

How's Work? with Esther Perel

Season 1: Ep 1 - The Break-Up

Voiceover: [00:00:00] What you're about to hear is an unscripted one time counseling session focused on work. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality names, employers and other identifiable characteristics have been removed. But their voices and their stories are real.

Mike: [00:00:16] Just the 32 second background. We flew Jets together in the Navy in the same aircraft, which are F18s. We deployed to Iraq flying off the Truman.

Esther VO: [00:00:30] In many ways. This is a love story.

Jay: [00:00:33] We had both decided at some point. Hey, we're really good at this together and a lot of times that's kind of rare for a two-seat crew to be really good. You have to have a good pilot, a good wizzo and they have to communicate and work well together for the deal to sing. But when it does it's a one plus one is greater than two thing. So we decided 'hey we need to do some business together'. We didn't know that would be.

Mike got out of the Navy about three months before I did. I called him up and said how is it and he said 'get here as fast as you can this is life-changing'. So I flew in the next day, went to work with him the next day, got a job the next day, bought a house the next day and moved to Midland.

Esther: [00:01:11] There is an amazing thing happening while you're talking. He's literally lip syncing with you what you're saying

Jay: [00:01:18] that that happens a lot.

MONTAGE REEL:

Speaker 1: [00:01:22] I just feel continually undermined.

Speaker 2: [00:01:23]The job has always been that place where I've been needed and I feel important.

Speaker 3: [00:01:33] A lot of the people that work for me are like an extension of my family.

Esther: [00:01:36] There's no doubt. That you're emotional and relational Derek comes with you to work.

Speaker 4: Imagine going to work every day, in a really busy place and no one will make eye contact with you.

Speaker 5: [00:01:47] I mean, it feels like a breakup

Esther: [00:01:49] it doesn't feel, it is.

Esther VO: So how's work?

END OF MONTAGE REEL

Esther VO: [00:01:58] From the early days in the cockpit both Mike and Jay have been inseparable. They built an oil company together afterwards and their strength, their boldness, their ability to assess and to take risks has always been predicated on the fact that they were together.

Mike: [00:02:21] I'm kind of the visionary creative guy and Jay's the one that actually makes things happen.

Esther: [00:02:26] Can I stop you one quick sec? If you want your names not in there, then you may want to not always...

Jay: [00:02:32] I don't know that I care about my name.

Mike: [00:02:34] No. Yeah, we're fine.

Jay: [00:02:36] I'm fine with first. I mean, I don't I don't think it's that big a deal.

Mike: [00:02:41] Yeah that business was very successful. The opportunity kind of faded and so we've been kind of figuring out what it is we want to do next. We're feeling very stuck and had been that way for probably 2 years. Now. I have a new idea. It's just come to life. I'm really excited about it, but Jay is not as excited about it. And we've kind of come to a place where we think that we can do different things and we're starting to figure out what that looks like for us because we've been together as kind of Life Partners for 10 years.

We've beat this drum that like this team is the reason for all of the success. So then the other side of that equation means that if there's no team, there's no success.

Esther VO: [00:03:28] And this is the first time where the question is asked: is it that they succeeded because they had such a good idea or is it also that they've succeeded because the strength of the US was the overriding factor?

And so now that they are considering their first-ever separation, the fear is that the best idea may not succeed if the US is no more.

Esther: tell me something, you would keep this business, but you would continue something else separately and you could do some together and some not? Or does it feel like this is our first separation?

Jay: [00:04:12] Well, it does feel like that for sure. Yeah, but yeah, this is the first time we've ever actually acknowledged out loud like hey, we don't have to be 50/50 partners in everything going forward. I would say for both of us that's probably a little...both scary and I don't know, freeing

Esther: [00:04:31] that's the word I had.

Jay: [00:04:32] Yeah

Esther: [00:04:35] explain each.

Jay: [00:04:36] Well, the scary part is that it's just it's a security blanket. I mean how we operate together. I would say that I am as worried about not having his ideas and vision and excitement as I'm assuming he might be worried about not having me to keep him a little bit in check and provide a little bit of administrative abilities for his sometimes quite disorganized and manic state.

So that's scary. And for the same exact reasons, it's kind of freeing.

Esther: [00:05:13] What's it like for you to say 'I'm going to do this on my own or maybe even with somebody else'?

Mike: [00:05:19] It's terrifying and really empowering. It feels like a new test to be kind of the benevolent dictator and not always have to balance something off a 50/50 partner. I'm solely responsible and I'm in charge now. I have to be more of a grown-up and I don't always have my conscience there to rein me in, like I'm going to have to do that myself.

Esther: [00:05:45] In a way you have a perfect complementarity, right? In which one person can have the vision the other person thinks about the implementation and you rely on it and when you rely on it you don't have to think about it so much because you know the other one will think about the thing that you are not so good at.

Jay: [00:06:05] yes. You nailed it.

Esther: [00:06:06] That's a priceless complementarity. Because they're often the reverse, in that one person criticizes the other for the very thing that they actually need. In your case you praise each other for that very thing. Each one enacts the part that the other person isn't as confident about.

Jay: [00:06:24] Yes. Yes. It's a beautiful thing. Now. It's not all cherry blossoms and rose...

Esther: [00:06:28] Who lives there? Is there such a thing? But that means that you can have major sparring I suppose...but, why am I telling you? You tell me.

Jay: [00:06:44] Well first we need to start with the environment where we grew up. You know in the ready room of a Fighter Squadron. It's an environment where passive-aggressive is not acceptable

Esther: [00:06:56] explain it

Jay: [00:06:58] when there's an issue, it's discussed openly without fear of hurt feelings and grudge holdings. But like hey, there's an issue here. We need to address it. Because there's too much going on. There's too much at stake.

Mike: [00:07:14] Because if we don't people could die

Jay: [00:07:15] if we don't people could die. We're flying fighters off of aircraft carriers that are loaded with bombs and guns. I mean, there's a lot of very critical scenarios every day, every flight. So we have brought that mindset forward to our business and more specifically our partnership.

When we have issues we sit down and if it's big enough, we pour a glass of bourbon and or whiskey and and we just deal with it.

Esther VO: [00:07:41] Often in the workplace. You have one person who likes to be direct and the other person who may be much more indirect or maybe sometimes what they called the passive aggressive or even totally avoidant.

So in their case they come in initially stating that their pproach to managing conflict is similar because they were raised in the same military culture. Of course, one question I have is is this similarity truly part of their personalities or part of their shared military] culture?

Esther: [00:08:19] And what's the complementarity of styles in the way that you discuss hard topics?

Jay: [00:08:27] He helped me open my views up a little bit in terms of like emotion and or you know appreciation for the way that other people feel. He helps me kind of think about the fact that it's okay that other people might think about something emotionally different than I do or whatever and I'm generally more adept at like open and clear communication, like logical Maybe.

Esther: [00:08:59] You have the 5 siblings, right? Yes, and you're the solo child.

Jay: [00:09:03] Yes

Esther: [00:09:06] see the connection.

Jay: [00:09:07] Yeah, sure.

Esther: [00:09:10] It just popped on me. You learned to solve things alone. And you learned to think about how it affects others.

Mike: [00:09:19] That's why we're sitting here in this office. I would have never thought of that but that's true.

Esther: [00:09:23] If you are solo child and live with solo parent, or sola parent, it becomes sometimes more difficult to be able to have separate opinions.

Jay: [00:09:41] Yes, that's accurate. I also think that and I'm not sure how this plays with the whole being an only child but like I'm actually pretty easily convinced when a logical argument is presented to me, and he's a salesman, he can sell his ideas and he knows how to sell them to me without a whole lot of trouble.

Esther: [00:10:06] Sure, was your mom good at that?

Jay: [00:10:10] I don't know. I wonder. We grew up with my grandparents. You know, my dad died when I was two and a half so it was just me and her and we lived with my grandparents, who were the best, they were awesome. We needed money, so she she had to fend for for us both, you know, from from the start. So I mean, she's just an incredible woman the things that she was able to do with nothing, you know. My dad had a business that was terrible. An aviation business, he loved. He had it because he loved aviation not because he was good at business.

Esther: [00:10:42] and you became a pilot.

Jay: Yes, not surprisingly. Yeah. But when he died, she was stuck with this business and trying to figure out what to do. She felt the responsibility to the business, the dream and to the employees. And in a couple of years she got that business from the red into the black and and sold it. I look back at that and go wow, that's incredible. So I don't think anybody was ever telling her what to do. So, I don't know the answer to that question

Esther: [00:11:12] because you're thinking of it as an issue of command and control right?

Jay: [00:11:18] That's the way I think of a lot of things

Esther: [00:11:19] right, I wasn't thinking about it from that side. I was thinking about it as if you'd give me a good argument, I can be convinced A. because I think it's a sound argument and 2. because I thrive on harmony.

Jay: [00:11:34] Yes.

Esther: [00:11:37] I thrive on Harmony with my grandparents, I thrive on harmony with my mom and I thrive on harmony with my business partner.

Jay: [00:11:45] Yes I would say that of ten door closing sessions where whiskey's poured, 9 of them are initiated by Mike.

Esther: [00:11:53] And that means what?

Jay: [00:11:56] I don't...I avoid conflict.

Esther: [00:12:00] I chose a nicer way of saying it but that's what I meant. Yeah.

Jay: [00:12:03] Yeah.

Esther: [00:12:04] To me the minute you tell me I love and I admire my mother, I love and I so deeply appreciate my grandparents, and I was this only child, I know you are a pleaser. But in the sense that you want to have a nice relationship with people that you are fond of that you love, that you admire, that you respect so much as you respect him. It's that you don't want to disappoint them. It's absolutely not a negative trait at all.

But like every trait, it takes place in the context. It's the context that determines if it's a useful one today or if it's more detrimental to me today. Same with him. Why is he so good at convincing? Because he's got four other brothers and they all have a big mouth and he has to get his point of view across. He had a training ground from day one.

[00:13:06] It's like the context of how you grew up exquisitely sharpens certain skills by necessity and they of course come with you to work.

Mike: [00:13:20] Yeah, I wonder how that plays out and in like trying to please your dad who wasn't there?

Jay: [00:13:27] Well, yeah, I mean that's a...I think that a lot of the things that I do are because my dad wasn't there and I just want him to be proud.

Esther: [00:13:38] And do you know that he is?

Jay: [00:13:40] I believe that he is but you know without any sort of confirmation then all I can do is just keep trying.

Esther: [00:13:45] But in your mind, you've done right by him? Okay are we clear on that or we still are trying to prove it?

Jay: [00:13:53] No a hundred percent. It's just, you know, if there's more to be done there's more to be done.

[00:13:58] **Esther:** [00:13:58] I'll tell you, there's one more thing that can be done, but it has nothing to do with business.

Jay: [00:14:05] To be a father.

Esther: [00:14:06] Yes.

Jay: [00:14:08] Yeah, that's scary.

Esther: [00:14:10] But that's the one.

Jay: [00:14:13] You're right, mom would love it.

Esther: [00:14:16] So would he.

Jay: [00:14:18] yeah, I think I think once the switch was flipped I would be good at that.

Mike: [00:14:27] You'd be amazing

Esther: [00:14:28] You're afraid that you would go too soon?

Jay: [00:14:35] That's one of things I'm afraid of but yeah, I mean sure that's absolutely one of them. I mean, I think I think a lot of the things I do could potentially be impacted by a fear of loss or a lot of things I don't do.

Esther: [00:14:50] I love that. Somebody who says that and then becomes a fighter jet pilot. How counter phobic can one be? Have you heard that Counter phobic is the person who jumps Cliffs when they're afraid of heights.

Jay: [00:15:06] I was just having this discussion my girlfriend this weekend about I forget exactly what it was, but I said I'm scared of that and she's like you're scared of that what you mean?

And I said, yeah, I'm terrified of it, which is why I try to go do it as much as I can because then I can take control of that fear and say no. No, this is illogical. I don't need to fear this.

Esther: [00:15:26] It's called counter phobic. There is a word for everything. Tell me something, when you said you were very very stuck. What unstuck you, was it the fact that you have a new idea or the fact that you realize that you could stay close even if you didn't do everything together? And it's not either or...

Mike: [00:15:57] I woke up one morning and said I've I've achieved all my dreams. I went and flew jets in the Navy and and found the ultimate test in combat and I started a successful company and and I had a beautiful family and I was a great dad and I had all the things that I thought I wanted. And it wasn't enough. I was still looking for something. So what am I going to do? What's important to me?

Esther: [00:16:25] But your stuckness was not because of what's happening in the business. Your stuckness was more existential and it was more yours or it was both of you?

Mike: [00:16:35] think it's...I think I've got to own it more. I think it was more on me because I was the idea guy and I ran out of ideas. I'd done the thing that you're supposed to do as an entrepreneur. I had created something out of out of thin air and it was wildly successful, beyond even my own dreams and and then it dried up and I really had to grieve the loss and you know to borrow Jaco's term 'extreme ownership' I had to look in the mirror and say all the successes are because of me. And all the failures are because of me and I really had to get right with the idea that maybe the failure wasn't because of me. The market changed.

Esther: [00:17:20] but that is valid also for the beginning. Things worked extremely well, not just because of you.

Mike: [00:17:30] Oh absolutely,

[00:17:32] **Jay:** [00:17:32] Rising tide floats...

Esther: [00:17:33] and the extreme ownership is also a hyper individualistic view. Is it all about you, the good and the bad, no, neither is the bad but neither is all the good. It was him, there was the market, there was a...it's a combination of everything that allowed you to flourish the way you did.

There is no lonely genius. Or a lone genius, that's probably the correct one. The lone genius is often lonely. It's always an interaction of multiple facets. To tell me if I hear you. I got stuck for two years in a whole crisis because in some way my premise was wrong.

And the premise was I have done all of this by myself. And therefore I'm responsible for the whole failure by myself. And since I couldn't accept that I hadn't done it all by myself. I didn't know how to let go of the other side, because once I accept that I'm not the source of all failure. Then I have to accept that. I'm not the source of all success. And meanwhile, I'm sitting there on my ass constantly trying to squeeze creativity out of me while I'm completely constipated I'm saying where is the next idea? Where's the next idea?

ESTHER VO: The stuckness he alludes to wasn't just some matter of fact shortness of ideas. We're talking about someone who became crushed by the burdens of responsibility because he needed to come up with a new idea that would be able to feed all the people that he brought into this business, including two of his brothers.

Mike: [00:19:35] I mean yeah, you kind of laid it out.

Esther: [00:19:37] That's right. And I think you must have felt super responsible for...when you bring two brothers in. I'm sure you must feel constantly the business should even stay alive just for them. I'll be fine, but I need to make sure that they are taken care of. So I can see the weight of all the responsibility creating so much anxiety that you cannot be creative. Creativity and anxiety are at odds with each other when you're anxious you're vigilant, when you're anxious you're trying to make sure that things stay a certain way that you're sure that nothing bad is going to happen. When you're in that vigilant state you can't be exploratory, playful curious, imaginative, creative, innovative etc.

Jay: [00:20:30] Yeah.

Esther: [00:20:33] What came first the idea or the idea of the possibility that you could separate?

Jay: [00:20:39] Possibility.

Esther: [00:20:43] So the very thought that you could. And that it's not a we are together or we are apart but that you could have some businesses together and some apart freed you from a loyalty bind.

Jay: [00:20:57] And it also freed me a little bit from...I don't have to take care of his brothers. And I say that and it sort of sounds - maybe it feels a little bit - but if we look at our business over the past year and a half and we were pure economists, I don't think we would have kept this thing open.

To me the only reason I was okay with it was because we were providing those guys with the paycheck and we were taking care of them until we really figured out our program and we could afford to do.

Esther: [00:21:29] That's what your mother did.

Jay: [00:21:32] Yeah, I think you're right.

Esther: [00:21:34] And you admire it. So life is not always about being pure economists.

Jay: [00:21:40] I know. And I don't look back on that and go man, I wish I didn't do it. I look back on it and say I'm glad we were able to do it.

Esther: [00:21:48] But you didn't add that. If you don't add that he's left with a different feeling about what you're saying.

Jay: [00:21:57] True.

Mike: [00:21:58] Yeah, and it weighs on me, but that was a big ask, you know, they have been living very lean and and I asked Jay to give them a bonus and we're not in the black.

Esther: [00:22:15] and?

Jay: [00:22:17] and we are going to do that.

Esther: [00:22:21] Because you don't want to disappoint.

Jay: [00:22:25] No.

Esther: [00:22:27] Yes.

Jay: [00:22:29] well sure that is certainly part of that, which I actually don't think is that...

Esther: [00:22:33] No people. This is not about good bad. Good bad. This is about also understanding what are the motivations here. What drives you. Of course you say I was convinced but underneath you say I was convinced and I have to admit that the presence of his brothers...fill in the.

You know, yes, he did agree with me but when push comes to shove, I do feel like I did convince him. So the burden is on me. The obvious is what you agreed on and what you did nice was super nice, but then there is the little extra.

Jay: [00:23:10] Yes.

Esther: [00:23:11] and it's those pieces, those extras, that we actually don't talk about.

Which leads me to ask you, you talk about a lot of things, what are some of the things that you don't talk about?

Jay: [00:23:28] So when you were saying about these little pieces that we don't talk about I was trying to think and decide why we don't talk about it. I feel like potentially we don't because it's understood. I know that Mike feels the overall responsibility. He doesn't have to tell me that for me to know it and I know that he knows that I feel a bit of a burden and I've talked about it because he knows

Mike: [00:24:02] right.

Jay: [00:24:04] I just, I do wonder if it would have been more beneficial to check in every once in a while with it.

Mike: [00:24:12] We both assumed that the other one new and that led to some of the isolation. I mean at least you know, we had always depended on each other. I mean literally, you know I depended on you with my life and and yet during this period when I had this crushing anxiety with my best friend and business partner sitting right next to me.

I still felt alone during that time.

Jay: [00:24:39] Yeah, and I did I did too for my stuff. If we spent four hours in a day talking about what these new ideas are going to be and then Mike had to go home to his kids. I had to actually then start doing my job because what we were doing in my mind was his job for the past four hours.

Now, I actually have to do everything that keeps the bills paid and actually, you know keeps the company going which was a super frustration that I didn't ever really like share often. Maybe maybe not ever really.

Mike: [00:25:13] But man didn't I feel it and still do and I would I would offer to help but he wouldn't let me because organization is not my thing.

Esther: [00:25:30] To me the ideas don't come when there is obstruction. And the obstruction you just described. It's one thing for you to know that he's stressed because he feels the burn of responsibility on everybody and it's one thing for you to know that he's stressed because he needs to make sure that he can do the payroll but the fact that you know, it doesn't do much for the other person if you don't say it.

It's like buying a gift that you don't offer. So what, so you went out and you bought a gift but you never gave it? The place where you are awakened alone at night, each of you fretting about your own thing, that extra space that really makes the difference is the fact that the other one witnesses it.

And says I see you in your predicament. It's I see you is what ultimately makes you feel less alone. And when you feel less alone, you don't have to put all your psychic energy into self-protection and into the burden of responsibility that's around you. So

the envelope can open up it can widen the space is created and the ideas can start to come.

One of the most important things about your relationship with him is that he's your brother of choice, but he is the one with whom you were not having to be the oldest. Because all your other brothers you feel responsible for. Rhis one was the equal.

Jay: [00:27:14] Do you feel at all responsible for me?

Esther: [00:27:18] Yes, that's the question that needed to be asked, that's a beginning one. It's good.

Mike: [00:27:24] Yeah, and and and I know it's not fair, and I know that you don't need me to be responsible for you. But the whole time this whole thing was percolating in my head a huge piece of it was where's the place for Jay?Because I feel like if I found something and you didn't. What does that mean for us? Right?

[00:27:50] **Jay:** [00:27:50] Well I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mike: [00:27:55] I don't I don't want you to feel left behind if this thing takes off and it's wildly successful and you're still looking for your next thing and three years. I'm trying to shield you from pain that doesn't exist yet.

Esther: [00:28:07] But that's actually...It's extraordinary caring, mind you. You know, if I do well, I want you to be a part of it and if you don't do well I want to know that I didn't let you go into the drain by yourself.

Jay: [00:28:22] Hm.

Mike: [00:28:27] Yeah,

Esther: [00:28:27] But did you know the thing that he would feel really bad if he went and it became successful and you were not a part of it?

Jay: [00:28:35] Yeah, and I think coming to terms with the fact that I'm okay with that if I'm not as stoked on it as he is and I don't need to be a party to that in the same level.

And also I need aviation back in my life like. I don't have aviation my life nearly as much as I want to and I feel like it's a like a hole and so I feel like that is a part of my life that I am not fulfilling right now and I want to fulfill it now so I want to do business. I want to be in charge of my own business company. I just want it to be with Aviation.

Esther: [00:29:27] Know what I'm hearing...I'm hearing a story in many directions. A piece of the story talks about the complementarity and about how much each of you has added to the other and a piece of the story talks about how the Loyalty you have for each other at some point began to compromise yourselves. It's like how do I hold on to myself while I'm with you? And how much of me do I have to give up in order for the Earth not to dissolve? And so you stop thinking about aviation, you stop

thinking about anything for that matter, you're not having any thoughts at all anymore. Just anxiety.

The power of the relationship was so strong that it was more important than the individuals for a while. That's actually quite amazing. You don't see it immediately, the moment that begins to feel that the price of the self that has been given up, has become too big, and what does it mean too big? It's that it no longer is serving the US. Do you understand what I'm describing

Mike: [00:30:47] That's incredibly accurate.

Jay: [00:30:52] hmm.

Esther: [00:30:55] Do you need another partner? You would like to work in Partnership?. You've lived in Partnership.

Mike: [00:31:04] Yeah, I don't think that I do. I do I feel like I value the opinions of others and so that I like to think that I would stop and listen and be very mindful and give that it's full credit.

So I don't think I need a 50/50 partner always being there to say it.

Jay: [00:31:33] I don't think you need a partner either. What I fear for you is your ability to manage the whole big picture and not just focus on what you want to focus on and blow off what you don't like, right, because historically Mike does not do what he doesn't want to do.

My biggest fear for you going forward in. Something where I'm not holding your hand for lack of a better term is I don't know how you can execute all these meetings all these people all these relationships. without somebody helping.

And if that's the world's most incredible executive assistant, maybe that's what I've been fuck.

Mike: [00:32:27] I don't know man. Maybe maybe it's just that I want to relieve you of that responsibility. I want don't want you to be the world's best executive assistant. You don't want to manage the shit I don't want to do anymore and it's not fair to you to ask you that right?

Esther: [00:32:40] Yes, that's but there's also another dynamic. Because he does it so well, you do it less and less, and because you do it less and less he does it more and more. And because he does it more and more you become even more the person who doesn't have to think about that which you don't like. And because you don't have to do that which you don't like he becomes the person who doesn't like that which you don't want to do.

Jay: [00:33:08] Wow. Yeah, really dings all the momentum that way.

Esther: [00:33:13] You lost your practical skills and you lost your vision. Yes, you may say he's the idea guy and he's the ops but the idea has some ops and the ops

has some ideas, but when it becomes too uneven and each one literally farms out to the other that which they don't feel so confident about we're right back where we started. Then slowly you lose even the piece of you that has this.

Jay: [00:33:42] Yes.

Esther: [00:33:44] Is that new what we just said now?

Jay: [00:33:47] Yeah, we haven't gone that far. Yeah. I was talking about it with. My girlfriend and I was telling her about Mike's new idea quite excitedly and she was like it sounds like you're really excited for him.

And I said hey, I believe in this one. She's like great so where does that leave you and I said, what do you mean like, I'll play some role in it and she said no like right now, where does that leave you and I said, well, I'm gonna run the business, our business. I'll just keep doing I'm doing making sure that money is getting paid and we're paying the bills we need to pay and trying to get these deals sold until there aren't any more to sell or isn't anything else to do.

She was like, well is that fair? And I said well, yeah, I mean, I think so like he's working on his new thing. I don't have anything yet. So let me just work on this and then I'll figure out what the new thing is. And then I heard myself saying that I was like, you know, I don't actually think that's fair.

Esther: [00:34:50] Yeah,

Mike: [00:34:51] obviously, there's there's a lot at play there. Like I would never ask you to do that.

Jay: [00:34:55] You never did. You never once asked me to

Mike: [00:34:57] I know and I don't want you to and. And I know that that...I think I just don't worry about money. I just don't and I know that you do and I hate that for you

Jay: [00:35:11] There's two worries about money. There's worry about money. Like I need to be the richest guy in the room, which I don't think either of us are worried about that, and then there's worry about money like I got to pay the bills. Somehow Mike has the ability to not really worry about that probably because he doesn't pay many of his bill. His wife pays his home bills and I pay his work bills. And so just like I shed my burden of maybe vision and creativity for the future. He can shed his burden of money because Jay is going to take care of it.

Esther: [00:35:44] Right? It's called Outsourcing. He doesn't have to be anxious because you carry it right and vice versa.

He carries the ideas and you don't have to ask what do I want?

Maybe you know...I think you need to confirm that for me, that when you are the only child of a single mother, you are much more aware of what is going on.

Jay: [00:36:10] I wasn't as a kid. I remember, I remember making fun of mom for her shitty jeans and beat up sneakers. Like why do you wear that stuff? Why don't you have new jeans?

Esther: [00:36:23] Because she gave them to you.

Jay: [00:36:25] because I always had the new jeans. And it took a minute to realize that.

Mike: [00:36:32] I think my relationship to money is more about risk tolerance. Like I'm I always...I've always been okay, even when I had nothing, I'm not afraid to lose everything that I have because I know I can get it back.I can go out and find a way to get some if I need to.

Esther: [00:36:50] And yours would be?

Jay: [00:36:53] The opposite. Mine would be it took an incredible amount of effort and risks that I would rather not have on, but accepted / knew I needed to to make the returns that we wanted to make and therefore we made that money, and when it goes away....

Esther: [00:37:18] So he says I don't mind if I lose everything because I know I can get it back. And you say

Jay: [00:37:26] I earned it? I don't want to lose it all.

Esther: [00:37:31] Does your dad enter that to narrative too?

Jay: [00:37:34] Well, he was not a good businessman.

So maybe this is me being better. My mom said I love everything about your father and I see so much of him in you the one thing I would love is if you're not terrible with money and/or at business like your dad was. So I would I consider it a failure. A failure at what I'm not exactly sure but a failure. I should have made the right decisions. I should have planned ahead

Esther: [00:38:18] should should should.

You began by saying we have different attitudes to money and to risk taking but now I got curious. How would you describe your relationship to this amazing word that we could spend three hours just talking about?

Jay: [00:38:40] Failure. Yeah. I put the most pressure on myself. And I think a lot of that comes from this whole success or failure thing because I historically do very well at what I choose to do and. I believe that I am incredibly High achiever and I'm capable of anything that I choose to go do. But I pick those things specifically

because I don't want to do anything that I don't win at so I'm terrified of failing and it plays into business and personal.

Esther: [00:39:25] Say more.

Jay: [00:39:27] I have all these challenges growing up and in trying to achieve this dream of being a fighter pilot, and so...

Esther: [00:39:37] And the challenges were what?

Jay: [00:39:40] As I was growing up? Well, I grew up without a dad, so challenge number one maybe. In high school, I got, I had a bad accident between my Junior and Senior year. I got shot in the face at a party with a real big gun. It was a really formative thing in my life.

Many say I should have died...very lucky that I did not. I am very fortunate the way I recovered. I think a lot of it was attitude driven. I believed that I was going to recover a hundred percent and still go to the Naval Academy and still fly Fighters and I did. And I succeeded in that lifelong dream of being a fighter pilot.

In the Navy I wanted to be the best fighter pilot. I wanted to be the best Squadron mate to all my buddies like, that's what I was. So anyway, this whole this whole story came up from this relationship question. I never had time to make that a priority in my life, even though I wanted it. I had never made any space for it.

And then when I got out of the Navy I made the move to Midland, Texas to get in the oil business because now I need to succeed at something else. I never had a year-long relationship with a woman. I am in one now and it's a huge huge deal, but I think generally we talked about is my fear of commitment and I don't know if we talked about like why I fear that commitment.

I don't even know a hundred percent if I know. I do I think probably a lot of it has to do with loss. You know, my dad from a young age.

I think also a lot of it has to do with like am I going to be good at this, am I going to succeed at this? So that's why I say that this this concept of success and failure has also driven personal life.

Esther: [00:41:42] To me the ability to not personalize. And not to think of it as success and failure in the extreme ways that you do is what allows people to be serial entrepreneurs in a more, in a better way than others.

Jay: [00:42:02] I see that.

Esther: [00:42:04] What makes the difference is is the ability to let go because if all you think is I'm a failure, you can't think about the next idea.

Yes, you're hijacked into your thoughts about yourself. Which is what kept you stuck for two years too.

Mike: [00:42:31] And I mean, you don't even know how extreme this is for him. He, he won the World Championships in air racing. He's the guy that became a fighter pilot after getting shot in the face. That doesn't happen. So he's achieved these incredible things. So now he's the guy that can't fail.

Esther: [00:42:50] I feel it when he talks, don't worry. I get it. And the higher you go, the higher you can fall. And a part of your closeness to this guy is because you sit in that cockpit where you are literally perched on the edge between life and death and when you come out of there alive, you have conquered your fear of loss with him.

Jay: [00:43:21] Wow.

Mike: [00:43:26] He said before we walked in here that I'm the only person who he's ever committed to. So no wonder it was terrifying for me to do my own things and not have him be a part of it. I mean, it feels like a breakup.

Esther: [00:43:41] It doesn't feel like it is. It is a separation. It's not a breakup, but it is a separation.

Mike: [00:43:51] I'm the one person that he's trusted.

Esther: [00:43:54] Do you have a sense that you understand that his responsibility doesn't just come from nowhere? He knows what it means for you to have trusted him in this way. As you said earlier, you don't have to tell him. It's not just a feeling. It's an embodied experience sure. Lay it on him for a minute.

Mike: [00:44:29] I mean that was probably the hardest part about about moving forward with this this new idea was what if there's not a spot for you there because you've given me the one thing that you've not given anybody else. You've given me the trust to do life together and what an awful thing to reject that?

Jay: [00:44:54] Yeah, well, I hadn't really considered it at that at that level.

Mike: [00:45:04] Yeah me neither but it makes sense. I mean, I feel better.

Jay: [00:45:15] It's okay, I absolve your responsibility

Esther: [00:45:17] because you see stuck, to me, is like a system of roots underground. You get to see the surface of the stuck. But when something is stuck it's because something else is pulling at it that you can't always immediately see the roots underneath.

It's like a tree you don't know what they connect to. It's that sleuth work that when you actually identify it you do feel better. Because it literally opens up obstructions and then whatever ideas are there can come through. You know because what happens is that in the end, you don't recognize either person.

Where's my confidence?

Jay: [00:46:16] Yeah.

Esther: [00:46:18] You know, that's the piece they both have been gazing at. Where was my confidence? Where's the guy I know? My guess is you're going to, maybe or maybe not have anything to do with this venture. You may meet up on another venture. This may be a period where you do separate ventures.

Your biggest venture is probably going to be that you're going to become a father. And that will change the entire way you do business. And when you will have that you will also think differently about how things are.

Because he in a way has had to focus on the presence of people in his life and what he does about that and you have had to deal on the absence of people in your life and what you do about that.

He's always come with a multi-perspective. You've always come with a singular perspective and the only multiple you got is when he shines a reflection on you.

Now you have somebody else, hey, dude, that doesn't sound very fair, you know, and so you come into the conversation with him very differently and it's gonna just amplify like that. Because she's going to see you come home in the evening.

Jay: [00:47:50] That's awesome. I need that.

Esther: [00:47:53] I think it's life-changing for you.

Esther VO: [00:48:06] At the end of this session Jay and Mike have a new template for what together and apart can mean for them. In many ways it was already in them, but they needed the permission and they needed the ability to put words to this intricate system of roots underneath. The roots of their childhood the roots of their transition the roots of their complementarity and the roots for a vision for the future. All of that bleeds into the story of relationships at work.

CREDITS:

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To learn more about Esther Perel's world, to sign up for her newsletter or to apply to be on the podcast go to www.estherperel.com/howswork

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