

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Shannon Miller

JVN [00:00:02] Welcome to "Getting Curious". I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a gorgeous 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm trying not to, like, cry and like have an accident on myself all at the same time, because I'm literally joined by seven time Olympic medalist, two time gold medalist Shannon literal Miller. Where we discuss her journey as a decorated gymnast, her battle with ovarian cancer and how she is bringing living a healthy lifestyle to the masses. Welcome to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. And if you guys are driving your car or like in a moving vehicle or just like, I just want you to be careful, because I felt when I introduced this person who is this guest on this week's episode, I feel like you might freak out. So just don't be touchy on the brakes if-. Welcome to the studio, Shannon Miller.

SHANNON MILLER [00:00:57] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

JVN [00:00:59] You are. You're one of the most prolific gymnasts of all time, if not the most prolific genius of all time. I mean, certainly before Simone Biles like, broke onto the scene, honey, but in 1992, you were the American with the most medals won. You're the most successful Olympian in the 1992 Barcelona games.

SHANNON MILLER [00:01:17] Yes, which is kind of crazy to think about it. It's really crazy.

JVN [00:01:21] You really, really were. And it was interesting because in '92 see, I talked about this in my stand up a lot. I do. But everyone's eyes were on that Kim Zmeskal, honey, and you were like a dark horse in that 1992, because everyone thought it was going to be Kim Zmeskal because America, because she won All Around in 1991, she was like the first American to win like World's All Around in '91.

SHANNON MILLER [00:01:40] She was, yes.

JVN [00:01:40] And so everyone was like, she was going to do it. But then she kind of like got a little baby bit nervous, which I cannot not even imagine. I get nervous just like going onto the ice or just like doing like a back handspring like, I cannot even imagine the presh. Good God. But then, and this is when I forgot, between '92 and '96. Is that you won in '93 and '94, which is the World All Around Individual title.

SHANNON MILLER [00:01:58] That's right. That's right.

JVN [00:01:59] Which made me feel like were you the first American gymnast to defend their Individual All Around title at World's?

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:07] I believe so.

JVN [00:02:08] I think you were.

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:08] It was a really long time ago. But I believe so, yes.

JVN [00:02:11] That was so major.

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:13] Well you know what? It's so funny because in 1992, there was apparently kind of like this big rivalry between me and Kim Zmeskal. And we laugh about it now because we're kind of best friends and we laugh about it now, we're like, you know, what, we

didn't really know each other to be rivals. And then we learned about that later. But, but I love Kim. She was such an inspiration to me.

JVN [00:02:33] Because you guys, like, went to Barcelona together.

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:35] We did. We do.

JVN [00:02:36] Were you on the Team in '91 for World's or were you too young?

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:38] Yes.

JVN [00:02:38] You were.

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:39] Yeah.

JVN [00:02:39] What did you guys do in Team in '91?

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:42] Oh, goodness. You're going to ask me this on the spot?

JVN [00:02:44] 'Cause in '92, you got a bronze.

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:44] I thought we had a silver Team. But I could be wrong.

JVN [00:02:48] For Team in '91. What does it say, Emily?

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:50] Yeah, we're gonna Google this.

JVN [00:02:50] For Team in 91.

SHANNON MILLER [00:02:52] Silver, I was right.

JVN [00:02:53] Oh my God. You're so right. Nailing it. Question and random. When did it go from four passes on the tumbling series on Beam to like-? Because now it's like only ever two, or it's three. But it always was four.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:05] You know, it's interesting. The rules have changed so much since I was competing. And every four years they adjust a ton.

JVN [00:03:11] Yes.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:12] So it's kind of like every four years you have to relearn everything about what gymnastics is all about. And now it's a lot more about difficulty. And so you're getting a lot of different skills in and it's kind of "Do the skills that are the highest value," you know, work the code. And that's how you're going to get the most points.

JVN [00:03:28] Yeah, because it's like, we got to win. Because when you're competing, it was like still we're doing the perfect ten days.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:33] Yes.

JVN [00:03:34] Which were major.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:35] I like the perfect ten. I really did.

JVN [00:03:37] But, but they were so rare to happen.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:39] Yes.

JVN [00:03:40] I got to say that McKayla Maroney to not have had the equivalent of a ten in '12 for that vault, don't you think? I mean.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:47] It was amazing.

JVN [00:03:48] But don't you think-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:49] It was beautiful.

JVN [00:03:50] If there's not a perfectly executed amanar, like, I don't know what is.

SHANNON MILLER [00:03:54] Exactly. No, I'm right with you there. It was beautiful.

JVN [00:03:58] Like, wow. Right?

SHANNON MILLER [00:04:00] You know, it's so funny because I was sitting up there and I was doing a commentary for, for that Olympics. And, you know, you kind of want to scream, but you're not, you know, you're on press row. You can't like, you know, cheer and go crazy and everything, so you're trying to stay composed. But, you know, then underneath the table, you're like, oh, my gosh, that's so amazing!

JVN [00:04:17] Did you freak out when you saw Simone do the, Biles, her new-, it's like which is they think the chan was like a half, it's like a chain that's like a double.

SHANNON MILLER [00:04:24] It's, it's insane.

JVN [00:04:25] It's like a roundoff on the vault with a double off. Right?

SHANNON MILLER [00:04:30] I can't even, I can't even keep it straight. I mean, what she does and what amazes me is that I'm no longer surprised with the twists and the flips and everything that Simone does because she is simply amazing in everything that she does. And what is really interesting is that she's not just the power athlete on vault and floor, but she's incredible on balance beam. And that's a difficult mix to be steady as she goes on balance beam and then best at this incredible vault.

JVN [00:04:57] And now she's like the reigning silver medalist on bars. She literally got silver last year at World's. Who saw that coming, so major she literally Aliya Mustafina could not believe it. I was so shocked. Girl, work. I mean, honey, because Aliya Mustafina, she does not play around on beam.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:10] No.

JVN [00:05:10] So. 1996. Well actually let's go before.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:14] OK.

JVN [00:05:14] 1994. 1993 actually, it's your first individual World All Around title.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:18] Yes.

JVN [00:05:19] You're minding your own business. We're like, because did Tatiana Gutsu stop after '92? Was she like I got the gold individual in All Around, I'm out. Like I don't even know.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:29] Oh goodness. I'm not even sure.

JVN [00:05:29] But who was like you're Gutsu in '93? Like who are we really just like going toe-to-toe with. Was it Podkopyeva yet?

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:35] No, no it was. Milo-.

JVN [00:05:40] This one girl-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:41] Milosovici.

JVN [00:05:41] Oh yeah. Nailing it.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:43] Yes.

JVN [00:05:44] So you guys are just going toe-to-toe, because when did you, 'cause on vault you-?

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:47] I feel like I'm getting quizzed. I'm, you know, I'm really bad.

JVN [00:05:50] Well, no, what I want to talk about. Because it, well, like it's like a vault. Because back in the-, because like in the vault, it was like, she was like the horizontal like skinny vault.

SHANNON MILLER [00:05:56] Yes.

JVN [00:05:57] In '92, in '96 and then by 2000 had it switched to the new one? Or was that 2004?

SHANNON MILLER [00:06:01] 2004.

JVN [00:06:02] So 2000-, that. Did you ever get to play around on the new vault?

SHANNON MILLER [00:06:05] I did two front handsprings on the new, like the vaulting table.

JVN [00:06:09] Yeah.

SHANNON MILLER [00:06:10] But that was it. And I will tell you, I love it. It is so much safer and so much springier. I so badly wish I got to compete on that table.

JVN [00:06:20] Do you feel like your body, just like from all of the years of like hitting those routines like, what is like you're like, like my ballet teacher from when I had this, like, phase when I was 23 where I really wanted to be a ballet teacher. She had like her hips, like from turning out all the time was really problematic. And she had like a really bad little baby bunyon like, is it like your shoulder? Like, like what hurts?

SHANNON MILLER [00:06:39] And, you know, I don't know if it's, well, see at this point in my life, I don't know it's, if it's from sport or from just getting old. But I don't have a lot of leftover injuries. Like I might have specific things, like I had shoulder surgery a couple of years ago, but that was

from a very specific bar move that I did toward the end of my career. And then I didn't get it fixed when I should have.

JVN [00:06:59] What was it?

SHANNON MILLER [00:07:00] I tweaked it on like a blind front giant and in 2000, with my-.

JVN [00:07:07] When you came back.

SHANNON MILLER [00:07:08] Lovely comeback. Yes, yes. My lovely comeback.

JVN [00:07:11] Those fuck-. But wait. Can we talk about that for a second? So wait. You had not really competed since '96.

SHANNON MILLER [00:07:15] No. I started, I got this idea for this comeback in January of 2000, which is a little bit of insanity to think that you're going to get ready for an Olympic Games in seven months. But, but that, that was me.

JVN [00:07:27] But you looked really good at trials.

SHANNON MILLER [00:07:30] I-.

JVN [00:07:30] So you came back in January. So let's think about that. So the Olympics were gonna be like that summer and you did v-, what did you do? What did you compete before tr-, you did something before trials.

SHANNON MILLER [00:07:39] I did. I did like a meet in Canada, that was just to kind of figure out where I was at. And then I did classics in Oklahoma where, where I was raised and trained. And that was the meet. The day before the competition, I broke my knee on a vault. Last vault of training. And-.

JVN [00:07:57] Was it a fuller or one and a half?

SHANNON MILLER [00:07:59] It was a one and a half.

JVN [00:08:01] Ooh. Because you'd always done fulls in '92. Then in '96 you switched to a one and a half?

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:06] I think so.

JVN [00:08:06] Yeah. Because that's when Kerri, because Kerri did one and a half.

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:08] Oh, and I also did like the half, like the half front also.

JVN [00:08:11] Is that kind like the Phelps?

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:13] Yes.

JVN [00:08:14] Yes.

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:14] Well yes it is the Phelps. So we both were doing it and she competed it at World's first.

JVN [00:08:19] Ew. She just like happened to go first, but if you had like gone first on the roster, it would have been the-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:22] Well, I'm pretty sure I fell on mine. I think, if my memory serves, that might be the way it happened.

JVN [00:08:27] Well, she had the floor landing, it's very difficult. But you have the Miller on beam.

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:31] Yes.

JVN [00:08:31] Which is like a standing back handspring with a full twist and then you end with like a split.

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:35] It is, yes. So it's, let's see, back handspring quarter turn and then hop half turn. So it kind of looks like a full turn, gives the illusion of a full turn and then land in a split, which is so much fun. It was so much fun to do.

JVN [00:08:48] And then so tell people this. Because like I had just recently started working my tumbling again at the gym.

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:53] I, I may have seen a little bit-.

JVN [00:08:55] Really?

SHANNON MILLER [00:08:55] I'm very impressed. I'm so impressed. I can't even tell you. I could not do an aerial right now if you paid me, I-.

JVN [00:09:02] Yes you could.

SHANNON MILLER [00:09:02] Well let me just stress this. I would pull everything in my body.

JVN [00:09:05] Not if you stretched for like twenty minutes. If you stretch for like twenty minutes and did that little wedge thing that Sarah, my coach had me on and did it into the pit. I actually really was shook that day though, because like I, like I was a cheerleader in high school and like that's where I learned to tumble originally. And I never, like I always like, like I grew up like idolizing you, like, so hard core. Like love you so much, as a gymnast in general. But like, I really wanted to be able to do a backflip and I couldn't and my little baby coach was like, and you guys will really have to read it in the book because I wrote a lot about it in the book. But this, my book is coming out in September, if you, oh my god.

SHANNON MILLER [00:09:38] OK, good.

JVN [00:09:39] I'll send you a copy. But, but like I had this coach who used to tell me she was like, I've never seen someone with, like, less natural ability learn how to tumble like because you get over on, like, sheer determination cause like, my body is, like, not built for it.

SHANNON MILLER [00:09:52] Well, you're 6 foot-, I mean, how tall are you?

JVN [00:09:54] 1. I'm like 6'1. Yeah, but I'm in a heel today, so I seem taller. But I'm 6'1. Tall for a gymnast.

SHANNON MILLER [00:09:57] But still I mean I'm barely 5-, if I stand up really tall, I'm 5 foot. So there, I mean, that's a huge height difference and trying to get that around is, that's tough.

JVN [00:10:06] But I was really excited-, like to learn an aerial, I was like very surprised 'cause I didn't think I would, like I can, I can do like a [gymnastic move] in my sleep, but an aerial like is, has always like eluded me, like I just was, like I just didn't think my body could figure it out but really like it was just like my, that back leg was dead, she just wasn't kicking. And Sarah was like you have to like kick with your back leg and like lift your chest up a little and I was like, oh my God, that's what it is. Then last week I, well, it may be like several weeks go. By the time this episode comes out, so like, don't worry about time. Here's the thing. I totally thought when I was done cheering in college, I would never do a full again because they're kind of scary. Like twisting is kind of scare scare. But I literally just did one off the trampoline accidentally last week, like working it.

SHANNON MILLER [00:10:42] Oh my gosh.

JVN [00:10:42] Yeah. I did like a round off full, off the trampoline into the pit. I was like really feeling so 18, like so inspired. But if I talk about my own gymnastics to you when we're in the middle talking about your comeback anymore, I'm going to take this marker and shove it through my eye. So anyway. So it's January.

SHANNON MILLER [00:10:55] No, but seriously, I love adult gymnastics. I just think more people should do it because it's fun.

JVN [00:11:01] And you can do it into the pit and be safe.

SHANNON MILLER [00:11:03] Yes. Yes. It makes you feel young again. And you get to try these things that you always wanted to do as a kid and maybe didn't have the option to do.

JVN [00:11:10] I just love like doing a present before tumbling pass. Just like doing. And then like also like it's like I feel like, I hope that Sarah and Amy, which are like the girls that are teaching me to tumble again in New York, like I'm always, like I love when we do videos. I always like can you give me like, "Come on, Jonathan. You got it". Like I just I love a good cheer from the side. It makes you feel so good. But anyway, it's January of 2000, Y2K had not happened, we woke up the next day. We all lived. Thank fucking God. And you're like, you know what? I'm young. I got it. I'm going back. I'm the reigning Olympic gold medalist on beam like, and if my memory serves me correctly in trials that year. Had, there is, there was some openings on beam. There were some openings on some things.

SHANNON MILLER [00:11:49] There were definitely some areas where I thought I might be able. I mean, I wouldn't have done it if I didn't think I could help.

JVN [00:11:53] Beam and bars. Beam and bars. You. Hello.

SHANNON MILLER [00:11:56] I knew I wasn't. I knew it wasn't gonna help on vault. Let's be honest.

JVN [00:11:59] Well, not vault. But beam and bars.

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:00] Beam and bars.

JVN [00:12:01] Yes.

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:01] I thought that maybe I could do something.

JVN [00:12:03] And on floor.

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:04] And I could definitely be kind of in the mix. I could definitely be back up. You know, if, if someone got injured, I'd, like put me in, coach.

JVN [00:12:11] But beam and bars, for sure. Like leadoff for sure. Three up. Three count. Absolutely. Like put me in for Team Final, like, you were not even crazy for thinking that, girl, like at all. So I mean, maybe it could have been cuter if you would have had the epiphany and like, do you think if you had had the epiphany in January of '99, that would've made a difference? Just having that extra year?

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:29] I think probably, but at the same time, that's also a year more taxing on your body.

JVN [00:12:35] Ooh.

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:35] And so. I don't know. It's kind of one of those things where I thought, you know, if I don't try it, I will always wonder what if. So I might as well go for it. And whatever happens, happens. And it's really interesting the way life works. And I got injured before.

JVN [00:12:51] Was that the one I remember like on TV, like on your vault, like that's when the one-?

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:54] Yeah.

JVN [00:12:54] But I feel like that was like at trials.

SHANNON MILLER [00:12:56] That was at trials. So I got injured at training, at classics. And then I went, I ended up going to trials.

JVN [00:13:02] And then you had to petition.

SHANNON MILLER [00:13:04] So I petitioned to trials.

JVN [00:13:05] Because that took more than my 13 year old gay self could take. Like when they, when the commentator was talking about how you had to like petition to get on. Like I literally.

SHANNON MILLER [00:13:11] Yes.

JVN [00:13:12] I remember almost like ripping my hair out, watching the tape on TV. I was like, that is the most decorated American gymnast of all motherfucking time. How dare they? They need to roll out the red carpet for Miss Shannon motherfucking Miller. I was so upset. I could not even handle, I could not even handle it. So I just think like for you, because I know that we keep it positive around here, but like we should be fucking outraged. Like, I mean if I could go back to 2000, right? Julie's face is she can't even, everyone's face is like, what? We have to take a really quick break, we're going to be back with more Shannon Miller after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. We have literally Shannon Miller. Freaking out. So then at trials, you're doing your one and a half.

SHANNON MILLER [00:13:58] Yeah, so. Well, I did verification the first day, so I kind of did like a full meet that day. And then I did the first day of trials and then the second day of trials I was up on vault.

JVN [00:14:07] And you looked really good on first day of trials. Your beam was good.

SHANNON MILLER [00:14:10] My beam was good.

JVN [00:14:11] Your beam was really good.

SHANNON MILLER [00:14:13] Vault was OK. The others were fine.

JVN [00:14:15] And you had upgraded your vault to a one and a half.

SHANNON MILLER [00:14:17] I did. Which was so crazy.

JVN [00:14:19] And Yurchenko one and a half.

SHANNON MILLER [00:14:20] It was Yurchenko one and a half. And you know, the biggest, I think-.

JVN [00:14:23] Just so you guys know, that's literally what Nastia Liukin won All Around with in 2008, on like the new vault.

SHANNON MILLER [00:14:31] Oh that's right.

JVN [00:14:31] Like that was Yurchenko one and a half. So just saying like that's like on the old vault, like Yurchenko one and a half, like it's a roundoff, roundoff then back handspring onto the vault and then like a one and a half off. It's like a blind landing. It's really difficult. But even eight years after with the new vault, that's what people were winning with. You know?

SHANNON MILLER [00:14:47] Yeah. It's, it was not an easy vault, it was not an easy vault for me, especially. I. I do not have the most powerful legs, shall we say. I have kind of these skinny little things and, and so vault was more challenging for me and I probably should have stayed with Yurchenko full because I-, they weren't going to use me on vault anyway. But you know.

JVN [00:15:04] But you're just trying to show the Crowleys you were like here to fucking play?

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:07] Well, you know, and you don't want to hold back. I've just never been an athlete that holds back or plays it safe. And so, you know.

JVN [00:15:12] The competition was fierce at trials that year. Yeah. So. So then that happened, you're like, OK, so I'm not going to do this, like right now. Amy Chow went on, that Amy Chow. When I go back and watch 90-, OK. '96 trials, she literally like tumbled onto her face on her beam routine, fell off, 'cause she fell on her face.

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:31] Oh, that's right. I forgot about that.

JVN [00:15:31] Had to give up on, she had a standing full on beam and a triple full as a-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:36] Amy's amazing.

JVN [00:15:37] Dang.

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:38] And she's just kind of this one that would silently go into competition. It was not a lot of flash and just get the work done. And she's got it done.

JVN [00:15:46] Consistent.

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:47] Yes.

JVN [00:15:50] And dang. Dang. So but in 2000, you're like, OK, so it's not gonna happen. But then, so then what happened?

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:55] Well then I. So I went home and I ended up-.

JVN [00:15:58] Which is Oklahoma City?

SHANNON MILLER [00:15:59] Yeah. Right outside of Oklahoma City.

JVN [00:16:01] Is it close to-? I have some family from Enid.

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:03] It's fairly close. So I'm Edmond. So the other "E".

JVN [00:16:06] They're like sister cities.

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:07] Yes. Yes. I competed in Enid a lot growing up.

JVN [00:16:10] You did?

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:10] I did.

JVN [00:16:10] I bet you like took those like little Enid gymnasts to town, honey.

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:14] I don't know. I lost for a really long time.

JVN [00:16:17] No, you didn't! Did you really?

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:17] Oh, yeah. I did. Absolutely.

JVN [00:16:19] That's interesting.

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:20] People see the gold medals and the success, but we forget about the thousands of times we fell in our face first.

JVN [00:16:26] Was there like at any time, like where you had had like a bunch of pressure, like pre '92, where you had like kind of had like a moment that was like really big and pressure-y that, like, you didn't, like, do what you thought you were going to do? And like, how did you deal with it?

SHANNON MILLER [00:16:37] I think there were a lot of moments like that. I was. I was. And I think I am I just I built this way as a person. I expect 100 percent of myself and I expect to get it right. And when that doesn't happen, I get very frustrated. And as a kid growing up, I didn't know how to handle that frustration. So a lot of times I would just start crying and, and my coach really kind of helped me understand how to channel that. And OK, you can cry about this now, but you're not getting any work done. Or you could get up and you could try it again. And if you fall, you try it again. And just-.

JVN [00:17:09] He was cute. Wasn't his name Steve?

SHANNON MILLER [00:17:11] Steve Nunno.

JVN [00:17:12] And he had like a, he had like a mustache and brown hair.

SHANNON MILLER [00:17:15] Yes.

JVN [00:17:15] Yeah. We liked him. I had like a five year old crush on him. I did. I thought he was like, really cute. I was like, I was like, if he was my gymnastics coach, honey. I just like, you know, he's so cute. But anyway, keep going.

SHANNON MILLER [00:17:25] So, you know, I think those moments I learned the importance of failure and, and how that can lead you to success. And that was such a great life lesson. And so I think that was one of the things that ultimately allowed me to succeed was I fell so many times that I kind of understood what to do. And so sometimes you have athletes that they never, I mean, there were athletes that were so much more talented than me in the gym and they would hardly ever make a mistake. But if they got into a competition situation where they faltered, they didn't always know how to deal with it. All the sudden, everything just kind of came tumbling down. Well, I knew how to deal with it because I fell all the time. And so I think just learning how to deal with it over time led me to, to be able to succeed and really cope with it. When I fell, I'd get back up and I would know that I just had to minimize any deductions. And you never know what happens. And I think for me, my first real test of that was my first state competition. I think I was maybe eight years old and, I know, and I did a back handspring layout, step out on balance beam and I fell. And it was my first event and I-

JVN [00:18:33] You had a back handspring layout step out when you were eight on beam.

SHANNON MILLER [00:18:39] But it was.

JVN [00:18:40] Is that typical of like eight year, or no?

SHANNON MILLER [00:18:43] I don't know.

JVN [00:18:43] I don't think that's that's typical. Yeah, because you're like the 1996 like gold medalist, Olympic gold medalist on beams like. That is typical for you.

SHANNON MILLER [00:18:50] I really liked beam. I really liked beam, but I fell and I, I remember I was just, I was crushed. And then it was kind of one of those moments where I, OK. I've just, I've got to get back up and I've got to finish the routine and do the best I can. And then my coach said, look, you never know what's going to happen, but just go and eat. You got to give it a hundred percent on all three events. It's not over. And I ended up winning State that year, and it was kind of one of those. OK. I think he knows what he's talking about. All right. I can do this. And it just helps you be a little bit more calm under pressure or when you do make a mistake. And that actually happened again at Olympic-, was it Olympic trials in '96, did I fall on beam? There was one of them I fell on beam again.

JVN [00:19:30] Did you?

SHANNON MILLER [00:19:31] I think so.

JVN [00:19:32] Everyone was really nervous on beam in '96 trials.

SHANNON MILLER [00:19:36] I think I was always nervous on beam.

JVN [00:19:38] But people I mean, '96 that competition was ferocious for that team.

SHANNON MILLER [00:19:42] There were a lot of good gymnasts. Yeah. It was, that was an incredible year for gymnastics.

JVN [00:19:47] It was ferocious in 2002. Like it was. And I feel like 2002. I remember that one gymnast, Morgan White, and she broke her foot like the day that she got to Australia. And then Tasha Schwikert ended up being the alternate, but like totally slayed in 2000-, like she did really, really good. But then what was so crazy was in 2000, they got fourth. But then that Chinese gymnast ended up being like 12.

SHANNON MILLER [00:20:08] And they got the bronze medal.

JVN [00:20:09] In 2008. It took eight years for that to happen.

SHANNON MILLER [00:20:12] It's crazy.

JVN [00:20:13] That story, I think, is one of the most interesting stories ever. I also talk about that on standup, because that's how Dominique Dawes became the first gymnast, American gymnast to win an Olympic medal in three consecutive games.

SHANNON MILLER [00:20:23] That's right. That's exactly right.

JVN [00:20:24] But it took eight years for her to get those accolades.

SHANNON MILLER [00:20:27] Talk about an am-, another amazing gymnast. I love Dominique.

JVN [00:20:29] Oh, my gosh. She-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:20:31] I love her.

JVN [00:20:31] And she was like, just so stable. Just like she like always, she was like the first, in '94. She like, wow, that's interest, that in '94, she won the individual at all the Nationals. But then at World's you came, and were more like, hi, sorry, like grabbing that All Around title. Like can't help it. Defending it. Nailing it. Did you find that like, were, did you do better like at international or national? Like did you find like you were, like did pressure make you like come out harder?

SHANNON MILLER [00:20:58] I think I scored better internationally and I don't really know why. Maybe I competed better. I don't know. I feel like the, not the bigger the competition, but that the more challenges I was facing, the better I tended to do. In '94, I had a pulled stomach muscle. And so just going over there and doing a glide kip on bars, you know, one of the most basic moves was so difficult for me. And so just trying to kind of come back from that, I was so focused on, OK, I just got to get through this routine. I've got to really focus. And I think that allowed me to kind of block all the other stuff out, this whole idea that I was, you know, returning champion. And would I get the gold again-, you know, all that, the media stuff that goes around, I just kind of didn't hear any of it because I was so focused on just getting through my routines.

JVN [00:21:48] You did a double layout off bars with a pulled stomach muscle. I want to talk to you about the media thing. Because that's interesting. Like the whole like, because I remember, like, seeing vignettes of you, like those little like athlete like backstory packages where they would like basically ask you when you were like a 14, 15 year old girl, like about the rivalry, or like, how do you feel when people, or all this attention is on Kim Zmeskal. And you'd be like, yeah, well like

I don't really think about that because, but like as an adult now in looking for that, and like it even just happen at World's in figure skating, which was really gross. Like you had Mariah Bell, this fig-, this American figure skater who's just sweet as she could be, at least from what I can tell on Instagram. And she had like this, this, she was like warming up and they like, and she very clearly from video like accidentally like a piece of her skate, like caught this other skaters back of her skate. But the skater like didn't immediately, first of all, didn't immediately react. So it seemed like like four or five seconds like past before she was like, ow, my leg. Then the coach who is like an adult, an adult like coach at World's like that was part of like the Korean Federation for Figure Skating came out like calls Mariah Bell out by name and says that she intentionally, like, kicked Eun-soo in this warm up. And the comments like on this girl, Mariah's like Instagram was like, it was-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:23:04] Oh no.

JVN [00:23:04] No like seriously, crazy, like so rude, so messed up. And I like I forgot where I was even going with it because, like, I was just like, ah, what was I talking about right before I got like retraumatize from talking about figure skating.

SHANNON MILLER [00:23:13] Just asking about, you know, asking athletes who are so young.

JVN [00:23:16] Oh yeah. Why is there this media attention? Like what do you think about that? Thank you so much. As an adult, I got so traumatized by bringing it up. I feel like I need to like Beatrix Kitawicks. I don't what to like retraum anyone that was involved in that. But anyway, like, what do you think about, why does the media do it? It's like, it's like literally kids. And it's another thing I've noticed to, because like I realized I was like really xenophobic when it came to gymnastics, like just literally this year, like because like I only wanted, like, the Magnificent Seven to win, maybe we're not the Magnificent Seven, no matter how good your double front punch was Prokopova. I didn't have time for it. And I kind of was like filled with, like blind rage every time someone did well like that wasn't on the American Team, but I'm over that now, like as an adult, you know? But like, because like everyone was great, and that's great. But, and like, everyone was great. And I actually do really like to watch old Olympics and World's now, and like not being like a nightmare, like, you know, America first, like MAGA person. 'Cause I was such a MAGA person when it came to like gymnastics and figure skating. I really was. Like America first. But what do you think about the whole like media frenzy? Like?

SHANNON MILLER [00:24:10] You know, I think it's extra difficult now. I mean, I grew up in, in a day where, there, there literally wasn't Internet.

JVN [00:24:15] But they still did that then. But they still did it then. They still tried to create a narrative, even then.

SHANNON MILLER [00:24:19] They still created a narrative then. But I don't think we were as aware of it. And I know we weren't as aware of that because we didn't spend the time watching TV or watching the coverage.

JVN [00:24:27] And there was no comments.

SHANNON MILLER [00:24:29] Yeah.

JVN [00:24:29] Yeah.

SHANNON MILLER [00:24:29] There was no social media. There wasn't Internet or cell phones or anything. So you could kind of move through without thinking about it too much. Except for those

few times they would ask you and then you kind of look around like, OK, wait. I don't really understand why that, they asked me that. But I just answered as best I could. And of course, at the time I was so shy I barely talked anyways.

JVN [00:24:47] Yeah.

SHANNON MILLER [00:24:49] In fact, I think I was doing a radio interview after '96. A reporter came up to me the other day and he said, yeah, I was doing a radio interview with you after '96 and you nodded your answers.

JVN [00:25:00] Aw, that's cute. Because you were like a teenager still.

SHANNON MILLER [00:25:02] And I was so shy. But. But I think it's important to not place a narrative onto athletes, and I try really hard, 'cause now, a lot of times I am part of the media as far as commentary and analysis. And I think it's really, I try to keep it about the athletics and keep it about the work that's being done and understand that these, these are athletes and they're people, too. And so let's let them tell their own story, instead of telling their story for them.

JVN [00:25:31] Which is really so important to let people speak their own truths and their own stories.

JVN [00:25:36] Absolutely. And I think you find it's more interesting as well because you don't really know what people are going through or, you know, a lot of times I think we're trying to create this, there's this narrative trying to be created to make it more exciting. But I think people's, their stories are exciting enough because that is what they've lived and what they've done. And maybe you just haven't gotten into their, their story as much as you should, ask them questions, but let them tell the story. Don't tell them the story and then ask them questions about the story you created.

JVN [00:26:11] Oh, my God. I feel like I do that to people all the time. I do. Like I ask a question and then I answer the question and I ask the person to like, answer the question that I literally-

SHANNON MILLER [00:26:19] It's hard not to do that though.

JVN [00:26:19] It's hard, 'cause like I get nervous. But wait, so, you know, they say it's like not the adage of like it's never the situation, it's like our reaction to it. So that if we can assume between like '92 and 2018 that, that the mainstream media, or like media will try to do like it will always be clickbaity to try to pit like the two top female athletes against each other. Or like just to pit, like to pit athletes against each other. And that will always be a clickbaity thing. But it's really like that's not the issue. It's like what we do with it and like how we internalize it and take that into, like, our own lives. So what have you learned in your competitive career like that you can kind of focus on just bettering yourself and like not let in that extra noise?

SHANNON MILLER [00:26:59] I think what my parents taught me really early on and this, again, was before Internet and social media and all of that was don't read your own press, because whether someone says something good about you or something bad about you, that really doesn't affect who you are and what you want to achieve. So if you want to get a better routine or go to the next competition or qualify for something, go in the gym and give it a hundred percent. Period. And don't worry about what anyone else is doing or saying, just go in there and do the work and the work will speak for itself.

JVN [00:27:31] And that's like really how we could apply that, if you like, not a gymnast. It's like if you're going for that promotion, or like that next goal in your life. It's like really not your business

what people are saying about you or thinking about you, like you just have to, like, focus on your job.

SHANNON MILLER [00:27:43] That's right. Focus on you and, and really just understand what your goal is and go after it. And don't be afraid of, of what anyone else is saying or doing and just go after it. Run your, run your own race is kind of what we say.

JVN [00:27:55] I love that. OK. So but wait. I would be remiss to talk about your Olympic career and then, like, not talk about like Beam Event Finals '96. So Kerri lands that fucking one and a half Yurchenko like out of nowhere, nails it. We win gold for the first time as Team in '96 like the whole thing's happening. Yay.

SHANNON MILLER [00:28:12] I feel like there should be applause right now.

JVN [00:28:13] Yes. It is. So that happens. It's your first Olympic gold medal. You come like so close, like literally fi-, well twice before with silver. Like three, but I mean you would come so close like several times. So you get this gold then, and you qualify for All Arouns. All Around is like, Lilly is like really having a good meet, honey, like all hell was breaking loose. But anyway. So then it's beam. Did you do any other event finals that year?

SHANNON MILLER [00:28:37] So I did. So I did All Around and I stepped out of bounds, which I still like relive. But-

JVN [00:28:43] No, on floor?

SHANNON MILLER [00:28:43] On floor.

JVN [00:28:44] But everything else was clean?

SHANNON MILLER [00:28:45] Everything else was good.

JVN [00:28:46] And then that made you like? Fifth, sixth, fourth.

SHANNON MILLER [00:28:49] Something like, it might have been, it might have been eighth.

JVN [00:28:51] No.

SHANNON MILLER [00:28:52] Yeah. It was, it was an-.

JVN [00:28:54] Oh, break. My bad. We're going to take a really quick break. We'll be right back with more "Getting Curious" right after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. We have Shannon Miller. So anyways, you stepped out on fucking floor.

SHANNON MILLER [00:29:16] I did, you know, and-.

JVN [00:29:17] Not a big deal. Like no. It's like-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:29:20] Yes, it happens.

JVN [00:29:21] It was fine. But it was like a three tenths reduction back then, I wonder. Or one tenth.

SHANNON MILLER [00:29:24] It was enough to knock me out of it.

JVN [00:29:26] Yeah. So fucking rude of them. So anyway, that happened.

SHANNON MILLER [00:29:30] So then I went, so I filled in for vault, for Kerri, for vaults. So which, you know, I didn't have that much business being in Vault Finals at the Olympics and my second vault wasn't that amazing. But I'm going to go in. I'm representing the United States. I'm wearing my red, white and blue. Like I'm gonna give it everything I have and I'm going to land on my feet. And I went down and landed right on my rear end.

JVN [00:29:50] No.

SHANNON MILLER [00:29:51] So. Yes, you can watch it on YouTube. I'm so happy about that.

JVN [00:29:53] On a one and a half.

SHANNON MILLER [00:29:55] No. On my, it was my, like a suke half. Like a suke half, front layout. And I had never missed it before, but I got off on my steps which again, why would that happen at the Olympic Games is beside me.

JVN [00:30:11] Wow, oh my god. Because what happens on a vault, if you get off on the wrong steps because you really can correct it, right?

SHANNON MILLER [00:30:17] You can correct it. The safe thing to do is run to the side before he hit the board because then you get to try. You get a do over.

JVN [00:30:22] Oh, you do?

SHANNON MILLER [00:30:23] Yes. If, if you make the decision soon enough. But I. I did not. I was all in and then I was all on my backside. But then it was after that I, I remember talking to my mom that night and just kind of falling to pieces and you know, I can't believe I stepped out of bounds and then on my backside and now beam. It's my last chance. I have 90 seconds left of my Olympic career. What if, what if I fall? What if I fail? What if I let everyone down? And she finally just said, you know, have you given it 100 percent? At other other competitions and training up to this point. And I said, well, yes, you know, I don't always get it right, but I always give it my best. And she said, I know. And that's why you can walk into that arena, head held high, confident in the fact that no matter what happens, you've done everything that you could up to this point. And I kind of walked in with that, that feeling of, all right, let's just enjoy the moment. And, gosh, it was the fastest 90 seconds of my life. But.

JVN [00:31:25] And you were first up or third up? You were towards the beginning, you did not have a great placement.

SHANNON MILLER [00:31:31] I didn't have a great placement. You know, I was somewhere in the middle. I don't remember exactly where. I never watched other competitors ever. So.

JVN [00:31:38] You were back behind the curtains somewhere?

SHANNON MILLER [00:31:38] I was, yeah. I was. Usually I'm doing drills on the sidelines. So I'm down there and I'm just going through my routines over and over and over.

JVN [00:31:46] So but you won. I was in the Upper Peninsula, Michigan on a family vacation in my family's like cabin, that we go to in the summer, I had like a hanger in the TV. I was riveted. I was so relieved. 'Cause I was like I, you, like I was just so relieved that that individual gold that you so

deserved. So that was so major. You like walked out of Atlanta with your individual gold, your Team gold, all golds. Golden girl. Love that so much. So then it's after that, it's after 2000. You go on to become a lawyer. Well you go to law school.

SHANNON MILLER [00:32:14] I don't practice, but I went to law school. Yes.

JVN [00:32:16] And you like literally like finish law school?

SHANNON MILLER [00:32:18] I love school.

JVN [00:32:20] I, like that's major. You like. Who knew? Like it's kind of like an Elle Woods moment except for like not, you were like a really smart gymnast, and like not chasing a guy, but like I feel like I would have-. Like I feel like 13 year old me would have been like surprised that Shannon Miller ended up going to like law school.

SHANNON MILLER [00:32:38] I was, with my parents, it was always education first. That was the deal. It was like, yes, honey, we love that you do this little gymnastics thing, but did you get your math homework done? And so that's kind of how I grew up. And.

JVN [00:32:49] Did you go to public school when you were?

SHANNON MILLER [00:32:50] I did.

JVN [00:32:50] You did?

SHANNON MILLER [00:32:51] Yeah. Went to public school. And then I started going part time, taking part time college classes when I was training for '96. And then I think it was something that helped me kind of balance gymnastics. For me it was never OK, life is gymnastics. It's, I had that balance of education and life outside of sport, which I think in many ways helped take the pressure off because it wasn't like, OK, anyone's going to love me any less if I fall at this competition, I'm going to go to school the next day and take my English test. And that's just life.

JVN [00:33:22] So that is incred. I love that. It kept you very grounded, like that, because you're very grounded, like very incredibly grounded. Obviously, very clearly hard worker. So you finish law school then what happens?

SHANNON MILLER [00:33:32] Then I launched my company, devoted to women's health and wellness and I really wanted to focus on helping women make their health a priority. 'Cause we all know that we kind of put ourselves to the backburner. We go out and we take care of everyone and everything else first. And a lot of times we're skipping our appointments. And I had listened to my mom as she skipped appointments to take care of us. And friends of mine that don't have time to exercise. And I was falling into that same trap and I thought, you know, there's got to be some things we can do, just kind of everything in moderation, not extreme dieting, not extreme this or that. But what can we do everyday in small chunks?

JVN [00:34:10] And what year is this?

SHANNON MILLER [00:34:10] This was. So I started kind of a concept after law school around, and then 2007 to 2009 is when I kind of got it going.

JVN [00:34:20] And you're like married with babies already?

SHANNON MILLER [00:34:22] No, no, not yet.

JVN [00:34:24] Not yet.

SHANNON MILLER [00:34:24] So I started a company. And then-

JVN [00:34:26] I had to get my time right. Which should be in front of my face but I wanted you to tell me about it.

SHANNON MILLER [00:34:29] So yes. I started the company in 2009, 2010 and then had our son. Well, actually, 2008, 2009 started, had our son in 2009. And then in 2000, late 2010, I got the shock of my life. I had a tumor on my left ovary and found out early 2011 that I had ovarian cancer.

JVN [00:34:54] Wow. So you have a one year old.

SHANNON MILLER [00:34:57] Yeah.

JVN [00:34:57] And a new company.

SHANNON MILLER [00:34:59] Yes.

JVN [00:35:00] And you like had you not-. And your company is about like devoted like women's wellness and like kind of like what universal like?

SHANNON MILLER [00:35:12] It's amazing how, how life works. It is really interesting. And actually so the July that I had launched the company in 2010. I also started hosting a radio show. And every weekend I would go in and I would interview nurses and physicians about every health topic you could imagine. And as I moved into the fall, we were doing a lot on cancer awareness, the importance of early detection and getting to your doctors appointments and all those good things. And I, at that time was starting to feel very overwhelmed. I had this one year old who I was just wanted to spend all my time with and all these great milestones. And then the company, which was, I'm really picking up steam. Lots of deadlines, crazy things, the holidays. And I had a doctor's appointment coming up. And I actually called up to cancel the appointment because I was going to be out of town. I thought, I'm fine. I'll, I'll just put it off till next year. It's no big deal. And as I was waiting on hold. I just felt this amazing sense of guilt because here I was an advocate for women's health, doing the exact opposite of everything I'm telling other women to do. And so when she came back on the line, I said, look, I'm not going to be here. But what about a cancelation list or first available? I'll, I'll make it work. And she said, Oh, that's great. That was a cancelation on the other line. Can you come over now? So I wasn't thinking really about my health. I was just thinking, how fast can I get this done? Because I've got too much to do. And that morning, my doctor found a baseball sized cyst on my left ovary.

JVN [00:36:43] And this is November? Or like?

SHANNON MILLER [00:36:44] This is about November. And.

JVN [00:36:47] And you're just trying to get this done, like having, and you like, you hadn't been feeling, like, tired. Like not really having, like, tons of, you just like thought it was life.

SHANNON MILLER [00:36:55] It's, I thought it was life. And I look back and I actually was doing an interview in, I guess maybe February of the next year after the diagnosis had gone public. And the reporter asked me, did you have any signs or symptoms? In fact, I think it was Robin Roberts and she said, did you have any signs or symptoms? And I said, no, I really didn't. And it was after that, my husband kind of said, you know, hey, you know, you were complaining about some

stomach aches last fall. Do you think that could have anything to do with it? And so I kind of started looking at the signs and symptoms and realized I had three of the primary symptoms of ovarian cancer: bloating, sudden weight loss, severe stomach aches. And I could chalk every single one of those up to either regular women's issues or, oh, just, you know, I ate something wrong. It was so easy to brush those symptoms aside. And I think that's what terrifies me the most about my diagnosis, not the actual diagnosis, but the thought that it went so easily unnoticed that I was so fortunate that my, my doctor happened to catch it at an early stage.

JVN [00:38:06] And it was like a baseball like size. Like right?

SHANNON MILLER [00:38:09] And how do you have a-? I'm a 5, 5 foot. I say 5 foot if I stand up really tall. But yeah, I'm, I'm a small person. How do you have a baseball sized tumor and not know? And that's just, it's crazy to think about. And that's one of the reasons why I did become very public about my issue. And I was willing-, it's not that my lifelong dream was to go around the country talking about my ovaries, but I think it's really important that that women know the signs and symptoms and men, too, because every man has a woman in their life.

JVN [00:38:43] Yeah.

SHANNON MILLER [00:38:43] That they love and they care about. So if we can help each other, watch for these symptoms and not that every stomach ache is going to be ovarian cancer, but we know our bodies better than anyone else. We have to listen to our bodies and not be afraid to speak up when something doesn't feel right. And it scares me that I had had such severe stomach aches. I had lost six pounds in a month, yet I couldn't zip up my skirt that I always wore.

JVN [00:39:10] Ooh.

SHANNON MILLER [00:39:11] And yet I went into my doctor's office and told him I felt fine because I didn't want to complain.

JVN [00:39:16] Wow. So. How did? What like, what was the plan like once it happened? Like once you came to terms with this, like what was the plan?

SHANNON MILLER [00:39:27] So as soon as I found out that there was this, this cyst, we didn't know what type of cyst it was. Women get cysts all the time. They come and go. So it was kind of that wait and observe period. And for four to six weeks, we did any tests that were available, but there are no specific tests to detect ovarian cancer. So by January, I was sitting with an oncologist and he did another ultrasound and he said, this is, this is a mass. It's not going to go away. We don't really know what we're dealing with, but I need to schedule you for surgery immediately. And January 13th was when I woke up from surgery and found out that it was ovarian cancer, a rare form of ovarian cancer.

JVN [00:40:11] Of 2011.

SHANNON MILLER [00:40:14] 2011, yep.

JVN [00:40:14] So just, you just had that November and then by, you get like the news of what it is and then it's just like they take out your, they take it out and then-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:40:22] Yeah. They, they took out the tumor.

JVN [00:40:26] I didn't meant to ask you specifically what they took. I'm so sorry if that was like rude.

SHANNON MILLER [00:40:28] No, that's fine. No. It's one of the things I decided that if I'm going to be open about it, I think it's important to be open. My mother is also a cancer survivor, not ovarian. But she doesn't want to talk about it. And I think that's important that we respect women that just kind of want to deal with it in their own way. She's told me I'm welcome to talk about her cancer diagnosis, but I learned a lot from her. And I think that for me to be able to utilize any platform that I have from my past career to help spread the word about signs and symptoms and help women focus on their health, and then hopefully that's a good thing. But yeah, so I went through the surgery. I didn't know what it was until after I woke up from surgery. So it was it kind of the typical sit in the doctor's office and learn about it, it was I woke up in the hospital bed and for me it was mixed news. But I prefer to think of it as good news because while it was ovarian cancer, they had caught it early. And unfortunately, there are over 22,000 women that will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year. And most of those are going to be at a later stage. And when you catch cancer, of course, any cancer at a later stage, you have less options. And, and I think that's important for women to really understand the signs and symptoms because the earlier can be detected, the more likely they are to have their life saved.

JVN [00:41:50] So when you were talking about that, you kind of were experiencing some of these symptoms but you didn't really know the name or like know how to put a name on it, you didn't want to complain. And it's like you obviously grew up like working so hard and holding yourself up to like a level of expectation that, like, most people don't end up becoming Olympic gold medalists. And so I think that your work ethic and your training level is probably above and beyond like what most like peoples are. But I definitely know, like, what it's like when there's, like, people waiting on you and, like, pressure on you for you to, like, show up and be on time and just be the face that people, like, want you to be. But how did you slow like-? Well, I guess you really didn't, because it was kind of by chance. But you've gone on to help so many people learn to slow down and listen to their bodies. So what have you kind of learn from becoming this advocate of, like, listening to your body and, and really kind of learning to walk the walk of, like, what your company, what it set out to do, which is like a women's wellness thing, like you end up experiencing that like first like what have you learned about, like, how people slow down to tackle their wellness?

SHANNON MILLER [00:42:54] Absolutely. And it's a hard thing to say "slow down." In fact, for me, I, in some ways think of it as slowing down, but more like stopping and smelling the roses, because it's important that we continue with our goals and everything that we want to achieve in life. We shouldn't do less than we want to do or be. But it's important to take the opportunity to pay attention to what our body is telling us. And we sometimes we just have to take that time, whether it's ten minutes or fifteen minutes or five minutes, whether it's sitting in the car or driving your kids to school or after you've dropped them off. Just have that moment where you just kind of check in with yourself and especially if you are having any kind of a health issue. I think it's really important and it's something I do now. Write it down or put it in your phone, like keep a log because it's really hard to go into the doctor's office and say, yeah, I feel fine now and you just kind of want to get out of there as fast as you can. But if you have that log and that list, you can say, well, you know what? I've actually had four severe stomach aches in the last two weeks. And I lost, I lost six pounds in the last month, but I'm not doing anything different. I'm not dieting. I'm not exercising more. So I just think there's something up and then they can begin to check that. But if you go in like I did until the doctor, you're fine. You're not giving them a lot to work with. And so I think that's important is to just check in with ourselves and pay attention to what we're going through.

JVN [00:44:19] But what if you're, like, scared? I mean, I think so many people like don't do that because, like they're scared of what the an-, like, what the outcome could be like, what if I do have something? Like how do the people that you helped?

SHANNON MILLER [00:44:31] Absolutely. I think the way I've started to look at things, certainly since my, my diagnosis is that, and this happens with recurrence, too, because it's not just about the diagnosis and treatment, but it's post treatment. And what if it comes back? And there's kind of always that little fear in the back of your mind. And so I think for me, it's just become look, I'm going to speak up and say something. If something doesn't feel right and if it's bad news, then at least I know sooner rather than later, because the earlier, you know about something, whether it's diabetes or heart disease or any type of cancer, the more options you have and the more you can do about it on the front end. And so I think that's really important. And I try to help women, especially, but everyone it's so important to not allow that fear to hold you back from getting the care that you need.

JVN [00:45:22] So tell me about your program and what your program is doing now.

SHANNON MILLER [00:45:26] So one of, so I'm so excited and I'm so honored to partner with Tesaro on their Our Way Forward campaign, program. And this is a program that is really designed to focus on the patient and care partners that are going through an ovarian cancer diagnosis. And what I love about this program, and I so wish that I had it when I was diagnosed, but it allows the focus and, and this idea of kind of rethinking the way we talk about ovarian cancer. And it takes the patient's perspective and experiences into consideration and really focuses on that. So if you go to OurWayForward.com what you're getting is videos and blog posts and discussion guides and even events that are in your local community so that ovarian cancer survivors can really share their stories and kind of create this community. Because we know that by sharing our stories and even if you just go and listen to other stories, it's important because you gain that hope and you gain that strength. And you know that you are not in this alone. And I think that's a really, really big deal. I know for me, having other women that I knew that had gone through a diagnosis and being able to say, "OK, all right, she did this and she did that. And while my experience may not, may not be the exact same, I gained strength through what they were doing and how they were handling it." But I think the other part is kind of what we talked about before is that it's not just about getting that care and having those resources during diagnosis and treatment, but also having it post treatment, because I think during treatment you have this incredible team surrounding you. You have all the medical staff, you've got people bringing over dinner and helping you clean the house. And people are so amazing. And then the day treatment ends, it's like you lose that team. It's like the day after the Olympics, everyone's gone and you feel like you, you're alone. You don't have that support system any longer. And yet you still have a lot of the issues from treatment, the nausea, the fatigue and neuropathy, all of these things. You still are not feeling 100 percent or anywhere near 100 percent. You have this constant fear of will it come back? And that is a lot to deal with. And so what Our Way Forward does is helps you, not only have those resources for the physical, but for the emotional, which is, is so important to deal with.

JVN [00:48:06] My mom just this last March crossed five years survivorship.

SHANNON MILLER [00:48:14] Congratulations.

JVN [00:48:15] She was. She had a football size, not to one up, but my mom had a literal-

SHANNON MILLER [00:48:21] It's OK.

JVN [00:48:21] She, and also like your mom, she doesn't really like to talk like, but she was like, you can talk about it, it's like been a part of, you know, our family's journey but I just, the strength and like resilience that she had. But also, you know, when you do go up against a diagnosis like that, like there is no roadmap and it's something that, like you are never really can be prepared

for. And so to have, like, a resource like this is amazing. And really what I hear, like you saying about, it's like community.

SHANNON MILLER [00:48:46] It is. It's a community where you have these shared experiences. And again, every, every experience is different. We're not all in the same place. We're not all on the same exact treatment. But at the same time, we do share this sisterhood and these shared experiences that we can talk about. And I know, I mean, I learned things like, you know, how to wear my wig, you know, from other women and, you know, what was normal and what was maybe not as normal and what could I ask questions about, because I think a lot of times you feel as if, OK, your treatment plan is X, Y and Z. And so you just have to do it and kind of get used to being uncomfortable, but now, looking back, I realized with the resources available now, your treat, you don't have to just suffer through it. You can have an individualized treatment plan. You can talk to your doctor about, you know, hey, this medication for nausea is not working for me. Can we try something new? I didn't really know that I could speak up about those things and really be a partner in my treatment, treatment plan. So I think, again, it's just this wonderful resource where you learn so much from others because it is complete, uncharted territory. You have no idea. And I had kind of gone through this. Like I said, my mother's a cancer survivor as well. And so going through it with her as a, a care partner, I was at a loss. I didn't know what to do or what to say or how to help. And again, I would have loved to have had a resource that would give me some kind of a road map.

JVN [00:50:14] Is there some of that for the care partners, too?

SHANNON MILLER [00:50:17] It is, yes. For the patient and their care partners and even for physicians. And so that, it kind of brings the entire community together so that we're kind of all on the same page and we know different things to expect, but also just get to hear from each other. And I think there's such a strength in hearing other's stories and hearing what they go through. And I will never forget. I am, speaking of not wanting to let people down. I had signed up for a speech before I was diagnosed and I had mostly kind of cleared my schedule of things. But I thought, you know, this speech, it's, it's local. I can do it. I'll, I'll be fine. Well, I was several weeks into chemo at that point and I realized I could barely get up and walk twice around the dining room table. And how is I possibly going to stand up for 45 minutes and talk? And I just, I was, I could barely even get to the place. And as I was walking up, a woman stood up and I'll try not to cry, but she stood up and she took my hand and she looked at me and she said, "I just want you to know I had the same tumor as you. In fact, we happened to have had the same physician. And that was 10 years ago. I now have two beautiful children. And you're going to make it." And I just of course, I bawled, just like I am now. But it gave me such hope and such strength to know that someone had made it, and for me, that's what Our Way Forward does. It gives you hundreds and thousands of those types of stories that can give you hope.

JVN [00:51:55] Whoo! Girl. Wow. Because really, it's like taking, like, the things that helped you beat your diagnosis and like just brings it like right into your, like right into the computer. So it just like brings it that much closer. Like the things that helped you, like this, Our Way Forward is like, Our Way Forward is bringing it.

JVN [00:52:15] It does. And it's, it's via computer. It's via you know, OurWayForward.com but it's also live events. And so that's really important too because you get to connect with, with real people that are going through this. But at the same time it's, it's building that community and that support system and those resources. So again, post treatment you don't feel like everyone disappears. They're still right there with you. You still got this incredible team.

JVN [00:52:39] Oh. I love that, or that piece of it.

SHANNON MILLER [00:52:41] It's, it's fabulous. And it's so important in all of the, I talk to so many different survivor groups all of the time. And that's the one common theme that I hear the most is, you know, I had lots of people there surrounding me, supporting me during treatment. But after treatment, it was as if I was expected to be 100 percent of my old self immediately, back to my job, full time, taking care of the house, full time, taking care of everyone else and everything else. And I just didn't feel up to it. Not yet. And so I think helping patients understand the importance of the kind of that new normal and that it's OK to take it slow. And my mother was able to help me through that, but also understanding that they can discuss this with their family and their friends in a way that helps them understand, Hey, I'm not, I'm not quite there yet. I'm still in this experience. I'm still on this journey. But it's gonna be OK.

JVN [00:53:39] Well like for me to you and were, for me, it's like because in 2000-, I think I started following you on Instagram in like 2013 and like, I was not really-.

SHANNON MILLER [00:53:47] That might have been my first year on there. I was slow.

JVN [00:53:49] I've been following, I've been following for a, like for a long time on Instagram. And like, I actually didn't know that you had, like that you were a cancer survivor because, like, I wasn't like on, I just didn't see the media that it did in like '11 and '12 when you've been talking about it then. And so even seeing where you were in like '13 and '14 like I wouldn't have known if you hadn't talked about it and been open about it, like on your social media, which I thought was so courageous and so strong of you. But I just wanted to ask, like, how long from the time you were done with treatment until you did-? Because I mean, I feel like following you now, like you did that CBS charity like beam routine last year that brought me to fucking tears. I was like literally scouring the Internet.

SHANNON MILLER [00:54:23] Yeah, that took a lot to get the nerves up.

JVN [00:54:25] I was scouring the Internet for, like, so long. I'm trying to find it. I was like, when is it going to be up? When can I see it? And I mean, you, like that video that I saw you, when you, when, this was on the p-. But I saw this amazing video of you training on Facebook, that was so amazing, that gorgeous handstand. And I mean, you seem very busy now, like a 150 million percent, like I mean, talk about, like, making it through the rain, like you definitely came out of the other side. Your kids are so dang cute.

SHANNON MILLER [00:54:47] Aw, thank you.

JVN [00:54:47] I love your guys' little dance routines in your living room. It's so cute. You really do have a really cute Gram. But I mean, how like, was it like for, in your experience, like in your journey, was it like a year after you are done or like two years or is it still not all the way?

SHANNON MILLER [00:55:00] You mean when my journey is kind of what I consider finished?

JVN [00:55:02] Yeah, well, not like finished. Like when were you like being like, like?

SHANNON MILLER [00:55:05] It took me. Well I would say it took me a little over a year to kind of feel like myself again. In fact, so after the fall of 2011, I signed on to do commentary for the Olympics in 2012 and I thought, oh, I'll feel fine next summer. It's, you know, no worries. And by next summer, I was still taking naps in the afternoon, I was still nauseous with a lot of foods. And I thought, what did I do? And, you know, when you go to the Olympics and work it, it's like 16 hour days. It's insane. And that was really the first time that I kind of felt like, all right, I've got to do this. And so once I kind of got through the other side of that, I think that's maybe late 2012 when I started to kind of really feel like myself again now, I wore, was still wearing a wig. My hair hadn't

come back. I had no eyelashes or eyebrows, but I was starting to get some energy back. But I do think it's an ongoing process. I still go in for my testing. I still have a little bit of that fear. But, you know, I just, the one thing that I really learned throughout the cancer diagnosis that I just need to go out and live everyday to the fullest no matter what happens. Just, you know, don't have those regrets. Just go out and enjoy every day as much as possible.

JVN [00:56:15] And like, when you have, like, your checkups, it's just like whether it's like quarterly or like twice a year, or once a year, it's just like, do you just try to kind of like just do what you just said that you do is like focus on the now focus on your day. Like, don't worry about like your-

SHANNON MILLER [00:56:26] I do, I do. I don't even think about it until I have to get there and then I get through it and I just try to think about everything else. And I figure if, if something comes back that's not great, then I'll deal with it and at least I'll know.

JVN [00:56:40] So I could literally spend the rest of my life talking with you. Thank you so much for talking to me about so much gymnastics. This is the part in the pod where, like I talked your ear off so much, in which was the most amazing time of my life. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you want to share with people that like, like we can obviously we're gonna put the link for your Instagram and OurWayForward.com and whatever other socials like people can follow you on because they need to. Everyone needs to be seeing it. Also, just like from superfan to you, I love the work that you're doing post Olympics. And I have to say, any time you want to be up in that gymnastics center doing some gorgeous stuff on the Gram. I think it drives followers. I think it drives views. I think people like, seriously.

SHANNON MILLER [00:57:14] I'm going to start stretching now.

JVN [00:57:15] No, seriously.

SHANNON MILLER [00:57:15] I'm like that with you. Good gracious. You're doing more tumbling than I'm doing. I think that great.

JVN [00:57:20] I mean, well. I mean, maybe we need to see you on that tumble track, like I think people would really freak out.

SHANNON MILLER [00:57:25] I think we need to do handstands after the show. I think we've got to do that.

JVN [00:57:31] Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, God. K, I'm going to freak out. All right. Well, wait. So what do you say? Is anything else we want to say now?

SHANNON MILLER [00:57:37] No. Thank you so much for having me on. I am so glad your mother is doing well. It is such a difficult thing for an entire family. And I hope people that are facing a diagnosis like this or any other challenge in life will go out there and really find that support and the resources that they need. Because we're here, we're all here to help each other.

JVN [00:57:57] I love you so much and I'm so glad that you're doing so well. And just like nailing it. Stick, continuing to stick to your landings, honey. Thank you so much, Shannon Miller.

SHANNON MILLER [00:58:05] Thank you.

JVN [00:58:06] You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Shannon Miller. You'll find links to Shannon's work and socials in the episode description of wherever you're listening to the show on. Follow me on Instagram and Twitter. Our

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