

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

## Episode 81:

# How to Clean Out Your Thought Closet So You Can Stay Positive More Easily with Jennifer Rothschild

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Jen: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 81.

Jennifer: I realized in my life I was telling myself a lot of lies, you know, often unkind, self-slandering, ways I would talk to myself that I would never talk to someone else.

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

Jen: Welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women, I'm Jen Riday. And the last week, I was speaking with Laura Doyle all about the one thing she had a change in her marriage to make things better; happened to be the same thing that I found made my marriage better. So if you haven't listened to that episode, go back and do so; that's at [jenriday.com/80](http://jenriday.com/80). Today, I want to invite you to sign up for my free kids chore chart that I'm giving away. It's the exact chore chart I've been using for 5 years with my 6 kids and it works, and I nag less and I don't have to do it all and I feel a lot happier. You can grab that at [jenriday.com/chorechart](http://jenriday.com/chorechart). Today, I'll be talking with Jennifer Rothschild all about the lies we tell ourselves, the language we use with ourselves in our minds that we would never ever use with another person. Let's go ahead and jump into this interview with Jennifer. I promise she will inspire you.

I'm talking with Jennifer Rothschild today and she's the author of 14 books with combined sales of over a half a million units, including the newly released 'Me, Myself, and Lies: What to Say When You Talk to Yourself', best-selling 'Lessons I Learned in the Dark', and DVD enhanced curriculum product, 'Walking by Faith'. Jennifer's from Springfield, Missouri, and she's been married to her husband for 31 years (awesome) and she's a mom of 2 boys with a little dog named Lucy. Welcome to the show, Jennifer.

Jennifer: Hmm, I'm so glad to be here, thanks for having me.

Jen: And what quote would you like to share with us to start off the show today?

Jennifer: One of my favorite quotes of all time is by one of my favorite people of all time, her name is Joni Eareckson Tada. So before I tell you the quote, let me just let you know who she is. She has been in a wheelchair, she's a quadriplegic. She's been in a wheelchair since she was 17 years old, and that gives this quote even more depth. Okay, so here's what she said, "Sometimes God allows what he hates to accomplish what he loves," and I love that concept; I love that quote, I love that thought.

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Jen: Yeah. I kind of agree with that one, even though it stinks to...

Jennifer: Yeah.

Jen: ... have to be on the receiving end of the bad things; that's great.

Jennifer: I know, right? But it's true. And I was just going to say I know that's probably not the most upbeat way to start the show, but truly...

[Laughter]

Jennifer: ... even though it reminds us that there's hard things in life, it really is an optimistic way to look at them; that nothing is really ever lost.

Jen: It's true; there's so much good that can come from the bad. And that's kind of what this show is about.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Jen: So let's hear your low point in life. And you sound so upbeat and I love that.

Jennifer: Mm-hmm.

Jen: So tell us how you're able to be happy despite something you might have struggled with.

Jennifer: Sure. When you just said that, my most low point, I thought, "Gosh, do I have only one?" I guess you only have time for one; we all have tons of low points. But I guess if I had to like sum it up into the Grandmamma of all low points, it would be when I was 15, I had begun to have some difficulty with my eyesight. And, you know, like when I would look at the chalkboard, I couldn't see what was on the chalkboard. When I would look in the mirror, my facial features started to kind of blend together. I was real clumsy, falling down stairs. And so, anyway, I was diagnosed with a disease in both of my eyes called retinitis pigmentosa. And so as a 15 year old, I had lost enough of my retinas that I was declared legally blind, but that's also when I discovered that the nature of the disease was that that same kind of deterioration would continue until my retinas were gone; and that meant the prognosis was blindness. So, you know, I... I look back at that, and of course that was just so life altering and life challenging. And so now fast-forward to today and I'm in my early 50s and I have lived in physical darkness longer than I've ever lived in physical light. So with blindness comes this opportunity for lots of low points because blindness is really hard; it's the hardest thing I deal with every single day. But I one of the things that... the reason that I can have joy is because, even though there's lots of low points, lots of fear, lots of frustration, it's almost like it's been in those places where I have been able to kind of just focus on what really matters, receive joy, learn to have a sense of humor, find the value in everything I can do rather than focus on what I can't do. So I'm not trying to be a Pollyanna, but it is really true; you absolutely see what you look for. And so even in the low points, once I get over the initial emotion of whatever has

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occurred or whatever's really bringing me down, then I really am able to look for the good in it. And anytime I do, thank you Lord, I always see it.

Jen: Wow, you are so positive and I love. It's just like a ray of light. So retinitis pigmentosa, the retina is the back part of the eye, right, so it just kind of goes away?

Jennifer: Yeah, deteriorates. It's... evidently, the retinas lie in the back of our eyes. And so everything, you know, as the... as the image comes in as you're seeing as your image comes into your eye, it's the retina that kind of interprets it and sends it up through your optic nerve to your brain. So the reason for the blindness is there's no launching pad to send the signal through the optic nerve. Yeah, there's your little science lesson for the moment.

Jen: So you were 15 and this happens, what were your initial thoughts? And, you know, I can only guess.

Jennifer: Yeah, right. I remember when we were in the hospital, I had several days of testing, and quite honestly, we were not expecting to hear blindness. And so I remember sitting in that conference room with the doctor and my folks, and when he said that word 'blindness', that this would lead to total blindness, it was like there's this silence that just fell into that room, and I don't even remember us talking, to be very honest with you; my folks and me when we left the hospital. And I asked my mom later if she remembered and she said she thought we were quiet too. And I remember sitting in the back seat as we drove home and feeling my fingertips and wondering if I was going to read Braille, thinking through my future like, you know, "Are boys going to want to date me? What guy would ever want to marry me? Am I going to be able to go to college?" just tons of questions. You know, and that's how it is when hard stuff happens, there's always more questions than answers. But I do remember this experience along with that. It's really hard to put into words, but there was this sense of peacefulness; and I know it was just grace, God just gave me enough grace to absorb the shock. And I remember, when we got home from the hospital, I went in and I sat down at our... we have his old piano that my mom and dad bought at a garage sale when I was in the third grade. And I had taken a few years of piano lessons; was not a good pianist.

Jen: Mm-hmm.

Jennifer: But on that day, I sat down to play the piano is like the silence from that hospital room and that ride home was broken as I began to play the piano. And I played a song that I'd never played before. Of course, I couldn't read sheet music, but it was this old hymn that we used to sing at church called 'It is well with my soul'. And I think, for me, it became a real defining moment because it was as if intuitively I understood on that day, "Okay, it is not well with my circumstances and it may never be, that does not mean it can't be well with my soul." And, for me, that was one of the greatest lessons, probably the first lesson I ever learned in the dark. And from that, there have been so many other opportunities to affirm the truth, "It really can be well with my soul, even when it's not well with my circumstances."

Jen: So... that is beautiful by the way. And I'm just thinking, if you don't mind, tell us what life has been like since then; you know, how you met your husband, what it was like to do the mom thing and write

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your books. You know, many of us wouldn't know what that's like.

Jennifer: Yeah, I forget blindness is interesting because I'm in it every day. (Laughs)

Jen: I know.

Jennifer: I know.

Jen: And I don't like a cliché by asking, but, you know, it just helps us feel into your story.

Jennifer: No, sure, I get it. So I met my husband in college because I was dating his roommate; how about that.

Jen: (Laughs)

Jennifer: And once Tony, the roommate, introduced me to my husband, Phil, I was like, "Tony who?"

Jen: (Laughs)

Jennifer: And so when I dated my entire freshman year of college, I ended up of course going to college. I was determined... I guess I should rewind that slightly. I was determined once I graduated from high school to do something that proved I could be independent; so that meant, for me, going away to college. So the university was Palm Beach Atlantic University. It was about an hour and a half away from my home in Miami, Florida, and scary (Laughs). But within the first couple of weeks, I met Phil Rothschild and I remember calling my mom and telling her, "I had met this guy and he was like no other guy I had ever met," and, "Please don't ever make me come home from college again."

[Laughter]

Jennifer: So we ended up dating off and on throughout college, but my senior year especially, we dated and knew we were in love; married 3 months after. I graduated from college, he had already graduated.

Jen: Mm-hmm.

Jennifer: And within about 5 years, had our first son. And so I can remember when we first married feeling this sense of inadequacy because he had to help me do so many things. There are so many things that I valued that I thought brought, you know, what the role of a wife should be that I just couldn't do, and it really made me fight against the feelings of inadequacy. But I do remember, (and it's still the same today) my husband, it's like he didn't even notice; he couldn't care less if he had to iron his own shirt. You know, I would iron it, I just ironed the wrinkles into it instead of out of it.

Jen: (Laughs)

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Jennifer: And, you know, he was a good sport. He... I just think that's a gift from God; I didn't anticipate how deeply I needed that gift. But he was... it's like no big deal to him. We had our first son when I was 25 and I remember, you know, it was hard being a mom of a little guy, especially when he started toddling around. I was able to, you know, do the basic things. I changed his diapers, and like when I would, you know, feed him, he'd sit in the high chair; so fascinating when my friends would see this. Most babies, of course, you know, they see you put the spoon in the baby food jar and then you bring the spoon up to their mouth and put it in their mouth and they eat, right?

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: My boys, both of them I would put the spoon in the baby food jar and I would hold the spoon over the tray of the highchair and they would reach their sweet little faces up to it and put their mouths over the spoon.

Jen: Aww! That's great. (Laughs)

Jennifer: Yeah. Isn't that amazing how they adapted?

Jen: Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer: When they would toddle around, I'd put a little jingle bell, I'd pin it on the back of their onesies so I could always tell where they were. And so now, fast forward, one of them's married and has a baby of his own and the other just graduated from high school. And I'm so... you know, one of the things that always concerned me is I couldn't drive my kids around, we always had to have someone else helping with that; there were so many things that I couldn't do with them and their dad would need to. And, you know, I just... I had... I never got used to that. I mean, just because I accept blindness, doesn't mean I ever get used to the loss. And so now that they're both practically grownups, they knew no different and so they did not feel a loss; they just knew we did things differently. So I'm super grateful. So that's kind of a snapshot of what my life has been like. You know, writing books, obviously I can't see to physically write or to look at a computer, but my computer software talks to me. So that's how I've written books, that's how I still write and blog and do all that is through a talking computer. I have other things in my life technology-wise that really helped. Like I have a color detector that I can put up against my clothing and it'll tell me what color it is. My iPhone is such a help to me because there are some applications I can use where I literally can hold up my phone towards something, push a button, and it will tell me what I'm looking at.

Jen: No way! Oh!

Jennifer: It's amazing, yeah.

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: There's just tons of things. I've said this before and I mean it with full respect because blind-

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ness is not easy, but if you have to be blind, this is a really good time to be blind because there's a lot of opportunity to have technology to help. So besides the wonderful humans in my life, the technology is a big help.

Jen: I have to ask, thinking of apps and blindness, my teenagers love Uber, do you use Uber? (Laughs)

Jennifer: I do actually. I love Uber! It's such a big help; it's so easy!

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: It's so easy. And so there's so many thing, (that's a perfect example) so many things like that. And of course, even like Facebook and Twitter and all those things are accessible too for me to do. So...

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: Yeah, it's a... it's really something to be grateful for.

Jen: That's great.

(Advertisement) [13:05]

(Interview resumes) [16:22]

Jen: Well, so you wrote a book, it's called 'Me, Myself, and Lies: What to Say When You Talk to Yourself'. Tell us more about that and... yeah, I can't wait to talk about, you know, how we all... well, yeah, just tell us more about that and we'll get into it. (Laughs)

Jennifer: So, yeah, the subtitle is 'When You Talk to Yourself' and I realized, in my life, I was telling myself a lot of lies. And once I began to be aware of how I was talking to myself, you know, often unkind, self-slandering, ways I would talk to myself that I would never talk to someone else.

Jen: Mm-hmm.

Jennifer: But I would speak that way to me. And once I began to notice the habit, that's when I began this journey of learning the importance of what I say to myself, realizing I have what I call a thought closet...

Jen: Hmm.

Jennifer: ... which is this place we store away everything we've ever said to ourselves, everything we believed. And then what happens? I mean, think about it, what you're wearing right now, what we're all wearing, we probably got from our closets. So we got to pay attention to what's in our thought closets because that's what we wardrobe our lives in. And so as I began to realize, "Okay, if I'm wardrobe din defeat or bitterness or discouragement, I can look back into my thought closet and I can see some of

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the lies I've told myself that create this destiny I'm living," you know, "You can't do anything right. That's never good enough. You are so dumb," that kind of nonsense; and we've all got it. So it's been a journey over the last 20 years of learning how to see what's in my thought closet, clean it out, keep it tidy and full of good stuff so that my life is wardrobe with confidence and joy.

Jen: Do you have an exercise or a way that we can figure out what's in our thought closet?

Jennifer: You know, there's a couple of good questions that I recommend. Okay, so first of all you got to recognize what's in your thought closet; and here's some good questions to ask yourself to see, okay? "How would I feel right now if someone I really respected..." you know, maybe it's an older woman, a mentor, maybe it's a spiritual leader in my life or just a friend who I want her to think I got it going on, right?

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: "How would I feel right now if that person could hear how I'm talking to myself? Would I be embarrassed or would I feel okay about it?" Here's another one, "Would I be willing to write down everything I say to myself and give it to someone I love, like my child, my niece, my nephew, somebody I really love and say, 'Here, when you grow up, I want you to talk this way to yourself;'"

Jen: Ooh, painful! Stab me in the heart.

Jennifer: Right?

[Laughter]

Jennifer: I know. Well, that's a pretty good indication; the answer that question gives us an idea to know what we're saying when we talk to ourselves. And here's the other thing. You know what? Even if you don't ask yourself those questions, the words we speak to ourselves should always bring us life and peace. And so if you really think about it, if you begin to realize, "How am I feeling? Am I feeling a lot of peace? Am I feeling like I have an eagerness and an optimism toward life? Well, if not, chances are there's something I'm saying to myself that's just not based in truth." So here's this quote, and I think this helps you sum it up, it's by John Stott, he's an Anglican pastor; he was, he's passed away. But this is what he said, "If you sow... (as in plant) if you sow a thought, you will reap an action. If you sow an action, you will reap a habit. If you sow a habit, you'll reap character. And as you sow your character, you reap your destiny." That's why we've got to recognize what we say to ourselves because it directly impacts what we do, the habits that are created, our very character and the destiny that we're living out.

Jen: So our thoughts eventually get us to our destiny.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Jen: Do you feel like you're living your destiny?

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Jennifer: I do. And here's the thing, my thoughts, I've not always had control over my thoughts. And when I don't, my thoughts control me, okay? That's universal for all of us. And so the destiny that I'm living out today, I still will have bad moments, of course, but I don't have bad days. And so I think the thing to realize is, when we really understand what we're saying to ourselves and learn to get a handle on it and speak truth to ourselves, that doesn't mean we're not going to slip, that doesn't mean we're not going to go through a period maybe where we're just depressed or having a hard time and we're having trouble managing. The point is, grace, grace, grace. God can slip into the thought closet, but just like you do with your closet at home, you can clean it out and put something new in there.

Jen: So you said the word 'grace', explain that further because it's not a widely used term. I get what you're saying, but I want to hear, you know, more about grace in your life.

Jennifer: So here's the way I think of it. You know, if you think of someone you love, (you know, often if you're a mom, it's your kids) and when they do something wrong or maybe they don't meet your expectations, rarely (if you're a healthy mom) is your first response going to be, "You knucklehead! How dare you! You are so dumb!" right?

Jen: Right.

Jennifer: We wouldn't do that. We show our children grace. That doesn't mean we let them off the hook, but it means we say, "Hey, you made a mistake here and you need to correct it. But who you are and what you struggle with are not the same thing. You are stronger than this and you are better than this. And you take care of this, sweet baby, okay?" and sweet baby take care of it, right? Done.

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: Grace, that's showing grace. We rarely show grace to ourselves in the same way. Grace is just giving us, ourselves, kindness. The biblical definition of grace is 'truly on merited favor'. In other words, you don't have to earn it, you don't have to deserve it, you're just treated kindly and you treat others kindly because of your inherent value. And when we begin to treat ourselves that way, it can really change the way we talk to ourselves.

Jen: Okay, I'm with you. And so you talked about that inherent value, and a lot of women when they're working on themselves in this way get down to the core that they don't really love themselves.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Jen: How did you come to terms with probably that fact? Because I think every woman has to at some point. And what helps you to feel self-love?

Jennifer: Yeah. Well, I listen, I've got to be honest, it's still hard for me. And I think it's because I've learned, for me, that... I don't know if this will make sense, but I'll just be super honest. I fell into a deep pit of depression about 7 years ago. And I have always had a very can-do optimistic view of life, but

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about 7 years ago, there was no can-do in me; in fact, there was no want-to in me. And I was stuck, I was in a pit. And during that time, it was hard not to have self-loathing because I didn't want to be her; I didn't want to be the woman who couldn't talk herself out of it and figure out a solution and a 3-step plan to get better.

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: I wanted to be able to fix it and I couldn't. And one of the things that was a great revelation, for me, was on the day... because I journaled a ton and I prayed a ton and I read a ton. And I remember the day that this dawned on me, and it made no sense, but it was this; I realized part of the reason that I was struggling with just really being so mad at me was because I felt guilty for being blind.

Jen: Oh!

Jennifer: Now, does that make any sense to you? No.

Jen: No.

Jennifer: Right, because I couldn't control it; it's nothing I chose. But what I think I had done, without realizing it, is I had decided that I was a burden to my husband, that my children were going to grow up without the benefit of a whole mom, that anytime I had ask anybody to help... to help me with something, I was bothering them. And I just felt guilty like I was a problem that needed to be solved for my people.

Jen: Yeah.

Jennifer: And once that hit me, I realized that when I had those bouts of not really honoring myself and loving myself, that was part of the reason. And so once I kind of dealt with that, then that issue was removed, and any time I start to get down on myself or frustrate myself, I don't run to that place of anger or self-loathing. I've learned to just accept me for the me that I am. I've learned that because of my faith in God that if this is how he created me and he could change it and he has chosen not to, then I'm going to embrace what I can't change.

Jen: Yes.

Jennifer: And in doing so, then I can accept what God has allowed and I can accept myself. And when there's that self-acceptance and that grace, then it's easy to be okay with me.

Jen: Oh, that's beautiful, hmm. Well, we'll take a quick break for our sponsor and then we'll come back and talk about some of your favorite things.

Alright, welcome back. And, Jennifer, tell us what is the best advice you have ever received?

Jennifer: Oh, the best. This is going to sound really simple, but I remember my daddy when I was in

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high school in the kitchen when I was having a dilemma, said to me, "Mature people say no and don't feel guilty."

Jen: Ooh, yeah.

Jennifer: And that was... I think about it all the time. I mean, you get it, you know? I'm in my 50s now and I have to say no to things so I can say yes to other things. And I always remember my daddy saying, "Mature people can say no without feeling guilty," and I think it's really good advice. My mom's great advice to me was, "You can do anything you put your mind to," and it is the truth.

Jen: Yeah, that is. And what's a favorite book? I mean, you have 14 amazing books, but do you have a favorite?

Jennifer: (Laughs). Yeah.

Jen: (Laughs)

Jennifer: Well, my favorite author is dead, his name is C.S. Lewis.

Jen: (Laughs)

Jennifer: I have a mad crush on C.S. Lewis; and my husband's cool about that because C.S. Lewis is dead. But when I was super depressed, it was reading C.S. Lewis that pulled me out of my depression and brought me back to a place of hope and faith in God. And so I have so many favorites of his, but none of his Narnia series, the fiction ones, I love the 'Silver Chair', and of his other books, I love a book that's called 'The Great Divorce', so I have 2; you asked one, I have 2. I actually have a million, I am a major reader, so those are my top 2.

Jen: And tell us about your morning routine, how you take care of you and what you consistently do to start your day.

Jennifer: Mm-hmm. So I have my iPhone in bed with me because I use it as an alarm. But when it goes off, one of the first things I do is, I like to read scripture. And so I have an app on my phone that I can just kind of swipe it and it will begin to read some scripture verses that helps me kind of focus and settle my mind. When I get up, I've got to be honest, then the first thing I do is coffee; I have to have it to function. And once I've gotten the responsibilities of the kids out of the way, then I will go into my office and I usually light a hazelnut candle; I love the smell of coffee. I usually use my Amazon echo and I ask it to play spa music because I love how relaxing that is.

Jen: Mm-hmm.

Jennifer: And that's when I turn on my computer and, you know, I deal with writing, journaling, emailing, and I forgot to mention, I actually do shower; I should have said that right after the coffee.

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Jen: (Laughs). Okay, that's...

Jennifer: I do want you to know.

Jen: I'm very relieved.

Jennifer: Thank you, yes, yes.

[Laughter]

Jennifer: But that's pretty much my morning routine. And I have my office, I call it 'the room of peace' because I am super intentional about making that a safe place where I can just process and pray and think. And that means, literally, if somebody... like when my kids were little, if they would come in with an issue, I'd say, "Mmm, this is the room of peace," and we would literally step outside my office to have a discussion. (Laughs)

Jen: Yes! You have your own space.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Jen: I kind of that's critical for women, and when we don't have our own space, we burn out fast; smart of you.

Jennifer: Serious. Yeah, we've got to have our boundaries because when we don't, you know, other people just will be all over the place in our space all the time. And, you know, you've heard that when you're flying and the attendant, flight attendant, will say, "In case of an emergency, a mask will drop from above you. Put on your mask first so that you can help the person flying with you," well, that's the kind of thing about boundaries; we've got to put on our masks first so we don't, you know, die of a lack of oxygen.

Jen: Right.

Jennifer: That way, we can help other people.

Jen: Hmm, that's great. Well, let's hear what it means for you to be a vibrant and happy woman and then you can leave a challenge for our listeners and we'll say goodbye.

Jennifer: Okay. To be a vibrant happy woman, for me, means to be an authentic woman. Because to be a vibrant happy woman does not mean you're on top of the world all the time, and it doesn't mean you do everything well. To be vibrant and to be happy, to me, being authentic because that's when we're the most accepting of others, that's when we're the most loveable, and that's when we represent our real beauty; that's my thing; authenticity. And I guess that would lead into the challenge that I would leave others, "It's okay to be who we are. We're not the only ones who struggle." And so to be authentic

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is to accept yourself, give yourself grace and realize, like I said earlier, that it doesn't have to be well with your circumstances for it to be well with your soul.

Jen: Everyone, Jennifer Rothschild, author of 'Me, Myself, and Lies: What to Say When You Talk to Yourself'. Thank you so much for being on the show.

Jennifer: Loved it, thanks girl.

Jen: I want to challenge you this week to follow Jennifer's advice and look at how you're talking to yourself and exercise some grace and self-compassion, and talk to yourself the way you would to a child that you love. I will be back next week talking with Robyn Openshaw from Green Smoothie Girl all about, not just smoothies, but how to unlock energy and success with the high frequency lifestyle. Not only is the food we eat so important for us, but our thoughts, how we think; and she combines the 2 beautifully. So I will see you next time with that and be sure to grab your kids chore chart at [jenriday.com/chorechart](http://jenriday.com/chorechart). Try out Organifi's complete protein that I mentioned in the middle of the episode; just go to [organifi.com](http://organifi.com), [organifi.com](http://organifi.com), and use the code 'happy women' at checkout to get 20% off your first order. And I will see you on Thursday with a happy bit. Take care.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast at [www.jenriday.com](http://www.jenriday.com).

*Vibrant Happy  
Women*

Episode 81: How to Clean Out Your Thought Closet So You Can Stay Positive More Easily with Jennifer Rothschild  
<http://jenriday.com/81>