

How's Work? with Esther Perel

Season 1: Ep . 6 - From Bartender to Business Partner

Speaker 1: [00:00:00] [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.

Esther Perel: [00:00:17] He's been the bartender, she's been the boss. He's been more than the bartender. He's been the loyal manager of the bar, and for the first time they are going to partner together and open a taqueria which they hope will become the beginning of a chain of successful taquerias. For the last few years she's had other partners, primarily family members, and perhaps this is why she never discussed equity, responsibilities, and so she would like to do it differently this time. And so with this new business partner, she hopes to have a clear sense of who does what, when and how.

Speaker 3: [00:01:00] [00:01:00] I just, I feel continually undermined.

Speaker 4: [00:01:03] The job has always been that place where I've been needed and I feel important.

Speaker 5: [00:01:10] A lot of the people that work for me are like an extension of my family.

Speaker 6: [00:01:14] There's no doubt that your emotional and relational diary comes with you to work.

Speaker 7: [00:01:20] Imagine going to work every day in a really busy place, and no one will make eye contact with you.

Speaker 3: [00:01:25] I mean it feels like a breakup.

Speaker 6: [00:01:28] It doesn't feel. It is [laughs].

Esther Perel: [00:01:32] So how's work?

Speaker 8: [00:01:37] You know, I've had work partnerships in the past that weren't really, like, talked through, 'cause I didn't know that I had to, and now they're really difficult.

Esther Perel: [00:01:50] They're still active?

Speaker 8: [00:01:51] They're still active, and they're a mess. From the beginning we didn't have, like, really good, clear communication about what we wanted, what was expected. [00:02:00] There wasn't a clear agreement.

Esther Perel: [00:02:01] Ex-husbands [laughs]?

Speaker 8: [00:02:02] It's a family member.

Esther Perel: [00:02:04] It's a family member-

Speaker 8: [00:02:05] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:02:05] But they're like ex-husbands in the sense that-

Speaker 8: [00:02:07] [laughs].

Esther Perel: [00:02:07] You have an ex-husband with whom you had kids, and you have to continue to raise those children.

Speaker 8: [00:02:12] Yes, yes.

Esther Perel: [00:02:13] And then-

Speaker 8: [00:02:13] You're right.

Esther Perel: [00:02:14] Right? Something like that [laughs]?

Speaker 8: [00:02:15] Yeah. I have an ex husband, so yeah [laughs]. So you know, we are building these new partnership for these new business, and we have a friendship, we've work together. Um, but I know that we need to do some work in terms of what is agreed, what is the expectation, like, what's this commitment gonna look like because it's gonna change so much that if it's not cleared from the beginning, uh, once we get working, it's just gonna be head down working.

Esther Perel: [00:02:46] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:02:47] 'Cause that's the nature-

Esther Perel: [00:02:48] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:02:48] Of the industry that we are in.

Esther Perel: [00:02:49] And you have ex-wives?

Speaker 9: [00:02:51] Um, no. I have in the-

Esther Perel: [00:02:53] [crosstalk 00:02:55] metaphorical ones.

Speaker 9: [00:02:55] Yeah, meta-, yeah, metaphorically I have, I have a city full [00:03:00] of ex-wives here.

Esther Perel: [00:03:01] Right. But meaning for me the ex is also, when you sit in this new partnership, and you talk about expectations, it is my sense that our expectations in any new relationship are often influenced by the relationships that we had before. The good ones, the less good ones, and the godawful ones. What would you say is the, some of the history?

Speaker 8: [00:03:31] Um, uh, so I grew up, grew up with my mother.

Esther Perel: [00:03:35] You grew up in the US, or-

Speaker 8: [00:03:36] I grew up in Colombia.

Esther Perel: [00:03:37] In Colombia

Speaker 8: [00:03:38] So I grew up in Colombia with my mom and my sister. And dad had another family. Um, and then I moved to the states when I was 17.

Esther Perel: [00:03:48] [foreign language 00:03:50]

Speaker 8: [00:03:50] [foreign language 00:03:50]. Yeah. I came, I had family here; like, I had an uncle and an aunt.

Esther Perel: [00:03:56] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:03:56] And that uncle is my partner that I'm dealing with [00:04:00] at the moment.

Esther Perel: [00:04:00] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:04:02] So there's a lot of, like, history, father-like history [crosstalk 00:04:06].

Esther Perel: [00:04:05] He's the brother of?

Speaker 8: [00:04:07] My father. Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:04:09] That matters too.

Speaker 8: [00:04:11] I would ima- [crosstalk 00:04:12] that it matters. [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:04:13] It matters.

Speaker 8: [00:04:15] But, so yeah, when I arrived here at 17, he, he has really been a very influential person in my life. And for a long time, I said that he was like my father. And at first, when we first opened this business, I really-

Esther Perel: [00:04:35] And that was what?

Speaker 8: [00:04:36] That was the restaurant.

Esther Perel: [00:04:37] Okay.

Speaker 8: [00:04:38] And I was the working partner, so I just kind of dove into that work head on. And worked really, really hard for a long, long time. Not really knowing what was expected. And I had two little children, and I was married at the time. It was, it was a lot of effort. And like, energy out all the time. And he wasn't even around. [00:05:00] We said we were gonna have this partnership. Got the loan, got the thing started, and like, midway through he said, "I have to move back to Colombia

because I'm in love with this woman, and I need to marry her." So we didn't even open. He wasn't even around.

Esther Perel: [00:05:13] You did open, but by yourself?

Speaker 8: [00:05:14] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:05:14] [crosstalk 00:05:15] So the restaurant still runs.

Speaker 8: [00:05:16] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:05:16] And is a successful restaurant.

Speaker 8: [00:05:18] It is. Like, it's been up and down, up and down. And a lot of it is because I've been learning as we do. 'Cause he wasn't around to teach me.

Esther Perel: [00:05:27] Did you think you would give up when he left?

Speaker 8: [00:05:29] No. It wasn't even an option. [laughs] That wasn't even an option.

Esther Perel: [00:05:35] I have this idea that you could either be really pissed at him, because he left.

Speaker 8: [00:05:41] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:05:42] Midway. Or you could on some, in some weird way almost appreciate the fact that he's finally out of your way, and you don't have to deal with him, because he's anyway, not particularly helpful.

Speaker 8: [00:05:54] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:05:55] And therefore you can just do your own thing.

Speaker 8: [00:05:57] So I think I, I've felt both. [00:06:00] I think I felt, I think at the time I didn't know it. But I, I've always said that one of the biggest blessings was the fact that I was able to do things my way, even though it was really hard because I had to learn them on my own. But I got to do them my way. But I think for a while, I was still, like, quietly resentful. Because he left. You know, and I felt like he abandoned me.

Esther Perel: [00:06:22] Like your father.

Speaker 8: [00:06:22] Yes. Absolutely. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:06:25] And he will be man number whatever.

Speaker 8: [00:06:29] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:06:30] In partnership.

Speaker 8: [00:06:31] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:06:31] This one here, right? And so part of your legacy is all these men leave.

Speaker 8: [00:06:38] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:06:38] The day they fall in love with somebody, they leave.

Speaker 8: [00:06:41] [inaudible 00:06:42].

Esther Perel: [00:06:41] They don't even... They leave for love. This is [inaudible 00:06:44]. It's like a Latin soap opera, [foreign language 00:06:47].

Speaker 9: [00:06:52] Right. [laughter]

Speaker 8: [00:06:52] And that has played out in my, into my relationships too.

Esther Perel: [00:06:56] They promise you the moon, and then they vanish.

Speaker 8: [00:07:00] [00:07:00] Yeah. [inaudible 00:07:01] moon, for sure.

Esther Perel: [00:07:06] She understands that her uncle, which is her business partner in the restaurant, and who was here when she arrived to the US, is the father that she never had. And now she also understands that the uncle, and yes, business partner, who defects and leads suddenly in the middle of the job also is reminiscent of the father who abandoned her. In both cases, she felt the loneliness of the abandonment, but also the freedom and the self-determination that came with it.

He's 50/50 with you?

Speaker 8: [00:07:49] He's 50/50.

Esther Perel: [00:07:51] And you've been doing 100% of the work for 10 years, 12 years?

Speaker 8: [00:07:54] For 12 years.

Esther Perel: [00:07:55] While he's 50/50.

Speaker 8: [00:07:57] Yeah. This is a conversation we [00:08:00] need to have.

Esther Perel: [00:08:01] We?

Speaker 8: [00:08:02] Like he and I need to have.

Esther Perel: [00:08:04] And what stops you from having that conversation?

Speaker 8: [00:08:06] Well, I try, I try to start. So I started this conversation three years ago. Was like, "Hey, can we, can we figure this out? Because I'm not feeling like I can continue to do this. Can you give me that?"

Esther Perel: [00:08:20] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:08:22] And it's hard. It's hard to bring him to the table to have a conversation. It's really emotional.

Esther Perel: [00:08:28] For?

Speaker 8: [00:08:29] For me. I feel like I, I cannot have a strong argument around him.

Esther Perel: [00:08:37] How young do you become?

Speaker 8: [00:08:41] I don't know. I feel like he, he knows how to, like, manipulate me emotionally, and I can't really, like state my ground. Like say, hey, this is not okay. I really feel really vulnerable around him.

Esther Perel: [00:08:54] Because he was good to you when you arrived here?

Speaker 8: [00:08:58] yeah. And because we've shared [00:09:00] some really hard things together. Um, there is a history of this in our family. Of like, working together, and p-, people taking advantage of each other, and then like, big fights. Family split; nobody talks. Everybody's in a camp. So it's like, I don't want to do that. And we're, we're doing it.

Esther Perel: [00:09:22] But this dynamic of working with the family members.

Speaker 8: [00:09:26] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:09:29] Uncles, aunts, siblings. By definition, if you have, you know, if you, if you have a business partner that is not a family member, and the business breaks up, or the partnership breaks up, you didn't have other attachments often to that person.

Speaker 8: [00:09:46] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:09:47] When you have those kinds of breakups with family members, you don't only lose your business partner, you lose the uncle that was there when you arrived, who was your father figure, who has been [00:10:00] invested with all kinds of other, other emotional meanings, and therefore you can't really treat him like you would have treated someone else because he was once so important, and if you cut him off, then you cut off a part of your childhood, and your history.

Speaker 8: [00:10:14] Yeah, yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:10:14] Everything is mixed.

Speaker 8: [00:10:16] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:10:17] At the same time, because everything is mixed, people allow themselves to treat their family members in way that they would never treat

somebody who was outside of the family. Because I gave you, therefore I deserve, and [crosstalk 00:10:33] was there, and you don't, I mean more than just this.

Speaker 8: [00:10:36] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:10:37] So that's one thing this time that you don't have.

Speaker 8: [00:10:42] It is.

Esther Perel: [00:10:45] Does he know the risk you take? Not the business risk you take. The emotional risk you take.

Speaker 8: [00:10:57] Do you think that you know?

Speaker 9: [00:10:58] I think so. I mean, I, I think that, [00:11:00] you know, I've learned your story, and I've been witness to a lot of this, like nothing that is being revealed right now is a surprise to me.

Speaker 8: [00:11:09] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I mean, I don't think that you would leave.

Speaker 9: [00:11:15] Right, I mean, I think that's kind of where, why we are where we are is I, I came in, and I gave full commitment from the beginning, trust was, was given and earned and all of that, and it's kind of maintained. In think that that's why this is even a possibly. [crosstalk 00:11:33].

Speaker 8: [00:11:33] So I think that for me, the way that I see this as being successful is if we can create this thing, and have sort of like a template that can be replicated. But if we do what we've done in the previous things that we've done, like, that is going to be really hard. That's why I'm [00:12:00] always telling you, like, you know, like, we really need to have a structure and a system, 'cause we c-, we can't, like tie ourselves so intimately to what we're gonna do-

Speaker 9: [00:12:12] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:12:12] Because then we'll never have the trust that somebody else is going to be able to do it as good as we do. And there's no way that we can grow. Are we really thinking, like, big picture with this? Like, with this... Because I'm actually a little worried that this is not going to be enough income for you to live.

Speaker 9: [00:12:32] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:12:32] Is this gonna be enough, like, these plans for, like, getting married, and like, the family thing, like, is it gonna be enough? And can we get out of the way to think that way?

Esther Perel: [00:12:43] Let me just ask you something. There's a moment every time you describe the past where a surge of sadness appears. What is it that you're touching on?

Speaker 8: [00:13:06] [00:13:00] I wonder what it is. I don't know. I think that it's because, uh, you know, work has been... 12 years is a long time. And, uh, you know, I'm not married, in part because of work. Anymore. So I feel like that was like a failure that I had in my life. But I think for me, things have shifted, where that energy that I had at the beginning, like, that is not there anymore. It's really not.

Esther Perel: [00:13:38] But you're also telling me that the men leave the business because they fall in love, and they have more important things to do, while you stay working. And you just told him that you want to make sure that he's got enough income this year so that he can marry.

Speaker 8: [00:13:57] Well, because I know that's something that you want to [00:14:00] do.

Esther Perel: [00:14:00] Yes, but basically you're left thinking, I'm the one working, while the man follow their hearts. You didn't say that.

Speaker 8: [00:14:09] Hm.

Esther Perel: [00:14:12] I just heard that. I mean, I sense you on the one hand, super excited about this new venture. And at the same time, there's a way in which you would like to do it differently.

Speaker 8: [00:14:24] Yeah, for sure.

Esther Perel: [00:14:26] And then there's a way in which this applies to him. That's the conversation that you just started.

Speaker 8: [00:14:33] Yeah, um, well, I think that differently I mean we have this idea, but we don't have to do all of it, just us. You know? Which is what I did when we first opened the restaurant. And I think when I did that, I really sacrificed a lot of things. Um, and maybe that's [00:15:00] the sadness that is there, you know? That there was so much that was put on hold. Because I feel like I didn't have a choice. Like, this is something that I had to make work. Whether I knew how to do it or not.

Esther Perel: [00:15:16] And a part of what you're talking about is how do I, how do I do a new business venture that still gives me room to also pursue my personal life?

Speaker 8: [00:15:27] Yes. But not just for myself. But for this partner too. 'Cause I know that that is important.

Esther Perel: [00:15:36] So you're now protective of his upcoming marriage too?

Speaker 8: [00:15:42] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:15:42] Did I just hear that?

Speaker 9: [00:15:44] That's what I'm hearing.

Speaker 4: [00:15:45] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:15:46] I saw your face.

Speaker 4: [00:15:48] [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:15:48] And just to be clear, there's no upcoming marriage. There's also not... No, no upcoming marriage-

Speaker 4: [00:15:55] But I think it's-

Esther Perel: [00:15:56] Meaning you know the price of sacrifice.

Speaker 4: [00:15:58] Yes.

Esther Perel: [00:15:58] And you're trying to tell him, [00:16:00] I've already gone through this.

Speaker 4: [00:16:01] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:16:02] I'm more experienced, and I'm older than you, and I know what it's like to do ev-, to throw yourself and do, as you just said. I would throw myself full-

Speaker 4: [00:16:10] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:16:11] Because-

Speaker 4: [00:16:12] And I've seen it [crosstalk 00:16:13].

Esther Perel: [00:16:12] It's a high price to pay.

Speaker 4: [00:16:14] Yeah, yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:16:15] Okay.

Speaker 4: [00:16:15] I think that's what it is. And I think, you know, that I just think that is unsustainable. Because I experienced it in a lot of levels.

Esther Perel: [00:16:25] So what are some of the most important learnings for you that you want to make sure-

Speaker 9: [00:16:30] I feel like-

Esther Perel: [00:16:32] You take with you?

Speaker 9: [00:16:33] I feel like for the lifestyles that we want, where we're a little bit more removed, it's like, what we're trying to do with this business is create something that is a business, not a job. Not a, not a every day hustle. It's a, it's a thing that kind of lives and breathes and you know, kind of runs itself.

Speaker 8: [00:16:50] Yeah.

Speaker 9: [00:16:51] Um.

Speaker 8: [00:16:55] I, you know, I think one of... One concern that I have is [00:17:00] that, you know, you and I both, like, really, like, identify with what we do. Like, as a, like an identity. Like, like, we live and breathe and all of that. And I know that for a long time, when I was doing that at work, um, just, you know, it, it got to a point where it was really exhausting.

Speaker 9: [00:17:24] Mmh. I mean, literally, you know, I wear the brand-

Speaker 8: [00:17:28] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 9: [00:17:29] On my body at all times kind of thing. And I identify with that. So the success of the brand is my success. Not the, not the financial success of the business so much as it is the perception [crosstalk 00:17:42].

Speaker 8: [00:17:43] The perception of success, yeah.

Speaker 9: [00:17:44] Yeah, the perception of success is something that's really valuable to me. And I think it probably stems from, you know, my pursuit of, of ventures that were alternative to my, my family, and I wanted to say like, look, I can be different and still be a success. [00:18:00] And success looks like this. Um, and I guess-

Esther Perel: [00:18:03] And I haven't sold my soul. And I am still an artist. And I didn't just become a business guy.

Speaker 9: [00:18:10] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:18:10] That pursues the money.

Speaker 9: [00:18:13] Exactly.

Esther Perel: [00:18:14] And all of that is in there too, right?

Speaker 9: [00:18:15] Absolutely.

Esther Perel: [00:18:17] What's your girlfriend's view on the whole thing?

Speaker 9: [00:18:21] She, I think she's supportive in that she wants to be supportive. She has a much more nine to five, you know, straight laced gig, and you know, this, my work, and my passion pulls me from away from her. And, um-

Esther Perel: [00:18:41] And you work with another woman.

Speaker 9: [00:18:43] Right, and I work with another [crosstalk 00:18:44].

Esther Perel: [00:18:43] And so how does all of that...

Speaker 9: [00:18:45] And another woman that has a lot in common with me, in all of those th-, ways that my girlfriend, it's a little bit of a foreign language to her. And I try to do kind of the bare minimum to keep her satisfied as far [00:19:00] as being a part of that. But a lot of times she's kind of a, a bystander, more than she is an active part

of it. She comes, she supports events, she is there, and she's lovely, and people love her, and to be around her. But, you know, she, she'll tune out when I start talking, talking about, you know, spirits and cocktails, and ingredients and things like that. It's, it's foreign. And the same way that I am with, with what she does.

Esther Perel: [00:19:25] Unless you serve her one.

Speaker 9: [00:19:27] Right. She's happy when I serve her one.

Speaker 8: [00:19:30] [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:19:30] She does, she does appreciate that.

Esther Perel: [00:19:32] Do you feel a tension there?

Speaker 9: [00:19:34] I do. Yeah. I do. Um, even on this trip, I'm out in New York eating, drinking, having a good time with someone that's not her. We don't get a ton of time away from work, and so, you know, I do feel like there's, she's definitely jealous of this situation right now. 'Cause it, she doesn't understand that [inaudible 00:19:58] I'm away. And, and [00:20:00] I usually explain my life to people as, you know, I've got 90, 90% of it is work that I love.

And so I'm, I'm happy to do 90% of it. And then the other 10%, I have to divide that time between my family, my friends, her, you know, everybody gets that sliver. And I give it fully. Um, but that means that everybody's left with two and a half percent. You know, a lot of the most important people in my life are left with a sliver.

Speaker 8: [00:20:26] This is how ridiculous he is. [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:20:27] But I think about it all the time, and I-

Esther Perel: [00:20:31] And they're all hungry.

Speaker 9: [00:20:33] They're all hungry. And I, and that's what I, I've got to find the balance in because the only way to get out of that, you know. I am looking at a future. I would like to get married; I would like to have a family, and I have no idea what that looks like with a person that gives 90% of their time to this other thing.

Esther Perel: [00:20:49] Doesn't look good.

Speaker 9: [00:20:50] That's why I'm, you know, that's why I'm 36 and haven't been married. Uh, 'cause I've chosen myself or whatever it is [inaudible 00:20:59].

Speaker 8: [00:20:58] Well, and I think the [00:21:00] reason why I'm always bringing this up is because I had to make that choice for myself at some point. Is like, okay, we are open this many days, and then I have my kids this many days. So how do I make my schedule work so I can actually be present for my kids? 'Cause if I am not, somebody else is going to have to, and then my relationship with them is not gonna be what I would like for it to be. But I had to make that choice. And I think I didn't make that choice earlier when I was married, and I chose work. So I-

Esther Perel: [00:21:34] So you see him, and you see, been there, done that.

Speaker 8: [00:21:36] Yeah. I think so.

Esther Perel: [00:21:38] Do you have a personal life?

Speaker 8: [00:21:42] I-I-I try to have a personal life, yeah. But it's [crosstalk 00:21:43].

Esther Perel: [00:21:44] And they get two and a half percent? Or they get some more? [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:21:46] It's more like [inaudible 00:21:50] percent.

Speaker 8: [00:21:46] So whatever I meet somebody. [laughs] I say I have my kids Sunday through Thursday, so, like, I don't compromise that time with them. [00:22:00] And then I have Thursdays for myself. So Thursdays available, and then I work the weekends. So [crosstalk 00:22:08].

Speaker 9: [00:22:08] [crosstalk 00:22:08] sound good to you? It doesn't, okay, well, see you next week.

Speaker 8: [00:22:12] Yeah, that's, that's sort of like how it is. [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:22:17] It's a bit ironic when I ask her if she has a personal life, that she basically parses out the seven days of the week. And her day of rest is Thursday, which is the day for the boyfriend. And that that would amount to a personal life. Then of course there are the children, and they are part of her personal life, Sunday through Thursday. So there is the mother, there is the business woman, and there is a sliver for the woman.

Speaker 8: [00:22:51] Yeah, so. It's not, it's not, it's going okay, I guess.

Speaker 9: [00:22:57] But that's also kind of this... Well, I don't know. [00:23:00] Maybe we've just gotten beaten down to think it's part of this industry, but you know, the way I view it is this: like, I never interfere, and I, I... With my girlfriend's life, I am proud of her, and any opportunity that she gets to feel valued, to travel, to do anything, I never say, wait, wait, wait ever. It's great, go, do, live. I want her to have every experience that she can, and what I want in return is the same thing, that if I get an opportunity to travel to New York to eat a bunch of great food, I want immediately that to be like, oh, wow, awesome, good for you. It never feels that way for me. And I want to feel like we're cheering each other on, and, and moving forward-

Esther Perel: [00:23:43] Except that you are very clear when you say 90% of me goes to work.

Speaker 9: [00:23:47] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:23:48] And then within the 10%, she gets two.

Speaker 9: [00:23:50] Mmh.

Esther Perel: [00:23:51] So when you say I'm gonna do one more thing, it's very, it's not easy for her to say, oh, go. Go ahead. Have a great time, [00:24:00] enjoy. Because most of these things are not about her or with her.

Speaker 9: [00:24:03] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:24:04] Mmh.

Speaker 9: [00:24:05] And I-

Esther Perel: [00:24:05] And how many years has she been accepting this? Or living with this?

Speaker 9: [00:24:08] She's, we've been together for two and a half years.

Esther Perel: [00:24:11] And there's, there's no end in sight because you're about to start another business.

Speaker 9: [00:24:15] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:24:16] No, she's not happy.

Speaker 9: [00:24:17] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:24:18] It's a kind of a no brainer. It is very hard to sustain relationships in the midst of this. So, uh, she's been very patient.

Speaker 9: [00:24:29] She has.

Esther Perel: [00:24:30] And instead of, like, saying to her, I don't get your support. From when she comes, she's done but that!

Speaker 9: [00:24:36] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:24:37] She's been quite generous. And may I say, I guess you give, what did you say? There's nothing I won't do? Here's 20 hours of, of me, fully giving. I would venture to say that the best of you goes into the business, and the leftovers come home.

Speaker 9: [00:24:56] That's true.

Esther Perel: [00:24:56] You know, the quality of your conversations here when you discuss [00:25:00] pricing and aesthetics and, and locations, and all of that stuff. You're engaged, you're present, you're focused, you're interested. When you go home, you probably want to chill.

Speaker 9: [00:25:10] Right. And I think I, I defend that by saying I've, I have, as I've gotten older, I've been very clear with people that I meet, in saying this is who I am,

and I know that that, I know that that doesn't mean a whole lot. But I, I'd like to think that [crosstalk 00:25:26] attracted-

Esther Perel: [00:25:25] This is who I am, but this is what?

Speaker 9: [00:25:28] Well-

Esther Perel: [00:25:28] No, she can't be attracted to the guy who is gone-

Speaker 9: [00:25:32] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:25:32] Most of the time. Six to seven days a week, and then comes home exhausted.

Speaker 9: [00:25:38] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:25:38] What's attractive about it?

Speaker 9: [00:25:41] You're right. Nothing.

Esther Perel: [00:25:43] Sorry. [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:25:43] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:25:44] I mean, that's one piece. This. You know, it's amazing she's waiting for two and a half years. Because seriously, you're not, you're not giving there. For good reasons. Maybe you, you, you choose not to at this moment. [00:26:00] But you need to be aware of that. You can't pretend that she gets something really special for which she should be waiting to let you be gone-

Speaker 9: [00:26:08] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:26:08] You know, seven days a week. Number two is the two of you are aware that because there's the artist in you, and because there is a certain, uh, attachment to the business in which you feel very much like they reflect you. There's a part of you that has often favored how it looks more than what bill it pays. And that doesn't mean you haven't paid the bills, because you wouldn't be holding a restaurant for 12 years. You're doing fine. But that when you make choices, you often will make aesthetic choices, what they call brand choices-

Speaker 8: [00:26:47] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:26:47] More than revenue choices.

Speaker 9: [00:26:49] I'd say definitely that's more me than you. I, I feel like you're more, more practical. You've learned.

Speaker 8: [00:26:54] I've just had to learn.

Speaker 9: [00:26:55] Yeah, you learned that it-

Esther Perel: [00:26:57] Okay. So this difference is [00:27:00] useful. You can fight over it or have tensions over it, but in fact it's useful. Because she will think over the stuff you don't think about. And you will think over the stuff that she may still value, but doesn't allow herself to think about. And so you becomes, it could become really complementary. If you make it work well.

Speaker 9: [00:27:22] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:27:23] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:27:23] And it's not always a cutting it in the middle.

Speaker 8: [00:27:26] Hm.

Esther Perel: [00:27:26] You know, in hospitality, I am sure that this is a, a trade all the time, back and forth.

Speaker 8: [00:27:32] It is.

Esther Perel: [00:27:35] How much it costs, how it looks, how it tastes, it's a trade. I mean, this is the essence, one of the essences [crosstalk 00:27:42].

Speaker 8: [00:27:41] It's like balancing act, yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:27:43] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:27:43] Like you're always there.

Esther Perel: [00:27:45] Do you ever consider, you know, joining organizations where you can get input. There are, there's a lot of experience out there. And a lot of what you have had to learn, you have learned alone.

Speaker 8: [00:27:58] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:27:59] You [00:28:00] figured it out. And that works up to a point.

Speaker 8: [00:28:04] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:28:05] There's a certain growth that you want to have now that demands you're talking to people who've done things like that. You'll take what you want and you'll leave other stuff. But it looks like you need more than just the two of you.

Speaker 9: [00:28:17] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:28:17] Like mentoring.

Esther Perel: [00:28:19] Yes.

Speaker 8: [00:28:19] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:28:20] Yes. That don't have to be necessarily specifically in your industry.

Speaker 9: [00:28:25] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:28:25] You have, you need both. Those who are doing what you do and therefore know the specifics of that, but also those who doing other things, but have grown things. Have scaled things.

Speaker 8: [00:28:35] Yeah, I think scaling is really-

Esther Perel: [00:28:36] And I'll tell you one thing, just on this one. The amount of this organizations who are looking for women entrepreneurs, you, they will all have open doors. They want women. And then on top of it, foreign women, or immigrant women.

Speaker 8: [00:28:51] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:28:51] You've got everything on the cache. [laughs] Sorry, dude.

Speaker 9: [00:28:58] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:28:59] [crosstalk 00:28:59] to her for this [00:29:00] one.

They have both touched upon various other aspects of this business partnership. But the one that is glaringly present that I see the entire time I'm talking to them, is the fact that here is a immigrant Latina woman, and a white American man, younger. And that that complementarity must play a role in why they are together, or how they are together, and how people view them, and how the divisions of roles will be distributed because of the intersection with the particular backgrounds that they bring.

And it influences the way that they can relate and speak to their employees. The ones that are in the front of the [00:30:00] restaurant, the ones that are in the back. The ones that clean the tables, and the ones that are at a sink washing the dishes.

What's your attitudes towards your employees? How do you, how, how similar, different...

Speaker 9: [00:30:17] Oh. I think I'm, I love and respect where she comes from, because I've learned it, a lot of it, from her. She gives everything she can. It's her mission to make, you know, to, to provide a safe and friendly work environment. Like, al of the, all the goodness that you can put there, is something that's very important to her, and it's something that I've witnessed, and, and that I value. [crosstalk 00:30:44].

Esther Perel: [00:30:45] You have loyal people?

Speaker 8: [00:30:46] Yeah.

Speaker 9: [00:30:46] Oh, yeah.

Speaker 8: [00:30:47] Yeah. Very loyal

Esther Perel: [00:30:47] People stay.

Speaker 8: [00:30:48] Yeah. For the most part. We have a really strong core of employees. I, I think for me, um, a lot of the people that work for me are like, an [00:31:00] extension of my family, so our relationship just doesn't stop at work. Um, it's, it's a lot more energy, and a lot more investment, but I feel like, it just makes work so much more, uh, gratifying for me. 'Cause we spend so much time together.

Esther Perel: [00:31:21] Do you have a feeling that the, the staff listens more to her?

Speaker 9: [00:31:27] Uh, probably. Our existing staff, you know, I'm the manager. She's an owner. And so it always, the buck stops with her. Um, with the kitchen, who's mainly Spanish speaking, um-

Esther Perel: [00:31:42] You must learn Spanish.

Speaker 8: [00:31:48] [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:31:49] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:31:49] You must learn Spanish. If you're going to be in this business with her doing, you know, masa and tacos, you have to learn Spanish.

Speaker 9: [00:31:56] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:31:57] Like, you've learned a language of cocktails.

Speaker 9: [00:31:59] [00:32:00] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:32:00] You have to learn the language of Spanish. [laughs] Am I the first one to tell you that?

Speaker 9: [00:32:06] No, and it's something that I've, I've wanted for... But I've never put the time. It's like, it's... I've chosen to spend the 90% on things that-

Esther Perel: [00:32:19] But the 90% you can tell every employee to start to only talking to you-

Speaker 9: [00:32:23] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:32:23] You'll see how quick this is going to go. How do you think she learned English?

Speaker 9: [00:32:26] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:32:28] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:32:28] She was thrown in here. Did you speak any of this before you came? Some?

Speaker 8: [00:32:31] Uh, I knew some, yeah. I know some English, yeah.

Speaker 9: [00:32:34] She's still learning. I teach her.

Speaker 8: [00:32:36] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:32:36] Well, it's a two way street.

Speaker 9: [00:32:38] I know. [crosstalk 00:32:42].

Esther Perel: [00:32:42] If you don't, there will always be a barrier not that you can't do it, but there will always be a barrier.

Speaker 8: [00:32:51] And you could totally do it.

Esther Perel: [00:32:54] Because then when something really important has to be explained, she will have to step in to come and explain it. [00:33:00] Talking back kitchen now.

Speaker 8: [00:33:01] I th-, I think a lot of the listening for the staff, and I think, you know, this is something important for us to consider as we move into hiring new staff for this place, is that a lot of their listening of you is that you are a white man. And if we're gonna hire, like, Latin American staff, they're gonna listen to you from that place, and that's something, sometimes that is a challenge.

Speaker 9: [00:33:35] I mean, not... I mean we talked about it a little bit, but there's even, if there's respect and understanding and compassion, I can't change the fact that I'm a white man.

Speaker 8: [00:33:48] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 9: [00:33:49] And that, that, that is gonna filter [crosstalk 00:33:54]. Yeah, their listening and all of that.

Esther Perel: [00:33:57] You have a lot on your mind on this one.

Speaker 8: [00:33:58] Um, well, [00:34:00] yeah, I was just thinking that, like it just came up. Like, is that one of the reasons why you want to be partners with me? Because I can facilitate that, those conversations and those relationships?

Speaker 9: [00:34:13] Oh, I mean, I think it, it, it's a big part of that yin yang kind of situation. You know, you've made me, you've been a major part of how I've fallen in love with Latin American culture and flavors and all of that stuff, and you know that it's a genuine love that I, I'm really connected to it. But you give validity to that, and so that's why I think that this makes a good partnership-

Speaker 8: [00:34:37] That I'm bringing, like, the authenticity to it.

Speaker 9: [00:34:38] Yeah, you bring-

Speaker 8: [00:34:39] [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:34:39] And hey, when the police are called, you call me, your white guy.

Speaker 8: [00:34:43] [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:34:44] Yeah, you in business with me 'cause I'm a white guy?

Speaker 8: [00:34:45] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:34:45] Let me ask you something. Given that we are here, and that there are things that you want to discuss. Let's use this place to discuss some of these [00:35:00] things that you have wanted but have not brought up to each other.

Speaker 8: [00:35:07] Mmh.

Speaker 9: [00:35:08] Does anything come to mind for you?

Esther Perel: [00:35:09] I know that discussing the partnership agreement was a request that she wanted to address in this session. But so far we have talked about a lot of things, and we have yet to touch the partnership agreement. So we transition to this tough moment where we discuss facts, figures, and numbers.

Speaker 8: [00:35:36] I think that, I-I think we need to sit down and have an operational, you know, like an agreement on how is it gonna be, down to like the little-

Speaker 9: [00:35:49] Literally.

Speaker 8: [00:35:50] Like, yeah, literally. This is how the money's divided. This is how the work is divided. And when this happens, this how we're gonna deal with it. Like, that clear. Like-

Speaker 9: [00:36:00] [00:36:00] Right.

Speaker 8: [00:36:00] Nothing-

Esther Perel: [00:36:01] You don't have an operation agreement.

Speaker 8: [00:36:02] Right now we don't, and I don't have one with my other partner.

Speaker 9: [00:36:07] And we, and this isn't the first time we've had the, the conversation, but just like so many other things, it's like, it can be on a to-do list, but the business is gonna open in two months, and if we haven't had it done, then [crosstalk 00:36:21] everything else is gonna get in the way, and we're not, we don't want to be nit picky and cold when it comes to, you know, 50/50 on paper is one thing. A 50/50 emotionally is a different thing. Um, I am nervous of once we get down

to those, the nitty gritty that it's gonna become an offensive thing. Like, [inaudible 00:36:48] it'll be difficult, you know what I'm saying?

Speaker 8: [00:36:49] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:36:49] It will become a less relational thing. It's a contract. And a contract will have things for when things don't work out. [00:37:00] Not when they work out. And you don't need the contract. And a contract will not sure all the warmth and the love. That's not what the contract is for. The contract is actually for, for, in some way, for when, if the relationship was falling apart. But you need one. You're avoiding it because, because it, it's all about the numbers and less about who we've been for each other and what we've given each other. No, that, that's a separate story.

Speaker 8: [00:37:26] [inaudible 00:37:28] is a necessary one I think.

Speaker 9: [00:37:30] It is. And I think for me, I know that accolades are something that rarely interest you. And I think for me, something that I want is to reestablish myself as your partner in this, and not your... The vice president, and so I feel like as long as we go into this partnership saying, you know, this is us. It's not you. It's not me. It's [00:38:00] us. And it's always us. And as long as we just stay true to that. That's one of, one of my fears. Because of the, your perception already in the town.

Esther Perel: [00:38:10] Because how long am I going to stay the devoted boy of Mrs. such and such?

Speaker 9: [00:38:16] Right. And, and that's the perception. 'Cause I know what our relationship is. She knows what our relationship is. But it, it's important to me that it's clear to everyone, not from a, not from a status standpoint, but just because there [crosstalk 00:38:34].

Esther Perel: [00:38:34] You sure there's no status involved?

Speaker 9: [00:38:36] Oh, yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:38:37] That's okay.

Speaker 9: [00:38:37] No, no, no. There, there is status involved. I shouldn't say [crosstalk 00:38:41].

Esther Perel: [00:38:40] You both have a way of underplaying the stuff that matters to you.

Speaker 8: [00:38:44] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:38:45] Because the, the [crosstalk 00:38:46], the brand, and the picture, and the image, and the, the... It matters to her. She just doesn't say it out loud be-, in case it won't happen she will be less disappointed. But of course it matters to her.

Speaker 9: [00:38:55] That's fair. I definitely, I-I, yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:38:57] And status matters to you.

Speaker 9: [00:38:59] Absolutely.

Esther Perel: [00:38:59] How many [00:39:00] years you gonna be number two?

Speaker 9: [00:39:01] Right.

Esther Perel: [00:39:01] And that needs to change. You need to be able to both be more honest about that together. Is, there's nothing shameful about it.

Speaker 9: [00:39:10] Right. Um.

Esther Perel: [00:39:13] Go ahead.

Speaker 8: [00:39:13] No, I'm just thinking about what you said. I think this honesty thing is a hard thing for me. Yeah, I don't want to justify it as, like, a survival thing, but I think that's what I strive for in this partnership. I want to be able to be honest.

Speaker 9: [00:39:34] Me too. I want to be honest too because I feel like-

Esther Perel: [00:39:38] Define it.

Speaker 9: [00:39:38] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:39:41] I want to feel a true partnership. I want to be able to tell you when I think I'm being taken advantage of, even when it's wrapped in this beautiful narrative of we're family. You know, and I, I'm really on the one hand talk about boundaries, but on the other hand, we have a kind of a culture in [00:40:00] which boundaries are there, but they're often s-, cr-crossed because we care. Because we are family. Because-

Speaker 8: [00:40:06] [crosstalk 00:40:06] how we justify-

Esther Perel: [00:40:07] Yes, we justify. We have a whole way of basically, constantly trespassing on the boundaries, so honesty is what, specifically? For both of you? I think you're in a great place, by the way. Even the very fact that you're stating it like this. So keep going.

Speaker 8: [00:40:24] What is honesty for you? In, in this?

Speaker 9: [00:40:28] I think I, I work hard, and I like to be seen for the hard work. I guess that's, that's a really important thing for me, is getting, working for the credit and then receiving the credit. Never having anything fall through the cracks. Did you know, did you see that I did that? Did you tell me you saw that you did that? Then you then tell me that you appreciated it? And I, and I feel like that, that's where I live. You know?

Speaker 8: [00:40:58] Um, okay. [00:41:00] So what I would say to that is that I, I might not be able to catch everything that you do and recognize you for it. So if I don't, then don't take it personal, 'cause it's not intended to be personal.

Esther Perel: [00:41:14] And why not? Because you don't do it for you?

Speaker 8: [00:41:18] Is that why? [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:41:19] I just threw that out.

Speaker 9: [00:41:21] Is that why?

Speaker 8: [00:41:21] No. What I was thinking is that because I'm doing something else, and I might miss it. Right? Because am I occupied with other things.

Esther Perel: [00:41:31] Then the same way that he needs to learn Spanish, you need to become more attentive.

Speaker 8: [00:41:35] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:41:35] Not just say, if I don't, don't take it personally.

Speaker 8: [00:41:39] Fair enough.

Esther Perel: [00:41:39] It's, I will try to be more attentive to this.

Speaker 8: [00:41:43] Okay. I'll try to be more attentive to this. [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:41:47] This is also-

Esther Perel: [00:41:48] It's a language too.

Speaker 8: [00:41:50] Yeah, I get it.

Esther Perel: [00:41:50] You understand?

Speaker 8: [00:41:50] Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:41:51] It's a language too. Now of course you will miss, and he doesn't always speak the language either. But it's different to say if I don't do it, don't take it personally, [00:42:00] versus, you know what? I get this is important.

Speaker 8: [00:42:03] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:42:03] And I will make an extra effort.

Speaker 8: [00:42:05] Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:42:09] So honesty?

Speaker 8: [00:42:12] Uh, so I think for me honesty is about, yeah, being able to say exactly what I need. Like, this is what I can do for this business, and this is what I

cannot do for the business. Just, like, being able to say that. And not be judged that I am not doing enough.

Esther Perel: [00:42:32] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:42:32] Because I think that's where I live. I'm not doing enough. I'm not doing enough. Um.

Esther Perel: [00:42:39] Yours is I'm not doing enough. His is I'm doing so much, does anybody notice?

Speaker 8: [00:42:47] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:42:47] Those are the sob stories.

Speaker 9: [00:42:49] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:42:51] Those are key pieces that color the expectations that you bring to relationships. I think they carry you in your life [00:43:00] as well. Generally the same narratives that we bring to work, we bring to life, to love, to family, they circulate in the same way. See, and part of why you may fail to recognize what he does is because you're not even busy with the recognition. You're just busy with, am I doing enough?

Speaker 8: [00:43:21] Um, I think there is some sort of like, shame thing, that comes up, in the recognition of it, right? Like-

Esther Perel: [00:43:32] Yep.

Speaker 8: [00:43:32] Who am I to say, like, I've made it, or-

Esther Perel: [00:43:35] Yep.

Speaker 8: [00:43:37] Or, like, this is really great.

Esther Perel: [00:43:38] Yep.

Speaker 8: [00:43:39] So anyways-

Esther Perel: [00:43:40] Ah, I would love for... No, no don't jump over this so quick.

Speaker 8: [00:43:43] [laughs]

Esther Perel: [00:43:46] I think you're right on the mark.

Speaker 8: [00:43:51] Yeah, I don't know why.

Esther Perel: [00:43:52] Do we know where that's from?

Speaker 8: [00:43:53] I don't know where that's from. [laughs] Do you [00:44:00] know where that... [laughs] Um, let me see if I can see it.

Esther Perel: [00:44:06] It's usually from the historical back kitchen.

Speaker 8: [00:44:12] Um.

Esther Perel: [00:44:14] It's usually [foreign language 00:44:17].

Speaker 8: [00:44:21] Um, oh, gosh, I don't know. I mean, it, it's probably going down to yeah, mom and dad's, you know, their breakup, and the way that we were raised. You know?

Esther Perel: [00:44:40] Say more.

Speaker 8: [00:44:46] Um. Mom and dad were a couple. But they were not married, and then I was born, and then he was kind of like, playing around with somebody else, and then he left mom, and then got this other woman pregnant, and got married to that [00:45:00] other woman. So like, he didn't choose us. It was always them. Maybe that's, that's what it is.

Esther Perel: [00:45:13] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 8: [00:45:17] So I've liked, worked hard enough... [laughs] To show him or to show whoever that, um, that [inaudible 00:45:30], like, that I was worthy enough to be chosen. I think that's it.

Esther Perel: [00:45:39] Yep.

Speaker 8: [00:45:41] And I think I do that enough.

Esther Perel: [00:45:43] Yep.

Speaker 8: [00:45:44] Can you see it?

Speaker 9: [00:45:46] Oh, yeah.

Speaker 8: [00:45:47] I see it.

Speaker 9: [00:45:54] I struggle with it as your partner because I [00:46:00] see, like, so clearly what I've worry, what I worry you don't see. In that, in that you have so much to be proud of, and that you are so successful as a human being, not, not, not a, not even as a restaurateur.

Esther Perel: [00:46:15] You know, to fight for the, the recognition of your self-worth, but you don't know how to receive it.

Speaker 8: [00:46:20] No, I don't.

Esther Perel: [00:46:20] So this is the gift that awaits you.

Speaker 8: [00:46:29] [laughs]

Speaker 9: [00:46:31] From the little bit that I know, 'cause I'm not fully involved in everything, but it seems like there's a constant kind of... It's like an, uh, like you were

saying, like, the, like a TV show almost. There's, there's drama and happiness and disappointment and all of this stuff going on at all times. It's like this, you know, it's, it's always never ending.

Esther Perel: [00:46:53] How many seasons do telenovelas last?

Speaker 9: [00:46:58] This one's going strong. This one's been picked up [00:47:00] for another, another season.

Esther Perel: [00:47:03] So what is this telenovela? She has a long history of disappointed relationships with men who let her down. And he enters a business partnership realizing that he's the next man who has to prove to her on some level that he will not disappoint her like all the others have. And this is where the taqueria enters.

Speaker 10: Esther Perel is a bestselling author, speaker, and host of the podcast, Where Should We Begin. To learn more about Esther Perel's world, to sign up for her newsletter, or to apply to be on the podcast, go to estherperel.com/howswork. How's Work is produced by Magnificent Noise for Gimlet and Esther Perel Productions.

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And the Executive Producers of How's Work are Esther Perel and Jesse Baker.

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