

# JENNIFER GOODMAN LINN YOU FEARLESS

## Q & A WITH JEN

**Q:** How did you become so fearless? *Jen on Being Fearless*

**A:** I had no choice but to remove fear from my life. In 2004 I was diagnosed with a rare, often fatal, form of cancer called sarcoma. I was told my odds of beating the disease were 50/50 and that there was no clear path or blueprint for how to proceed. Over the past 6 years I have slogged through five heartbreaking recurrences, eight courses of chemotherapy to shrink the tumors and six grueling surgeries to remove them. I continue to beat cancer every day by not giving in to the disease.

**Q:** I've heard you say that cancer is the best thing that ever happened to you, can you explain? *Jen on Having a Choice*

**A:** I realized I had a choice in how I wanted to live my life; I could give up or fight like hell. I could look at cancer as the worst thing that ever happened to me, or channel all that I was learning from this disease and make it a positive experience. Although it is hard for most people to understand, my life has been fundamentally richer since I got diagnosed. There is a quote from Ivy Baker Priest that I love, "The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning." I was committed to making cancer my new beginning.

**Q:** Do you consider yourself a survivor? *Jen on Surviving*

**A:** I always say that I am not a survivor, I am a thriver. The term survivor seems so final and I think thriver is a much more accurate description of how I have chosen to handle what life throws at me, by living day by day and truly in the present.

**Q:** What are some of the big lessons you have learned? *Jen on Life Lessons*

**A:** *Orientation is everything.* When you change the way you look at things, the way you look at things changes. I knew that my battle with cancer was likely going to be a long road and I needed to become part of that journey.

*Often, life events are beyond your control.* Rather than be able to make something happen, you have to make the most of the hand you have been dealt. There is tremendous freedom in accepting this.

*I am not a statistic.* I have chosen to separate myself from the disease. The minute I internalize this disease, it wins. I often say, "I might have cancer, but cancer doesn't have me." Rather than listen to what "might" or "should" happen, I focus on what I can make happen.

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**Q:** **Talk about fear.** *Jen on Fear*

**A:** Mark Twain once said, "Courage is the mastery of fear, not the absence of fear." I love that quote because so many people try to deny that they have fear in their lives. And fear, when channeled appropriately is a great motivator. However, a lot of people let fear overwhelm them. And when you give fear too much power, it can get in the way of progress and it can become so debilitating. When you give in too much to fear, it can truly paralyze you and make you see only obstacles instead of opportunities.

**Q:** **Talk about fear and how it relates to the business world.** *Fear in the Business World*

**A:** Eliminating fear has been important in my personal life and my professional life. In fact, I believe it's the key to building successful businesses and careers. By eliminating fear, you can unleash the power of your ideas, objectively assess potential options, and be decisive. Great creative ideas are built when you are not distracted by common fears such as "Will this idea be liked?", "Will this idea make me look good?" or "Will this idea really work?" Breakthrough ideas happen when people fling themselves to every challenge, focusing on what could be rather than the confines of what is. Being fearless is not only an approach to conquering personal challenges, but a critical winning strategy in business contexts as well.

**Q:** **How do you manage fear?** *Jen on Managing Fear*

**A:** I really focus on living in the present. My doctor once said to me these words that I will never forget: "Year by year all is unclear. Day by day we find our way." Taking one day at a time and assessing how I feel that day and living in accordance with that is really productive. So often people are scared of the unknown. They imagine what might be or what could be and those assumptions dictate their behavior. My answer is that I do have fear, but I have learned that focusing on that fear is a waste of time. I'd rather focus on what actually is happening versus what could be or what might be. I will not buy into fear. The minute I buy into fear, the disease wins.

**Q:** **Do you still sweat the small stuff?** *Jen on Sweating the Small Stuff*

**A:** In many ways, having a life-threatening disease really helps you prioritize what's important in life. You realize that many things you obsess over really are not going to have much of an impact on life, so that's a great lesson. However, to be really honest, I would say that sometimes I realize I don't have control over the big stuff like my health, so I get a bit neurotic about the silly, small stuff. But no one is perfect. I am pretty aware of when I do it however, and I try to change gears when I notice the small stuff creeping up on me.

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**Q:** Tell us about your You Fearless concept. *Jen on YOU Fearless*

**A:** I want to help people get more comfortable with their fears so that rather than be paralyzed by them, they are propelled by them; propelled to take action and make a difference. I had no choice but to master fear in my life, and it has made such an incredible difference both personally and professionally. We all have those proverbial “monsters under our bed” that get in the way of progress. I want to help people get rid of them. I truly believe that if I can help people tackle their fears, they will be more successful in all aspects of their lives.

**Q:** Tell us about a time in your life where you eliminated fear and what happened? *Jen on Living without Fear*

**A:** I studied abroad my junior year of college in Sydney, Australia. One day I was walking in a very popular downtown area of Sydney called “The Rocks” and I saw the Saatchi & Saatchi office buildings. Saatchi & Saatchi is a very well-respected global advertising agency and I had always dreamed of starting my career in advertising. I was 20 years old and I had no idea how I could get my foot in the door to this industry. Perhaps it was the fact that I was abroad and in a different environment, but I put aside all of my considerations or insecurities and walked right into the lobby and asked to meet with Human Resources. I explained that I was here for the semester and that I would be willing to do whatever was needed to help out and get some advertising experience under my belt. They were impressed with my determination and drive and hired me as an intern a few weeks later. I had a wonderful experience and more importantly, I was able to leverage that internship to get a full-time job in America after I graduated. That instance of “living without fear and going for it” really set up my career.

**Q:** Tell us about some early childhood memories that shaped who you are.

**A:** I have a few that I believe really express who I am:

**My “Seize The Day” mentality.** My parents sent me to nursery school when I was about 4 years old. I kept on going to the bathroom in my pants even though I had been potty trained for years. When my parents and the teacher confronted me about why I was not asking to use the toilet when I needed it, I threw up my hands and exclaimed, “But I just don’t want to miss out on anything!”

**My “Never Give Up” Mantra.** I loved baton twirling when I was little and I must have been about 10 when I entered myself in the Hillside School talent show. My routine was to the Donna Summer song *Last Dance*. At one point in the routine, I had to do a “step out” which is a move where you throw the baton over your head, turn around and catch it on the way down. I must have practiced this move thousands of times and never

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caught the baton. My parents often joke that there is still a dent in our front yard from all the times the baton fell to the ground. I really wanted my teacher to take the move out of the routine, but instead I kept on practicing. Sure enough, the day of the talent show arrived and I caught the baton! I was so stunned that I forgot the next few seconds of the routine! At least I didn't give up.

**Q: Tell us about a time when you pretended you were fearless but that wasn't actually the case!**

**A:** When I was a consultant at McKinsey, I had the pleasure of working on a complete marketing revamp for the United States Army. I spent over a year working in the Pentagon helping the Army reinvigorate their marketing and sales strategy in an effort to get 210,000 "men in boots" annually. After a particularly well-received presentation one of our key clients thanked us vigorously and asked if there was anything he or the Army could do to show their gratitude for our ideas and our work. Never one to keep my mouth closed, I piped up, "You could let us jump out of a plane!"

Mind you that I am terrified of heights! However, I learned that the Army doesn't really joke around. They took my request quite seriously. The next morning I received a phone call from a staff sergeant requesting that my entire team report at 0600 to Fort Bragg in North Carolina to jump out of a plane with the famous Golden Knights. I will admit that the fear enveloped me. I have never been so scared in my entire life. Jumping out of a plane went against everything rational to me, but I was scared to say no. I became a victim of peer pressure and felt helpless.

To make a long story short, we didn't merely jump out of the plane at 12,000 feet, we somersaulted out of the plane at 15,000 feet! I loved every minute of it! Somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 feet I embraced my fear and accepted it. I took the fear on and suddenly I knew I was going to conquer. Now imagine how much more capable we would be if we adopted that "head on" attitude in all aspects of our lives.

**Q: If you had to sum up your mission in a few sentences, what would it be?**

*Jen on Her Mission*

**A:** I want to create a world that is free of fear. A world where people tirelessly and relentlessly persevere in getting what they want, obliterating any obstacles that stand in their way. I want to be a living role model to others, demonstrating that without fear, anything is possible. I want people to reflect on how they can better their lives by seeing how I live mine.

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**Q:** Tell us about *Cycle for Survival*? *Jen on Cycle for Survival*

**A:** I created *Cycle For Survival* for 3 reasons:

1. To give back to the doctors and nurses at Memorial Sloan-Kettering who have tirelessly worked to save my life over the past 6 years and will continue to do so in the years ahead.
2. To raise much needed funds for orphan cancers – rare cancers that affect millions of people a year, but often don't attract the necessary funding needed to ensure advancements in drug development.
3. To celebrate strength and determination in the face of adversity. Lance Armstrong once said "You either give up or fight like hell." This is for the people who are fighters and inspire their families and friends to fight for their cause.

**Q:** Why cycling? *Jen on Cycling*

**A:** I credit exercise, and specifically cycling with helping me get through my years of treatment. Cycling became my therapy. I would go to the gym every day and no matter how strong or weak I felt I would say, "I may have cancer, but cancer doesn't have me." Some days I only had enough energy to cycle for 15 minutes, but it was my way to proactively and proverbially tackle the road ahead. The hills signified the obstacles I had to overcome and the adversity and fear I was facing. Cycling enabled me to push myself to the best of my ability every day and feel like I was beating this disease. Fear wasn't allowed in the cycling studio.

**Q:** How did you conceive of an event that would become one of the fastest growing charities in the country? *Jen on the early days of Cycle for Survival*

**A:** What I love about *Cycle for Survival* is that from day one, the idea was conceived from a passion, a passion to give back and a desire to couple my passion of marketing with my passion for cycling. There was no blueprint and no fancy business plan. It serves as proof that when you have a good idea, a passionate network of supporters and a truly worthy cause, you can make anything happen.

**Q:** Talk about the cause and why it's so important? *Jen on the Cause*

**A:** *Cycle for Survival* is unique in that we are the only organization that I have found that advances rare cancer research. I call them "orphan cancers" because they don't get the love or attention of the pharmaceutical companies. These orphan cancers affect millions of people annually and they are cancers that you have heard of like cancers like pancreatic, brain, neuroblastoma, melanoma and sarcoma. Because these cancers don't get proper

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funding, patients have fewer treatment options. I always say that when someone is diagnosed with cancer, their first words should be “What is the plan?” not “Is there a plan?” I want to give hope to the millions of people suffering like me that there will be more treatment options in the pipeline. I don’t want people to have to live in fear.

**Q:** How much progress has *Cycle for Survival* made? *Jen on Progress*

**A:** We have already made a real difference for patients with rare cancer. The money we have raised has gone into numerous trials affecting brain, pancreatic, pediatric and soft tissue cancers and has also been used towards the development of new more effective chemotherapy regimens. In fact, I was recently placed on a new treatment protocol that was developed from the dollars raised from the 2009 event.

**Q:** What is most gratifying to you about *Cycle for Survival*?

**A:** I love that the idea might have started with me, but it has been embraced by thousands of others. So many people thank me after the event for pushing them to do something that they didn’t think they were capable of, whether it’s fundraising or participating. I love that I am helping people get over their own fears and as a result leading more productive, satisfied lives. We are capable of so much more than we think we are and for so many *Cycle for Survival* is evidence of what you can accomplish when you take fear out of the equation.

**Q:** Where can we find out more information about you?

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