

Jennifer Louden-Loving Your Family, Loving Yourself April 2010

Lain: Hello, everyone. This is Lain Ehmann with 30MinuteMartha.com and The Multitasking Moms Telesummit. We are here for an interview with Jennifer Louden. Jennifer is the best-selling author of numerous books. She's a personal coach and a former monthly columnist for Martha Stewart's Body and Soul magazine. She's a frequent guest on radio and TV. She's a creator of learning events and retreats throughout the country. She's devoted to nurturing women to evoke their creative power and find the good in their life so they can have a blast while changing the world. She's been seen on the Oprah Winfrey Show and her blog, website, and ezine draw thousands of readers each month. There are over 850,000 copies of her books in print. Jennifer Louden, welcome to The Multitasking Moms Telesummit.

Jennifer: I'm excited to be here.

Lain: I forgot to add to your bio that you are an occasional Irish clog dancer.

Jennifer: And a Mom...don't forget I'm a mom...that's most important.

Lain: Mom of darling Lillian who is gorgeous, wonderful, happy, strong, and an inspiration to you.

Jennifer: She is. She'll be 16 this Saturday and we were this past Sunday going to jump out of an airplane together to celebrate, but she got sick.

Lain: She got sick like from nerves?

Jennifer: No, she got a sinus infection earlier in the week. The people who run the place are like: *Do not jump with a sinus infection.*

Lain: If I'm a little informal during this interview it's because Jen and I have been pals and colleagues and business partners for years and years. She's actually one of my very favorite people in the whole world and a very good friend of mine. If I tease her and throw a few jabs at her....I don't normally do that when I'm interviewing but in this case I'm allowed because you've seen me in my jammies.

Jennifer: You've seen me in my jammies with my hair sticking up in my face.

Lain: Your jammies are very cute. Anyway, today we are talking about nurturing our families and ourselves. I've had three days of interviews with experts telling us how to make our family dinners more effective and fun and how to be more creative in our family life and just a lot of the tasks and strategies that we can use to make our family stronger and be more intentional around our families. What we haven't spent a lot of time talking about is how we can be more intentional in taking care of ourselves. I know that is a topic that is near and dear to you so I thought we could talk a little bit about that.

Jennifer: The thing that always comes up for me in being a mom and taking care of myself is... even with a 16 year old it still comes up really frequently. In fact, it came up last night. She wanted me to help her with her homework and I had a toothache. (I've got a crown and it's just driving me crazy.) I had to say to her: *No, I can't help you tonight.* Her dad came over and helped her.; *I need to go to sleep.*

I think the first thing I want to say is the fact that you feel pushed, pulled, guilty or uncertain or that it's not neat and clean to take care of yourself is really normal. It's part of being a parent. If we can just drop this struggle or this story that it's supposed to be easy to maintain our house and our souls and our creativity and all that other groovy stuff while we're parents, we just are ahead of the game right there. It's not easy. They want everything from you. They will suck you dry.

Lain: So no matter what we see on the Internet about these people with 17 children who are all homeschooled and perfectly pressed and groomed and their houses are gorgeous and their mom is like a Goldman Sachs bond trader and wears a size 2 and six inch heels...that's not totally realistic, right?

Jennifer: Either Mommy's popping Zanax all day or Mommy has no relationship with her 17 kids. There's no secret out there. I think that's the first thing about the Internet and TV and magazines is that it gives us this polished look. Even when I sit down to write a ranting blog post I polish it up a little bit. We want to present our best selves to the world. That's why we need conversations like we're having here today...people like you- people like are good friends-I used to have this friend (I still do. We're good friends.) but our kids didn't sleep for years...literally did not sleep for years. We would call each other in the most awful times...6 am...and we wouldn't even say 'Good morning.' We would say: *Grim is*....and then we'd go into our litany. Then the other person would say: *Grim is*...and then we would

hang up. You need honesty in that. Not that you want to be negative. I'm not saying that, but you need some place to vent.

Lain: That's so interesting to think about because so many of my friends now are virtual especially since having recently moved across country. I don't have a ton of in-person friends. We live in a more transitory society than our parents did with the moving and then the turning to the Internet for social relationships. You're right. Even the smallest photo or blog posts that we put up we do polish it a little bit. We aren't getting that unvarnished truth that we might have gotten over the back fence or the neighbor next door hearing us scream at our children. ..whatever it might be. We are almost always getting some kind of filtered view...not to mention TV...of what 'reality' is.

Jennifer: We're very aware and smart women so we know that, but still through the back door is the voice that says: *Somebody is doing it better than you. Someone knows how to really take care of themselves and they don't.* It's a learning process. It's always a little lopsided so let's just start there.

Lain: So if we see the woman who has the gorgeous wardrobe and the cute figure, she may have the kids from hell or her house may be a tornado? There's going to be some area where perhaps we've got a better handle on it but nobody has the whole shebang figured out.

Jennifer: You know what I'd say even more honestly than that. She may have the perfect house, the perfect figure, and the perfect clothes and kids, and you know what? I would not want to be in her head because of the amount of control, the amount of 'shoulds', the amount of...I want to clench my teeth and I would if my crown didn't hurt...that it takes to live that way...I could throw up just thinking about it. That's what I'm going to stand against. I'm going to stand for 'here's life'. It's messy and chaotic and beautiful if we can show up and be with it without trying to pinch it, control it, and push it away.

Lain: So if we learn to appreciate the messiness and the chaos and the joy in that chaos in front of us, then we have something that's really true and beautiful.

Jennifer: Not even appreciate it...some of the things we get to appreciate, but I think we can just start with 'It's here.'

Lain: It's real.

Jennifer: It's real and stop the inner conversation that it should be different than it is. I think that's where self-care really starts.

Lain: That is such a life challenge.

Jennifer: Yes, it is a life challenge and if you study different spiritual paths that's what they say. I think that's where spirituality and self care and parenting all come together.

Lain: How do you hold the realization of what is right now while also having a goal of how you might want it to be? Like...*Okay, my kids hate me or seem to hate me.* Let's not even go that extreme. *My kids talk back and are rude to me and fight all the time.* That's what's happening right now in this moment. I wish they didn't do that and we treated each other with more respect. How do you bridge those?

Jennifer: Great question and I wish I could put everybody into a moment I'm thinking of a few months ago when I was very aware that I wanted what was happening between Lily and I to be different. I think it was more of a struggle around homework in that moment. Then how I was able to soften my body (You know me. I always like to start with the body.) and just totally accept how I was feeling...which was I wanted her to be different and I wanted this conversation not to be happening and happening different than it was) and I just completely relaxed and accepted that this is who she is right now. This is the conversation we're having.

Then this magical thing happens which happens every time I can do this...suddenly the tension between us just leaped out of the room and we were able to have the kind of exchange that I was wanting to in that moment. I think the answer to your question is....The kids are fighting and they're hating each other and you want it to be different. If you can really accept how it feels in your body and how it feels in the room and this is happening right now and just for a moment drop the future, I think that's how the energy and the intelligence and the ideas on how to shift it happen in the moment. Does that make sense?

Lain: Yes, it's not saying that I accept it. This is how it's going to be forever and ever.

Jennifer: No, no, no. That's resignation. **(TALKOVER...)**

Lain: This is what's in front of me right now. If I let go of that tension I can feel it in my shoulders. I'm not a real woo-woo person at all, but I can feel that when I've been in that situation in the car in particular with the kids and then just let it out. Then it's like: I'm not adding to the problem.

Jennifer: No, you're not adding to the problem and we've known this through so many different traditions and disciplines like when you accept it, it can move. Werner Erhard in EST days used to say: "*What resists persists.*" Unfortunately he was right as much as I dislike that man. So it's the same thing. I'm not being: *Oh, because you're not accepting their fighting. That's why they're continuing to fight.* Nothing like that but your ability to be creative and come up with new ways of seeing...because that's when change really happens at, right? It's the level that we perceive things. If you try to perceive it in the same way...keep doing the same things...they keep producing the same results.

Lain: Right. So I'm not adding to the problem and I'm able to see some new solutions or ideas of how it could be to create that shift?

Jennifer: At the very least you won't want to have a martini at the end of the day.

Lain: I might want to do that anyway.

Jennifer: Or a bar of chocolate.

Lain: So bring this back to self-care then. We talked about it in terms of the kids. How does it relate to self-care? Is that self-care right there?

Jennifer: It's like the best self-care. Just keep saying...*Here I am*. Last night I was feeling this pain in my tooth and what I wanted to do was push it away and make it go away. Of course, I took Tylenol. I'm not just sitting there being: *Oh, I'm going to feel pain because it's here*. It's like: *Oh, my tooth is hurting*. I'm watching it move around my mouth. Literally we have this huge body of research that's growing that when we can do this it really can affect pain. It can really affect chronic pain so yeah; it's really deep self-caring. When it comes to another day that you didn't get to the gym...what do you do with that? Do you have any ideas?

Lain: I wanted to say how much I love that idea of that being self-care because it doesn't require me retreating to the bathroom for an hour with my lavender eye pillow and a stack of magazines and a candle. It's not another thing that I add to my lists of things to do like *'Oh...Take care of self 30 minutes between 2:30-3:00*. It's something I do right now. I can do it over and over again throughout the day that doesn't add any more time to what I'm supposed to be doing anyway.

Jennifer: There are one or two more things I want to say. I was at exercise class last week and one of the moms who had 4 children came in and very determinedly did her exercise routine. I heard her talking to the other

moms and she was like: *Yes. I just came from a massage.* We're kind of like: You just got a massage and you're coming to exercise class? That's a little.... She said: *Well, you know you just have to squeeze in your self-care.* I thought: *Yes, and that sounds a little violent.* We don't want to get into this place where we're always forcing, forcing, forcing our self-care because I don't know if we get the benefits. Instead, if we can kind of think: *I can restore myself in each moment.* It's less about what I do and more about being present to what is.

Lain: Wow. It's a whole shift in just the way you go through the day versus...The lens you're using affects every element. It's not isolated to that massage or that hour that you and your husband go out to dinner. It can be the whole day...which can be so critical for the moms we're talking to on the call today obviously identify with multitasking. They're here. They know how it can be if you just have the list of 'to dos' that never get done. To not have to add to that and be able to take care of yourself is...

Jennifer: I really want to speak to the fact that the 15 minute massage and the hanging out in the bathtub with the lavender pillow are also important. If there are two ideas that I want everyone to take away...one is the idea of being with what is, and being really curious about just softening your body and your eyes and your mind towards it. The second one is if you can give yourself 30 minutes, 15 minutes, 10 minutes of doing nothing every day...really doing nothing. That wouldn't be reading or listening to music or meditating...doing nothing...that is also profoundly life changing. We need nothing. We need white space in our lives. What I find myself doing

when there's time for white space is I look around for something to do. I straighten up or clean up or I should do that clutter or pay those bills. It's like: Oh, no, no, no. Here's the white space. Do nothing.

Lain: Then what does that do?

Jennifer: Well, it calms our nervous system. Our nervous systems are really in overdrive and that makes it very difficult to relax. It gives us a feeling of (A) craving sugar and caffeine which perpetuates the cycle and stresses our adrenals and is hard on our liver as we get older and our hormones get more stuck in our liver. It also makes it harder to think and harder to be creative and resilient. Our tempers and attention span get shorter. A lot of what might be excitement and anticipation becomes anxiety in the perpetually nervous body.

Lain: So it gives the body time to reset sort of?

Jennifer: It needs down time. Our bodies have not evolved to be able to live at the pace and take in the amount of information we're taking in. Your body's just not there. That's why so many people are loving Tai Chi and Yoga and walks in nature. You think: *Oh, wow*. Your body gets a chance to calm down but in the days you don't get a chance to do that, if that stuff doesn't speak to you and you're in the gym with the music blasting doing aerobics, your body is never getting that chance to go: *Whew. Wow. I can drop in here and calm down.*

Lain: It reminds me of living on the strip in Vegas where 24/7 the lights, the noise, everything ...where you don't ever get that chance to have peace. It really can be like that because some much of our lives is lived online where it never goes away...the entertainment that never goes away.

Jennifer: Right. So one of the things I point out a lot to people who work with me in different capacities is there may be nothing wrong with your life. It may be really fabulous but you're not enjoying it because you're not attending to the 'soft animal of your body' as the poet Mary Oliver says. If you could just start to do that, it's not a big ding dang do. It doesn't mean you need to go and get acupuncture three times a week although maybe that would be great. It just means getting an eye pillow which I love because from [Ira Zadock's Science](#), we know that that actually calms the frontal brain. It helps your brain shut down. Maybe it's just laying on the couch for 15 minutes and teaching the kids when they're little that that's their quiet time, too. I know that sounds impossible, but I know parents who've done it. That's your time to play quietly while Mom lays on the couch or you wait until your partner comes home.

Lain: Yeah, or get them a little eye pillow, too.

Jennifer: Yeah, one of the ways we get in the way of our self-care is when we have a lot of conversations about what isn't possible or what we should be doing instead. Those are always real giveaways to me in my own life when I say 'have to' 'should' and 'that's not possible'. I'm making at least part of the roadblocks.

Lain: Right. One of the parts of your work that I've always really enjoyed and something that I use a lot is the *conditions of enoughness*...the satisfaction. Can we talk a little bit about that because I think that's really a key tool that women can use?

Jennifer: It's something that I learned and then worked with and expanded a little bit from my coaching training with **New Field Network**. It's the idea that we live in a time in which declaring what is enough is one of the most profound ways we can bring everything from peace to productivity to our lives. What we do instead (earlier you mentioned your 'endless to do list', right?) we live in possibility which becomes this nagging sense of overwhelm and never being enough or never doing enough.

When I work with people at The Comfort Café (which is my membership website) and with my clients is to begin to understand and inhabit and declare what would be enough for this day. What would be enough for this vacation with my kids? What would be enough for working on this project today? What would be enough for connecting with my partner tonight? Really begin to declare and do it in specifics.

This is the part that sometimes drives people crazy. It's incredibly powerful to do. You get specific. What would it look like? If I had a video camera, would I know what *enough* would look like for you? Would I be able to see it or taste it or hear it? There's a time element by how many times you will do it. Let's use the old saw exercise. We carry around this image of fitness

which for most of us is impossible. It leaches away or ability to enjoy our bodies and to be healthy because we don't look like so and so. We don't exercise with kettle balls for 3 hours a day or whatever the trend is these days.

What if we said what is *enough* for me and what I'm competent to do in my life right now with four little kids is to walk for half an hour every morning where I'm almost breathless with one of my neighbors or by myself if they're not available. I will do that four days out of seven. That's something I would see you walking....It has a time element which is a super important part. You declare that you will be satisfied with four out of seven 30 minute walks to this breathless point by yourself or with your neighbor even if you don't feel like it was *enough*. That's a really important point because our brains are conditioned to keep saying: *You know what? You could've gone for 45 minutes and come home and done some sit-ups.*

Lain: Right. ..or so and so says that Jillian Michaels says I have to go 60 minutes for blah, blah, blah. (TALKOVER)

Jennifer: Before I take my steroids. I think she's taking steroids. Yeah. This is a really great point, Lain, because what conditions of enoughness help us do is they help us begin to trust our own instincts. They also help us pay attention to what is actually possible in this life now. One of the things...you can hear how passionate I am about this...I think so many of us are missing the life we have because we're trying to live some ideal which (A) isn't us and (B) isn't possible right now. How sad is it to come to the end of your kids' time at home, let's say...before they go to

college...The entire time I was parenting or at least half or a quarter of the time, whatever, I wasn't here because it didn't look the way I thought it should look.

Lain: That's a big one for me, too. My tagline on the blog: *Life doesn't have to be perfect to be good...*It's one of those cases where you choose what you need to learn and teach. It breaks my heart to think that happens and that it might happen to my family. It goes back to what you were saying about being in the moment...to be able to appreciate what is real and to focus there rather than on a future time that not only may or may not happen, but probably makes you feel bad because you feel guilty or it's more pressure or you feel stressed about it. *How am I going to create this perfection?* You're sacrificing what is now for that.

Jennifer: Right. They tie together very closely. When we can accept what we're feeling, what we're experiencing, what we're eating in the moment, it's such a bridge to conditions of *enoughness* to experiencing *enoughness*. They reference each other. The third part of it is self trust. Everybody listening can sign up for a free course at ComfortQueen.com for the free emails I send out about self-trust. I don't sell you anything. They are fabulous. I get an email almost every day from somebody saying how much they love them. We need all three of these things...being with what is, accepting it, practicing enoughness, and then self-trust. It's like a circle. They reference each other.

Lain: I know you and I have talked before about authenticity and the role that plays in self-trust. We hear all the time about being authentic and real and then you don't really know what that is because we've turned over so much of our decision making and standards to externals whether it be magazines, experts, books, whatever. We don't even know what we really think half the time.

Jennifer: There's a really good reason why we do that and that's because our brains are shutting down because we have so much choice. Going to the grocery store makes me want to breathe into a paper bag. It's really interesting to study all the research that's been going into choice. If you go to the grocery store and somebody is sampling cheeses and there are six to sample, you're much more likely to make a purchase from the samples than you are if they're sampling 12. Your brain goes: *Sorry. Can't make a decision.* We want to have a lot of mercy for ourselves.

I love what neurologist Oliver Sacks does (He's also the author of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat.*). He eats the same thing for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. He never has more than a dollar in his pocket when he goes to work so he can only buy the same amount of chocolate from the vendor. He wears the same outfit. He's really learned to limit choice in his life and I think about stuff like that and try to do stuff like that for myself so I can foster more self trust and pay attention to the things that are important.

Lain: Right. That's true. It's not like you have to live this monastic existence in a barren cell where there's nothing on the walls and one robe that you wear to bed and one that you wear during the day, but you choose which areas of your life...if you love food and love cooking, maybe that's where you would explore and not worry about decorating your house.

Jennifer: Exactly. That's so true. Last night my sweetheart's son who lives with us halftime said: *You know, Jen, it's very bare over the stairs.* I said: *Yeah. I never really decorated this house. I've lived here 8 years.* I mean it's sweet. It's nice. People like it but my other houses I was obsessed with gardening and decorating and it's like I consciously let that go. It makes me real sad. I love to go and spend some time decorating, and my house is nice but it's not this beautiful, lovely...That's not what's happening right now for me. Parenting and creating a business is happening and my spiritual life is happening.

Lain: We have to make those choices or they get made for us.

Jennifer: Or we walk around like the woman we were talking about earlier. We think we're doing everything but we're not enjoying any of it because we're just trying to keep everything so perfect.

Lain: Yeah, that perfectionism is a huge barrier. I often wonder if I would feel the same level of struggle if I didn't have constant access to the Internet.

Jennifer: It does change things. I think like radio when it came and TV when it came, it's a tool, and we have to use it with a lot of mindfulness. The difference is each stage of technology that's come along has become more intimate. Emails with the nice new products of 'the best way to lose weight' come right into your email box...in your computer that's in your house. Most of us on this call (I'm 47...most of you are quite a bit younger than me.) learned growing up that commercials were trying to sell you something and so you had a lot of distance from them. They were the subject of your awareness. We don't have that same distance with the Internet yet. It's also one of the most profoundly *shadow comforts*.

Lain: Talk about *shadow comforts*.

Jennifer: That's a term I came up with in my first *Woman's Comfort* book in '92. There are things that we do instead of really comforting ourselves. There are things that we do because we think we can't have what we really want or because we're not willing to stop and feel what we're feeling and be with what is and then be really mindful to choose what we want. There are distractions and habits that usually numb us out or deaden us instead of what I think real self-care does which is bring us alive and strengthen us.

So it can be anything. It's not what you do, it's how you use it. You can eat a bar of chocolate and it can be the most mindful, delicious, orgasmic experience. I have women do this as part of my retreats. We eat a piece of chocolate really mindfully. It's incredible including: *I didn't think I liked chocolate*. Then we also can eat chocolate and not even taste it.

Lain: Right. Okay, so it could be reading to escape or reading because you're really enjoying the reading?

Jennifer: Right. You're like totally giving yourself up to it. Did you ever sit there and read and half of your mind is going: *I should be doing something else?* That in it's way is a *shadow comfort*. It's like when you choose to nurture yourself...choose it. Grab it. Steep yourself in it and when the voice comes up and says: *I can't believe you're doing this and there's like two piles of laundry that need to be folded*, say to the voice: *Shut up...or thanks for sharing. I don't think anyone's going to die if I don't fold the laundry right now.*

Lain: How do you tell when you're really nurturing yourself and when it's a *shadow comfort*?

Jennifer: How do you feel afterwards? Do you feel more you? Do you feel more strengthened? Do you feel more engaged? You may be tired. Some things you do that nurture you ...You might swim 20 or 50 laps and you may be tired. You may decide that what nurtures you tonight is to organize your photos and scrapbook. You may end up staying up until midnight and being tired. It's not just that I'm always rested but you're more you...You're more strengthened. *Shadow comforts* - you feel guilty and numb and sick to your stomach or wasted...blah. Well, you feel like: "I wish I would've..."

Lain: I think I've felt like that once or twice.

Jennifer: I just watched two hours of CSI and I really wish I would've gone out into the woods because here's the other thing about self-care...Often there's a barrier to getting to it. Nobody talks about this. There was something about self-care in some magazine (because there is every single month) and there were all kinds of things you could buy, but nobody talks about the fact that we're kind of scared to comfort ourselves and take care of ourselves. There's a hump to get over.

Lain: Okay. Talk about that. Why is that? Is it the guilt thing?

Jennifer: I think it's a lot of things. Part of it is what we're talking about the speed of life we live at. So our bodies are in the high keyed up mode and to take care of ourselves means to slow down and that means to feel our feelings. It means to like that whole place we started the call with..accepting what is here right now. To really give ourselves permission to sit on the couch and feel our feelings and maybe feel angry at the kids and our partner and let the weight of the world pass through us, who wants to do that? It's much more fun to go to the mall.

Lain: It's definitely easier.

Jennifer: It's much more fun to check out email and read a celebrity gossip site or maybe push ourselves to go and exercise at our target heart rate or do something that's productive. It's just that easier. That hump of sort of sinking into yourself and letting yourself soften and feel is the hump that you move through and cry through sometimes and then you get to the place where you can be with. *What I really want to do is doodle with my oil*

pastels. I just really want to doodle. What are you going to produce? I don't know but I'm just going to take this 20 minutes before the kids get home and I'm going to doodle. I'm going to let myself be really right here with the color and the smells. That's what I want. But there are so many other things you could do. I know, but that's what's here right now.

Lain: I can see why removing choice in other areas would really help create time for that.

Jennifer: Of course, because anybody who studied art knows that when you study art you don't go into the art class the first day and they don't open up the entire Crayon® box. They give you charcoal and a piece of paper...limiting your choices allows your creativity to bloom. That is one of the laws of the universe. So create some limits around yourself. That can be really helpful.

Lain: Speaking of limits...minimum requirements. Can we talk about those a little bit?

Jennifer: Yeah, we can...from another one of my favorites although I hate the title I gave it. It's an idea in my last book, *The Life Organizer*, and if you go to ComfortQueen.com and you look on the right hand blog where it says: *Find the good booster pack*...and you sign up for that you get the self stress emails and you get access to this cool free audio. It's all free. It doesn't sell you anything on minimum requirements for self-care. I wrote a really great blog post about it, too, in the last few weeks. It's a very simple idea. There are things that you need that keep you in touch with yourself.

These are not goals or resolutions to run a marathon or anything like that. These are things that when you become familiar with them, they allow you to go: *Oh, this is what I need. Have I been getting it lately?* They're not sexy. They're things like: I do better on 8 hours of sleep. I feel more me. I do better when I eat protein at breakfast. I do better when I have Saturday afternoon to myself at least every couple of weeks. I do better when I meditate the first thing in the morning before I check emails. They're not sexy or unique. I do better if I have sex more often than not. (It might be on there thinking of sexy.) So you name these things to yourself.

There are questions that are processed on the audio and in my book that will help you do this and then you begin to have this way to say: *Ha. Everything in my life sucks and I want to divorce my partner and move to Fiji. When's the last time I checked in with my minimums? Am I getting them?* This has been a huge breakthrough for so many women because of the time we live in and our culture, we internalize our suffering. We think something is wrong with us. When we can have sort of a map and say: *Okay, if I have these things in place and I've been attending to them, then I can look outside and see what maybe needs to change in my life.* But first we want to start with these minimums. Wow.

Do you know what? You think this is so obvious but I can't tell you how often we miss this. Wow. *The fact that I haven't slept through the night in three weeks. Could that be it? We say: Oh, no. That can't be it. It must be that I need to lose weight or I need to get a new job or I need to get a job or quit my job.* It may be, but let's get some food first.

Lain: You know what I love about that is that it requires you to be the observer in your life. It sounds so simple that we would know what we need but just thinking about it right now I could maybe name three or four and then a lot of the other ones I have ideas about but I would have to experiment and see how it goes.

Jennifer: Yeah, and that's exactly one of the things I did at my last one day retreat. (I have one coming up in May.) I had people really get into small groups and really get into it. What are their minimums? It was fascinating because they did think they knew them or they thought they had been meeting them. They really got specific. It was great to hear other women. Usually our lists aren't very long, right? Mine includes carrying a water bottle with me. Mine includes meditation. Mine includes being in nature. Sometimes you can add a time element. You can get more persnickety about it if that helps, but it's a map or a guideline.

Lain: Just because you know them, of course, doesn't mean you're going to get them.

Jennifer: No. That makes it a grow or resolution. Forget that. That just becomes another way...this is just information. When I have these things most of the time I have a good foundation for being me - for showing up in my life.

Lain: For new moms I think back to when my first child was little and you just feel so isolated. I didn't have post partum depression but everybody has those hormone spikes and you just feel like it's never going to end.

Sometimes you just want to cry. If you say: *Okay, to be my best I really need 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep. I'm not getting that now.* That is coloring what's going on. Just that knowledge can make life easier.

Jennifer: Yeah, it's huge. It's a huge part of the self-caring and I think it comes with community. It comes with being able to have conversations like this and being able to listen in on them and saying: *Yes! That's some of the reasons we visit blogs and make comments so that we feel less alone.* I know when I did have post partum depression I know that it was incredibly helpful to have a moms group.

Lain: Just to have somebody reflect back and people who know you...*I know you, and you told me you haven't had time to go to the gym in 3 weeks. Get to the gym. That might be something that could help you out.* Just those kinds of reflecting back at you what they know about you...we aren't always the best observers of our own selves.

Jennifer: We are not. You absolutely have to know that we aren't the best observers of ourselves. That's why coaching and therapy exists. That's why whole professions exist. Friends exist for a part reason. We can't see. We think we can but we all have blind spots and will have blind spots for the rest of our lives. Sometimes I'll come out when I do speeches with this wild pair of sunglasses on and say: *We're all wearing glasses all the time. They goal is to become aware of the glasses. The glasses never go away. You're never going to be without glasses. They're formed from everything*

from your genetics to your life experience to your religious beliefs to what you eat for breakfast.

Lain: Give an example of how those blind spots can impact us as parents. You've got a few, right?

Jennifer: I live in a community that is pretty pushy towards our kids and pretty high pressure. If you're a regular kid you can kind of feel inadequate, you know? So here's little Miss Alternative Culture Me telling my daughter that grades don't matter and then there's me who comes in the next day and says: *Have you done your extra credit book report yet?* My daughter looks at me and says: *Mom, you're sending me mixed messages. You told me grades don't matter, and then you tell me to do the extra credit.* I fall to the ground and say: *You're right. I'm confused. I don't know what the right thing is to tell you.*

Lain: So I'm going to tell you both so I have all my bases covered.

Jennifer: Exactly. My blind spot in that moment is the conversation: My daughter has to keep up. She has to get honors English designation...all this stuff is so important and next year is....And I'm off to the races. I stop and I have a complete blind spot around what she needs in that moment and what's best for her and how I can trust her and really empower her to guide her high school career.

Lain: Do you think the blind spots are unexamined assumptions?

Jennifer: Mostly, yeah. They are assessments and assumptions...same thing. They're opinions and interpretations we have of the world. We hold them to be facts. The way I explain it a lot of times is something happens. You have an interpretation of it. You forget you have an interpretation of it and the interpretation becomes the fact. We forget that. All that happened was I didn't know if my daughter had done her book report or not.

Lain: Right. So it could be that the assumption or assessment could be if my child doesn't take part in year round baseball (I don't know where I'm coming up with that) that I'm going to wreck his life?

Jennifer: Exactly. Those assessments (you know from the coaching we've done together years ago) is the space of being a new observer, being aware of the glasses you have on, is in the place between the facts and your assumptions or assessments. The fact is your son is playing baseball. That's it. That's the only fact. We don't know anything else. In fact, you can't know anything else. Then you could also say the fact is my son is complaining about playing baseball because he says he's tired. That might be a factor. *I am not wanting to go to this baseball game again.* That's interesting. That's a fact. We don't make case for the facts. That's just another interpretation. We just start paying attention to them.

Lain: Then you can kind of play with them like with blocks and put them in different arrangements that they might mean.

Jennifer: Yeah, you can, but going back to the beginning of our conversation, the practice is to keep coming back to the fact and just accepting it and sitting with it. The fact is my son plays year round baseball. Accept it.

Lain: Then seeing how that feels? Would that be kind of the next step?

Jennifer: Just deal with it and letting it be there...not doing anything about it. My son plays year round baseball.

Lain: How do you stop that next thought which is: *What the heck was I thinking?*

Jennifer: Well, you don't stop it. You just let that be there, too. Huh, that's really interesting. It's a much more fun way to go through life.

Lain: Versus the squirrels that we talked about.

Jennifer: Yeah, that was a really popular blog post I read about. I teach at Kripalu every year. If anybody can get away from their kids and come, it's July 4th weekend which is probably terrible for most parents, but it's really a wonderful retreat for polish. It's a fabulous place. It's outside of Albany, New York. It's closer to Lennox, MA. Anyway, I was there and taught two retreats last year. One was a weeklong retreat and I'm famous for making up these sort of characters during retreats. This one I started in spontaneously talking about..."you know, the squirrel..." and making this little sound. (You had to be there.)

Lain: I wasn't there and I totally know the squirrel.

Jennifer: The squirrel just gets going and takes off and I named it the Squirrel with Ridiculously High Standards, I think. They wanted me to do a video of it and I was too ashamed.

Lain: So we're not going to get the video of the squirrel. We're not getting the clog dancing on our calls today? Tons of great stuff...so many places for people to start...but it sounds like it really just boils down to holding the moment that is first.

Jennifer: I think that's where it starts and where it ends. It's the greatest spiritual practice of all. I just find God and exhaust myself by wishing and pushing and right now I've been having for quite a while some real physical challenges. I don't want them there. That's not my image of who I am. My image of who I am is I'm strong and can hike up a mountain as fast as my six foot tall sweetheart, and that's not who I am right now. I don't know if that's who I'll ever be again. I have no way of knowing. Every time I push that away and want it to be different than what it is, I just get so tired. Then I don't want to do my physical therapy and I just want to give up.

Lain: You don't have the energy to make that shift that might bring you to a different place.

Jennifer: Often you don't or what I find (much easier to do when you're younger than when you're older) is you will it to happen. You will the change to happen. What we're learning about the brain is that the brain's most precious resource is self-awareness. For example you decide you're not

going to eat those brownies. Most of your brain's resources and not just some kind of biological level but glucose starts to go: *Don't eat the brownies. Don't eat the brownies.* Then you wonder why like 15 minutes later when you're trying to do a difficult task at work or you're trying to be patient with the kids and put together something they're all screaming and crying and you're trying to put something together for them, you snap. It's because all of your resources went into: *Don't eat the brownies. Don't eat the brownies.* And when brownies are not a possibility for you (brownies are a possibility for me because I'm allergic to gluten. The only time I have gluten is if I've had alcohol at a party and then that's the natural embedded part of me says no gluten and it gets overridden and I eat the cake and pay the price. My glucose doesn't get eaten up. My brain doesn't have to use its resources to go: *Don't eat the brownies. Don't eat the brownies.*) and I've forgotten why I got off on this point.

Lain: The shifts...so if we're spending so much energy towards fighting things we have no energy left to make the shift.

Jennifer: Right. So it's really important and this goes back to the conditions of *enoughness*. It's really important to focus on only one or two things that you're shifting from automatic or the old way into the new way. One of the ways we stay stuck in life is we decide (of course this happens every January) *I'm going to eat and exercise right, be more patient with my kids. I'm going to do work that I love.* It's like a week later you're exhausted and eating more than you've ever eaten before and yelling at the kids more.

Lain: Yeah. I think that's also why the shifts that people make on the make-over shows like *Biggest Loser* or whatever, it happens in such a short period of time and they change so many things at once and they've got people there to help them, but when they go on their own there are just too many things to keep track of.

Jennifer: Exactly. One of the things we know is that the brain likes a path, right? So those kinds of shows are a great example. Those people don't have to think for themselves. Go back to what we were talking about earlier...Somebody is making me get up at 6 am. It's completely different for your brain to have somebody get you up at 6 am than to have to get yourself up at 6 am.

The Dalai Lama says the secret to life is routine. I think part of why that was true is because he was born and raised in a monastery but I think the other part is the routine becomes embedded and you don't have to use brain resources to do it.

Lain: So make the changes we do make slowly and...

Jennifer: Embed them...embed them. Gluten is embedded for me pretty much all the time now. Then I can go on to dairy.

Lain: You hear that 30 day thing. Is that a bunch of hoey or is that true?

Jennifer: I don't know if that's true or not. I think it's important to become second nature.

Lain: It might be 30 for some and it might immediate. You hear from the doctor that if you smoke another cigarette you're going to die, you might right then go cold turkey.

Jennifer: Yeah, although the very resources to not smoke are still going to be there. I think it's the struggle. It's like I don't have to struggle anymore to say no to brownies. Okay, now I can go into something else.

Lain: Right. Wow. Great stuff, Chica.

Jennifer: Thank you. I love talking to you. You're a good interviewer.

Lain: You're pretty darn smart yourself. Let's pat ourselves on the back. So if people want to track you down...

Jennifer: If people want to track me down, if you want to see the full offerings of everything in my world you can go to JenniferLouden.com. That's the place to see everything. When you're there you can click over to the blog. I wrote a great post today. You can check out the Comfort Café which is really cool because it comes to you with all kinds of different offers. I send out these really cool emails every few days. We do a monthly theme. You get a coaching call with me. You get a call with a very cool wise person. Everything is downloadable so it really fits people using material in all kinds of creative ways.

The Multitasking Moms Telesummit
Lain Ehmann
www.multitasking-moms.com
Jennifer Louden
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I have a couple of retreats still left this year. One is in Cincinnati, Ohio. It's a one day thing which is great for moms. Then we have Kripalu which is July 4th weekend. You can find all that information at JenniferLouden.com.

Lain: Great. I'm going to do a wrap-up of the telesummit and I'll put together a resource page so people can link over directly and put in some of your books there, too...not all of them because they'd take up a whole page....but a couple of them. You're just awesome. Thank you. Everyone thank you for calling in and listening.

This has been Jennifer Louden with JenniferLouden.com, and Lain Ehmann with 30MinuteMartha.com for the Multitasking Moms Telesummit. It's a wrap, guys. Thanks so much. I'll see you online. Bye everybody.