

#63 – Unleashing the Power of She with Crystal Jackson

Donna Ferris: [00:00:00] Welcome to Bounce Back Stronger, the podcast that explores ways to find peace and purpose no matter what happens. Today, we have author and psychologist Crystal Jackson with us. A little bit about Crystal: Crystal's personal essays connect women from all walks of life, creating a community where humor, Honesty, and vulnerability reign supreme in a world where being seen and heard is not always guaranteed, especially these days.

She has crafted a space where women feel understood and acknowledged. Her words have graced the pages of renowned platforms, such as Medium, Thought Catalog, Elite Daily, Your Tango, and Elephant Journal, as well as the pages of her Heart of Madison contemporary romance series. But Crystal Jackson is not just a writer. She's a therapist who brings a unique perspective to the intersection of mental health, relationships, and personal development. And I've been a longtime follower of your work Crystal and I'm so glad to have you back on the podcast

Crystal Jackson: Yeah, I'm so happy to be [00:01:00] here

Donna Ferris: And last Valentine's Day, we had you on for an episode called The Unexpected Joy of Being Single, which was counter-programming for Valentine's Day.

And I will tell you, initially, it didn't do that great, but it is one of the more popular episodes. I figured it would be because the idea of enjoying being single hits a nerve for a lot of people. And then, after everything's been happening with the election and your recent pieces about decentering men and pick me societal structures and self-prioritization, I really wanted to have you on again for a second Valentine's Day episode to cover these topics, which a lot of women are thinking about today.

Crystal Jackson: I think it's assumed that we're not happy single, that single is a state that you want to change. So, really embracing it and choosing it does run counter to the kind of societal mandates. You hear from as young as puberty that you're supposed to find a [00:02:00] partner. And so to be in my 40s and have absolutely no interest in that, it's been very interesting.

There's a wave of women who are opting out of dating and relationships right now. And it's, honestly, it's wonderful to see.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, I didn't know about the 4B movement, which I might just take a moment here. So this is a movement that happened in Korea.

The B's are B words in Korean, but they stand for no sex, no giving birth, no dating men, no marriage with men. So it's a real response to the experience that women have had in Korea. However, after the election, people started picking that up here. Obviously a difficult thing to put into practice.

I think you wrote a piece called Decentering Men, which [00:03:00] might be a really interesting thing to talk about.

Crystal Jackson: Well, I had never heard of the 4B movement either until the election, and then all of a sudden, it's extremely prevalent.

And I read about it a little bit, but I already have children. I've been married, I'm divorced, so I kind of started looking into the broader picture of where do I fit in with something like 4B if that is an initiative that I wanted to take. I did much reading and I came across the idea of just de-centering men because with 4B it's we don't date them, we don't marry them, we don't have children with them, you know, there's, we don't have sex with them. So it's still about them. What I like about decentering men is it takes them out of the equation. It's not about them. It's about us. This isn't a punishment of men. It's a response.

And some of that response is the way that men are [00:04:00] voting, the way that they're thinking, and the way that they're treating women. So a lot of women are taking a step back and saying, I don't want this in my life. Where de-centering men comes in is it's just not about them. So how we dress, how we present ourselves, how we interact in society, it's not for the male gaze. It's not for male approval or validation. It takes them out of the equation entirely. As far as like, you just live your life. You focus on yourself. You don't center them in the topic of conversation. It really appealed to me on a lot of levels because it's just thinking about going to the grocery store and not putting on makeup or fixing your hair.

There's kind of a thing in the back of your mind where you think about how you'll be perceived, but we're really not thinking about how we'll be perceived to other women because frankly, other women of any sexuality generally don't care. It's the men who might pass judgment and you learn from [00:05:00] so young in age to present yourself in what is considered an attractive way.

So if I go to the store looking like a bog witch that just rolled out of bed, how will I look, to potentially an attractive member of the opposite sex? And so that gets internalized so young. So I like the idea of just taking them out of the picture and really starting to focus on what we want, and some of what we want is to not be involved with people who don't see our rights as basic human rights.

Whether that's reproductive rights or just the right to be able to be in public without being commented on or touched or just all the ways that women are generally harassed that is accepted by society. Yeah, so I think it's a good alternative for people who don't feel like 4B is something that they can really stick with or don't feel like they fit the picture.

Like they've had kids or they're in a relationship and they want to be a part of a movement and they want that solidarity with other [00:06:00] women. It's kind of hard to do that if you're in a healthy relationship, and then 4B comes along. It also leaves out men who are strong allies to women.

Not the ones who just pay lip service to the idea, but the ones who are actively on our side. I think it leaves them out. And frankly, I think in some ways it leaves out lesbians and bisexual and pansexual people who are only having sex with men. And it's not only men who are the problem.

Some women are problematic. So I think decentering men really just destabilizes some of society in what I see as a really positive way. Because it doesn't make it about them, so it's fascinating to me.

Donna Ferris: It is fascinating. And did you write the piece about Pick Me?

Crystal Jackson: Yes. Yes.

Donna Ferris: So, talk a little bit about that. I related to that.

Crystal Jackson: Yeah, of course. I am a *Grey's Anatomy* fan. I had a former partner who really got me into binge-watching that show. There's so [00:07:00] much trauma from all the characters lost along the way of loving that show.

And any *Grey's Anatomy* fan is with me on that and can immediately call to mind people. But there's this, pivotal scene where Meredith Gray says, you know, pick me, choose me, love me. And even the actress talks about how humiliating it was to be put in a position of even having to say that to a man. Pretending it was so hard for her, but the reality is a lot of us say that with our actions and for a long time I was so concerned with being chosen and being

loved by someone else that I wasn't choosing me or I wasn't thinking about actively choosing them because I was so concerned with this pick-me energy. I think it does a lot of negative things.

It makes us treat other women like competition and enemies. It makes us self-sacrifice in ways that aren't healthy. [00:08:00] It really is back to centering men. It's like we want them to pick us. So bad, or we want a partner to pick us so much that we're willing to give up pieces of ourselves until there's not a lot left.

And for me, it came to that point where I had put all of this pick-me energy into this relationship that, in the end, didn't work out. And I didn't understand it. I couldn't understand how something that felt so right didn't feel right to the other person. And when it ended, I finally realized how much of myself I'd given away and what was upsetting to me is I felt like I had done that in my marriage and I thought I had learned my lesson and then I get back out there and I fall in love and I fall right back into it again and that was hard.

It was hard to say, like, oh, man, I fell back into that pick-me energy, and I wasn't thinking, do I choose this person? Do I like how I feel in this relationship as it is now with no [00:09:00] changes? I was giving things up, and a lot of that was authenticity, being honest about what was happening in the relationship because I was walking on eggshells at that point.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, and I think these things go together as you said, I think we may not realize we've been doing it our whole lives I don't think I got it. For a long time, I was buying into that idea of I want to be the one that's picked. I want to be the one that's noticed. We get trained in that a bit. So then, you start not caring much about that, which is part of decentering yourself, right?

You're just not gonna worry about what they think, and then there's a relief to it But it's also like then who are you? Who are you when you stop doing that?

Crystal Jackson: Well, I think it was a gradual process, even though that break-up pushed me a lot. It was a gradual process of seeing the little ways in which I had given myself up because nobody was asking me to do it.

I wasn't with a partner who was demanding [00:10:00] that. I just naturally did that to keep the peace, the relationship, and things going. And afterwards, kind of had to look around and say like, who am I now? Who am I in the future now that this relationship isn't a part of it?

What does my life look like? And having to reimagine, all of it. Then, the next time that I got out into the dating world, it was interesting that I was choosing, and I think it may have been the first time in my life that I was dating in that very intentional way of having conversations.

When I saw that someone was not a good match for me, I didn't get emotional about it. I wasn't unkind about it, but I could say, this isn't working. I can see that we're not a good fit. And I moved so much more easily through all of those interactions because I wasn't waiting for them to pick me, a lot of them would have, but they would have done it at their [00:11:00] own expense because they would have been giving something up.

And I could see that they just weren't a good fit. So it was interesting how it changed my perspective. And I don't think I'd ever dated like that before. It was like, I like this person. I want this person to pick-me, and I will make it work. I will make myself fit into this mold. And we do it in jobs.

We do it in relationships. We do it in so many family contexts that I don't think we see ourselves. Like I wouldn't have said I was a pick-me girl. I've always been very independent. I've always been a feminist. I would not have seen myself that way. And it was absolutely true because that's the programming of living in a patriarchal society. You want to be picked?

Donna Ferris: Yes. You want to be picked. Well, it was interesting. Somebody said to me the other day, like, why do you always dress up when you go out? I'm like, because you kind of have to get any respect as a woman. You do have to do that. And I was asked by, you know, a white [00:12:00] male, and they don't have to do that.

Crystal Jackson: No, they don't even have to like do anything with their hair. They can, even men with a full head of hair can roll out.

Donna Ferris: Yep. But I can't do that. I mean, I've done it. I've actually had the experience. So I used to travel all the time for work. So I always was dressed, you know, for a meeting in a suit.

And I remember not dressing that way with my kids. So I was with my kids as a mom. And, I had all this priority on the airline and everything, but they treated me completely differently. And I remember that moment going, "Oh, it's because I'm with my kids, and I'm dressed differently."

And even though I have all this priority on this airline, you don't care because I'm not dressed the way that you respect. And I'm a mom. So it is really real. I still dress up for things because if I know I need to get something done, I'm gonna have to look a certain way. It's not worth it to me to have that disconnect because I need to get something done.

Which is sad [00:13:00] but true, and we are white I mean, so let's just let's say we have a bunch of privilege right there. So it's been eye opening in a lot of different ways, these realizations for me at least

Crystal Jackson: Oh, absolutely. And there are those layers of privilege that even as a white woman, there's so much that you have to do to present yourselves where maybe a man puts on a suit or a nice collared shirt. But he doesn't have to do makeup or spend much time on hair or even facial grooming anymore.

They can just go out into the world. They're given respect simply because they're men in a patriarchal society. Women get a lot of disrespect when we go out. And I think that's hard for men to understand that we go out with an entirely different perspective. And how we operate in the world is the putting the keys in your knuckles, going out to your car in a parking garage.

Women [00:14:00] think like that all the time. And it's not that we're paranoid and suspicious. We're dealing with real-world realities and being cautious because of that. And it's smart. Even smart girls become victims. I don't think men realize the layers we must go to.

And it's healthy for women right now, taking men out of the picture and saying, well, what do I want my life to look like? I have a lot of freedom because I am freelance for the most part. When I go out, I dress how I want to. I present myself the way I want to present myself because I'm not held to a particular dress code or corporate environment.

It has made some changes in the way that I present myself, but you're right. You still have to put yourself together in a certain way, depending on the context of the business you're going to conduct. I think it's a sad reality for most women.

Donna Ferris: I do. I [00:15:00] do.

So maybe we move into the consumerism piece that you did, which I think is really related there. I think we as women get sold a lot of stuff. Like if you look

at your Instagram feed, right? And I'm really trying this year, for a lot of reasons, trying not to spend money.

It's interesting to see how little of a footprint I can make in terms of spending. And it is amazing how much I get sold. All the time. Let's talk a little bit about that piece that you did.

Crystal Jackson: So I had an upper respiratory infection for like 15 days through the holiday.

So all of Christmas, all of New Year's, and it gave me a lot of time to think about things. And of course, I'm laying in my bedroom, which at the time was very messy, and I could feel my closet on the other side of the room judging me because I know that the laundry is piling up, particularly as I'm sick for a couple of weeks and I'm not doing any of it.

But to be honest, it's been like that for a while. And so when I started to feel a little bit better, I went and sat on the floor of my [00:16:00] closet and sorted it. If I haven't worn it recently, if I put it on and then immediately take it off because I don't like how it fits or how it looks or how I feel in it.

Those are the things I started putting away and I've decided I was gonna set them aside for a little while and then give them away to friends or donate or whatever. But I'm going through this closet. And even when I'm done, the massive amount of clothes is just a perfect example of overconsumption.

It would take me a really long time to wear every single item that I own in my closet. And what's funny is when I finished this big, huge sort, I decided I needed a dress. Because I go to these work events that are fancy and I have all of these little shawls and cardigans and different things that I can put on and all these little kimonos, but I needed another dress.

No, I don't need another dress. Look, there are so many dresses hanging, but it's funny because that's where my mind went is I got out of that awful messy closet [00:17:00], and I bought a dress. And then I added a shirt to the cart so I could get free shipping. Free shipping. It's not free. I just added a shirt to pay for it.

And I didn't need another shirt. And then it made me sit down and evaluate my relationship with the whole big picture of consumerism, not just fast fashion, which is something I've been looking at for a while and trying to switch to more sustainable, eco-friendly brands, fair trade, vegan brands that care about their impact.

Thrifting clothes, getting it used, like I'm thinking of all those things, but the reality is I don't need any more clothes for a really long time. But you can't go on social media without swiping through so many ads because they follow everything that you do online. They're targeted to you.

So I keep getting the same ad for this red light facial massager thing that's supposed to like remove fine lines and wrinkles and take the [00:18:00] water weight out of the neck area so that you look slimmer. And it's in a very attractive ad, and I watch it over and over again, and different brands keep popping up for me in case one of them works.

And I've done the research, and the research says this doesn't work. There's not a correlation. It's in your head. If you have any progress, it might be because you're just taking better care of your skin

Donna Ferris: And drinking a lot of water, which tends to help.

Crystal Jackson: And you moisturize because I don't do a lot of it myself.

Donna Ferris: Yeah.

Crystal Jackson: Yeah. So you moisturize before you put it on. So it's one of those things where you'll be moisturizing more, and maybe your skin will look better. So I know it doesn't work, but how often did I sit there and watch an ad and think about it?

How many times did I click on it and look at the price before going absolutely not? And coming back out. But the thing is, I don't need it and I have products that are sort of similar to that because they like to sell women anti-aging products. They want to sell us [00:19:00] youth that they want to scare us into thinking we need something that makes us appealing to whoever we date.

They want us to lose weight. There is a yoga app that looks so neat, and I'm so angry with them because every ad is about doing this somatic yoga for weight loss. Not so that you feel better about yourself. Not so that you can embrace the entire yoga lifestyle. It's so that you can get skinny and trim your waistline.

With this somatic yoga, I have left so much feedback and so many comments that they have deleted because it comes up for me, and I know it's coming up more because I'm engaging, but they're trying to sell us something we don't need. They're trying to say you have a problem.

We can fix it. You're getting old. Let's remove those wrinkles. Are you putting on weight? You don't need to do that. Here's how to take it off. But the whole point is for them to make money [00:20:00]. And they can't make money if we don't feel like we need anything. If I feel like I've got everything I need they can't sell me something

Donna Ferris: Or if it doesn't relate it to some sort of basic thing that we lack this basic lack that we feel.

Crystal Jackson: Yeah, I mean, that's where it's a self-esteem issue Yeah,

Donna Ferris: It's totally self esteem, and I swear if they said meditation would, help you lose weight, I think people would meditate. I think they should try that. I don't really care, but they should try it.

Crystal Jackson: Well, honestly, the stress relief probably does have a positive cortisol response, and you could lose weight.

Donna Ferris: I mean, it'd be wrong, and no self-respecting meditation teacher would do that. But, like, I wish they would so that people would start to meditate.

Crystal Jackson: And frankly, it's a good marketing point and it's an effective one. Because I'm thinking up until this point in my life where I'm just a “hard no” on all these sales tactics, it worked for me for a long time.

I've done a lot of these, and I would do them hoping I would lose weight [00:21:00] or hoping that these other benefits would come in. And frankly, you know, and this was something that was really hard for me to admit for a while, but I am at my highest weight. I am at a higher weight than I was at when I was pregnant with my child who was almost nine pounds.

And I was a thin girl growing up and would get criticized for that. And then in my twenties, I started putting on weight and I'd get criticized for that. And I feel really comfortable in my own skin right now because it's not about the number on the scale. And I will say this, this last year, I haven't been exercising as much and it is something I want to get back to because I like the way it makes me feel, but I don't want to step on any more scales outside of a doctor's office.

If I could bypass that, I would.

Donna Ferris: Me too.

Crystal Jackson: I don't want to look at the number. I don't want to try to get to a different clothing size. I just want to love my body as it is. And that's such a revolutionary idea for women because we're told, "Oh, you've put on weight. You don't need to do that."

And then they want to list all of these [00:22:00] health reasons, but let's be honest, it's not really about health. Because if it were about health, they would be looking at other measures of how you're nurturing your body through what you eat, your lifestyle, your stress level, you know, all these other factors.

They don't care about that. They care about the number and what size you are. And that's not the same as health. So it's been really revolutionary for me to be like, yeah, no, I acknowledge the weight. It's there, it was an adjustment at first. And now I'm like, I won't be suckered into some kind of scheme that tries to make me feel bad about myself so that I'll buy their product.

Donna Ferris: Good for you. Yeah.

Well, I think maybe this is taking us into the self-prioritization piece that you did too. We've been talking a lot about all these outside factors that drive us to act in certain ways and not put ourselves first.

Maybe there's something there to talk more about is how do we prioritize ourselves and what we really [00:23:00] need as opposed to what everybody else thinks.

Crystal Jackson: I think a lot of that is living intuitively. Like they talk about intuitive eating, you eat until you feel full, you eat things that make your body feel good.

There's really a lot of intuitive living to it and making those really intentional choices about what feels good, what things serve us, and what doesn't. And for me, when I took that future relationship out of the equation, the future was going to look different because I wasn't in that relationship anymore. I started thinking about more of what I want, and it was such a surprising journey for me because I ended up with chickens. I'm raising chickens, hens for eggs. Something I never saw coming and absolutely love.

I have this beautiful garden that I keep growing because I enjoy it so much. You know, I joke that these are all my granny hobbies. I'm just skipping that midlife [00:24:00] crisis and getting right into my, my, my, all my good granny stuff.

Because it's fun. And because when you get to that point, you just do what you want to do, and you do the things you enjoy.

Donna Ferris: Yeah. Michael Singer, I was listening to his podcast. I don't know if you remember the Untethered Soul. I don't know if you've read that one, but yeah, so he's got a podcast, and he was saying, "I don't know why people get so upset about getting old. It's the best. I don't care what anybody thinks. I say whatever I want to say. It's the best part of life." And I really kind of had a laugh because I think I haven't gotten there yet. I haven't been able to, disassociate enough to do that yet, but I get it.

I get it that it could be really awesome

Crystal Jackson: I feel like I'm getting there because like first came the chickens. And then I really thought after the pandemic, we all women agreed that we weren't going to wear bras anymore. I'm real disappointed. A bunch of people put them back on. And it's like, if you need it for support and you like it, that's fine.

But for all the women who hate it, thought we had an [00:25:00] agreement, right? And it's so controversial. My mom hates it that I'm like that. Cause I mean, I'll roll out to whatever work, whatever. And I'm like, half the time, I'm not wearing one unless I want to be. And it's just so funny because that's such a thing. Every time someone challenges me, I say that the next book I'm gonna write is going to be a children's book called "Everybody Has Nipples."

There probably is one like that.

Donna Ferris: I thought you were going to do something after the chickens, where everything went after the chickens. That's what you should write. Right?

Crystal Jackson: It's so funny. I have my little feral chickens. I'm like a free-range chicken.

Kind of out on my own working .

Donna Ferris: I love it though.

Crystal Jackson: But it's little things like that. I putter around in my garden and I really enjoy that. And I don't care that much what other people think. It doesn't really affect me. I'm like, that sounds like a you problem.

That's about your journey. It's not about mine.

Donna Ferris: Mm-hmm . [00:26:00]

Crystal Jackson: Just a really good way of

Donna Ferris: looking at it.

Crystal Jackson: Yeah, and it's, it's just funny, but it's other things too. And this is going to make me sound even crazier, but it's like, I rescued two cats this summer, and my friends are like, you have a dog, 10 chickens, and two cats already.

You don't need two more cats. But I was like, but I do in my heart, I needed them. And then the breeder I had gotten my dog from gave me a puppy I wasn't expecting. So yes, if you add that up, I'm not going to mention the number, but that's a lot of animals. And I love it. And the responsibility doesn't bother me.

I enjoy it. It's really fulfilling to me. You know, I can manage that well in my household, but a lot of my friends were like, you don't need them. This is crazy because, and, and I see what they mean. If I were to meet someone, I would have to tell them how many pets I have, and [00:27:00] maybe that would be a problem.

But am I going to live my life on the off chance that I meet a person who I like, but who doesn't like animals?

Donna Ferris: I think when they don't like animals, I think that they're out.

Crystal Jackson: I don't know. Yeah, that's the big red flag. Well, when I was talking about getting my chickens, I was still dating at the time, and somebody was like, "Oh no, I grew up on a farm. I don't want to manage a farm." And I'm like, nobody asked you and ask your opinion about if I should get chickens., I was telling you something about me. I wasn't asking you to weigh on my decision, but I think we do that. I think we kind of live in ways that are still thinking about that. And so, since I've taken that off the table, and it's not something I'm planning on, I'm not saying it couldn't happen, but I'm not planning on that.

I make those decisions for me.

Like, eventually, my kids are going to leave home, and I'm going to be an empty nester and a single parent. I'm going to have all of these animals that love me and that I love and [00:28:00] enjoy spending time around. When my kids go to their dad's for weekends, I have my animals, which seems like a small part of it.

But it's making those decisions because it's what I want and not factoring in the fact that probably 90 percent of my friends think I'm a little crazy now or, because they wouldn't do it, they wouldn't want that responsibility. But taking that out of the equation and taking what a future man might think about my menagerie of animals out of the picture and really leaning into the things I love, which turns out are chickens and gardening and reading so much and, going down all these rabbit holes on like herbal gardens and being a more sustainable human while I'm on this earth and, watching the shows that I like and not worrying about if anybody else watches them or likes them.

It's taking all that off the table and saying, like, who am I? Who am I when no one's watching? Who am I when I'm not in a [00:29:00] relationship to someone else, as a parent or a friend? What do I like, and what do I want? And I don't think a lot of women ask themselves that because they're stuck in that routine of who am I to other people?

What do they want from me? What do they expect of me?

Donna Ferris: It's not even men, right? It's your kids too. Especially as your kids get older. I still find myself saying, okay, well what, if I do this, then I can hang out with them. But I may have this other thing that I would be doing otherwise that's very important to me. So I need to prioritize myself somewhere in here, because it, you feel it later, right? Because you get that resentment thing. Look, oh, I should have done the thing that I wanted to do, because now I resent it. So I think it's a constant thing. I think it's not just men.

I think it's in general; like, I think we just aren't really taught well to put our needs first.

Crystal Jackson: No, we're told to take care of everyone else first.

Donna Ferris: Yeah. Yeah. That's why on every flight we're [00:30:00] told to put the oxygen mask on us first instead of them.

Crystal Jackson: Cause we'll do it.

Yeah. Because you're so busy constantly thinking of other people because that is how women are taught to be. We're taught to caretake, and then we're told that that's biological when we know that's not actually true. You know, men can caretake also. Anyone can. We're just told that it's our responsibility.

Donna Ferris: I think we also internalize that we will get left behind if we don't. There are those basic things that we fear as humans. I think that's somewhere in there.

Crystal Jackson: Oh, absolutely. Or that we'll end up alone, and not everyone has a comfortable relationship with solitude either. And that's something to really acknowledge because we do need other people. I'm very fortunate in my life not to just have friends that live close by that are great supportive friends, but to feel like I have [00:31:00] friends all over the world, all over the country. People I've never met an actual person, but that are supportive and that I could reach out to.

There are a lot of lonely people out there who don't have the social support, and maybe they don't have the people online, and maybe they don't have the people in their actual day to day lives. And so when it comes to that, it gets really easy to lean on romantic relationships when you don't have that support

Donna Ferris: And this is a great time, as we are processing things that have happened. We are reaching out to other people who are like-minded and supportive of you and your beliefs. I'm just finishing editing a podcast with Sharon Salzberg and I said wouldn't that be the wonderful turn?

If the outcome of some of what's happened is that we actually find each other again after the pandemic because that certainly was an isolator and we were already lonely before that according to the Surgeon General. So it's something I'm hopeful for.

Crystal Jackson: So post election [00:32:00] I just really wanted to scream, and I mean that literally, I wanted to scream.

Donna Ferris: I did. I did.

Crystal Jackson: Well, I did too, but here's what I did. I said, I feel like I need to go out and like open space, maybe a bonfire with some friends, and we just all scream. We just scream until we're done and just let it all out because I feel like I cannot be the only one who feels this way. And it was just this thing in my

mind, and I started talking to a few people, and every woman I mentioned it to, said Absolutely.

Every man I mentioned it to mentioned that I might be a little crazy.

Donna Ferris: Exactly. I need to manage my anger.

Crystal Jackson: Yes. But the women were like, absolutely, that is exactly how I feel. And then some were like, wait, wait, wait, are we actually screaming? Are we just saying we're doing?

And I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. We're going to get actual screams, primal, guttural, whatever screams. Scream however you want. Scream bad words. I don't care what you scream, screaming. So one friend offered up her [00:33:00] home, and she said, all my neighbors, you know, they're not close. The ones who are would be cool with it.

I'll clear it with them and tell them from this time to this time, if you hear screaming, there's not an emergency.

Donna Ferris: And so we headed over

Crystal Jackson: And everyone brought drinks and snacks and we sat around and I thought we were going to do some screaming first, but we didn't because we sat around and talked about how we felt about everything.

About the need for stronger community right now and to really build these relationships because this is a fairly newer friend. And I love her so much. She's just one of those people you instantly want to befriend. And you think this is a cool person that I would vibe with. And luckily she felt the same about me.

But some of the people that I invited were people I didn't know that well, but knew were like-minded enough that I wanted them to come. And so we talked about building stronger support. And then we did a lot of screaming. There was screaming, but there was dancing, and there was laughing, and there was joy.

[00:34:00] And, there was screaming too, where we just got it all out. But that just cemented it for me. That need for strong community and connection right now more than ever. And as a result of that night, I was recommended the book Braiding Sweetgrass, which I don't know if you've ever read.

Donna Ferris: No, I did see that you have it. You loved it?

Crystal Jackson: I love it so much. I'm not usually a big nonfiction reader. I don't read it as easily as I read fiction. I can read fiction in a day. Nonfiction just takes me longer to get through because I want to process it more. And it's really about having more of a reciprocal relationship with the environment, but it also brings community into that, that when you see everything as being equal to you, you have more of a give and take relationship.

And it brings in a lot of indigenous wisdom and plant medicine and things. And it was so beautiful, but I read that at a time where I was already thinking we need more community. And it was really [00:35:00] interesting to read about things like the term Indian giver. Where white people thought that meant, you know, you gave a gift and you try to take it back.

And so I had always heard that growing up. It was funny because she explains in the book that it was a massive cultural misunderstanding where if they gave something they expected it to be used. I might butcher this interpretation but they expected it to be used for the good of the community that if you're given something you use it to help or you give it back, later. It's not about, I gifted this to you. Give me back my gift. It's about, they expect it to continue to do good in the world because it doesn't just stop there. And it made me think of the first time that I went out of the country. I went to Ireland and we do that find a penny, pick it up all day long. You'll have good luck. Well, they don't stop there. They say, pass it to a friend and then your luck will never end. At the time I was in my late thirties, I never [00:36:00] heard that because in America, we take that penny and put it in our pocket. They pass it on.

It's a cultural difference. And I think it reflects a lot of what America has become that we put the penny in the pocket. We call someone an Indian giver because they expect us not to hoard things, but to share them.

Donna Ferris: To give them to everyone.

Crystal Jackson: It kind of really pulled that whole idea of community and connection and being a person other people can lean on, and you can lean back because it's a reciprocal relationship.

And I know that's kind of a long way around, but those things all kind of came together for me at the same time and made me think if nothing else, maybe this pulls us together stronger than ever before. And we come out the other side of it completely different. Changed in a way we might not have been otherwise.

And that maybe we needed that. Because all of these women saying, I need 4B. I want to de-center men. I need to choose for myself. And then finding like-minded [00:37:00] people. I think that this could be really important for the next stage of human evolution and change.

Donna Ferris: It could really help our kids and our generation. But I think I'm ahead of you, but my generation, your generation, our kid's generations. I think it's an important discussion to have, which I don't think we were having it, in any large way, before this.

Well, I think I'm going to stop there. Thank you so, so much for all of your wisdom and all of your writing. And folks, she has an amazing Facebook community

Crystal Jackson: It's like the greatest inclusive community. Yes, everyone's there for the memes and a little bit, a tiny bit of my writing. But they're the most inclusive, wonderful, hilarious people, all of them.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, it is a great group. Well, thank you so much, Crystal Jackson.

Crystal Jackson: Yeah, thank you for having me.

Donna Ferris: That's all for today. If you want [00:38:00] to learn more about Crystal, her books, and writing, those links will be in the show notes. Thank you so much for listening. I hope this episode was helpful. If it was, please subscribe, drop a review, or share it with your friends and family. That's the best way to get it in the hands of those who may benefit.

And if my daughters, Sienna and Sylvia, are listening, I want you to know how proud I am of you. And I love you so much.

Bye now.