

EPISODE 148

“JH: I found myself in a space where I had gotten a little off the rails, and I had experienced eating disorders as a teenager, both anorexia and bulimia, but I think of them all in, right? It had gone far enough that I had seen a therapist, but I had pulled it back from time to time. What happened after I had this baby was I started keeping a secret, which was that I had fallen into bulimia, and it felt exactly the same as when I was using drugs.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:31] LW: Hey, friends. Welcome back to The Light Watkins Show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified as their mission. In doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story, or people who witnessed them in action, or people who've directly benefited from their work. This week, I am in conversation with the founder of what's called The Big Ask Method, which is a platform that helps people ask for the help that they need. She is also a huge fitness influencer. Her name is Jamie Hess.

Jamie grew up in New York City. She grew up in a privileged life as the daughter of Joan Lunden, who some of you may remember as one of the anchors of Good Morning America. At an early age, Jamie, like many privileged young teenagers, got involved in drugs and alcohol, and later she started working in PR, and she became a high-functioning addict. Those are her words. Until an accident got her addicted to Vicodin, and then later on that spiraled into an addiction to Adderall, which she described as being far worse than any street drug she'd ever tried.

Her mom had written her off and then had a change of heart and came back and tried to convince her to go to recovery. This time, it actually worked. Jamie was able to turn her life around, and that's when she became a fitness influencer. Then she met her now husband. They were set up on a blind date, and then he ended up proposing to her at Barry's Bootcamp.

Together, they started a platform called NYC Fit Fam. As a fitness influencer, Jamie began sharing her addiction story and using it to motivate people to overcome whatever obstacles they were facing in order to get clean and healthy. She essentially turned her mess into her message.

Secretly, as a fitness influencer, Jamie developed an unhealthy relationship with food. She began releasing her food after she ate. Then, after one particular rock bottom moment where her newborn was in one room crying and she was in the bathroom releasing her food, she decided that she had to ask for help. She opened up to her husband, told him what was going on. Through that experience, she began helping other people ask for help. That's what led to The Big Ask Method, where she now works with other people, mainly women, who struggle to ask for help.

Jamie's work has been featured on the Dr. Oz Show, The Today Show, Good Morning America, The View, and many other television shows. She has a huge social media presence, hundreds of thousands of followers. During this interview, Jamie was very transparent, very open. We go into her full back story, we talk about what it means to be a high-functioning addict and how to recognize when there is an issue. Seeing as how alcohol has been so normalized in our society, sometimes it's hard to know, "Hey, do I have an issue, or am I good?" We talk about the power of asking for help and how that can open up new dimensions in your life and in your career. We also speak about what to say, and/or what's a healthy way to approach someone that you may know who is struggling with an addiction. And we'll look at the steps that you can take to turn your mess into your message.

This was a fascinating conversation. I think you're really going to be inspired by not just Jamie's story, but the way that she relates to her story, because she's a complete open book and I think that when we see someone being so transparent, it allows us to become more transparent with the things that we're going through, if they can help other people. Without further ado, I would like to introduce you to Miss Jamie Hess.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:04:51] LW: Jamie, thank you so much for coming on to my podcast. It's so good to see your shining face again. I think we met last summer in Detroit –

[0:05:01] JH: We did.

[0:05:01] LW: - at a conference.

[0:05:02] JH: One summer in Detroit.

[0:05:04] LW: We didn't really connect at the conference. We just saw each other. But there was definitely a shared bond there and I knew I was going to connect with you at some point in the future.

[0:05:14] JH: That's exactly how I felt as well. We are at this conference for upleveling our game as professional speakers and getting our message out and really honing that skill. It was so cool to meet everybody there, because there was nobody there that was just like, “Oh, I don't know. I'm just going to do in this thing.” Every person there was on a mission to shine their light and spread their message. You, my friend, you stood out and you made an impact on me immediately.

I remember, I believe I was with my girlfriend, Mandy, another speaker there. I think that's when I met you. Immediately, your presence, this is why you're a Zen master. It was very calming. You have an amazing way of speaking. I immediately felt comfortable in your presence. That is so unusual. I just hope you know that you have that gift.

[0:05:59] LW: Oh, thank you so much. In full transparency, I had so much imposter syndrome there and I was like, “I don't need to be here with these people. They're all professional speakers.” We have done little talks here and there, but thank you so much for acknowledging that. Appreciate that. I felt the same about you, when you gave up and told the snippet of your story, I was like, “Oh, my God. I have to have her on my podcast, because that's amazing to overcome all of that.”

[0:06:20] JH: Thank you. Yeah. It's important to share when we have imposter syndrome. I think so many people just stride out on social media and they're like, "I've got this all." That's why we're all so broken and mentally unwise. I think it's really important to say like, "Oh, no. I feel like an imposter 99% of the time." Nevertheless, I persist. I think that's part of the message that matters.

[0:06:41] LW: Yeah. I've said, if you don't have imposter syndrome, you need to go further out of your comfort zone.

[0:06:46] JH: That's right. That's right.

[0:06:49] LW: I like to start these conversations off talking about your early days, childhood era, okay. I know you grew up in New York City. We'll talk about that in a moment. Thinking back to little Jamie, if that's what you were called when you were six or seven-years-old, do you remember having a favorite toy, or activity?

[0:07:07] JH: Yup. Little Jamie, I actually – people used to call me Annie, because I had an afro, like a red afro, which is quite funny when you look at me now. I literally had this big red Annie Afro, from the cartoon. People used to say, "The sun will come out tomorrow." They were literally – It was so funny. It used to make me feel so annoyed. I would say, "I'm not Annie. I'm Jamie." But it's a beautiful memory.

I was very, very close with my parents. I had a really lovely upbringing. My mom is Joan Lunden. She hosted Good Morning America for almost two decades. I had a really interesting upbringing. I think a lot of things that probably other children didn't experience, but I didn't know that it was not normal. Christmas morning for us as an example was always getting up and getting hair and makeup, because my mom hosted the Disney Christmas parade. I always was on a float with Mickey and Minnie for Christmas. That's just how everyone celebrates Christmas, right?

There's a lot of good and bad that come with having a parent who's in the public spotlight. I'll tell you a little bit as we get on with my story about how that affected me later on in life. The early years, before I became affected, like all preteens do and sullen, the early years were great. I

had a really lovely, happy childhood. I'm a horseback rider. I remember my entire world revolving around my pony when I was six and seven. That's when I started riding. I got a pony, by the way, that was named Bud Light. Now I don't know why my mom let that remain his name, or why anyone thought that was an appropriate name for a kid's pony, but we called him Buddy. He was my entire life.

I've often thought back to my passion for that sport, for horseback riding, and I just credit it with saving my – it saved my life over and over again as the years went on and my story unfolds. I'm so grateful that I learned to have that passion and value another animal and his consciousness over my own at a very young age.

[0:09:05] LW: Interesting that you said you saved your life, because it also entered you at one point. Before we get to that, what did you, as a six or seven-year-old on your pony, on Bud Light, what did you get –

[0:09:16] JH: Buddy. We called him Buddy.

[0:09:18] LW: What did you get from that experience, if you can remember back then? Did it make you feel seen? Was it a way to play? What was the dominant benefit that you remember getting from that experience?

[0:09:31] JH: This is the best question. I don't think I've ever thought about it, Light. This is truly actually opening my third eye to something right now, which is that horseback riding was always terrifying to me. Always. It's still to this day, and I rode professionally for several years as well, but I had a lot of physical body fear, because you fall off and it hurts, and it happens, there's no way that your parents can save you from that.

My mom had always been able to bail me out of things that were uncomfortable in the past. But when I was out there on my horse for the first time, it's going to happen. You're going to get bucked off. You're going to get hurt. It is scary to ride on a one-ton animal, no matter what age you are.

[0:10:11] LW: You're really high up. I mean, I'm six-foot, three. When I'm on a horse, I'm like, "Man, this is high up." You're jumping and you're a six-year-old kid, so you must have felt like you were on a skyscraper.

[0:10:20] JH: I was terrified a lot of the time. But I loved the sport enough that I kept going. You know what? You know what I really loved? I loved the feeling of pushing past the fear and coming out on the other side with a sense of pride and accomplishment. It was the first time that I ever had to challenge myself to step out of my box of comfort and security in a way that was really real.

Somewhere in my young brain, I knew that the benefits and rewards I was going to get from doing hard things, being a human who does hard things, that those things mattered in life. I knew I had to stick with it for that reason. I will tell you, it is probably the thing that has made me braver and more nimble and more disciplined than anything else in my entire life, is my long time experience with horseback riding.

[0:11:08] LW: Did you have a coach the whole time, or did you work with several people?

[0:11:12] JH: You have a coach the whole time. Over the course of my life, I had two really major coaches that I was with each of them for about 10 years. When you do one of this sport, especially as a child, your coach is next to God, man. You don't mess around. Your coach is everything. I'm so grateful for that relationship. I think also as a child, your coach can tell you things in a way that your parent can't. I think all of that is very important for children, doing organized sports.

[0:11:37] LW: Was the coach the one that gave you language around, "Hey, you're overcoming fear. This will come in handy one day"? Or does that adjust your six-year-old wisdom maybe from a past life?

[0:11:45] JH: I don't think that my coach gave me that. My first coach was extremely hard on me. I don't know who scared the shit out of me more, my pony or my coach. I think it was my coach. I think, I was just so scared. I was scared of my pony dumping me on the ground, but I

was more scared of my coach and how she would yell at me if I didn't persevere and just fight through the fear. I did it anyway. I learned how to do things scared.

[0:12:09] LW: Growing up, you're an only child, right? I know your mom had a bunch of other kids, but –

[0:12:12] JH: No, I had sisters. I did. I had two sisters. Yeah, Lindsay and Sarah, and they're three years and then seven years younger than me.

[0:12:19] LW: You're the oldest.

[0:12:20] JH: I'm the oldest.

[0:12:21] LW: Okay. Growing up as the daughter of this famous person in New York City, what was that vibe like in your house? Were there any philosophies, or ideologies that your mom would talk about, or your dad would talk about at home, like you should work hard, or you study, or were you being groomed to be on television? What was the vibe like?

[0:12:45] JH: Quite the opposite from being groomed to be on television. My mother is the most down to earth human and has always played it that way. There's two kinds of things at play. On one hand, my mother is extremely humble and grounded, practical, and really tried to raise us and imbue us with a sense of hard work and practicality. I remember, I was just speaking to my husband about this last night, because we're going to take our kids to Disney World. My husband said, "Well, your family ruined Disney for you when you're growing up, because it's like, how could you ever go back as an adult without having all the backstage access and having to wait in line?" I said, "I hear that."

But my parents and actually, my father was the one who used to remind me of this. Every time we would go, he would say, "You know, Jamie, it's so nice that we get to skip the lines. But I want you to understand that someday, you will probably have to stand in the line. When you do, you will meet doctors and lawyers and plumbers and taxi drivers and businessmen and all sorts of different people standing in that line, taking their kids on a ride, waiting for the chance to have this experience. The wait makes the experience that much sweeter. I don't want you to ever look

at having to do things like a 'normal person' as a negative. Understand that in getting to skip the line, you may even be missing a little bit of this experience, because part of the experience is that it's that much more precious by having to wait for it."

I think my parents really worked hard to not ever let us be spoiled brats. I mean, that was just not the vibe in my house. On the other hand, I will just mention, though, that my family very much valued working hard. Today, I have this super-duper hustle culture mentality, which sometimes serves me really well. It could be my biggest asset, or my biggest liability. I'm still stuck a little bit in that 90s mentality of the person who sends the latest email wins.

I worked in public relations for a really long time. That whole *Devil Wears Prada* sensibility from that movie, those were all my bosses. It was not a place that valued self-care, let's just put it that way. However, sometimes I have to unlearn these things. I have to unlearn these things and I have to remember spending that cherished time with my children, making sure that they can see my softer side and hear me with belly laughs and all the things that really matter in life, rather than being so anxiety-driven by work seven days a week, I have to remind myself that balance matters.

But I will also say that much like my own mother, my kids will always know and will always hear me say, "I get to go to work. Not, I have to go to work." They will understand that while I value being a mother and I value them so, so, so much and I love them so much, I value work and work fills my cup. I would be a shitty stay-at-home mom. God bless any stay-at-home mom, she 100% has the harder job. I think stay-at-home moms have it harder. For me going to work was my only option, because that's who I am fundamentally at my core. I need that part to fill me, to fill my ego, to fill also my sense of purpose on this planet. I think everybody needs to understand what fills their spiritual cup and make sure that they're just leaning into those sensibilities.

[0:16:13] LW: Speaking of which, as you were growing up, what did you envision yourself becoming as an adult?

[0:16:20] JH: The first career I had was in public relations. Public relations, it's become something a bit different now. But back in my day, it was very much about securing earned media hits for your clients, which basically meant a lot of really intriguing and creative

copywriting and writing great press releases, telling a great story, networking, bringing your client to the cool events, getting them out, making introductions and being at the nucleus, at the center, at the heartbeat of the scene in New York City, or wherever it was that you were doing that work.

I knew from a very early age that that's what I was destined to do. I just didn't know it was called public relations. When I was a teenager, I was already contributing articles for all of – I was a horseback rider, like I said. So, I was contributing articles to all of the equestrian magazines. I had gone out – every single one of them, either marched my butt into their office, or sent them – I don't even know if we had email back then. Called them, maybe, on the phone. I'm 42. I'm not ancient, but I didn't have emails when I went to college. That wasn't something that we just naturally had when I was growing up.

[0:17:18] LW: Wait. Who told you that this is the right approach? Did someone coach you in this, or you just woke up –

[0:17:24] JH: No. It was completely intuitive. I just had a tenacity, because I watched my mom and I watched – she was in a completely male dominated industry. I mean, my mom – For any younger people listening, who might not know who my mom is, I really respect and value my mom so much and she's my role model, because she came up at a time where there were no other women in really, broadcast journalism, except for Barbara Walters. Barbara Walters really blazed the trail. Oprah came up around the same time as my mom. Obviously, she did it differently. My mom was really the first person to have a baby on TV, and I was that baby.

She actually found out that she got the job on Good Morning America in 1980, at the very beginning of, let's see. I was born in July of 1980. Nine months prior to that, she got the job on GMA. She found out two weeks later, she was pregnant with me. That's the timeline of that. She was literally breastfeeding me in the car and reading her script on the way into the studio, four in the morning. Then for years, until they moved studios, the copy machine room at ABC News had a little placard on it that said, "Baby Jamie." It was still up there for 20 or 30 years before they moved to their Times Square studio.

I was very much a baked-in part of the ethos of ABC News. I didn't realize this till I was older and I would hear women come up to my mom and say how much she impacted them. She was this trailblazer. Similarly, I think I had watched that and just adopted something from that intuitively. You got to go out and make your own way. You don't wait for someone to give it to you. You go out and if you want it, you get it. I was also doing pro bono work for a bunch of – this is in the 90s, a lot of my friends in the horse world were gay men. We were just coming through the AIDS crisis. I was doing a lot of work for all of these AIDS charities and I started doing PR and event planning for them. I still didn't really know that that's what it was called, but that's what I was doing.

I got very into the New York nightlife scene in my late teens. I wasn't even old enough to be in a nightclub, but I started throwing events and doing promotions and DJ stuff. I was doing PR and DJ bookings for all of these entertainers in the gay nightlife scene. I just became very much a part of this hobnobbing New York world, before I even had my first internship. Later on, I would realize that all of those skills I was learning were public relations.

[0:19:47] LW: Were you known as Joan Lunden's kid, or did you have your own identity at that time?

[0:19:54] JH: I worked very hard not to lead with that piece of information. I almost never told anybody, unless they found out naturally. Today, my mom and I do a lot of work and campaigns together. I think it's really fun that we have this message of health and women's empowerment from two different generational standpoints. Now it's a part of our brand, because we each have our own brand that we've decided to merge at times. When I was younger, I was very intent on making my own name.

[0:20:26] LW: You're at NYU, you're still competing in equestrian, right? Your worst nightmare ends up happening. That sent you on a different track and not so great of a life. Can you talk about that experience?

[0:20:41] JH: Riding is a very dangerous sport. I actually had, in the course of two years, I had two catastrophic accidents. My first one was in 1999, I was 19-years-old and I was at NYU. I was riding down in Wellington, Florida. The whole horse world moves to Palm Beach for the

winter. I used to go to school Monday through Thursday at NYU and then I would fly down to West Palm Beach on the weekends, compete, and then fly back.

One of the weekends, I was competing in a very big competition. It was actually the trials for the junior Olympics. The year before I had gotten the silver medal in the junior Olympics, this was going to be my last year to compete in that age group. I was doing the trials to compete one last time. My horse flipped over, jumped, and I shattered my leg. Tibia, fibula shattered. It took me a really long time to come back from that accident.

Now, let me just give one more pulse point. As I was coming through all of these things and making my name as this hobnobbing, little, young burgeoning New York girl doing all these things, part of that identity was champagne and cocaine, models and bottles. That's what it was. If you weren't on that path, you weren't part of this scene. I already had a proclivity to drug use. I think that my mom, when I look back, when I've done some soul searching, my mom being so "perfect," she was America's mom. She was waving an American flag and baking an apple pie, as far as America was concerned.

I almost felt, well, I could never be that perfect. I might as well just go the other direction. I think there was a part of me that, not consciously, but a part of me that made that choice. I had started going to raves. This is the 90s, and being part of the party scene. That's how I found my way to the New York nightlife scene. I started using drugs pretty young. That became part of my story. When I broke my leg, that became this new freeway to painkiller drugs. It was this whole new world of like, "Oh, my God. A doctor will give this to me? I don't even have to go get street drugs. Wow, this is the greatest thing I ever discovered."

Here I was, recovering from this really quite serious injury, but it parlayed. It opened up a new door of drug use that became more habitual. I mean, quite honestly, previously it had been street drugs. It had been part of the New York nightlife scene and part of a recreational moment of my life. This actually became a habit. That was not great. Then I actually had a second accident where I broke my face. I just come back from the riding accident with my leg. Then I went to another competition and my horse tripped and fell on me and I broke my face.

After these two years of recovering from a riding accident and also, getting basically streamlined opiate narcotic painkillers, I was in not such a great place. I also decided to give up my sport, because understandably, I was like, “Was this a really great hobby? Now it's time to move on, because I keep getting hurt, or am I going to do this professionally?” I decided it was not going to be my profession. I was going to work in public relations and move on. I gave up my sport. But, like I mentioned earlier, that sport had been the one thing that was really keeping me grounded. It also provided a bit of an opportunity for me to fly off the rails when I did give up my sport. Because all of a sudden, I was like, “Who am I?”

[0:24:02] LW: What was your relationship like with your mom at that time? Was it contentious, or did anybody know that you were on all these drugs?

[0:24:08] JH: By that time, my mom was like, “You know what? We're done here. I don't know what else I can do.”

[0:24:15] LW: You guys had been having fights and arguments and stuff leading up to that. She would call you out and say, “What's wrong with you?” And all that?

[0:24:23] JH: She had no idea how to deal with it. I fault her for that zero. She had no historical reference for understanding. She hasn't used drugs. She never had any an addictive nature. None of it made sense to her. She just thought I was being an asshole, which I was. The reason I was being an asshole was because I was – my brain was hijacked. I was completely underwater and I had no way of getting out of it. She just let go of the reins and was like, “You know what, girl? Good luck.” I was like, “Great. Let me do me.” I did that and then I ran myself into the ground.

[0:25:05] LW: You mentioned and something I researched that there's a drug to treat opioids. How does that work?

[0:25:12] JH: It doesn't. No, that's not true. It does work. I'll give you a quick fast forward. The fast forward was, I ran myself into the ground with drugs in my early twenties and I started attending spiritual recovery meetings that are anonymous. I won't exactly share which ones, but people in recovery circles probably know. If you have questions about it, my DMs are always

open. I'll just leave that there. NYC Fit Fam, you're welcome to DM me and ask me more questions.

I started joining spiritual recovery groups to get sober. That started an in and out. I would be sober for a little while and then I would just relapse, because I was working in New York City nightlife at that point through my twenties. Then finally, in my mid to late twenties, I just completely imploded. At that point, I actually – the party with over. I wasn't doing hard drugs, I was just completely addicted to things like opiate, painkillers, and also, Adderall.

[0:26:04] LW: Adderall. Yeah.

[0:26:04] JH: I think that's an important thing to mention, because so many people today are addicted to drugs that they're not buying in a crack house. Let me tell you, those drugs were worse than anything that ever happened to me with recreational street drugs. They're very addictive and you should be very concerned if you feel that you have a problem with those drugs, and you should not try to fix it by yourself. I implore you, because it really does take some external help.

My mom finally came banging down my door. I was about 27 and finally, my wonderful stepfather had been like, "What are you going to do about Jamie? She needs some help." I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful that she found the courage to do that. She came to my New York City apartment, and that was the first day of the rest of my life, because she helped me get to treatment. I went to rehab and I'm so glad she did. Now at that point though, I had been put on something called Suboxone, which is similar to methadone, that type of a drug. My opinion, I'm not a doctor, but my opinion, but I have been around recovery circles for 20 years and I've seen a lot of people try to get off opiate painkillers. I think I probably would have been better off just trying to detox off of the painkillers. I think those harm-reduction drugs can be really challenging.

Again, look, this is my opinion, okay? I'm not a doctor. Everybody out there can take it as they wish, but the withdrawal off of that drug was so much worse than anything I had ever experienced before, and took months and months and months until I was normal again. It was really hard. Had I not been in a safe place, like in treatment, there's no way I would have made

it. There's just no way. I'm very grateful that I had that opportunity to get off of that stuff under medical supervision.

[0:27:50] LW: Can you just share a little more about what your mom was able to do, or say to break through that time? I'm sure other parents may be listening to this and they've been having a hard time getting through their kids. Why at that time? Why did that resonate with you?

[0:28:05] JH: She's verbalized several times since that she feels bad that she didn't do it earlier. I don't know that I would have been ready to hear her message earlier, to be honest. That's not to discourage anybody from approaching their teenage, or young adult addicted child, because you should. You save them as soon as you can. At the point that she came and banged down my door, I was so sick and tired of being sick and tired.

I mean, Adderall is a vicious drug. I mean, Adderall is just, it's amphetamine in a bottle. Just so we're all aware, literally, the generic form of Adderall, says on the bottle, amphetamine salt. If you think that you're just giving it to a young person, especially if there's any proclivity to having an addictive nature and that they're going to be fine, you're sorely mistaken. I was just having this whole last year of my life there where every time I started a day, I knew I was going to be up for four days and it was just a literal insanity. Literal insanity.

I was so miserable in that life, but I had picked up the phone to call my mom at least 100 times, and I dialed the first three numbers and then hung up. Because I just thought, maybe tomorrow I'll be able to fix it myself. Maybe tomorrow. I was so ashamed. I was so ashamed. Here she is, this picture of perfection. I just felt like such an F up, without using really bad language. I just felt so embarrassed of my actions.

The funny thing is, is that sometimes we're so ashamed, and so we don't reach out for help because we don't want to let on about how bad our behavior is. In doing that, the behavior gets worse and worse and worse and we just have more and more to be ashamed of. If we could intervene on that cycle, or if I could have intervened on my relapse process a little bit earlier, I could have avoided so much self-harm. Unfortunately, I just wasn't there yet. Her coming to knock down my door, I had just been waiting. I had just been hoping and praying to the universe that she would do it. It took me a few extra years of suffering to get there.

[0:30:01] LW: Were you otherwise successful in your job as a PR person? What does that look like?

[0:30:07] JH: I had been for years. I had had a very successful career in PR. But in that last year, I was “freelancing,” right? I left my last job and my last job had been in-house public relations for one of the biggest nightclubs in the United States. They were in New York, Chicago and Miami. Understandably, in my trying to get sober and kept going in and out, I just said like, “This job isn't the best for me.” I had had a couple freelance clients at that time, I said, “I'm just going to step away from this job where I have to be in a nightclub all the time, and I'm just going to do this freelance consulting for a while, until I get my sea legs under me.”

What it did was, I'm not the type of person, or at least I wasn't back then, who should be left without structure, right? Without the structure of having to show up at work every day. I wasn't there yet. Now, today, I'm a very successful solopreneur, but back then, I didn't have the tools, and so I just completely imploded. That last year of my life was spent scrambling to keep up with these freelance clients that I had. I would not say I was successful at that time. I would say, in fact, that I was so lucky, because all of my yets had come true.

They always say, when you go into recovery groups, they say, “I wasn't unemployed and unemployable yet, or hadn't lost all my family and friends yet. I wasn't homeless yet.” Well, by the end of that, my family and friends had stopped talking to me. I was getting evicted from my apartment, and I really had no discernible job. My yets came true. What I then had was the gift of desperation. That's why I was so willing to go to treatment. It's actually a wonderful place to be is on your knees, because you have no place to go but up.

It's much harder for high-functioning addicts to receive help, because they still think, “Maybe I can bail myself out.” What I can tell you is your yets will come true. Your bottom has a trap door, and it leads you in a deeper bottom. I promise you. Addiction is not a disease that heals itself. That's just wishful thinking. You do need to get help and get better. It doesn't have to get as bad as it got for me.

[0:32:17] LW: That's a question I had about high-functioning addicts, because I think people who are high-functioning may not consider themselves to be addicted to things, right? How do you define addiction in that context? How can someone assess whether or not they are a high-functioning addict?

[0:32:40] JH: There is a 21-question quiz that Alcoholics Anonymous that the main organization, the headquarters has. I believe if you go to their website, you can take it. It does give some really high-level questions that are actually very helpful. It's like, if you answer yes to more than this many questions, you really might have a problem. I would just challenge you to ask yourself, is this thing creating a problem in my life? Does it take up more real estate in my brain than I would like it to? Does this thing have more of a hold over me than I believe is safe and healthy? Those are some pretty simple questions you can ask yourself.

You may still be very high functioning. By the way, it might never rob all of that from you, but it might rob your own energy. It might zap your life force. It might steal your peace. Whether or not it steals your money, or your opportunities, is it worth stealing your peace? You should have the power over your own life and your own choices. If a substance or a liquid is having that power, then you really need to assess that. Because ultimately, by the way, it will get worse. Addiction never just stays static. It doesn't stay neutral. You're always floating closer to, or farther away from the problem. You might want to consider that as well.

[0:33:55] LW: You mentioned that when you did go into recovery, you adopted an attitude of gratitude, which is a feature of the recovery process. Can you talk a little bit about what that actually looks like? Were you walking around, telling everyone how grateful you were, or is it more normalized than that?

[0:34:10] JH: I'm still obnoxiously walking around, telling everybody how grateful I am. Because honestly, in my opinion, the key to happiness is the key to life. I think that there's nothing more important than gratitude when it comes to living a happy life. I hear people all the – there's so much, “Oh, man. It's a matter of perspective.” But there's so many people that I hear that just gets stuck in the cycle of complaining and everything's a problem. It's like, I wake up every day, and by the way, this isn't just intuitive. This is a practice exercise that my husband and I both do.

He happens to also be in recovery, so it's neat. Because the two of us live together, it's like being in a meeting every day and a meeting of the minds around recovery. Gratitude is the nucleus of every single thing that we do. I've been sober for many, many years now. When I wake up on Saturday mornings and I – sometimes I'll just give him a little elbow and I'll be like, “Man, do you remember when Saturday mornings would either be this massive hangover, or we would still be up, cracked out from the night before?” Not us. My husband and I have never used together, but both of us experienced that side of life.

I'll still think about all the people coming home from bars or clubs and how awful that must feel, and how glad I am that I'm not in that lifestyle anymore. On a really generic level, I'm just appreciative that I'm not living in a hangover anymore. But just on a grander level, I do lean into every single day, I'm so grateful for my health, for my opportunity to do professionally a thing that I love, for the roof over my head, for the life I have built. It is all so beautiful. The ability to experience the presence of mind, to see it all for what it is.

I, like anybody else, could lean into the modern annoyances of everyday life, to the client that's not responding the way I want him to, or to the vendor that didn't pay on time, or whatever. It's just not what's important. An attitude of gratitude is the absolute heart of recovery and of a recovering mindset. I make that the centerpiece of my life.

[0:36:12] LW: You're in recovery in your late twenties. Are you working out at this point?

[0:36:16] JH: When I got sober, I spent a couple of years actually away from New York. It was more important to get my sea legs under me than it was to just go running back to an industry that chewed me up and spit me out. Although, I let that happen, but it wasn't the best idea for me to go back to that industry that really is very event centric and all of that. I went back to my sport for three years. Here's another time where my passion for horses saved my life. I was riding professionally. I lived in South Florida for a couple of years and then out on the West Coast in LA for a couple of years, and got myself back together.

I went back to New York right around the time when I hit 30. At that time, I discovered boutique fitness. The boutique fitness scene was just becoming a big thing. When I say boutique fitness, I mean, Soul Cycle, Barry's Bootcamp. In New York, I used to go to Y7 a lot, which is hot hip-hop

candlelight yoga, all of these different places. All of a sudden, I realized, oh, my God, all of the energy that I was looking for on the dance floor, that tribal beat and that rhythm and that communal way of moving and grooving together, I found it again. I just found it on the floor of Barry's Bootcamp, and that same endorphin rush and that high. It was like, I had rediscovered everything that I had loved about finding that community and also, my sense of belonging.

That's part of what I loved about nightlife. It wasn't just the drugs. It was the music and the rhythm and my sense of belonging and this community. I found that again in the boutique fitness scene. I literally transferred my love of nightlife to my love of boutique fitness and it became my new north star. I started sharing about that a little bit on social media at that time and also, with my people around me. I had gone back to New York when I was 30, gone back to public relations and I was working in a corporate environment where I was seeing people burn the F out. I mean, just that New York hustle mentality that I mentioned earlier, right? If you're sending that email from 10 p.m. and you're still in the office, everyone gives you a little low-key round of applause. It's not healthy.

I started helping people with my own best practices around healthy mindset and making your fitness and your nutrition your priority, because that really is – your health is your wealth and all of that stuff. I started helping people a little bit fundamentally one-on-one, and then sharing about those tactics on social media. Then I met my now husband.

[0:38:39] LW: Before we get to your husband, is this when you started sharing your recovery story, or your addiction story?

[0:38:45] JH: Yeah. I would say that I've always been really open about my recovery story. The thing for me is that we talked about this a little bit earlier, I've always believed in making your mess, your message. I also think it's maybe a generational thing. I think back in my mother's, or my parents' generation, you played your cards close to the chest. I think you didn't share a lot. You kept things private. You didn't share your business. This is before social media had become a huge – it was a thing, obviously, but it wasn't like it is today.

I don't even think it was social media. I think it was just my own understanding that I had the ability to save someone's life if I told my story, perhaps. I felt that. I felt that deep. That's a big

part of the recovery community that I was a part of is just sharing your message. One addict helping another should always be your responsibility. If somebody else reaches out their hand, no matter who it is, you take that hand and you help them. I was sharing about all of this together, right? This is how I recovered. This is how I got better. Let me share this with you. It might help.

[0:39:53] LW: I don't know how your relationship with Tracy Young, but she was pitched an idea of setting you up with someone who happened to be 20 years older. You didn't know that he was 20 years older at the time, though. Were you dating? Were you interested? Is this one of those situations where you didn't want to go, but you forced yourself to go?

[0:40:09] JH: It was that. You know what it was? So here I am three years sober at that time –

[0:40:12] LW: Because I hate blind dates.

[0:40:13] JH: Yeah. Here I was three years sober, I'd come back to New York, I'd hit the ground running and I was happy. Tracy Young is a world-famous DJ. She actually just won a Grammy last year. She was nominated this year too, but she won a Grammy the year before for her Madonna remix. She's a big darling of the gay night life scene. Like I said, I was very much in the LGBTQ night life scene. I did PR, DJ booking and planned circuit parties, which is a big thing in the gay club life world.

I used to joke, when I was in my 20s, people were like, “Why are you doing the gay night life scene?” I was like, “I can't find any straight people that can party as hard as I can.” Throw a little glitter on it, girl. Go do a twirl. That was my whole thing. I would just go out with my boys and had a lot of fun. I was still in that scene very much, even though I was sober.

Tracy Young, being a big DJ in the gay night life world, she was actually a friend and a client. She became a client. I was helping her with her PR. I had red carpeted her at an event one night and we were walking home, it was a beautiful New York night. She said, “Jamie, why don't you have a boyfriend? Why aren't you dating?” I said, “Because I'm happy.” Full stop. I'm not looking for anyone to mess that up. I'm good. I have my time to go to the gym, to do my thing. I'm good. She was like, “I have this guy.” I was like, “Oh, God. All right, tell me about him.”

She was telling me about her friend, George. I don't think she mentioned that he was 20 years older than me. She did tell me that he was in the music industry and a bunch of other things that I found interesting. I was like, "All right, fine, Trace. I'll go out with your friend, George. I'll meet him. What harm could it do, right?" We ended up going out on a blind date. I mean, it was just one of those things, Light. I walked in the front door of this restaurant, this little Mexican restaurant in Soho, and I saw these warm eyes and the smile. He looked at me and we literally knew, it was more than those things. We walked in the restaurant. That was 11 years ago and we literally have not basically, spent hardly a day apart in the last 11 years. Somehow, we're still not tired of each other yet.

But we had this dinner, that first night on that blind date, and I think both of us had this thinking like, all right, let's just put all the cards out on the table. If the other person's still there when we're done, then we're good. I was like, "Yeah. Hey, so sober, alcoholic and drug addict in recovery." He was like, "Cool. I've been married a few times and have three grown children." I was like, "Cool." Both of us were like, "All right, great. That's cool. Everyone has their baggage." That was that.

Four months later, we were literally only dating for four months, we were at a Barry's Bootcamp class at our normal 7 a.m. class that we took every morning. At the end of class, all of a sudden, the music changed and the music got lower and everybody seemed to know something was about to happen, but me. I turned around and George was down on one knee, after our last treadmill sprint. We were all hot and sweaty and looked crazy. My mom and my sisters popped into the studio there. They've been waiting in the back. He proposed to me on a treadmill at Barry's Bootcamp. A very cute proposal.

What also happened from that proposal, I think also because my mom was there, was that it got a bunch of media attention. It ended up on Page Six, in the New York Post and it ended up in a couple of different magazines. It started our public-facing persona as a fit couple. From there, because I was a PR and marketing girl, I was like, "Well, this is cool." Why don't we, instead of sharing on our own personal Instagram accounts about all of this fitness stuff that we do, because we each had our own – we each had our own jobs. I also was sharing that PR and marketing tactics and he was sharing about the music industry. I was like, maybe we start an

Instagram account together about us as a fit couple. That could be fun. Let's call it NYC Fit Fam, because everybody on social media right now is using the #fitfam moniker. And so, we did. We didn't know that decision was going to change our life.

[0:44:16] LW: NYC Fit Fam. You're now social media influencers, but then you have a secret. You start developing a new addiction.

[0:44:24] JH: Yes. The fast forward on that is that the account grew and people really started following me through my fit pregnancy journey. That's when the account really had this crazy uptick.

[0:44:37] LW: Were you posting every day, or what was the strategy for growing this account?

[0:44:42] JH: It's so funny. I ran social media marketing for the biggest brands on the planet; McDonald's, General Motors, LinkedIn, W Hotels worldwide. These are my PR clients. Influencer marketing was a big part of that. I had some best practices. But learning how to grow an Instagram account and figuring out your own strategic moves, it's just a day-to-day –

[0:45:02] LW: Trial and error. Yeah.

[0:45:03] JH: Yeah, there's playbooks for it, but no two equations are going to work the same for everybody. I did a lot of IRL events, like a lot of in real-life community building, where we brought NYC Fit Fam into the real-life space. We would do host classes and do nutrition stuff and vegan stuff and all the different – We were just playing with community, the idea of community. Because #fitfam means that. So, getting people together around fitness and a shared love of that.

We did a lot of that. I did a lot of collaborations. I was going to all the cool New York City influencer events. I started getting invited to them and then people start following you, because you're seen in those circles. The account started growing and I think, also, we were just sharing really organically from the heart. I think authenticity always wins. I think that shines through. My fit pregnancy journey, I was sharing a lot about that and people started following me around that. The account was growing and growing and it grew so much that I was starting to consider,

maybe this side hustle is going to outpace my real hustle. Maybe it could be a real job. Let's see.

I started pursuing it to also be – I was getting asked to be a wellness influencer on TV on behalf of brands and stuff like that. I was really allowing it to be a platform to other things. Then I found out I was pregnant, which was wonderful. I found out I was pregnant, I act like it was a surprise. I did IVF. I found out that it worked and I did the whole fit pregnancy thing. Then I had the baby. After you have a child, especially when you're breastfeeding, it's really easy to get very confused about what is right, nutritionally. You have a lot of pressure from the outside to do everything; to breastfeed, to – you have people saying, “You should watch what you eat, because you're fostering a little life.” You have other people saying, “Don't let people tell you that you need to be watching what you're eating, because you should be breastfeeding, you should be eating all the things.” It's just like, “Oh, my God.” You can make so many excuses for heavy eating, because you're like, “Well, I am eating for two” kind of thing.

I just got into this really confused space. My body was completely in turmoil, because having a baby is – It's funny. Everybody asks, “How was your delivery?” The delivery is not the hard part, okay. The delivery is not the hard part. A month to 90 days after is unbelievably challenging. Not only is your body torn apart and there's so much physical recovery to do, but mentally and hormonally, you are just a wreck. I had what I now know was some postpartum depression. I didn't realize that at the time. I certainly didn't even want to admit it, because I was like – I was the positive girl. I can't be depressed.

I was just leaning into a lot of really herbie eating and I wasn't going to the gym, because I had to protect my body. It was just really, really not feeling ready to go back to the gym. I started gaining this weight. I had also, by turning on that faucet of really allowing so many sweet foods and sweet treats back into my life, it really turned on this addiction again in my brain. When you look at the studies on sugar and its addictive nature, it's as addictive as cocaine. For somebody with a proclivity to addiction, to really lean in and dive in with almost a free whole pass to dive into that carby comfort food type of thing, I found myself in a space where I had gotten a little off the rails.

I had experienced eating disorders as a teenager, both anorexia and bulimia, but I think of them like, all in, right? It had gone far enough that I had seen a therapist, but I had pulled it back from time to time. What happened after I had this baby was I started keeping a secret, which was that I had fallen into bulimia. It felt exactly the same as when I was using drugs. All of a sudden, I was keeping these secrets. All of a sudden, it was this thing that it was hijacking my brain. For somebody who's never dealt with bulimia before, you need to understand that it hijacks your brain in the exact same way that drugs do. It is very different from anorexia. Binge eating disorder and bulimia go hand in hand. I mean, one, you feel like you're resolving the problem by making the food go away and the other, you're just not. But either way, you're feeling called, compelled to eat certain foods and to obsessively eat them, in the way that I would obsessively do drugs. Basically, I might not have been back on drugs, but I might as well have been. It was a terrible, terrible secret to keep.

[0:49:38] LW: You're in the public eye now as a fitness influencer and you have this secret and you said, you had a conversation with George, your husband one day. Why that day?

[0:49:48] JH: I had gone back and forth. I would go through a bout with bulimia and then I would somehow pull myself back off the edge. I was talking to my sponsor, my recovery sponsor about it and I was being honest with her. She would send me to some of the 12-step recovery groups around food, but it's really, really tricky, the food thing. It's really tricky, which is why I'm a weight loss wellness coach today. I deal with food in the same way that an addict had support in their addiction, because most of the women who come to me, they don't just, "Oh, I don't know. I have a little bit of a sweet tooth."

It's like, I'll lean in and I'll be like, "Yeah. Yeah. Is that really how it's presenting?" They're like, they break down in tears. It's like, "If I'm really being honest, this has just plagued me since I was 13-years-old." I hear that nine times out of 10. That's not everybody's story, but so many women struggle with binge eating disorder, or some compulsivity around food, or they're keeping terrible secrets, or they're wrapping up candy wrappers, or chip wrappers in a bag and throwing it away so their husband doesn't see, because they're so ashamed.

Or, whatever the case may be, I know what it feels like to be an addict and to keep secrets and to feel ashamed. I don't want anyone else to have to feel like that. Just because it's food, you

shouldn't feel you are owed any less support. By the way, food is murder, because you can't stop eating food, right? You can't completely abstain the way you can with drugs. I can stop doing cocaine for a couple of years and I won't think about cocaine anymore. With food, you have to keep eating food. You keep picking up the addiction and it's a challenge every single day.

I had gone back and forth with this bulimia thing and I would get it under control and then I would go back off the rails. Around the time I had my second child, I got a job on the air at QVC. I'm on the air, I'm the face of their athleisure brand and it's a wonderful job that I love so much. It meant I was on the road, going back and forth to Pennsylvania, which is where I live now, incidentally. I was living in hotels. I was on the road so much by myself. I had never really been honest enough to get this thing fully under control.

Here I was on my own, onlooked after by a friend, or family member, able to do my own thing and get away with it. This thing just completely kicked back up again. I also had a lot of pressure. I was in this new role. I really wanted to do well, and that's when as an addict, or somebody with any compulsion, we tend to really fall off track, because the pressure gets the best of us. I started acting out again when I was by myself on these road trips. It was terrifying me, because it was so clear that my disease was in control. My disease was in the driver's seat of my life. I was not.

After a particularly bad bout, after this one weekend, I just said, this absolutely can't go on like this anymore. I have to do something about it. There's also a story I've told from the stage before where I remember, I was alone with my child and I had an episode where I had acted out with food and I was in the bathroom, going through a bulimic episode and I heard my baby crying in the other room. There was nothing I could do to get to him. I was so caught up with my own doings in that moment. It felt so selfish, because it was. Addicts and food addicts have to understand, you are an addict, right? I wasn't being selfish, because I'm a bad person. I'm not a bad person trying to get good. I'm a sick person trying to get well.

I did know enough about that to understand that I just needed help, right? I wasn't a bad mom. I was a sick person and I needed help. It was just around that time after a couple of those really, really low moments that I went to my husband and I actually wrote – I typed it all in a letter that I

then sat down with him and I gave it to him, because I knew I was – I might lose my nerve if I sat down and tried to speak. I organized my thoughts on paper and then I sat down and I sat with him while he read it and I admitted everything and was ready for help.

[0:54:05] LW: I love that distinction between not seeing yourself as a bad person trying to do good, but a sick person needing help. You obviously help women with this now, but what was your solution once you came forward with everything? What was the next step that you have an eating challenge?

[0:54:23] JH: I truly believe that the same model works for food addiction as it would for drug addiction. I was very familiar with fall step recovery. I put together a plan for myself and then invited my husband in on the process as my accountability partner. Now, the clear distinction to make there is that I was not asking him to fix me, because he's not qualified to do that. He's not a therapist and he's not a nutritionist. I knew what I needed to do to get myself back on track and what type of help and assistance I needed. I just had to ask him for a modicum of accountability and I had to make it very clear.

Where people tend to go wrong in asking their partner for help is that they're too vague. They'll say something like, I've heard a million times, "Oh, I've asked him before." I'll say, "Well, what have you said?" She'll be like, "Oh, just last week, I said, "Gary, will you help me make sure I don't go in on the Doritos again?" Or, "Will you help me make sure I get to the gym next month?" I keep paying for the gym and I'm not going." It's like, "Gary doesn't know what to do with that. God bless Gary's heart. Gary's not the Doritos police. He's not going to knock the bag of chips out of your hand, like at mid-bite. He doesn't really know what you mean by get to the gym next month. What does that exactly mean? You're just going to give him side eye when he tells you to go to the gym.

You haven't really made it clear. You haven't asked for specific help. You guys haven't sat down where you led with vulnerability and told him just the exact depths of your pain and suffering, so he really understands how badly you need this help. Then you haven't put any guardrails on it." Like, okay. What's the timeline? Are you asking for his help for one day, or for 30 days, or for a year? Can you give him a little more of a solid plan, so he'd be able to give you the help that you so desperately need. That's what I did with my own husband.

I had worked with accountability coaches in the past and they had really helped me with different things, food in particular. I did a great accountability program that helped me lose some weight before the first time I was going on television. She was quite simply an accountability coach that we would text every day and she would track my cardio and my meals and help me make sure I was staying on my game. I think that's such a great concept and a great program, but most people probably can't afford to hire an accountability coach for the rest of their life, nor should they necessarily want to do that. What if you could institute some of that in your own hyper local space? What if you could set up that method, that format, that framework with, say, your husband, or your sister, or your roommate? But you really had a plan that both of you understood and you were asking for something that was very tangible.

That's what I do with my husband. I said, "Hey, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to ask you, like when you go away on a business trip, I wanted him to lock." We actually put a lock on our pantry, because – and some people said, "Oh, don't you think that's extreme?" No, girl. I think what's extreme is that I would binge on three pints of ice cream and then throw it up in the bathroom. That's extreme. That's terrible. I'd rather not have to do those mental gymnastics.

When my husband is away, he puts our ice cream that our kids still like to eat. It's okay to have it in the house. He puts that in an outside freezer that we have that has a lock on it that we bought from Amazon and he locks up our pantry. I take out my snacks. I bag them up for each day. I write on with a little sharpie and I organize and I get prepared and I prepare for myself. Then he takes care of the rest, so I don't have to do those mental gymnastics. That works for us.

I work out seven days a week. That is my plan, that is my intention. Without a plan, I'm likely to not show up, because life gets big and I put other things in front of that. As long as I stay on a good fitness game and a good healthy eating game, I tend to go off the rails that much less. Seven days a week, we have a little WhatsApp group together, where we text each other our proof of workout at the end of our workout, just to stay honest with each other. By the way, he might be in the same house, but I still have to text him, because I might say, I'm going to go down and do three miles on the treadmill. Then I go down and I do one and a half miles and I

hop off to pee and then I get scrolling on Instagram and I come up and he says, "How was your workout?" I say, "Oh, great."

Well, if I don't text him the dashboard to prove completion, I'm a freaking liar, and I know it. You know how I know it? Because I'm a human being and I'm going to try to get away with shit. This is what I tell my clients. You set up accountability. You set it up with true guardrails, so everybody stays honest. You ask for help with vulnerability where you know you really need it, like me asking for the snacks to be locked up. Then you also ask for help of being your best self where you also need it. Like showing up for myself seven days a week in the gym. That is where we show up for each other.

Am I asking a ton from him? No, I'm literally asking him to lock up some snacks and accept a text. It's not that hard. But him showing up for me and knowing where he's expected to show up is what works for us. Then that is how I created my coaching program, because it is that exact framework that I teach to other women.

[0:59:28] LW: I love this idea that discipline is really more about honesty with your own tendencies and knowing, okay, I have a tendency to scroll in the middle of my workout. I need to put that guardrail in place, so that I can hold myself accountable. As your partner, George, in hindsight, what's something that he did well that helped you help yourself? Because I'm sure a lot of partners can fumble the ball as well when it gets revealed that their wife, or their husband has a problem and they may overreact, or maybe underreact. What's something that George – how did George handle that in a way that helped you help yourself?

[1:00:07] JH: Well, look, none of this is going to go perfectly. I want to make that really clear at the front end. One of the things that I do with my coaching clients in The Big Ask Method is we actually script, write, and then we role play. I have them practice their ask. When you make the ask, it's like, it's not one and done forever. It's not like you make one ask and then you never have to come up.

[1:00:28] LW: It's a dialogue.

[1:00:30] JH: But it is the first conversation where you get the fundamentals out there. We role play, because people will lose their nerve in the middle of a conversation, especially like, your partner might look at you funny, or have a reaction that you feel judged, or a myriad of things might happen. I actually wrote in my book about – I have seven different archetypes of who shows up on the other side of that conversation, right? Mister makes it all about him. “Well, I always support you in going to the gym.” It's like, “That's not what she's saying, bro. That's not what she's saying.” She's just saying, she needs help, because she hasn't shown up for herself.

Or mister underqualified. “Oh, I don't know. I'm not going to do this. You should just ask one of your friends, or hire a coach.” Or mister likes what he likes. He really loves you, but he loves his maple glazed donuts better and he really doesn't want to hear that they're bringing you emotional pain. They have to stay out of the clubhouse. There's a lot of reasons that the other person might show up with a little bit of, there might be some struggles on the other side.

One thing that my husband did very well is that he just listened. Then the first thing he asked was like, “Just how can I help?” That was just the first question on the table. The other thing that he'd always done that we both always done, to be honest, is that we understand that the other person is perfectly imperfect. That is something that we both learned in recovery circles. He knows that there's days that he's going to try to give me that support and I'm not going to accept it very well. He's going to be like, “Babe, you said you were going to really stick to this particular nutritional plan this week. Do you really think you should be eating that cookie?” I'm going to like, want to cut him. I'm going to look at him with a side eye that could kill a man.

He doesn't have to get mad about it. He doesn't have to yell at me like, “Well, you told me to hold you accountable.” He's like, “No. You're having a hard time with it today.” That's tough. This is as much about interpersonal communication as it is about food, or fitness and how to understand that first. One of the things that I hear from my own clients, time after time after time, is that you then, The Big Ask and going through my program, help them have a deeper relationship with their partner.

They're like, “My sex life is better. I'm using my voice better in all areas of my life. We're communicating better.” I'm like, that's literally what it's about. It's just about the fact that I find in today's world as humans, we try to take too much on ourselves, because everybody's promising

you that you should be able to fix it by using an app, or going to a website, or taking a quiz and then figuring out – That's not how humans are actually meant and designed to function. We are truly better together. We are meant to show up and help each other. Learning how to communicate in a way that's more constructive and also, learning how to roll with each other is too perfectly imperfect humans. That actually is the lesson more than anything else.

[1:03:25] LW: How and when did you decide to go public with this issue that you were grappling with?

[1:03:32] JH: Well, as an influencer, as a job, a big part of what I do is sharing about every part of my life, right? It was so funny that I truly could not get myself to go public about this for a long time. By this, I mean the bulimia. I've been public about my drug story for a very long time. Something about food felt so much more shameful. I talk about this now all the time. What is that about food? Why should we be so much more embarrassed, especially as women? It's like, I had no problem being like, "Oh, yeah. I did all these crazy drugs." It was almost like a little sick badge of honor on that.

Oh, I was the night life girl. I got to go into the club. I need the DJ. But you want me to admit that I would closety like a box of Girl Scout cookies? I can mortify. Why? Why? They're all just my normal human being shortcomings and my addictive brain leading me around on a leash. It's just an ongoing battle. I shouldn't feel bad about having to fight that battle. It's just a battle I've been fighting my whole life. For some reason, food felt so much more egregious, and so much more shameful than drugs. That's unfortunate.

I think by the time I finally did come out with that, I was able to make that a part of the message, too. The response that I got back from women fighting their own hard fight and their own battles was unbelievable. I started helping women just out of the kindness of my heart and just because that's what social media does, it allows us an open door through our DMs to people. I started helping people with stuff like this and being an accountability partner with other people, and just doing it ad hoc.

When I started working with a business development team, when I was working on the proposal for my book, they were like, "So, you don't do any coaching?" At that time, I was really just an

influencer and a media centric type of gal, and a brand ambassador for big brands. I said, “Well, no. I don't coach. I don't have a B2C business per se. I do coach literally hundreds of people in my DMs, because they come to me and then we become buddies.” They're like, “I'm sorry, taking back to the part where you're coaching hundreds of people, but you haven't set it up as a formal business.” I was like, “Yeah, I guess that doesn't make a lot of sense.” That's just because I could be monetizing it, but because I could be helping so much more people by just destigmatizing it.

They helped me create The Big Ask Method, which is the program that I run today. I coach people through two different ways, which is I do one on one, and then I also have a group boot camp that I take about eight to 10 women through a group boot camp environment, which is done on Zoom over the course of an eight-week period. Once I started interspersing my story in, it was about the same time that I started making this a part of my mission.

[1:06:25] LW: You also said that the food thing, wanting to lose weight, or abusing food is never really about the food. It's about something else. Do you need a coach to discover what that is? Or is there a way to figure that out on one's own?

[1:06:44] JH: You can absolutely figure that out on one's own. Well, you can ask yourself some very important questions, right? A lot of what I do with women is just, and this is why it is helpful to get a coach, because sometimes we can't be as honest with ourselves as somebody else will push us to be. The same reason that you might stop after doing a couple reps in the gym, because you're a little bit tired. If you work with a coach, they're going to make you do that last two or three reps to push yourself.

When I coach women and they say, “Well, I just have a sweet tooth.” Then when we get to the bottom of it, it's – For instance, I had a coaching client recently and she had recently lost her husband. She was just convinced that she deserved – I mean, she was still on the couch and eating bags of candy. I mean, bags of candy. She was an older woman and had raised adult kids and now had grandkids. She was just hanging onto it, like, “I deserve it. I had been through such a hard time.” She was able to justify her behavior by letting herself off the hook, because she had had such a tragic experience.

I said, "Taking nothing away from your need to self-soothe and self-care yourself into a healthier you, do you think this is what he would want for you? Do you think this is how you're going to best show up for your kids who now, you're the sole surviving parent, you were literally eating yourself into an early grave." We don't ask ourselves these hard questions quite often. We can't, because they're very painful, right? When you have somebody else who's willing to challenge you and is willing to help you get there, she was able to stop letting herself off the hook.

By the way, part of why she was remaining in depression, part of why she was remaining in a feeling of victimization, self-victimhood is because she felt like crap about herself. It was many pounds of her weight, but more importantly, her gut health was a wreck. I mean, our gut is where we make 90% of our serotonin. She was eating bags of chemical-laden candy. How are you ever going to recover?

I mean, food is medicine. If you don't believe that, you're listening to the wrong folks, okay? Food is medicine. You can literally recalibrate your mood by eating better foods. How is she ever going to heal if she was feeding herself like this? By challenging her and getting her uncomfortable, I mean, she cried through some of our early sessions, because I was asking her questions. By doing that and getting to her why, she was able to start to heal and recover.

By healing and recovering and starting to absolutely improve her nutrition and her level of movement and actually getting her endorphins going and getting a little sweat on, she healed herself to a place where she could see herself no longer as a victim and she started to actually change fundamentally from the inside out. That's why I say, this is so much deeper than a diet. To answer your original question, can you ask yourself those hard questions? You can. I challenge you to really sit down and do some soul searching, but it might also be helpful to work with a coach, like me, or work with a therapist to say, "Hey, am I really asking the questions that are hard enough, so I really get to the root of what's going on?" Because unpacking your why is critical to figuring out the next step.

[1:10:05] LW: Beautiful. Well, I think that's a great place to end. I want to thank you so much for using all of your life experience to help other people feel grounded in the same way that you felt grounded as a little girl. It's clear that you have very much found your calling and your purpose.

I'm excited to be able to call you an acquaintance and hopefully, maybe one day we could spend more time together and develop the friendship.

I know you have a podcast as well that you co-host. You have your Big Ask platform. You're coming out with one book and you have another book in the pipeline. You're doing a lot of big stuff, keynote talks, all of that. I'll definitely put everything in the show notes to help people find you. Yeah, thank you so much for turning your mess into your message and for being an inspiration to us all.

[1:10:50] JH: Thank you. One last thing I'll just mention is that there is a retreat that I'm hosting with a couple of other transformational people in the wellness space, happening April 20 through 23rd. We're calling it The Reset Retreat. It's taking place in Orlando, Florida. I'm co-hosting it with Dr. Don Wood. Also, Anne Mahlum, who's the founder of [solidcore], and a woman named Nikki Sharp. I don't know if who she is, Light, but she's incredible.

[1:11:15] LW: I do. Yeah, Nikki's awesome.

[1:11:17] JH: Yeah, the four of us will be down there in Orlando. I have a few spots left, so if any of your listeners would like to come, if you could put the landing page in the show notes, I'll also say it here, because I'm going to give your listeners a very nice discount in a moment. The landing page is thebigaskmethod.com/retreat. If any of your listeners, Light, would like to come to that, the code for 20% off, which is a substantial discount off of that price, is Reset20.

[1:11:48] LW: Thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:11:51] LW: Thank you so much for listening to my interview with Jamie Hess. For more inspiration, make sure to follow Jamie on the socials. She is @NYCFitFam. F-I-T-F-A-M. Of course, I'll drop links to everything that Jamie and I discussed in the show notes on my website, which is lightwatkins.com/show.

If this is your first time listening to the Light Watkins Show, we've got an incredible archive of interviews with many other luminaries, who share how they found their path and their purpose. People like Humble the Poet and Ava DuVernay and Ed Mylett and Saul Williams and Marcus Samuelsson and Steven Pressfield and Zachary Levi and many, many more. You can search the interviews linearly, or you can search by subject matter in case you want to hear just episodes about people who've taken leaps of faith, or people whose main story is about overcoming financial struggles, or people who've navigated health challenges. You can get a list of all of those categories at lightwatkins.com/show.

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Then finally, to help me bring you the best guests possible, it would go a really long way if you could just take 10 seconds to rate this podcast. The way you do that is you glance down at your device, you click on the name of the podcast, you scroll down past the seven previous episodes, you'll see a space with five blank stars. If you like this show, if you like what we're doing, tap the star all the way on the right and you've left us a five-star rating. If you want to go the extra mile, I always encourage you to go the extra mile, you can leave a one-line review of what you like about this podcast, or what you like about the interviews, or if you have an episode that you recommend a new person should start with, all of those could be helpful in terms of spreading the word of this show and helping me to get bigger guests for you. I really appreciate that and I thank you in advance for taking the time to do that.

Otherwise, I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with another story about someone just like me and you, taking a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, keep taking your leaps of faith. If no one's told you that they believe in you recently, I believe in you. Thank you very much and have a great day.

[END]