

The Full Stop podcast

Episode 53 – Community and Friendship

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

childless, people, community, bit, grief, janine, denmark, feel, cecilia, organised, part, meet, thought, year, children, woman, friends, meetups, online, laugh

SPEAKERS

Cecilia Rebuild, Janine Ford, Sarah Lawrence, and Michael Hughes

Berenice Smith 00:03

Storyhouse Live on childlessness takes place on Saturday, 23rd and Sunday, 24th of September at the Garrick Theatre in Chester in the UK. It's two days of events designed to explore living without children to build community, meet new people, and hear other people's personal stories. And we're delighted to be there over the weekend and recording the full stop podcast live on stage on the 24th. And yes, Michael is joining us all the way from Australia in person. So this is a big event for us. Now storyhouse Live gave us we can past giveaway in a competition. And loads of you entered this we were completely overwhelmed by entries. And thank you to everyone who took part and answered our question, which we hope wasn't too tricky. Sandra, is our winner. Congratulations, Sandra. She's coming all the way over from Spain. It's amazing. And she's a great supporter of the podcast, and really loves what we do. And she also loves World Childless Week and all the events that go on in our community. Well done, Sandra. Thank you to everyone who entered. And we look forward to seeing you at Chester.

Michael Hughes 01:19

We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Janine 02:27

Giving yourself the permission to say no, what did someone say last night in our hive call. No as a sentence. There's a whole sentence. I like that.

Michael Hughes 02:44

Welcome to The Full Stop Podcast, a childless community podcast we have Sarah Lawrence, Berenice Smith and me Michael Hughes. Now sadly, Berenice wasn't able to be with us on this episode, she was taking a much needed break in an area with no internet access. And if this is your first time here, our podcast delves into the many facets that make up the child's identity, as well as what is going on in the wider, childless community. And our hope is that with all our special guests, we can help you craft your own narrative and what it means to be part of the childless community. And we also aim to educate

those who are not childless, so they can begin to understand and support those in their lives who may be facing love with their children. Now in this episode, we are going to talk to Cecilia and Janine from Denmark. And we're going to talk about friendship, community and giving ourselves permission. Now warning, there is a mention of pregnancy loss and stillbirth. So please, go gently. So today we're going to talk about friendship and community, which obviously, is something really important for us in the childless community. But I'm going to shut up and I'm going to ask Cecilia and Janine, who are you? And what do you do? Want to go first?

Cecilia 04:02

Okay, I can go first. Yeah, thanks. So my name is Cecilia. And, and I'm Danish, I live near Copenhagen. And I'm travellers not by choice, of course. And I used to work in I used to work in corporate and working with HR and change. And the last couple of years I've been interested transitioned into having my own company, and I work with, he talked about that fall about that I work within the liminal space, I could say because I help people in the transitions and transitioning from if they've been let go, let go off and have to find a new job or in a new leadership position. And so, so these kinds of transitions, Antony and I, we met each other via the online vehicles, led by Karen Enfield, back in 2020. So we'll come back a bit more to that. And what we do around that as well. So Jenny, maybe you will continue. I think you have a special greeting as well. Maybe Okay,

Janine 05:00

This was for Berenice. Ko Aoraki te maunga Ko Waimākairiri te awa Ko te Waipounamu te moana Nō Ōtautahi tōku papakāinga Ko Janine āhau Tihei mauriora! So I'm Janine, and I'm from Aotearoa, New Zealand. And it's a practice really, in New Zealand to give what we call a 'mihi' in Māori. And it's to introduce ourselves, but it's in connection with the mountain, I just gave out the mountain that I grew up near the river that I grew up near the city, and where I grew up, and obviously my name because that's very important in New Zealand society to show where we come from in our connections. And also I put something in the community for and Berenice particularly liked it. So I wanted to say that for her, so yeah, I'm Janine. Also, obviously childless, not by choice. I kind of regard myself though as coming to this place. Pretty much by circumstance actually. I spent the best part of my reproductive years single, about 11 years on my own, just not meeting the right person. And then I met my Danish partner, in my early 40s. And we suffered three miscarriages in a row over a period of 12 months. pretty brutal. I was we decided not to continue because it seemed to be age related. I was almost 44 When I had the last miscarriage. And I was I felt like I was in the middle of mummy land where I felt quite unsupportive and not around a lot of empathy for my situation, and everyone I knew, had children or pregnant. And both of us love to travel. So we thought, well, what can we do? Now that we are childless and can't have children we would like to travel. So we took a bit of a looking back on that, I think, a bit of a drastic measure and move to the other side of the world. And that is to Denmark, where my partner is from and something that was meant to be like, you know, two, three, maybe four years has ended up being 10 years as these things can happen. We moved in 2012 I didn't really deal with my childlessness. I don't think although I knew it was sort of there - various things would get me upset. And then I just stumbled across the advertisement for The Online Bee at the end of 19. And we started in 2020. Online Bee was a year long pause finding your plan B that Jodi Day created in Gateway Women as it was back then it was facilitated wonderfully by Karin. Anyway. So we did that for a year and I think it was online. We were all based in Europe. But I think Cecilia and I were the only ones that lived in the same city. And

we were really lucky in that respect, and managed to finally meet in the summer of that year around lockdown etc. And we've been friends ever since. And at the end of the Online Bee a year later and in 2021 we thought we would try we'd like to create a little community here in Denmark to support other childless woman and we've managed to do that. We've got a little group going it was a slow burner for sure. And one picnic in fact that we organised to celebrate I think was the final day of World Childless Week on We Are Worthy day. We organised a picnic and advertised quite widely and then was only sustaining

Cecilia 09:17

One year later, we actually organised at the picnic again and we were six people I think

Janine 09:28

It's a nice mixture of both you know, childless by circumstance and not by choice, older woman younger woman and also pretty much half International and half Danish woman. So yeah, that's me for now.

Sarah Lawrence 09:46

Wow. I mean, that's such a challenge, isn't it? Going to that first one must have been must have been soul destroying with noone. I'm curious, at these meetups - you know I talk to a lot of women - it's hard, isn't it to bond over childlessness? Because we are we've all got such different backgrounds, different stories, albeit when same community. How did you to connect? What was it that brought you together? Because geographically, you know, we could all live in the same city and be potentially childless? What was the spark that really got you to interest in your friendship?

Cecilia 10:28

We reflected upon that as well, because that one of my reflections is also that just because we are childless doesn't doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to become friends, just I mean, as you say, as well, Sarah. So I think, for me, friendship is also about feeling a connection with somebody else. And I instantly felt a connection with genuine when both online but also meeting her face to face. We used to travel a lot. So that whole travel thing was one of the things that connected me with Janine. And then I think also we have a shared interest in in writing. So I think that's part of it as well.

Janine 11:10

We try and encourage each other to get on with we've got respective writing projects underway. And both of us have been good trying to encourage each other to get on on with us.

Cecilia 11:25

But both of us have actually had something published in the Danish media. So I had something published in a national media, national newspaper that I was called, it was called missing and missing. It was a whole topic about missing and I talked about, wrote about missing, missing having children. And so getting the connections about that. And Janine, you had a piece published in the International newspaper in Denmark, the whole writing thing and exploring how, how we can connect about writing. And so that's part of it. I think that's part of the answer.

Janine 12:06

And also, to be honest, you know, right up until the online day, so we moved here in 2012. I think my last miscarriage was in 2010. That's a long time ago now, but I had never been open about my childlessness. I was, as I wrote in the articles of international paper here, I felt like I was very complicit in the taboo around it. But you know, the whole shrouding it all and, you know, a sort of shamed kind of silence, that I was part of that, perpetuating that, but you know, also, of course, understanding how hard it is for us to speak about this openly. But when it came to the childless week, in that year of the year of The Online Bee in 2020, Cecilia wrote this piece in the big Danish paper, she also translated it into English. And for the first time ever on Facebook, I shared it and said that this is, you know, an article from my friend, I don't know what what did I say about her childlessness and experience shared by me or something like this? I can't remember now. And that was a first kind of notion, instead, what we call of being childless and, and, you know, got such a response that people have no idea what had gone on behind the scene. For me, they thought I was just wandering around Europe on a motorbike and living the life of Riley was a good life. But the reason why I was in Denmark was because I had lost these pregnancies and couldn't bear being around mothers, new mothers, my friends. That has started and from there on, and I've just shared a lot of stuff on articles and I think really sum up and, you know, advocating for our seat at the table, basically, particularly around the workplace and then ageing and how society perceives that I'm really wanting to change that, to help change the narrative on how society sees us. powerless people. So and I thank Cecilia for that, you know, that was she inspired, I was inspired, she's written this thing, I put it out. And then I as she said, I wrote my own thing, which then I also put out there as well. And I just got some amazing support from friends, both childless, and I'm not a mother actually, I've got other friends, from really unexpected places and opening up some really good conversation with a lot of my other friends that I never would have. So the writing and yeah, being inspired by, really, I think, the inspiration and motivation and, and the guts, the guts to do this and knowing that I had Cecilia and the risks of what do we call it the online hive, we call it our group that we're doing the year long course together, I have it all behind me. So that a supporting me so that if I got any pushback or any nasty comments that I knew I could go to find support, so and then I've been writing ever since I really, really thank you for inspiring me online.

Cecilia 15:38

And I think I wouldn't have been able to publish these pieces. If I hadn't been, I mean, a part of the NLP and if we hadn't talked about these things genuine so I know the trust, and I have from from you and also from the others in the Online Bee because and because it's also getting closer to each other and understanding each other stores. And really, I thought about it this morning as well. It's about reeling feeling safe with somebody else. And I really feel safe with you

Janine 16:14

I think too, we didn't mention that. Cecilia and I did the online course, mainly in 2020. But the course, and this is a great thing, the course is so dense, and we'll have such great material to absorb and take her in and exercises to do that a little hive have stuck together. So we still meet every month. And we're now on the fourth year of the Online Bee. One of us or two of us, volunteer to host a session and we take ourselves back through it. But you know, quite often life gets in amongst it all. And we just deal with particular difficulties or things that are happening in people's lives. But and then actually I forgot to say we met recently in Reading in the UK for a weekend some some of the woman in the hive could make it and it was absolutely special. It was very cool. So there has been wonderful. I am moving back

to Australia, I was saying before we started recording, we plan to move back up to the north this summer. So quite soon. And I think one of the biggest things I have a bit of grief and a bit of rule about this massive move. And I think one of the biggest things is losing the ability to meet up with the hive that's living in Europe allows admission office and Celia obviously

Cecilia 17:58

It will be a good reason for us to come down under

Janine 18:03

We actually we actually reached out to the hive in relation to this podcast recording this morning about what they had got out of childless friendships, and they really reinforced a lot of belonging, the comfort that they feel and just being immediately understood. cheering each other along quite a lot. The showing of compassion to each other, being able to really, really take deep dives into conversations, you know, literally without children interrupting or hijacking the conversation or, you know, friendships that are really, really deep that we might not necessarily have with brains that we've even known. For decades. I know that I feel like that. And quite often quite existential questions come up, you know. And particularly, you know, about ageing, we will talk a lot about ageing without children. How to plan for that.

Michael Hughes 19:13

don't want to break the flow, because this was quite a beautiful conversation. But I know there's a lot of people going to be saying, what is what is The Online Bee?

Cecilia 19:23

So at one on one part there was there was this online course that was hosted by Jody Day and Karin hosted it through Gateway Women. It was only for for women who were childless not by choice. And it was a full year course, with different topics each month which had exercises and reading materials. And then we would meet once a month to discuss these things. Did I cover more or less everything?

Janine 19:52

Yeah. And I think one of the beautiful things and also another connection with Cecilia, one of the beautiful things that the course does take you through, letting go, I think they call it Letting Go Session where the hive was broken up into smaller groups. And we online wrote letters to our children that we never had. And then with each other, we read them out to each other, and then ceremoniously we burnt them in a candle. And we've all done different things with the ashes from our letters. Cecilia and I happened to be actually on the same in the same group. So we sort of witnessed there and then which I thought was very, very powerful. I remember when I was writing, I wrote screeds to my three unborn children. Karin's not going to make us read that is she? And we did read them out. As one of us later stated, you know, she could really see the mother in all of us. Cecilia and I had been through that together. And I think, if I'm not wrong, I think we were the second to last cohort that was offered this course. And I don't think it's right. I know for a fact it's not offered anymore. And it's a real shame, it was just one of the most transformative experiences that we could have or have gone through for that year. And then as a result, creation was a lifelong relationship or friendships. And anyone listening out there, who's in a position, I would strongly advise that some sort, of course, and will, of course be created

Cecilia 21:56

One of the real strengths was that it was just not just a weekend or two days or something, we kept connecting a word for the year. And so so in that way, we could come back and connect and develop and come back. And so I think that was really one of the and I, and I agree, I get it. When I talk about the ceremony about the letting go ceremony, I get all emotional now. I think it was very, very strong. It was one that but but so that part, but also the that it wasn't it was that it was through through a whole year was very good.

Janine 22:37

We're also very privileged that we had the opportunity.

Sarah Lawrence 22:42

I'm interested in that, because you're what I'm struck by is, it sounds as though that course facilitated a depth to your relationship, not just in terms of talking at a surface level, it was, I guess you had to witness each other's grief in that moment. And I wonder as well, whether that informed your article, Cecilia because that that doesn't sound like a surface article? To me, that sounds like quite a deep, sort of, as you say, sort of existential quality to it.

Cecilia 23:19

Yes, I think, I think absolutely. I read read it this morning. And I did think it informed it and I think the whole part about and I ended by talking about I don't want to make a happy ending in the story I have about missing because kind of talking to a right into about that, then we could expect that we then talk about this happy life that every travel more I have a fantastic career or something specific spectacular, because then we can do that. And but then I took into that, but but we're still missing. But and, but we are where we are moving and touching each other's lives by by by being with others and being open about how it is and maybe breaking some multiples. And then I then I in our stance being I don't want to I want to start sampling. I want to brag and I don't want to brag it sounds it sounds strange, but that the last part was that I don't know that I don't only miss but I also give because we give these this stuff to each other that we break taboos. So that was and I keep and I'm not explaining it very well in English but but it's just about as if we're not just missing out but we are not having. We don't necessarily need to have a spectacular life but we're just if we can give something else by by being there for others and having that death as you talk about Sarah, then that's for me. That's really Something that's existential, for example, and I think, maybe touching upon that. And we're also rereading it. I think when we started our recorded this unknown place, our Instagram profile, and the whole thing about our meetups, and so we started with and then then I suddenly lost the hearing on one one year, overnight, and it was that's another loss. And I think it was this disenfranchised grief connected to that as well, because a lot of people don't understand that. And it's also invisible, and it's about really reliving the grief again, but it's, but I was just thinking that having again, this this group, the online, the group were more or they understood, and they were there they. So there's really this diff in this group, which means that I have, will, will, real friends. Yeah, around Europe. And also when I connect with people like here, I feel I have friends around the world. And that's very special for me.

Sarah Lawrence 26:12

How was it then to start your own group? Because obviously, you're you're talking about the impact that you were, you had as part of a group that was run by someone else. But now you've got your own group that you both run? How does that is that very different? How do you get that that same? I guess, vibe if those people aren't part of the Online Bee hive, if that makes sense.

Janine 26:33

Yeah, we had talked about that. Before hadn't learned that, in some ways. I mean, I sort of speak for myself, I feel I'm quite a different level, from a lot of was a small group, but from the other woman. And again, you know, just really privileged to have been able to dive into things the way that we have over the that year, and I'm sort of encouraging the other woman, you know, please get on lighthouse, or gateway or whatever. Because you're, you know, you can access the steps of conversation and the support that's there. I just wish for them that they would engage more with the childless community. But of course, it's up to them and their own time and stuff. But I do feel on a bit of a different level due to failure. I mean, I guess we've got things to offer, we've got a lot of resources and a lot of recommendations to make. You should read this. And just being there to support and our WhatsApp group. It's not that active actually.

Cecilia 27:39

No, and I think that's maybe the challenge as well. I mean, we don't offer the same thing, we would just offer meetups. And, and and maybe they don't have moments even they don't necessarily see the need, and is and for this kind of process either. So it's also being there for what in for what they need. And they are and I think we've talked a bit about that. And I don't know whether that's part of it as well. I mean, we are stained sometimes seen as very reserved, and very introvert. So it's sometimes very difficult also to get the conversation started at all. I don't know. So, because we talked a bit about it, also one of the meetups that, that we were actually a bit struck that we don't really we're not more people that that want to attend.

Janine 28:34

And there is a private Facebook group in Denmark and as many as 200 members or something. Yeah, yes. And we advertise what we're doing. And no one no one takes it up, you know, and obviously, that's sorted out the group, you know, to join, there must be some sort of need there. What's peculiar about Denmark that they won't come forward, even though they've obviously seen me by joining the Facebook group.

Cecilia 29:17

We haven't really figured out what and I know, we also talked with other people who started up groups, and it takes a long time to get the group's going. And so so maybe that's just part of it. And, and maybe we haven't been good enough at sharing what's going on and how it's helpful and so on. And maybe it's also about, I mean, back to, maybe we don't just connect with everybody. And it's I mean, just because we're childless doesn't necessarily mean that we've, we feel we can connect.

Sarah Lawrence 29:56

I'll be honest, I think you've been very hard on yourselves. You know, I, obviously as a counsellor, I've talked to lots of people about their childlessness. I do think actually, there's a, there's a couple of levels

of things that go on for people. It's number one, I've got to accept that I am part of this community. But it's also, I think, as well, a little bit of the school of hard knocks, isn't it? Because we have to learn by experience, who can be trusted with our feelings, and you can't, and I'm yet to meet anybody that's not had a bit of a battery in and a bit of a bruising, by trusting someone that potentially couldn't handle what they were sharing. So I think I think it'd been quite hard on yourself, because it's not like rocking up for a dog walking club, is it? There's levels of stuff that you have to deal with before you go, you know, what, actually, I will, I will go out with these people. I will try and connect.

Cecilia 30:53

And it's very true, I think, because we also talked about that we also lost, both of us talked about yesterday that we were just friends that we had at our churches, and that they are at least I sometimes feel that maybe it's because they had them when we start sharing our grief or about childlessness, if they can't, they can't cope with it somehow. There's so many levels of grief of identity in this.

Janine 31:25

Yes, there is.

Sarah Lawrence 31:31

What do you do when you're going going to these meetups?

Janine 31:36

Well, around summer before everyone goes off for the summer holiday, because Denmark sort of comes to a close over summer. We try and organise something before everyone goes. We need to get cracking on that one! And then Christmas is really big in Denmark. So which is lovely, you know, we're trying to organise a Christmas meet. At last year, we weren't quite so successful again, because it's so big. And everyone's so busy with Christmas arrangements and whatever. But yeah, just general open and open space meetings, picnics, or cafes, or something like that. It's pretty lurking there. At the moment. And we

Cecilia 32:27

Janine, you've been very good at the putting photos at our Instagram profile. But that's not so much about read up. Actually a lot of people also from around here, follow what's happening there as well.

Janine 32:42

When we first started this online place, I connected with a Swedish woman that was doing some stuff. And was interested to come to remember she was interested to come to Copenhagen and actually meet us and be here for one of our meetups, but I think pandemic got in the way. And then we also had a Zoom with a great Finnish woman, just out of Helsinki, who was quite active in her community. And she you know, she gave us a lot of tips actually about what she had been doing and what we could be looking at. So there was an idea to make it more of a Nordic thing with emphasis on Denmark for us. It has been it's been a slow moving train. But yeah, and we've had things going on.

Cecilia 33:39

I think we I had to do more than we did, or I did because of that I had, I haven't had to deal with that grief or that loss as well before being able to do something new about this, or more about this.

Sarah Lawrence 33:58

I'm really struck by your although you're saying well, this happened, this happened. I'm really struck by the fact that you're still turning up, you're still doing it, you're still we're still here, people were still here if you need us. So it's although I hear what you're saying about well, you know, the first year, you know, we organised the scene, and we didn't have anybody that the next year you had six, so and the next year, presumably, more and more and more. So it feels as though the consistencies the real, the real key part because you're both still turning up doing it, even though you're saying well, you know, we're not sure. We're not sure what people are looking for. But I think, you know, in terms of you mentioned I forgive me I think it might have been Janine mentioned, sort of people can be a little bit introverted about this. What would be your tips for people because it can be quite daunting coming along to this these groups you know, as a sign it's not a it's not an easy process. What tips would you give people because obviously, you're still you're still rocking out, you're still doing it. What What would you advise them if they were Not all, you know, I'm feeling a bit tentative about it. Would you say?

Cecilia 35:04

I think maybe just show up and you know that you don't have to say anything, just be that and, and the like a guest and observe and and find out what's happening. You don't have to say anything at the first or second meet up

Janine 35:05

I listened to last month's episode with Karin and I'm like Michael, I'm an extrovert. You know, if I something's being organised by a bunch of childless woman, you know, not by choice. I'm there, you know, and I, I travel a lot and everywhere I've gone, I've connected with so many people in our community. I even invited myself to stay with someone in Melbourne for three or four nights that I've never met before. Apart from on, on, on Zoom during, during lockdown, and as Michael knows, is a bit nervous. I've never met this woman born, what if it doesn't work? And Michael was very good at calming me down. And it was absolutely fantastic. You know, and we had quite a laugh about our childlessness. Can you believe I hope I'm not being offensive to anyone listening to us. But it was really nice to be in a position with someone where we could actually have a bit of a laugh and take the piss out of ourselves away. That was Penny Rabart's who you've had on the podcast. But so it's a bit difficult for me to answer that, because it's just fine, not me. But all I could say was just come and be serious. If you don't need to say anything, you don't need to share anything. You don't even need to talk about it. If it makes you more comfortable with we'll just talk about everyday stuff. I don't know, what would you say?

Sarah Lawrence 36:57

I love what Cecilia said, Just give yourself permission just to turn up really, isn't it? As you know, we talked about this last time, but I am quite introverted. So, you know, at the beginning, it took a lot for me to turn up to these things. You know, I'd be the shadow in the corner going right? I'm just looking. A little bit unsure. But I think it is that first tentative step, just give yourself permission just to if I go for five minutes, that's a win if I go, if I stick around for half an hour, that's an even bigger win, isn't it? But even

just going is a big deal, I'd say. And, you know, perhaps the introverts like myself, perhaps be a little bit more Janine.

Janine 37:39

Michael said last week, take a risk. Yeah, just you can just take a risk, because that's going to be rewarding. Yeah, not so serious, if not everyone is going to be a cup of tea just because we're childless. But eventually we'll find someone and the sense of belonging. And as you guys keep saying, of not being alone, it's healing factor and having a community or even just one night that you can text at work, or something's about a baby shower or whatever, at work. Because I think that's what we've all struggled with pride for so long, and I struggled with it for 10 odd years, almost nine years of this thinking I was alone and all of us. And I took this drastic step of macronuclear side of the world. If I'd known there was some sort of community in Sydney that I could have relied on, I might never have come here then I wouldn't have missed that you didn't know I'm glad you didn't.

Michael Hughes 38:45

So we have we have a question from the audience. And the question is, in relation to childlessness lived experience what one piece of advice would you give your younger selves to help you weather the storm of childlessness?

Janine 39:01

Find people like you and will were everywhere because a lot of us you will get through it. I mean, I know that's kind of might sound trite to someone that's going through the worst of it.

Cecilia 39:17

I could say the same thing about it we'll get through that would say that to my younger self as well, but also that that just be yourself and and, and be the grief because I think some some of the things I reflected upon was I tried so hard to be some be be happy while I was going through the grief. I tried so hard to make an effort to to do something extra extra because I didn't have children. I don't have children. So just it's I mean, in some way, it's like very, very simple, very cliché. Just be my be who you are, but be will what that is be. Enjoy the grief but you will that grief will always be there. But there'll be, there'll be laughter And there'll be good times again. Also find people who understand who do we have different lives who have children, I also very much enjoy that I have friends who have children I had we had my friend's child staying during COVID Because her parents lived in Melbourne at that time. So she stayed with us for two months because the school in Denmark closed down. So that became a very big became a very long answer. But, but but be Be true to yourself with the grief and but also that you will get through it. And yeah, sorry, for the very

Sarah Lawrence 40:37

Love that. I love that. Love that giving yourself permission again, isn't it be who you're not, I guess and making yourself feel 10 times more uncomfortable by putting yourself in positions that you don't really want to be in?

Janine 40:51

Oh, yeah, I've done a lot of avoiding the things I don't want to bring you in for sure. And, you know, it's been really easy for me coming to Denmark, and I'm wondering about now returning to Australia, and that when I came here, I could completely hit the reset button. So I just sought out other childless friends or child free friends and I've deliberately moved away from the site, you know, I hadn't really had to deal with much in the last 10 years to be honest. Not not too much anyway. But But yeah, giving yourself the permission to say no, what did someone say last night in our hive call? No, as a symptom? No, as a whole thing. I like that. To not turn up to things if you're not able to think also, for me, during the question going through the storm of childless I think actually, I mean, it takes a while. And it certainly took me years and years to get there. And I'm not saying to rush into anything. But I think one of the biggest things that helped me get through my that storm or get to the place that I'm at now was actually opening up about my childlessness is one of the most healing and empowering things I could have done. And again, you know, that was through the article that was shared in his article and, and what happened thereafter. And we all take it, you know, we all have our time frames, and that for some people may never be appropriate. But for me, it's just been so empowering. And getting this I think one of my biggest aspects of the grief was not being understood, acknowledged or recognised, or heard or seen, you know, all those things that are so important for us. And an opening up, I just got some amazing responses from parents things out there. Also quite a lot of silences. But enough responses to you know, I sort of felt like this would call it monkey was lifted off my back, and that I could start living an authentic life, actually, you know, for years and years. What are you doing in Denmark, honours, father's very elderly. And so we thought it was time to come home and be with him, had nothing to do with us. Although that was a nice side bonus. But now I'm very open about it. I'm very open about it at work. And you know, a young thing that a young colleague at work that I was open was she revealed that she had a stillborn at four or five months. And she never ever talks about it. And no, none of her friends are interested whatsoever. So we had this massive connection, she's young, every possibility she would go on to have children, but she had very similar experience. And it's only by being open about it that you know, you get permission to, for other people to be open about it as well and start start talking about your experience. And I just, I don't know if uses failure, but for me, because I've spent so many years with this Hadden's kind of secret that I never talked about. I just found it really really healing and it's really pushed me along and that kind of journey for the want of a better word into the place that I am now.

Cecilia 44:27

Absolutely. Yeah. I think I've so much agree about the openness and and also because I actually was quite open with my when my friends in the beginning, but it also helped me when I started saying yes saying no. When people were talking too much about their children themselves and saying we need to talk about something else. And I was thinking when you were talking also that something else I mean, being open but also using our we all have creativity and use it in different ways. I mean, they now are talking about the writing. But other people have been using singing or drawing or whatever. And I think for me, at least, starting using hidden or forgotten ways of being creative have helped me a lot. I had never I mean, I've never thought that that will help me. But that creativity helps me a lot. And I would I think I would advise a younger self to, to find those creative sides again.

Janine 45:30

The community blows me away, actually, I think there's so much talent, and how can you just say some amazing stuff? And yeah, I would really encourage that as well. And I, you know, I've always had ideas about writing, ever since I was very young. And it's only recently through all of this, but I've actually thought of writing.

Michael Hughes 45:57

So one of the things we'd like to be able to do is, if you've got a few to have those links to those articles that you wrote, if they're still available, please let us have those. And we'll put those in the show notes as well. So that people can do listening to this podcast can actually reach your staff. That'll be great.

Janine 46:22

And it's so good that you guys are creating more community, more out there for us to all come together?

Michael Hughes 46:34

That's one of the things that we're not to take it away from you two, Bbt that's one of the things that we're really excited about is listening to your explanations of what being part of the community has done for you, just reinforces to us that, you know, it's important, because not every community you're going to, you're going to sort of resonate with, so the more communities are out there that the more it can be. And we would hope to attract more guys into the group because, yeah, we we probably can't I don't know what the right words. My simple brain is saying that we are, we are terrible at making connections. And, but at the same time, I can tell you that in the childless men's community, it is. All the time, there are guys who are saying, this is the best thing that's ever happened. I really needed this place. And yeah, it just, it just goes to show that take that risk and be part of something. Sorry, sorry, Jenny. But as my mum used to say, and I'm not quite sure if this is appropriate. She used to say, what's the problem? Is it life threatening? Really? It when we make when we're scared of making decisions, you know, is it life threatening? I'm not sure that's appropriate. But that's what I keep in my mind all the time. When I take risks. I just go. Yeah, it's not. So I'm going to take a risk. Some of them paid off, by the way.

Sarah Lawrence 48:21

I'm glad you caveated that! What have you guys got coming up learning for your Meetup groups. So if you've got any plans, what if you've got anything that you're going to be organising? What's it look like going forward?

Cecilia 48:43

I think actually, we need to, we are going to have Summer event happening very soon that we need to plan. And then I think we need to have a good, good talk through about how we're going to do it going forward, because we're going to missed in in here in our northern hemisphere very soon. So we need to figure out how are we then going to do it? Because I think I actually I have very, I mean, I know that my friendship within the market continues. But I and I think as a strength are one of the things I enjoy also with our community here. And then like I said, it's not only Danish, but it's a mixed community of Danes and internationals and so on. And I think that's a lot of what you're also ensured that that happens in him. So we need to, I need to figure out a way out doing that, because I'm not sure that it is

you can't be face to face going forward when you move down under. So we need we actually need to sit together I think and I would need your help didn't even have to plan it going forward. But also, I mean, I think it's so great that you're making this new community. I know Sarah and Berenice thought we needed another community. I was thinking about what mean, for all of us in the end, it's all about relations. It's and we need to have more relations and where we can connect with each other in different ways and where we Are you feel safe?

Michael Hughes 50:03

I can see an Aussie Danish group happening here. I can bridge bridge the 14,000 miles or whatever it is!

Cecilia 50:19

Something that I not invented yet! We will make a make it possible for you to jump back and forth between Australia and Denmark.

Janine 50:32

Six months in Australia six months in the Danish summer because Denmark has a wonderful summer. I haven't quite worked it out. I think you need to be physically near us. Yeah, I don't know how we're going to go moving forward. I just had a thought actually, the reason why the community has grown, you know, it's all word of mouth. It's people talking to people "Oh, you might like this" It's knowing other childless woman. One at the moment is with a single childless colleague. And she's sort of sussing out whether by choice or she has grief around that.

Cecilia 51:21

I would love that we had a stronger group being part of your new community here, because somehow I think we will, we would feel all part of this kind of community somehow. So that would mean having a group here would be good as well. That they could connect online as well. And, and fears face to face as well.

Sarah Lawrence 51:44

So is this going to be one big bash then in summer? Is it is it is it going to be like a huge thing that you're going to organise? Because, as you say, it's changing after that, isn't it? So? Sounds like a good excuse for a big bash?

Janine 52:00

Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't. I don't have the time, but I wouldn't mind organising something before I leave as well. Another good question. Yeah, yeah. We haven't actually got houses. And your spirit to think about it, actually. So it's good. Yeah. What, uh, I think, what's the fear? and I both feel to it, we've kind of the narcissist lessons here. What's the filler and I are both thinking about is that we fight quite a ways down or through with our childless group. And we're also looking for communities that are Yeah. places within our communities where we can be a bit lighter and a no and just to know what I mean. And really have you know, bringing us because I think we've all got great senses of humour and really have a laugh about things and get just get back the joie de vivre i know that we've that we've lost them because I feel that I was saying to Cecilia, and I think she reminded me recently, you know, when I was

down under at home recently catching up with people, a couple of one friend in particular took me aside and sort of stage and I took me by the shoulder and said, you know, you've got the weight of the world on your shoulders. Just let it go. And that took me aback a little bit. And I thought, yeah, there is a lot of, there are a lot of things to laugh about out there. And I would quite like to sort of have that amongst our community as well, for those of you that spayed while we've been you know, we are dealing with dealing with serious issues, etc. But I just yeah, looking for the joy really looking for the joy.

Michael Hughes 53:56

I think that's another part of the community, though, because when you mentioned earlier that when you met Penny, can I just say, I told you so. Didn't I?"

Janine 54:06

What do you say a week ago Michael! What am I doing? Yes, you did tell me, quite right!

Michael Hughes 54:17

I'm sorry. I had to get that in. But again, we're having a laugh about it. And I think that part of the community is is also that you feel safe to have that laughs exactly. You feel safe that I know that this will be received the way I intended it. You know, and so, yeah, I do. I really resonate with that. And I just hope I don't go too far sometimes.

Janine 54:47

Not from my experience. And can I just say that, you know, when I was in travelling around the world and meeting up with people that I had a wonderful afternoon was microloans equity. There was very special and again, just easy, wasn't it, Michael so comfortable?

Michael Hughes 55:07

It was.

Janine 55:08

And lots of trust there.

Michael Hughes 55:12

Yeah. Not to take away from you two again, but that's one thing that I love. That's what, that's what. So I took that risk to just reach out to people and say, let's let's get together. It's the best thing I've ever done. By far. Excuse me, I'm getting emotional, it would have to have happened at least once in the show. But, but it's the best thing I've done so far. Because the risk paid off. And, and when someone says to you, I've never, and I've had this a few times. I've never spoke to anyone about this. Well, I've actually had, I've actually had some people say to me, they've never spoken to the partner about what they're talking to me about. Those, you know, and again, being part of a community understands each other. You know, that is, that is very special. And so, yeah, even though it's scary, it can be so, so beautiful.

Janine 56:17

Really lovely, and very, very rewarding. You know, and I have, you know, I have a friend, good friend who's a mother in New Zealand that I stayed with for several days. And that what's really lovely, she's very curious about this online community that we all have. And she's going she's in rural New Zealand, but isolated, not having a great time of it. And, you know, she was really envious of, she wanted about to get online and reach out to people that she has, you know, things in common worth and get some real understanding and depth. But the other at the receiving end, she was really envious that I had this at my fingertips.

Michael Hughes 57:05

We've just said it, we just had a comment pop up to say that it's lovely to see the depth of connection between between you two. And I would have to second that. Thank you. Yeah,

Janine 57:16

We've been lucky. I mean, as I say, we were the only ones in the same city in the hive.

Cecilia 57:30

I second the whole thing about laughter and lightness and because of course we there needs to be space for our grief and our individual differences and so on. But that we can make a bit of fun about I mean, and we don't have to be scared of what we say. But we actually we can have a little fun as you I mean, a matter when you change the name. I mean, it's it's, that's part of it as well that we can, because otherwise it becomes too serious. And we become too. Too sad. Somehow, we hit and we of course we I think I will always carry the grief with me somehow. But if I sometimes we can also find good ways of laughing about the old thing and laughing about I mean, having laughs get laughs together and laugh about life.

Janine 58:22

Yeah. Yeah, no, I have absolutely no doubts that, you know, I'm 57 soon, and I'm sure I'm going to be you know, friends are soon going to start becoming grandmothers and whatnot. And I'm sure I'm not going to begin with that very well. So there'll be space, you know, there needs to be space to go back into that as well. But I think, yeah, a bit of laughter. And I think that's where you and I are so when we meet we have a bit of alarm creating space for discussing difficult stuff.

Sarah Lawrence 59:03

It's so true, isn't it? We we talked about the journey, but it's kind of that is part of it, isn't it, the grief is always going to be there but it kind of shrinks and then you've got room to have a laugh to, you know, connect with people. I think that's such an important thing to draw out because I think when you're at the beginning of it and everything, everything is really difficult and hard and dark. You can lose sight of the fact that was some point down the track. I'm going to be a laugh again. And I'd love to have that you know you have that depth of connection that you built. And now you can go well you know what, there is light in this as well as well as the dark there is plenty of light and sounds like your group is going to start to reflect. I think we need a bit more fun. I think we need some laughs We need something extra. I love that.

Janine 59:50

It was interesting in reading when the hive met in real life. It was a lot lighter and we did have quite a lot of love. Y

Michael Hughes 1:00:01

That's great too, because you also giving, I guess, giving people some inspiration and, and hope that, okay, I know what they've been through, I get it and look at them well, so you don't have to, you know, you don't have to say you'll get through it, they can actually witness for themselves that are well, that they're, this could be me one day, or they may choose to go, I'm gonna be just like, Janine or Cecilia one day.

Janine 1:00:34

Also, I'm gonna mean in terms of, you know, I have no big. Personally, I have no big thing about leaving a legacy. I just have an idea that we are bits of dust, we come for a time that will just quite shorten the arc of time, and then we do. But if there was going to be any legacy, it's somehow mentor and woman behind people behind us, you know, that? Yes, we can. You do get through this, and you will find laughter again. And that's what I'm interested in. I'm interested in recovering a bit of old Janine Not, not that I will ever be the same again, none of us even will. But, you know, I think I'm richer in some ways for it, but I still would like, you know, a bit of a silliness and giggles and pranks. Thank you. It's always nice being very cheeky. I sort of feel like I might have lost.

Michael Hughes 1:01:37

Yeah, I can understand that. So. So before we wrap up, what, what's what are you? What are you two got in, in the future plans? What? So aside from the childless group, we know you're coming to Australia,, Janine, What about you Cecilia?

Cecilia 1:02:01

I have plans for two writing projects. One about my great grandmother, who went to India to mission and, and got to know grant again very, very closely. And how this whole story tripled down and now a family line. So she married an Indian and my grandmother married in English, and so on, and so on. So I want to write about that. I've done a few pieces so far. And then I've also volunteered for helping people who have been lost their hearing, hearing abilities. Because they actually does all the same things as as we do within our community. They think that the in this community that they need equals both professionals but also equals who have tried losing their hearing suddenly. So I'll do that. Yeah, going forward. And then I hope to travel a lot more again. We've had a bit of pause on that the last couple of years, but travelling to Australia to visit Janine travel, other places to visit some of the people I met through this. Yeah, that's some of the plans. And we'll see what happens. And the second MacBook Pro, probably not to look at is about living in a normal life as a childless woman. And there hasn't I haven't seen any books written in Danish yet. So I went to a writing course a couple of weeks back at the Catholics and E SACD. Innocence home in Denmark. She wrote the African farmer out of Africa. And I wrote some scenes for that. So yeah, some writing projects and some volunteer projects. And then some travel.

Michael Hughes 1:03:49

Let us know when when you have things moving along, because we'd love to support you. And you know, in our way, help you get more exposure for your writing projects if you need it. So please let us know. What about you Janine?

Janine 1:04:04

Well, there is a monumental move. I have a writing project, which is kind of like a memoir ish thing, but I just want to create a collection of little vignettes, I think of just I just had some amazing experiences just yeah, one reason or another, just being at the right place at the right time. And I kind of want to talk about them. With the thing of childlessness, always being there in the background, but not not being front and centre, but the aim of the book would be to basically show you know, that you can have a really interesting fulfilled life without children. So and yeah, so that's what I'm doing as a citizen theory. I've always had an idea about wanting to do a screenplay. I haven't gotten very far with that around childhood. smells and I don't want any miracle baby at the end. And again, I want to be able to, but I don't want Percy and sadness either. I want to just show what we've been talking about here that there is life after those and kind of, can I say a happy ending in that respect? You know what I mean? But yeah, and I'm sick to death of not being, you know, not seeing myself reflected on TV or film. I want to see myself and our community up there on screen. But yeah, they got big ideas, big ambition. Let's see. And of course, being down under and being in my language, and very much knowing how government works and stuff as our heads, I believe, a lot more social capital. So I'd quite like to get involved. And stuff around childlessness, particularly in the workplace. I really like to raise issues about that. And the ability for us to be working part time which, when I lived, it was an absolute no, go and see your apparent usual crap that we get about, you know, having to take up the slack and not getting any more pay for us not even being asked, you know, this kind of stuff. And I also met Don award, when I was in Melbourne, and she's working on a lot of stuff around it was particularly for single woman ageing woman around housing, you know, because we have this housing crisis, Michael in Australia, and a lot of woman ending up in caravans etc. I would really like to get involved with her over some of that kind of work as well. I don't know. I mean, the first thing I'll do when I get off the plane is get a dog, rescue another doggy. We lost ours here during the pandemic, and maybe looking around cancer with kids and pet therapy, or hospice work, you know, working with a dying and pets and things like that. Yeah, so just a mixture. So very similar to Syria, but of voluntary work for the right. And I don't know about travelling, but had some now as far as I recall. Travelling a different way, I guess we'll be close to Tasmania, and of course, close to New Zealand, which will be fantastic. Yeah, I'm saying and getting connected with the Aussie bunch now. And you know, working with Penny and others with their initiatives.

Michael Hughes 1:07:24

Yeah. Cool. Well, look, thanks. Thank you both for joining us. It's been really lovely talking to you. Thank you. Really, it was really, it was. It's great to see you Janine as we have that lunch before and and what people don't know is do not necessarily have we were very nervous about today. But I'm, I know you'd be great. on that. You'd both be great. So it's been wonderful. .

Cecilia 1:07:51

Thank you so much for having us.

Janine 1:07:53

Thank you so much. It's really a privilege and absolute honour. And yes, we were nervous Nellies, but there was no reason to be. You took a risk. You told us as you tell we took a risk a risk.

Michael Hughes 1:08:09

Thanks for listening. We were really inspired by Janine and Cecilia and we really hope you were too.