

Jess Weiner, cultural expert and CEO of Talk to Jess

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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This week, we go behind the mask with Jess Weiner, cultural expert and CEO of Talk to Jess. At Loeries Creative Week on Monday, 16 November, Weiner will take us on her personal journey with Mattel in 'The Business of Belonging: How Inclusivity Evolved the World's Most Famous Doll'.

She says she's humbled and excited to be a part of the Loeries this year. "As an institution focused on inspiring and fostering real, impactful change in our branding and advertising, I'm grateful to be a part of that movement and lend my own background in consulting and cultural trends to help build a more representative media future.

"In my keynote, I'll discuss how I've helped businesses grow in an ever-changing climate and media landscape. Through my own personal stories and current business imperatives, I'll teach what inclusion means for the future of marketing and advertising and how businesses can make the necessary changes needed to shift culture."



■ ***So tell us, what's really behind your mask (literally and/or figuratively speaking).***

Someone who is scared, hopeful, determined, tired and working hard to live her good life.

■ ***Where are you locked down?***

With my husband and pets in Los Angeles, CA.

■ ***How are you finding working from home or physical distancing at the office / how has your way of working changed?***

I am lucky that my company's structure was already compatible with working from home, however, I miss seeing my employees and having casual convos and social interactions! I definitely Zoom way more... Honestly, before the pandemic I had never even heard of Zoom, and now I'm on it all day! Also, Zoom fatigue is a real thing. I'm usually pretty drained at the end of days where I've spent most of it talking to people on a computer.

■ ***Describe a typical workday, if such a thing exists.***

Most of my work day is filled with Zoom meetings and conference calls... that is how I've been able to maintain some normalcy with my clients and team. In between those calls, I might be reviewing a presentation I'm giving soon, and of course sending lots of emails. Occasionally, my at-home co-workers (my cats and dog) will pop in and check out who I am talking to!

■ ***How do you maintain a good rapport with your teammates/clients?***

I try to stay in communication as much as possible... My internal team uses Slack throughout the day to keep each other updated, and on top of that, we talk a lot on Zoom. For me, I'd rather be over-communicating, so I'm using *all* of the apps and platforms!

■ ***How do you socialise these days?***

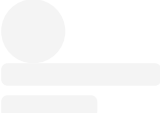
It's looking very digital these days... Because of the pandemic I mostly hang out with my husband and our pets at home, but I try to stay connected to friends and family through technology. When this is all over, I can't wait to give everyone a big hug!

■ ***What do you do to keep fit/healthy and/or sane (physically/mentally)?***

Truthfully, my exercise routine has slowed down during the pandemic, but I am getting back into it, and am enjoying getting back in touch with how I am feeling, both physically and mentally.

I also have a practice of reading Pema Chodron (an amazing Buddhist Nun and teacher) passages every morning. I find them so grounding and helpful for perspective.

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Today's #PemaADay reading is called “The Perfection of Patience,” and it had me at the first line: □ “Patience is not learned in safety.” □ Similar to a lot of Pema’s teachings, this lesson is about what it takes to cultivate patience in nonoptimal times (um please see: current times we are living in). □ And I appreciate it because creating more patience in my life is something I thought was more of a fixed virtue - you either had it or you didn’t (and dear reader: my husband has more than anyone I know!) □ But I’m thinking about it differently today and I’m curious how this lands for you. □ ♦♦ For those who’ve ordered your Pocket Pema books, throw up a video of a reading you’re selecting and as always, thanks for your comments and great feedback. ♦♦ □ #PemaADay #Reading #Spiritual #Ritual #Patience

A post shared by Jess Weiner (@imjessweiner) on May 13, 2020 at 10:04am PDT

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📺 **What new apps would we find if we scrolled through your phone?**

I’m using the Mirror App to do workouts because they have hundreds of classes I can take online.

📺 **Share your favourite Covid-19/lockdown-related meme/gif with us.**

Moir: [“One must champion oneself and say, I’m ready for this.”](#)

■ ***What is the first thing you plan to do when the lockdown lifts?***

Hug everybody!

■ ***Describe your career and if/how the pandemic/lockdown has affected its course.***

The part of my work that the pandemic has impacted the most is my live events. I usually [teach workshops or speak and present at corporate offsites](#). That obviously took a backseat. So, I'm launching a new online education platform next year called the Good Life Community where I can offer my teaching and programmes online.

Otherwise, I have been really lucky to maintain my work with many of my brand partners.

The world is really becoming even more ready for our line of work - using cultural insights to advocate for equity inside brands and workplaces is no longer a nice to have but a need to have in today's business world. I also started a podcast at the beginning of the year called [We're All Going to Die, Anyway](#). It was designed to talk about normalising death, loss and grief and how it can lead us to ultimately living a more urgent life! Who knew how prophetic that topic would be during this season. Of course, we had to switch from doing in-person interviews to Zoom interviews but that pivot didn't stop us from having incredible conversations. We've had so many wonderful guests in Season 1 and I can't wait to do Season 2 next year!

■ ***Any companies/brands that you feel have responded particularly well to the crisis and/or Covid-19-related campaigns that stand out to you, and why?***

Dove came out with a fantastic video in April about the bravery of our nurses and healthcare workers, highlighting that courage is beautiful. They have also made very generous donations to help these same workers obtain PPE, ventilators and medicine.

Aerie's been focusing a lot on mental health and connecting with their consumers via social media on the importance of self-care.

I also loved how Barbie responded to the Black Lives Matter movement, by not only donating money to their cause but also by creating content that doesn't shy away from big topics like anti-racism and white privilege. Their Barbie vlog video was overwhelmingly successful because it addressed the issues affecting Black people head-on.

■ ***What are you working on right now?***

In addition to my consulting work, I am launching an educational platform called The Good Life Community. 2020 has been such a challenging year for all of us. It's forced us to slow down, look around, and really look within. It has inspired me to explore the notion of what it means to live a good life, a life you love on your own terms.

Throughout my career, I have developed frameworks to help guide individuals, companies and brands through personal and professional development, and now I want to bring these tools to you!

If you're interested in redefining your vision and values, exploring what success really means in your life, or want to have more tools to handle grief and loss, join the community by signing up at [JessWeiner.com](#).

■ ***What does the 'new normal' look like to you?***

I envision a world where we all take a step back and ask ourselves what's truly urgent and important, and how we can make the world more intentional, holistic and equitable for every single person. It's a lot of reckoning with old biases and systems, and I think that's going to take a lot of self-reflection and hard work. I'd like us all to be more present, to relish the moment and the process rather than the hustle, to check our authenticity and reframe our values.

■ **What are some of the buzzwords floating around at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself?**

- "Focus on getting it right instead of being right."
- "Progress over perfection."

■ **What advice would you give to other industry folk during this time?**

I'd say one of the most important things is to make sure you're taking care of yourself. We're in "The Great Reset", a time of reckoning and understanding that things will probably never go back to "normal". This can be taxing on our mental health, so I'd encourage everyone to give themselves space and time to acknowledge and hold back judgement on themselves. We can feel a lot of pressure to "do more", "hustle harder", "obtain that goal today", but sometimes we also need rest and self-care. We're all here because we're passionate about creating change in the world, and the best way to achieve our visions is to take care of ourselves along the way.

Visit Weiner's website at [JessWeiner.com](https://jessweiner.com) and follow her on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

*Interviewed by [Jessica Tennant](#).

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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