



Nat Damon: Welcome to another episode of Reach, Teach, Talk. I am really actually of two mindsets on the topic of this conversation that we're about to have today. The theme is loneliness, and I am of two minds on this theme because one is, loneliness is a challenging concept to really wrap one's brain around, I think, and I've found that, myself. It took me a long time in my growing up to kind of recognize the difference between being lonely and being alone, being an individual and being part of a group, but it's a concept that brings about a lot of challenging feelings, I think, in all of us because we have primal needs that are socially driven, and as we know in the classroom, learning in science is proving. Learning is cognitive, and emotional, and social.

Nat Damon: One does not learn just as in a unidirectional way. That's why we can't educate ourselves through technology, through open courses. We can educate ourselves to a certain degree, but we can't have a K-12 full education that's self-motivated in a box, in a vacuum, where we are just receiving information. There's something actually kind of sad sounding to that, actually, because it is the idea that I'm learning, and I'm growing, perhaps, in factual knowledge, but I'm not broadening the information that I'm learning through discussing it with a teacher, a person, whether online or in real life, or with classmates.

Nat Damon: We've had episodes in the past. We've talked about the social contract of the classroom. We've talked with a professor, Louis Cozolino, about the tribal classroom and how it's so important in learning to have a sense of community. I'm learning not just for myself. I'm learning as part of this class. I'm growing as part of this community, the spiritual community, among others. The being among others is such an important part of the development of one's self, one's spirit, one's self-concept. I say this, but I also recognize, right, Abraham took 40 days in the desert on his own. Jesus walked on his own. We don't know what Jesus did between the years when he was 13 to 33 or 32. We just don't know, but we have this understanding that there was a lot of time alone, meditation, and pilgrimages, and Vipassanas, and just all of that is about being alone.

Nat Damon: I walked the Camino de Santiago two years ago, which is 800 kilometers across the North Coast of Spain, and I was alone. There were times that I was desperately alone. There's this one part in the middle of it, which is 10 days of walking, and it's called the Maceda, which is this pueblo, and it's like walking through Iowa or Illinois, like you're just going through cornfields, and it is boring. Even though it's Spain, it's boring. It's just the same thing. But what was fascinating was, even though I was alone walking through this really boring landscape, my inner landscape was developing. My inner sense of just thoughts and questions that I had, and feelings and sensations, was heightened over time of being alone.

Nat Damon: Same thing with like a 10 day Vipassana. I've never done a Vipassana, but that's the whole idea of taking a silent retreat where you take a vow of silence, and you don't read books. You don't get any information, besides what's around you, and you're silent. Apparently, days four and five are just like the crises times where it's just like, "Oh my God, I don't know if I can live with myself anymore." I'm just by myself, and I'm in my own head, and I am desperate for some communication, even to read a passage of a magazine, just to have something else inform my thoughts.

Nat Damon: I'm sharing these kind of anecdotes as ways to describe how this discussion that we're about to have today about loneliness is so complex, and there's so many myriad components to what loneliness is. I was stimulated to have this episode because of two reasons. One, I live in London, and London, the UK, has taken a massively aggressive approach to, what they call, the loneliness epidemic. This isn't a country that is all about, I mentioned before in previous episodes, the stiff upper lip, just keep calm, carry on, move forward, mustn't grumble, all that stuff, and it's not just stuff. I mean, I admire, actually, those stoic tendencies, but there's been a lot of mental health issues that have come to the surface in the UK through former rugby players, football players, people who served in the military or people farming up in Yorkshire and are just feeling like, and mostly men, and they're feeling disconnected.

Nat Damon: They're also focusing on the 25% of pensioners, folks who are retired, folks who are living in the latter third of their lives, who, 25% of them don't have anybody to be with at Christmas, anybody to be with during the holidays. They are alone. I volunteered for a couple of years at this church in Soho in the middle of the theater district in the West End. Super diverse, amazing, oh my God, the most vibrant neighborhood, I think, I would say in London. Every Thursday, it was not feeding the homeless. These folks had homes, but they were pensioners, and for many of them, it was the one time of the week that they could interact, that they would count on to interact with others.

Nat Damon: Some of them would bring in their flasks of scotch whiskey or their mini bottles of wine, and they would treat it like a real event, and it was real event. Actually, the more I familiarized myself with the 60 or 70 folks who would come every Thursday, the more I began to fall part of that fabric, and I began to realize parts of myself that were actually quite lonely, as an expat in the US, and parts of myself that were actually... I began to start craving the community with them.

Nat Damon: I am thrilled because speaking of the fact that this was a church Thursday lunch, church-oriented Thursday lunch, the second reason why I'm really excited about today's episode is because of the guest that I have. Reverend Janet Broderick has come to Los Angeles very recently, in the past six months, from Montclair, New Jersey. She grew up in New York, and I highly recommend listening to her sermons, whether you are of the Episcopal faith, Christian faith, whether you're not. Her sermons have a way of communicating to everybody. And yes, we're quoting from scripture, and yes, we talk about Jesus, and it is human.

Nat Damon: The reason that I thought that the spark that hit me when I thought, "Oh my God, I should really invite Janet to this show," came about when I listened to a series. I got the flu over New Year's, and I listened to a series of her sermons, just one after the other. I

binge listened to Janet Broderick's sermons. Truly, I told you this, and I realized that there was a certain pattern to her sermons. Not to make it formulaic, but the inclusion of story, the inclusion of her own stories growing up in New York, growing up Jewish and finding, really, her spiritual identity later in her early adulthood years toward Christianity, toward Episcopalianism, but her very, very true stories.

Nat Damon: Some of them actually had a lot to do with connection, and a lot to do with relationships, and a lot to do with loneliness. The theme of this podcast being about the importance of relationships, just, I leaned in, and I invited her, and graciously, Janet accepted the invitation to be on here today. I feel safe talking with you, Janet, about this laden topic of loneliness. In fact, last thing I'll say, and I know I'm talking a lot in the intro here, but I just want to-

Janet Broderick: No, it's good. It's fascinating.

Nat Damon: The last thing I'll say is, the last thing you and I talked about before the theme music played was about my sister. I would say this. I said to you, "Having a sister who is autistic, and now 50, but growing up with a sister who is autistic..." You asked me, or I shared with you, "I know that having an older sister who is autistic informed the way that I looked at the world growing up and continues to today."

Nat Damon: I would also say that it made me highly sensitive toward the concept of loneliness, because I grew up with a sister, my brothers and I, who was very vulnerable to me in terms of the possibility of her feeling alone because she can't read, right? She can't follow certain nuances of conversations. She cannot understand the metacognitive stuff that we, as normally functioning adults, think about. "How did I appear at that cocktail conversation? What did I really say? How did I come across? What was the tone?" Lynn, my sister, doesn't think that way. So, the can't, can't, can't juxtaposed with the benefits of her disability, as well, which is not the topic of today, but I share that, and I wanted to share that with the can'ts come this incredible gift in her life, as well, of not being aware of all that nuance that we are, and we can beat ourselves up, but this sensitivity toward loneliness, I think, is what I grew up with.

Nat Damon: I share that with you, Janet, as kind of why also this topic is emotional for me and why I feel like I just want to talk about it for a few minutes with you, and hear your thoughts about what loneliness is, and how loneliness affects the spirit, and what do you think is behind this focus on loneliness today, whether in the UK or the US? Hopefully we're all addressing it around the world. And what is the best antidote toward loneliness? How can a 90-year-old pensioner find connection with somebody in this world today?

Nat Damon: So, as we think on this, I just want to say welcome, Janet Broderick, the Reverend Janet Broderick...

Janet Broderick: Oh, thank you.

Nat Damon: ... to Reach, Teach, Talk. I am just thrilled to have you here, and I'm excited about where this conversation is going to go.

Janet Broderick: I mean, I'll go into the loneliness thing, but I'm feeling that it must have been lonely for you, also, to have to be the person making up for, what you felt, your sister wasn't able to take in, because how could you explain that to other people...

Nat Damon: Yeah, yeah.

Janet Broderick: ... what it was like to be you?

Nat Damon: Yeah, and not knowing what it's like to be me, because you know when you grow up and you're a kid, you don't know any different.

Janet Broderick: No.

Nat Damon: Right? And you certainly can't reflect on how one is different from your friends, but I had a lot of friends growing up, and I think that that possibly related to this.

Janet Broderick: Right.

Nat Damon: I was looking for a bunch of people to kind of be my sounding boards. I couldn't articulate it.

Janet Broderick: Yeah. I mean, I was thinking, myself, I think I've always been lonely. The times in my life when I haven't been lonely are amazing to me. I'm like, "Oh my God, I'm not lonely."

Nat Damon: How does that feel?

Janet Broderick: I just remember falling in love for the first time, and I think my boyfriend left the room, and it was the middle of the night, and I followed him into the living room, and I just wanted to stand there because I didn't want to be in the other room by myself. Then I followed him back in again, and I said, "I just don't want to be... I mean, this is so good, I don't want to let it go. I want to just be with you." You know what that's like to fall in love like that, where you're like, "This is so good. I don't want it to stop." You don't even realize that you've been in pain until you have somebody love you. And then you go, "Oh my God, it was awful before." Right? What's that wonderful song? There were bell... Something in the sky, but I never-

Nat Damon: Until there was you, The Beatles. There were birds.

Janet Broderick: Yeah, well, that's The Music Man.

Nat Damon: Yeah, it's The Music Man. That's right.

Janet Broderick: But it's so true, until there was you. I'm not even sure you're aware of the pain until it stops, and then you're like, "Oh my God, it just stopped."

Nat Damon: There was love all around, but I never heard it ringing or something.

Janet Broderick: No, I never heard it at all.

Nat Damon: I never heard it at all until there was you.

Janet Broderick: Until there was you. Yeah, and I love the way the song says it, "And there was music."

Nat Damon: There's wonderful roses.

Janet Broderick: There's wonderful roses. He starts to say all the things that were around him that he didn't see, but I could see them because there's you. I was talking to a fellow, a man today, who had some children in the church, and we didn't have Sunday school, so he brought them to church, and it was very hard on him that we didn't have Sunday school because he had two boys in the pew, a seven-year-old and an eight-year-old. I guess they were hating it, and the Bishop came, so the service lasted forever. By the end of it, he just wanted to quit the whole church. I wanted him to come in and talk to him. By the time he came in, he had sort of gotten over it, but I've been a parent, and I understood how, I am a parent, how exasperated he was. We're talking about, why is it worth it to stress to go to church with kids, how hard it is?

Janet Broderick: But I think there's a wonderful story about a psychiatrist who's working with a little boy who detested his father. I mean, he was throwing things at his father and trying to hurt his father, physically. Finally, they took him to the psychiatrist, and the psychiatrist said, "Is there any time you ever like your father? I mean, can you think of one minute when you like him?" And he said, "Yeah, I can think of one time when I like him." He said, "When?" He said, "When he's on his knees in church."

Nat Damon: Oh, wow. That's profound.

Janet Broderick: Yeah, and it was profound because he meant, I like it when there's somebody bigger than him.

Nat Damon: Wow.

Janet Broderick: Somebody bigger than he is.

Nat Damon: And it's not that the idea of putting him in his place.

Janet Broderick: No.

Nat Damon: It's different than that. There's a compassion to what he said, actually.

Janet Broderick: No, it was a beautiful opening. When you're talking about learning, the whole idea is, I am not just a repository of you. I am also a contributor. And so, the child felt there was space when his father was on his knees that clearly wasn't there when he was standing up. He was on his knees before something bigger. The wonderful thing about the whole way in which the spiritual life can ease this kind of loneliness is the sense that we're all under something bigger. There's something bigger than all of us. There's a kind of

equality so that you can love your brothers and sisters around you because it's not like I'm worse than you, or I'm less than you, or I'm better than you, or I have more to contribute than you. I'm just a frog, like you are.

Nat Damon: A frog or a fraud?

Janet Broderick: A frog. What does he say, Mark Twain? A frog, not like any other. I'm just a frog.

Nat Damon: Is it The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County?

Janet Broderick: Yeah. This frog ain't no different than any other frog.

Nat Damon: Totally, totally.

Janet Broderick: I sometimes think about that. I ain't no different than any other frog.

Nat Damon: Right, because in that way, we are all one.

Janet Broderick: We are.

Nat Damon: It's almost like the oversoul or the idea that... But don't let me trivialize or misinterpret what you're saying, because I'd love to go deeper on this. I'm a frog. You're a frog, and we all are, but is that simply saying because we all crave connection, or is this something else?

Janet Broderick: Yeah. The scripture would be, we all fall short of the glory of God. There's this infinite, infinite distance between ourselves and our creator. It's just impossible to reach. So, we're all falling short. We're all equally in this boat. It's a beautiful thing to see that. Jesus makes this profound comment at one point. He talks about his only loneliness, and he says, "The son of man has nowhere to lay his head." There have been times in my life when I think, well, there's no safe place for me. There's no place for me to go. And then I think, well, the son of man has no place to lay his head. My situation may be bad, but it ain't worse than anybody who ever lived. I'm just another. I am part of the human race, and so it's okay.

Janet Broderick: Yeah. I mean, it's interesting about life because loneliness is sort of a wonderful thing. It allows you to feel and to reach out. Why would you reach out if you weren't lonely? If you could just make it all perfect all by yourself, you would never reach out. You'd never give it a try, and then you'd never see so many things that you can see. So much of what I had been able to do in my life has all been because of a kind of loneliness. I think I'm in Beverly Hills because of loneliness.

Nat Damon: Explain. Describe that.

Janet Broderick: Well, I think that I was actually not in Montclair. It was Morristown, by the way.

Nat Damon: Right, sorry.

Janet Broderick: St. Peter's... No, but I think that at some point, it's like a call. It was like I understood. I loved everyone. I loved that church, but there was some deep part of me that said, "Where is something else? Where is something new?"

Nat Damon: Even though you knew that it would remove you from community.

Janet Broderick: Yeah, and I felt very sad about that, very broken-hearted about it, but yet it was the loneliness that got me going. Dorothy Day, the great leader of the Catholic worker, wrote a book called *The Long Loneliness*. It's really, I think, loneliness is a... I can't really think of a more wonderful spiritual place to be.

Nat Damon: Loneliness, but not alone.

Janet Broderick: Right. Loneliness is an existential question. It has nothing to do with whether you're with a bunch of people or not. It has absolutely nothing to do with that. You can be so lonely in a whole bunch of people. You can be by yourself, just remembering how much someone loved you and not be lonely.

Nat Damon: That's beautiful.

Janet Broderick: Don't you think it's true?

Nat Damon: Yeah, oh, I'm certain it's true. I'm thinking about, there was one time that I was on a ferry, and I was on this ferry to an Island off of Greece, so I left Athens off of mainland Greece, and I left Athens and went to this... I think it was Patmos or something, and it was an overnight ferry, and it was like one in the morning, and I walked up to the upper deck, and there was nobody there at all. It was not the US, so it was not like safety lights everywhere and do not go past this area or whatever, and I could walk out to the bow of the ferry and just be there, and I knew that... It was black. I think it might have been an overcast. There was no stars. Nothing. It was just black, and it was totally loneliness.

Nat Damon: I had just lost my grandfather. I walked up there, and there was a calling. I was like, I'm not going to be bed. I'm not going to drink a beer. I'm going to go up, and I'm just going to stand outside, and I was alone, but I was consumed with thoughts about my grandfather, and I was consumed with this feeling of love. My heart swelled and this feeling of connection with him that I would not have had if I was alone or if I stayed at the bar and talked to somebody or even just been around community. I might have sensed my grandfather's presence, but not really to the degree that I did when I was alone in the darkness and the blackness.

Janet Broderick: Exactly.

Nat Damon: It was worth it to go up there.

Janet Broderick: But it's fabulous. You went. I remember when my father was dying, they finally, in hospitals, they put you on a cancer wards where everybody's dying, and it felt like it, anyway. It didn't look like anybody was getting out of there. I remember at one point,

going down to the chapel and just expressing my fury at God, and just saying, "Why don't you just pull a joke every now and then and actually heal somebody? I mean, why don't you just come through like once? I mean, hey, then you'd probably have about like 10,000 idiots who will follow after that, so you might as well give it a try every once in a while." I was furiously angry.

Janet Broderick: After the sort of rage was there in the chapel, I just remember this sort of sense of Jesus standing with me, and thinking and realizing, okay. I can't explain it. It was like, yeah, I know. I felt heard, understood. Nothing changed, but I'll tell you what did change. I knew, in a little time, that I needed to say to my father, "I love you." Now in my family, we don't talk. We don't say stuff like that, like, "I love you." It was sort of home-wrecky. You know what I mean?

Nat Damon: Totally.

Janet Broderick: I thought it was so stupid. Also, by the way, I love you would read, "I know you're dying." Right?

Nat Damon: Totally, totally.

Janet Broderick: You go up to somebody's deathbed and say, "I love you," you're sort of saying, "Bye-bye. I'm leaving now." So, I couldn't. I was like, I cannot do this, but there was something inside me that was like, you never said it. He's going to die, and you never said it. So, I'm walking up and down this dreadful hallway. I walk in. The television set is on for the fellow in the bed next to my father, who was also dying. He's lying in the bed, and I look over, and I just finally, I forced myself, and I just said, "I love you." My father looked at me. I'll never forget it, and smiled and said, "And I love you, too."

Nat Damon: Full, full speech full of words.

Janet Broderick: I was like, "Oh, shit."

Nat Damon: And now I'm going to cry.

Janet Broderick: No, but it was so... I just, I'll never forget it because it was like... And I remember thinking to myself, it's okay. It's not okay that you're dying, but here's the deal, really. I wouldn't take anybody else. Like just the amount of time I had you, I got to have you be my father, and that's cool. I'm so glad of that. I think real loneliness does turn to gratitude. You went upstairs. You felt the darkness. You remembered your grandfather, and then you were grateful for him, for what you had had.

Nat Damon: Absolutely.

Janet Broderick: Right?

Nat Damon: Absolutely.



Janet Broderick: I know. It's an amazing thing. I look at social media, your questions that you were thinking about for this, I look at social media, and what worries me the most about it and worries me, personally, is that people only show Instagrams of, I mean, we know this, but of when everything is going well. This is me at the party looking thin. This is me at the, whatever it is, the sunset, not when I'm distressed. I think, well, I know that, but I still always feel it's true. I'm not there. I didn't get to that party.

Nat Damon: The fear of missing out, which is such a cliché kind of term. I don't love that FOMO thing.

Janet Broderick: I don't, either.

Nat Damon: It doesn't reflect the depth. It trivializes to me that the profundity of that, that feeling of like...

Janet Broderick: Right.

Nat Damon: Because that can be a knife.

Janet Broderick: I know. I don't know what the effect of all of this sort of fake kind of relationship with media... I don't know. People are listening to this podcast right now, and I'm connecting, right?

Nat Damon: We are connecting.

Janet Broderick: We're connecting, but I'm also thinking of other folks, and thinking, and caring. I mean, God bless the fact that they can hear it. Right?

Nat Damon: Yes, absolutely.

Janet Broderick: On the other hand... So, it's real. Right?

Nat Damon: Yes.

Janet Broderick: And what we're doing here today is real and their connection with what we're saying. So in that way, it's kind of wonderful.

Nat Damon: So in a sense, you're articulating two things, right? The fear of missing out part of what technology gives is, perhaps, exponentially drawn out and also spotlighted. And also, though, the incredible ability now through the same technology to touch others, too. I mean, again, when I was sick with the flu and listening to your sermons, that touched me. That was connective, and I was very grateful for being able to go to the website for All Saints Beverly Hills and queue up these sermons.

Janet Broderick: No, I mean, sometimes late at night, I listen to Satchmo sing Wonderful World or Mahalia Jackson, How I Got Over, and I listen to her. She's my friend. She is. I hear.

Nat Damon: Yeah, absolutely.

Janet Broderick: I love it, in that way. It's beautiful. I don't know this... I'm 64-years-old now. So when people talk about the last third of their life and all this, and loneliness. I wonder, for this whole generation of folks who are older, how are we connecting? Do you know what we're referred to and all sorts of ways? Boomers and what were supposedly like. I don't know. I wonder. I question all of these values, whether it's true, we continue to learn. Right? We continue to change.

Nat Damon: We continue to grow. I mean, you're not the same person you were when you were 54.

Janet Broderick: No.

Nat Damon: Right? I can say that, right?

Janet Broderick: No. What's really fun about this time is, in terms of loneliness, is I take much bigger risks.

Nat Damon: How does that factor into loneliness?

Janet Broderick: Well, I take risks to be intimate in my sermons in ways I never did before. Before, I was thinking about what people thought of me. Now I think about, well, what do I think?

Nat Damon: Excellent.

Janet Broderick: It's a very different way to come out.

Nat Damon: Excellent.

Janet Broderick: I'm not worried. I'm not so concerned. I'm much more concerned with the idea and the love. How can this be love? How can this make sense? Watching people to see how it's happening, but I'm not worried about how I'm coming off.

Nat Damon: You're not attached to the outcome so much.

Janet Broderick: No.

Nat Damon: It sounds like you're saying that. It sounds like you're actually more fascinated now by the process because when you say you're actually paying more attention to the parishioners listening to you, and you're sensing now, it sounds like you're saying you're finding more joy, being able to kind of... It's almost like an interplay now, where before, it was more, I want to make sure I did this, I executed the sermon correctly. Does that make sense? Is that what you're saying?

Janet Broderick: Absolutely. I love this thing that happened with Louis Armstrong. He said it would be years before... Remember, he learned all his music just by ear.

Nat Damon: That's right.

Janet Broderick: Right? He played a cornet. He didn't even have a horn. So finally, he gets a horn. He marries a woman who has a PhD in music, so he can learn to read music. He gets divorced. He's playing in these big bands and trying to sort of keep up, and he's noticed, and he talks about this night in which he went out, and he said, "All of a sudden, I realized I wasn't going to play for my teachers anymore. I was going to play for the audience."

Nat Damon: I.e., I'm not going to play for an affirmation to get the A, to get the commendation. I'm going to play for people.

Janet Broderick: Something in my head that tells me, "This is good, and this is bad," and he just erased that. He just went, "How is it for you?"

Nat Damon: Beautiful, beautiful.

Janet Broderick: Right? How is it for you?

Nat Damon: But, Janet, I'm driving in LA, and I'm going by tents, and I'm seeing the homeless people who are there. And how is it for you? I don't know, because I'm not homeless. I'm not...

Janet Broderick: Have you never been homeless?

Nat Damon: I've never been, so I don't know, because I've never been homeless. Right? I've always had a family-

Janet Broderick: Have you ever been kicked out of your house?

Nat Damon: Never been kicked out of my house.

Janet Broderick: Really?

Nat Damon: I've had challenges, sure, but I've never been...

Janet Broderick: You didn't have roommates ever say, "We hate you. Get out of here."

Nat Damon: Well, I was a horrible roommate my first year out of college. Oh my God, if I can apologize to my roommate.

Janet Broderick: Yeah, you were like, "Who is ever going to put up with me?"

Nat Damon: Please let me apologize to Jonah. Jonah and Todd, I am so sorry for the horrible roommate I was when I was 23, because I was the guy who never took the food out in a refrigerator. It was literally until it was moldy. It was disgusting. I was horrible at the dishes, and I think I was also extremely self-absorbed for whatever reason at that period in my life, and I will own that now, half a life, a full life later, but yes, you're right. I have pissed people off in the past, right. Absolutely.

Janet Broderick: Haven't they said, "Get out here?"

Nat Damon: Or just not complained when I've left for a period of time. It was always the omission of, "Hey, come join," right? It's the omission. Actually, that's interesting, and I don't want to derail where you're going to go with this. So just for as an aside, there's also that loneliness, the weaponization, I would say, of loneliness in the sense of in the workplace or in social cliques where it's not the, "Get out of here," because saying to somebody, "Get out of here," means I see you, and I hear you, and I'm annoyed by you enough that I'm going to tell you, "Get out," versus the icing out, the silent exclusion.

Janet Broderick: Right.

Nat Damon: Does that make sense?

Janet Broderick: Yeah.

Nat Damon: There are studies that show that kind of... What's the word for it? But I would just say exclusion is... It kills people. It literally like hurts the heart because they know that they are being disconnected, that they are being iced out, and they are being forcibly detached from a community. That's killer.

Janet Broderick: So much of homelessness, working with homelessness for years in Jersey City and New York City, but in Jersey City, specifically, for about 10 years, being aware of the fact that folks could come off the streets if they live together in community, financially. Two is better than one. Four is fantastic. Six, suddenly dinner is really cheap. Eight dinners, like a dollar. If eight people can share a car. Lots of immigrants understand this, of course, and people, but the idea is that everybody needs their own SRO with their own car, and their own thing, and their own... Yeah. But when you're in community, you can really make it work. It's actually lifesaving.

Nat Damon: It is lifesaving. It's life savings and lifesaving to be a part of community, as opposed to... And I would really, again, living in the UK, which has a much more substantive social contract, I would say, than honestly, the US. I love the US. American first and all that. Great.

Janet Broderick: Nice of you to say that.

Nat Damon: We're going through turbulent times, but this idea of...

Janet Broderick: American first.

Nat Damon: Well, okay, I didn't mean that. Okay, that's a little extreme, but let's just pride America for what we... Anyway, the ideal. We can get there again. We can, but part of how we can get there, I think, is by broadening our sense of what it is to be part of the social fabric in the US, and it's very easy to be in our car and to be driving down Wilshire Boulevard and to be honking at the people who are blocking our way or to get mad at

the bus that you're stuck behind, and you're on your own, and that actually can be very distressing because you're alone.

Nat Damon: That movie, *Crash*, you lived in New York. Just being able to bump... You grew up in New York, being able to... I love it in London, being able to bump into somebody, especially because it rains so much in London. We're all with our brollies or umbrellas, and we're always poking each other with umbrellas by accident, or try to subtly, okay, my umbrella is going to go higher than that person's umbrella as in crossing them or lower so it doesn't collide, but there is at least an understanding that there are other people around besides just yourself.

Janet Broderick: Yeah, I agree with that, but don't you absolutely love... Well, I grew up in the city in Washington Square. Right? But I love the fact that you can go like one block away from your house, and nobody knows you. I love that.

Nat Damon: That's cool, right.

Janet Broderick: I love that. You can become somebody entirely different. You can do whatever you want to do. Right?

Nat Damon: Yeah. That's very, very cool.

Janet Broderick: I love that you can completely reinvent yourself.

Nat Damon: Yeah, and learn about yourself in the process.

Janet Broderick: Totally.

Nat Damon: The different dimensions of yourself.

Janet Broderick: Exactly. I love that. I love wandering. Yeah.

Nat Damon: We're going to have to wrap this up because we are on a time schedule, and obviously, this is about a 30 minute, 40 minute podcast. But Janet, if there's one final kind of takeaway that you'd like to share about loneliness that either we've discussed, but you want to kind of hit back on, reinforce, or an element or an angle that we haven't talked about, here's your time.

Janet Broderick: I guess I just want to say to anybody, if they're feeling this sort of pain of loneliness, that it's not your fault. I was really overweight, and I lost almost a hundred pounds many years ago, and I remember going to this doctor who worked with me, and he said to me, "It's not your fault, you know?" And I kept saying, "Yeah, it is. I'm terrible. I eat too much." And he was like, "Actually, we know more than that. It's not your fault." And my life changed from that, that kind of blessing. So, I just want to say to somebody who's lonely, is not your fault. You didn't create this. It's a hunger that you have, and it's God-given, and God bless you, and I hope you follow it wherever it takes you.

Nat Damon: Beautifully said. Follow it. Trust it. Dig into your faith. Right? And this knowledge of connection. This is a lived example of connection, because before we started recording, it was a question of, how is this conversation going to go? If it doesn't go well, can we just delete it? Yes, of course. If we want to edit it, of course. That fear of... And also, I don't know you that well, so there was a bit of that, too, like the unspoken hesitation about, is this going to work? Are we going to connect? And I feel very safe saying, yes, we connected.

Janet Broderick: I'm glad.

Nat Damon: And yes, this feels connective to me, and I'm just grateful for that example, as well, the lived example.

Janet Broderick: Well, thank you for inviting me.

Nat Damon: Thank you so much for being here on Reach, Teach, Talk, and I'm just really, really grateful, Janet, for your time. Thank you.

Announcer: You've been listening to Reach, Teach, Talk with Nat Damon. If you'd like to recommend a guest for a future episode, you can send your suggestion or questions to [nat@reachacademics.com](mailto:nat@reachacademics.com).