

# Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey



## Full Episode Transcript

With your Host  
Elizabeth Sherman

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You are listening to the Done with Dieting Podcast Episode number 33.

Hi, I'm Elizabeth Sherman, former corporate high tech executive turn life and weight loss coach. But it wasn't that long ago that I was searching for that perfect diet, the one that would finally be the golden ticket to lose the weight that I so desired.

Fast forward past tons of failed diet attempts, exercise fads and painful lessons learned, and although I still have not reached the state of Nirvana, body love, my relationship with food exercise in my body is infinitely better than it was not only when I started this journey, but even as recently as three years ago.

The journey that has allowed me to ditch my scale, stop logging my food and exercise, eat food that I didn't prepare and easily maintain my weight - something that I never thought was possible for me.

I created the Done with Dieting podcast to give you simple, easy to do and sustainable strategies to help you do the same without all of the drama that I went through.

If you're a woman who's looking to create a better relationship with food and her body, get off the diet roller coaster and free up a bunch of headspace spent on calories, how you should look what you should eat and beating yourself up for not doing what you think you should be doing. You are in the right place.

Let's get started.

Hello! Welcome to the podcast. I have known my guest today for several years, yet it wasn't until our interview that I really understood how valuable what she does is. Jennifer Richey is a coach for caregivers. And as you listen to her story, you'll understand how

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

much caregiving she has done between her grandfather, father, and then most recently mother.

But more important than that, anyone who has found themselves in a care-giving role will relate to all the frustrations, overwhelm, guilt, and resentment that are so common and normal to experience.

We are at that age where even if you aren't a caregiver right now, it's a reality that you could see yourself in. This conversation is so important.

So, without any more introduction, Let me introduce you to Jennifer Richey.

**Elizabeth:** All right everyone, welcome Jennifer to the show.

So welcome Jennifer, this is so awesome that you are here. Tell everyone about you, who you are, who you help, all of that great stuff.

**Jennifer:** Okay, I am Jennifer Richey, I am a certified life coach through the same the life coach school, which is where I met you. And I'm also certified caregiving consultant, which allows me to help caregivers and give them resources and help them through wherever they are.

And so, what I do is I've combined both of those and I really help people stop hating their lives because caregiving, we don't talk about like when I see things on social media, a lot of it is like, "I love this experience, taking care of my mom at the end of her life."

Which is amazing and we all love that. But there's a lot of people that don't feel that way and that are really struggling. And So, that's where I come in and I help.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

I help people feel better and not feel bad for all the feelings that they're having about their parents, and it could be anybody, it doesn't have to be their parents. It could be their partner, whatever. So, I help them, I do one on one coaching and I am also consulting, so that's me.

**Elizabeth:** So, what are some of the things that people, I don't say complain about, but what are some of the things that people come to you with on your initial calls? Like, what are the problems that they think are the problems that they're struggling with when they seek you out?

**Jennifer:** A lot of it is overwhelmed, resentment of their parents. And I may use the term "Caree," that's just my overall term for the person you're caring for. They often feel trapped, I know when I was taking care of my parents, I felt very trapped. And so, that's a big one, like you can't leave, we couldn't take a vacation.

At the end there, my partner and I could not leave the house together, it was a lot. So, they're feeling resentment and then they're feeling so guilty for feeling resentment. Because they feel like they should be loving this process. And it's probably one of the hardest things I ever did. 2020 was the hardest year of my life and it was because of caregiving.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, so talk a little bit more about that. About your experience with caregiving for. Now, was it both of your parents that you were a caregiver?

**Jennifer:** I did, but separately. In 2015, my dad after a long, weird battle with kidney failure, he was exposed to agent orange in Vietnam. And so, he had all of these weird symptoms and we didn't know why and finally we figured it out and it was really kidney disease. And so, he was on the list for the kidney transplant for a long time.

He finally got one after eight years in July of 2015 and he was in and out of the hospital for a good four months afterwards with infections just constantly. And then he got a

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

one in a million fungal infection in his lungs. That we all have access to like it's not something that is rare. It's just we have the immune system to fight it off.

He was taking these immune suppressant drugs that just made his immune system completely shot. So, he ended up passing on December 30th, 2015.

So that was a weird caregiving experience for me because my mom was really involved still. And so, we had to do a lot of the driving and back and forth to his hospital. But it was a little more like we thought the transplant would come and then he'd be well. And so it was that last six months that was really tough.

And then in 2012, I moved in with my grandfather who had fallen and broken a hip and he was living alone. And so, my partner and I decided, this is what we're going to do. And we knew, going into it, that we were losing some privacy and losing some independence and some freedom. But that was okay, it was like the price of admission, we just did it. And we lived with him for his last five years and did amazing things with him.

I think we brought so much more joy to his life than had he just lived alone, you know? The toughest time was in February of 2019, we became foster parents to a two week old baby with one week notice.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, goodness.

**Jennifer:** Yes. My nephew, his girlfriend was pregnant, and they took the child because of drugs. And we were plan C and then we quickly became plan A overnight. And we had a week's notice and here we go, we are parents now.

And the day that we got our son Alex, he plans on our house, had been approved to renovate her entire house to move my mom in. So, we had a one-year-old, an infant, we were renovating our entire house, and taking care of my mom all at once. Because

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

we were moving her in, she really needed help after my dad died, she was really lonely. She was only four miles away, but we were there all the time.

And so, we built on a totally accessible room, accessible bathroom, all of that to her total specs, and moved her in November of 2019.

Had I known, I never expected that she would only be here for a year with us. We thought this would be a long time. So that year, which was also the year of COVID 2020 was taking care of her. I think the move, she did not have cognitive impairment when we moved her in and almost immediately, she did. And I think the stress of the move was part of that.

Had I known that I would have done things a little differently and I help people with that now. And she just immediately became sick. She was hospitalized in February, like right after we moved her in, and she was never the same.

And so, we brought Hospice in, in February of 2020. And they were with her until 22nd of December is when she passed. But it was the hardest year we fought a lot, I constantly felt guilty because I think in the moment, I didn't realize that she was in the throes of dementia, and I really thought she was just being difficult.

And I was in some real denial, I think too. But she wasn't getting sleep and I was like, "this is just sleep, this is just a sleep issue." But it wasn't, she was really forgetting things and sometimes having hallucinations and things that I thought she just needs a good night sleep, and it wasn't.

So, it was a lot of tears in 2020 and we were in the middle of covid, we couldn't go anywhere. We had one year old and a 72 year old, and we watched them both have very similar needs. And one is thriving, and one is declining, and it was just such a circle of life moment, you know?

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

So, after she died, I was like, I need to help people not have to go through what I just went through because it was really-really hard and so preventable.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, it's such a beautiful story. I have goosebumps right now actually because my mom passed away in 2001 and it's part of the reason why I do what I do, seeing her go through breast cancer. At one point, one of my sisters had planned on moving her out of the hospital and into her home, but it never actually really took, she passed away very quickly from that.

But a lot of what you just said, just really brought back memories for me in that time. And I really want to get into family dynamics in caregiving. But first, I think what you just experienced, most people don't have the one-year-old and the caregiving parent. But they do have the squeeze from teens or young adults. And so, I think that's actually really common.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, there's a name for it. It's the sandwich generation. It was very challenging because I think my mom was actually jealous of our son. And she loved him so much and I think he actually brought a lot to her, in that last year. And having him there was made doing what we were doing with my mom tolerable.

But it was like sometimes we had to just say, "he's one, we've got to go handle that." You're stable, I know you want our attention right now, but if we had to weigh it, we've got to go take care of the one-year-old right now. That was really tough and so I can imagine having teens and college plans and that goes along with that.

And then having the responsibility of; whether they live with you or not, having someone in a skilled nursing facility or assisted living, that's not any easier really. Maybe time wise it is, but you still have all the feelings, you still have all.

**Elizabeth:** All of the guilt and resentment and like where I'm thinking about that is, I'm one of six kids and some of my sisters lived closer to my mom and had more free time.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

And so, they were picking up more of the flak in terms of bringing her to doctor's appointments and stuff like that. And yeah, the dynamic between the family members became a problem as well.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, and I'm an only child, so I didn't have siblings, which was helpful on one end because there was no like questioning what I was doing. But I was the only one doing it. So, it was really a lot for one person and obviously my partner was there too, but it was a lot. And I think having older kids who can help is great and having them involved in that process is really helpful.

But when you've got somebody in a facility too, you also have the guilt of them not being with you. People who have to place their parents and outside facility have such a hard time with that. And sometimes it's just necessary, it's such a family decision but people disagree, siblings disagree, and it's tough.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So, what are some of the things that you tell people who have this guilt about; my mom was a great mom and now I owe her, right? So, is that kind of the thought process that you do have?

**Jennifer:** Lot of obligation. The one thing that helped me that I always tell it's the first thing that I go over when I coach people is, you have the option here. Like, you can walk out the door, I know you never would, I know you're committed. But knowing that you could leave at any time, like gives you this, "okay, I'm choosing this, this is not happening to me." It takes the victim part out.

And knowing that, even though I would never have left my mom, I would never have put her in a nursing facility because I knew that's not what she wanted. Knowing that at any point, if I had to hire someone to come in I could and I was okay with that.



## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

Just gave me that exhale moment of, "okay, I'm not a victim here, I'm choosing to be here." And sometimes I have to choose it every hour because those tough days. But the other thing is the guilt is totally normal and it's unnecessary for sure.

But all of those emotions that you have, the resentment, the guilt, the feeling bad for feeling bad. All of it is just like, we're human and we're going to have those feelings and any thoughts that you have about your family members that you're caring for during that time are completely normal.

And it's especially helpful to be able to talk it out with someone who's not invested. Which is why I love talking to caregivers because I'm on the outside and I can relate, but I don't have anything. I'm not vested in it, so I don't have a dog in the race, so to speak.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, so let's talk about some of those emotions, like guilt and resentment and what are some others that caregivers typically face?

**Jennifer:** Obligation, dread. Dread was a big one, it was a big one for me.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, so you also said trapped?

**Jennifer:** Yes, and I think there's this anticipatory grief that's happening as well.

When my dad died, I grieved like the classic cry for two months or whatever and it comes, it still comes. When my mom died, I did not cry because I had spent the entire year crying and I felt horrible for not feeling sad, or then, I was. But it was relief really, because it had, and we were both just miserable and she was in pain.

So, a lot of caregivers after their Caree has passed feel relief and hate that they feel relief. Because it's more guilt, it's like, "I should be grieving this more than I am."

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, I'm a bad daughter because I'm relieved that it's over. Not that she's gone, but that it's over.

**Jennifer:** But it's over, yeah.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Jennifer:** And you know, you hear though she's in a better place, she's out of pain all of that and that's all true, but it doesn't help. And I really struggled for a lot of time after she died, why am I not responding the way I thought I would respond?

And it just hit me like, you had this anticipatory grief that you didn't even know you were having. And I was grieving the mom that I wanted her to be, and she wasn't. At while she was living, and that I think is so common especially with people taking care of folks with dementia, Alzheimer's, any kind of cognitive impairment, just totally can really devastate you.

We were never to the point where she didn't know who we were, but at the end she was accusing us of taking all her money, she was just saying really mean things that I knew were not her. But it was the fear that was creating that for her, she had no control of her life.

So, I really had to go into that, "okay, how can I have compassion for my mom right now?" Like, I know how to have compassion for myself, but I really got to have compassion for my mom here. And this is a woman who has no control, she's in essence dying and fighting it. She fought that to the end. Yeah, this is really painful for her.

**Elizabeth:** I think that that's actually a really important topic to talk about not only because all of us hopefully, we'll get to a point where someone will be taking care of us. And so, our cognitive abilities, physical abilities, we're going to be losing that like we are strongest right now.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

And so, we're going to be declining and giving up some of the expectation of what was, right? That's really frustrating, and then also again, having compassion for our parents because our parents are like, I'm the parent, I take care of you, you don't take care of me. So yeah, that's such a complex, like dynamic there.

**Jennifer:** I remember my mom after her dad died, her mom had died years ago. I remember her being really upset and she said, "I feel like I'm an orphan now." And I was like, "mom you're 65, you're not an orphan," but I totally now know what she meant. It was like, who do I ask things? What if I have questions, I don't know how to handle. And it was a sort of a moment where I could totally relate to her.

So, I forgot what you asked me.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, no, we were just talking about just losing the cognitive ability that having the compassion for our parents.

**Jennifer:** The other thing that I realized after she died is she was a teacher and I had posted on Facebook that my mom had died, and I tagged her in it. And all of these people came out of the woodwork. She was my favorite teacher, she taught me this, so many messages.

And I realized like I had forgotten that she was a human who had a job, who taught for 35 years and changed all these people's lives that I didn't even know until she was gone. And going through her things, I'm finding like letters from past students and so I was like, "if I could have tapped into that, that year that I was taking care of her and maybe talked about it with her." That would have been amazing.

**Elizabeth:** That is so brilliant, because I think that we don't see our parents as people. We see them as our parents.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, oh yeah.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Elizabeth:** We have no life outside of taking care of us.

**Jennifer:** It's like when you see your teacher at a store like, "what they exist outside of the classroom?" Yeah, and it was interesting because when she was with us, she was dreaming all the time about school, being in school and teaching. And like she would wake up and when she was having hallucinations and things it was, " we have a food drive today, I've got to get there."

All her stress was related to her career, which was so interesting. And had I known differently and been more in tune with it, I would have just jumped into her reality with her. Because I think that would have eased her mind instead of arguing, yeah.

It's so common for us to just want to like, "no mom! you're home now, you're not at school," you don't have this happening. But really what all the experts say and what I have now experienced is you just follow along the reality. It's very interesting, it's hard to do because it's so counterintuitive.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, very cool. So, I wanted to go back to siblings and the family dynamics that occur when you aren't the only person who is in charge of caregiving for a Caree.

**Jennifer:** Yes.

**Elizabeth:** Let's talk about that and all of the dynamics that go along.

**Jennifer:** I've seen a lot of that, a really common scenario is you've got one person who's power of attorney who's handling the medical decisions. And then, siblings who'd live out of state or far away and don't see their parents very often, will visit and question everything. And they should be doing this differently, and they should be doing, maybe we need to have this specialist and they get real involved for a very short amount of time and then they disappear again.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

And it's super stressful for that main caregiver and then you start to doubt everything you're doing. It creates this horrible friction between siblings and it's just unnecessary. Like, one of the things that I actually do is I will have families come together and I'll work with them on developing a plan on how to handle everything, how to handle the worries.

Some of them go really well, I've seen some really-really awesome families that have come together, and they support each other. Some don't and it's a very clear and some decisions have to be made about what you share and what you don't and just setting some boundaries because it can be tough.

You also have siblings where one is very interested in hospice and getting their parent comfortable and making sure that they're really just calm and safe and comfortable. And the other siblings are fighting that process because they don't want their parent to die and we're killing them, that's hospice is such a polarizing issue anyway. And then, it's such an emotional time anyway and then you put that on top of it.

So, managing those dynamics are tough. And then, just some siblings just don't want any part of it. They just don't want to be involved and don't call, don't visit, don't do anything. And there's the resentment of that primary caregiver to their siblings. You know, why I'm doing everything, I quit my job for this, all of that.

**Elizabeth:** I'm in a Facebook group and there was a woman who was complaining recently about her sister, not volunteering. And it was really interesting to see all of the other folks from the group offering like, “you shouldn't have to ask, or have you asked?” And she was like, “I don't feel like I should have to.”

And so, what are your thoughts about that?

**Jennifer:** There's the legal part of it where if you have a power of attorney, you don't have to ask, you make the medical decisions. I always encourage people to come

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

together and try and facilitate a meeting of the minds when they're dealing with that. It just makes everything easier.

Sometimes it's just not possible. And when you're the one there every day, you're doing all of it. You have to be confident with the decisions that you're making and sometimes it's tough conversations.

So, it's very individualized though. Like, "I wouldn't be able to say you should always do it this way, you should always do it that way." It really always try and bring them together first, but if that can't happen; that can't happen and being okay with that.

**Elizabeth:** And what I hear you saying is also that communication is super important. Between the siblings or whoever is invested.

And here's the thing, I'm super passionate about that person who is like the, either the expectant caregiver where we know mom's getting older, nothing's happened yet, they're totally fine. But we know at some point we're going to have to step in and help or the person that's just starting the process where, "Okay, just figuring out, there was a diagnosis. Now, what do we do?"

And if at that point we can get everyone together and really this is about the Caree, this is about the parents and what they want. And what are their wishes, we need to honor their wishes even if we don't agree with them, to the best we can.

And so, I love meeting with families in advance of all of that. Because the emotion's not there yet. It's like we can all think clearly, ask these questions of our parents, what do they want? Do they want to die at home? Do they want help? Do they want to go to a facility? And sometimes the parents aren't even ready to answer those questions.

Whenever we can do these stuff in advance and take that in the moment emotion out of it. It just makes everything so clear because if you have something in writing from

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

your parents saying, this is exactly what I want, there's no fight to be had. There may still be the conflict, but you can always go back to, "this is what they want, I'm just honoring their wishes."

**Elizabeth:** That's so brilliant, because when families get together or when personalities, let's just say get together, there's always the ego that's like, "I'm right." And if we can shift the perspective over into, "this isn't about you, this is about the parents." So, let's all get on the same page there instead of being right.

Do I lose you?

**Jennifer:** Yeah, it's really important. I had such a great experience, not when I was caring for my grandfather but afterwards, he had just passed and we were all sitting around like, "Okay, now what do we do?" And my mom said, "I know what he wanted to wear for his funeral." Like, I know what he wants to wear, but that's all I know.

And I'm literally going through some papers, sitting there with them and I find an envelope that says to be opened after I die. And I had seen it before, obviously didn't open it. And I gave it to my mom, she opens this envelope and there is from my grandfather, this is what I want to wear, this is a song I want played. This is where I want everyone to go after the funeral. I want these people there, call these people. It was like, "oh my God, what a gift he gave us." Because we didn't have to think about it, we just followed what he said.

When I talked to caregivers where their parents don't want to talk about it, they don't want to talk about their funerals that this isn't no. I tell them, suggest to them to write it down, put it in a sealed envelope and put it away. They don't have to look at it, they don't have to discuss it. But they will know that in that moment, their wishes are honored. It was amazing.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Elizabeth:** So, at what point do people start the caregiving discussion with a parent, or a child, or whoever?

**Jennifer:** I think it should happen as early as possible. When our parents are still vibrant, lucid, know what they want, and to try and get some of that information as early as we can. Some families are super private about it, so it may take several conversations, a couple holidays where everybody's there.

Let's talk about this because it's a tough conversation for a lot of people. The way that I like to encourage people to do it is to think about their own wishes. Like, "I'm 46, I'm not thinking about necessarily what I want when I die." But I am putting a trust together.

I am getting my will just in case something were to happen, right? And a lot of people do that earlier than that. And that's a good way to start the conversation. We're just going to put all like, "where do I want my money to go, who do I want to legally make my decisions?" All of that, and that can open up, "oh, by the way, what do you want?"

We often think we know, and we don't. I thought my "grandpa" wanted to die in his home and he didn't, he didn't want to be a burden. So, he died in assisted living, and we never expected that ever. But I was so glad that we were able to do that. He just didn't want to be a burden.

So, as early as you can, because it takes some time sometimes. But you really have to be sensitive about it with people who are private. And this is a culturally sensitive issue too because some families do not discuss this. And so, you just get as much information as you can, and you do your best. Like sometimes you just have to figure it out.

**Elizabeth:** When you say some families don't discuss this or some cultures don't discuss this, what do you mean by that? They don't discuss caregiving, or they don't discuss death?



## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Jennifer:** They don't discuss death, part of what I do is like, where do you want; who do you want your money to go to; beneficiaries, things like that. They do not discuss with their children money at all. That's just a "nope" off the table, that's what I mean. But a lot of people, a lot of families, and a lot of cultures don't discuss death. They don't want to think about it, and that's fine. They don't have to think about it.

But I always encourage people to just say, I just want to make sure that your wishes are honored at the end of your life. And I don't know what you want. And so, let's just put it on a piece of paper and we don't have to talk about it, especially with siblings. Would just mom want to be cremated? I don't know, one sibling might disagree with that if we don't have a written thing that can really become a battle.

**Elizabeth:** So, let's go back to the caregiver and the struggles that he or she has in the caregiving role. And you said overwhelm is one of the predominant feelings that they have. Clearly that's a very real emotion in a very real circumstance. How did they get out of that or do they?

**Jennifer:** Well, overwhelmed. Sometimes it's very real because there really isn't enough time in the day to do everything they want to do. But sometimes it's just our brain telling us, it's our brain being busy. And we feel because our brain is going a million miles an hour, that everything else in our life is, and that we just can't keep up. And sometimes that's not the case.

So, what I suggest to people is first, just logistically; write down everything. Do you really have the time? Because a lot of times you do. I remember doing this myself, everything that I own my obligations, every appointment, I was like, "there's just no way!" And then I plugged it all into my calendar and there was totally a way. I just had to get out of my own way.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

But then sometimes it's real and there are kids obligations, parents obligations, medical appointments, people coming in the home, and all of that. It is just a lot. And you have to know when to ask for help.

People want to help, they don't know what to do though; you will hear, " please let me know if I can help in any way." And I think people really sincerely mean that, they just don't know how. Like, can I cook you dinner? Can I send you a meal? Can I watch your son for an hour while you just take a nap? Like any of those things, people will usually step up to the plate and do that stuff for you. If you just tell them exactly what you need.

**Elizabeth:** That's actually a really good point. So, let's look at that from the other side. You just gave some really good tips of things that people can offer because I just recently did that myself. I contacted a friend of a friend who's sick, who just recently had a diagnosis. And I was like, "tell me, what I can do for him?"

And she didn't really give me a lot, but it's a really good, it's like, "I don't know what they need." And so, what are some of the things that people who do want to help others can do to step up?

**Jennifer:** I think the biggest thing is coming over if the situation is that they can do this. Coming over and just sitting with their parents, if it's a parent that's being taken care of, if it's in the home. Watching the kids for a little while just so they can get a break because the one thing that caregivers don't have is a break. Unless they have staff coming in, which I think is probably the rarity.

They are doing everything and even an hour to just go take a shower and like, "maybe do my hair." Like that is a luxury when you were caregiving. We just did for a friend of the family just lost her husband and we had a friend set up a food train and everybody signed up. And there's like a website for it, I didn't even know this.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

And you know, she's got dinner for the next three months planned. She doesn't have to think about it. That's amazing, just those little things. The other thing is, “can you come walk my dog?” If it's a situation where the parent is in the hospital and they're away from the home a lot, “can you just come check my mail? Make sure there's no packages on my porch.” Like, keep an eye out.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, those are really great. Those are really great tips. Okay, good! So, you've given us some direction there, perfect.

Now, you mentioned something about a family emergency plan. Let's talk a little bit more about that.

**Jennifer:** So, I have a really immediate example of this, where I was coaching yesterday, and I coached a woman who lives in Texas and her parents are in New Zealand. Her dad got diagnosed with cancer, two months later he was gone. And her mom doesn't know how to do anything. She doesn't know how to pay the bills, she doesn't know where anything is passwords, nothing.

And so, my client is trying to provide this for her a continent away. And she was like, “my dad just didn't plan for anything.” And I told her what I did, and she was like, “oh, if I would have just had this plan in place, everything would be different.”

And I just was like, “I've got to get this out,” because basically every caregiver has a worry, many worries usually. But there's always like the biggest worry for me it was, what happens when my mom is not mobile anymore? What happens when she's in a bed and she can't get out? And that's exactly what a whole lot of the year was.

And so, I had to really think about that and that's what would keep me up at night. So, I asked people, what keeps you up at night? And we take that worry and we come up with a plan for it. And while we do that, we also look at, “okay, who's got all the

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

passwords?" Who makes the medical decisions? Who does this? If there's a hospitalization, what happens then? If there's a weather emergency, what do we do then?

And this is why it's so great to bring the siblings involved because they realize, "oh, we all need to step up, or I'm out, see yah!" I would rather know someone's out from the beginning and not have to keep pulling them back in. If you're not going to be involved, great, just tell me.

Don't tell me you're going to be involved and then be unreliable and that's fine. We meet sometimes with siblings sometimes not. And we go through these wheels that are thought generators, idea generators and worry generators. And what are your biggest worries, every worry needs a plan, "is sort of the motto here."

So, we come up with plans and then we update them. Sometimes we need to update them every three months because things change quickly, caregiving can change day to day. Sometimes it's something you do, and you don't look at it for a year. I'm actually going to be doing it for our family, just for my son.

Just in case something happens to us, what do I want, who do I want taking care of my son? If there's an earthquake and we can't get to his school because I'm in California, who do I want picking him up? And the best way to do that is a couple people deep. Because if grandma's not available, then this person.

You just have it all ready because when something does happen, the emotions are high, you're panicking, you are not making decisions out of any kind of rational thought. It is all emotion and when you can just go, "okay, we plan for this, this is what we do, it's all done, it's such a beautiful thing."

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Elizabeth:** Yeah, and I remember when my mom passed away, she thought she did a really good job at getting all of her finances in order and doing all of that paperwork and legal stuff for us, it was still a nightmare for one of my sisters.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, I had the exact same situation. My grandfather had told us, “you're not going to need a lawyer.” And we had never done this before, “you're not going to need a lawyer, I have everything ready.” He had handwritten addendums to his will and his trusted never gotten them notarized.

So, when we actually went to the lawyer, he almost didn't take our case because it was so complicated. He died in 2017, I'm still managing his trust. We are hopefully closing that up this year but, “oh yeah,” had we had a plan where I could have asked him okay, where is everything? And really done a little research, totally would have avoided all that.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Jennifer:** It really can change and then you can focus on the really important thing that like there's potentially someone dying here, and we need to put all our attention on that. We can just be here for our parents; we don't have to be thinking about all of the like little details and it's all taken care of. It's really an investment in your peace of mind.

**Elizabeth:** I have to imagine that there's also a lot of anxiety when it comes to caregiving because you don't know what the future is going to hold. Like, how much time do I have with this person? Is it going to be a month? Because I know that when my mom passed away, we didn't know the doctor was like, “she could live a month, it could be three years, we really don't know.”

And so, that was like, “okay, so how do I make plans not knowing what the future is going to hold?”

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Jennifer:** Yeah, I went through that as well with my mom because I kept saying like, “are we going to do this for 10 years?” Because I don't know that I can do this for 10 years. Like, I really have to have a point when I got to tap out because my own health and mental health is at stake.

So that's a real thing. And you plan for the most likely scenario, we just don't know but I would plan for them living longer. But I would also plan for the urgent hospitalization, because that could happen to us, could have happen to anybody. They don't have to be aging.

So, I would plan for an emergent situation and what happens, then I would also plan for the long-term too.

**Elizabeth:** So, what haven't we talked about that listeners need to know?

**Jennifer:** I think we have this vision of how we want things to look. We would all just love for our parents to die in their sleep, that would be lovely. And sometimes that happens but most of the time it doesn't. Sometimes we want things to look a certain way and we think this isn't supposed to be happening.

Caregiving is messy and you just have to embrace what is; not resist it. I spent a lot of time resisting everything that was happening in my life in 2020. And I missed a lot of it because I was just like, “I wish this wasn't happening.”

So, rather than wishing it wasn't happening, just embracing what is and how can I live, and support myself and support my family in a way that's healthy and try to enjoy my parents best or last year. Really not resisting what is, because when we resist reality, it never ends well.

**Elizabeth:** That is so true! True words could not be spoken that most of our suffering is resisting what actually is rather than accepting it.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Jennifer:** Yeah, and especially when it's so unpredictable and sometimes you just going to roll with it and if I don't like to think about what do I regret? Because I do believe that everything that happened; happened for a reason and I am where I am today because of it.

But there are some things I would have done differently with my mom and one of them was really look at, “okay, this is where she is, and I need to get on board.” Because the train is going, and I got to get on board. And I really just stuck my feet in and nope it's my way and I didn't have to be. Like, there was just a lot of suffering that didn't have to be there, I think on both of our ends.

**Elizabeth:** Well, yeah. And so, it's the resistance of the state of my parents and then also the resistance of this is my life right now.

**Jennifer:** Yes! And that's what I meant when I said trapped. I remember; this is when both of my parents were still alive, they were still both fairly healthy, but my dad, it was a lot. We were still taking care of them, and I didn't even know what a lot was back then. Like, I thought I was doing a lot, no.

And I went to them, and I just said, “I feel so trapped, I feel like I can't do anything.” As if they were the people to help me with this, right? And I thought my mom was going to be like, “it's okay, honey,” and she was like, “I think you need to find something to help you with that.” And I was like, “what?!”

But it was the best thing she could have said to me because then I did and I realized like they don't have to make me feel better, that's my job.

So, that's how I found coaching and that's how I started everything.

**Elizabeth:** Is that when you started life coaching or learning about life coaching?

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Jennifer:** I started looking and after my dad died is when I found the life coach school. But yeah, it's when I said, "okay, I need to handle this myself." And my mom was like, "be sensitive to the fact that you have a life," but love my mom.

**Elizabeth:** That is so awesome. Again, I was talking to another guest a few weeks ago about when we have a problem, we think that the other person is the problem. When it's really just our perception of what's actually happening is the problem.

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** And so, it's a really good reminder that, that's actually coming back again.

**Jennifer:** Yes, it's always our thoughts because someone else could have been in that situation and been like, "this is no big deal." In fact, "future me-the me now." If I went back to that situation, I'd be like, "this is piece of cake!" I hadn't seen tough caregiving at that point, and I was already feeling trapped.

**Elizabeth:** Well, but that's just growth, right?

**Jennifer:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** What we've learned in life coaching school was that whenever we have a problem or whenever we have a goal. When you were like thinking about the past version of yourself, wanting to get to where you are today. All of those little struggles were just things that you needed to learn in order to get to where you are today.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely, yeah.

**Elizabeth:** And so now of course you have the abilities to handle anything.



## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Jennifer:** Yeah. In fact, you asked what people don't know yet and there was one other thing I wanted to share, now that we can travel again. But when I was taking care of my mom, she wasn't living with me yet, but it was still pretty much a full-time job. It took us a year to managed a plan vacation and we went to Iceland, we went on a 21 day transatlantic vacation.

I was able to leave knowing that things were taken care of. We had someone staying with my mom. But it took us a year to feel comfortable to leave that person. That's the truth, it took us a long time. If I, did it again now, it probably wouldn't have taken so long but we had dogs that had to be dealt with.

My mom and she was going through her own health issues, and we were able to do that, and she was fine, she did great. And we had an amazing time and that's the last vacation we took before the world shut down, but it was so great to be able to do that.

And I want to help people do that now, you can get breaks. You don't think you can, but you can. And I can help you do that because we did it.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So, tell us a little bit about that, you have a program coming out, right?

**Jennifer:** I do, in September I'm starting a 12 week partnership with my clients, where it's one-on-one. I walk through this with you. It's 12 sessions over a period of three months and I meet you where you are.

Are you planning to be a caregiver? Are you entrenched in it? Whatever level you're at; I help you deal with those dynamics with family, I help you let go of that resentment and the guilt. If there are resources you need, the consultant part of my work is I can help you find resources.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

I can actually do some research for you and because we've dealt with hospice, we've dealt with veterans, foster care, and things like that. I've got a lot of resources that I can share with people.

And if I don't know myself, I have a whole group of colleagues that can. So, it's a three-month program. It's the program that I was looking for in 2020 that I could not find, and I would have paid anything for this.

**Elizabeth:** And so, you built this, this isn't someone else's stuff, this is yours.

**Jennifer:** No, I created it because I couldn't find it, it wasn't there, and I've been through it. I know exactly how people are feeling. I know what it feels like to feel like you're doing it wrong but I'm on the other side of it now. And so, I can see with a little bit of grace, but you know how we can do this the best we can.

And I think all of it happened so that I could help other people because people are suffering out there needlessly.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And it's brilliant because we've generations have gone through this before. And to think that there isn't a resource out there for people to navigate this is silly, right?

**Jennifer:** Yeah, there are a ton of free resources out there. But the problem with that is that you have to sift through all of this stuff that you don't know what you need until you need it. And sometimes you don't even know what you need, you don't know what you don't know. And having someone else hold space for you while you're going through this process.

There are some sessions I do where I say, I do not say a word. And at the end they're like, "Oh, this was the best thing that ever happened." And I was like, "I literally just listened." Because you know what, caregivers don't have anyone to talk to that get it.

## Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

Except for other caregivers, their friends don't want to hear it, like they want to help but like they get sick of hearing about it.

It's sad to say that but it really is the truth. It's an experience that unless you've lived it, you don't know how much you just need to talk about it. Even now, I want to share it and so just having someone hold space for you during that time and make you feel like you're not going crazy is really powerful.

**Elizabeth:** That's so awesome. Great, tell everyone where they can find you.

**Jennifer:** So, my website is [bravecaregiving.com](http://bravecaregiving.com) and the email is the same [bravecaregiving@gmail.com](mailto:bravecaregiving@gmail.com). That's the best way to reach me, I'm also on Instagram under same handle. So, you can contact me there, email me, whatever works, whatever's easiest.

**Elizabeth:** That's awesome. This is such an amazing resource. So, if anyone out there is seeing themselves as a caregiver currently or it's quite often a reality for most of us. If not right now, some time in the future, I can't recommend Jennifer enough because she has actually coached me several times and when I was just a hot mess.

**Jennifer:** You're one of my favorite people to coach, you are.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, awesome. Thank you, Jennifer, for being here. Is there anything else that you want to add?

**Jennifer:** No, I think we covered it.

**Elizabeth:** Awesome, all right.

# Done with Dieting Podcast #33: Jennifer Richey

**Jennifer:** Thank you so much.

So, there you have it. What I love about what Jennifer' does, is the Family Preparedness tool that we ALL need. This tool walks you through everything you need to think about in order to prepare for all the stress that goes along with end of life decisions, like handling wills, estates, and everything that just adds to stress.

This is a topic that although we don't love talking about, we can't just put away in a drawer & not look at it.

So even if you are not a caregiver, this is something that you can do for your family.

Hey, Thanks for listening. If the show resonates with you, and you have a friend, mother, sister or who you think would benefit, I'd love for you to share the podcast with them.

You can leave me a rating and review in Apple Podcasts, which helps me create an amazing experience for you,

AND it helps other women who are done with dieting and want to get off of the diet roller coaster to find it as well. See you next week.