


Ep #033: From Abused to Addictions to Freedom



**Vulnerable
to Valuable**
with Rosie Aiello



Jill Reynolds

**"From Abused to
Addictions to
Freedom!"**



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Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rosie Aiello

Women's Life and Transformation Coach

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She never gave up. She kept trying and searching ways to heal. our guests today, Jill Reynolds, finally found the modality that transformed her life. and now, she felt free.

Hi, I'm Rosie Aiello and welcome to the Vulnerable to Valuable Podcast. We talk about moving forward after experiencing narcissistic, controlling, demeaning and abusive relationships. If you've been in one of those like me, you KNOW what I'm talking about. You are not alone. You've been through some painful stuff ... shame, blame, that inner bully inside you. My mission is to lift and inspire you ... give you the ways you can reclaim your voice and value, your confidence, and the courage to BE the new empowered you.

Jill Reynolds had a traumatic childhood that set her on a path of eating disorders and drug addiction, but she overcame it all and created a successful life.

We're going to talk with Jill Reynolds in a moment, and first...

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The only way to move forward and create an impact in your life is to know where you're at, where you want to go and what's holding you back. Get started by taking the Freedom Fulfillment quiz. In 4 short minutes, you'll discover where you are, where you want to be, and what you'll need to do. If you are serious about evolving into a new empowered you, who can show up as the confident woman she once was, or wants to be then start now. Your life is waiting for you.

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Jill Reynold's resiliency kept her going under the trauma and pain. There was a will to survive... transformed from traumatized child to successful business woman, wife, and mother. She continues to help others by creating empowering live events and by helping women overcome eating disorders so that they could have hope, heal and live a healthy lifestyle.

Now let's go from Vulnerable to Valuable with Jill Reynolds.

Rosie Aiello: Welcome, Jill, I am so pleased to have you join us on vulnerable to valuable.

Jill Reynolds: Thank you so much for having me. I'm blessed to be with you.

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Rosie: It's amazing. I just love interviewing people because I get to meet so many fascinating people. I'm reading your bio. I'm sorry, people, but I have edited a little bit, otherwise it would take up the whole show. It's just pretty amazing. And it's just a joy to have you.

So Jill Reynolds founded Brave Heart Workshops in 2017 and is a certified meeting and event planner with 39 years of networking and consultative expertise in media, logistics, technology, and hospitality. She is the host of the podcast The Connection Show, where she interviews leaders, and she has a weekly online connection gathering circle.

Jill also helps others in nutrition and mental wellness with Amari Global, the mental wellness company. Jill has been fully recovered from substance abuse since 1984, codependency since 1992, and eating disorders since 2015. Over the years she has helped women in recovery and helped parents get their children proper treatment from substance abuse and eating disorders. Jill is also a published author in a collaborative book and inspirational speaker.

Welcome, Jill, and it's a delight to have you here. And it's clear from your bio, how much work you have done for yourself and on yourself. And I really use the word "for yourself" because that's what this is all about. Right? It's how we can improve our lives and live a more fulfilling, joyful life. But it wasn't always like that, was it?

Jill: No. And it's funny, when you read that bio and I hear that and you say "the work I've done," the number one word that one professional therapist said to me one day, Rosie, was, "Jill, if I had 10% of my clientele that came in with the resiliency you have, I would be out of business. you are so resilient." No matter what I've gone through, Rosie, I'm the kind of person, believe it or not, even when you were reading that, I had to go to treatment, Rosie, five times to recover from my eating disorder. And I say that because eating disorders are one of the hardest diseases to recover from because we have food everywhere around us. And yet, I was the one that checked myself in each time because I know myself so well that I know when I hit that brick wall from the trauma in my life, that whatever I was doing on a day-to-day basis wasn't getting any through the day. So I said, I need more help.

And so I think for me, the resiliency came when I said-- when I knew that I can do this for myself, and this is where I need professional assistance. And then I did it and succeeded and got well.

Rosie: That's such a great thing to recognize because a lot of people don't get there. They think they can do it themselves. And I found with trauma, especially if we've been in--- we'll go into your story in just a moment. If we've been in these really traumatic situations, relationships, whether it was parental, intimate partner, boss, friend, I mean, doesn't matter how it happens. There's a lot of trauma that happens. A lot of times, we're not even conscious that it's happened.

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That's why I do this podcast and want to hear your story. And then we think, well, we can just figure it out and read a book.

But the work that you and I do and therapists and counselors is really critical to help them move forward and give them that outside. And for you to be able to recognize that is such a huge step. So hopefully, this will be another step of awareness for those who are listening in that it is possible, you can have a life after any kind of trauma. You can create it.

So why don't you just give them a little bit of a background. maybe the causes of your disorder, right? Because maybe as a child, you were oppressing your feelings and thoughts.

Jill: A real quick synopsis of-- I always like to start first with my mom because my story really pertains a lot to her. And when I share it, it sounds like she was this horrific person, which in many ways she was, but I like to start the story first with my mom. She had a horrible accident at seven where she had her toes cut off in an elevator. And she lived in a boarding home. And while she was in the wheelchair, a man picked her up and raped her at seven. So by the time my mom grew up and had children, she had a severe borderline personality disorder. And she got married to my father just to leave home. My dad was gone quite a bit. She got pregnant within a few months after my sister, with me.

So from the moment of conception, Rosie, my story began with me completely and utterly not being wanted and despised. So from the moment my mom pushed me out of the womb, her energy towards me was that of hate. I even have an image of laying on a queen bed in her holding the bottle out, not even holding me. I have lots of body memories of being left in the crib, completely unattended, with no nourishment or attachment for many months in the crib.

So my story began that up quite a bit of trauma. Through that trauma, I was very non-verbal. And so I was the lost child, and I would just sit on the floor and play and never speak, and my mother would leave, hover over me, screaming at me, "Would you talk?" And I would just hover over the floor. So, the trauma started very early for me, Rosie.

Rosie: Yes. So it's interesting because, speak, and you're already scared to death. And I'm wondering, you knew what you were feeling, but you probably didn't know what was going on.

Jill: Yeah, I need the audience to know. A lot of this came out because I've had 39 years of recovery. And I've done so many different modalities of healing, EMDR and internal family systems. So I had complete bodywork where I had total memories of this. And I'm sure at the time, I would have never known anything was different. When you're growing up in an insane childhood, you just think it's normal because you don't know what normal is supposed to look like.

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My mom then with her borderline personality disorder, Rosie, nothing was ever enough for her. So she began having fears on my father when I was a couple of years old. And by the time I was six, one day while my dad was at work, she picked us up and moved us across town to be near a man she was cheating on my dad with.

And so my dad was my lifeline. He was the one who would come home after work every night, and tuck me in bed and give me a hug and say prayers. He read bedtime stories to me. So when my mom abandoned my father, and we only saw him now on Sundays, six days a week I had no love and no attachment and no connection. So I only had one day a week to look forward to have hope in my life. And it was really lonely. It was really lonely and really hard on me.

I did a trauma timeline, Rosie, and it's seven years old. I wrote on my trauma timeline. There was so much trauma. At the bottom of the timeline, I wrote: "And this is the year I died." And so internally, I felt an internal death to my soul.

Rosie: So now as you're growing up, did you start to overeat? Did you start to get into drugs? At what age was that starting to happen? Because it's obviously very-- you were screamed not to talk, but that made you do the opposite. So there was some way of offsetting the suppressed feeling. So when did that all start happening?

Jill: I've done a lot of timelines. And at five years old, I started chewing and spitting my food out into a napkin, because I would tell my parents, when they were still married, that I have tummy aches. And of course, being born in the 50s, it was "Clean up your plate." And so when I would eat food, and I get sick, I just started chewing it out and spitting. So I was very malnourished not knowing until I was 50 years old that I had genetic celiac disease. So the flour was making me horrifically ill.

And then, when my mother started having these multiple affairs and men coming over, my codependency started to set in. So at that point then, there was a lot of confusion going on with me growing up as a young woman. And at 14 years old, the first boy that ever paid attention to me, invited me over to his house, and I went there. And within 20 minutes of sitting on the couch, he raped me. And I went home and never told a soul until I got into therapy, Rosie.

So I share that because that's when then I started with White cross amphetamines to stop eating so that my body wouldn't develop. So I was very anorexic. I was very little. And I utilized the amphetamines so that I would not develop because I didn't want boys to pay attention to me.

Rosie: Yeah, it's interesting either. Often you hear women who've been raped or whatever, they'll gain lots of weight. So they try to make themselves look ugly. You're kind of doing the

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opposite, being so thin you would be unattractive, all these things that keep fast just mess up our whole minds and our image of ourselves.

But let's go fast forward. Now, you've been in a loving marriage. And you've done so much as we talked in the bio, in the introduction, a lot of work on yourself. So what are some of the, I don't know, maybe three, four, or whatever, keys that really were instrumental for you and your recovery. Maybe, I don't know, if you were in the 12-step programs, or things that you actually learned that you found really, really life-changing and helpful for you.

And like you, I want to also say is, and which I also want to emphasize too, that you have done a lot of modalities, and I have to for my healing. I like sharing that because there's not just one thing, right? I found that there's just no one thing that just helps us. We kind of need a variety or I needed to kind of check things out and everything helped me. There's some that helped me more than others. But nothing that I tried-- on these modalities, they were all helpful. But I want to just-- if you could just share maybe, I don't know, three or more ways.

Jill: So one of them, which is a key for me, and I want to transition back a moment for what you said about the body image stuff, because this goes into the modality. So one of the things with body image, by the time I got into recovery and doing a lot of my deep work, I remember being in treatment for my eating disorder in a body image group. And I remember hearing the different people talking about body image. And I said to the therapist, at the end, I said, "I don't get it all these women and men that have issues with body image, like get over it." And I said, "I can't figure out why they're so stuck in their body image. I can put on a bathing suit, and I'm 100 pounds overweight and enjoy going to the pool." The therapist said to me, Rosie, she was chill. She goes, "Your body image is so severe, you don't even know you have a body." And it just freaked me out and stopped me in my tracks because I kept judging others that were talking body image stuff, and I couldn't figure it out.

So I bring that up, because the modality that really helped me to connect after she said that was when I was in treatment. Dr. Laura Wood, she's a world-renowned trauma therapist, and we would do expressive trauma therapy with internal family systems of going back to a burden and connecting with that burden to release it and send that burden to somewhere beautiful. Like for me, it's the beach and I line it up with lawn chairs and suntan lotion and sand pails to play.

So internal family systems is my go-to where you really get in touch with your managers and protectors and exile parts so that when you unburden them and unblend them and send them gently and lovingly to the beach, you are truly left with hope inside of you of having self. You could really connect with stuff. So that's been my key to survival. Because before I got to that level, Rosie, and always feeling like a failure of, why am I not getting well? Why am I not getting well? And it wasn't until I did embodiment work, and get inside of my body and

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connected with my body that I could start really seeing some joy and healing in my life. So, that's number one. That's number one.

Rosie: So these are bodily memories, right?

Jill: Yeah. With the work that she was-- she can do individual where you just sit there and you close your eyes. And let's say-- this is a good one that the whole audience can relate to because many of us do it. Let's say the burden we struggle with is busyness. And so you might connect with busyness and just talk to busyness and say, "Hey busyness, would you be willing to speak with me today?" And as you speak to busyness, she'll ask, "Could you tell me a little bit about you and where you showed up in my life?"

So you go on this journey of where you see busyness that came into your life and how you used it to protect yourself because busyness is then a manifestation of the part behind it that you're trying to fight so no one sees it. So busyness might show up because what's really going on behind it is loneliness. And if you sit with loneliness too long, it's too painful, and then you feel despair. So instead of your exile part feeling despair, which is really a manifestation of loneliness, you act it out in busyness. So if you can unblend that and ask busyness if it's willing to step aside and go to the beach, then you have space for loneliness to come in and you give it some space. And then if you ask loneliness to go to the beach, you have space for maybe despair to be seen. And once you've gotten to these levels and you ask despair to go away, you're left with your true authentic self and who you really divinely are.

Rosie: That's beautiful. I love that because we are-- I talk about the overstuff, the overeating, overdrinking, the overworking, the over-exercising, anything that's "over," right? When we're doing excess is because we're, just like you're saying, we're blocking what our true feelings are. I mean, one of the things when I first landed, because I was telling you, some of my listeners have already heard that I did international escape. And when I arrived, I really felt that if I didn't keep myself busy, I was going to fall flat on my face. It was my survival method, just to kind of keep going even after the escape. And yet, everything that you're bringing, saying, which is the key to really moving forward and finding your authentic self is getting back to those feelings, the loneliness, the despair, the hopelessness, whatever those feelings are as to really, really feel them. So thank you so much for sharing.

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Every episode I offer a mini masterclass on the 11 Freedom Fulfillment Pillars. You can get the guidebook to all 11 Freedom Fulfillment Pillars right now. Simply go to [VulnerabletoValuable.com](https://www.VulnerabletoValuable.com) and hit the subscribe button to get your copy.

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The only way to move forward and have an impact in your life is to get awareness of where you're at, and discover what's holding you back. Following the 11 Pillars I was then able to develop strategies to create my business, become an international award-winning entrepreneur, speaker, and author, find the love of my life and I use these pillars every day to create a fulfilled life. These are the same ones that I use with my clients. And now they are yours free. Go to VulnerabletoValuable.com and subscribe.

And we're back with Jill Reynolds, Founder of Brave Heart Workshops.

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Jill: One of the things that I'll offer as a gift towards the end, too – I know we're jumping but just so I remember – is I wrote a piece, I have a piece of column that's called Binge and Restrict. Profound. And what it is, it's a manifestation that when you take time to look at this list that I'll send, I'll make it available to your audience. So in one column, you write down everything in life you binge on, and the other column, you write everything in life you restrict. And they're always working together. So if you're bingeing on busyness, generally, it's because you're restricting connection, or whatever something on the list. You're restricting taking time to sit down and have a meal, a healthy meal. So it's always opposite. If you're restricting exercise, it's maybe because you're bingeing and I don't know, overeating, whatever. So it's always their opposite parallels. When you can look at your columns of binge and restrict, you can come back into balance and go, "Oh, wow, I might have volunteered to balance this, I need to get into the center."

Rosie: That's great. Well, we'll make sure you're going to tell us that, and then we'll send them there to get that free link. Thank you for sharing that.

Jill: So I guess the second thing, because you said a couple of things. The second one that I think is so imperative to share with the audience is that of boundaries. Living in my family and going into treatment like I had, my diagnosis and treatment with the professional team was that I had no sense of belonging because again, living in the dysfunctional family, we're locked out of the house for hours at a time with no food and no bathroom privileges. So we would wander around the neighborhood aimlessly with no boundaries. So my diagnosis and treatment was no boundaries, no sense of belonging, and no boundaries. Because there were no boundaries in the house, people would walk around the house naked.

So it was very difficult for me in recovery, to learn. My son used to say, "Mom, of everyone I've ever met in my life, you by far are the kindest person I've ever met. You would help anyone. But if I put a red flag in front of you like this, you couldn't see it because you have no zero

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boundaries.” And Rosie, I took every class you could imagine, read every Henry Cloud book on boundaries.

Rosie: Yeah, I know him.

Jill: I mean, I did everything you could imagine. And I still have horrific boundaries. So the only thing that gave me hope, again, going back to this internal family systems therapy, is I did a session with two therapists where one therapist was supposed to play the role of saying no to me. no matter what I asked, she was supposed to say no and then turn away from me. So we began the session with me saying, “Hey, it’s family week. When my husband comes, can I have a pass to go out to dinner?” And the therapist said, “Nope, you can’t go.” And so immediately, I closed my eyes to get in touch with what that “No” felt like. And it took me back to all those years that no one in my family ever heard me when I said no. When my mother would scream at me, “Talk!” I was like, “No, I don’t want to talk.” When the boy pushed me down and I didn’t want to have sex and he raped me, he didn’t hear my no.

So my parts went back into this memory of no one hearing my “No.” So once I was able to see my “no” part and asked my ‘no’ part to go to the beach and chill out, then all of a sudden, I opened my eyes and I went “Wow, Rosie. I can see you, like for the first time I could see you,” because I was so disconnected from people.

Rosie: Thank you for sharing that, your vulnerability and opening up to everybody, because boundaries is such an important thing. And I think one of the common themes I’ve spoken to, I don’t know how many women, the common theme is that we’ve lost ourselves, we lost our voice. And it shows up in different ways. But we say something and nobody hears it, right, but the abuser doesn’t hear it.

And I remember, my daughter would be really frustrated. And I would tell her, just to have a visualize. You know the expressions like “talking to a wall,” the wall can’t hear, the wall doesn’t have feelings, the wall doesn’t have compassion.

That’s what it’s like talking to somebody who is abusive, a narcissist, or whatever. But it’s hard for the brain to look at a human being and think they don’t have those capabilities. But that’s the truth. And then, we’re talking and we’re not heard. And so you just start not talking, right? I mean, I did that as an adult, you did that as a child. I had to learn as well to use my voice, to speak. This is one of the reasons I’m doing the podcast. It’s like, “Okay, I have a voice now.” But really, it’s also a big leap.

But everything you have shared, everything, the work I do, is all getting back to the real you, discovering the real you. And you’re such a beautiful example of a human being who’s gone

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through so much, and yet has overcome and shows up as her real self now, and isn't it a lot easier?

Jill: And I want to say to you because again, when you say-- when you were talking about when we don't have that voice and people don't hear us, I want to transition there for just a moment because I think this is so impactful to say to the audience. When we're stuck that voice that we're not heard, and then we start to power up, then we then are perceived by the world as being the abuser, because see, everyone then perceived me as being the one no one wanted to be around because I've empowered up so much and became so controlling of others that I was shooting everyone, and trying to control everything around me. And so it actually left me more hopeless, because I was not aware of how that protection that I kept putting on manifested in me powering up and being controlling, and again, me being the one that didn't hear others know.

So I think this is a really important thing for the audience to hear. Because until you heal those "no" parts, you don't understand that then you're being perceived as the abuser. You start getting perceived that way.

Rosie: Yeah, that can happen and I hear you. And a lot of times, a real classic is for narcissists because they'll play the victim. And if you start questioning or doing anything, they'll throw it onto you. But you have to be careful not to take that on. Now if you know you have adapted some of the behaviors because those were in a way, kind of survival behaviors, those are behaviors that you learn, then you need to understand "Okay, step back here. I've gone a little bit too far in how I'm showing up?" But just because people are saying you're the abuser doesn't really mean that you are abusive. There's no perfect human being in life, right? Everyone's going to yell. Everyone's going to get upset. Everyone's going to say things they regret. But it doesn't mean they're abusive.

You cross the line when you can't recognize what you've done, you don't apologize, you show no empathy. If you've gone that far, then yeah. But if you've shown that, but then still, it's a sign. Okay, I better-- I have to kind of sit back here and evaluate how far I've gone. I've seen that happen, where we still have not healed that we feel like we need to control everybody to feel safe. So that's just a sign that we haven't healed well yet.

Jill: Yeah, and I want to correct that because when I said that I became the abuser, | really didn't mean that. I became the controller because I felt so out of control.

Rosie: Yeah, exactly.

Jill: Right. And so for me, until I got to the place of understanding those boundaries, I didn't understand. No, you could have told me, Rosie, every single day, "Jill, you're controlling me." I

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would have looked at you like a deer in the headlights going, “What do you mean? I’m not controlling you?” “Yes, you are?” And I’m like, “I don’t think I am.” And it was like, I couldn’t see it. I could not see it. So it wasn’t abusive as much as I had blinders on, because I was in so much pain.

Rosie: Yeah, this is really great. And for people to hear this, like, oh, because I’m blind, people go, “Oh, am I abusive?” And I have to calm them down like, “No, you’re not.” Just because you yell at somebody doesn’t mean you’re abusive. It’s a really fine line.

Jill: This is the last one because you said three. So the last one that I have, that I’ll share is, and if I didn’t have this, I wouldn’t have had the other two, I have to say it’s my faith in God, because when I was in the worst state of my life, at 28 years old, I was a crack cocaine addict, 97 pounds, I would literally, I would literally do drugs for three straight days and nights with no sleep and no food. Not at all. I don’t know how I’m here today, because I literally did this for about seven straight years of no sleep, no food, three to four days per week, partying. And then I had a spiritual awakening. And God just, like pulled me to the ranks and delivered me from my addiction overnight. And so I could not have hope, health, or healing today if it wasn’t for God. So if I don’t end with that, if the whole conversation was fruitless, because I truly have been saved by His grace.

Rosie: Well, thank you. Thank you so much for sharing that. And just to show there are so many different ways that we can get to the healing and create the life that we desire, and the work that you’re doing. So speaking of that, as a perfect transition, why don’t you share with everybody how they can get a hold of you? And I’m going to remind you about that duality list, the restriction and what was it?

Jill: My website is [BraveHeartWorkshops.com](https://www.BraveHeartWorkshops.com) -- inspiring connection with hope, help, and healing in 2021. And, as I had just said, is that God’s really pulled me through the pits of hell and back. And so actually, not to sound crazy, but I had a real big spiritual awakening in January this year, Rosie. I mean, I was getting woken up at three in the morning from God and just saying, “Jill, I’ve given you all this hope in your life. Now go spread it in the world.” And I’m like, “What do you mean?” He said, “I want you to do a live conference” And I said, “A live conference. I have no budget, how am I going to do it?” He goes, “Well, you’re going to tell Rosie and Rosie is going to tell the audience and people will come.”

And so I have a conference coming to Branson, Missouri, August 20 to 22nd, called Hope, Health and Healing. And we’ll have 18 speakers share their stories of how they’re connecting dots from their story like this, led them in their life to having more hope, health and healing. And so through these stories that people will hear. My one saying I love Rosie is: “Look for the similarities in life and not the differences.” So this whole event will be based on people coming

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in hearing stories that are similar, and they can hear those similarities and connect it with themselves so that they themselves will leave the conference with amazing hope, health and healing.

Rosie: Beautiful. I love that. So again, what's the website?

Jill: BraveHeartWorkshops, with an S on the end, .com.

Rosie: And how can we get that freebie you were talking about?

Jill: You can go on my website and there's a contact form. Just fill that out and then put your name and address, whatever the email, and I'll shoot it to you via email. I'll send it to you. And I also have-- I'll send this too, so I'll include this as well. I took a word and then I looked at the antonym, and I wrote out a spreadsheet with about 50 positive words. So like, for example, the positive might be joy, the opposite might be hate, whatever. And it's a breath meditation. So you breathe in joy, exhale hate. It's Breathing in and breathing out. It's lovely.

Rosie: Oh, it sounds fabulous. Thank you so much for your generosity. I love that. Those links will be in the show notes. And my final question is, "What does love is kind" mean to you, Jill?

Jill: Loving and kindness to me today, Rosie, is since I have my eyes open now and they're not so closed. I have to be able to sit in, say a room. I go to church every week, and look around at people around me and just connect with someone who seems that there may be some longing within them. And then just to pause at the end of church and maybe walk up to them and say, "Hey, Rosie, my name is Jill. I just felt this nudge to come and connect with you today." And I'm telling you, it takes me on such adventures, Rosie, and brings in so much kindness because I've had such unbelievable experiences happen, where I'll do this, and the person says, "You have no idea how I needed someone today to talk to me." So really just having eyes open, opening your eyes to those around you, and not being so self-centered.

Rosie: Beautiful. Thank you so much for your time and for sharing everything. It's been fabulous.

Jill: Thank you.

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That's it for today's episode, head on over to [VulnerabletoValuable.com](https://www.VulnerabletoValuable.com), and subscribe to the show. When you subscribe, you'll instantly get a special eBook.

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