



## **The Limitless Women Podcast Dena Patton**

On today's podcast, I have the pleasure of talking with Dena Patton. Dena is an award-winning business coach and speaker, and is the co-founder of The Girls Rule foundation, a national 501c3 that offers programs to develop self-confidence, financial literacy and leadership skills in teen girls.

During our conversation, Dena shares her experience around giving and how to move forward into abundance.

### **Want to skip head? Episode Highlights**

- [00:27] You'll learn about what is covered in today's episode.
- [09:09] Learn from Dena how the coronavirus pandemic stripped away "luxury" from business owners, and how to use those times in positive ways for your business.
- [21:36] Listen to Dena share her story of 9/11 and how she was able to share her talents.
- [38:40] You'll find out from Dena how you can get back to your core values and what truly matters in times when you've maybe lost focus.

### **Episode Transcript**

*[MC]* Welcome to the Limitless Women Podcast. Our mission is to help women business owners, like you, grow profitable businesses and actualize your opportunities to serve and give to yourself and others. Here's your host, the founder of Limitless Women, Laura Gisborne.

*[Laura Gisborne]* In today's episode I chatted with my good friend, Dena Patton. Dena has been an award-winning business coach and speaker for 20 years. She works with leaders, entrepreneurs and world changers to help them go from good to great. She is the Co-Founder of The Girls Rule Foundation, a national 501c3 that offers programs to develop self-confidence, financial literacy, and leadership skills in teen girls.

During our talk, Dena shares her experience and knowledge around giving, how the coronavirus pandemic stripped away "luxury" for many business owners, and what you and I as business owners can focus on to move forward into abundance anytime. Enjoy the show!



*[Dena Patton]* It's the go-getters -- I say this in my book. It's the go-getters that are also go-givers. The show is angled on this go-getter and this hustle and this amazing athlete, CEO, blah, blah, blah, go-getting in the hustle, and this give. It's that that I think is interesting because you've got the business and whatever, but you have an angle of the go-giving philanthropy.

*[Laura]* Right, and this is exactly what I wrote back to her the next day. I woke up -- I'll put a caboose on this train with her, but I'll tell you that I said to her at the end of our -- basically, she was interviewing me. I said at the end, "Well, what do you need most in your business? How can I support you?" I said you've got these different - - I don't know what they call them, but basically, different shows and production around this and this. I said, "I have a person here that I know that I have a great connection with that I'd love to just have you check her out and see what you think, if she could be a good profile for that. Then I have another friend who does documentaries and here's his link." She laughed and she said, "I've got to tell you that in all my years of doing this business, no one has ever asked me what do I need." She's like, "You're just blowing me away." I'm like, "Well, everybody thinks this is so altruistic, but I really do believe that giving causes growing, so understand there's something in it for me when I ask what do you need and how can I help." Do you know what I mean? I said, "Don't just put me on a pedestal with it," but this piece of like -- I went back the next day and I made the introductions for her to the different people I was thinking about and said -- what came to me this morning was really what you're saying, Dena. If we want to meet the masses, if we want to meet them and say where are their brains going, clearly there is a desire for Shark Tank. It's such a great show. Clearly, there's a desire for the Prophet.

What nobody's really looking at -- and I sent her the American Express report that we all refer back to because they do the most comprehensive on women in business. I said, "This is what's happening for women in the world." Now, this was all before coronavirus. Can you imagine how many mamas that have had a chance to be home after they lost their poop over homeschooling the first week? They're like, "Hey, this doesn't suck too much being with my babies, being home." I think about how you were with Ale and how I was with Jake and Erika. I literally built all of my companies around them and the reward to me today is that my daughter who's turning 24 in just a few weeks, when this started going down, we were on the phone and I said, "Come home." She got in her car. She drove home from LA. She's been here for a month. It's been fantastic. The luxury of my relationship with her as an adult is a result of that amazing opportunity as an entrepreneur. So I just think what's getting ready to happen for women in business is -- I'm covered in goosebumps -- there are huge opportunities for us as women.

*[Dena]* Yeah, absolutely.



[Laura] Yeah, a big wake-up call.

[Dena] It's funny because women are out front in philanthropy and charity and giving, but some of my biggest go-givers are my male clients.

[Laura] That's so nice.

[Dena] I think it's a mindset. It's a heartset. I don't think it's a male-female or it's a rich-poor. I walked into Fresh Start, baby business, brand new. I just moved to Phoenix. I had this much revenue. I knew no one and I walked into Fresh Start and I said, "You're going to be my chosen charity and I'm going to write you a check every month. It might be \$50. It might be \$100." I felt so silly. I felt so ashamed of my hundred dollar check. Now, on the other side of being a charity -- when people write a \$100 check, it's nothing to be ashamed of.

[Laura] Exactly.

[Dena] But I think giving, just giving, it's a hard thing. It's a mindset thing. It's not like, "When I'm rich, I'm going to give." I'm going to give right now and it's going to expand me. I think that really is -- when you give in not big checks, not life-shattering you're donating a building, I think what happens is people shift in their worth.

[Laura] Yes.

[Dena] I think that's the shift, is oh my gosh, when I write \$100 check every month to my chosen charity that moves my heart, I'm a philanthropist and I make a difference. I'm worthy and they're worthy. I think the whole thing of like, "I can't be a philanthropist," I think it's more about people's self-esteem of like "I'm not worthy of giving" or "I don't matter. My money doesn't matter."

[Laura] Or the conversation of like, "I'm not enough" but what shows up is "I don't have enough. I don't have enough time. I don't have enough money." I joke about this all the time. Giving USA's annual report on philanthropy, the bulk of giving comes from individuals 88%; 75% of these people make less than \$150,000 a year, which is still a lot of money for many people, but I feel like this piece around -- I remember when we were just really building for ourselves of the understanding of how to use this business as a vehicle to inspire women to give back. I remember having a woman at an event in 2015. It was a small event. We were like 20 women there, and she said, "I'm going through a divorce. I'm basically staying with a friend. I'm basically at this point homeless," and she said, "but I want to commit \$10 a month and I want to sign up for that. I want to really do it for the next couple of years."



I used to get a receipt coming through by email that this woman was making this donation for like three years, and then she upped her giving and her business started growing and she did great things.

I'm just saying we've literally raised hundreds of thousands of dollars as a community by you doing your part, me doing my part, Cindy -- her name's Cindy - - doing her \$10 donation because that's what she could do when she was basically hungry and homeless. She still could do that. We get to the other side and I think -- you and I have been friends for a long time and there's this place of what I know my mission to be is this healing of the poverty consciousness of women business leaders in the developed world. I always joke that nobody hires me for that. What they say is, "I need help with my profitability. I need help to find my time. How do you get it all done? How do you find flow?" Those are simply symptoms of this underneath condition of "I'm not enough." I'm always fascinated that it's a different -- man, there are different issues for women when they're living in the world where they don't have access to water or food for their children or education. They don't have the space for "I'm not enough." They're really on a mission for, "How do I take care of my family?" It's an interesting luxury that we have that I feel has created this not enoughness for us, right?

*[Dena]* Yes. Well, it's funny that you say "luxury" because what I'm getting in my prayer meditation this week is all the people who didn't want to work on their business or didn't want to put systems or didn't want to address the gaps, blah, blah, blah, it's because they have the luxury not to. I have the choice of like I can or I don't have to. What's happened, I got more clients in the last two weeks because the luxury has been ripped away. Well, you have to work on your business. You have to get systems. You have to know how to sell. You have to leave from your greatness mindset. I think that "luxury" is such a great word because you remind me of one of my favorite books, "Lioness Arising".

*[Laura]* I don't know this book. Let me write this down, one of your favorite books, "Lioness Arising"?

*[Dena]* Yes. All of my friends need to read that, not need like you need the book. The book, you could have written the book, but --

*[Laura]* Yeah, I'm a bit of a lioness, aren't I?

*[Dena]* The lioness, I just love this visual and I say it so often in my speeches. A lioness just doesn't walk around thinking, "Oh, does my butt look too big? What do I need to waste my with?" She's like [swoosh]. You look at lionesses in the wild. They have frigging intention. They're strong. There's no lioness on the planet that doubts its strength. It doesn't wake up and go, "I don't think I can get the llama today" or



"Oh, that llama is too hard." No! It wakes up and it's like, "I'm getting that llama today. I need to feed my baby." It's this rise up and lead the tribe that you're meant to lead and lead it with confidence and know that you're the lioness. You don't have to doubt. We have the luxury of doubt and that's such to me -- don't give yourself the luxury of doubt. That's the discipline that I have built in that I love reminding people of, is you're giving yourself the luxury to doubt yourself.

[Laura] That's a great point.

[Dena] We're in lean times. What has shifted is the luxury to be lazy, to be in doubt. All that's removed.

[Laura] This is it, and what matters. I want to just put a caboose on the train because I love that you brought this up, the story of the lioness, because I remember when I went to Africa the first time. I was not aware -- and you probably know this already. I just didn't. I was not aware that in the pack -- I think it's a pack of lions. I think I'm saying that right -- the lioness does the hunting, not the lion. There's an order for eating, which is also very fascinating to me, which was that the mama, the women, eat first. They hunt. They eat first then the male eats and then the children eat, which is interesting, and they're not fooling around. There's an order. When you see the mamas and their bellies are so full, the natural order there is that the mamas eat first.

I think this is the place that again -- I always say -- I don't want to offend the Christians when I say we don't need any more martyrs. Jesus already died for us. We're good. That's my personal belief, but it's not everybody's belief. This idea that we make ourselves victims and martyrs and blah, blah, blah, it's not helping anyone and it is not even a natural order of things. Women really like owning what they need, taking care of their needs, and our needs are actually fairly basic. I'm sitting here talking to you about my gray roots and heaven forbid I haven't had my nails done in four weeks. It's so scary, but really, this is such a First World issue. In the meantime, what matters? What do we need to be focusing on? What do we need to do to move forward? Our basic needs are basic and then all the rest is pretty elective for us. It's pretty elective.

Tell me about -- we've been friends for a long time. How are you doing on time, sweetheart? Are you okay?

[Dena] Yeah.

[Laura] I said I want 30 minutes, so I've got a little more time. If you've got more time, I'd love to hear more from you.



*[Dena]* I have a 12 --

*[Laura]* Okay, perfect. I would like to hear a little bit about your origin story. You're talking about the \$100 checks for Fresh Start, which is fantastic, but I feel like there might have been some stuff even before that. I know the 9/11 story and some different things that's happened in your life with your health and your losses. Where do you think giving first showed up in your life that you're aware of?

*[Dena]* Well, I think for sure, my whole line of women -- it's funny when I look -- I've been doing a lot of soul-searching in the last year since my father died and helping my daughter know her history. I think it's really important that women know their history.

*[Laura]* Beautiful.

*[Dena]* What I learned was my great grandmother was given away at 12 and never saw her family again.

*[Laura]* Oh, wow.

*[Dena]* And never had education, more than that, but this woman at 12 made her way from Russia. She was in Russia, given away to a family because they had too many girls, and girls were useless and girls brought down the worth of the family.

*[Laura]* Right.

*[Dena]* So she was given away, never saw her family again. The family she was given to, she was a housekeeper and a nanny and a cook. They moved to Greece -- oh, they moved to Poland and then they moved to Greece where she then got on a boat at 19 and came to America in 1912.

*[Laura]* Wow.

*[Dena]* All because there was an advertisement. There's this little town in Fargo, North Dakota --

*[Laura]* I know Fargo. My daughter-in-law went to school there, yes.



[Dena] There was some factory there and I don't know that history, but they were advertising in the town that she was living in that I think was making America sexy like "Come to America, work for our factory." She got on a boat from there, came to America, worked in this factory at 19, and met a boy that also moved from Greece for a job there, and they're my great grandmother and great grandfather. She had to learn five languages and was a mad cook, which I didn't get any of those skills.

[Laura] You got other strengths. I love your other strengths.

[Dena] She just became an extraordinary woman and had three kids. One was my grandmother who practically raised me. My grandmother and my mother were both very service-oriented, caring people. Neither one of them were rich. I never saw them write a check or give money, but it's their attitude of abundance, of giving, of serving when they see someone hurting whether it's give food, give groceries, give a ride. So it was, I think, a mindset and it was something in our culture and in our family, and that's where I learned it. When I lived in New York, I really learned about charities and philanthropy and giving for real, not just in personal life. I think we forget that we can make a difference with our gifts.

I think one of my biggest beliefs is our God-given gifts are the most priceless thing that we have. We have college education and experiences and job resume and all that, but we forget about our God-given gifts and those are the biggest gifts that we can share with our family, our communities, the people around us. That first and foremost is the philanthropy that everybody can do, is how can I serve my neighbor, my community, another child, another family, a single mom, someone struggling, so that level, but then I learned about philanthropy and just the world of charities solve problems that the private sector doesn't. It's not monetized. It's really service-based work.

So I got on some boards in New York and fell in love with certain charities that move my heart, and really that was the beginning of me really loving -- I've always been an impact person. I think part of my personality is I want to be useful and I want to be impactful, and so that's always been with me, but I think the question that people have to ask is how. You can want to help all you want, but what are the gifts that you have that can help someone else? It doesn't have to be money or food, but sometimes it's just listening. I have a friend who's really struggling. She has four people in her life right now that has COVID, and her sister has cancer. I just called her and literally, we just had girl talk for two hours and just connected and I loved her and had a girlfriend talk.



[Laura] You're such a good friend.

[Dena] That is so huge. I just think people forget about the basic of human abundance like we have little time for our friends.

[Laura] We all have the same amount of time, so that's always the issue, and then how we choose to spend it. I love what you're sharing. We talk often -- and you know this. I'm preaching the choir to you, but I won't be to somebody else listening necessarily, is that it's not always about our tithes although it's very important that we all contribute what we can because we get to. It's actually what we get to give. The piece around your talents leads me to think about a couple of things. First of all, I had a little flash in my mind of meeting you the first time in that brown dress and how gorgeous you were in Scottsdale a million years ago, actually, almost ten years ago now, which is kind of crazy, and just what a bright light you were even then. You're still just more gorgeous than ever, so I just want to feed that back to you.

What I'm hearing a lot about, Dena, I feel like you have a very personal story that can be compelling around the same issue of your talents. There's a lot right now where we're hearing about what's happening in New York with COVID and the numbers going beyond 9/11, and 9/11 has been for many of us the big moment where we knew we were in this lifetime. Could you share a little bit about what your journey was with 9/11, and again, sharing your talents and where you went with that because I think it's a really compelling story.

[Dena] Yeah. Well, I had just been recovering from my -- I call it my entrepreneur stroke. Your business can kill you if you don't have that self-care plan, which I'm a huge fan of. I was working 12, 14, 16 hours a day in my PR marketing company and didn't know the power of "no". I didn't understand that I could choose my clients and I could say "no" to people that I didn't want to work with, and so I said "yes" and was a workaholic and ended up having my minor stroke and recovering from that, and fell in love with --

[Laura] Pause for a second because it's a big deal. How old were you when you had your stroke?

[Dena] Twenty-seven.

[Laura] Yeah, that's important.

[Dena] Yeah. It was a total game-changer. At that time, I think in your 20s, you just think you're so --



[Laura] Invincible.

[Dena] Yeah, or untouchable. I'm thriving in New York and I'm strong and my business is strong. You just feel untouchable, and so it was a huge wake-up call. I had to hire a coach to really help me understand the gaps and the blind spots because I just didn't get, I literally didn't get how I got there. I didn't have the systems in place. I definitely didn't have the self-care in place. If you are going to play a big game, you have to have a self-care plan that is supporting that big game or you implode.

Anyway, I was recovering from that when 9/11 happened and I was near the towers. We were all there watching and it was devastating. It took me a long time to get over seeing the people in the towers jumping and falling. It was a horrible time for so many people, but for me, one of my coping mechanisms in challenging times is to serve, so it's a win-win. For me, again, that personality of impact and serving and the person who's getting served wins, so it's a win-win, but that night when I walked home -- of course, I had five-inch heels. I love great shoes, so I was down by the towers with five-inch heels and had to walk seven miles home, and I remember just crying.

[Laura] You're shocked. I can imagine.

[Dena] Just shocked. Your mind's going a million different ways and emotional then I got this just very clear God moment of, "Go and serve. Go and serve." It's just something that I can just hold onto. I can just get in action and I always go to what do I have? It might be emotional. It might be spiritual. It might be physical. It might be financial. What do I have that I can go and serve with?

So the next day, I literally went back down there and I served in triage for three days straight, and then I met this guy who had this idea for -- at the time, the parks were covered in pictures and poems and candles and all that of all the people that were lost. He said, "There's this art studio that is empty right now and I'm going to ask them if we can move these in there and have a central place for people to gather." Long story short, we did and we put up -- people were allowed a 1.5 ft x 1.5 ft square on the wall and they could put pictures and stories. So we open that up, we spread the word over a couple days, and within four days, it was ceiling to floor thousands and thousands and thousands of pictures and stories.

[Laura] The pictures and the stories are of people that were lost?

[Dena] Yes, but to my shock, what was weird about that was -- my hobby has always been photography and I've always had my camera on me. Now, this was 2001. I didn't have a camera --



[Laura] Yeah. We didn't have cellphones. You actually carried a camera.

[Dena] Yeah. I have a big Canon camera and never in those moments of being by the tower, never did I think, "Let me get my camera out and take pictures." I just didn't think of that, but thousands of people did. This is the thing. There were thousands of New Yorkers that weren't in New York. They were on a plane or they were at the Pentagon. They were in various places around the world and they took pictures where they were. We had pictures inside of a plane on a tarmac who sat there for ten hours and they couldn't go anywhere. She took pictures of all the different faces and different people that she was with in those ten hours and that was her story.

So there were all these just amazing, personal, powerful stories of "This is where I was. This is what I was feeling. This is what happened to me," very, very different. There were probably 50 people who took pictures going down the stairs inside the towers as they ran downstairs. I'm thinking you are running for your life and you're like -- that was so amazing, to see those towers inside after they were being hit. There were many, many people who took those pictures.

I've always been a storyteller and it was why I was in theater, why I was in PR, why I'm a speaker, why I do what I do. I love storytelling. The human story is to me magic and powerful, and people -- back to what I was saying about my grandmother -- knowing your history and knowing your story is part of your story. I knew parts of my great grandmother's story, but I didn't know a huge amount of it and it just inspires me that my great grandmother --

[Laura] It's so enriching for you too, this idea that it's just like another jewel to add to your crown. It's just a whole another place for you to have an enrichment of your own experience. It's really beautiful.

[Dena] Well, also that you can connect to your -- my resiliency and my grit -- my mom wasn't necessarily a grit type of person, but my great grandmother was.

[Laura] You know where it comes from, yeah. It's nice.

[Dena] Yeah, these little anchors that we have inside of us for good or for bad. Yeah, it was a powerful storytelling time. A woman walked up to me at that -- we took shifts. There were three of us that created this project and we all were working. We're full time working and we just took shifts to watch the project.

[Laura] And be there, yeah.



*[Dena]* And be there because we had lines. We had 500 people in line to see it every day because you go through it and you stop and you read people's stories. It took me about two hours to get through it.

*[Laura]* It's such a tribute.

*[Dena]* Yes, it was a huge tribute and it was all about healing and telling the stories. This is why when you go through something and then you see it on mainstream TV and it was dramatized, it wasn't telling the people's stories.

For me, it was really important to tell people's real stories and not watch the media. For me, that was a real safe place of this is a safe project. Well, this woman came up to me and she said -- this was when Mayor Giuliani was saying, "Please come. Come to New York" and people were starting to come. She said, "I'm from Sacramento. I work in the governor's office, and this is the most healing thing I've ever seen around 9/11. I would love to bring this project to Sacramento." I was like, "What?"

*[Laura]* Good luck with that.

*[Dena]* This is back to gifts. Just with tears in her eyes, she said, "This is powerful. This is healing. This can heal America. Stories heal America," and I just got it. I went, oh my gosh, this project doesn't belong in New York. We have to create a tour and go across the country. Well, who do you think was in charge of that?

*[Laura]* Well, let's see who God gave the talent to.

*[Dena]* I know.

*[Laura]* Here's that gift.

*[Dena]* There you go. Sometimes you just wake up and you say, "How do I serve today?" and someone goes, "You need to put this on tour," so six cities, six weeks each. We started at the Pentagon in DC and then went around the country and it was all about healing, healing people, giving people a place to -- when you hear people's stories of survival and persistence and just love, it was all about connection and the human story and the human spirit. So it was a very, very powerful year for me given I just recovered from my stroke. For me, it was a time that I could use my gifts to serve and do something that I think mattered.



From that is what -- I saw so many families come together in that time and I just said this is the time -- I had been in New York for eight and a half years and I said this is the time that I'm going back to my family and I'm going to move back to Phoenix. So after all that time on tour, I came back. I packed up my apartment. I called my mom and I said, "I'm moving back to Phoenix."

[Laura] Oh, and she was so thrilled.

[Dena] Yeah.

[Laura] And then it took you on another adventure.

[Dena] Yeah, and then I started coaching. I fell in love with coaching. I trained as a coach. Part of my coaching has always just come from all of those experiences and I have been coaching and team training ever since. Every year feels like a new year because you elevate as a person. If you're growing, for me, it's all about a growing mentality, so my business and my leadership and my mindset is different than it was three years ago and five years ago. We evolve. Our businesses evolve. For me, it's all about being that go-getter and that go-giver and that's what brings me joy, brings me a fulfilled life.

[Laura] Yeah, it's good. In the time we have left, I want to talk about two things. I'd like to talk about your greatness trifecta because I feel like -- again, I saw you do this on -- I think on Facebook Live. It was so cute because you're hopping around and showing your whiteboard, "I can't see what you see, but this is what I want you to know." You just feel your passion and it was so exciting. I feel like again, it's those three key elements as an anchor for women who are growing.

If we're growing, we're embracing change. We're in a time of transition. The truth is when is it not a time of transition and when is it not a time to grow. There's always a time to grow, but we're really in a place right now of inquiry. When somebody will be listening to this, I feel like that message is so timeless. If you can take us home and wrap us up on really -- and I'm going to ask you to talk fast, which I know you can do after all those years in New York, my friend. Let's hear a little bit about Girls Rule. I want to know a little bit about the origin of Girls Rule and how we can support and what we can do to really help you grow that movement because you've done a remarkable job already and I want to just say everyone needs to know about it.



[Dena]

Awesome. Trifecta of Greatness is something that when I wrote my book -- I had been coaching it for a while, but when I wrote my book -- you know when you have a written word or some kind of program in the world that people are doing and then they give you feedback? They write you and all that. It's probably one of the most written back things that people get back to me and saying that the Trifecta of Greatness was such a framework that I audited my life, I aligned my life with the trifecta.

The three things that make up your Trifecta of your Greatness is your power, your voice, and your money. These are the three things that you can easily give away in ways that don't matter or people can take if you're not aware and protect them. They are three of the biggest assets that you have. When you look at people that you admire whether they're a top CEO or scientist or inventor or athlete or celebrity, when you look at them, they are using those three things in ways that you admire when you break it down, how they're using their power in the world, how they're using their voice in the world, and how they're using their money in the world.

When people say, "Oh my gosh, I'm bored with life. I'm flatlined. I'm resigned. Life's not going well. I feel all those feelings," for me, the first thing you want to do is look at your trifecta of greatness. How are you using your power? How are you using your voice? How are you using your money? If you are willing to be honest with yourself and give yourself the courage to truly look at that, you will see that you are giving away your power, your money, and your voice to things that don't matter to you, that aren't aligned to your core values, that aren't aligned to your faith, your business, your family. When we start to give away our time, our power, money and voice to things that are not aligned to us, don't matter to us, we start to get disconnected and resigned and it's not fulfilling. In short, it's giving yourself the trifecta audit, making a list of your life, everywhere you give power to, everywhere you give voice to, everywhere you give money to, and asking yourself some hard questions, "Is this thing aligned to me, my life, my dreams, my values, my faith, my brand or business?"

[Laura]

Can I ask a clarifying question real quick? I just think it might be helpful. For those of us that have done a lot of personal development work, which pretty much our community is a pretty evolved group of women here, what are some good reminders for how to get back to your core values, how to get back to what really matters? You said a few things here about my faith, my family. If we're talking about our business, what does our brand really stand for? I think this is a place where -- you're an amazing coach and you help so many people get back to what matters. Do you have any insights for us around that like places of focus because I think it's easy to say, "I'm giving away my power, but I'm not really sure where to put my power." Where should my power be going instead?



[Dena] Generally, if you're a business owner, the core values of your business are your guiding principles really. You hire or fire by your core values. So when you look at places that you're giving money, you're spending money or you're giving your power to, and you would ask yourself, "Does this align to my core values and what my brand stands for?" if you don't know what your brand stands for and you don't know your core values, that's where you have to start because you can't align something to something if you don't know it.

[Laura] Yeah, so that clarity is priceless.

[Dena] Clarity moves the train, so clarity and your core values and what your brand stands for because your decision filters should be going through all of that.

**[0:40:03]**

That's first and foremost, is those core values because alignment is to something. For me, my faith is there. My core values are there, so I can very easily let go, "Oh, I'm spending money on this. That is so not aligned to my core values at all" or I'm giving a ton of power to this group over here that no longer serves me, no longer serves my brand and where I'm going in my dreams. Let's cut that off.

I think we "yes", especially as women, we say "yes" a lot without having the decision filters in place to say, "Is this aligned to my brand? Is this aligned to my faith? Is this aligned to my core values? Is this how I want to use my trifecta of greatness, my assets? Do I want to put my assets?" I think it's easy to just say, "Oh, yeah, yes to that group and yes to that group," but we have to be better decision makers than that. Money also, not just how we're building our business, our personal money, our personal budget, and our philanthropy money whether that's \$10 a month to a cause that you love or it's \$100 a month or it's \$1000 a month. The dollar amount doesn't matter. What matters is that you have that giving mentality and that you choose a cause that moves your heart. We all have different causes whether that's animals or water in Africa or it's girls development or it's education. Choose something that moves you, that gives you fulfillment, that maybe is aligned to your purpose or your heart.

I think it expands us. When I walked into Fresh Start, I know that the advancement of girls and women in the world are part of my purpose, so I walked into that charity at Fresh Start Women's Foundation and I said, "You're my charity until otherwise." I was so embarrassed to give them that \$100 check at the beginning of my business and I just said, "I'm going to write you a check every month. I don't know how much it is, but I'm giving you 10%" and it started there. I ended up three years later raising \$100,000 for them.



[Laura] Excellent.

[Dena] Listen. I wouldn't have raised the \$100,000 if I didn't give the \$100.

[Laura] Exactly. It had to start somewhere.

[Dena] \$100, \$50, it kept my heart alive and it kept my giving alive and it expanded with me, and then when I was able to, it's like, wow! Look at this, what I can do. Well, the charity was already there and the relationship was already there, so it was an easy "yes", but I would have not done that or thought like that if I wasn't doing the baby giving.

[Laura] Well, it's part of that stretch we talked about before. It's this place where we stretch and we become expanded and we don't have to contract again. It's like we're stepping into our greatness, which is really what your message is on so many levels. Tell me a little bit about Girls Rule and how you got involved, where it went, and where that's come from.

[Dena] My stepping stone charity, I've been committed to women and girls advancement for 20 years, and in the beginning, it looked like I sat on boards of girls' and women's charities, and then I gave to women's and girls' charities, and I realized the gap. I realized something. It was a huge realization. I looked at two things. I looked at my state's and my country's girl statistics. When I looked at that, I had a whole new relationship to -- oh my gosh, we're in deep trouble when it comes to girls' training and development.

Then I looked at hundreds of women that I have trained in my own journey. We all started this training and development usually in our late 20s or early 30s. It's the pattern I saw and I thought, wait a minute. If we're getting trained in development with self-esteem, empowerment, mindset, and leadership training at 32, of course there are going to be horrible girl statistics because they don't have any tools. Here, we now see this gap 20 years too late, so I said let's start training them at 12 instead of 32, #20yearstoolate. I got in action with the workshop and I started training girls with a set of 12 leadership principles and that's where we started with the workshop.

That turned into a second program, which turned into a summer camp, which turned into a global digital club now that any girl around the world can start. Things evolved. I didn't start this eight years ago with that in mind. I just started with how do I share my gifts, my gifting around training and development, empowering women, leadership of women.



How do I do that for girls? I just started. I just started with a workshop and it evolved. I think that one of the big things that I had to be okay with that was scary is not knowing where this was going and failing forward and not always having the answers. Building a nonprofit is probably one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life. It's a whole different language. It's a whole different structure.

We have two boards and 80 volunteers and four programs and it changes the lives and saves lives of thousands of girls. On International Day of the Girl last year, we launched dreamLAB, which is our after-school, out-of-school program that any girl, any school, any group, any homeschooler, anyone with a group of girls, they can buy our leader kit, our curriculum, and create a club for their girls. It solves that problem because I think a lot of schools and organizations, groups, churches, teams have the girls. They just don't have powerful curriculum to train and develop their girls.

*[Laura]* Yeah, and somebody might have an idea. They can be aware of seeing like here's this group of girls that really have seeds of greatness inside of them and how do we actually water those seeds and fertilize them and encourage them to really step into their most powerful selves as women, as young women. I love this hashtag, #20yearstoolate. It's good, so we'll make sure that we have some links here so you can share that and people can learn more about Girls Rule, and also, how to get a copy of your book would be great to be able to share, if you can share that with us as well, and how to get in touch with you because I know again, you're just such a wealth of great training, great resources. You're one of those people, Dena, that really takes a stand for the women in your life. You stand for all of us as friends. I've watched you stand for people you've never met before. Your commitment to generosity and giving and really lifting everyone around you is so inspiring.

*[Dena]* Thank you.

*[Laura]* Thanks so much for that, my darling. Well, unless you have anything else you want to wrap up with, I think I'm good. I think we got some great, great, great content from you, and I loved -- again, I have so many takeaways. I've been taking notes over here. Your story about starting the nonprofit and failing forward and just going forward, I think it's a metaphor for life. "What can I do today?" It's such a strong message.

*[Dena]* Thank you. Well, thank you for your support and this connection and being in my life.



*[Laura]* Thank you, my love. It's always my pleasure. Is there anything that I can do for you right now? Do you have any launches or anything going on that you need support with?

*[Dena]* Well, yesterday was day one. It was Arizona Gives Day, which our association does a big, one day fundraiser for nonprofits, so we were part of that, but it was day one of a 30-day fundraiser. The narrative that we're saying right now is if everyone -- we have about 6000 people between our social media and our list. If everybody gave \$20, we'd be fully funded. People are scared to even do that right now sometimes, but it was a big hit. Our biggest fundraiser was supposed to be last week, so we're at that money. Our two biggest revenue-generating programs were cancelled. Money just went [swoosh].

*[Laura]* Yeah, and there's so much fear right now. Do me a favor. Post in the Limitless Women Group. Tag me personally so it gets on my personal profile and send me a link so I can make a donation. I think we're like everybody right now. We're very blessed. We're at a position where we're okay, but Scott's out of work now, a minimum until June 1st, which means he won't have any income coming in until probably September, which is not what we planned for this year. That's a big time to go without income, and part of what allows me to give away all my money is him having a good, decent income, so we're in a place like everybody else where we're just really trying to be wise about our opportunities, but I'd love to make a donation.

*[Dena]* Thank you.

*[Laura]* Yeah, so send that and I'd love to share the word.

*[Dena]* Yeah. That's the game right now, is 20 bucks. If people give more, they give more. There are different levels, but the ask is 20 bucks.

*[Laura]* Good, so send that to me if you can. I know you have a call right now and I know I do too, so I've got to go. I actually do have to get on camera with somebody, so I actually have to do something to myself. Okay. I love you so much.

*[Dena]* Thank you. Talk to you soon. Bye!

*[Laura Gisborne]* Are you finding this content useful? Are there other topics or podcast formats you'd like to hear from us? Send an email to [podcast@limitlesswomen.com](mailto:podcast@limitlesswomen.com). This is the best way to grow and be of service to our growing community of Limitless Women like you.



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