

Episode #15: Take Back Your Life with Loren M Gelberg-Goff

1:53 The story we tell ourselves is that this is all normal or that this is life and who are we to expect something different

2:38 The book was in the making in her head for years

2:57 We don't have to do things the way we always have

3:17 Women in age range from 50 up for the most part were raised to take care of somebody else

3:50 We learned on an adolescent level that I'll take the hit

4:00 Doing two things undermining ourselves & Not giving anybody credit for being able to navigate their lives

4:25 It's an ingrained Legacy

4:43 How do we break the ties that bind us - acknowledge I know what I'm doing might be upsetting to you but I'm doing what I need to do to take care of me at this moment it's not disrespectful and I thank you

5:10 When we say thank you we're not combative we're not trying to get them to agree with us

5:25 Fear or trust

6:04 How do caregivers break out of that idea of I shouldn't be doing this, I don't need to do that

6:12 Changing the either or scenario

6:30 Put your oxygen mask on first

6:51 If you don't get that oxygen you will pass out before you can help anyone

7:10 It's an AND not a BUT

7:23 We know the difference between true emergency and a wish

7:35 Allow the difference to exist

7:40 Guilt is a feeling - it's not our feelings that get us into trouble it's our actions

8:00 You feel the pull towards the habit but in that moment you choose

8:10 No judgement of feeling

8:23 Experience this is what I want or am doing right now
8:32 We have to let go of that judgement
8:40 Example - Nurse who had day off - looking forward to planting in the garden

9:08 How could she say no to the call of going to work
9:17 "All I was doing was puttering in my garden"
9:20 As long as we continue qualifying what we are doing as "not important" everything else of course takes precedence

9:30 Do you matter? It's not about what you're doing
9:45 Her afternoon power nap
10:08 Her kids knew if she didn't have her nap the answer was going to be no
10:39 Judgement is built into caregiving we judge ourselves, we're judged by others

11:03 Early on in caregiving enormous amount of praise recognition which feeds your soul

11:22 That fades, it becomes normal and expected

11:34 Looking for acknowledgement and recognition that isn't coming anymore and we never learned to validate ourselves

11:46 If I ask for help it means I'm weak
11:55 Because we were used to living and thriving on external praise
12:00 That is what undermines our calling for help
12:12 Because we think it's no big deal
12:25 "A little and a little makes a full bowl" - is it a big deal?
12:38 Individually those things aren't a huge event but over time you are overloaded

13:05 We are operating in a closed loop - all we're hearing is what's in our own head

13:13 Don't believe everything you think
13:22 As a caregiver "I can't have someone come in because my parent won't like it"

13:42 What are you doing that's so important
13:50 How do we as caregivers break through that cycle
14:05 Just say it doesn't work
14:29 Do not explain, defend or justify

14:42 Saying no with compassion
14:55 This is what I need to do right now
15:05 I realize what's important for you but I can't do it right now
15:23 Emotional blackmail (you're the only one who can do it right)
16:00 We validate the feeling "I know it's hard for you"
16:20 If it's someone who has always been demanding and needy we need to acknowledge it's a change and I know it's hard

16:38 Have to acknowledge who they were before
17:05 I know you're busy I guess you can only come on Sunday
17:17 You feel the twist the passive aggressive emotional blackmail - thanks for understanding mom

18:05 Her husband never wanted to ask for help and then would say you put everybody else first

18:24 I know it's hard to wait
18:44 She would compensate for feeling bad then have to back off of that
19:02 It's our feelings and then our actions that exacerbate the problem
19:15 We are reinforcing the behavior we don't like
19:23 We are teaching people how we are willing to be treated
19:33 When you throw dementia in it adds more everything and you're the one who has to do it

19:55 Yes and no
20:00 Even if it's 2-3 hours a day to get out
20:03 Pandemic has thrown that into chaos
20:25 Breaks that could happen - baby monitor - someone sits outside room
20:40 In general - it is the belief I'm the only one who can do it, they have dementia, they're not going to be okay with anyone else

21:06 At the beginning of dementia when they still some cognitive abilities this
21:16 So that other people are familiar
21:42 Her neighbor's wife had a stroke and he is a gardener
22:02 Knew there was an issue because his lawn and gardens fell to ruins
22:21 He said he cannot leave her side
22:27 She said who could you ask to come and sit with her for 20 minutes
22:36 His answer was I can't do that
22:40 All we can do is offer an opportunity
22:56 Compassionate detachment - no perfect solution or answer
23:05 We are doing the best we can in any given situation and that's here what I can do and when I can do it

23:22 There will be discomfort on either side

23:25 You're going to decide which discomfort you're willing to deal with

23:33 Favorite question - what is your desired outcome?

23:40 Has to be what you want, not what you don't want - whatever we put our energy to gets bigger

23:50 If I tell you to not think about pink elephants the only thing in your head is pink elephants

24:08 Has to be something over which you yourself has control

24:24 The desired outcome has to be stronger than our fear, than our excuse if it's not then we'll give power to "I can't"

25:16 I don't even have the thought process because I'm so focused on what I need to do that I'm not thinking about what I need and how to get there

25:43 Being aware that you are stressed and exhausted you usually have a sense of "if I could just have a hot shower" or "a glass of wine"

26:05 Right there we are acknowledging what we need

26:18 We are aware but we tend to dismiss it

26:31 Have to be willing to say I matter

26:39 My needs and feelings are as important to me as your needs, are to you

26:49 Take that breath

27:04 On a scale of 0-10 how important is it to you have what you want

27:16 If it's less than a 9 or a 10 something else is going to seem to be more important

27:24 It isn't that as caregivers we aren't aware of having a need we just may not have given it a name

27:42 Can't or won't

27:48 Yeah but

27:55 Anything after but is going to discount the first part of the statement

28:09 When you hear yourself say I want to but just stop - on a scale of 0-10 how important is that

28:18 Because the minute we go down the road of the but we've changed the energy and are focused on the problem

28:34 There is a solution for every problem or a problem for every solution

28:42 And what are we looking for

28:51 The problems are so present we don't have to look far for any of them whether they are our own or our loved ones

29:09 We don't see a way clear for a solution

29:17 Break it down to in this moment, what do we need in this moment

29:28 Two minutes - she gives away a 2 minute meditation everybody has 2 minutes

29:41 Shifting perspective, what are we looking for, what is your desired outcome gets you laser focused on what it is you really want

29:55 When you find yourself focused on the "yeah but" focused on I can't it won't work it never has worked - stop breath focus

30:00 No talking just breathing let those thoughts fade away what's your desired outcome and let yourself focus on that

30:47 If you hired outside help it would be 3 people to come in for a 24 hour period but you can't give yourself 2 minutes

31:09 But you don't get that because you don't deserve that - do you not deserve it, because your'e not worth it?

31:19 You just work yourself into the ground because you're a caregiver?

31:32 What do I deserve? Am I enough

31:38 When we base our self-esteem and our self worth on how much we do that creates a problem because what's enough - did I do enough?

31:52 Take back your life group is about improving increasing connecting to our self-worth, our self-esteem so that we can take 2 minutes we can say I matter

32:11 Even when our loved ones are not happy about the change it's not about them

32:24 What happens if you run yourself into the ground and you get sick, now what?

32:38 Are you going to wait for that crisis?

32:45 The only time I get a break is when I'm sick

32:54 People pride themselves on never missing a day of work

33:03 A woman gave a talk about graduating high school with perfect attendance - her mother wanted to take her and her sister out of school to go to the beach

33:32 So much of it is cultural, it's a legacy, the sociology of our lives
33:42 Are we willing to upend those rules, who wrote those rules anyway and are they valid today

34:03 When we upend the norms there is discomfort there is unrest even when it's just our own

34:12 When we can trust there is something healthier, better, feeling more empowered on the other side, feel that breath because now we know what we're working towards

34:26 In that regard making these small changes, they have to start small

34:36 We will never do the big things if we can't do the little things

34:44 Start with I won't answer my phone this time I'll let it go to voicemail

34:49 Set a timer, to start if we're talking about little steps

34:58 Let the phone go to vm and wait one minute and breathe

35:13 If you know they're waiting for you and you're going to be late call them and tell them you're going to be late

35:33 Instead of doing something today I can take care of that for you tomorrow or an hour later

35:43 We can all take one step

35:46 Martin Luther King said, "You don't have to see the whole staircase you just have to get on the first step."

35:53 If I can let my phone go to VM

36:00 If I can see a text and not answer it

36:12 Allows you to be a little more thoughtful

36:58 We all have to do things that allow for safety

37:08 We know what's time sensitive and what isn't

37:32 Let me see what boundaries I can set to have some trust that my loved one is safe

37:44 If I know I need a half an hour.....is there somebody who could come in if my loved one really cannot be alone

38:02 What other support can come in

38:06 Number of agencies or resources around you for help

38:25 At some point it may become a necessity not an option

39:05 Often time there are people, family we can invite in or ask

39:24 Script for asking siblings

39:31 A lot of times people don't help because you have it under control, you don't want me to help, what were our relationships like before

39:40 Maybe we need to bring in respite care

39:54 When we have desired outcome we will look for solutions

40:06 Pandemic risk

40:22 If you don't get a break and you go down what is going to happen to your person

40:29 Forgiveness

40:35 Who are we forgiving why is forgiveness so important

40:51 Forgiveness means we're letting go

40:55 We carry resentment and anger.... the only people it hurts are ourselves

41:10 WE cannot control what other people do or say

41:18 We are letting go of our attachment to them

41:24 Doesn't me we condone what you did or it's okay

41:31 Letting go of the emotional tie I have to that so that I can heal

41:41 Forgiveness ultimately is for ourselves

41:46 As long as we hold onto what you said what you did and how you are we remain stuck

41:56 I'm drinking poison and expecting you to get sick

42:02 You may not even know that you've done anything wrong or hurtful

42:08 Most people do things that are not mean and malicious

42:13 There are things that may be traumatic truly hurtful harmful we still have to work through forgiveness and we do it by working through acknowledging the pain the suffering the hurt the damage thats real

42:29 But we don't have to live in it and hold it in like a badge of honor to become a martyr to it

42:37 Especially when you are caring for a parent who may have not been the best parent for you

42:45 May not have been a kind and loving person and you are choosing to care for them

42:55 That self care becomes even more important

42:59 And making decisions then about what your loved ones care needs to be you want to come from a place that's not "I'm punishing you for what you did to me" because that doesn't feel good (not in a judgmental way)

43:23 What we ultimately want is to be able to look at ourselves in the mirror and say I am proud of who you are - I like who you are and we get there by acknowledging our pain our hurt our suffering and I know who you are

43:43 Exercise in book - Who is this person even though we think that's who not who they should be

43:54 Acknowledge that and I can't change that and what pain and suffering have I been carrying at the result of someone else's behavior

44:09 That's where we can feel the freedom

44:11 Then we can make decisions for the greater good and maybe being in a residential facility is for the greater good mentally and emotionally physically spiritually

44:28 Do I have to live with someone who was abusive do I have to be the only person who's helping

44:33 When we do things out of love and care and compassion we feel better

44:42 When we're doing it and feel like we're being a martyr I don't know of any happy martyr's in history

44:53 What does it do for me? Does it really make you feel better about yourself: usually not we know when were feeling like a martyr and it drains our energy

45:05 Forgiveness of oneself saying yeah I was doing this because I thought I had to I thought there was nobody else I didn't allow any other options to come into my sphere of thinking or believing

45:21 We have to work through the guilt of making that change being able to say alright let me adjust to what it feels like to not be the one

45:59 Its' a process you know intellectually that you know your are doing things in a healthy way doesn't mean we don't have feelings about it

46:12 Work through and forgive ourselves for decisions we make that someone else might not like or that didn't work out the way we wanted

46:26 We have loving intentions and they don't always get received as loving intentions we don't think of them as loving because I'm letting someone else take care of you for a day for a week forever

46:41 How do I forgive myself for making a decision that's for my greater good and that because it for my greater good I get to go visit you and enjoy our time together rather than muddling the waters of how do I create a loving relationship with you when look at all I'm doing for you

47:08 Especially true situation when it's a spouse you're caring for your spouse it changes the nature of your relationship

47:23 If I want to have a loving relationship with you and it's all about the need and the care you have to work really hard to create a different balance

48:10 Life if ever evolving

48:29 We learn to be flexible, go with the flow in whatever way we can, we know when we're stuck

48:45 Virtual group on the phone

49:00 Keeping it ever present in your mind

49:11 As isolated as we all feel, we're in it together

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Facebook group - [TBYLgroup.com](https://www.facebook.com/TBYLgroup.com)

BIO:

Loren Gelberg-Goff is a psychotherapist, author and speaker, and has become best known for creating the powerful, life-changing program for caregivers: "Take Back Your Life". Loren is also a long-time family caregiver, so she comes to this space both personally and professionally. She counsels individuals as they learn new life skills so that they are able to live free of chronic, daily anxiety and overwhelm without having to constantly feel guilty, angry &/or resentful. Her latest book, written especially for caregivers, *Take Back Your Life: The Caregivers' Guide to Finding Freedom in the Midst of Overwhelm*, teaches readers how to take as good care of themselves as they do of those they love.