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Jenet Dove is a Licensed Psychotherapist and the owner of Jenet Dove Counseling Services. With over 7 years of experience, her counseling practice focuses on helping individuals who are struggling with perfectionism and burnout, and who are ready to explore the possibilities of finding peace in their lives.

Jenet began her own journey towards inner peace more than a decade ago and hasn't looked back since. Through therapy, she was able to reframe her own story of perfectionism, overcome unhealthy self-perceptions, and rebuild her self-worth. She brings this philosophy into every interaction, connection, and decision she makes, valuing her own worth and skills, maintaining healthy boundaries, and supporting others in their healing journey.

Jenet believes that her approach has brought her a sense of peace and sustainability in both her professional and personal life. She is eager to share her insights and support others on their path towards healing.

Jenet, welcome. Welcome back to Not Boring CEs! I am your host, Allison Puryear. I'm here with Jenet Dove, and we are talking about perfectionism from a clinical lens. We're going to be diving into like conceptualizing perfectionism. Maybe in some ways you haven't before. And I'm psyched because this is going to really help a lot of our clients. So thanks for being here. Jenet, thank you for having me.

Jenet: Yeah. So can we first talk about what perfectionism is and how it shows up for people absolutely so. Perfectionism is a belief system. It's the belief that if I do everything perfectly, then somehow I can avoid these negative feelings of shame, embarrassment, rejection. It's the belief that if I keep achieving and excelling and accomplishing, I will be worthy of love and acceptance. So it's solely dependent in a lot of ways on perception.

Jenet: What others, what we believe. Others think of us, and it's deeply rooted in shame and the fear of rejection and failure. Yeah, and since it's rooted in perception, there's also a lot of opportunity for projection.

Jenet: Absolutely absolutely. It often say that one of the One of the most harmful things about perfectionism is, not only do we end up demanding it from ourselves, we end up demanding it from others and our relationships. And that can just create this cycle where we no one, not even in ourself, is ever good enough. And we often end up feeling very lonely.

Jenet: Yeah. And I think about how that plays out. Generationally, too, perfectionistic mothers putting perfection like expectations on their children. And it is playing out over generations.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. So we've got this this way of viewing perfectionism as this belief system that is rooted in shame and

Allison Puryear (she/her): really wanting to be loved.

Allison Puryear (she/her): All of us have shame. All of us really want to be loved. What do you see as the mechanism for some of us being more perfectionistic than others.

Jenet: is that attachment stuff. Is it like, where does that come from? Yeah, I think a lot of it really is rooted in developmental trauma. I think

Jenet: we have to look at it through a lens of attachment theory, I think exploring attachment wounds, early messaging from our parents and our relationship with our primary caregiver is critical. Again, somewhere. Early on we were taught that we have to look a certain way, be or behave a certain way, or do certain things in order to be loved and accepted, and those messages become internalized. As I'm not good enough as I am.

Allison Puryear (she/her): so I must keep performing and perfecting and pleasing.

Jenet: Yeah. And it's it's really unrealistic. It's it's

Jenet: it's a unrealistic trap cycle, I like to say.

Jenet: but going back to attachment, theory, you know, we're familiar with those different attachment styles. And so when we explore, typically avoid, and or insecure attachment styles, we that is where we can really trace some of that messaging back to

Jenet: It was never good enough, just as I am, you know. It was. There was always something, whether it be I'm only getting your attention through accolades. I'm only getting your attention when I'm on the sports field performing, you know. And when all that stops like. It's not there, you know, there's a void. And so again, that that becomes

Jenet: who I am on my own, just as I exist.

Jenet: It's not enough. It's not enough for love, it's not enough, for it's not worthy enough. And so then I develop all these mechanisms. You know later in life, or that come out later in life, such as you know, just constantly going and going, which evidently leads to burnout and depression and high functioning over functioning, anxiety, etc.

Allison Puryear (she/her): It's interesting. Listening to this as a clinician and as a person and as a mother like I'm I'm thinking about all of these things at play of like, you know, as a mother like this squeaky wheel gets the grease, right if

Allison Puryear (she/her): one of my kids

Allison Puryear (she/her): is getting a lot of accolades or something. Of course we're gonna be like fantastic good job. And I've tried. I've tried my best, I believe

Allison Puryear (she/her): to make sure that they feel really loved, no matter what, all the time, but just the

Allison Puryear (she/her): constant, honestly like constant intentionality around that, as a parent is, it's a lot. It is a lot. It is a lot, because in in.

Jenet: I think it's very easy to

Jenet: applaud when there's performance, you know, that's very easy to do.

Allison Puryear (she/her): It's what are you doing when your kid is not performing? You know. What are you doing? What are? What are the spaces in between? Look like.

Jenet: what are the what's not being said in those spaces? Yeah, when you think about your clients who are struggling with perfectionism, is there something that

Allison Puryear (she/her): might have made a difference in their upbringing, for, like well intentioned parents who are really trying is there anything you can think of like one on one time every week, or like those kinds of things that would be helpful to have prevented them needing to come into therapy for perfectionism.

Jenet: You know I actually don't. I don't quite know. I don't want I don't. I'm not quite sure about that. But what I will say is

Jenet: One thing to avoid is using shame

Jenet: as a tool

Jenet: to get the outcome you want from your kids. Yes.

Jenet: yeah.

Jenet: and so I think that you know, I know I was parented heavily through shame. I was, you know, I think, in a lot of ways that kept me very small and

Jenet: in that smallness I learned to behave and do, and you know, respond in certain ways that met.

Jenet: you know that elicited the response that I wanted or desired from Mom. And so I think, being cognizant of not using that shame as a tool

Jenet: to control behavior from your children.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, that's interesting.

Jenet: How I mean it lives in shame. So, of course, that shame is perpetuated, you know, like, that's the thing that so remains as an adult. It's very hard, because again, you know, one thing that Brene Brown says is that shame thrives in silence and it grows. It's like it, just

Jenet: it exponentially grows in silence, and it's one of those things that we fear greatly about putting words to putting language to around

Jenet: But the thing about it is. That is what

Jenet: that's what gets us out of our same shame. Cycle is putting language around it. It is speaking it, you know. It is showing up as yourself in safe spaces and letting people love you just as you are.

Jenet: And so that is

Jenet: one of the biggest ways. When we talk about moving my clients or our clients out of. You know that perfectionism cycle is really building community building safe spaces in which you are able to just exist where you're not performing where you're not pleasing?

Jenet: and allowing those people to just love, you

Allison Puryear (she/her): i'm thinking about this as a clinician. And how this plays out for my clients is like when they find that community. It's hard to trust that they do really love them just for them, like there's still a good amount of performance initially.

Jenet: To try to like, continue to earn the love that's already freely given.

Jenet: Yeah. And I think that

Jenet: I think a lot of times. People think community has to be very big. When in reality

Jenet: you know, shame thrives in silence, but it doesn't mean that it dies within a massive public. It can. You can work on it, one on one within therapy. That's a very safe space to start showing up just as you are. But even just having one or 2 people in your life

Jenet: who can just love you as you are.

Jenet: Can make a phenomenal impact in bringing that the shame side the perfection cycle of perfectionism.

Allison Puryear (she/her): So I'm thinking about clinically when we're working with clients who might not have that they might not have one or 2 people who truly love them.

Allison Puryear (she/her): How do you help your clients either

Allison Puryear (she/her): reach out to build those relationships or

Allison Puryear (she/her): recognize. In some circumstances they already have those relationships. They just don't realize cause they're still trying to be shiny and new all the time for them

Jenet: absolutely. And you know, in a lot of ways that's how perfection is fake connections. They're usually not themselves. And you know, when they first meet people. They're they're putting on this version of themselves. That they believe. You know, is what others want to see or want from them.

Jenet: I think a lot of it comes from being willing to try new behavior. Because you won't know until you start taking those risks.

Jenet: And also, you know, knowing what you're taking the risk for like, if, for example.

Jenet: if I've if I met a connection, and this connection only knows this perfect, flawless version of myself that I've let on, you know, and one of my goals in therapy is to really kind of unbreak this or start peeling back some of these layers

Jenet: of shame. You know, one of the biggest things that perfection is struggle with is like making mistakes or saying the wrong thing. And so if I'm with this person, and I end up saying something that I believe, is not appropriate, or could have been taken the wrong way or whatnot. I'm in my head like I'm I can't focus on anything else other than what I said 20 min ago, and you know, ruminating on that, and that's something that I would

Jenet: take to therapy and and through therapy. If that was my client, I would ask them like, well, how did the other person respond? What evidence do you have that they're thinking of you any differently? What evidence do you have that that the relationship is ruined? Now it seems like they don't really care. It seems like this might be a safe space for you to, you know, start exploring other ways in which you could take. We're at risk within the relationship. Does that make sense? Absolutely? Yeah. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And I think about the like that, that pain of shame.

Jenet: It's

Jenet: it freezes you in your tracks. It is, it is, I think. I really like how Brene Brown says she calls it a shame spiral and so it's she talks a lot about the physiological responses that happen within your body. And so one of the part of the work that I like to do with my clients is recognizing what a shame spiral feels like in our bodies. Because once we're in that spiral, really, all bets are off.

Jenet: The only work that you have, that you're responsible for at that moment is getting you out of that spiral is getting you into a safe space, getting you back into your body, getting your nervous system regulated again. There, nothing else is. Gonna make sense until that happens.

Jenet: I love that. Can you talk us through how you help them identify how it feels in their body like, how does it play out in session? Yeah. So it's usually, you know, taking it. If I keep going with the the same example. I'm presenting this perfect version of myself to someone who maybe I want to build a friendship with. I say something wrong, or I think I said something wrong, and you know again I'm stuck in my head. I can't think about anything else.

but additionally to being stuck in my head. I need to pay attention to what's happening here. Usually there's increased heart rate. There's sweaty palms. It's

Jenet: It's it's almost identical to like a trauma response. And for me it like you said, it stops you in your tracks. It's you're either gonna go to fight or flight or freeze one of the 2 depending on what your nervous system ha! Typically was how your nervous system typically responds to a threat and so being able to identify that threat response and

Jenet: knowing that because a lot of times we want to run into fight or flight, we want to problem solve. We want to fix it. But nothing that sorry, nothing that you're gonna do in that moment.

Jenet: Sorry the doggies want to participate.

Jenet: They can join. I can't even hear them, so you can't hear them. No! Oh, wow! You have a good sound system, then. Nothing that do. In those moments when your system is that just regulated, it's going to be productive. It's gonna be conducive to any type of healthy connection. And so,

Jenet: yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, so thinking about how

Jenet: we muscle through those moments, most of us right, most of our clients just muscle through those moments. Their brain is going a million miles an hour. The person they're talking to might notice that they're not totally engaged, but they're still engaging with our clients. Nonetheless, they can bring up more shame, because, like, I just missed the last 5 min of what was said because I was in my head absolutely. And it's not only like I missed the last minutes of what what I said. But it's just like I'm also

Jenet: I'm being so harsh and critical to myself, like I'm really tearing myself apart.

Jenet: You're not nice to you. It's not the machine spot

Jenet: you turn on yourself. You become very vicious like. Let's run with me.

Jenet: you know. Why did I do that? Why did I say that this is why no one wants to connect with me. This is why I suck XYZ, you know.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Do you find that those internal voices are

Allison Puryear (she/her): like internalized voices from parents, or like.

Jenet: yeah, 100% You know, we, as most of us know, the inner self critic is a parental voice. And so that's

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm sorry if I put my dogs away. It's very loud over here.

Jenet: boys.

Jenet: Come on, thanks. Great, great, great, great, great Great

Jenet: Way.

Jenet: Sorry I did not plan appropriately the guy that comes to clean up their poop every day. Every Tuesday.

Jenet: Yes.

Jenet: What were we saying? The internalized voice. Yeah, is the parental voice? Yes, and that that is the big part of the work, too. I often when I hear that I optimize my clients. Oh, who? Let's stop, pause, whose voices? That because it doesn't sound like you, and so part of the work as well is learning to separate

Jenet: that voice from yourself. So you don't. So it doesn't further become internalized. Right? Yeah. Are there perfectionists that you've worked with where? It's not the parental voice

Allison Puryear (she/her): like a sibling's voice or a peer's voice, or

Jenet: I think I think that that's a great question. I think it could be I've heard siblings

Jenet: in terms like when I asked, whose voice is that? Oh, that's a sibling a grandmother! I think it it can equate to anyone who's had authority in that person's life.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, it's interesting, you say authority cause I think about. I have one client who had kind of like late onset perfectionism. They weren't a perfectionist, as in their childhood or adolescence, but what they were in an abusive, romantic relationship. And so the internalized voice was a an ex partner. And how like that sense of authority and an abusive relationship is definitely

Allison Puryear (she/her): like present. So

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, when you think about

Allison Puryear (she/her): like that sense of shame you're helping clients identify. That's that shame in their body. You're helping them identify. Who owns this thought in your head. Where did this come from? So you've got some like

Allison Puryear (she/her): physical and mental/emotional. Digging around to see where these things are existing? Do you have clients? Who may clean some to the perfectionism because it has worked for them in certain areas of their lives?

Jenet: So I think that's where

Jenet: I. So there's there's this thing where

Jenet: you know, people are like

Jenet: healthy perfectionism.

Jenet: I have a problem with that phrase, let's because I don't think what we're referring to is perfectionism. I think what we're referring to is striving healthy. And I'll think terminology is very important, and there's a difference between that

Jenet: And so it is like, let's pick out the the traits that have gotten you to where you are today. You know you are a hard worker. You do know how to excel. You do know how to put your mind to certain tasks and to get things done. That's not what we we address when we're addressing perfectionism. What we're addressing is more so. The

Jenet: What happens when you don't meet the goals? What happens when you don't? You know it's not performed in the way that you had envisioned. It didn't go exactly how you thought it was going to go. That is what I really focus on

Allison Puryear (she/her): are most of your clients coming into your practice for help with perfectionism or for help with other things. And you uncover the perfectionism.

Jenet: I yeah, I don't think that

Jenet: they they usually come to me for burnout. You usually come to me for burnout, and then we trace that back to well, you know the cycle, the cycle of burnout, which often is tied heavily to this perfectionism, the strive to just keep going and going and going and going

Jenet: and then not pausing.

Jenet: no breaks. Because, again, what perfectionism our worth is tied to our productivity.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And if our our work is tied to our productivity. It's not as if

Allison Puryear (she/her): our worth. Rather, it's tied to our productivity. It's not as if we're gonna stop working. If that's the only place that we feel valued exactly.

Jenet: Yeah. And so you know, a lot of that is

Jenet: What else do you have going on in your life? Another big question I like to ask my clients are, is, whose dream are you chasing? Wanna be doing as you know again, when we talk about some of the internalized messaging. From our childhood we've learned what we were supposed to be growing up. We we learned, you know.

Jenet: the right answer to that question. Well, what do you wanna be when you grow up, you know. And so some of us just took that and ran with it, and we we never really took the time to assess. Is this really

Jenet: what I want to be doing, you know, and a lot of ways for some of my clients? It's not you're chasing Mom's dream. You're chasing Dad's dream.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And how is that working out for you? Yeah, I'm thinking about how, even if it was their dream, it doesn't mean. It's still their dream, like ages and stages like even if it did like, originate from them, maybe even as a rebellion against parents. It can still be

Allison Puryear (she/her): no longer the goal. Exactly allowing yourself permission to change. Yeah. And I mean, perfectionists stay so busy that they don't often have time to check in with themselves. And and nor do they necessarily want to, because they don't want to have to change course, because

Jenet: a lot of times again, when you build

Jenet: this perception of yourself. and now you've hit a wall. And now you're in therapy, and your therapist is peeling back these layers, and you're faced with this idea of

Jenet: something that doesn't seem as glamorous as what you built that is, that's scary as hell. Yeah, yeah. Nobody wants to go backwards. Yeah. And if it's perceived as backwards, it's perceived that it's backwards. Yes, 100. Yeah. When really like having more time to yourself and peace never going backwards, struggle greatly. What's sitting still

Jenet: and doing and not doing anything? Because, again, are worth this, tied to our productivity? How do you ease clients into learning how to sit still.

Jenet: I think it's nervous system regulation 100%.

Jenet: So I do talk a lot about the the Polyvagal theory with my clients. I do, you know, talk a lot about well, what happens in your body when you're not doing anything? Where do you go?

Jenet: Do you go to fight? Do you go to flight? Do you go to freezing up on you know what and why?

Jenet: You know. What? What are you telling yourself. What are the messages that are coming up as you're you're in fight or flight, fight or flight, you know. And usually it's what are you gonna do you just gonna sit there and and rest all day? You're just gonna take a nap.

Jenet: I wish people listening could see your face because the wonderful judgment. There I was like, disgusting enough is what your face is communicating. Yeah. Cause that's the internal monologue. Right? Yeah, absolutely. It's, you know.

Jenet: And and a lot of that again is

Jenet: we've taught. We were taught that we always have to be performing a certain way, looking a certain way, even when no one is looking.

Jenet: and so that that really sticks with us. And there's the idea of like creating this soft life or this life that we want for ourselves. I think a lot of the work, too, is

Jenet: identity, you know, breaking away from that, or I wouldn't necessarily say breaking away from the inner child, but

Jenet: learning how to repair yourself, and also allowing your inner child to show up

Jenet: in the way that she couldn't or he couldn't. Then, you know and knowing and allowing them to, you know.

Jenet: to know that that it the way you are, it's okay.

Jenet: It's okay for you. You are responding very appropriately. developmentally.

Jenet: you know, for where you are right now.

Jenet: And that's okay. You don't always have to be buttoned up.

Jenet: You're allowed to take a break.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Hmm.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah. So I, you know, work with folks with eating disorders who struggle mightily with perfectionism most of the time. And how that sneaks into food and body stuff, how it sneaks into all these different sneaks into work, stuff! It sneaks into so many like

Allison Puryear (she/her): immovable parts of our lives that we have to like, make peace with

Allison Puryear (she/her): almost one at a time like I wish I could just be like perfectionism. Poof! And, like all of it, goes away. But I find like when my clients get a handle on the gentleness with themselves around food and body. So all of a sudden they're working a lot more than they did before, and it likes to kind of switch to these other areas almost, and hide if we don't get down to the root of it.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and I know, like you do a lot of

Allison Puryear (she/her): a lot of attachment wound work with people and helping using attachment theory to really guide them towards long term recovery from perfectionism.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Can you walk us through some of how you do that? What you see working with clients?

Jenet: Yeah. So

Jenet: again, attachment theory categories categorizes people into different attachment styles based off of their relationships with their early caregivers.

Jenet: And perfectionism often arises as a coping mechanism.

Jenet: early attachment or to manage some of the inconsistencies and rejections, or rejection or neglect that is experienced during early attachment.

Jenet: And so

Jenet: the difficulty about it is because I feel like you have to handle attachment stuff, especially people who have never questioned their relationship with their early caregivers or

looked at it through critical lens. You have to handle that very delicately, because this is this isn't a, you know. Let's shit on Mom, and let's shit on Dad for for what they did this. It's more of a

Jenet: mom. And Dad did what they could with the tools they had.

Jenet: and some harm was done, and there was a better way to go about it.

Jenet: And this is a result of what happened. So it's really allowing

Jenet: my clients a safe space to explore some of those early attachment. Stop some of those attachment relationships with their their caregivers? Critically.

Jenet: and know that it's okay. And I often had to tell him it's just us in here. Mom's not listening. No one's eavesdropping. No, because there there is this fear of

Jenet: It's it's wrong. I shouldn't be talking about my mom like this. I shouldn't be talking about dad like this. They they've done so much. I am who I am today because of you know everything that they've done. Yes, and you're here with me today. You're paying me thousands of dollars to see. So you know, there's we have to be able to hold both of that, you know.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, but it's our job is not. We're not trying to make you hate your parents. We're not trying to make you bad mouth them. We're just taking a like an honest look at what went down.

Jenet: Absolutely, absolutely.

Jenet: And so yeah, it's it's allowing them a very, very safe, delicate space to explore some of those early messages. You know. What would you? What did you need? This is what they did.

Jenet: But what do you think you needed in that moment.

Jenet: and sometimes I take it a step further. Well, what do you think? Stop them from be able, from being able to give that to you.

Jenet: And then that's where we really develop compassion for Mom and dad and their resources and their trauma experiences. And how they were parented, and how that you know it's all connected. But again, there's compassion, and there's accountability, and we can hold both of those at the same time absolutely

Allison Puryear (she/her): does your work with clients around attachment end up impacting their current relationship with their parents. If they're still living.

Jenet: I I often start by assuring them that it doesn't have to.

Jenet: because I think that's part of the fear, too, is okay. Now my therapist is telling me I can't be in a relationship. I gotta, you know, break it off. I gotta, you know, stop talking to my mom. No, I really.

Jenet: I really want people to know, like going into this work. That's not the end result. That's not the goal. The goal is, the the goal is more so. Addressing how you perceive yourself and what your behavior is as a result of those early attachments and some of that messaging

Jenet: it's now, I will say, if

Jenet: and we'll say if

Jenet: we are not able to to move forward if we're not able to have a change in behavior, or, you know, see desired results, because the connection with that attachment figure today is still so strong they're still they still have a heavy hand.

Jenet: And how you're performing and showing up and perfecting and pleasing. We have to talk about boundaries 100% we do have to talk about that. That's I'm not gonna sugarcoat that you know. And then that goes into a different conversation of well, what are boundaries? And you know what boundaries versus control, you know, and and making sure that we understand the difference between

Jenet: it's not about telling your parents what to do. It's about.

Jenet: you know.

Jenet: saying what you need stating, we're not asking. We're stating what we need to keep ourselves safe and protected.

Jenet: Umhm, yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah. Which again, goes back to nervous system work? Right? Because having those conversations with your parents, maybe for the first time in your life.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, it's scary. It's it's disrupting a system that's been at play your whole life. Yeah, I think a lot of it is that lot of the work is realizing that when we, if we have to get to that point to really break our cycle, or, you know, disrupt our work with perfectionism.

Jenet: It's making sure that when you're having those boundary conversations, you're having it from your adult self and not your inner child.

Jenet: Because a lot of times, even just the presence of our parents can shrink us down to that little girl, that little boy right?

Jenet: and so it's it's really there's a lot of work to be done before we even think about

Jenet: depending on the severity of the case. Think about having those conversations with Mom or dad regarding boundaries. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): So I wanna talk about nervous system work again. Like you were saying, like you, you invite your clients to notice.

Jenet: are they? Is it fight flight, freeze fawn like what happens for them when they get activated? When they're sitting still, for instance, and that's activating or maybe when they're having these conversations with parents. Do you have different ways of

Allison Puryear (she/her): responding to

Jenet: whether they go into fight or flight or freeze? Yeah, my, my biggest thing is, you just have to stop everything. You have to stop everything. Your only goal, when that happens is to get yourself back into

Jenet: a a balanced nervous system. That is your only goal. So it's very critical to be able to recognize our our shame triggers. It's very critical to be able to recognize when we are becoming escalated and then eventually regulated. So we can stop.

Jenet: And then it's okay. So soothing.

Jenet: taking myself for a walk, removing myself from whatever the environment is right now. There's, you know, all those different coping strategies to help us regulate again before we re-engage or not even re engage like before we, you know, reflect and assess what happened, and then determine what our next steps are.

Allison Puryear (she/her): It's interesting cause I'm I'm thinking about myself and how my response. My nervous system, like Major Trigger.

Allison Puryear (she/her): is different, based on the circumstance. Right? If I'm sitting still, not a great person, it's sitting still, yet still working on it. Like I get flight right? I just. I've all of a sudden think of 300 things I need to do. And sitting in this chair like my my knees start bouncing. I just like go into this

Allison Puryear (she/her): flight action. If I am given feedback that I'm interpreting as an insult to like like. I didn't try hard enough. I could take all sorts of feedback all day long, but if there's this thread of clearly you didn't really try

Jenet: my perfection or perfectionist comes out, and I get in really defensive and fight with

Allison Puryear (she/her): and just thinking through each of those, and how for both of them. I do just need to sit my ass down.

Allison Puryear (she/her): just breathe or take a walk. What you're saying.

Jenet: yeah, it's interesting because you think about it. When you respond in any of those States you're not being authentic to yourself. First and foremost, and

Jenet: second of all, you're more than likely going to exacerbate the situation. You're gonna make it worse. Yeah, because

Jenet: particularly when we're talking about shame and perfectionism. When we go into that, it's usually like I. There's this fear of disconnect that is happening when I enter one of those States, when I enter dysregulation, and your goal is to erratically feel connected, and feel that love and acceptance and worth again. And so you're feeling all of these things that are like and authentic to you to get that

Jenet: as opposed to just. Okay, let me regulate myself. First, let me take care of myself. My body is telling me my needs are not being met, and that is no one's job right now but myself to to own and take care of. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah.

Jenet: which is interesting, because perfectionists already take everything on right. They're the ones in the group project who does it all like it's and and yet this taking on the responsibility of doing things differently, feels very difficult.

Jenet: Yeah, it does and especially if it's not the again, it doesn't fall in line with the The way you had envisioned it for yourself this procession that you created of yourself right? And you're not moving towards that love and acceptance that the perfection is there to grab, anyway? Right?

Jenet: Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): So I think like, and I touched on it some with my like. This is when I get defensive. But just shame and rejection and people with perfectionism. Can we talk some? You just did a whole shiver.

Jenet: yeah, absolutely. Because the perfectionism again, it's

Jenet: It's so deeply rooted in shame. And just just so deeply rooted in wanting to be loved and accepted.

Jenet: that that's really all it is. And so I really do. I feel feel very greatly for myself and anyone else who who struggles deeply with perfectionism because we at the end of the day. Sometimes we go into it thinking that we wanna be loved and accepted for this perception that we're putting on. But no, we wanna be loved and accepted when all the walls are taken down. That is really the goal. Yeah,

Jenet: yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And the like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): There's perceived rejection. And then there's real rejection.

Jenet: Both of them feel awful.

Allison Puryear (she/her): But at least in my clients when it's actual rejection. like the depths of shame that they go into.

Jenet: It's deeper than the perceived

Allison Puryear (she/her): rejection. So like like your example earlier of I've just ruined this friendship that I want wanted to get going. Stupid thing like I'm gonna think about it for years. It was so dumb versus getting broken up with, or using your job, or something like that, absolutely.

Allison Puryear (she/her): But at least with the clients. I've worked with the the difference between the perceived rejection, the emotional response to the perceived rejection and the emotional response to the actual rejection.

Allison Puryear (she/her): There's a through line. But the the actual rejection is much

Jenet: deeper and longer. Yeah.

Jenet: absolutely so to that end, like it makes you think like on some level, they know that this is a perceived rejection, and not like true hardcore rejection which gives some leeway to maybe work with it. Some, I think.

Jenet: I think, to an extent 100% I think that we can convince ourselves that it that it's real, you know. Convince ourselves that our reality is that I messed this up. I ruined this chance of being connected with this person and that that

Jenet: begin. The fear of disconnect is so strong I will be that I will be stuck in that shame, spiral for hours and days.

Jenet: I think about like the memes that are popular around like

Allison Puryear (she/her): not knowing if somebody's mad at you.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Like. I see these all the time around like anxiety, and that everybody's mad at you, and how?

Allison Puryear (she/her): How common that is in our perfectionistic clients. Because because you've done something imperfect.

Jenet: yeah, I like to encourage my clients to collect evidence. You know. What is. What is your evidence? That they are mad at you, that you've done something to to upset them.

And then, you know, if you, when we get to a space where we feel safe enough, let's just ask

Jenet: Umhm, yeah, let's let's just check with that person and see what's actually going on here. And

Jenet: that. And that's that's more, you know, evidence to put in your goody bag of like. This person is a safe space. If I'm able to go to them and

Jenet: put you know what feels like. Put my life on the line and ask them, Are you mad at me? You know. And

Jenet: they respond compassionately, and they're able to create space, and you know, really unpack it with me, and you know the the amount of regulation that happens within that nervous, your nervous system when

Jenet: during that moment.

Jenet: that is, that's very powerful for building your tribe and building true connections with others absolutely and something I know I value a lot. And friends that I also provide to my friends is like. I will tell you.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I swear to God I will tell you if I am mad about anything frustrated with anything. If there's anything in the way of our relationship. You can trust me to bring it up and not stew on it and think about you behind like, think about you without bringing it up

Jenet: absolutely, and that feels like having friends like that has completely changed my relationship with. Are you mad at me? Cause I trust that they'll tell me and that feels good, that I have friends that love me enough to say the hard thing absolutely 100%.

Jenet: I agree with that.

Jenet: And sometimes it's hard to find those friends when you're still stuck in perfectionism, because you're not showing up like that. You're not showing up

Jenet: as your self. And it's really not until you begin doing that that you're gonna find the people who are meant to be in your life like stick stick to you like glue.

Jenet: I think oftentimes we can end up in friendships that are

Jenet: that replicates a relationship with the caregiver. Who demands that perfectionism for us from us, because that's how we're presenting ourselves to the other person.

Jenet: And if someone's attracted to that perception that you're presenting, then, of course, they're gonna keep wanting that they're gonna want you to, you know. Keep performing that way.

Jenet: and so

Jenet: that can be very tough, a tough cycle to break out of when

Jenet: we when we think about building a tribe to try new behavior and really create safety within our relationships.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I'm thinking about like as somebody who pretty much. Don't struggle with perfectionism at this point in my life.

Allison Puryear (she/her): It'll sneak up on me sometimes, but back to place I think about when I did struggle with it more. And how?

Allison Puryear (she/her): like those friendships?

Allison Puryear (she/her): We're anchor points.

Jenet: Yeah,

Allison Puryear (she/her): and I think, like my parents were anchor points, cause they weren't critical parents.

Jenet: In the way that we think of. Like most perfectionists.

Allison Puryear (she/her): parents are really critical, like I did get. I did. I was an only child. I got a lot of attention.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And but I think for me a lot of my perfectionism came in my own like comparing myself to peers

Jenet: and feeling like I was falling short in so many ways, which

Allison Puryear (she/her): I don't know where that voice came from. But

Allison Puryear (she/her): it was something I noticed, and really beat myself up with a lot and then realize like, Oh, I'm good at a few things, so I'll just go really hard on those like I'll just be like the greatest at those. Yeah, which is exhausting very much.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and just thinking about how that dynamic of

Allison Puryear (she/her): finding, if it's like sometimes, if the pain came or was exacerbated by relationships with peers. How finding different friends can be so healing?

Jenet: Yeah.

Jenet: there, there's a lot of healing and community. And I feel like sometimes the community, the work community is so big, but I don't know how to make it smaller, you know. Sometimes think when we think about communities like the village that you know we need, you know. But really, community can just be one or two people. But the idea is that

Jenet: allowing, you know, talking through your shame with someone who is safe and someone who gets it.

Jenet: There's so much power in that. There's so much. And it's really the only way you're going to get out of

Jenet: out of you when you're gonna start breaking that that shame cycle. That's the only way to minimize it. Yeah. again, it thrives in silence.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And how

Allison Puryear (she/her): like a lot of people are so afraid if they bring up their shame that they're gonna be either the person is. Gonna only see that about them like this one thing that's so hard to talk about, or that

Allison Puryear (she/her): the other person doesn't experience the same

Jenet: level of shame around something. But like, we've all got shame. Yeah, we all have it. We all have it. We all might not have the language to describe what it is, but we all have it. It's a universal experience. Yes, yes, and how? There's just like this

Allison Puryear (she/her): the human

Jenet: shared experience.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and then it also doesn't have to become our identity cause. I think sometimes there's some risks with some people where they start talking about their shame.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and they maybe over identify with it, and it becomes almost like

Allison Puryear (she/her): almost like a pathological

Allison Puryear (she/her): intensity around their shame. They've gotta keep talking about it. Keep talking about it in a way that stirs the pot more than processes it. Cause. I think it's the way in which they talk about. I see this a lot with eating disorders around like body shame, for instance, and it's like when they say out loud,

Allison Puryear (she/her): I really just. I feel disgusting. I feel like

Allison Puryear (she/her): my belly is disgusting, like that kind of thing. And then, once it's out, sometimes

Allison Puryear (she/her): they're not processing through it as they talk about it. If they're not with a therapist, they're just like

Allison Puryear (she/her): complaining about their body to their friends is how their friends interpret it.

Jenet: Yeah, I see what you're saying, I see what you're saying.

Jenet: Oh.

Jenet: and is it are we? Is it like?

Jenet: If a friend does try to like, be compassionate? Are they receptive of the compassion that their friends can hold for them.

Jenet: Are you finding that they, in this particular instance stuckness on?

Allison Puryear (she/her): I see this often in younger women who's younger women, friends or or partners, or whatever

Allison Puryear (she/her): aren't, gonna be. They don't believe them. If they say something nice, they you know. If let's say.

Allison Puryear (she/her): we talk about in the eating disorder world like that's not a bad word like it's not an insult. It's a fact for some people, and if we continue to demonize the word fat, then fat people continue to be demonized. And so let's say it's a fat client, and their friends are like, no, no, you're not fat. Your belly is practically flat, like when it's not the truth, it makes it worse. So it just gets really messy.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And so, yeah, I'm thinking about how like that form of perfectionism can be

Allison Puryear (she/her): like, it needs to be spoken like you're talking about like that's the shame stays stuck without speaking it, but making sure our clients are speaking it in a place where it can actually be processed or can be received with love and competence maybe cause. I think most of us in our in our America are pretty messed up about our bodies, and we can't really respond from competence in a lot of ways to other people's stuff.

Jenet: Yeah?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Or you think your stomach's disgusting, and you're smaller than me. So what are you saying about me that kind of thing versus a perfectionism around.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you know, being an incredible singer, or doing a great job academically, or things like that.

Allison Puryear (she/her): where

Allison Puryear (she/her): the shame of falling short of your own expectations

Jenet: your friends can sometimes support really well and sometimes be like, no, no, you were crazy.

Jenet: Yeah, I think wh. What I ultimately hear there is that

Jenet: How do I say this?

Jenet: Even within that community.

Jenet: that safe space people can't be everything to us.

Jenet: And so there! There are certain things that

Jenet: have to, I believe, you know, be dealt with clinically. Be dealt with you and your therapist before we even take it to, or you know, or maybe yeah.

Jenet: that have to be dealt with clinically before we

Jenet: Because when I when I hear that example.

Jenet: I'm hearing friends who

Jenet: they're very safe spaces, but they don't know what to do. Yeah, yeah, it's the competence piece. Like I. This is like, I have no idea what to say. You know I'm gonna say the wrong thing. I obviously am saying the wrong thing.

Jenet: And so it's

Jenet: that I

Jenet: there's a lot of. There's more work there that has to be done with with, you know whether in group or what your therapist.

Jenet: because that is a lot of pressure to put on your friends, too, for you know something like that. That. and I. It might be one of those things where. as a friend. You you have to be able to say I can't show up for you

Jenet: in this area. I don't think I am able to show up for you. And the way you need me to show up for you?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And it's it's also them like acknowledging or knowing that when they're talking about their shame.

Allison Puryear (she/her): no matter what their shame is. What they're really looking for is love and acceptance like it's just like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): here's some garbage in my head. Do you still love me?

Jenet: Yeah, that's that's very true, absolutely

Jenet: absolutely.

Jenet: Yeah. And

Jenet: I guess the the real thing there is keying in on that and knowing what's

Jenet: knowing to ask for that right, being able to set your friends up for success in those moments of

Allison Puryear (she/her): this is what's happening. This is how I feel. This is what I need you to say, yeah, yeah, absolutely. Which

Jenet: I remember learning that in my twenties in therapy. And it was so mind blowing to me that I could give my friends scripts essentially, and how like when when they returned in kind, you know, like they were like, Oh, cool when I say this. So you say this, like, we were really able to support each other.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. And and and also, maybe it's in how you phrase it like how you help your clients phrase it to their friends of like instead of like, I hate my body. It's so disgusting to say I'm really beating myself up a lot today about my body. Can you just remind me that?

Jenet: Yeah, you love me, no matter what I look like. Yeah.

Jenet: yeah.

Jenet: Setting our friends up for success.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, it's so powerful. It is

Allison Puryear (she/her): it's and it's a kindness.

Jenet: it is

Jenet: there's a lot of kindness in that hmm.

Allison Puryear (she/her): huh!

Allison Puryear (she/her): Let's see, what else do you think is really important for people to know when they are seeing their clients who are struggling with perfectionism? What haven't we hit yet?

Jenet: Let's see.

Jenet: we can talk a bit more about the difference between

Jenet: perfection and striving for excellence. Yeah.

Jenet: right?

Jenet: And it's really a a mindset shift

Jenet: at the end of the day. It's first of all acknowledging that perfection is impossible and extremely subjective.

Jenet: Right? So we gotta put that in into context. And then it's about. And a lot of this I will say it's very difficult to do unless you have checks and balances in place.

Jenet: So one of the things that we we need to be able to do is set realistic goals. But if you're a perfectionist you might greatly struggle with setting realistic goals. What are some checks and balances we can put in place

Jenet: to help us with that. And so that might be like running my goals by someone who can really assessed this for me. Okay, this is your goals. This is your timeline. This seems feasible. This doesn't seem feasible. Let's talk about what's happening, what? Some of that. So? And then another big thing is breaking those goals down into small, achievable, realistic steps and then celebrating all the small things along the way that happened.

Jenet: and knowing that another big piece of it is knowing that failure is going to be a part of the process. You're not gonna learn anything without it. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): I always one of the like tenants of entrepreneurship that I had to really wrap my head around

Allison Puryear (she/her): was fail fast. That the goal is not to not fail is to fail quickly, so you can move on to whatever the next step is. The next idea is

Allison Puryear (she/her): and I think that's helped normalize for me that this is just

Jenet: this is just it.

Jenet: It's part of the process. And and I think

Jenet: perfectionists don't really realize how small they're keeping themselves because of that fear of failure, that fear of being seen trying and making a mistake. And so we typically don't do anything until

Jenet: it already looks good. It's already shiny and ready to go until then. And there. But there's so many things that you're missing out on when you adopt that mindset.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, that makes me think so much about you know, we talk. We talk about nervous system, regulation and self-care, and these kinds of things often as like

Allison Puryear (she/her): having something to do for fun, having a hobby having something that's like, not monetized. There's no pressure on it, and how that perfectionism, and not being great at something the first couple of times you try it

Allison Puryear (she/her): can really leave us bereft of anything that is helpful or enjoyable, or.

Allison Puryear (she/her): you know, low stakes. and

Allison Puryear (she/her): it's so vital to being like a well rounded human being who enjoys their life to have some things that aren't work related, or family related, or

Jenet: even self growth related something dumb. You do for fun? Yeah, I cannot speak on that because I'm still struggling tremendously. But I agree, 100%. Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. And it's, I think, because it's painful. Right? Like we we try something and we are not good at it. And that brings up all that shame, all that unlovability and

Jenet: we know as adults, especially like we're not gonna be great at everything we do the first time. Maybe, like, even with lots of practice, we're not gonna be great, but it still stirs all that up in a way that just makes us never wanna do that thing again. Yeah, absolutely. And you, I think I have to. When I think about some of my clients, I have to really challenge them on.

Jenet: So you you did this thing that you've never done before in your entire life. But you were supposed to know

Jenet: exactly what to do, how to do it. And I'm not talking about like writing in person like this is an a monumental thing that you're trying for the first time.

Jenet: and somehow, miraculously, you were supposed to get behind the wheel and ace it.

Jenet: Yeah. Your teacher was supposed to look at you first lesson to be like impressive. Yeah, I never seen anything like it. Let's let's collect some evidence about that like, what?

Jenet: Why did you think that you were supposed to know how to do this already, like you were just supposed to wake up and get out of bed and go

Allison Puryear (she/her): like we had to talk about some of those irrationalities in our thinking. Yeah, yeah, cause it's

Allison Puryear (she/her): is this fantasy world that we live in that keeps us safe.

Jenet: Yeah, absolutely. And and it's also often perpetuated by You know

Jenet: I receive so much praise. Praise when I, you know, have these accolades and achievements. It just it's almost becomes an expectation that, as I'm doing, I'm going to keep receiving, you know, this praise and accolades and whatnot. And so it's Earth shattering.

Allison Puryear (she/her): It really is earth shattering when it doesn't happen right?

Allison Puryear (she/her): Right? I think about like all the

Allison Puryear (she/her): like the graveyard of gear that I have for different things. I was gonna try and sucked at. And so I just did it, maybe one more time and didn't improve. And so I just

Allison Puryear (she/her): threw it in the drawer or put it in the garage.

Allison Puryear (she/her): and how

Jenet: it! It wasn't like somebody with ADHD who was like, that's really fun. I'll do the next thing it was, it was like, a, I have to hide this in this drawer because it represents something. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Jenet: 100%. Hmm. so yeah, when we think about. I really.

Jenet: I really cringe a little bit when I hear healthy perfectionism. I really want to encourage people to adopt healthy striving

Jenet: because even within that terminology, terminology, healthy striving is this, there's this understanding that I'm gonna make mistakes.

Jenet: I'm gonna fall short and through each of those mistakes there's going to be a reassessment, a realignment.

Jenet: Something new that I can take with me, you know, an adjustment that's going to help me get to where I want to go. Yeah.

Jenet: as opposed to perfectionism, which is, I've made a mistake. And now my life is over

Jenet: right, and this is why I won't try anything new. This is why I don't put myself out, there, let me, just stick to what I know.

Allison Puryear (she/her): which does keep us really small very small.

Jenet: Umhm. yeah. and keeps us like, in a fixed position in our loved one's mind about who we are and what we're capable of

Jenet: exactly 100%.

Jenet: I used to be in this friendship where

Jenet: they only knew. And it's partly my fault, because this this is only ever how I presented myself to you.

Jenet: And then, you know, when I would try new behavior, it was looked at as you don't do that. Why are you doing?

Jenet: That's not you. Who are you trying to be just like, okay, never mind. Let me retreat back. Let me get back into, you know my little box. you know. And so,

Jenet: yeah, it's

Jenet: it's interesting how? Sometimes, not only ourselves, but our community is responsible for perpetuating that belief system within us.

Jenet: Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah, I just think about that old like we get sick in relationships, we get well in relationships. And how like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): how vital.

Allison Puryear (she/her): especially for people who are so perception based like seeing ourselves reflected back through loving eyes, who believe sky's the limit for us. And who have an appreciation and understanding that it'll be a little messy sometimes. And it helps model for us

Allison Puryear (she/her): that it's

Jenet: it's okay.

Jenet: It really is absolutely absolutely. You.

Jenet: You know, part of finding your tribe is finding people who don't want to keep you small.

Jenet: Umhm, who don't want to keep you on a box, who encourage you, who are, who are going to cheer you along the way as you're trying new mistake, trying new things and making mistakes. Yeah.

Jenet: yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah. And how

Allison Puryear (she/her): we don't have to have all the internal resources all the time. When we've got a great community. We don't have to be perfectionistic, about our internal resources

Jenet: yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): so I'm curious about

Jenet: moments in session where, like, we just talked about with something like hobbies, where you're encouraging clients, and it's something you'd also struggle with. How did your perfectionism come up? And then how do you handle that?

Jenet: You want me specifically, or anything? Yeah, if you feel comfortable talking about it, I'm curious. Oh, golly!

Jenet: So so the the tough thing about it is the main reason why I said I struggle with it is because I can't think of something that I'm doing

Jenet: well, that's not true. That's not true, because I'm thinking about a hobby being something that you monetize. You don't monetize.

Jenet: And so or yeah, that I guess it is true. I I'm I have a difficult time thinking about something that I'm doing that is not tied to a goal.

Jenet: you know. So right now, I am trying a lot of thing, new things out, loud types of goals within my practice. But within my my personal life, right now it's

Jenet: yeah.

Jenet: There's there's not much there, Allison, you know.

Jenet: I like your little face.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yeah, I mean, cause I think

Allison Puryear (she/her): there's opportunity as a therapist

Jenet: like I think we get our mirrors held up to us a lot, too, and what we are not saying to our clients that were like done for me, I mean, I know one thing that I really wanna do is I really wanna take singing lessons. And I'm not as I've always been a musician like I played a piano, flute band nerd, but I've always wanted to take singing lessons. I don't know why I haven't signed up or looked for it yet. I can't tell you, but it. It is on my list of something that.

Jenet: So I will put that out there. Okay, so you probably know me well enough to know I'm going to be like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Hey, do you want to say by when you're going to look into that

Allison Puryear (she/her): also? Great for the nervous system singing, it always comes back around voice lessons is not necessarily great for the nervous system in the same way, but

Allison Puryear (she/her): helps you sound great and protect your voice. So.

Jenet: yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah. Cause I asked, cause we do, as therapists realize more often than like a software engineer may like. oh, look, here's a space in my life that could use some attention. And so when we noticed that

Allison Puryear (she/her): like, we can just notice it right? We don't have to be an immediate action about it in our perfectionistic self. We can just notice and maybe make a plan for later. Maybe not. But I know that's always my knee jerk of like.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Oh, I just said something to a client that I needed to hear myself. Now, how do I integrate that? As quickly and efficiently as possible in order to be doing it right?

Jenet: Right? Right? Not. Everything needs immediate reaction. You can just sit with it. Reflect on it. Do want it for a bit.

Jenet: Yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And I think, too, like noticing what my immune immune system that, too. But what my nervous system, and what my clients nervous systems often do is this is like like a

Allison Puryear (she/her): nervous energy around action.

Jenet: And for me, I'm starting to see that as like, Okay, that's a red flag like. I don't need to be intense about it. I can think about it. I can sit still for a minute, think still for a minute. Instead of knee jerk reaction, trying to manage something about

Jenet: like, why do you feel like you have to address it right then and there? Why does it have to be an extra plan so soon.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Story of my life. My partner is very much like, let's take a beat, and I don't have a beat wired into me. I don't think so. It's a constant like you don't have to send that text right now, like, that's a little bit

Allison Puryear (she/her): so yeah, it's good to. It's good to find people in your community who are the opposite to show you that

Allison Puryear (she/her): there's another way.

Jenet: Just to see what that even looks like, exactly. Yeah, it's it's refreshing, though it's really refreshing. When you start welcoming that space in that pause, and knowing that not everything requires immediate

Jenet: an immediate attention or immediate response.

Jenet: It allows you to breathe a little bit, yeah. I think leaning into

Jenet: the just an overall sense of ease.

Allison Puryear (she/her): yeah.

Allison Puryear (she/her): And if your clients like me aren't.

Allison Puryear (she/her): they're where it's second nature. Yet then it's okay, if it's like an after thought of while you're in the middle of planning of like, Oh, wait.

Jenet: Yeah, I could just sit in the. I don't have to even finish this sentence. I'm writing. I can just exactly sit for a second.

Jenet: Yeah, there's a lot of power in the past.

Allison Puryear (she/her): Yes, absolutely. Jenet, thank you so much for talking with us about this. I feel like the conceptualizing

Allison Puryear (she/her): and and really understanding the heavy shame behind perfectionism, the desire to be loved. That those 2 things are really the drivers and and

Allison Puryear (she/her): the thing that helps so deeply is working on that attachment wound. And yes.

Jenet: absolutely finding that community that really

Allison Puryear (she/her): gives you what you've been looking for all along in like unconditional acceptance.

Jenet: 100%. Yay, thank you for your time today. Thank you so much for having me.

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