

Quiet Doesn't Mean Weak: Redefining Strength, Self-Worth & Self-Confidence

Because you build your confidence, you can rack up all these wins, be visible, be maybe loud, and yet if you don't know you're enough at your core, you'll always be chasing something, it'll never be enough. Hi, welcome to You Keep Me Safe. I'm Aileen.

And I'm Julie. And we're two friends navigating life's ups and downs together from opposite sides of the world. Hi, Julie.

How are you going? I'm good, thank you. Just finished my dinner. I had to say that because I saw your coffee there.

Completely different times. Was it a nice dinner? It was a very good dinner. I had salmon tonight.

Or very healthy. It is very healthy. So I feel good about myself.

Anyway, you know, I was thinking as well, we've not yet acknowledged that a month ago, we turned one because we got all these lovely messages we received about that. We haven't actually spoken about that. I know.

Someone said to me, are you going to celebrate talking over this with some champagne? And I thought, well, one of us will be having breakfast champagne. I know. Yeah, that's true.

No, we didn't actually. We didn't make a big deal of it. But it's a wee baby, he's only one.

Next year we'll be a toddler. Yeah, but thank you. It was so nice to get all these lovely messages.

Thank you. It was such a great reminder that what we're doing, it's really worthwhile. And some said they feel like the podcast has helped them grow, which was just lovely to hear.

And it's helped us grow as well in many ways. It's really helped us in many ways, whereas we didn't even know we had to grow. I actually feel so much stronger in myself since doing it.

Yeah, me too. I've been really reflecting on this idea of strength lately, what it looks like, what we assume it is and how often we get it wrong. And I came across a conversation with Jamie Kern-Lima that really brought it into focus.

Yeah, Jamie's story is amazing, isn't it? And for those who don't know her, so Jamie Kern-Lima founded IT Cosmetics from her living room and grew it into a top selling makeup and skincare brand. Then she sold it to L'Oreal for 1.2 billion, becoming the first female CEO in L'Oreal's 100 plus year history. I mean, she's a phenomenal woman.

It is unbelievable. She's not even 50 yet. And on the surface, that's the ultimate success story.

I mean, it really is. But what really stood out was that despite all of this external achievement, she still felt unworthy inside. How she wanted to meet Oprah Winfrey, and then she did.

She got her phone number, but she didn't feel good enough to contact her. It's a totally different story now, but at that time, that's what happened. And she's someone who really helped me understand the difference between self-confidence and self-worth.

She points out that self-confidence is what you can do, your skills, your performance, whereas self-worth, as we know now, it's who you are. It's an internal, unwavering belief that you're enough just as you are. I know some people still get this mixed up.

It's easy to confuse the two, but they really are very different. Yeah, they're very different. And actually, I do know quite a few people who have high self-confidence or self-esteem in certain areas, but actually have really low self-worth.

So that really resonates. And I think that's a really interesting part of her story that being financially and traditionally successful to the outside world didn't increase her self-worth at all. And we've often talked about that, how traditional success markers don't always, or often don't, fill the gaps.

We've watched so many women and ourselves do all the things, achieve, perform, and still feel something's missing. Yeah. I mean, when I worked in finance, and I was doing exceptionally well on the surface, yeah, I was confident, et cetera, but my self-worth was on the floor.

And I think that is the missing piece. It is that self-worth part, because you can build your confidence, you can rack up all these wins, be visible, be maybe loud. And yet, if you don't know you're enough at your core, you'll always be chasing something that will never be enough.

Absolutely. Actually, that word loud really resonates for me, because I think people do associate the loud ones with confidence or even high value. And I know you saw

this in your teen years with people, which I think is a place that that kind of loudness really does play out.

Because in the teen world, the ones who are loud and brash, grabbing attention do seem strong, whereas the ones who are quiet, reflective, maybe more sensitive, often get labeled as weak. Actually, I attracted that weak label a few times in the past once at school and in my adult years from former friends who interestingly were themselves very loud, very vocal, but loud doesn't mean strong. I just really think that's such an interesting point.

Yeah, not at all. But it's often seen like that, as if volume equals power. Actually, loudness can be a shield.

And yes, I did see this in my teens like you and as an adult as well. It plays out in my friendship group at school. One of us appeared really confident, had a certain power being loud, commanding attention, appearing to have it all together.

Underneath, though, she was dealing with a really difficult home life. So her loudness was survival. And she learned early on, you've got to be the first, you've got to be seen, you've got to protect yourself.

And this plays out by way of her manipulating all of us, playing with our emotions, turning us against each other, making you feel special one moment and then the next, giving you dirty looks and ignoring you. It happens in a lot of friendship groups at this teenage stage, especially female ones. I don't have a son, but from what I've heard, you'll know more than me.

It is a very difficult time. I think it is more difficult for girls, but it's a difficult time. I mean, the teen years is when it does sort of play out a bit, but there's a bit of a hangover as well.

In adult years, I think often the ones that have that self-esteem, that loudness, whatever, they have a low self-worth, but they're seen as being very strong. I definitely know those loud ones in my life had their own insecurities, though, and that's really often what it is. But it's hard to see that and deal with that.

So sometimes what looks like confidence can often just be protecting themselves or control, mainly based on fears and lacks. But I think what can happen is it makes those quieter ones get overlooked or misread. But if you think about the ones who pause, listen, reflect, especially in the younger years, they can be seen as weak, or even their strength might not catch the spotlight, but they carry so much depth, compassion, empathy.

So it's such an interesting topic for me because I was always around people who were loud a couple of times, had some close friends, and I was more seen as weak,

whereas they were strong. And it's like, well, actually, it's not that. It's just they've got confidence in that, probably hiding something, some other insecurity.

But it does dig at your worth when you're seen as that. Yeah, it totally does. And as adults, we still engage in these narratives.

It's a spillover from childhood, isn't it? It takes work to get through this. And you and I are still a bit of a work in progress, let's face it, because sometimes we go back. It's not a daily thing like it maybe was when you were younger.

You and I have lived abroad. We've raised kids. We've restarted more times than I can count.

And yet we've been seen as changing too much, unstable, always reinventing. But what if that's not a sign of instability? What if it's a sign of self-trust, resilience, willingness to be your own person? I know someone who lived overseas like we have, and we have a mutual contact. And they said to them, oh, you're one of those people who goes and lives abroad like Aileen did.

Like it was something so awful to do, rather than, wow, you're so brave. But we always say people can only meet you where they're at. Yeah, and I think people are also threatened by the unknown or things that might challenge the way they view themselves.

Because people do often put you down if you're doing something that doesn't confirm their own choices. I've seen that time and time again. People always want to justify their own choices, confirm their own existence.

But it's so interesting that that person said that as if living abroad was a terrible thing, or even changing lives so often for that matter. Gosh, I've lived such an unconventional life. But I mean, if that's equated with chaos and weakness, and that makes me laugh, that's ridiculous.

Because change doesn't necessarily equal chaos. It's growth, right? It can equal courage. But yeah, I think society often misinterprets it based on their own comfort zones.

It's a bit the same as someone, the loudest person in the room is often seen as the most confident or have a lot of strength. But that's not true either. I really, I've seen that play out loads of times now.

Before I moved back to London, it was so apparent that the quieter ones were the stronger ones. But then I would hear people say, oh, that person, the loud one, oh, they're so strong. And I'm thinking, really? What do you? Yeah, anyway, coming back

to Jamie Kern-Lehmann, she did reach some very acknowledged, conventionally successful external milestones, and yet still felt empty.

And she wrote her book, *Worthy*, which is subtitled *How to Believe You're Enough and Transform Your Life*, as a direct result of recognising that fundamental gap, that success and confidence weren't filling the one thing she really needed. And that book really helped me a lot as well. Yeah.

Because they're very different things. That external success or vision of you, it has nothing to do with the worth you feel inside. And I think that it just talks to the loop that so many of us get stuck in, doesn't it? I mean, as we've said before, we live in that when-then limbo, like when I get the promotion, when the kids are grown, when I finish this project, when I lose weight, then I'll feel enough.

But the truth, as Jamie refers to it in her book, is that the external stuff can shift, change, fade, reduce, but the internal part, that's a constant. So if you don't believe you're enough now, then you never will. You'll forever feel like you're chasing.

Oh, completely agree. And there's some numbers that bring this home, actually. According to some estimates, roughly 85% of people worldwide suffer from low self-confidence.

Psychology Today, for instance, one survey showed that Canadians found that nearly 40% say they lack confidence in social situations. And for girls in the U.S., a survey shows self-confidence in girls in grades 5 to 12 dropped from 68% to 55%. Yeah, they're big figures, aren't they? And like, as we know, self-esteem and self-worth aren't the same thing, but the two are really closely connected.

So as you said before, self-esteem is about how you feel about yourself in relation to your achievements and abilities, whereas self-worth is that deeper belief that you're valuable because you exist. And so what the research says is that even people who seem confident and capable on the outside can still struggle with that inner sense of worth. So if we notice self-esteem dropping, especially in young people, it'd be a massive signal that the roots of self-worth are therefore very fragile.

Because if how you feel about yourself rises and falls with circumstance, there's usually a part underneath that's still waiting to feel inherently enough. Yeah, I was definitely like that growing up and for many, many years. And we're seeing these levels of low self-confidence, then the self-worth is usually a massive concern.

I mean, no self-confidence is task-based and it goes up and down based on performance. And, you know, like I said, working in finance helped my confidence, but not my self-worth. As the work I was doing, it wasn't in line with my values as I wasn't interested in material wealth.

I just wanted freedom to have enough money to go and live overseas. And so my self-worth took such a hit during that decade. Another thing that Jamie said in your business, leadership, relationships, you don't rise to what you believe is possible.

You fall to what you believe you're worthy of. And that really struck a chord for me because I didn't value myself as much doing that soulless job. I ended up choosing bad relationships, toxic ones, which really took a toll on me over the years.

I was trying to get over the death of my dad, walking away from a loving relationship and managing my mom for a period of time when she had a stroke in London. That was a complete mess. But with a lot of work.

Yeah, it's a lot. Doing a lot of work. It is a lot.

Yeah. So something had to give. Oh, absolutely.

It's interesting, actually, you said that broking, and obviously you were earning good money and you were conventionally successful, but that actually reduced your worth. Is that because you were putting so much weight on that that it became really weighty, that whole income success thing, I suppose? Yeah. And I think just the environment, there was no, it wasn't regulated.

So there were things going on that wouldn't happen in any other workplace. And that really took a toll on me, being privy to stuff I shouldn't, women probably shouldn't be privy to. That's tough.

That's really tough, isn't it? Worth is such a complex thing. But I love that line that you said that was in Jamie's book, you fall to what you believe you're worthy of. I just love that.

It stings. It does sting, doesn't it? But that's interesting that you were saying as well, that having that low worth that you got from working in that environment led to making bad choices. And I guess that's kind of what she's saying, you fall to what you're worthy of.

So you end up gravitating to what deep down you think you deserve, I suppose, in that way, which is really terrible. And I think it also talks to what we were saying before about the quiet ones, maybe being more solid and strong ones, because just in terms of the way, I guess, you lived having a very big job, lots of money. It's a very loud way of living, I suppose.

People notice it, but then inside you don't feel enough. So it's that dichotomy again, which I think is really interesting. Because I think there's a lot of strength in feeling enough.

All of that external noise, which might be in volume, but you can also have it in busyness, I think. How many people do we see juggling a million things in life, showing a high level of capability and capacity, balancing work, family, the self, doing the managing, the caring. So it's like this whole dichotomy, because deep down, they don't feel enough.

There's a lot going on, whether you're busy or whether you're loud or whatever. But deep down, there's no worth. And I think a lot of people do keep busy and achieve more and be more and say more, which is all loud, because they're just trying to fill that not enough void.

I know so many people like that as well, especially women, actually. It's really interesting. And it can lead to burnout at this life stage.

I've burned out many times. And I also think as parents, there's another layer, because we're modelling behaviour to our children. And if we show our children that being loud or the doer equals being strong, having that visibility equates to value, we might just be teaching them to chase applause instead of inner worth.

Meanwhile, if we show them quiet strength, presence, boundaries, self-respect, we give them a map to something much more sustainable. Yeah, absolutely. It's an important thing to know that loud, and that can be loud in volume, loud in busyness, is like big and grabbing attention, I suppose.

That doesn't mean strong. And quiet doesn't mean weak. I just think it's a really important lesson.

And it is good to model our kids, because the person who yells the loudest might have so many fears. Actually, there's even research showing that introverted or quieter personalities often have higher emotional intelligence, more empathy and more self-awareness. They don't react, they respond.

And I think that's strength. Oh gosh, that's definitely strength. And also, I like the point that just because you're doing something different or unexpected, it doesn't mean weak or bad either.

As I've said, we've both lived lives that might look completely different to most, but we both know that no matter your choice, you'll likely be judged anyway. I've been criticised for chasing money in order to live in a different country. I've been criticised for making money and not buying fancy clothes or material possessions.

I've been criticised for helping others in need when I had money. It's just, it's never, you're always going to be judged. You can't win.

So we each get to choose how we want to live, and someone will always criticise you for something, and we just have to turn off that noise. But what we've done is given us so much growth. And for me, that really is self-worth in action.

I was speaking to someone the other day, and they said they'd made a big positive change in their life. It was nothing, all singing and dancing, yet how much it just felt that their self-worth had improved. It wasn't that it was something they were trying to prove.

It wasn't a big accolade or anything. It was just so lovely to hear them talk that way. Yeah, I know who you're talking about, and I think it's just making that choice for yourself, right? Just saying, I'm choosing to do this for me because it'll make me feel better.

And that's self-worth and strength. Because that singing and dancing, big things that grab attention, they're not necessarily the thing of value. It's often those quiet achievements, that decision to put yourself first, to make a change in your daily routine or whatever to give yourself more peace.

Those are the things that nobody sees that are strong, I think. And the drawing of boundaries, the wise choices, that is strength. So I think some practical takeaways to bring from this conversation.

One big one for me is that gentleness can be strength. You don't need to shout to be heard. Your presence, your consistency, your kindness matters.

And being able to offer those things quietly is strength. Absolutely. And it's also important to note that confidence and worth are completely different.

Notice where you feel capable, and notice where you feel worthy. One might be high while the other lags behind. Yeah, and we need to model this calm strength, I think, for our kids.

Show that steady self-worth matters more than being the loudest in the room or the one with the most accolades. And to do this, it's really important to pause and reflect. Just ask yourself, am I acting from a place of proving or from a place of belonging? Am I doing so I feel seen? Or doing something because I feel inherently seen? Yeah, the self-honesty is a big one, I think, because we often actually can't see it.

We can't see our own patterns. We live reactively too much, but stopping and asking where an action comes from, we can start to see our patterns, which is when we can actually change things. And then I think when we do make those unseen, quiet changes, we have to acknowledge that.

Acknowledge that when setting a boundary, speaking your truth, choosing rest when the world says to perform, they're hidden victories for self-worth. Yeah, one more. If you've ever been told you're too quiet, too kind, too sensitive, and it's weak, it is not a weakness.

Please remember that. It's your power. Your voice matters, even in silence, in reflection, in presence.

This might be hard in your teenage years when you're trying to forge your friendships, but once you reach certain life stages, being this way, it will serve you so well. So if you're listening and you've ever felt like you don't belong, or you don't measure up, or you're waiting for someone to tell you enough, just know that you already are. And if you're parenting someone, navigating friendships, particularly peer pressure, or just figuring out who they are, your role isn't to fix everything.

It's to show them what grounded strength looks like, to say you don't have to fight to be seen. You are seen. We'd love to hear from you.

Have you seen these patterns in your own youth, with your kids, in friendships? Share your experiences, leave us a voice note, or message us at youkeepmesend.pod. If this episode resonates, please consider sharing it with someone who might need to hear. Quiet doesn't mean weak, and loud doesn't always mean strong. So thanks for being here, for listening, for walking this path with us.

And don't forget to join us on Patreon for this week's sanity check. Subscribe for the price of a coffee a month, click the link in the show notes, and until next week, keep showing up and keep believing you're enough. Thanks for listening.

Bye. Bye. Thanks so much for joining us.

We hope you're feeling more understood, a little less alone, or that something we've discussed resonated with you. And if you have something to share, email us at hello@youkeepmesend.com, or message us on socials at [youkeepmesend.pod](https://www.instagram.com/youkeepmesend.pod). Oh, and please remember, we're just two friends sharing our personal experiences and discussing everyday challenges. We're not qualified coaches or therapists, and our content is for general information and supportive conversation only.

If you need professional help, please seek advice from a licensed therapist. And if you don't know of any, we'll aim to help you find one. You Keep Me Sayin' acknowledges the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which part of this podcast episode was filmed.

We pay our respects to their elders, past and present.