

A BETTER LIFE WITH RACHEL ROFÉ

A CONVERSATION WITH

JOANNE

AMEYA

COHEN

**IF YOU HAVE A
CHOICE, CHOOSE
A BETTER LIFE.**

Rachel: Hello everyone. Today we're here with Joanne Ameya Cohen. Joanne is an expert herbalist and flower essence therapist, inspirational speaker, feminine embodiment mentor and author of the upcoming book, *The Healthy Feminine Leader: Alleviate Stress, Balance Your Hormones and Tap into Your Power*. Joanne combines her expertise to help women balance their hormonal and reproductive health systems through healing their hearts and embodying their innate truth, power and wisdom.

Also working as a birth doula, childbirth educator, and midwife assistant, Joanne has supported hundreds of women to face their fears, worries, anxieties, and joys in order for them to birth themselves as mothers. Joanne has been schooled in the ways of women over the last 14 years in private practice and humbly teaches all she has learned. I asked Joanne to come here today because I've had first-hand experience with what she does and she is incredible.

I personally worked with her for several months and saw amazing changes to my health. Joanne is a master at finding the most gentle yet the most powerful methods to make women feel infinitely more healthy. If you're a woman and you're listening, I'm sure she's going to drop some knowledge that will help you immensely. If you're a man listening, this is the kind of stuff that can help you support the women in your life big time. So, Joanne thank you so much for being here.

Joanne: Thank you for having me. I'm honored.

Rachel: My pleasure. The intention behind A Better Life is to show people that if they have a choice, they can choose the better life. In that spirit, can you take a minute to share with us some of the things that you're most proud of in your life?

Joanne: Sure. I mean, I love this question because I think so much of the time we end up focusing on all the things we haven't yet accomplished or completed or that we don't yet have, so I appreciate the question of starting with our accomplishments and what we're grateful for. I'm proud that I'm committed to my own emotional healing, that I'm really willing to be messy and beautiful and expand more and more even when that feels really scary.

I'm proud of the incredible relationships that I have with women in my life that I call my sisters and I've always had the most incredible women in my life. I feel really proud of that and know that they've pretty much shaped who I've become. I'm proud of my deep connection to nature and that I can communicate and can act with plant spirits and plant medicines. I feel really proud of the work that I do in the world and I feel so honored and so grateful that I get to support women, to celebrate their wisdom, their beauty, and their radiance.

Somehow, I'm not only my working with them, but I'm also helping their children, their partners, and their communities. Hopefully, I'm creating by helping one woman, a spiral effect of helping lots of people. I'm proud of the way that I love. I will say that, too.

Rachel: I'm just nodding my head to everything you're saying because I know that you're such a master or mistress of all of those things.

Joanne: Thank you.

Rachel: I know where you are now, that's amazing. I recommend you all the time. I know that you didn't just wake up and be in this spot. I know that you've worked through things and you've worked hard to get to where you are right now. I would love if you would just describe a particularly notable time that comes up for you when things weren't going the way that you wanted or you felt trapped.

I'd love to hear just what was going on then, what you were feeling, and what it was looking like for you because I just want people to kind of get the feel that even if we're in an amazing spot right now, there's always things that we have to work through to get to where we are.

Joanne: Yes. Actually, I have little angel bumps all over my arms from that question because I think it's really important. I think that we have tendencies when we look at people we really admire and respect to think that that just kind of happened. For the most part, there are many ebbs and flows and pulsations that bring us up and then bring us back down and bring us up. I know for me, that the second half of my twenties were really, really rough.

I was, at that time, in a really dysfunctional relationship and I couldn't quite get myself to leave. I really, really loved this man, yet knew in my heart that my needs were never going to be met. Because of this intense back and forth that I felt and the intense emotional turmoil, I put so much of my life on hold. I also didn't have a lot of energy to put into other parts of my life, so I was really struggling with money.

I was having chronic yeast infections because the way that I look at it is because my most feminine parts were trying to communicate with me and tell me that there was a disconnect between my soul's whisperings and my actions. I also wasn't living my dharma. I wasn't growing my business. I wasn't reaching the women that I knew in my heart I was here on this planet to serve. Life felt so challenging. I really felt trapped.

I just felt like how is this pattern, how is this relationship, this money, this business, my health going to shift and change? It was really, really a big challenge and a lot of heartache and pain that I went through.

Rachel: It sounds like it. How did you work your way out of that?

Joanne: Honestly, a couple things happened. One was that one morning I woke up and something had really shifted inside of me. Part of that was because I had been praying and praying and praying for support from the unseen world because I just didn't feel like I could do this on my own. That one morning, I just woke up and it was like through my eyes, everything looked different.

I had been living in Hawaii, and I moved from Hawaii to Los Angeles. I started focusing on my business because something inside of me said that I had to choose me. When I said, "yes" to choosing myself, everything just opened. All the energies that felt stuck, stagnant, and broken really, really opened.

Rachel: What happened with the guy?

Joanne: We ended our relationship and it was terrible, heartbreaking, and heart wrenching. I'm not sure if I've ever gone through that level of heartache in my life and yet I knew that it was a must. Whatever I was feeling and however uncomfortable the pain in my heart was, I also knew that it had to happen. It was a really long journey of my healing. I had a lot of books that I read and a lot of friends who helped me. I owned tools that I used.

It took me a long while to end that relationship, find myself again, and find my money, work, and health. It was a beautiful, beautiful journey in the pain and the opening.

Rachel: That's amazing that you were just praying and you just had this, "I choose me." You decided to move to L.A. What did it look like when you first got there because you said you didn't have much money at the time? Was there an initial working out all the kinks with trying to figure out money and stuff or was it kind of effortless once you got there?

Joanne: The reason I moved to L.A. was because I had an astrologer years before tell me that it was a good place to live because in the moment in Hawaii, I just felt like where am I going to go? What is about to happen? I had one friend in Los Angeles who I went to college with and it was all just very beautifully synchronistic. Her roommate was actually leaving for three months, so I moved in with her.

I felt like I had family and I had somebody that I really knew and loved because I didn't know anyone else in Los Angeles. I allowed myself to have a lot of time to heal. I was definitely crumpled on the floor at times crying and having friends rub me, give me hugs, and really love me up. Then at a certain point, I just really started to ask myself what it is that I wanted? What it is that I really wanted my life to look like?

For me, the biggest momentum for me in the foundation from which I come from is emotional freedom. How can I live in this moment and make choices from this moment rather than based on any pains and hurts from the past? In order to do that, you need a lot of courage. So, I really practiced harnessing my courage every single day. What in this moment feels courageous? What do I want my life to look like?

How can I harness my courage? How can I be free? How can I be me? I was always coming back to that place. Things just really opened up for me here. I don't know if it was my astrology where that woman had told me years ago to move here or if it was choosing me and in that moment creating space for things to open. I was a birth doula at that time and just started getting a lot of jobs and meeting people. There was this incredible, incredible ease.

I still talk to people about this because in comparison to the stuck and the sadness that I had been feeling for so long in my relationship and in Hawaii, there was so much ease when I got to Los Angeles, which just affirmed everything for me.

Rachel: When you were telling yourself, "What do I want my life to look like?" how specific were you getting? Did you have a list? Was it something that you put in your mind and what kind of things were in that picture?

Joanne: One of the biggest pieces was I felt like I really needed to create financial abundance for myself. I had moved somewhere new. I had to buy a car; I had left my car in Hawaii because I kind of just left. There was a lot of me that was just visioning my life thinking what kind of money do I need to make right now? I spent a lot of time creating connections and meeting people. Like I said, there was a lot of ease for me getting doula jobs.

Then there were also practices that I did, whether they were visualization practices or sometimes I would do journaling practices of how do I really want to feel? For so long, I had overridden my body's feelings like a lot of us do. We get an intuition or we feel uncomfortable around somebody or our energy falls when we're around somebody, but we just say, "Never mind that. I'm going to keep doing this thing."

I realized that I had been doing that for a long time. It probably started in my teenage years. A lot of my practice at that time and still is like, how do I want my life to feel? How do I want to feel in my life? Over time, once I got ready to get back into a new relationship, that's when the lists came. I started writing lists of whom this man was that I wanted to find. Before then, it was more of creating this space and a container for the visioning and feelings to come through.

Rachel: I think that feeling thing keeps coming up. It's so powerful to just focus on what we want to feel and then let the how show up. I'm curious, you

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decided you want to feel abundant and you were noticing more people that you felt energy coming down from them. If you were with somebody and you were feeling like you were energetically feeling less around them, how would you handle that? Would you say something to them? Would you stop seeing them? I think people could learn a lot from this.

Joanne: This is where our boundaries come into play. I've had to learn a lot about boundaries because of my patterns of over giving or caretaking others. Truthfully, a lot of this healing for me has come through taking flower essences. There was just a point where, I know it sounds somewhat simplistic, but where I kept reminding myself that I was choosing me. This was really hard because for somebody who has tendencies towards caretaking others at the expense of ourselves to create a boundary brings up a lot of guilt and feeling like we're letting somebody down and it questions our self worth.

Just creating a boundary isn't as simple as creating a boundary. There are many factors that go into it. A lot of our patterns and beliefs about ourselves and about the world come into play. I remember at one point when I was really working on my boundaries almost making a game of it for myself because it was so uncomfortable to say, "No, I can't hang out with that person right now," or, "No, I actually I can't help you with that project," or even something as simple as, "No, I actually don't want to eat at that restaurant."

That's small but it can still be hard, especially for women, to speak our truths. I would just give myself like little practices or little games every day. Let's say, for example, I was out with a friend for lunch and I started to feel in my body the sense of exhaustion or uncomfortableness or even anxiety, I would say, "I have to be somewhere at 2:00." So, I would cut off the time period instead of leaving it open ended.

I would practice these ways of creating healthy and appropriate boundaries because healthy and appropriate boundaries are really important for us. It's not to say that you have to be mean or put somebody else down, it's really about taking care of yourself and what it is that you need in order to flourish, in order to feel really good. I would create these games, but honestly, flower essences were my biggest tool for creating boundaries.

Rachel: Yes, and I know it might sound crazy, but it's true. Joanne actually sent me flower essences when we were working together. It's amazing the results that I would feel from them. There's medicinal properties in them. You've heard, I'm sure, of taking herbs; it's the same thing with flowers. You can get these amazing medicinal results by taking them. I would definitely feel different. Joanne would send me these custom formulas. They were just amazing. Did you take things that were specifically for boundaries?

Joanne: Yes, there's a great flower essence called Motherwort, which is really good for boundaries. The thing about this specific topic is that it usually comes from somewhere. Usually, we have boundary issues because at some point they were crossed, manipulated, or violated in some way. The biggest thing when you're trying to create boundaries is also cultivating why they need to strengthen and where that wounding occurred.

There were other flower essences for me that I would use so that I wouldn't fall into the pattern of caretaking others, putting other's needs before my needs. Caretaking others can be really beautiful. We like taking care of people we love. It's when it crosses that super tiny fine line and goes into being unhealthy for us. There were flower essences like Sun Ray Lily and Missouri Primrose for self-worth and deservability that I took.

It's kind of important for us to know the full picture of why are our boundaries being blurry in the first place. Then there are tons of flower essences that can help to not only strengthen our boundaries, but also heal the things that have created the dysfunction or imbalance in the first place.

Rachel: That's a really great point. I'm curious, when you were setting your boundaries and you were kind of making it a game for yourself and you added some joy to it, how were people responding around you?

Joanne: You know, it's a little bit tricky depending on who the person is. For example, when I first started making stronger boundaries with my dad, there was a little bit of a push and pull because you're changing the dynamics and the rules that have been set up for years and years and years. There's usually a little push back or a push forward from the person that you're trying to set the boundaries with like, "Hey, wait a second."

If you can stick with it though, and you can stay strong, then the other person eventually starts to get comfortable with this new way of being. What happens with a lot of us is we give in to the other person so things don't stay strong. I actually had a lot of compliments from people. They were like, "Wow, you have really good boundaries." But it wasn't in a way of being rigid; it just was in a way of I take care of myself.

I am taking care of me. My freedom, my health, my pleasure, my autonomy is mine and needs to be protected and cared for just as you would with your favorite niece or plant or child. We need that same caring for ourselves. For some people it was a little bit harder and those were more of my intimate relationships. For other people, I got a lot of validation and compliments from people.

Rachel: One of the things that I think is really helpful is when you're considering a new way of being, to consider the worst case scenario, not in the space of

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being negative, but just from a space of let's kind of think this out. If you wouldn't mind, I would love to hear one of the things that you decided to set a boundary on with your dad, how he responded, and how you got through it. I think that would be really helpful for people.

Joanne: One of the things with my dad was that he would call me every single day and I had somehow become his confidant. It was actually really taxing. I would have a lot of anxiety about what he was going to share with me sometimes. One of the simplest steps (I've actually shared this with my clients who have similar issues with either mother or father) that I did with him was instead of talking to him every day in the beginning, I would talk to him every three days.

If he called, I just wouldn't answer the phone. I'd call him when I felt like I needed to call him and I would stay on the phone with him for as long as it felt okay in my body. As soon as I felt that he was over sharing with me or that I was going to start to take care of him, I would say, "I have to get off the phone now." This was eight or nine years ago. Now we talk once a week and I'm very mindful of how long I can be on the phone with him.

Our relationship has really shifted in the last nine years as I've been really devoted to my own inner exploration and what makes me feel safe. That's something really simple. Honestly, I hear this story so much with my clients. "My mom calls every day and I don't feel good after I talk to her, but I don't feel like I can not talk to her." One of the simplest things is just stretching out the amount of time between conversations. This isn't about saying that you're never going to talk to that person ever again. They're your parent and you love them. It's about switching out of patterns that don't serve you.

Rachel: That makes sense. You never felt like you had to say, "Dad, I feel like you're over sharing," or "Dad, you're calling too much." You just simply stopped engaging what you didn't like to do?

Joanne: We actually did have one conversation. I don't live in the same state as my parents. I remember one summer being in person with him, we were out to dinner and he started over sharing. It was really hard for me. I had tears in my eyes, I was completely uncomfortable, and I said, "I can't be that person that you share this with." I couldn't actually say much more because I was on the verge of crying and that's why it was also that simple.

But he looked at me and it was the first time that I felt like, "Oh, he just got it." He just really understood that there were some boundaries that were actually being very blurred. I just needed to say it. It's kind of that, again, that other simplistic place of we are so scared of speaking our truths for the potential that somebody might say "no" or asking for our needs to be

met because somebody might say “no.” But if we don’t ask, we don’t know.

Rachel: That’s a great point. How do you think that men can support the women that are exercising boundaries and trying them out?

Joanne: That is such a good question. I guess if you’re in an intimate relationship with this woman and she’s coming to you saying, “I’m really wanting to work on my boundaries.” Then hopefully, there would be a clear communication and respectfulness being mindful of her boundaries. So, if she said, “No,” even if it hurt your feelings or if you take it personally remembering that she’s asserting her will and asserting her authority, which maybe she’s never done before.

So, you get to be a part of and a real safe haven for her to actually practice setting boundaries. One incredible thing about doing this with your partner or in partnership is having somebody that you feel really safe to just practice, at first, with your boundaries.

Rachel: That’s great. I think that’s going to help a lot of people.

Joanne: To have somebody that can be supportive of you when you’re trying to change yourself and change your behaviors is one of the most helpful things that I’ve had in my life. Somebody cheering me on saying, “You can do it. You’re doing amazing. You’re changing. I’m seeing how you’re changing. I know this is hard for you,” just somebody who is being your greatest support.

Rachel: Every single podcast that I’ve done so far, (I’m sure there are some people who are not like this) people were talking about support and how helpful it is to be able to surround yourself with people who can support you. I just think maybe there’s some people who are not like this, but I think the gross majority of people just flourish when we’re being encouraged.

Joanne: Exactly, and like you’re talking about how to create a better life and so much of the reason why we don’t create a better life is because of these conditionings that we have about what’s appropriate and what we should do. The only way to break out of that and create this epic life is by having other people who are just like, “Yes, I will rise with you. I will stand with you. I will hold you accountable. I want you to live your most incredible dreams.” We need, we need, we need that support.

Rachel: For people listening who maybe don’t have a significant other or they don’t feel like they have support right now, do you have any ways that you would suggest for them to get that support?

Joanne: For women listening, I think one of the best things can sometimes be your dearest friend, your dearest your sister who maybe you've known for many years. I would call on her to help you. I think, as you know, the biggest things that keep us moving forward are support, accountability, and motivation. So, maybe just taking a moment to look at your life and look at the people that you surround yourself with and asking who could help support the accountability and the motivation?

As you're moving towards co-creating your ideal life or your most beautiful life, there are going to be walls that you hit whether they're internal walls or external walls and you're going to need somebody who can help you dust yourself off and get back towards your desires. Of course, there are tons of other people that you can hire and mentor you and walk with you. It also depends on what somebody is looking for.

Rachel: I think you bring up some really great points. Even if you're a man, you need to go to your brothers, your friends and ask them. If you're going through the people in your life and thinking, "None of these people would understand," I think that's one of the greatest beauties about the time that we live in now. There are so many forums and Facebook groups and all kinds of communities and meet-up groups where you can go and be with people who are interested in the type of things that you're interested in. I don't think it's ever been easier to create communities for growth.

Joanne: It's true. I actually heard this person speak once at a conference and he said something so simple. He said, "If there's somebody who's living a life that you admire and from where you are now to where you want to be it feels like you could learn a lot from that person, then go on a forum, or send them an email or send them a message and say, 'Hey, I so appreciate you. It looks like you're living your life. Do you have five or ten minutes to chat?'" You never know what could happen.

Rachel: That's a really good point. Like you were saying before, the answer may be, "no," but it also might be, "yes."

Joanne: Exactly. You don't know until you ask. When I heard him say that I thought, "Oh yes, there's a way in which I do this." I'll look at somebody whom I admire and I think, "Oh, I can't possibly email them or contact them. They don't have time for me." I just go into my own mental chatter. Then I've taken the option completely off the plate and who knows what they might have said?

Rachel: Even if they don't do it, I think just being courageous in trying to do it would make you feel better.

Joanne: Exactly.

Rachel: From where you were in the second half of your twenties to where you are now, you've obviously made leaps and bounds in your growth. I'm curious if you could whittle it down to a couple mindsets or choices that helped shaped your new decisions. I know one of them is, as you say, "It's all about me. I'm going to make decisions based on me and how I feel." Are there other things you told or believed about yourself to get to where you are now?

Joanne: The other piece that I really touched on is my why—my reason why I do everything is for my emotional freedom. When I'm free, then I get to be me—the truth of me, not the truth of me based on societal conditionings or limiting beliefs. I always come back to, when I'm making a choice, is this aligned with my truths? Is this aligned with freedom? The other place that I'm constantly coming back to is courage.

We need courage for everything. We need courage to get up in the day. We need courage to speak to our bosses, to speak to our partners, to dive deep into our deepest desires. Courage is my guidepost. I talk to her every day. What do I need to believe to be true, to be courageous? A lot of times what I need to believe to be true is that I'm worth it, and I'm worthy, and I deserve whatever it is I'm desiring in that moment.

Rachel: I think you just made such an awesome point. I talk about this all the time. It's just like asking yourself the right questions. I love that you asked yourself when you're in this period where you're not sure if you're feeling scared about doing something, what do I need to be true in order to feel courageous? Then your brain just starts coming up with the answers.

Joanne: Yes. Sometimes I don't have answers. Sometimes it's like, "Oh yeah, okay, I need to do that," and sometimes it's like I actually just don't know and the courage is in the unknowing or the courage is in the sitting and listening and seeing if I get any guidance from spirit. That's courage as well.

Rachel: That's something that I adore about you. You're very, very gentle and you don't try to push things at all. I think probably everyone who knows you really appreciates that about you.

Joanne: I don't know. I'll have to start asking around.

Rachel: That is great. Is that something that you taught to your clients as well to not make immediate decisions if you don't get a clear answer?

Joanne: Oh yes, it could be frustrating when you really feel like you need to make a decision and you're not clear. It's hard to find clarity. Two things are happening. Either it's just not time to have clarity and you need more time and spaciousness to delve into what needs to come forward or for a lot of people, not being clear is like a default setting. It's like I'm just not going to

move forward because I'm not clear and it's an old way of being and living and navigating in the world.

My second question to somebody if they're really not clear is have you ever felt like this before? If they're like, "Oh my gosh, yes. I feel like this all the time." Then that's a really great opening for healing. Why are you feeling confused? "I'm really scared of failing." Then you start from that space. So I think it's two parts. It's like sometimes we're holding ourselves back and sometimes because we just need to take the time and space.

Rachel: When you're working with clients asking them questions, getting their answers, then when you start kind of clearing these patterns, that often makes shifts in their physical bodies too, right?

Joanne: Yes, for sure.

Rachel: Do you have any stories that come to mind about times when that's happened?

Joanne: Oh my gosh, yes! This one comes to mind because it was so dramatic. I really have a strong belief that our emotions and our physical symptoms are completely linked up to one another. There's no separation between the two. That's the place that I come from, whether I'm working on myself or with another woman. In the fall, I had a client who had very intense vaginal itching for eight years.

That's a really long time to deal with something that uncomfortable. She had been to numerous doctors. Finally, at the end of the eight years, her doctor said she was making it up because everything was coming back fine, she had no infections, she had no yeast, she had no bacteria. They just couldn't find anything to "fix." So, she came to me and we started talking about her life.

In this process that I do with my clients, which you're familiar with, we figure out times that trauma really happened. So, I asked her about this time in her life from age five to nine and she said that was when she was molested by her father. She had actually never told anyone except her mother. As soon as we started working on that trauma, they were happening nightly. After the first session, they went to a week. We had our second session and then they just stopped happening.

She still will have more work to do because that's a deep violation to be molested by your father. Hopefully, because we touched into the wound, the physical symptoms start to disappear. That trauma that's been imprinted into the tissue starts to alleviate and to release.

Rachel: How did you work on the trauma together? Was it with your amazing energy work or was it flower essences or a combination?

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Joanne: It was flower and gem essences. It's kind of a combination of energy work plus the gems and flowers. The whole point of it is when we have trauma in our lives, (I don't think anyone has gotten through life without having some experience of trauma) usually when it happens at a young age, we don't have the tools to process, heal, and release them. They're so painful that we push them down deep and they end up in our tissues. Ultimately, at some point, they manifest as physical health symptoms. It's important that we move that trauma out of the tissues and out of our psyche's alliance.

Rachel: I know that that makes a lot of sense.

Joanne: It starts to get a little heavy as we start moving into traumas like the conversation gets a little intense and heavy, but it's so magical what happens when these issues are released from ourselves.

Rachel: Yes, I mean, it makes sense. They say when you stuff down with food or different things, whatever your addiction is, a lot of times those emotions will get trapped in your actual tissue and there's science around it. When you're able to clear those things out of your tissue, out of your body, for sure like you're saying, it could have outstanding results. What's an action step that you do on a daily basis to make your life better?

Joanne: Honestly, I take flower essences every single day or almost every single day. Flower essences work on our emotional healing. They pull subconscious thoughts to the conscious mind. I'm constantly working on my edges, the places that are uncomfortable, and my shadows and expanding into my light. Flower essences help me to really stretch so that I can shine in the world in my relationship and my friendships and my health and my work. Every day, that is something that I do.

Rachel: How can people find out about flower essences?

Joanne: I have information on my website that they can read about. I could talk about them for hours and hours. If anyone's interested, they can also send me an email. I have a YouTube channel that talks about flower essences, amongst other things. Of course, just Googling flower essences, I'm sure you could come up with a ton of information.

Rachel: Awesome. I had another question that's slightly changing gears, but I'm just trying to have total transparency here for people listening. I'm curious, in your experience, what do you think is something that people don't share about improving themselves like either it's not sexy or it just doesn't paint this overnight success kind of picture?

Joanne: That's such a good question. I love that. I would say one of the things is the commitment it really takes to improving yourself. The commitment it

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takes to yourself. Like I was just saying my commitment of expanding myself and shining light into the shadows and the ups and downs that we go through as we go through our personal journey. Sometimes there's a year where maybe you don't have any issues and then maybe you have two months that are like whoa, I'm facing a lot of my inner self-doubt.

So, I would say one part of it is the commitment because we live in a world where commitment is not valued. We like the quick fix. We like things that happen overnight and getting to know yourself and creating this life where you look around and you're just like, "Oh my gosh, this is like my dream. I'm living my dream." It takes commitment. It takes work. It takes focused energy. I would say that doesn't seem sexy at all, but it's actually what's most needed.

Rachel: That's a great point. So many people have been saying something similar and I think there's a lot of wisdom in that.

Joanne: Yes it's like the commitment to just showing up for yourself and for your loved ones because it's not just about ourselves. The reason that we're doing all of this work on ourselves is then to create a better relationship, to attract a relationship that feels really loving and healthy, or to have a dream job. Everything that we do then affects all the people around us. In us, making the commitment to ourselves, we then give others permission to do the same.

Rachel: Absolutely. Right before I do every podcast, I open up with "[Our Greatest Fear](#)" by Marianne Williamson.

Joanne: It's so good.

Rachel: It's so good. She has this line right at the end, "And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." I just love it.

Joanne: It's beautiful. Also, I like it too, because it messes a little bit with the idea that we learned where you can only rise to the top because of your own endeavors and your own smarts. What Marianne Williamson says and I think what a lot of other practitioners are also saying is, "Let's rise together. Let's do this together in sisterhood, in brotherhood, in humanhood, and all live this incredible life where we're shining."

Rachel: Beautiful. We're all humans with every day struggles. We're never going to stop evolving and that's kind of the beauty of it. For you, what's something that you're currently working through in your life right now and how are you getting through it?

Joanne: You caught me on a good week because actually, for a while, I haven't really had major stuff coming up, but last week, I sure did. There's a way in which we all kind of know our stories like that happened to me and that happened to me and this is how I feel about this person. So I've had this story that I've known about for as long as I can remember about myself and something that happened to me when I was little.

Just last week, I got to a different layer. The more you do this work on yourself, the more subtleties you can find and the more layers you can unpeel. Right now, I'm working on some sexual shame that was just revealed to me. I can see patterns of how I've suppressed not just my sexuality over the years, but my power—really standing in my power because there was a time when I did that and I got made fun of or ridiculed or made others uncomfortable, so I learned how to suppress myself and kind of fit in and did my life kind of like that Marianne Williamson quote.

So, I'm seeing these deeper subtleties and this deeper shame and trauma and what I'm doing right now for that is talking a lot with my friends, a lot with some girlfriends, talking with my partner, making sure I'm being really real and really raw. Yesterday I actually wrote a letter to my inner child and I lit a candle and just kind of did some ritual work. I take flower essences and actually I just reached out to connect with somebody who does Somatic Experiencing work which is this really subtle modality of releasing trauma from the system. I'm at a place in my life where I can catch these things more quickly than letting them percolate, sit, and bring me down for a long time and realizing that I want to work on this. Who has the best modality to help me work on this specific issue? How can I move through it even when it's uncomfortable? This is not easy.

Rachel: I bet. Is it helpful just to talk about it? Is it helpful in the aspect of once we talk about something we have shame about, does it lessen? What specifically is helping you about sharing it with your friends?

Joanne: That's a great question. One is just in the sharing, I know I'm not isolating myself, which is really easy to do. The other thing which I'm finding so beautiful, more as a reminder because I've always felt it and known it but you know, I've been doing work with clients for almost 14 years, and I've been teaching online workshops and I teach in-person workshops and what I've found to be so incredible and actually kind of surprising each time is how we're all so alike.

We all have similar stories, maybe different characters and maybe slightly different events that happened, but we all understand shame, heartache, anger, and joy and we can really all relate to that. What I'm finding in this last week talking with my dear friends (most of them are women) is this I'm watching them tear up as I'm tearing and them revealing things that happened to them and this knowing that none of us are alone.

That's just a construct of our mind and we've all experienced something that is really painful. I feel like that's what's so healing. When I get to hear their story and I just feel like, "Oh my gosh, wow, this person lived through that and that happened to them. Oh my gosh, it's so sad." It makes my heart ache for their little child that was made fun of or taken advantage of, I can feel into their pain, and then I'm feeling my pain.

I feel like, "Oh my gosh, we're all one big family. We're not alone, we can all do this together. It takes a village." So, I feel like there are two parts that I'm getting out. It's not isolating myself, really being messy, and this knowing that I'm just not alone and every person has a story.

Rachel: That's beautiful. I love that. Just showing we're all in this together, I think is so helpful. That's such a good point. The other piece that I wanted to touch on just for people who aren't familiar with the inner child work, can you speak for a minute as to what you mean when you say that and also how the inner child relates to the subconscious?

Joanne: Yes. The inner child is that small part of us, that little girl or that little boy who got hurt, or wounded, or made fun of, or taken advantage of, or whatever your story is. The inner child is that part of us that we can connect to and talk with and care for like you would if you were actually holding a child or holding a baby. For most of us, the inner child is, for many of us, kind of running the show.

What happens is we have a trauma in our life, and let's carry on with the woman that I was sharing about who was molested by her father. In that moment, our bodies, our psyches create these incredible defense mechanisms that keep us safe. That place of wounding kind of becomes the imprint through which we then live our lives. So, we make decisions based on that experience.

For example, if you were violated you probably either pick partners who violate you more or violate you the same or you kind of steer away from any partnership and suppress your sexuality altogether. This child, this inner part of you that was wounded is the one that is making all the decisions. So, even though you look like an adult on the outside, and you think you're making rational decisions, it's actually the child that's making the decisions.

What happens when you start to heal these wounds and heal the inner child and talk to her and relate with her is you're also bringing the adult self into your present moment and into all the decisions so that your adult rational filter is now the one making the decisions. This can be hard for the child because she's used to making the decisions and she wants to keep you "safe" so there's a little bit of making sure she's tended to and she gets healed so that you can make decisions from the present adult

perspective. I hope that wasn't confusing. I'm just trying to think of how to speak about it without taking an hour.

Rachel: I think the only thing I would add to it is the inner child is a way of looking at it. There's all kinds of ways of looking at it. Another way of looking at it is our subconscious. You've probably heard our subconscious makes most of the decisions for us. Something happens and you automatically act on autopilot. It's not something like a lot of times you think, "Did I just say that? or "Why did I say that?" You don't even think about it.

The inner child is part of that thing where, when we were younger, we learn to make decisions because things happen to us over and over and after a while, it's just easier to have a way of responding to those things. The inner child is another way of saying like those decisions that we've formed years and years ago are the ones that we're still acting on autopilot now. When we presence that part of our subconscious and we're able to talk with it, that's when we're able to start changing things that aren't really serving us as much.

Joanne: You said that much better than I did. Thank you for clarifying all of that.

Rachel: The other question I wanted to ask for the people who are listening and maybe they're feeling like, "I haven't had something happen to me like being molested or something." Do you have examples of things that maybe clients have identified as traumas in their body even though it wasn't something that might be considered huge to other people?

Joanne: Right. What I would say for that is we can look at the word trauma because I know some people will have a little bit of a kneejerk reaction to that if they haven't had trauma, so we can also just define it as a hurt, a pain, or a wounding that you've had in your life. I'm sure if anyone has not had that. It could be something really minor or something really big like a sexual violation. It could be when you were in fifth grade, everyone was picked for the kickball team, and you were the last person.

It could be your parents' divorce and from that moment on, the way that you saw the world was really different. It could be from a job that you really wanted that you worked super hard for the interview, you got there, and they just kind of picked you apart as to why you weren't good for that job. So, I would say trauma in itself is anything that negatively affects your self worth, your deservability, and your self-esteem.

Rachel: That's a great way of putting it. I'm really glad that you called out. Just the word trauma sounds so intense.

Joanne: I know. It sounds intense, it does. I find that more often than not, I use words like wound or closure around your heart or pain because trauma does sound intense. It sounds like it has to be sexual violation or physical

abuse. The thing is, we often compare ourselves to others, and so if I was comparing myself, I might say “What I’m going through right now wasn’t sexual assault, but I’m still feeling a lot of shame and it still felt like a big wound for me.” It’s really important that we don’t compare ourselves because then we negate things that have happened to us that are really significant.

Rachel: I think that’s such a good point. When you were saying that, I immediately flashed back. I was in this Mastermind a couple of years ago, we were sharing our stories, and so I shared mine. As you know, there is tons of trauma from my childhood and after I shared one of the other women started crying and she’s like, “I don’t feel like I have a right to say anything. I had a pretty good childhood. I’m not allowed to say anything. I’m not allowed to work through anything.” So I think you bring up such a good point because pain is pain for everybody.

Joanne: Exactly.

Rachel: A lot of people right now, if they are listening to you, they’re feeling inspired by you, but they are still potentially scared to make changes in their own life. What advice would you give to somebody who’s listening, inspired, but just really scared?

Joanne: I think fear is a very significant emotion to be aware of. I have many clients, myself included, when I’ve signed up for different programs, there’s a way in which we know when we really need change, we really want change. Yet, it’s scary to think of what might happen in our world when we change. Will our relationships survive? Will we have to get rid of friendships? Will we have to switch jobs?

As we discover more and more of our truths, what is going to then happen in our lives, which ultimately all be amazing and fantastic, but sometimes in the beforehand when you’re looking at everything, it can be really scary. One thing is I think your question is fantastic and I think just acknowledging that you have fear and that your fear has nothing over your dreams is really important because there’s always going to be fear.

Things are scary. You’re going to have to move through self-doubts, resistances, and people wanting to pull you down potentially. There’s so much that we have to move through. What I would remind people is that you’re the co-creator of your life, so it’s incredibly possible to create the life that you imagine and envision. I think that the most important piece to come back to in this podcast about choosing a better life is that you get to do this for yourself and there will be fear.

In the introduction, you had mentioned that I worked with many women in labor, so I tend to look at life through the filter of pregnancy and birth. I remember being at a birth one time with a midwife who was talking to my

client and my client was saying how scared she was. She wasn't sure she could go on longer. She was really in a lot of physical discomfort. The midwife said to her, "You have to wrap your mind around the pain and the discomfort. It's there for a reason.

In this reason, you're birthing a child. Each time that you push away from this discomfort, you actually make it harder for yourself because you have to start all over again." I think about that a lot because I can remember the visual of her really trying to move her body away from the pain. Sometimes you just have to step into it. There's no way around feeling your emotions. I guess there is, I guess you could really numb out and disconnect from your emotions.

But if you're choosing you, and you know that you have a longing inside of you to better your life, there's no way to skirt your emotions. Once you get to the other side, the freedom that exists there and the beauty that exists there, I promise that it's beyond your wildest imagination. There's so many things that I could say to somebody feeling scared. Ultimately, it comes back to how willing are you to live the life that you want? If the longing is so strong that you're willing to coax out your visions no matter what.

Rachel: An absolutely poetic response. What would you say to somebody now who's struggling and feeling trapped by their circumstances?

Joanne: When we're struggling and feeling trapped we just want to either run or get out or just try to avoid that feeling. I guess the one thing I would say is to really acknowledge and appreciate what the circumstance is offering. When we feel stuck and trapped, the situation that's causing that didn't happen overnight. There's a way in which we really said, "Yes" in every moment that led up to that.

So, number one is to really appreciate and that's really hard because it can feel so uncomfortable, but there's some reason that everything has conspired to get to this point. Then, I would start to ask yourself and your body some of the questions that we've been talking about. What do you really desire? What do you want for your life? What's your ultimate vision? If you could paint a big vision for yourself and not get bogged down by the money it might take to get you there or the people it might take to get you there, but just really allow yourself the freedom of what do you vision? And what are your desires? Then bring that vision into your body, really feel what that feels like to cultivate that vision and then move from that space.

Okay, I want to feel this. I want my life to look like this. What do you need then to create this? I need to work with somebody or I need to call that person that I've wanted to call who has my total dream job and ask them, "How did you get that?" Or, I need to leave this relationship. It's not working for me anymore. A lot of the struggling and feeling trapped that

we feel is actually because we're not paying attention to choosing ourselves.

Rachel: I love it. Thank you so much. This has been phenomenal. People are going to get so much from it and I'm positive that people are going to want to learn more about you. Can you let people know where they can go to find out more about you?

Joanne: First, I just want to say thank you again because I feel like all of your questions are what people are really needing to hear so that they can move forward. So, I really appreciate and honor you asking questions that other people don't ask. My website is just my name, <http://joanneameyacohen.com/> There are lots of blogs on there and I have a YouTube channel with tons of videos that you can kind of sit back and relax and hopefully get inspired and hopefully give you some new ideas or new ways of being in the world. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and all those social media outlets I will be there with my arms out welcoming you to live with your radiance.

Rachel: For those listening, this will be in the show notes. Just so you guys know how to spell the website, it's J-o-a-n-n-e-A-m-e-y-a-C-o-h-e-n.com

Joanne: Yes, it's a long one.

Rachel: It's worth it. It's worth the typing, so awesome. Thank you so much again. It's been so great. I can't wait to get this out there.

Joanne: Thank you so much, Rachel.

END

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With love,
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