed because, one, I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I thought I was the ultimate failure, the ultimate failure, and I wished my life would end.

J: Ooh.

S: And I would drive around and I would wish that a car would come hit me so that I've died and that I wouldn't have to disappoint my parents, my community, this life that I had built, I didn't want to face it. And when I talk about it now, it just seems like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe that I was willing to have my life end for something as basic as being by myself," but that's how much it meant to me to really be perfect. And I didn't know who I was, I didn't know who I was without these things; without all of the things on the list. And now my life was going to be nothing, I thought, so I was so, so depressed and just unsure of where I was going to go next.

J: So your idea of success was to meet all of the expectations your parents had set up. Do you think all of those expectations were coming from your parents or some from society as well? I mean, what's your sense of that?

S: You know, now that I look back on it, it was so much of society, it was so much of what I believed. It was even this pressure I put on myself.

J: Mm.

S: You know, I hid this from my parents for a long time, and to this day, my parents say, "Why didn't you tell us?" but I didn't want to disappoint them, and they said, "We love you, we would have been there to support you." So it was a notion I had created in my head of what made me valuable, what made me worthy, what made me complete, which was actually a complete farce. I mean, it really was based on... on no reality and just something I thought that, "When I achieve these things, I will be the pinnacle of success and I will have made it."

J: Yeah, or, "I will finally be good enough," you know?

S: Yes.

J: Oh my goodness.

S: Yes.

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J: Wow. So how did you pull yourself out of that pit and what thoughts or what thoughts did you have to change? I assume that's how you had to get out.

S: So, for me, you know, it was really... it was really I had no other choice, right? I was going to be on my own so I might as well go figure out what that means because the alternative was not looking good the way that emotionally I felt. And on the other side, there was a part of me that was thinking, "This is happening for a reason," I always believed that that, "All of this is happening for a reason so let me continue on." And that meant discovering myself, and one of the biggest things I discovered was, wow, I had no idea that I had low self-esteem. Here I was, somebody that people looked at and thought, "She has it all together," but inside, I was crumbling and the beliefs I had about myself were really self-loathing, almost you could say. And so I had a chance to really examine my self-esteem and say, "You know what? I'm going to work on it." Just the same way we might go on a diet to improve our eating habits, I decided I'm going to go work on my self-esteem. And this looks like a lot of different things. For me, it was really starting to think about what are the things that make me who I am, what do I even like to do? And I created a dreams list of things I wanted to do, big and small. So one of the first things I started with was taking swimming lessons.

J: Ah.

S: And there was something about doing something that I loved that was just for me that started to build up who I was. And I did a number of other things. I traveled and I started doing new activities and I started to look at my life in a different way because my reality was shifting very quickly and I couldn't be in a place where I was just lost and feeling hopeless, because that's not life. Life isn't about feeling hopeless, there's so much more for us, and everything that happens is for our best.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: So it was during this time too that so many people who had told me, "Shazia, you should be a coach, you're so great at helping others," that I decided, "Okay, let me go get trained," you know, "Let me go do this. Let me do this completely different thing in my life." And it turns out, I really enjoyed it, I was really good at it. So as I was doing all these new things, trying out new activities, discovering different pieces of myself, I started to learn that there was a whole side of me that I had kept buried for such a long time, that I am a powerful woman, I'm a loving woman, I am capable of so many thing, I feel very passionate about a lot of things, and that my life is not dictated by what my external circumstances say, but my life is dictated by how I be, who am I.

J: Yes. Yeah, being, not just doing, right?

S: Mm-hmm.

J: Mm-hmm.

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S: And this is where I just really flourished, I really blossomed. And as my marriage ended, it turned out that I was not alone as I thought I was going to be, I had immense support from everybody around me, and mostly, I had immense support for myself. I felt a freedom that I'd never had before because, now I had no expectation on me, I got to start all over again and I got to write my story. And it was liberating, which is a word I never thought I would have used, but it absolutely was and it has been.

J: Mm, so writing your own story. Well, so let's say someone out there's listening and they realize, wow, they are the old Shazia, they are you from your past and they want to shift into this place of being free and having no expectations and writing their own story, you know, how would they do that?

S: The first thing is to really understand who you are. Part of the journey is to understand your essence and the core of who you are because so many of us, and the old Shazia, are working towards a life that has been set by others or that we believe that we have to live. And that is the first disconnect, really. So the connection has to be back to yourself, "Do you really know who you are? Do you know what you love? Do you know the things that you want, the things that light you up?" Because it seems like a simple thing that somebody would say yes to, but so many women don't know the answer to these questions.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: And taking the time to ask yourself, to sit down and actually write it down, "What do I want? What would I love to do?" and starting to do those things can create an immense shift in your life, no matter how you're feeling. If you're feeling like the old Shazia and you feel like you're not good enough or not achieving a certain goal, it is never going to be the goal that is going to make you feel whole, it's going to be yourself and being true to who you are.

J: Right, right. What if someone is listening and they think, "Eh, that's all fine and good, but I never get what I want. I'm trapped," you know, maybe it's someone with several kids and no income or a job that they hate or... what do you say to that?

S: My goodness. I say, even then, you get to know who you are. Even then when it's something small, even if you feel completely trapped, even if you feel like, "I have no time, how in the world am I going to fit in doing something for pleasure when I can't... I don't even have the time to do the things to survive?"

J: Mm-hmm, right.

S: You still get to have something for yourself, even if it's something very small. Writing down the things that you love doesn't mean you have to go do all of those things today, it doesn't mean you turn your life upside down and you fly off to India or to Indonesia, you know, and start your life again, you don't have to do that. It could be as simple as making sure to buy flowers for yourself the next time that you're out buying groceries.

J: Mm, I love that.

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S: Spending \$5 on yourself it's worth every single penny for you to see the blossoms in your life and to know that you get to bloom in your life. It's the small things, it's not some big huge thing, it's the little things and the way that you start to see yourself differently and value yourself differently.

J: Mm-hmm, and it all starts with knowing what you love and what you want.

S: Absolutely, start with that list, make it big, small, dream away because pencil and paper and a few minutes to yourself, everybody has that; everybody has that.

J: Yeah. Well, I want to hear what you put on your list, but first let's take a quick break for our sponsor and then we're going to come back in find out what was on your love and want list because this is so fun.

Okay, welcome back. Shazia, you're going to tell us what was on your love and want list, the things that you found lit you when you were getting out of that depressed place after your divorce and moving forward with your life.

S: Okay, I had some things on that list that were really easy. So I talked about the swim lessons, so for me, I made time for that, but I had some really big things on there that, at the time, I had no clue how it was going to happen. And one of the big things I had on there, and I had highlighted it in like green, I did it actually on a Google spreadsheet, I'm kind of nerdy so I created this dreams list with a Google spreadsheet.

[Laughter]

S: I'm like, "Oh, I could pull... I could just pull it up right now." And one of the things that I had highlighted was meeting a man and having a man who respected and loved me in my life and that I loved as well.

J: Hmm.

S: And at the time, I had no idea, I mean, my marriage had ended there... I just thought I was used good, nobody was ever going to want to be with me again. Who would want to be with somebody like me? But I still put it on there, and guess what?

J: What?

S: I did find him.

J: Ooh!

S: (Laughs)

J: Wow.

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S: I did meet him.

J: Uh-huh.

S: I married again a wonderful man who my relationship is so much deeper and so connected and he is so the right fit, dare I say my soulmate.

J: Ooh!

S: And... yes, yes, and somebody that I can be incredibly intimate with. And I don't just mean physically...

J: Right.

S: ... which is great too, but somebody that I can really share who I am with.

J: Uh-huh.

S: So...

J: Aww.

S: ... that was a really big one and I want to put that out there because, even if you feel like something is so far away and, "No way, it could never happen," still put it on your list. You're setting that intention, you're putting it out into the universe, you're sending a prayer to God, whatever it is you believe that this is what you want, and believe that it can happen. So that was a really big one, and there were some small ones too if you'd like to hear those.

J: Sure, sure. How long have you been married?

S: I have been married now for 3 years.

J: Mm-hmm, and how'd you meet him? That's the bigger question; so interesting.

S: Oh my gosh! Okay, that's such a fun story too; okay, also in line with what we're talking about and believing. So in 2015, I watched the documentary or the movie 'The Secret'. Have you seen that, Jen?

J: I haven't, I have the book though.

S: Okay. So 'The Secret' talks about the law of attraction and how what we put out into the universe is what comes back to us. And I decided after that that I was going to create a vision board. So I created a vision board and, on it, I put a whole lot of different things, but around relationship, I put some pictures of couples who exuded a feeling I wanted in my relationship, so feelings of like passion and playfulness

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and love and romance. And I remember in particular that I had put a picture of this beautiful custom engagement ring. And, again, there was nobody in my life, there was no hope of anybody in my life, but this ring was beautiful. It was his vintage rose gold flower shaped ring with a morganite in the middle, not a diamond, it was like a custom ring with morganite, and it was striking. And I put it on there, this was January of 2015. In June of 2015, I met a man, and in November of 2015, that exact ring was on my finger.

J: Huh? Did he know about your vision board?

S: He did not, but he did know about the ring, so it would be really uncanny if you'd happened to buy that ring by surprise.

J: Yeah, yeah.

S: But when he was shopping for the ring, I told him that that was the one I wanted. So he had come into my life I believe because I had really put out there what I wanted.

J: Yeah.

S: And so when we met in June, we met through a friend at a dinner party, and I didn't know or think that, you know, as I was talking to him that one day I would be married to this man.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: But we talked and my friend had a great idea afterwards for us to get to know each other.

[Laughter]

J: Nice, that's so great.

S: And so that's where it happened. And now, 3 years later, we're still together.

J: That's so cool. Well, so we work on what we want, but going back to that quote or we identify what we want, but how do we tie that back to being nothing more than who we are?

S: Mm. So number one is to accept who you are as you are. So we live in a world of a... you know, social media showing us these perfect photos and perfect videos and everything is so perfectly curated, and when you look at others, it can feel like you're not measuring up. Because the truth is, you may be measuring up in one way, but in another, it might not be a priority in your life. So the idea of what is important to you needs to become important to you because you're never going to be everything that you see in social media, in society, because you can't be everything.

J: Mm-hmm.

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S: You were created perfectly to be who you are. So the first thing is just not comparing; not comparing yourself. And I think that's really the key is to stop comparing and instead, look at what skills, what qualities, what characteristics do you bring to the table? Because each woman is a beautiful medley of who she is, even when it feels like, "Well, I wish maybe I was skinnier. I wish I could speak better. I wish I had the perfect family, the perfect kids, the perfect (fill in the blank)," there are pieces about you that somebody else is wishing they had. So this concept of an instead of feeling like the grass is greener on the other side, what if you believe that the grass was greener on your side?

J: Mm-hmm.

S: What would you look at? What would you see about yourself? So, "I can be nothing more than who I am," is you getting to be nothing more than that and being as full as you can in who you are, rather than trying to be something else. Because you'll never attain that and it's always going to feel uncomfortable, it's always going to feel like wearing clothes that don't fit you well. You're already in the right outfit for yourself, you're in your own body, in your own mind, in your own heart, in your own soul. Don't try to fit into somebody else's something because it won't fit.

J: Exactly, so true; I love that. So accept yourself as you are, never compare yourself to others, and know it's important to you.

S: Mm-hmm.

J: So, Shazia you work with women and you have your amazing podcast, can you share a story of someone making this transformation of being stuck in perfectionism and shoulds and expectations and then what it looks like for her to shift into that accepting herself for who she is?

S: Oh my goodness, yes, I'm thinking about so many of my clients. So one woman that really comes to mind is, I can't give her name so let's just call her Sarah. (Laughs)

J: Okay.

S: Let's make up a name for her. And she came in feeling like the story a lot of us feel. She had done everything right, but why wasn't she satisfied? Why wasn't it enough? Why did things not work out in her life either the way she wanted? So she came in and one of the things that we went through was really going through a process of understanding who she is and what she wants; so we've talked a lot about that. And so the way I like to really take my clients through this is by, first of all, identifying what we've talked about, "What do you want? What do you love?" Now, the next piece is identifying, "What's holding you back?" right? Because you can do that exercise, but there's something holding you back, and oftentimes, it can be emotional or it can be physical. So there is a decluttering process that can really help. And I have a specific episode on forgiveness which helps with the emotional decluttering, you can find that at episode 4 on my Feminine and Fulfilled podcast, but a big way to do this physically is physically decluttering. So I take my clients through the process of decluttering the spaces around them because it can represent what is happening in your life. So that's the second part, so she went through

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that, we went through forgiveness we went through physical decluttering. And we went through a lot of dreaming, a lot of really seeing what it would mean to step into the most sage version of herself, that part of you that is clear and balanced and knowing, all-knowing. And when she came out of it, what she found was so different than what she had started with. Originally, she came in saying, "I want to do XYZ and my career. I wanted to..." you know, she wanted to get promoted. It turned out actually, she hated her career, so she changed her career completely.

J: Hmm.

S: So that was a big change. She realized what was really important to her in her physical space, so she changed the way that her physical space looked, she ended up picking a space in her home that she made hers and she designed it, she made it beautiful, and that was her space to go to. And she realized that she had always wanted to start an effort and a business around helping others to be healthier. So she went and she got trained and she became a personal trainer and that's what she does now.

J: Ooh, cool.

S: Yeah, she has great aspirations to start her own gym as well, which she's been working on. So she was able to go from feeling like she wasn't doing enough, what was going on in her life, to really understanding who she is and changing the things around her and really feeling fulfilled.

J: Hmm, that's beautiful. Well, you have a decluttering guide that you want to share with us, is that right?

S: I do, yes! So I have a really simple download for your listeners, it's called '10 simple ways to declutter your life'. So if you're not quite ready to dream, yet you can do this in parallel or you can start with this, and this is one of the things that can get the momentum going. So it's '10 simple ways to declutter your life'. It's how to clear out the clutter, but it also talks about ways to save time, be more efficient, it's really simple hacks for your everyday life so that you can get started. Because when you start decluttering and you clear out the things that you don't want in your life, you invite things in that you do. So this is a great first step, you can find that at thelifeengineer.com/declutter, and it's free and I would love for you to start there.

J: Cool, thanks, Shazia. And we'll have a link to that on our show notes page at jenriday.com/134; cool. Well, Shazia, some of your favorite things, what is your favorite happiness hack?

S: Oh, my favorite happiness is connecting, it's connecting to people that I love. Because if I'm alone for too long, (laughs) it's not a good idea. So whether it's a phone call to a friend, making sure that I schedule a date night (I actually schedule date nights now with my husband), whether it's that or just taking time to connect with myself with a good book, I need to be connecting somewhere. That is my ultimate hack to feeling happy.

J: Mm, perfect, schedule it.

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S: Mm-hmm.

J: I love it. And your favorite easy meal.

S: Oh my gosh. My favorite easy meal is spaghetti. I love spaghetti, it's so easy and it's always so good.

J: Yes, we have that a lot here too.

[Laughter]

J: We have to keep our sauce and meat and pasta separate because someone doesn't like meat and someone else doesn't like sauce, but they all love the carbs; it's so funny.

[Laughter]

J: What do you do to relax, Shazia? I mean, you mentioned the date and the book, but what else?

S: Yeah, I love reading for sure; give me a good chick-lit novel anytime. And I also love dancing; I love dancing. So sometimes I dance by myself in front of the mirror or in the living room and I also take a hip-hop class, which actually came from my original dreams list was to take a hip-hop class, and I've been doing it for years now.

J: For real! I want to see in a video. Don't you want to send us one?

[Laughter]

S: I will send you one of our hip-hop class, it's awesome. And if you happen to live in the Dallas area, this is at the 24-hour Fitness in Southlake, Texas, in case anybody wants to join. It's amazing, our teacher's awesome.

J: Ooh, I'll write that in the show notes, that's so funny. 24-hour Fitness in Southlake?

S: Mm-hmm.

J: Texas, okay, got it. What's your favorite book? You mentioned reading.

S: Okay, my favorite book, one of my most favorite books (and this is a great one for your listeners to grab too) is called 'The Artist's Way' by Julia Cameron, and it's basically a workbook, it's a 12-week workbook and it takes you through uncovering and discovering your creative self. So this would be a great place for anybody to start, and it helps you to just uncover all parts of you. And I've already done it 2 times, I'm going to start a third round in 2019; I just adore it. It helps me to make sure to have fun, to connect, and keep going on my spiritual, creative path.

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J: Cool, that is a great book for sure. And what does it mean for you to be a vibrant happy woman?

S: Oh gosh, I love the name of your title, Jen, of your show. What does it mean to be a vibrant happy woman? To me, it just means being myself.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: It means enjoying the little things and trusting to keep going and who I am. The more I be who I be, the more vibrant and happy I feel.

J: You know, wouldn't that be the best song by Bob Marley, "Be who you be,"? I don't know, I can just hear it.

S: (Laughs)

J: I don't know, I don't know.

S: Yes. (Laughs)

J: Random, random, "Be who you be."

S: Maybe we could collaborate and create something together, we could create a song together.

J: I don't know why I have reggae vibes in my head for that, but anyway.

[Laughter]

J: Okay, let's have a challenge from you to the listeners of Vibrant Happy Women and then we'll say goodbye.

S: Okay. So I want to challenge everyone listening to take just 3 minutes, 3 minutes this week to write down 5 of your dreams, big or small, because it will really help you start the momentum of what is going to come in your life. Even if there's a part of you that feels like, "Ugh, what's that going to do?" I challenge you to do it because it can change everything.

J: Cool, awesome. Thank you so much for being on the show, Shazia, you're awesome.

S: Thank you so much for having me, Jen.

J: Thank you so much for listening to this episode. And I want to challenge you to take out a journal now and write down what do you really want and how would you feel if you achieved those things? I will be back next week talking with Debbie Reber, all about differently wired children. You know, we're all unique and quirky, and we have this idea that there is "normal", but really, it doesn't even exist and

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we're going to bust that myth next week. There are no normal children and really, no normal adults. We are all unique and diverse and moving on our own paths that weave together in a beautiful tapestry. I will see you next week, and until then, take care.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast at www.jenriday.com.

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