

Transcript of Interview with Arti Kumar-Jain by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Arti Kumar-Jain

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 09/29/2022

Location (Interviewee): Virginia

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we discussed include:

Mother died of cancer in 2019, going into the pandemic with grief. Starting a small business and nonprofit just before the pandemic; serving economically disadvantaged individuals. Pivoting services online, eg. running parenting webinars rather than in person events. Husband traveled for work a lot pre pandemic, having more time with husband at home with children. Moving during the pandemic. Shifting from being an extrovert to an introvert-extrovert hybrid. Hoping people retain some of the lessons learned early in the pandemic that seem to be slipping. People changing drastically during the pandemic. The crisis cycle. Holding space, mindfulness, meditation, breathing.

Kit Heintzman 00:02

Hello, would you please state your name, the date, the time and your location?

Arti Kumar-Jain 00:07

Yes. Arti Kumar-Jain. The date is Thursday, September the 29th. And in Virginia.

Kit Heintzman 00:12

And the years 2022.

Arti Kumar-Jain 00:16

2022.

Kit Heintzman 00:18

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

Arti Kumar-Jain 00:27

Yes.

Kit Heintzman 00:29

Thank you so much for being here. Would you please introduce yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening?

Arti Kumar-Jain 00:34

Sure, my name is Arti Kumar-Jain and I'm the Executive Director of Diya Holistic Life Care, which is a nonprofit organization.

Kit Heintzman 00:35

Tell me a story about your life during the pandemic.

Arti Kumar-Jain 00:48

Sure, so I had actually started a small business and this nonprofit called Diya Holistic Life Care before the pandemic. The nonprofit started in January of 2021. And so it was just in its build up phase. And so it's basically it's a coaching in person was the goal in person coaching services through the lifespan to serve, you know, economically disadvantaged families and individuals. And so during the pandemic, it turned into like everyone virtual, so I did a lot of webinars, especially on grief. So like, I did a couple of ones, holiday holidays, grieving during the holidays, because so many people really were facing a lot of just a lot of sadness and processing of not being around their families for the holidays. So had a couple of those, and then a lot of parenting webinars, because it's been a challenge for everyone. But then for working parents who are also homeschooling like, and for many of them, just the idea of having some shared space. So I held a lot of these kinds of holding spaces during the pandemic. And I had experience with Zoom before I taught on Zoom a few classes. So I always loved the interface. So I'm really, I have to say, I'm excited about the fact that as much as the pandemic has brought a lot of crisis, there's some things that have come out, I think that I, we have, I've met people from all over the world during this, I have a podcast that I started prior to the pandemic a few months before. And so I was able to make a lot of connections globally. And then personally, to be honest with you is a really good time for my family. I have two young children, my husband travels a lot. And so he was able to be home. And I can tell you that for the last two years, that I think that my kids will have memories of their dad being home. And not you know what I mean that it'll be part of that idea of having a working parent who travels a lot, but then also also some shared memories of recalling that he was also home which, which I think for bonding purposes was really important for our for our family. I do know post as I look at what's happening personally, I was just processing this morning, this idea of I used to be a big extrovert, I kind of turned into an introvert combination, and I think a lot of us have and so I've been processing a lot of like the idea of being introverted, but still extroverted. So I am reminded that we are all processing, even in this period COVID of trying to figure out our new identity. And so while I've been working with people on their new identities, I realized I'm also trying to figure out why I still feel so heavy oftentimes, you know, like many folks, I lost physical wellness. When you think of the dimensions of wellness. I don't I'm trying to get back on the bandwagon. I haven't figured it out yet. What my new normal of what it looks like still prioritizing work right away, which all of us have been doing. So like making these shifts, I think the life work balance for all of us, including myself, has been so off from the last three years and burnout is so hard. I think that we've realized and that's been I think one of the things I've realized is how are we going to really identify post crisis in this country. Ways that we can take care of ourselves and our families and our community All, while still giving to our job, but then have having cut offs, you know, where I think that's one realization that I think has come. And I think there have been a lot of learning lessons, I wish we could take some of the learning lessons we had from the very beginning, when we were a little bit more centered on our home environment, where even folks who are in solitude can say that they were doing some self reflection, those who are raising children, so they spend time with their kids. And now, we're going back to focusing so much on the external world, like, beyond our four walls. And I think we have lost that messaging that to whatever you want to call it, then natural phenomenon is whatever it is. So my aim is how do we find that balance again? And so I'm now looking at trying to create more spaces of, of how do we identify with the new US, you know, because we're all different, which we

realize we change all the time. But I was just saying the other day that we have drastically changed in three years span of who we are, like almost like a 10 year. Lifespan real quick. So a lot of learning lessons for sure. And one of the greatest things that came out pandemic was I developed a strategic alliance with an organization that's called pause Inc. And it's basically believes in transformational education, which I believe in, and we have so many shared alliances, and now she's a co host on the podcast. So we're just really, a lot of great things have come out. I think a lot of great things in terms of how we look at things globally. We now don't really have to feel like we have to operate in isolation, we can look at other countries and see what they're doing and how we can integrate things. And I think telecommuting works for some folks and I think we're just trying to figure out the balance and I think as long as we keep in mind, the individual personality, what the life circumstances are, I really feel like while we're in this again learning phase of the new normal now I don't like to call it normal. I don't believe in normal anymore. That we'll figure we'll figure it out. But I think we need to understand we're in a post crisis cycle right now we were in crisis during COVID Now we're in post crisis and we will then get to you know, as the crisis cycle has kind of and hour at that tail end of figuring it out and I think we just have to be patient and realize that that is what is happening.

Kit Heintzman 08:00

How are you identifying with the new you?

Arti Kumar-Jain 08:03

That's a great question. I haven't quite figured it out there lots of things. So part of what happened was my I lost my mom died from cancer in 2019 August so I was kind of process ahead the whole kind of whatever you want to call it that year I started this nonprofit the business so I did a lot of stuff in the meantime COVID came and now I'm in this period where I'm reflecting on grief for myself like I have I I feel like I have been on the go like all of us feel like I've been we've been on the go but I realized that I have been on the go and I might not have given myself permission to just sit still. So right now, I feel like I haven't figured it out because I'm trying to slow down and I'm realizing that it's really important for me to take some time right now to figure out my new rhythm before I get on this train again, that's speed ahead and then I you know, so I am in the price process of trying to figure out how I want to identify with my my physical wellness is my big agenda is figuring that out for myself for sure. But do I like the fact that I am okay with not having be the life of the party always being around and giving myself time just to be still for sure. And I that did come out of the that came out of the pandemic it also came out of my mom's loss and now I really actually love that part where I want to give and serve my community but then I also just want to just chill and whatever that looks like to give myself permission because I talk a lot about self compassion and I I have gotten a lot better with that piece while I talk about it. Well, for others, I've definitely gotten a lot better with it too.

Kit Heintzman 10:09

What are some of the things you noticed in your clients?

Arti Kumar-Jain 10:15

So, I have noticed that they are looking for share, Like a holding space, I think that they are trying to process just like we all are this identity, and I think they feel bad about not having, there's a lot of shame in not having it figured out. Um, and the stress like, literal chronic stress that is causing some, like health conditions or pre existing health conditions or like, or like, personally, I can tell you that I know it's inflammation. And then when I think about what they're talking about in their bodies, when they're talking about how their system is off, you

definitely tell there's a lot of inflammation in the body. And it's because of chronic stress. So I would tell you that stress, but then when people take that door to open up themselves and become vulnerable, they feel so much lighter and so much better is the observation, like I have done some grief recovery method. It's a basic education program. And after the program that is a lot of intensity, intensity, but they feel so grateful for the experience because they knew that they needed to do it. And so I'm seeing a lot of this idea of like, vulnerability is hard. But if I do it, I'll be in a better place kind of concept.

Kit Heintzman 11:48

I'd love to hear a little bit about how your own home life changed.

Arti Kumar-Jain 11:53

So my husband is traveling again. So we're figuring that out, we actually downsized our house, and we we downsize our house, we actually live closer to the beach. So we are literally more in nature. It was a big moment of transition, because it was it was a lot of partying. And you know, we physically hold on to things that are that we've either collected, or that means something because they're family related. And so that when I realized I was going through a big grief cycle, because it was last place that I said goodbye to my mother physically. And I thought I had made amends with it. But I realized that was a big part of the grieving cycle saying goodbye to a physical space, the last space but that I processed you know that processing came a little bit later. And so that was a big, big transition, as we know, move is a big stress, but this one, it I believe everything is such a gift, right when we look at it, but it's in the heart of it, it was not easy by any means it would took a lot of a lot of months to kind of figure out sort through. And then me going through the grief cycle of like, no, I don't want to move. So I gotta go through denial, oh, maybe the sale will fall through like all of this grief cycle. And I now look at everything that we like, there is a grief cycle, when we have something that's changing. And so I think the more we identify with that model, the more that it just brings a lot of like, okay, I'm, again, I'm using the word normal, but I just felt a lot better about what I was going through. So that was huge.

Kit Heintzman 13:45

What's it been like working with parents during the pandemic, while also being a parent yourself?

Arti Kumar-Jain 13:52

Honestly, I think it always helps. I used to work with families before I had, you know, years ago when I didn't even have kids and that was different. And I don't think I was a hypocrite I never came I don't think I was but like, you know, when you're passing on info and you've never been through it. But it is a different feeling of being truly empathetic when you are going through certain journeys. But I still think you can do a great job. If you haven't lost a parent, you still be a great grief provider. If you're not a parent and you're still providing you can still be a great provider. But the level of empathy, like truly from the heart, I think I definitely think is different. So when we were doing some of our workshops or get together or even any of the classes that were being I think just holding space was really really great. I really love the fact I start most things that I get a chance to with some type of meditation, mindfulness breathing for even a minute. If I'm given the opportunity to lead something, and even those five minutes of starting something, you could tell that everybody just needed just some space to just chill for a few. And that was really, really helpful. I think that that grounding. And I think pushing the message of we're all in it together was a big one for me. And I think that was helpful. So creating spaces to do like, you're not in this by yourself, like people look like they have it together. They really nobody does. And I think that was helpful. And, yeah, I think it was the fact of just being grateful to be able to do that, for sure.

Kit Heintzman 15:49

This is my last question. I'd like you to imagine speaking to a historian in the future, someone far enough away that they have no lived experience of this moment, as they go forth trying to understand COVID-19. In the last few years, what would you tell them cannot be forgotten about the pandemic?

Arti Kumar-Jain 16:07

That is a great question. There is a book by Patricia K300arst, it's one of my favorites. It's a children's book, it's called the invisible string. So if you believe or don't believe, there is an energy in the world, and it's universal. And when you see something and witnessed something that literally were tied together by the pandemic, and was is something that will go down in history as a global effect, which, if you look at there's, you know, we're right now monitoring, you know, the Tropical Storm hurricane Ian like, in this country, on the, you know, on our east coast, but that's one region, right. But when you look at what what it means to be tied together by something that has struck the entire world and shaking it at it's core to figure things out, and being in crisis mode, but then also be out of crisis mode, the moment we all realize we are tied together by something. And that can't be explained. And I think the bottom line is we don't need to always explain everything, I think we try and always figure things out on our problem solving mode, but some things are just the way that they are. And they can't be explained. But you just know that they exist and then you just work with it. And the resilience of the human spirit is something I would definitely, definitely say that exists.

Kit Heintzman 17:53

I want to thank you so much. If there's anything you'd like to share that my questions haven't made room for, please take some space and share it.

Arti Kumar-Jain 18:01

No, I appreciate this opportunity. And I it's an interesting time that we are talking about this because it is really important to process. So I appreciate you having this space because I have literally been thinking a lot about again creating spaces myself to be able to share because we have gone into a place real quick of post cycle and I think we need to process so I appreciate this opportunity in this space to be able to do that. And it reminds me like how more spaces need to be created. To process like, just around just around that topic. Not you know not anything else but so, yes.

Kit Heintzman 18:47

Thank you so much.