

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Dr. Doreen Dodgen-Magee

JVN [00:00:02] Welcome to "Getting Curious", I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by psychologist, author and speaker Dr. Doreen Dodgen-Magee, where I ask her, "Is our reliance on technology turning our brains into mush"? Welcome.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:00:28] Thank you.

JVN [00:00:29] But you're not-. I mean, here's the thing. Becoming a psychologist and a doctor no less is no easy feat. But you're also, an author. Author of "Devised!: Balancing Life and Technology in a Digital World". I'm not surprised that I was brought to you universally to talk to you. OK, my first question is this. And then we can really go for it.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:00:52] Okay.

JVN [00:00:53] Do you remember that show "A Revolution" on NBC?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:00:58] I do not.

JVN [00:00:58] OK. It was a show called "A Revolution". It had, I think, two very honest seasons. They really tried. But the premise was, is that like this evil, like radicalized American terrorist organization, like came up and like turned off all the satellites and all this stuff and our phones stopped working. There was no cloud, no Wi-Fi, no like, I mean, there's no planes because there's no traffic controlling. There is there's nothing and there's only like they finally got like a train going and that was like a huge turning point because like, 'cause like it was a huge thing, it was called "A Revolution", honey. Like you couldn't, like, plug your phone in. No one had pictures. It was like such a big thing, you know? So that made me curious, like, what would happen if, like, something happened and like all of our phones like stopped working?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:01:43] I think it's such a good question. And I think the first thing that would happen, I would hope after we got over our panic and our sheer lack of knowledge of what to do, we might actually find out that we can encounter each other in really beautiful and meaningful and creative ways. And my hope would be, I'm sure, you know, I'm pretty, I'm a pretty optimistic person and I'm sure there would be some violence and some struggle for power and resources that we have. But I do think that over time, if we could get comfortable enough within our own selves, that would also allow us to be comfortable and resourceful with our neighbors and our communities in ways we aren't anymore. And maybe we would also use that opportunity to become more creative, to become more flexible. Maybe we would even become a better people.

JVN [00:02:31] Do you think that the integration of this technology in our lives is leading, is helped lead to the dysfunction that we're experiencing, like in politics and health and like everything that we're kind of experiencing right now in American culture?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:02:44] I do. I do. And I think one of the things that both the academic research shows, as well as just in my own experience speaking around the world about this, is that there is this kind of ambient sense of relational aggression and competition and

comparison that gets fed by our interaction with our devices. That does feed kind of an automatic negativity and comparative and evaluative and judgmental way we approach the world and talk about each other. And I think it's becoming more and more the norm. There's even some interesting research showing that the way in which children observe their parents talking to their home devices like like Alexis and Sierra-, Siri, I mean, really reinforce rigid gender roles like, "Hey, I get to order this woman around".

JVN [00:03:33] Oh, shit.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:03:34] It's true. And that that becomes this normal way. So then you say like, "Hey, mom, get me my dinner", you know, or whatever it is. But that they're watching us, these children are watching us. And even a lot of the new toys out use vocal commands similar to our home devices. And so children are barking orders at their toys rather than, you know, marching around and playing, moving the dolls or moving the cars. I promise you, you know, that they are playing in less embodied ways than you talk about you playing on your, you know, your balance beam that you and your dad made.

JVN [00:04:10] So, I mean, I think that we have an interesting generational divide here between like because I think I'm Gen X, but there was a generation below me, a younger than me, Gen Y, Gen Y. And then do we know the name of the people below Gen Y?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:04:23] Yeah, they're they're messing with that. There are lots of different proposed.

JVN [00:04:28] Oh my gosh. So what are the people below Gen Y that would be borne between?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:04:32] Oh I don't know the date range but I would say they would be probably mid high school and lower at this point.

JVN [00:04:39] So like, what are we seeing that? Well, actually, before we jump into this and not that I need to like qualify your gorgeousness, but I want to talk about your intellectual gorgeousness and like why you're talking about this. Because you are a doctor. Tell us, like, how you studied and what you did till you become this, like, expert on how technology impacts us.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:04:58] I love that question. So when my own children were in middle school, which they're 26 and 24 now. That's right when flip phones were starting to come out and I was watching how they were kind of disrupting or or at least interrupting the time that children spent together. And then at the same time, my husband was working in high tech and I was seeing what was happening early on with smartphones. And it just began to occur to me that as a psychologist, I really believe that what grows us as people and what makes us healthy as individuals and as a culture is, is interpersonal connection. And we learn best interpersonally, we, our brains are wired and they are wired more deeply with when there's kind of an emotional interaction that occurs. And so I began thinking, you know, this is the early part of this, what if I engaged my family in such a way that we opted to live kind of a moderate tech life to see, just to observe? And at the same time, I started noticing when I was buying toys for my niece and nephew that they were all chipped. And so literally the kind of things that I used to, you know, make car sounds with my mouth now makes, you know, that's made automatically in the toy. And that not only robs a child of this opportunity for creative invention, but it also in some passive ways kind of

omits parental interaction in a way that is really, really powerful for the early wiring of our experiences and the wiring of our brains. So I began at that point, just really following pop culture writing to companies that we're integrating tech into their toys and at the same time then reviewing the pure academic research. I spend about 15 hours a week kind of calling all of that. And then I began just talking with people around the country and did a couple of tours around the country on university campuses and found so much desire on the part of young adults to be able to talk openly and honestly about how tech was impacting their sense of self, their sense of sex and sexuality, their sense of comfort with violence and with relational aggression. And it kind of broke my heart open in a way that made me want to encourage multi-generational conversations about this stuff in non shaming ways and also to inspire and to provide really easy opportunities for people to be more embodied so that they could tolerate putting their phone aside for even just 10 minutes a day. There's research that showed that that can have a profound impact on kind of our sense of feeling addicted or dependent. And so that's when I dug into writing the book so that I could be spread, the message could get out to more people than just what my physical body can get to.

JVN [00:07:43] Wow. So backing up from that even a little bit. So are you-. So you went to school, are you from California?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:07:53] I am.

JVN [00:07:53] So OK. You're from California. And then what's a psychologist?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:07:59] A psychologist, I used to say I wanted to be a psychologist from when I was tiny and I didn't even know what it was. I have a doctorate in clinical psychology and I have a private practice where I get to work with people on becoming healthy.

JVN [00:08:11] So if someone doesn't know what-. Like what-? So basically a doctor of psychology just means like what did, you have to interview people, you have to?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:08:22] Oh, yeah, yeah. So you go to school and you get an undergrad degree and then you go to graduate school and they do things like watch you do therapy sessions with people behind a one way mirror and give you lots of feedback.

JVN [00:08:33] Very FBI-ish.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:08:35] Yeah, it is.

JVN [00:08:35] Oh, I love that. So after doing this, over the course of your whole professional life post-college, honey. You and, and having your family flip phones, you're like, "How is this like developing our, our brains and our experience with life"? So is it really true when people say that like our psyche's are develop between the ages of like 0 and 7?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:08:55] You know, it's so interesting. Yes, that was the research when I was in graduate school 8,000 years ago. But now we know at literal-, at least with the brain, at least neurologically, we know that new synapses, new neural wiring can happen all the way through age 80.

JVN [00:09:11] Ah!

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:09:11] I know. Isn't that great news?

JVN [00:09:12] Yes.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:09:13] And neuroplasticity just means that even if we've created some really tricky habits, we can, uncreate the neural tendency to engage them.

JVN [00:09:21] Okay. So neuroplasticity is?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:09:24] Neuroplasticity means that the brain can change its wiring. So, for instance, when we interact a lot with screens, we push the wiring in our brain to a certain region and it's more the left and lower region of the brain, which is kind of this very linear, linguistic, logical, very automatic. But we know that if we change our behavior so we expose our brain to something new because the brain wires together where it fires together. So if we expose the brain to boredom, then maybe we push the wiring into the other parts of the brain that are more creative.

JVN [00:10:03] Oh my god, I love boredom. I miss boredom. I really miss boredom.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:10:06] That's my whole new goal is to invite the world to a boredom party.

JVN [00:10:11] Yeah, I miss being bored. I used to, boredom used to be part of my self-care.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:10:16] You write about it in your book. I mean, I wish I could talk with you about your book this whole time, but you referred many times beautifully to how boredom pushed you to develop kind of this strong sense of self that-

JVN [00:10:28] I did.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:10:31] I know! I know. No, I, I can't even tell you how much I love your book. And, and that I kept thinking if we only encourage that now. And, you know, when you were growing up, probably you were forced to be bored some of the time. But now children and youth and young adults never, ever have to be. Which means they have to privilege boredom and create opportunities for it. And if they don't have anyone modeling that they don't.

JVN [00:10:56] I really I have, I have boredom scheduled for all day Saturday and Sunday and Monday. I do have to some hair on Friday. But that's because it's people who I love and I have to look at them a lot. So it's almost kind of self-care because there's certain people that if I love them enough like I can't stand to have them get their hair done somewhere else. And then I got to look at it for a long time then I beat myself up. So I just I am going to do their hair, so that's fine. I'm going to do that on Friday, but I'm so excited for a little bit of boredom. So when you are raising the little baby-kins in your house and like and realizing that tech was kind of like because I think I got my first flip phone and it had like I remember like Snake and everything. I think I was in like 10th or 11th grade. I'm having my own self-. It was like when I started driving was really when I got it, like that year.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:11:41] Right.

JVN [00:11:41] And it was like a big deal. And I was like, so excited that I had it. Snake was also really fierce, that game. But when you say that your family is going to become like a moderate tech household. What does that mean?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:11:51] Well, it, it was successful and, you know, varying right over time. But what it has meant over time is that my home is filled with all kinds of kinetic opportunities. So I have big balls of kinetic sand around on the coffee tables and bins of Legos and Tibetan singing bowls all around, balance boards. Sometimes I'll say, everybody, you can be on your phone in my house as long as you're on a balance board, which people put their phones down. So trying to find kind of rich, wild, somewhat risky, edgy experiences so that we have somewhat kind of muses to leave tech for. And so it has just met me really trying to live in a way that invites people's whole body's present and whole beings for who they genuinely are, because that's the other thing I find is just that tech creates, and you, you actually write about this too. This tendency to compare ourselves and to compare how we look and how our lives seem. And, and I just want to create spaces in the world where, where that isn't what we're comparing ourselves to, but where actually rather than seeing people through their social media or seeing people, you know, through all those tech ways that I'm creating opportunities for actually encountering people who they are and getting to look in their faces and tell them that they are complex and that they are beautiful and that they, they matter regardless of what has happened for them on Tinder or, or on Snapchat or on Instagram. I just I think we lose those these days.

JVN [00:13:32] Ok. Can I call you Doreen?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:13:34] Please.

JVN [00:13:34] OK. Doreen, we're gonna take a really quick break. We're going to be right back with more "Getting Curious" right after the break. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. So, OK, I'm-. What is the risk if we-, what is the risk of tech addiction?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:13:58] That's good question. So in the U.S., we don't even have that as an actual thing. If you look at just what is a diagnosable condition, there's been this huge pushback against calling tech addiction an addiction. Even though-

JVN [00:14:11] I am definitely tech dependent.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:14:12] Yes. Well, and the World Health Organization recognizes tech addiction as a real thing. The effect of it is fourfold in the research. The first is that we have less comfort in our own bodies. So when we become kind of dependent upon our devices, we become less comfortable, you know, facing awkward moments, facing boredom. That's somewhat dependent on the fact that it also is impacting our brain and the-

JVN [00:14:34] I have one really quick question.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:14:35] Yeah.

JVN [00:14:35] Not to make this all about me. And I got to get better about, whatever.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:14:38] Please.

JVN [00:14:39] OK. So I. OK. I do feel like I'm like really out of, or like in my body and like out of my, like, tech dependance when I'm figure skating or doing gymnastics or like, like when I'm doing, like self-care masking things. But if I'm going to try to capture some of those things, like for my Instagram, Twitter. But I'm doing it like only because I want to do it anyways 'cause I'm doing it anyway. And it's actually like fun for me to do that part of it, too. Does that negate my self-care if I'm doing some of it on cam-cam? But it wouldn't, because like not like on a TV cam-cam, but if I'm just like in my kitchen or like when I do like my normal Instagram things because that still feels like life affirming.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:15:15] Well, right. So let me ask you, do you feel after you take those pictures and post them when you're doing your self-care? I don't get the sense that you're sitting around, you know, hoping that you have a million likes.

JVN [00:15:27] Well, no, but I do fuckin notice that sometimes my figure skating videos, these motherfuckin people be sleeping on my god damn figure skating videos. I will, I do notice. I would say I do. And also sometimes y'all people be sleeping on my "Getting Curious", on my "Getting Curious" views, too. But I don't really sit there and really, like lose sleep over it. I'm usually like playing Mario Kart at that point or researching another subject or like doing something fun.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:15:58] So most of those things, though, sound like they're on screens, like Mario Brothers or researching a subject. Right?

JVN [00:16:05] Sometimes they're not on screen.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:16:06] Ok good. So that's all you want to make sure of. Is just that if, if posting it is fun, then for sure-.

JVN [00:16:11] Yeah, I love that part.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:16:12] Post it. Absolutely.

JVN [00:16:13] 'Cause I still post what I want to post even if they don't, if I notice that other things like it's like I can just like you know, like Brittany Spears straddle Antoni and that gets like 17 billion things but then like, not literally, but like when it's something I'm really like passionate like into then like sometimes it doesn't have that. But I don't do it for the engagement, I do it because it's like fun for me.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:16:30] That's the, that's the difference. It's when it becomes, you know, really the driver of your sense of contentment and satisfaction and feelings about yourself, that it's the problem. And that's what I think a lot of youth and like high schoolers are focused on right now.

JVN [00:16:44] Or.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:16:44] Yeah.

JVN [00:16:44] Or? Or? Is it okay if you notice, there's a little bit of that going on, but you're like, "Eh, that's just the little thing going on in my little baby psyche, and I also do these other fun things".

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:16:55] It's probably fine. The thing that I just think about is if that becomes what really drives you, making sure that you also feel that same kind of contentment when you're actually engaging with yourself, just you with you. Or.

JVN [00:17:10] Oh, I love engaging with, yeah.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:17:11] I know you do, it's in here.

JVN [00:17:13] I just don't get to do as much. My friend was telling me, like my friend was coming to my house and I didn't realize like when she was coming over and I was like under my gravity blanket just staring at the ceiling quietly, like, not looking. I was just looking at the ceiling, like waiting for the ambient noise of like busy-ness to go away.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:17:34] Mmhmm.

JVN [00:17:35] Yeah, I think I have. But I do think I'm my little busy bee might be, my little busy bee part might be a little bit in overdrive lately. I would say maybe that one's workin' a little hard.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:17:47] Uh huh. So, so can I tell you the words of this sage?

JVN [00:17:51] Oh god, oh god.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:17:51] On page 255.

JVN [00:17:53] She's opening my book, I want to go home.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:17:55] Are you kidding me? You say, "Which leads me back to the importance of your relationship with yourself. The media celebrity comparison in the beauty industry. These are all worth billions of dollars and cause people unspeakable pain and trauma. Knowing I don't have to take on everything I hear and read as complete truth for myself is my greatest freedom".

JVN [00:18:15] That's true, but these fuckers are really mean on Twitter. Like yesterday, they were really mean. They really fucked me up this week.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:18:23] Oh Jonathan.

JVN [00:18:23] They did. I cried so hard yesterday and the day before.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:18:27] Jonathan.

JVN [00:18:27] I did.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:18:28] So what happens if you just say, Ok, that's out there".

JVN [00:18:31] I feel a little bit better today. Even before I got here, I did. But I want to hear more about it. Help me work through this.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:18:35] Yeah. Well no, when we're being trolled, it sucks.

JVN [00:18:38] It sucks.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:18:39] And it's hard to hold onto that strong sense of self. And especially you have so much right now. I mean, you were kind of having the week of I don't even know how you're upright.

JVN [00:18:50] I'm having a week. I'm having a week. You're right, you're right.

JVN [00:18:52] And so that means very likely that you haven't had the same kind of ability to do, you know, your yoga or your figure skating or whatever it is that keeps you grounded and it lets you come back to that internal kind of way of being, and what I find is that, you know, at least you have that. You, you developed that and your, your mama helped you develop that and you've got a therapist who helps you, you know, lean back in. Imagine what it's like for a high schooler who only has had the number of likes they get or the comments that they get on anonymous bullying sites, which are huge in middle and high school.

JVN [00:19:26] They are?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:19:27] Oh, my gosh. Yes. Do you not know about them?

JVN [00:19:29] No.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:19:30] Oh, dear one. Oh. Twitter feels horrible, I know. And it's so wide reaching. But in middle schools and high schools now, there are sites like "After School Yik Yak", lots of them. And basically they're places where they use GPN-, GPS locations, kind of devices. And you si-, you sign up in your school and then you only have access to this chat room that everyone in the school can see and you're posting anonymously.

JVN [00:19:59] It's like, it's like, it's like ICQ but of now? And worse.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:02] It's horrible.

JVN [00:20:03] 'Cause you can post like pictures too?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:05] Oh yes. And you can, so the kinds of things that usually are on those sites are like fattest girls at Lincoln High School or worse blowjobs at this school or I mean, it is, and so even if you're trying to be solid and to love yourself, you can be constantly subjected to this horrible anonymous treatment.

JVN [00:20:25] But I mean, we have to get off of these apps. I mean, my God, that sounds worse than Grinder. You don't even get to. I mean, you can't even have sex with those ones.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:34] Right.

JVN [00:20:34] It's anonymous and stuff, like that's, that's not even like a fun addiction.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:38] Right. But it is an addiction, right? Because sometimes-.

JVN [00:20:40] Yeah. But like what the fuck? That's not even any fun at all kids. Get off that.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:44] But you know.

JVN [00:20:45] And also, stay your ass off Grinder too now that I think about it. Y'all need to take your ass to some gymnastic classes or something.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:51] Please.

JVN [00:20:52] You better take your asses to go paint. What the fuck?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:20:54] Please.

JVN [00:20:54] What are going on? What are going on with these? With these with these apps? I bet Elizabeth Warren's got a plan for that. I bet she does.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:21:02] I bet she does. I'd love to help her with that plan.

JVN [00:21:04] These GPS things, 'cause some, because I mean, 'cause sometimes they could be nice. Why does it got to be so mean?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:21:11] I know, I agree.

JVN [00:21:12] You know?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:21:14] I agree.

JVN [00:21:14] So, wow.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:21:15] I'm sorry that people were-.

JVN [00:21:16] Oh, it's OK. It was-.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:21:18] No, it's not okay. It's but that's what our culture has become.

JVN [00:21:20] Well it is crazy, I feel like I've never really had like a, well, I've, no, I've had things before, I think I've just never been so vulnerable before when I had like a cancellly thing happen on like Twitter, but like having like one random video that you do. 'Cause here's the other thing about

Cancel Culture that I learned. Sometimes you don't realize like, okay, when you do a press week of something, you'll literally be like doing interviews in a room for like 12 hours a day, like crazy long days and like some random thing that you said at like 7:30 in the morning on a Tuesday three years ago can be like dragged back up and taken out of context and like negate every other thing that you've ever done and just be, you know, be totally like overstated or taken out, whatever. It just is a lot. But I also feel like I should take my, well I shouldn't shame myself. But I, my own advice in there is true. But it's I think I've just never opened myself up for the amount of like criticism that I had, is I have like this week.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:22:20] It's big and people are threatened by vulnerable authenticity. People are threatened by beauty and love and light, which are all the things that you are.

JVN [00:22:32] So what? Okay. So what are, is there any cute new stuff that's going on to deal with these like bullying anonymous sites in high school? 'Cause I mean, is the really the best thing to be, just like what?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:22:44] It's fantastic to try to be off of them. The tricky thing is that.

JVN [00:22:47] I mean, it's easy to just they get off it. Yeah.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:22:49] Right.

JVN [00:22:49] 'Cause you want to monitor like what people are saying.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:22:51] Well, and even if you aren't on it, if everyone else in the school is. When I was speaking at universities, I used to have some of these up on my phone and I use it as my remote. So I'd be in a, an auditorium of a couple thousand people and I'm using my phone as my remote for my slides and, you know, showing really cool hip things and watching "Yik Yak" to see what people were talking about me or saying about me. But it became so, so horrible, so fast.

JVN [00:23:14] In real time?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:23:16] In real time. Oh, yeah, they're all in this, 2000 people in this GPS base just ripping on my appearance or some stupid thing I said in their opinion. And what, what I found is even when I turned it off and stopped doing that while I was onstage, you're still aware that it's happening in this ambient way. And I think that's the culture that children are growing up in now. They're still aware that this stuff exists out there. And sometime later, when someone searches their name, it could easily come up.

JVN [00:23:46] So even like makes your relationship with yourself like that much more important.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:23:50] Exactly.

JVN [00:23:50] Yeah, I do feel like getting like trolled really hardcore this week on that, on the, that video, the Bernie thing on Twitter was like it did make me feel bad for like every time I've ever

called anyone out ever, because I was like, "Ew". Like, that's so sad that that's going on for kids now. Is there "Yik Yak" for adults? Or is that just like the thing where the neighborhood people just gossip about each other?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:14] It's probably that. And interestingly, Illinois found some way of blocking "Yik Yak". They're the only state that's been able to do it. But I, and that's where I feel like next-.

JVN [00:24:21] They did?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:22] Yes.

JVN [00:24:23] Good for Illinois.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:25] I know. And I feel like-.

JVN [00:24:27] State Legislatures.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:27] And next, I feel like that's where my work needs to go next is in terms of helping us think at a legislative level. Because when you ask about "addiction independence", tech now is made in such a way to feed our addiction independence. So as an example, you know, on Netflix. Now you no longer have to watch the intro or the exit, which you know or the, you know, credits you just-.

JVN [00:24:49] Kind of gives you in time to run. You're like, "Oh, I've been here for six". Like it needs a pause.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:52] Right no. Right. But you don't ,we don't have that anymore.

JVN [00:24:55] Right, right.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:55] Anywhere.

JVN [00:24:56] But that used to be a thing of like, "Oh, you've been here for five hours".

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:58] Right.

JVN [00:24:59] "Maybe you should like-".

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:24:59] Right. And so we literally, the FTC is now creating guidelines that allow tech companies to create their, their offerings in such a way that they actually feed that constant use.

JVN [00:25:11] Well not our friend, Netflix. They would never do that to us.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:15] Well, so here's an example, though, of something we can do, like to fight our dependence. Right? Is, and this is, this came up for me last night. So I am trying to make "Queer Eye" last as long as I can.

JVN [00:25:25] Yes.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:26] So I watched one episode every month, which nearly kills me because-

JVN [00:25:30] But that's not good for our ratings.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:32] I know.

JVN [00:25:32] But if you don't burn through it all of a sudden, Netflix thinks that we suck.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:36] OK. So I do understand that part.

JVN [00:25:39] Just go and put it on in another room. Go into another room.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:40] Ok, there you go.

JVN [00:25:42] Then go to bed and go to sleep.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:43] OK.

JVN [00:25:43] And then just make them think that you watched all that.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:46] Please do, because I want it to keep happening.

JVN [00:25:48] We'll go take your own advice, I'm going to sit over here and take my own advice. You've got to take that advice.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:51] Ok, I will.

JVN [00:25:52] Because you got to, binged on a laptop somewhere. And on your phone. Make one of the kids keep pressing, "Yes I'm still watching".

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:25:59] Yes.

JVN [00:26:00] Yeah.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:00] OK. Well.

JVN [00:26:00] Yes.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:01] Other things then tend to do-.

JVN [00:26:03] So sorry. So sorry.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:04] No, I love it. Are you kidding? No.

JVN [00:26:06] I'm so sorry. No, you're right. Actually, this is healthy because I'm, I'm asking you for what I need.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:09] And you're telling me what you need.

JVN [00:26:11] Exactly, yes.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:12] I want for that.

JVN [00:26:13] And you're a doctor. You know, so it's like really it's like I'm doing everything I need to do.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:20] It's true, it's true.

JVN [00:26:21] You know? So. OK. OK. So as far as the whole like revolution of it all. What? What about what's this? What's this micro-cyber-terrorism?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:26:31] Oh, I love that question. So when you originally asked me, you know, are we facing a scary post-apocalyptic kind of cyber-terrorist option, I really think that the small ways in which we, you know, are fed digitally altered images of physical bodies all the time. I mean, you know, you talk about, you know, coming to terms with your own physical presence in the world and how hard that is. I certainly relate to that. So the way that the beauty industry or the way that just Instagram with its constant filters or whatever the site is, can feed me this curated view of the world that then I compare myself against that feels like a little bit of a micro terrorist attack in some ways.

JVN [00:27:14] But this is, this is actually an interesting point. OK. So there's two very distinct sides to this.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:27:19] Yes.

JVN [00:27:20] Which I think you can actually almost compare it to like politics kind of. But one side says, "If I want to do these filters or if I want to do these enhancements, whether they're on Instagram or in real life, you know, whether it's permanence, in my permanent to my body, surgically modify or whatever, if I can afford it, if I can do it. We shouldn't stigmatize people wanting to get work done, whatever, we shouldn't".

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:27:41] Absolutely.

JVN [00:27:41] And I'm not saying that's what we're doing. But so there's those people that kind of like engage more in Photoshop. Maybe don't disclose when they're using Photoshop, you know. And they're saying, and so there's that and that, and, you know, if you want to do it, great. And then I think, well, actually, maybe there isn't two distinct sides. I might be on the same side of the same coin. Then it's like, well, so is it on them to be upfront and an honest and and disclosed when

they're using these things? Or is it on us in our culture to like not take that comparison in the first place as the consumer?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:28:12] Right. And I wish that we had the ability to do that. But again, we're raising a generation of young ones who don't even realize that there's alteration. And, you know, I think what I find is that, that's another kind of what would I say? It's another-

JVN [00:28:26] Oh my gosh, we have to take a really quick break.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:28:30] Ok.

JVN [00:28:30] Really quick break, really quick break. You guys, because, because of what you were going to say is really going, and I don't want to lose it. Ok. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", we have gorgeous Dr. Doreen Dodgen-Magee, which actually I sometimes I just say, "gorgeous" when I need a moment 'cause I want to make sure that I'm not going to pronounce something wrong. So I don't want to. I mean, you are gorgeous, but you're also like a literally a doctor. You are an academic. You are a researcher. And you're an author and you're a speaker. So but anyway, what were you just going to think it's like? Because you were saying that, like, we're raising a generation of kiddos that don't even realize that these things are altered.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:29:12] Right. So. So I find it another kind of vulnerability on that sense of self. I really do think that if we could all live from this central core, I call it an "internal locus of control". So where my feelings about myself come from this informed place in my gut, where, you know, I rely on the way my, maybe my parents loved on me or other people have built into me and my sense of my strengths and weaknesses and all that. When we are projecting out into the world a curated sense of ourselves, whether that be in social media or even in gaming, if we're part of a clan and we've protected this kind of hyper-masculinized view of ourselves. We know that then when we encounter the world in our embodied spaces, that we won't match up to what we have been able to curate. Does that make sense?

JVN [00:29:59] Match up the same? Yes.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:30:01] Yeah. And and I think that creates a lot of then insecurity. And we already see the research is really clear that anxiety, depression and then this kind of very strong ambient fear of missing out are really ratcheted up. There's actually the, the first new piece of research has just come out that, that shows not only a correlation between high levels of social media use and anxiety and depression, but actually that high levels of social media engagement can actually cause anxiety and depression. And when you really get down in the weeds, in the research and then in talking with young adults, you'll hear that sense of like, "I can't, I can't be as quick on my feet as I am on Twitter", "I can't look as great as I do when I've taken 50 photos with the filter and then chosen the one that looks perfect on Instagram" and that creates this kind of anxiety about how people will receive me in the world.

JVN [00:30:54] It's yeah, I mean, so like this morning I was like running to my doctor's appointment and I like was like sitting in my hotel and like I just have been like on the road for like seven days and often like, I will just like throw my hair in a messy topknot, like put on my sunsc-, well, my serum and then a little bit of sunscreen. And I just like put all my stuff and I like run out, but like I'm like my panty lines are showing them wearing tights. I didn't have, like I couldn't find my long t

shirt. And so then I had to like wear like a boxer brief under a tight with like a tighter sweater, which was like not like not my cutest look like, typically I would have done like a longer layer underneath but I like couldn't find it and I didn't want to be late. And I just like kind of lulled myself because, like, I know like like really looking like I rushed out the door in the dark, which like I did this morning. I'm cuter now 'cause I had a moment to come back together. But this was like before this. So I think about that. But like, I kind of just laugh at it sometimes. I think my biggest concern is like when, if I'm having like a bad day or an irritated moment and I let someone down, like in that way, than I do in like a physical appearance sort of way, like if I make someone feel like more alone or like more unseen because like I was like stressed or flustered or whatever. But how do we, how do we come on-? I mean, do? I mean, is the cure to that just knowing that, like social media is a facade anyway? And like not into-, because it almost kind of reminds me like Eckhart Tolle in "A New Earth" where it's like it's okay to realize that we like have an ego or whatever and realize that this whole thing is going on and it's even okay to participate in it because it's life. And like for a lot of people and even for me before "Queer Eye" like Instagram was a big, it was part of my bottom line like I needed to put hair stuff on my social media so I could get new clients. It really helped support my business, like Yelp really supported my business when I was, you know, doing hair full time. And, you know, and in a lot of ways it really without tech like, I wouldn't have had "Gay of Thrones". I wouldn't have had, I wouldn't be anywhere I am without some of the positive aspects that tech has created. So how can we start to, like, integrate those boundaries into our lives and be able to, like, use them? Because the other thing that concerns me is this. This, this is like my Anne Oakley come, coming out and I don't want you to like think that I'm a nightmare. But it's like when you say that we're raising a generation of kids that don't know that these are digitally altered images. I only am raising four cats. And I would also say that like children generally annoy the piss out of me. But we know when we see on Instagram and stuff like, I mean, don't kids know when they see an Instagram and then like go out in the world and just like observe people like in front of their face like can't we can use our critical thinking and compared it like to realize like, "oh, like these are, like people do you have pores out in the world. And like they aren't all smooth and have like filters all over them". I mean, I get that like that-. But I think that's really because I'm really just talking through this trying to figure it out. There's a lot of maybe people who don't have a supportive parent or nurturer or teacher or whoever to be able to, like, hold their hand and walk them through those things, so they're left to like figure it out for themselves. And then we get like a lot of like untrue, you know, internal system structures going on in our brains that are because it's kind of like we talk about in parts therapy in the book. It's like when the center itself doesn't know how to explain these traumas that we incur. And if you're naturally comparing yourself to someone else, it's like an unrealistic expectation of beauty. And no one's there to teach it to you. I just learned about it already. So that's why I was like "duh", but some people haven't learned about it already.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:18] And if you think about it now, you know so much of even-.

JVN [00:34:22] And I still fucking struggle with it all the time.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:23] That's right.

JVN [00:34:25] Oh no.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:26] That's right. And even when, you know, you said even when people are out and about in the world, they see other people. And anymore when we're out and about the world, we're often looking at our screens.

JVN [00:34:34] And I'm looking straight down praying that people aren't gonna freak out on me.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:37] Right. And so I think-.

JVN [00:34:39] I miss looking up.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:40] Isn't it true?

JVN [00:34:41] I really miss looking up.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:43] I miss looking in people's eyes.

JVN [00:34:45] I don't want to look in anybody's eyes. I want to look up at the gorgeous building in New York City. They're so pretty.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:34:51] They are.

JVN [00:34:52] The architecture is everything. It's my favorite thing about living in New York. Just. But if I look up too much and I look like I'm, like just taking in all the wonder of all the gorgeous buildings. And I just hear people shrieking and yelling "Jonathan" at me. And then I have to put my head down and I like haul ass.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:35:05] Which is, I think another part of, yeah, that we're talking about.

JVN [00:35:08] But I don't want to complain about it. I love all the cool ways that my life changed, but I do miss taking in the city. And also before you come for me, everyone, Tan said the same thing. And you know how much you love him. So.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:35:18] No, it's I think that is a real, the way in which celebrity now infiltrates all of our lives and where, that we can follow these little things. And we feel entitled now because we get to see you doing your coffee dance in the morning or whatever it is. There is kind of a loss for people, I think, who become either influencers or celebrity that you don't get the same opportunities naturally that maybe you used to have to be with that core self having fun, noticing the buildings.

JVN [00:35:51] Or just like, you know, really being ratchet out at the bar for a night if you wanted to. You know?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:35:58] Mmhmm, mmhmm.

JVN [00:35:58] You can't like a backup on it is, you know, you gotta think twice.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:36:02] It's hard.

JVN [00:36:03] Responsibility.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:36:05] It's challenging.

JVN [00:36:05] I don't mind. I actually like the responsibility. It's cute. And I like this, I, as much as it is stressful sometimes I actually really like the pressures and I'm really grateful for. 'Cause I actually really do love what I do. But OK, so how does people's experience with tech based off of gender differ?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:36:23] Oh!

JVN [00:36:23] And do you think that like, do you think that tech is becoming a less rabidly sexist place?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:36:34] I don't. I, and I think as long as our current administration is in place, it's becoming a less, it's becoming a less nuanced, relationally sophisticated place. And I think one of the things that I talk a lot about in the book and in, in my work is to really watch our engagement with tech that is highly gender stereotyped.

JVN [00:36:58] Such as?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:36:59] Such as the Disney Channel, you know, places where there's just or even video-gaming. So video-gaming is a huge, huge, huge pastime in our culture. And the most played games include very, very hyper masculinized, very relationally aggressive language and themes.

JVN [00:37:19] What about Mario Kart?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:37:20] Mario Kart's amazing.

JVN [00:37:21] Yeah.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:37:22] Amazing. But I'm talking about, you know, games where torture is.

JVN [00:37:26] Yes.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:37:27] Apart of the-.

JVN [00:37:27] Grand Theft Auto. Yes. I did used to like that when I was growing up just because I thought it was fun to go beat people up with bats and pull them out of their cars and not do the mission and stuff. Now that I hear myself say that, I see what you're saying. It's a little unhealthy.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:37:40] Yeah. Well, if you think about it, you know, gamers and I love gamers, they are a group that I actually really, really just love. I love people, basically but-.

JVN [00:37:49] What is that affliction?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:37:51] I don't know.

JVN [00:37:52] Like have you just have not been hurt enough? I love it.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:37:55] Oh, I don't know.

JVN [00:37:56] I'm fresh off of a Twitter trolling tirade. I think I need like three days before I love everybody again. I need three days with my cats.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:38:02] Yeah, I get it.

JVN [00:38:03] And close friends.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:38:04] No, it's not an easy way to live. It's yeah, when you live really big hearted.

JVN [00:38:09] Oh my god, she, she's really recoiled. I'll come back out of my shell again. OK. I need to stop interrupting you.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:38:15] No, you're fine.

JVN [00:38:16] No.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:38:17] I don't remember what I saying.

JVN [00:38:18] We were talking about sexism within tech. And I also want to know about like, do you think that tech is becoming more open to the idea of like non-binary people or are we having anymore, like transgender people that are coming in tech and being able to interface?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:38:31] So I think that's a fantastic question. And one of the things that I hope if I can, if my work can do anything. I hope that it can help bridge some gaps between both generations and then just levels of insight of people. I think that folks who are aware of the importance of non-binary thinking and living are probably pretty astute at finding good quality information and content online. But those who aren't, aren't. And so one of the things that I really, I really wish I could interview you, but that I, you know, one of the things I find are for gay and queer and trans folks that I talk with, oftentimes they've had no input from grown people in their lives about how to find out more information about, you know, if I'm trans, what do I do, what is my path? Or what is, what is healthy, satisfying, safe sex? And, and so they find, they just find whatever they find in their first Google search, which is sometimes not very reliable and certainly leaves them very alone. And the other thing that we find in so many, especially going back to like gaming, we find so much sexual harassment that is happening in those spaces, especially for people who are less traditional gamers. So men who don't fit on a strong masculine binary or women or trans folks are treated horribly if they actually disclose those things about themselves. Within the video gaming community. At South by Southwest, they were gonna have a "Women in Gaming" panel and the participants and the moderator received so many death threats that they ended up canceling the panel.

JVN [00:40:17] Wow.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:40:17] This stuff is really real. And so I think people are really hurting. What I find is that they're desperate to talk about it. And so when I'm on a college campus or talking with, you know, whoever, and I'll just say to them, you know, "How has porn, the way that we view porn now, how has it impacted your ability to feel sexually satisfied and fulfilled with an actual embodied person"? Or "How does the violence you view in games, how does that sit with you and how do you shake it off when you try to encounter people"? And they it's like that, it's like all the stress in them just goes out of them because they hold it all inside and they fear talking with anybody about it because they fear they're just gonna be shamed.

JVN [00:40:57] Yeah.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:40:57] And it's having such a profound internal effect that I find that if we just open the doors to saying this is just our reality now and you're probably being shamed and hurt and, and let's find ways of talking about it. But then also we become less comfortable with voice-to-voice, face-to-face communication. So I think those folks are especially at risk, people who, you know, are don't fit into strong gender roles that our culture would say are the traditional gender roles. But I think there are great spaces for them. They just may be harder to find.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:41:33] So. OK. So the risks of, you know, tech dependency and our not kind of viewing it as such, you know, go hand-in-hand with like anxiety, depression, a sense of compared, you know, obviously comparisons like baked into all of that. And we all know that like anxiety and depression can really like incapacitate our ability to like move forward in life and can really get in the way of our ability to dream, our ambition, like, you know, what we want to accomplish in our lives. So how, what are like meaningful ways that we can like untangle ourselves from tech and really like start to move forward in a more embodied, gorgeous way?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:42:10] I love it. So I would love to challenge everybody to, to kind of create a new mantra for themselves and where they ask themselves if they're willing to be inconvenienced, uncomfortable and bored. And if we could do those three things even for a couple times a day, for ten minutes a day, there's beautiful, your word "gorgeous", research that shows that 10 minutes a day of a mindfulness practice or that could also look like, in my experience, like a rhythmic exercise that gets you into that kind of zone that we think about.

JVN [00:42:40] Yes, vinyasa flow, honey.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:42:42] You got it. That actually doubles the gray matter in the part of the brain that we see diminished wiring in with high levels of tech use. We now also-

JVN [00:42:50] What's gray matter?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:42:51] Gray matter is kind of what creates the energy of the brain. It's like the engine of the brain. It's what makes it work really robustly and well. And we now know that that same 10 minutes also impacts what's called the "myelination", which affects the efficiency of the brain. So just being able to be away from our devices, hopefully if we practice it enough so that we aren't also thinking about them the whole time while we're away from them, can, can not

only impact just our behavioral ability to tolerate boredom, to be able to tap into our internal self. So if we're being flamed or trolled, to walk away from it, be able to come into ourselves. But it also creates a pathway in our brain that will remind us to be able to do that when we are feeling overstimulated. It also, the other thing that I would say is to just make sure that you have things in your embodied life, like you do with figure skating or whatever it may be, that are fiery. And I think for them as fiery, kind of risky where you could fall on your face and totally fail. But where they're also really fulfilling, making sure you're eating all kinds of food and seeing all kinds of beauty.

JVN [00:43:55] And making sure my cats are fine.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:43:58] Exactly, all those the are-.

JVN [00:44:00] And fun.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:44:00] Yes.

JVN [00:44:02] 'Cause, you know, Hannah Shaw keeps talking about making sure that if you're cat owner, your cat's not like bored out of its dang mind and never around new stimuli and stuff because we're the soul like creators of their world and stuff. And we gotta, and that made me feel really bad. I was reading that this morning, I was like, "Oh dang, Hannah, I got to make sure I have like new toys and new fun stuff for my little baby kittens all the time".

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:44:18] Yes. And we need to do that for ourselves and-.

JVN [00:44:20] But especially our cats.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:44:22] And our young people.

JVN [00:44:23] Yeah. Oh, yeah. And young people, too. Especially if you have them. Well, Dr. Doreen, so were to the point in our podcast where it's yogi recess, we, you know, I think we've covered a lot of things. I, I think that your approach to this issue is so open hearted and so amazing. I can't wait to read your whole book. And I love the work that you do. And we will put links to what, we had to make some Instagram content in a second. But what do you want to leave this podcast on? What do you, what is the Yogi recess moment for people?

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:44:52] I think it is that I hope that every person that listens to this can take a few minutes and be, be bored. Be quiet and try to connect with maybe their most beloved experience in their life where someone has just looked at them and and loved them for who they are and affirmed who they genuinely are. Because I think our screens are likely to tell us we're not enough over and over and over and that we need to tend to them more and more and more. And I'd love to help people feel like they can look into themselves. And if they can't hear it anywhere else, hear it in my voice that they are beautiful and they are beloved and they are brilliant and that we need their unique light in this world for who they genuinely are, not who they curate themselves to be.

JVN [00:45:41] Dr. Dodgen, thank you so much. Dr. Doreen, Dr. Magee, thank you so much for coming. We really appreciate it so much.

DOREEN DODGEN-MAGEE [00:45:47] The thanks it's all mine. You just made my dream come true.

JVN [00:45:54] You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Dr. Doreen Dodgen-Magee. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter at CuriousWithJVN. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quin. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe. "Getting Curious" is produced by me, Julie Carrillo, Rae Ellis, Harry Nelson and Colin Anderson. With special guest bookings by Mary O'Hara and our socials are run and curated by Emily Bossak.

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