



0:00: Hey, it's your friend Sarah, and welcome, welcome to Stories of Survival in the Modern Age.

0:14: Today I'm chatting with Jan Nicole Smith.

0:17: Nic is the founder of Joy First, a creative agency helping people and organizations build brands rooted in purpose, clarity, and joy.

0:26: A US born entrepreneur, creative director, and expert in design and color psychology, she's spent nearly two decades helping brands including Purina, Foster's, and Columbia Hospitality create deeper emotional connection with their audiences.

0:43: And yet behind that success is a very different story.

0:47: Long before Joy first, Nic battled crippling self-esteem and a deep sense of unworthiness.

0:54: She burned out twice before the age of 30 and spent years striving and proving and, in her own words, pretending to be confident until one day she simply realized she wasn't pretending any more.

1:08: Today, her work is about much more than branding.

1:11: It's about helping people build lives and businesses from a place of joy rather than fear, purpose rather than pressure, and contentment rather than constant validation.

1:24: And with so many facets to unpack, let's jump in.

1:28: Nic, welcome.

1:29: Welcome to survival in the modern age.

1:32: Thank you.

1:34: That's a lovely intro.

1:37: It's quite a list of credentials.

1:40: I often like to start, Nic, before the survival story begins, before you became visible.

1:49: Before all of this, before the businesses, the clients, the success.

1:55: What did it look like for a young Nic?

1:57: What do you remember about her?

2:00: Who was she?

2:01: And what was she believing about herself up to that point in her life?

2:06: Hm, what a lovely question.

2:10: So I think Little Nic was quite a happy, trippy little thing, very, very artistic.

2:19: It's interesting looking back now, I, I, we were chatting the other day and I mentioned I, I got a.

2:26: ADHD diagnosis I wasn't looking for about a year ago.

2:30: So, looking back now on that time in my life, I have a really different lens of who and what that little child was, but she was very artistic, she was obsessed with horses.

2:42: My parents got divorced quite early and so I think from a really early age I did a lot of code switching.

2:49: Of being with my mom in Seattle in this very like liberal green little bubble and then visiting my dad down in Arizona and my family there was all quite conservative and Mormon and so it was this flip flop between these two real extremes so I think that along with.

3:12: the way I was trying to perceive the world and fit into it really led me to do a lot of people pleasing and a lot of code shifting really, really early on to kind of be liked and fit in wherever I went and be very little trouble.

3:26: that's, that's quite extreme, isn't it?

3:28: I can, I can just imagine that flip flop now because they're two polar opposites, aren't they?

3:34: Yeah, it's only later in my life I've really realized that, and it's so interesting because every time I used to go down to Arizona to visit my dad, I would be really ill for like 3 days.

3:43: I would just throw up nonstop for like 3 days, and I always thought it was because he had, you know, like 6 other kids, and I was like, oh, I'm just catching a bug every time I go down here.

3:52: But looking back in my 20s, I sort of realized that I think it was just my body rejecting.

3:59: This insane change and trying to just be the person who could fit in that space because I so wanted to be, you know, loved and fit in with my family down there.

4:09: I only saw my dad like once a year and And and also having a lot of that stuff really, really foreign to me in terms of, you know, values and beliefs and even activities that we would do.

4:21: So yeah, it was really intense.

4:23: I think.

4:24: But then I'm guessing there was a lot of sort of self esteem issues perhaps around that a lot of.

4:31: Body image perhaps issues, do you, would you say, or was it more just like a sense of insecurity, you didn't feel really feel like you belonged in either place?

4:43: Yeah, I think it started with the belonging, and then as I got a bit older, I have always had a larger body and so I definitely felt like my whole experience from very, very young was defined by that.

5:00: I remember being at the doctor's office when I was young.

5:03: I must have been like 9 or 10 and watching him write obese on my chart.

5:08: And being like really confused because I barely knew what the word meant, but what I understood was that I was like 10% over my target body weight and therefore I was like obese, and, and I remember that being just like a really defining moment and understanding then that like there was something really wrong with me that needed to be fixed.

5:28: And my mom was really sweet and really great, but I think because she was so concerned about fixing this problem.

5:36: I really internalized a lot of, you know, this idea that I was fundamentally wrong in the body that I was in, and I think that really defined my entire personality from there on.

5:47: And also I think now again looking back with that ADHD lens, I'm like that is the label that I gave to explaining why everything felt so hard, and all the masking that I was doing.

5:58: I would have all just put it down to.

6:00: My body.

6:01: Wow.

6:02: Wow.

6:03: You used the word masking there.

6:05: Did you feel like, that you were wearing a mask?

6:09: Or, or is that something that sort of, it kind of morphed into it and, and therefore you just kind of like fell into life behind the mask?

6:19: that's a good question.

6:20: I, I use the word masking now because I have that language, which I wouldn't have had until recently.

6:25: I, I think what I felt like was I, I desperately didn't want to be bullied, and what I noticed because I've always been a really empathetic, keen observer of people, I was a good study of human beings is I noticed that the kids who.

6:43: You know, had something they could get picked on for and didn't pretend it didn't bother them, were the ones that got targeted.

6:52: It was sort of like, if, if it's not like this asking for it, but it was like making yourself vulnerable was dangerous and that if you pretended.

7:04: Like super cool and super happy and like nothing bothered you, then maybe no one would notice that you were deeply, deeply insecure, whereas if you seemed really shy or if you seemed really insecure, all the kids would just feed off of that on your on your front didn't you then if you if you're being perceived or showing that vulnerability.

7:26: Right, so I just remembered I just decided that I was going to act confident.

7:30: Because I was so afraid of being bullied and so I just felt like I spent my entire life pretending, but I've also, I probably thought that that was just normal that we were all just kind of getting by, you know, pretending to be whatever we needed to be to fit in.

7:46: I mean high school is such a gauntlet, isn't it?

7:49: Oh my gosh, I, I would imagine, well I kind of know from the people I've spoken to in the past that high school in the US is, you know, has that same trait as high school here, and you're right, if you're, if you're putting out that vibe, whether it's shy or whether it's timid or quiet, then yeah, you're gonna get picked on.

8:09: Yeah, and it was also during that like Kate Moss heroin chic era.

8:12: So being thin was the most important thing you could possibly be.

8:17: And I think the knock-on effect for that for me, it wasn't just about the size of my body.

8:21: It was especially about like the clothes I could wear.

8:24: Like I couldn't ever just go shopping in normal stores and feel normal.

8:28: Like, I mean, I wasn't huge, but I was big enough that I was outside of the normal or junior sizes of, you know, what you're supposed to be at 15 in.

8:38: whatever that was, 1997 or something like it was, it was not generous.

8:43: there was no body positivity movement then, so, yeah, I think it felt like it touched every area of my life and I think it just caused me to double down on being.

8:53: Being funny, being fun, being likable, being, you know, this code switching.

8:57: I, I fit into every group.

8:58: I had some popular kid friends, and I had some drama friends, and I had some stoner friends, I had some art buddy, you know, I was just kind of like floated between the different groups.

9:08: And what, what, impact do you think now looking back that had on you in your teens, you know, going into, like, senior year and beyond?

9:22: Yeah, I mean, I, I don't know whether I was just born with this ability to read people or if I developed it during that time, but it definitely made me a very good people person, and I think that is from, it's almost like academic, right?

9:36: It's almost like being a, an academic observer of human beings and how they operate, which has actually, you know, served me really well as an entrepreneur having to sell my own stuff and.

9:46: I, I think I'm, I'm a very good people person, but I think ultimately what it's gifted me, which obviously has some shadow side, is I think I'm a really good bridge builder.

9:57: I think I'm really good at making complex things simple or helping two people.

10:02: Understand each other or you know, definitely a bit of a peacekeeper, you know, this energy of being able to kind of see from 30,000 ft what's going on and be able to kind of build the bridge from both sides of what that could look like and I think that.

10:19: Is I think that's a really important skill, especially now.

10:23: absolutely.

10:24: Would you say that was kind of what shifted you into that sort of psychology, the theory of psychology, to better understand people.

10:36: I remember sitting my senior year, I was in psychology class and we were doing an IQ test and it was like, It was such a fascinating experience and I remember thinking like, oh if I don't do art, I'm definitely gonna do psychology because this is fascinating.

10:50: I loved it.

10:51: I loved it in the same way I loved like English and like finding meaning in a book and being able to.

10:57: Extrapolate all this symbolism like I loved being able to do that pattern recognition, big surprise, I just, I really enjoyed that and so I think it was always there for me as this fascination and I also think that.

11:13: You know, when you become an entrepreneur, which I did at like 19, basically, I, I never had a quote unquote real job.

11:22: it's like, it's the most intense personal growth journey you can ever go through.

11:27: I think, especially if you have a personal brand or you're an artist like I was and you have to literally sell yourself.

11:33: it's really intense, so I think that's the other thing that really deepened my fascination with psychology and like you said, I burnt out twice before I was 30, so I wanted to figure out how to not do that again.

11:43: because obviously, you know, what would the, what would the cost to you have been if you'd have carried on in that pattern?

11:50: Yeah, it doesn't I couldn't have.

11:52: Yeah, I couldn't have carried on.

11:53: It just, I wouldn't have survived.

11:55: I, I, I, you know, the second time I burnt out, I was so stressed that I had hives all over my body and nobody could tell me why.

12:06: And I would take the antibiotics and they'd go away and then they'd come back and I had such severe joint pain I couldn't even turn the key of my car.

12:13: It was like that was the most intense experience of this sort of psychosomatic.

12:19: You know, physical manifestation of, of stress and burnout and, and yeah, you go through that and then you kind of realize that's what's going on that it's not your diet and you're not allergic to anything and it's actually just stress and that was during the time when I was moving.

12:33: I was exiting my business and moving to the UK and I think it was just a lot for my nervous system.

12:39: And, and so you, you mentioned there and I, and I failed to, to mention in the intro that now you do live in the UK so so let's just talk about that a little bit if we can, that sort of move in transcontinentally.

12:54: Yeah, I really underestimated that.

12:56: I did it all in about 6 weeks, and I don't think the move, I mean, the move was probably part of that stress, but I think it was actually exiting my business at the time.

13:06: I, I had 2 businesses and I had to exit one of them in order to move.

13:09: And there was a lot of like mediation and conflict resolution and trying to figure out how we were going to do that in an amicable way.

13:17: And the time was good because, you know, we, we probably were ready to go our separate ways anyway, but.

13:24: I really underestimated moving from America to the UK.

13:27: I think like, so the reason I was moving is because I met a boy and we had been long distance dating for like 6 months.

13:34: The lease was up on my place in California and I was like, why not?

13:38: Let's just give it a go, basically.

13:40: It was a very impulsive decision and I remember being like, it's not like it's English speaking.

13:46: It can't, how different can it possibly be?

13:50: Oh, so yeah, I definitely had culture shock for months after moving here.

13:56: It was also quite lonely because my husband had a corporate job and I didn't know a single soul, and I'm good with being alone.

14:02: I, I quite like it, but I realized that it was just such an extreme change to go from this bubble of entrepreneurs and running two businesses and working this fast pace.

14:11: I didn't have my dogs with me for the 1st 3 months because I didn't want to move them straight away.

14:15: So for the first time in.

14:17: You know, 8 years or something.

14:18: I didn't have dogs to look after.

14:21: And so it was this nice chunk of freedom, but it also was very strange.

14:26: So, so you you get here in the UK and you know, how did this joy.

14:33: Idea come about because I mean did it just, oh, there's joy, I'm gonna pull that in air.

14:39: Or, or was it, was it because you were looking for something?

14:45: I mean, I think I was always looking for something.

14:47: I think from those very first burnout experiences I was determined to, I became very anti-hustle culture very early because I was like, a, I had a business partner who was extremely different than me.

15:00: I was all brand and emotion and he was all, logic and money and shelves in the warehouse and we were a great combo in a business, but.

15:09: I remember just feeling like life is too short and that's why I made the decision to move to the UK.

15:15: I made a lot of really what I would call now joy first decisions to do the quote unquote irresponsible, possibly irrational thing in pursuit of something better.

15:26: and so I think the threads, the strings, the bread crumbs were always there for joy, but once I stabilized in the UK, I, I did a master's in marketing to get a visa to live here.

15:39: And after that process, after I was married and I had a different visa and I could work again, it was very clear to me that the thing I was most passionate about was helping other entrepreneurs avoid the mistakes that I had made.

15:51: and so I think again there was another breadcrumb for joy.

15:54: I think being obsessed with positive psychology because I didn't want to burn out again and I really did believe that it was possible to have freedom and, and be an entrepreneur and not burn out.

16:05: I knew that that must be possible.

16:07: so I think once I unlocked that I wanted to share what I had learned with people and that's where it really began.

16:13: I think I, I really am passionate about helping women in what I call the messy middle.

16:20: And I had so many of these messy middles where I was in these transition periods, these big changes, these big losses, and I think ultimately that's where the joy has come from.

16:31: The word joy.

16:33: Originally, I would have called it freedom and fulfillment.

16:35: That was the language I had back in like 2014.

16:38: But yeah, that's where joy began.

16:40: And I think because I've also just been an artist and I pursued becoming an artist instead of doing the responsible thing, I was supposed to be a veterinarian.

16:47: And I, my senior year, I quit the vet clinic and decided that I was actually going to pursue art as a career, which I knew was a dangerous thing to do in terms of financial security.

16:57: And, and so I think it's just this, it's just sort of innate in me, I think, making these big leaps in order to pursue something that might possibly give you that 10 out of 10 instead of settling for the 7.

17:11: And are you, are you a 10 out of 10 now?

17:15: I mean, I believe in that everything is seasonal, that we never really arrive.

17:19: I especially believe joy is not a destination.

17:22: It's, it's the journey, right?

17:23: It's enjoying the moments along the way.

17:25: So I would say many areas of my life are 10 out of 10 most days, and some days I feel like a 0, and some days I feel like a 12.

17:34: I am really proud of the life that I've built.

17:36: I, I, I met the, the.

17:38: man of my dreams and we have two lovely kids.

17:41: We live in a beautiful part of the world.

17:43: I am absolutely obsessed and in love with the work that I do, and I feel like I have a clear mission and purpose, which gives me a lot of meaning.

17:50: I love the people that I get to meet, so I feel ultimately, yeah, I'm, I'm really fulfilled.

17:55: And, and, and clearly living a joyous lifestyle and living a life filled with joy.

18:03: Yeah, and I think people right now on my podcast, Joy First, I'm kind of picking this apart because I think even I, as someone researching, I'm writing a book called Joy First at the Moment.

18:12: So I've been doing like 4 or 5 years of intensive research, as well as talking to people and kind of picking apart my own experience.

18:18: But I think we think of joy as this pedestal thing.

18:23: And it's not, it's like hope.

18:25: It's like, it is gritty, it is dirty.

18:28: It is in the, you know, it is in the forum with you.

18:31: And so, Yes, I experience a lot of joy and I love my life, and I think that It's, we have to be careful not to think of joy as aspirational because it isn't.

18:43: It is available all the time for all of us and for many of us it is the thing that gets us through.

18:49: And I had a really tough two years the last two years, and this is kind of where this awareness really came home for me because I felt this imposter syndrome of like, how can I talk about joy when I feel so miserable right now.

19:00: And I realized it was all the little things I was doing, it was all the things I was learning and implementing about joy that helped me survive that period.

19:08: Like, I would have loved to have been shinier and done things better, but I did get through it, and that is 100% down to, you know, the support systems that I.

19:19: And these practices that I was doing and just believing that joy was important during a time when I felt, you know, a lot of stress and anxiety and unworthiness and things that make us sort of reject the idea that maybe we even deserve joy.

19:34: I love how you how you coined that believing that joy is possible.

19:38: That's great, that really is, that really is a, a big aha moment.

19:43: You mentioned to me before we chatted today that, you now, you're at that point where you're not sort of striving or trying to prove anymore, and that you actually realize now that it, it's not that you, you, you don't need anything.

20:00: So, you know, was that a pivotal moment for you when all of a sudden, you weren't pretending to have this confidence anymore and it just, it just was there.

20:11: Yeah, again, I feel like the confidence thing is definitely seasonal and cyclical, right?

20:15: We have periods of feeling good and not feeling good in ourselves.

20:18: I think I've been on a weight loss journey which has really helped.

20:21: I mean, I have my whole life, but I am now at the lowest weight that I've been since I was a teenager, and so that is definitely a boost to making it easier to access.

20:31: I think we can't underestimate some of those things that might seem superficial but really aren't.

20:36: But, and I think there's the, the feeling like you've, you.

20:43: I think there's the gratitude piece and there's so many pieces to unpick of what you described, but I think the, the pivotal moment for me of that feeling of having arrived, this sounds so ridiculous, but I, I was actually on Necker Island.

20:59: I was on Necker Island.

21:00: I got invited there with a group of entrepreneurs back in you were on Richard Branson's Necker Island.

21:05: Yes, Sir Richard Branson's private island, Necker Island.

21:10: billionaires are not popular these days.

21:12: So I, I get it.

21:13: But Richard is a really important figure in, in sort of my journey of someone that I really looked up to as someone who is able to fail and fail and fail in public and get up and do it again.

21:23: So there was a lot more wrapped into that than just being on a, on a party island.

21:27: I was there with a group of, Really influential, women entrepreneurs led by a gal named Natalie McNeil, who's wonderful.

21:36: And, I was standing on the balcony.

21:39: It was the last day, and we were about to leave.

21:43: And I remember just looking out at the sea and being like, oh, I don't want to go.

21:47: I don't want to go.

21:48: This is such heaven.

21:50: And I immediately had this response in my body and my brain where I was like, no, I'm ready to go.

21:55: I'm ready to go, and I just had this feeling like I was leaving paradise, but I also felt like home was also paradise, and it was so transformational to have that feeling, you know, I didn't think it, it just happened to me and I was like, wow, what a gift that is that I'm in like one of the most exclusive properties in the world, having the time of my life and.

22:19: Home is better.

22:22: Home is better.

22:23: And I never ever thought because I spent so much time striving and proving that that would be true for me.

22:29: I was so worried.

22:29: I would spend my whole life like never getting there, you know, because of this sort of striving, trying, yeah, that deep hole we're constantly trying to fill, right, even though I had at that point at all, you know, I'd already quote unquote made it in so many ways.

22:43: And so that was really powerful.

22:45: And I think also just being on that island where it's literally like.

22:49: You can have anything, right?

22:51: Any food you want, any drink you want, any, anything you want to do, and it's, you know, it's incredible.

22:56: And I realized after sort of leaving that.

22:59: And being there, I didn't want that much.

23:01: I didn't drink that much, I didn't eat that much.

23:03: I just wanted to be in nature, be with my friends, have some nice deep chats with Richard, like it was such a profound experience to have that feeling of like, I actually don't, I don't need that much when, when it's all before me.

23:19: You know, the stuff I have at home is the stuff I really need.

23:22: and I think there's, there's a key lesson there, isn't there, that when you have everything in front of you.

23:29: You actually realize that you do already have all you need.

23:35: Yeah, I think, I think that's true if we don't destroy our body and our relationships to get there, and that is the joy and anti-hustle piece, right, is I think we are, we are often in that proving energy is so powerful and it's so fear driven, that is purely based on fear.

23:49: It's fear of judgment, fear of failure, fear of, you know, not making our daddy proud, whatever it might be.

23:54: And that's fear energy, and I think when we're driven by that, it can be really toxic and drive us to do really toxic things.

24:01: And I've, I've believed that for a long time and I've known that for a long time, but I think that was the moment where it really came into my body and I really felt it.

24:11: And that has unlocked a lot for me in terms of what I need and what I don't need and what I care about and how I spend my time and, and actually I started writing the joy first book on on Necker Island because of this unlock and it was just like, oh, this is joy.

24:29: Richard has this famous saying that is, I think it was one of his parents who said it all the time, which is, isn't life wonderful?

24:38: And even in the midst of, of, of the really hard stuff, right?

24:42: Isn't life wonderful?

24:43: And to me that is, that is joy.

24:45: It's gratitude and it's noticing, it's, it's actively trying to notice the good stuff while you're navigating the hard stuff.

24:53: And I think that is, you know, that is.

24:58: Such a.

24:59: It's such a profound lesson that I think we all know in our head.

25:02: Like we've all been told that, we've read it, we've seen it, but It's a hard one to really understand until you're able to live it, right?

25:11: I think, I think you're right, I think you're right, and so if anybody's listening, listening to this today and they're perhaps feeling exhausted from trying to earn their worth, what's the one thing that you hope that they take away from this, Nic?

25:29: Oh, the way you said that just really hit me really hard.

25:33: Trying to earn their worth, it reminded me of how much we are told that we need to price for our worth, that we need to charge our worth, which I think is such a load of crap, I think worthiness is cyclical and seasonal, right?

25:50: We, we want to feel like we've arrived and we will always feel like we deserve everything that we've built.

25:56: But I think especially as women, we are so cyclical and seasonal, right?

26:00: We're so hormonal.

26:01: Everything is in this like tumble, right?

26:04: navigating perimenopause and all that like.

26:07: I think fundamentally it is hard at times in our life to feel worthy.

26:10: It is a hard thing to wrap ourselves around sometimes, and I, I, I hate to say it, but I think that's always going to be true.

26:18: Every, every, you know, multimillionaire, every person who owns these insane businesses or is CEOs of these huge companies, all these people that I've spoken with.

26:29: Worked with, I'm friends with every single one of them experiences massive imposter syndrome.

26:35: Every single one.

26:36: That is the universal human experience.

26:38: And I think we've got to stop comparing ourselves, assuming that that's not true.

26:42: So I feel like if we can be, if we can be, for me, I call it living in a joy first way where every day we're taking time to find Choose and share joy and a lot of that happens automatically once you find it, it's easier to choose and once you choose it, it's contagious for other people, so you're automatically sharing it just by being you and I think that for me is a practice.

27:07: I think worthiness is a practice.

27:09: It's not something you unlock and keep forever.

27:11: It's, it's reminding yourself.

27:14: Of of the fact that you're human and the fact that you're human means that you do matter and it's not just you, but it's every other human around you, and giving yourself a set of practices that you can lean on when you feel low.

27:28: And joy is one of those things that unlike happiness, which only exists in its own state, you can be happy or sad, right?

27:37: You can be happy or mad, but joy exists along.

27:40: Alongside the really tough stuff.

27:42: It is a it is a practice and it is something that you can cultivate and lean on when you're navigating grief, depression, loss, violence, all kinds of things.

27:53: So and it's just a simple, it's just a simple little word.

27:57: You, you know, people might think of it and just like, throw it away.

28:00: It's three letters, tiny tiny, but yet the power of it is so immense, isn't it?

28:07: Yeah, and I continue to be surprised.

28:08: Like I'm not a God person because of sort of the formative years where there was this battling religion in my life.

28:14: I'm not, I'm, I'm coming back to spirituality now in a slightly different way, but it's interesting how many people when I talk about joy, for them, it is totally synonymous with their relationship with God, which I find really interesting.

28:26: And definitely one of the joy codes is faith and belief.

28:29: For me, that belief is a little bit different than a, you know, a traditional organized religion kind of belief, but I think believing in something bigger than ourselves is really, really, really important to, to help navigate all of this.

28:42: And I also think that.

28:45: We You know, sometimes we just need to let it be easy.

28:49: The reason, so we've talked about so hard, don't we?

28:52: We do, we do letting it be easy seems like real, something really simple to say.

29:00: Yeah, it's the number one thing I've worked on with my clients over the years.

29:03: I would just literally ask like what would be easy?

29:06: And it's, it's such a relief of a question, but it's also really hard to allow ourselves there, and I think.

29:12: We do believe that things have to be hard to matter, to count.

29:17: We have to hustle.

29:18: We have to be miserable to prove, right, how hard we're working.

29:21: And that's just such a lie and a dangerous lie.

29:24: I think that, you know, one of the things we've not talked about today is that one of my big passions and areas of specialty is color psychology.

29:32: And one of the reasons I'm so obsessed with color is not just for branding and how powerful it is in business, but because I accidentally sort of discovered what an incredible joy hack it is for life.

29:43: So I think being able to start by using color really intentionally is one of those things that's easy because it's accessible, free, you don't have to think about it and.

29:53: It creates this upward spiral of, well, if I can be intentional with the top I'm wearing today or the color in my office, like what else can I be a little bit more intentional about?

30:03: What else do I have power over that I can control that makes me feel good?

30:07: And I think it is in my experience working with especially women over, you know, in this early 40s transition of life.

30:16: It's a powerful, powerful tool for rediscovering ourselves.

30:19: So I think that's a that's something I always like to just open the door on for people is that it sounds just like the word joy, right?

30:26: Being so short.

30:27: It sounds so simple, but it's actually incredibly powerful.

30:32: And and you say they're opening the door to that.

30:34: And if, if you're willing, I'd love to have you back on and explore the idea.

30:39: Color even more because I, I, I think that's a whole episode in and of itself, so, so please say that you'll come back.

30:48: Of course, excellent.

30:50: Before we go, Nic, I want to do my quick fire 5 questions with you.

30:54: Oh, OK.

30:55: OK, so the first one, they're super simple, the first one, what's your best comfort food or drink you go to?

31:02: Ooh, mac and cheese, I'm constantly on the pursuit of good mac and cheese in the UK.

31:07: It's hard to find.

31:08: If you find it, please tell me.

31:12: I will do.

31:13: Especially the one that's got lobster bits in.

31:15: I love that, that version was a California specialty, a book or an audio that you're currently enjoying.

31:23: Oh, I'm on a pause at the moment.

31:25: What was the last one?

31:27: I just read the Fourth Wing trilogy, so I'm into a bit of fantasy fiction.

31:32: I'm looking for my next read, so if anyone's got recommendations, let me know.

31:35: OK, so noted.

31:37: in this moment, Nic, what's the one thing that you're most grateful for?

31:42: Oh, health, health for me, my kids, my, my in-laws, my parents, like I I am very aware that all of us are healthy right now and I'm so grateful for it.

31:53: And your husband too, I'm guessing.

31:54: Yeah, all of them.

31:55: OK, yeah.

31:57: a go to self-care practice, do you have one?

32:01: Oh, I have many, I have many, I would say the one I'm really enjoying at the moment is I'm staring at right now on my desk.

32:11: I've got these fresh little flowers.

32:12: I've started growing seeds and having a garden this year and every Monday I put fresh flowers on my desk and it is a joy to go in the garden.

32:20: It's a joy to arrange them and it's a joy to look at them all day.

32:24: So that's the one for me right now.

32:27: And lastly, what's the one thing you wish you could tell a 21 year old version of Nic?

32:40: I think it would have to be.

32:43: A pat on the back and a reassurance that responsible is not always right because I made a lot of irresponsible choices that I felt a lot of shame and guilt for at the time that have been the best choices of my life and definitely the most joy first ones and you know things often do have consequences.

33:02: We, we have trade-offs and everything, but I am so proud of myself for making the big moves that I did and I remember the agony that I went through making them because they felt so.

33:12: Insane at the time, and everyone around me was so worried for me, and made that very clear.

33:19: So yeah, I would say good for you for making these, these big, big risky moves and, and keep doing it.

33:26: Amen to that, amen to that.

33:28: Nic, thank you so much for joining us today.

33:30: I really appreciate it and we will definitely do this again soon.

33:34: Perfect, sounds great, thank you.

33:38: Reflecting on my conversation with Nic, the thing that keeps coming back to me is how we often think of joy as something waiting for us on the other side of success.

33:50: That once life is easier, calmer, or more certain, then we'll allow ourselves to experience it.

33:58: But you know what, as Nic reminded us, joy isn't the destination, it is the journey.

34:05: One of my favorite moments from our conversation was when she talked about the idea that joy isn't something aspirational or reserved for those perfect moments.

34:16: No, rather it's something we can choose and notice even when life is hard.

34:23: She shared a quote, didn't she, from Sir Richard Branson that really stayed with me.

34:27: Isn't life wonderful?

34:30: Not because everything is always wonderful, and not because challenges disappear, but because even in the middle of the messy, the difficult moments, there are still things worth noticing, appreciating, and yes, feeling grateful for.

34:48: And perhaps that's the question we carry.

34:51: It's, where are the bread crumbs leading me today?

34:56: Nic, thanks for your honesty and thanks for reminding us that we don't have to keep striving to prove our worth.

35:03: Sometimes the bravest thing we can do is to simply pause and to notice the good that is already around us.

35:12: Thanks for trusting me, and thank you for sharing this episode with the people you care about.

35:17: And when you come back, I'll be here, ready to meet you where you are.

35:22: And so until next time, stay safe, be well, and of course, as always, be your own definition of amazing.

END