

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Gretchen Rubin

JVN: Hey, curious people. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and welcome back to Getting Curious. Honey. I hope you're staying cool out there. It is a hot summer, it is a hot person summer. But you guys, this is an exciting episode because we are checking back in with none other than Gretchen Rubin. If you remember we had Gretchen on in January of this year to talk about how we could be - happiness in 2024. And it was more about like New Year's resolutions and how to like stay in connection with our New Year's resolutions. And really the question there was like, is it selfish to pursue happiness in the face of awfulness around the world? Is it even possible? So when we had Gretchen on, we, I developed, I devised my own little plan with Gretchen on how I was going to try to be happier. Also, Gretchen's research has shown that happy people are also engaged, people who are more likely to be making the world around them a better place. So it's like maybe being happier does help us be better people, but it's like the chicken or the egg? So we're just over halfway through the year and we wanted to bring her back to check in on our goals and see where we are at. So there's really nobody better to talk about this with than the happiness expert herself. Gretchen Rubin is the author of best selling book, The Happiness Project and host of the podcast Happier with Gretchen Rubin. She decided to become a writer after clerking for Sandra Day O'Connor. And since then, she's been interviewed by Oprah. She's been an answer on Jeopardy and she walked arm in arm with the Dalai Lama. Gretchen is a total podcasting icon and we are so excited to have her back. The question we're asking today is, Am I any happier in 2024 and stick around to the end of the episode? Where we'll reflect on what we learned and how we answered this question. Gretchen! Welcome back to Getting Curious. How are you?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I'm great. I'm so happy to have the chance to catch up.

JVN: How's it going queen? We are chugging right along. We are, you know, it's,

GRETCHEN RUBIN: it's all happening.

JVN: It's been a very eventful year over here on my end and I'm just going to dive right in. So the first time that we met, I it was right around New Year, I think it was right after New Year, wasn't it? It was like very beginning of January. And, you know, I think anyone who listens to my podcast is probably familiar with the Rolling Stone article and I just had never had any experience like that. It was, it was undoubtedly unhappy. Like that experience was like, it was an unhappy one -

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Of course.

JVN: But it also forced me to like really put into more practice of like, I literally logged out of social. I, I didn't look at any social and I really got into my morning routine and in that time from like March to like May, I felt so much better. And then, and I had Queer Eye to focus on and I was like, you know, focusing on like, you know, shooting, but slowly what I realized is not to be just doom and gloom, but let's be vulnerable and authentic. I am. I think as some of the shock and the despair and the just like just how hard that process was like, started to fade away. Then some of my like those better coping skills of like not spending time on social and doing a better morning routine kind of started to like slide away and then his work got really busy and I like, you know, wrapped Queer Eye and went straight into just so much

more work. I've kind of now, I've kind of this, I'm just like going for it. So then sixth of July is, that's the day that my step dad passed away and we were really close and every fourth of July, it's like hard because I think about him. And I, sometimes it's easier and sometimes it's harder. And this year it was hard and I'm kind of back to that, like, kind of back to that struggle of like, I love, I love the people in my life. I love the things that I get to do in my life. But at the same time it's, I think I just forgot how to find how to stay in touch with my well being. It's not even happiness. It's like staying in touch with my well being. And I'm really kind of back to the drawing board queen on how I want to do that. So not to be disappointing, but it didn't go great. No, no.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Like life, life happens, life happens. You know, I mean, that's the thing and, you know, it's interesting, this is a side note before we like really get into this. One of the things that people sometimes think is like, well, if I, I'm hard on myself, if I'm really harsh to myself, if I slip up or I don't, you know, don't achieve something that I set an aim that I set myself. I'm really hard on myself, that'll kind of inspire me to like do better. But in fact, what the research shows is that the people who do the best at reengaging, like you're saying, like I had this like plan and it was going to be great and then something happened and all these things happened all these consequences followed that I hadn't really planned on. And now I, I feel like I'm sort of back where I started. You know, it's the people who say to themselves, hey, you know, that didn't go the way I expected or that wasn't my best effort or I learned that lesson the hard way or I'll do better next time. They're the people who do the better at engaging again. So, on the one hand, we want to like hold ourselves to our aims. So we think it's really something that's going to make us happier and healthier. But on the other hand, we want to have a lot of like tenderness for ourselves and say, hey, you know, you can learn. Uh one of my favorite proverbs is a stumble May to fall, you know, and suddenly, OK, I screwed up. But I'm gonna try again and, and just like, try again and not be too harsh on yourself. So here you are, it sounds like you're just going through. It's just social media is a lot and you're right in the middle of it. I mean, the way most people could never even imagine. And so, and this is just an unprecedented thing in, in human history. Nobody had to deal with this. So you're kind of on the cutting edge of figuring this out. Um So you're a pioneer.

JVN: That is true. I haven't had like in human history, we've never had people just get be subjected to so much feedback at one time. Yes.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Well, and social comparison is such a strong thing. I mean, and, and, and, and for good and for evil. And so people are comparing themselves to you, you're comparing themselves, you've got, you're reaching people on this like 1 to 1 level on a scale that is just, you know, never before imaginable instantaneously every minute of the day, multiple different platforms. I mean, it's bananas.

JVN: I think it's like I said this to my husband and he was like, he gave me like such this look. But I was like, babe, I was like, I think I'm addicted to social and he was like you think.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: You said that last time. Those were your very words.

JVN: Yeah. And, but I didn't even like, but the denial is so strong with the addict and also it's not even that it's just like out and out denial. It is also like my livelihood and it is how like you communicate and it's like you need to be aware of like, but it's like how much is too much

and, and you know, you try to put guidelines on it. But, but enough about me, I just talked to myself for about myself fully for 8.5 minutes.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I want, I want to get into the like, well, see, this is my sister calls me a happiness bully because if I think there's a way for you to get happier. I'm like, let's start talking, let's do this. You know, like I'm, I'm coming over to clear your closet, which I have done to her. She is, she is my, my, uh, you know, innocent bystander. But so one of the things though, and I'm just curious, like to, to hear if you tried it or if you're interested in try trying this again. Now that you've gone through this, like huge experience, kind of like, um, you know, because what you had talked about trying last time that we spoke in January was that you were gonna try managing sort of the onslaught of social media by limit it, limit it, limiting it through time. So you're gonna like 20 to 30 minutes, 30 minutes snacks in the morning and at night for engaging and then for scrolling, you're gonna just sort of passively taking things in like 10 minutes or so in the mid morning. Uh and after work each day, and I thought you had a really good self insight in that you were like, if I do it first thing in the morning, I'm like tired and vulnerable and like really reactive. Like first thing in the morning, it was not a good time for you. So you were saying mid morning and then like, you know, and this was a way you like, get yourself in a calm place so that you wouldn't be impulsive, you wouldn't feel you could kind of manage the just like the waves that were hitting you. Um Did you try that or did all this unfold before you could really implement that plan? Because there's a question or I could see that might be sort of satisfying for you because there's like customization and tracking and that kind of thing.

JVN: Yeah, I did. And so the 10 minutes of like passive scrolling, I feel like went out the window, like I was good at the at the mid-morning thing about not going on the news and not going on social till mid-morning. Um And I was doing like my gratitude breathing like my heart lead breathing and my like hot lemon water and like before my coffee and then I was like working out and so I was getting to like 9 30 10 and I wake up at like 630 without being on the phone.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: So that, so that's a good morning.

JVN: Yeah, so I was doing good and then, you know, obviously it would be like, you know, some like workout, then I got to get ready and then do whatever I was going to do, but I was good with that. But it was almost like once the like once I, I don't know, once I got used to it or if I felt just like once I kind of started feeling better, I just noticed that some of the plans started to like my morning plan, like didn't stick as well. And I didn't follow through with, like, the wholeness of our plan about, like, the mid morning and then only 10 minutes and then at night. So I wouldn't even know if it was fully going to work because I didn't do it. I didn't commit as hard to it as I needed to. I probably set the stakes too high in retrospect.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: You mean, like, the time limits were too strict and not realistic? Yeah. Well, that's why, well, you know, we just passed halfway day, which is July 2nd and I think halfway day it's like New Year's Day. It's a great opportunity for reflection where you stop and you think, well, given what I've learned what's working, what hasn't worked, what would I do differently? So, it sounds like having kind of these set limited times works. But maybe you need to give yourself, you're just, like, realistically, these are big tools for me. This is a way to engage with the world. I need to, I, I'm, I'm gonna give myself more time because that's just more realistic. But then maybe you want to do something like, set an alarm so that an alarm goes at 20 minutes. And it's like, so you're, you're specifically saying to yourself, ok, I heard

an alarm go off and yet and I know I'm gonna feel better if I step away from this. You know what I mean? So that it's not just you noticing because I feel like a lot of times we get pulled into this stuff and you're like, one more, one more, one more, one more. I'm, I'm right on the brink of ending, right on the brink of ending and 10 minutes go by. Um, so, so sometimes an alarm can help.

JVN: Yeah. Yes, that is a lining. That's resonating. So, what, what about your 2024? How have you been?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I have been doing, I've been doing ok. I, I, some things are going well, some things are not going well. Um, one thing, this is a very silly thing. But, um, so one of the things that I had resolved to do was to wear socks to bed if my feet were cold because I had read research that if your feet are cold, it's harder to fall asleep because warm feet is one of the ways that the body decides that it's safe to fall asleep. Um, and I have really, really cold feet. So I'm like, ok. But what I found is I would wear socks. I would wear two pairs of socks. I would pair a pair of socks and slippers. I mean, I am like the frumpiest person going to bed and my feet were icy ac cold. I bought the dumbest thing in the world which is an electric foot warmer, which is again like the frumpiest thing. And I have so much respect for my husband that he doesn't make fun of me for sticking my feet into this thing every night, but it's really improved my sleep. So I had this thing to like deal with my feet and I got an electric foot warmer and I tell you, I fall asleep faster because I, my body just relaxes fast.

JVN: Yes. True story. You guys, I got to give you guys some insight into the recording of this episode. So yesterday, because now it's the next day, like what you were just listening to Gretchen talking about her New Year's accomplishments. What really happened was is that the internet in the state of Texas got like the stomach flu essentially from Hurricane Beryl and it just stopped working. There was no internet in Texas or at least in Austin and San Antonio yesterday for like eight hours. So Gretchen's space was just giving me like kindness and telling us about her experience and then everything froze and everything stopped working. So now Gretchen's been really cool help to come back. We are picking it up where we left off.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I feel like we need to "do do do do do do do" sign for like time passing. It's tomorrow.

JVN: How was it on your end? Gretchen did my face just like freeze in a weird face?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: It was a really good moment. Like you had your hand out and you looked really thoughtful and I thought you were just like pausing like really thoughtfully and then I'm like, wow, that's really a dramatic pause. And then it was like, oh, he's frozen. Um, and so, yeah, it took me a minute to realize that it wasn't just, you know, a pensive pause.

JVN: Okay so last night I was actually thinking about you and I fell asleep because cold and I was like, oh, I was like, I'm thinking of her and it really wasn't until I, like, I, like, I do this thing where, like, I spin my feet around each other to like create friction to war. I've never tried that. I do like, I like spin my feet around each other to like warm it up. And so I was thinking about you last night. So I was also thinking about you as I was going to sleep because I was like, man, what a healthy reus like resolution. Like I love your like, like let's get these feet warmed up. Like mine's all like, let's not have like a self destructive like mental health episode. And yours is like, I want to keep my feet warmer. And then I was like, let's not-

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I have to say that sometimes I've learned over time. It's good to make resolutions that you're like, this is a pretty small and straightforward resolution. I think if I put a little little effort into this one, I could like cross it off my list. It's nice to have ones because the bigger transcendent, more abstract ones are the more important ones and the more challenging ones. And I, I've learned that it's good for my morale to get something. Uh, you know, we have our to do list, but you need a, "ta da!" list too. You need things you can accomplish realistically. It's good to remind yourself of everything you've accomplished.

JVN: I'm writing it down to da list. I love that. That is. And also it's like I pulled up yesterday when I was ok. Fine. I'm telling on myself, I was, I was doing a little bit of scrolling and I saw this quote that I said that I forgot that I said, which was that like, we don't, you can't just like, will confidence, like confidence is built from like setting goals for yourself and then you show up for those goals. But it's like if your goals are always like, you know, or if your goal tends to be like this really big thing that's like, always kind of troubled you, then you need some other ancillary goals or like, you know, like secondary and tertiary goals to like, help that confidence because it's like if, if you're trying to quit drinking soda, but you've been drinking soda every day, you know, for 20 years or something, just something that's like, really become like more of a crutch like that. You might need some other, like more secondary goals to like build up the confidence to get there or maybe you just rip off the band aid, who knows? But I just like the idea of like more achievable, like reasonable goals to help us move towards where we want to know.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I think, I think it's really important because I think if we set our sights so high, we can get discouraged. One of the things with resolutions, I think that help like if you're thinking about New Year's resolutions is always to frame a resolution is something that's concrete and specific and manageable because sometimes people are like, write a best selling novel and it's like, we, you can't do that, like, for so many reasons, but it's like, write for an hour a day and you can write for an hour a day and you're like, yes, I wrote for an hour a day. I wrote for an hour a day, seven days a or whatever. But sometimes it's like, learn Italian or get back into playing the violin. It's like, what does that even look like? Can you achieve that? But you're like, practice the violin for 20 minutes a day or practice the violin 20 minutes once a week. That's something that it feels specific and, and you know, whether you've done it or not, and it's so it's like, as you're moving towards that bigger aim, you can cross it off your list.

JVN: So one thing that you said yesterday that I was obsessed with halfway Day, I never knew the half was a thing. We're making it a thing right now. I love that but that's so cool because it, like, it allows us to kind of like, slow down, check back in with ourselves from six months ago. What were we feeling? What were you thinking? And one thing that you did six months ago in January was you launched the Happiness quiz, which is so cool. What's, what's the idea behind the happiness?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: So, it's called the Habits for Happiness quiz. And the reason that I did it is because, you know, I write about happiness and so people would often come to me and they're like, ok, well, what should I do if I want to be happier? And I would say, well, like I can't tell you because it really depends, it depends on what your challenges are. It depends on what your aims are, your interests, your values, like it's all these things and people would be like, yeah, but just tell me what is the one thing that I, what's the one habit I should do if I want to be happier. And so it was really kind of unsatisfying. So I thought I'll create a quiz. So

I worked with this really brilliant team and with only uh eight questions um which seems kind of unbelievable that in just eight questions, you can get to such a like transcendent answer. It will say what is the habit for you? Not just for a per in the world, but for you, Jonathan Van Ness, that would make the biggest difference in your happiness right now. And what it does is it asks you a lot of like to make like, and it's, it's funny because in the quiz, I say if you could magically do something and it's because if we think about what we really realistically can do, sometimes we get discouraged or even scared. And so we don't admit to ourselves even what we want. So the quiz tries to let you think like, well, if there was no effort, if you really could just have what you wanted, what, what would that be? And so it, it, it spits out an answer that's tailored for you. Um Right now because maybe in a year you would have a different answer. But right now, what is like on your mind, what is it that you really are seeking? What, what, what do you feel like you would want to be happier? And um you know, and these fall into eight categories, it's like energy, purpose, creativity, uh um productivity, meaningful consumption, meaningful investment, like meaningful consumption is like, am I consuming media or food or drink in a helpful way? That's like one of the, that's one of the areas. Um And so this is really exciting because now when people are like, well, what should I do if I want to be happier? I'm like, we'll take the quiz and then you'll find out because uh you've told yourself.

JVN: I want to stay more in touch with my heart and my spirit and my humanity and share that. But like, I don't want to put myself up for like so much unsolicited feedback, like so much unsolicited critiques.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I think that this Habits For Happiness Quiz is going to help and then it has like, it has like suggestions of things to do and resources to kind of get you started. Um Like one of the things I don't know if this will work for you, Jonathan, but one of the things for uh meaningful consumption is might you turn your, your phone to gray scale so that it's in black, you know, black and white and gray instead of in color because it's a lot harder to use your phone when it's in gray scale and it's super easy to do on a smartphone. It's like watching your grandparents black and white TV set. And so it's just harder to use unless less entrancing, you know, because stuff just doesn't look as good. So anyway, there's a lot of examples there to help people get started once they get their answer.

JVN: That's so genius because have I told you about how obsessed I am with Fortnite game? It's just like really fun game on like PSO I've heard of it. Of course, it's so fun. It's so addictive, but part of it queen is the color, like it's so pretty like the world that they make is like so bright and so vivid and like, I'm a sucker for turquoise water, like, just like clear water and there is like the leaves, the grass, the water, like everything is just.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Do you want to know something bonkers that happened to me? I turned my phone to Gray scale for a while and I started to feel like the world was looking brighter really? Because, you know, the colors in your phone are like illuminated from the back. And so they're really like, they're really, they're, they're shining, you know, and I think it was just dimming the real world. And then when I took that away, it's like, and, and maybe this is just like my psychological thing, right? I don't know that it actually happened, but it felt like it happened, it felt like the world got brighter.

JVN: That's a beautiful

GRETCHEN RUBIN: or terrifying.

JVN: So because the people have been taking the habits for happiness quiz for a little while now, is there like a way for you to like, see like what most people are falling on? Like is there like, what are people going on?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: And by the way anybody can take it for free? It's like [gretchenrubin.com/quiz](https://gretchenrubin.com/quiz), you can just look for it there. Um Here's the thing that really tell me if this surprises you because this surprised me. OK, because we've got these eight categories. So it's, you know, uh purpose, order, relationships, meaningful consumption, meaningful investment, you know all these things, the one the the category that scored the highest was creativity. And so creativity, like people could have like different versions of creativity. So creativity might have meant identifying a new interest. Like that's the answer that I got because I really want to get into watercolor. So I want to, I want to cultivate a new, a new interest, a new creative interest. Then there are people who wanted, who get the result that they want to deepen an existing creative interest. Like you, like, if you were really like, still thinking that you wanted to get back into the violin, you might have gotten that answer. And then one is for people who they really want the aspect of, of creativity where it's more about tapping into their feeling of adventure and play. So it's like the part of creativity that's about like the fun, the reset, the recess, that aspect of it. So it's a but of all the categories. That was the, that was the one that was the biggest. And at first it surprised me and then I was like, well, maybe this makes sense because the people we kind of know we should be getting sleep, we know we should be exercising, we know we should be spending more time with our friends, we know, you know, and so maybe when people are taking this and they're really like thinking big this, this is something that they're tapping into. Um that they hadn't thought about before. And so it's kind of overcoming up as an answer. What do you think? Are you surprised by that?

JVN: Well, at first when you said it, I was, and then as I kept thinking I thought, well, like, so much of my joy and, like, my really unbridled, like, childlike happiness comes from figure skating, gymnastics, um, like jewelry because, like, jewelry reminds me, like rocks and like, rocks were like my first love. So, but they're all like kind of creative things. So it's like if you were wanting more joy than yeah, like maybe it would, maybe it would be coming.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: So that's interesting. But if you had to like what the number one like absolute answer is is for meaningful progress on, on making consistent progress on an aim. So like the biggest category is people want to be creative. But if there's like, what is the one habit that most people want? It's like, ok, whatever it is that I want, I want to make consistent progress. And that was not surprising to me because I think that's something that just about everybody um wants to do a better job of which is whatever it is I'm doing, can I just make more consistent progress?

JVN: So when someone's taken the habits for happiness quiz, how can we bring more creativity into our lives and bring about more happiness?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Well, again, it's just, it depends on who you are and what you want and what kind of things you like to do. And so, um, you know, one of the things that I, I think is really fun to do is at the beginning of every year or you could do it for halfway day is you could do, like, I did a 24 for 24 list where I wrote down 24 things that I wanted to do in 2024. And some were big, like, learn a watercolor and some were really small, like, uh, you know, deal with my cold feet or whatever. Um, and so that can be a fun way to, like, keep ourselves on track. Um, anytime we make something into a habit that makes us more likely to follow

through if it's something that's important because a lot of times the things that we wanna do aren't things that we can just do once and get done, like, sure you can, like, clean out the basement and be done with it. But most things it's like you wanna exercise consistently forever or you wanna eat healthily, you know, mostly as much as possible or you want to, you know, stop using your phone for an hour before bed or whatever it is. And so then it's like, it's very helpful to think about, well, what would that look like in terms of being a habit? Um, because that way it's, it's, it's present in your life more, it's present in your space more. I mean, 11 interesting thing to, to say to yourself is if something's important to you, look and see, is it in my calendar? Is, you know, is it on my schedule? Is it in my surroundings? And am I, and is it like, am I paying for it in some way because like, not to be extravagant but things that are important to us, they probably are costing something like you had to buy a new yoga mat because the dog chewed up your yoga mat or whatever, like things that are important. They, they appear on the schedule and they appear in our surroundings and then usually, like, they appear in our, like in our bank account in some way um in our spending. And so, uh so that's something that's interesting if you're like, well, what's am I following through on the things that I say that I want to be doing? It's like, ok, surrounding schedule spending.

JVN: I really think I have to have like an A DHD sale. Like all the things that I've -

GRETCHEN RUBIN: I love this idea, I think people would flock to -

JVN: I just like looking at like I go, there's this like one room I call it my capitalist guilt and shame room where I all the shit that I bought like, you know, expensive bags, like really nice shoes, like stuff that I like. It's like the same part of me that got triggered by like collecting rocks or like having like collections as a kid. Like I started doing that with these like luxury things. And now it's like, instead of feeling joyful when I look at them because I realized when we interviewed Troy Dunlap last year, her 1st 100 K I like, love her. But I realized that like of the things that I've impulsed by, there's probably like 20% that I would like really just be devastated if I didn't have. Like, that means 80% of the shit that I have bought is stuff that I could take or leave. Like it was for this quick little validation cycle in my brain and then it's over and then I never really like, wear it till the cows come home. Like I'm not, I'm obviously not, you know, needing it that bad because like, there's things I don't even play with or look at for a long time. And so it's just like the ways that like, I just think that is one thing I've noticed about me. I love how I just get so deep with you. But it's like, logically like in my brain because I do have this like fast processor. I logically understand things but I don't take the time to like slow down and like, actually process it to the point where it affects my behavior.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Oh, well, so I think this is a great because I kept thinking about this in different things that you were saying it's this idea of impulsivity. And I think that one of the things when you're happier when you're better rested, when you're calmer, like when we have a better sense of perspective, like when the things around us or feel like kind of like, like we're not in the middle of chaos, then we can take a breath and not and not do something impulsively whether that's like firing back in the comments or like hitting like, you know, one click uh with a purchase because impulsivity so often, like how often do you sit down, think through and make a significant mistake? You know what I mean? Sure it happens sometimes but it's, it's much more that like people are tired, they're stressed, they're rushing, they're angry, they're upset, they're, they're upset, they're, they, they, they feel attacked and, and, and, and, and then it's that impulse. And so I think that's one of the

reasons also why being happier can help us, like, do a better job in the world for other people because we can like take that breath and have that perspective or somebody is like yelling in your face and you're able to like, say, oh wow, I'm sorry. I, I didn't realize that I cut in line, you know, you know, you know, have you ever done that? Like, there's like a gigantic line and you somehow don't even see the line and say, like you go marching up to the front. If I did that recently, you know, and, and like, but then to have, like, the soft answer and, like, not always to go to this place of, like, rigidity

JVN: And like, I have to do this right now.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Yeah, and snapping back. And so, yeah. And so I think impulse buying, impulse, you know, responses, responding like it's impulse conversation. Um, I think that's another way why being happier, like, helps us to do a better job in the way.

JVN: It's like, for me personally, it's like, if I notice that I'm being like extra impulsive or like really rigid around my impulsivity, like I'm probably like, really triggered or like there's like a part up and I should like, take that as a note to like slow down,

GRETCHEN RUBIN: but it's so hard to notice. Right? That's the key. It's like, how do you notice you're being impulsive? That's the problem, right? But if you could do that, then it's not impulsive anymore. So true.

JVN: But that is like work because like even like my house, like, I love our house, but we moved like when we were shooting *Queer Eye* in New Orleans, like we had this like smaller house and I was like, oh, I feel like I just don't get alone time. Like I always have people around me. Like, so instead of me like, you know, being like, hey, let me be done with work at five so I can have more alone time, I was like I need a bigger house so I can work all the time and then I just won't have to see my team when they're around. So I'll just have a bigger house. So now I bought this way, fucking more expensive house. That's way bigger, way harder to manage, stresses me the fuck out. And so, and so it's like even like big things like that, it's like now I'm in this bigger house and I've been here for almost two years, but it's like, it was not, and like, Austin's not in like the greatest real estate place right now. So it's just like, there's all these ways that I see, like my impulsiveness, like hurting me later where at the time you couldn't have talked me out of it like I was, but it was kind of impulsive and I didn't really think it through.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: But I think part of like, this is a good example of something that I think happens to all of us, which is we, we feel that there's a problem and we change what feels easier to change rather than like what the actual problem is. And so it's like a friend of mine who was like, well, I'm gonna quit my job as a lawyer because I hate being a lawyer. But it turned out she really didn't like her commute and when she fixed her commute, she's like, oh, my law job is fine. Um because she just like, hadn't taken the time to analyze, like, what was actually wrong. Or you often see this with relationships where, like, somebody's feeling really dissatisfied with themselves. And so they say, oh, it's not me. It's you. If I switch partners then I'll feel fine. But it's like, no, you're gonna be, you know. Right. Exactly. But it feels like, well, if I just change partners then this will or I'll move or I'll buy a new house or, you know, it just, sometimes you reach for something or you're like, I'll renovate the kitchen and that'll make me feel better. And it's like, maybe, but if, if the problem really isn't that you don't have enough countertops, it might be that renovating the kitchen won't make you feel any better

JVN: Cause you're disappointed because you did all this work and then you're still. Yes. Yes.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Right. Because you're like, it didn't solve the problem because I didn't know what the problem was. So I think part of it is a part that I hadn't never connected this idea to impulsivity. And I think that's a really good point, which is, that part of impulsivity is saying like, oh, I know what the problem is. I know how to fix it and then it might take six months to bring it about. But the, but the impulsivity came and the jumping to the thing of like, I know what the problem is instead of saying, let me make sure I'm identifying the problem.

JVN: I'm curious about this and let me like,

GRETCHEN RUBIN: yes, really think through what is a friend of mine said she was going to move, uh, apartments and she said, oh, I told my real estate broker I wanted, um, outdoor space. But then I realized I really want a husband. It's like, ok, that's a good thing, a human need.

JVN: Like you want more connection, you want more community, right?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: But outdoor space is not, it's not, it's not, it might be very nice, but it's not going to solve that problem. But it took her a long time to, to like figure that out. So I think identified, that's one of my, like I have 12 commandments uh for, for my own, for my own happiness and identify the problem is one of them because so often I don't stop to identify the actual problem. And so if I'm trying to solve it, it doesn't get solved because I didn't know what the problem was and sent us the problem. Like I know somebody who was like, I never cook. I hate to cook, blah, blah, blah, blah. I never eat healthy because I don't like to cook. But then when I really pushed her on it, it turned out she didn't like grocery shopping. Like my husband loves to go to grocery shop. He once went three times to a grocery store in one day loves grocery store shopping, but some people really don't like it. And then she had a roommate and so that she's like, oh, well, my roommate will do the grocery shopping and then I'm fine cooking. Like, she just had misidentified where the exact problem was because not liking grocery shopping is not the same thing as not liking cooking totally related, but they're not, but they're completely different.

JVN: And so she had a, she had a different solution queen. We are doing the damn thing now. One more thing. What is, what's, what is productive progression, right?

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Well, this is when people are making consistent progress on whatever aim it is. So you might be wanting to write a novel in your free time or finish your phd or figure out how you're going to sell your house or whatever it might be. And it's like, can you make consistent progress towards that? And you know, there's a lot of different ways that people do it. One way people do it is they do a, don't break the chain like I created this, don't break the chain journal because so many people are like, feel very energized by this idea of like I'm gonna do it every day for 2037 days or whatever. Um You know, sometimes it's breaking things down into smaller parts and just moving your, you're moving yourself through a checklist. Sometimes it's like setting aside time on your schedule, creating accountability with other people. There's a lot of ways that we can help ourselves make consistent progress but it, you sort of have to realize that that's what's frustrating you that in some aspect in your life, you're not making the consistent progress towards whatever aim you have for yourself.

JVN: So it's mid July and we have six more months in 2024. And I am saying, what am I saying? I am saying,...

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Are you saying it? Are you really gonna say it?

JVN: I think what I'm saying is, is that I am going to, I don't want to say for the rest of the year because I wanna do manageable goals. But I'm gonna say it's, you know, mid July, I'm gonna say till August 1st, I'm going no scrolling like no comments. Like I'm not looking at my comments and I'm not looking at my story mentions like I'm not looking at -

GRETCHEN RUBIN: So you're scrolling, you're scrolling, you're taking in other people's things but you're not engaging with people's comments. Ok? So now I'm going to push you a couple times in a couple of ways. So is there somebody around you who's gonna be looking in the comments? So you feel like look, if some, if I really need to know that something's happening in the comments, somebody's somebody -

JVN: I trust my social media manager and my publicist.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Ok? So you don't need to be like paranoid like, oh my gosh, nobody knows what's going on in there. Who knows? Because they know and they'll tell you. And then do you want them to do something like, uh give you some kind of report? Like, do you feel like you want to have a vague sense or you just wanna, like, you just want to step away from it?

JVN: I think I want to step away. But I do think one thing that would be good is like, there are just so many, like, amazingly supportive, sweet kind people who have supported me over the years and I have because of the negativity bias was like engaging with people that weren't them. So I think like for really sweet, good things like I'd love to engage with like those people more because they deserve it. And they've supported me and I have like, I want to support the people who support me. So like, so

GRETCHEN RUBIN: maybe so you want to say to your social media team like please, if there's something that, you know, I'm sure they know the kind of thing that would like, you know, touch your heart, like there's something that you think I would really want to see. Can you like flag it for me so I can type you

JVN: and give it to you and you can reply,

GRETCHEN RUBIN: right? So, so you feel like you do have that connection, which is really important and valuable to you and to your and to the people who love your work, but you're protecting yourself because you're not just in the rushing stream of like the constant refresh of like, who knows what's coming up? Do you feel like that's so it's gonna be so it's till August 1st you're not gonna go in there at all. They're gonna report to you on like any kind of major trend or anything that's like super special that they think you wanna see.

JVN: And that's what I'm gonna stick to and we're gonna check back in and see if my mental health space feels um more centered, like more like more from my centered self and not from my people pleaser because I think that really is who who gets so triggered by the negative feedback is like my people pleaser because as much as I want to say like I don't care what people think about me, my people pleaser like that part of me is in diametric opposition to that. Like my people pleaser gives a lot of shit about what people think about

me. So I want but I don't want my people pleaser driving my car, I want my center itself driving my car. So I want to see if this will help me be more centered.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Yeah, which would be happier. I'm excited to hear how it goes. I mean, this feels realistic. I think it's great that you like you're giving yourself like a like a set time. So you're not committing to something just endlessly like you can see how it goes, you can tweak it, you can find out like if there's things that you're missing, that you want or, or if you feel amazing and great and free.

JVN: I think it could be the last one we'll see, but I think it could be the last one. Um You guys, Gretchen ruben.com/quiz Habits for happiness quiz is, is available. Now. Take it, let's all get happier together. And meanwhile, Gretchen Ruben, thank you so much for coming back on getting curious and maybe next time we have you on, we could do it in person in New York.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Yes, that would be so much fun. I would love that and I am so eager to hear how your experiment goes. Like I'm so curious. Yes, I'm getting curious.

JVN: I love it. I love it. That's what we're going to do. And I also, as long as I'm just hacking things on, I like this morning because like, I sleep with my phone next to my bed, but it's just so easy to like, I'm like, well, I won't get on social media first thing, but the news is not social media and then I read the news, but then I get so fucking depressed. Not that I don't want to read the news because I mean, I come from a broadcast family. I love the news, but I think I'm gonna stop. I gotta go back to my thing of like my hot water, my Metamucil, my coffee, my little workout before I read the news. So I just don't start from like a sad place

GRETCHEN RUBIN: you've mentioned several times that you feel like you're kind of vulnerable in the morning and also that it sets the tone for your whole day. And so it feels like you really dialing in on your, in your morning is, is a really, really good idea.

JVN: I did the last.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Wo you kind of drifted away from that. Yeah. Yeah. So, go,

JVN: #xcept for this morning, I'm such a liar. I got to call it out. Right. When I say I did read the news this morning, it made me feel anxious, but then I got out of there and, like, played with my dogs and I felt better. But, yeah. Ok.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: It'll still be, there will still be there to work.

JVN: Gretche. There's always something to work on.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Yeah. I know. I know. I know. That's what I, that's, I know the infinite project that we, we are for ourselves.

JVN: And then also just last thing I would say is I put this stuff that in my hair that we're testing for like a potential new product. And I, like, I was like, I'm not sure, but it's nice.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: It looks good.

JVN: I'm here for it. So, that's exciting. Thanks for coming on. Getting curious. You're the best.

GRETCHEN RUBIN: Oh, I enjoyed it so much. You're the best.

JVN: So, did we learn if I'm any happier in 2024? Unfortunately. Yes, you did learn that if you listen to this podcast, which it's like, you know, the jury is out and interestingly, I know I said this to Gretchen. But in retrospect, like talking to Gretchen now versus in January, it really shows for me that I have to double down on my happiness and on my recovery. Because happiness and recovery and confidence and security don't just happen because we want them to happen. And the fact is, is that like my late my life in the last year and a half has changed so much between deaths in my family and life changes everything with JB and hair, with Queer eye, like just so much of my life has changed. And I tried to handle that like I was totally fine the whole time. And I think that that has been kind of what you know, has made me not as happy, but I think that happiness and well being is such a gigantic subject and it's not ever really like one exact thing. But I think through talking to Gretchen, it's like I got to start with one thing that I know impacts my mental health, which is social media and it's the mindful consumption. And so for me, I think what's really come up from our conversations that I have to be way more mindfully engaged in how I just have to be way more mindful with how I engage in consuming content online. Um Not that, that means I don't want to bury my head in the sand as far as the news because I know that I'm strong enough to process the news. But I got to keep my mornings clear. I need to keep, you know, I need to tend to myself first. Before I show up for everyone else. And I think the other thing that I'm left with this conversation is, which is like a bomb to my soul, which is hope. I, I know that I have healed. I've been through, I know that I'm capable of healing. I know that I've been through a lot of rocky things in my life and what I've been through in this last six months is not going to keep me down. Um I know that and I know that part of it is my relationship to phone my relationship to impulsivity, the relationship to nature or to impulsivity. Like anytime I'm being super impulsive, I think that's like when I need to be more curious with my own parts, like with my own personality and really dig a little deeper about what is the problem? Like, what am I really worried about? And when Gretchen said, like so often we try to fix the thing that's like the least amount of effort, but it's like that only I think, I think can kind of lead to like ill in or unintended consequences. So I think being really specific about what is bothering us and trying to slow down long enough to process it is so important. Um Also loving halfway day, I never knew that halfway day thing was uh a thing and I love like checking in with our resolutions halfway through the year. So if you are checking in with your resolutions and it didn't go how you wanted it to go. It brings me back to what Gretchen said about gentleness and you know, the knee jerk is to be hard on herself. But when Gretchen said that research shows that people who can be more gentle with themselves actually can get back on the horse faster and can reen engage in their goals around them faster. That is to me, it just screams about recovery because for any of us who are in recovery or who've had issues with, you know, substances or compulsive behaviors, self destructive behaviors, like being hard on yourself is like the thing that I know for me is always what comes up first. But if that worked, I would be like the most calm, balanced, non uh over consuming person. I know which isn't the case. So I do think I gotta try something different, which is like being more gentle and kind and loving to myself because it's like when I'm that hard on myself, then I'm like hard on people around me. And it's like you, like, I, I just gotta be easier on myself, more gentle loving with myself. The negativity bias, I was really taken with like, we've talked about that on the podcast before. But we know that that is important, the negativity bias. How can we, I think one thing I'm curious about now is like, how can I make like the positivity bias? Like, cool, like how could we make like being like, compassionate and loving with each other? Like, interesting and like, because ultimately everything is in this capitalistic heca does come back to money and these fucking companies only want fucking money. So how

can we make positive vibes, expensive and luxurious, luxurious instead of like just going for this hateful short term, you know, cancel n negative shit that we do all the time because it doesn't really seem like it solves anything because there's still so much suffering and war and destruction and compulsivity and you know, individual suffering and collective suffering. So maybe the the way out of this is gentleness and is compassion with ourselves and each other. But how do we make that sexy? You know, I just, I just don't fucking know. Oh and also social media addiction. I'm really curious about phone addiction, social media addiction and what is actually happening to us psychologically when we engage in social media. I'm really curious about that too. Um So I think, I think that's good. I think that's how we feel. How much do we love Gretchen Rubin? You guys? I and also like, yeah, I just, we love Gretchen Rubin. Love that she came on the pod. Hope you guys are doing great and we will see you next week on Getting curious. Bye guys. Love you.

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