

How's Work? with Esther Perel

Season 1: Episode 7 - Stuck in a Job, For Years

Esther: 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.

Sister 1: Very nice to meet you. Yeah, I'm glad. I'm, see, I'd never, I didn't, I didn't necessarily think it'd be us on

Esther: the couch, but,

Sister 1: but that works.

Esther: She roped you in.

Sister 1: I was like, Oh, what did you think when I said it? Um, my thought was, I don't know if I want anybody to know how it helps. This relationship is at work. And I was like, ah. I think she tried to get me out of this job.

Esther: In this session we meet two women who don't work together, but to have known each other for more than 40 years because they grew up in the same household. They are sisters. It is the younger sister who reached out on behalf of the older sister because she was tired of hearing her vent and complain about how stuck she is. In a job where she's been for more than two decades and the very younger sister was also tired because the sheer volume of advice that she's been giving her over the years has just fallen flat. And in the end, the two of them are on parallel process, stuck and helpless.

I just, I feel continually undermined. The child has always been that

Sister 1: place where I've been needed in. I feel important.

Esther: A lot of the people that

Sister 1: work for me are like an extension of my family.

Esther: There's no doubt. That your emotional and relational diary comes with you to work. Imagine going to work every day and in a very busy place

Sister 1: and no one will make eye contact with you. I mean, it feels like a breakup.

Esther: It doesn't feel

so how's work.

And what's the age difference between teachers in a day for years and a day and

Sister 1: a

Esther: day makes it, that day's a significant,

Sister 1: the days. You know what's funny? It is significant because I think she felt like I took over her birthday and took over her the spotlight on her. You'd probably like the fact that you had to be born on my birthday, I believe is what they said. And, um, but she came the day after and yeah, I have those moments. And, but that's, that's due to your spotlight person. So, um, yeah, it's just, you know, personality. Hey, what's going on? And I'm just quiet and I sit back and that's always been like my personality. And in, in though, I'm sorry, I'm super emotional and I'd be like that all week, but, um. People love me. Um, and I shine. But then I get around, um, my sister and my mom, and then I just feel incompetent and I feel less than, and don't feel good enough. And I, and, and it's not until recent that I realized, okay, it's just, they want you to be better. And it's not necessarily that they, um.

That they're talking down and belittling you or think badly of you. It's just you could do better. So sometimes the way things come out don't always sound that way.

Esther: Yeah. So when you see a lot of people love me or people love me, or even my sister and my mother loved me and I'm sitting in, I'm thinking, is this a situation where everybody loves you more than you love yourself? First of all, and that thought and feeling is part of the voice that says, you can't do it. Don't bother. Stay where you are.

Sister 1: It's safer here

Esther: and you've been in the same job for

Sister 1: 23 years. When I started, it's the company was smaller. The mother owned the company, her daughter, and was working there. And as time grew, you know, because it was smaller, the boss's boundaries weren't always in a professional tact. So

Esther: he said an understatement.

Sister 1: Yes. So in the last five years, she has introduced all of her, her children in as executives and part owners of the company.

Esther: You're the only person in the executive level that is not a family member.

Sister 1: I am not an executive level. I'm actually, I'm a step below.

Esther: Is that because only family members can be exactly.

Sister 1: Executives

Esther: and who does the work?

Sister 1: I have done a lot of it. An absolute lot of the work. On very confident days. I can say that I'm the one that helped keep that company together. They're gone on vacations. The trust was there that I could run the whole thing and, and I would.

Esther: And are you properly recognized for that compensated and recognized?

Sister 1: No. Only inconvenient moments when they need me to do something else.

Esther: We need something from you. They first preface it with a compliment,

Sister 1: of course. So, yeah, you know, we need you, you know, you, you know how to do this. Um.

Esther: It isn't just her lack of self worth that is at the root of her being stuck. It is part of a dynamic with the owner of the company, with the powers to be, to compliment somebody and make them feel unique, indispensable. Irreplaceable is Diller of power. It's so seductive as a way of saying only you when you grappled with a chronic lack of sense of self worth. This is irresistible and this is part of the hook of her stuckness that I'm beginning to observe from the beginning of the session.

If we had a productive session today, do you think we would land on the side of how do you make what you have better? Or we wouldn't land on the side of. How do I extricate myself? Do you have an idea of where you want to be?

Sister 1: My fear is that we'd land on the side of how do I make it better?

My ultimate want

is to free myself and just really be okay to be happy, but. It's always, the job has always been that place where I've been needed in and I F I feel important. Okay. So I stick to it,

Esther: but then there's a

Sister 1: part of me that's like, I might just be happy working in Nordstroms if he'd better than the stress I'm getting here. And not that there's anything wrong with working at a department store, it's just. I know I have potential to be so much better, but then there's a fear of not and just failing and just failing

and I'm scared to fail.

Esther: But then you never know if you will succeed. I do. Yeah. So many things are swirling through my head as I listened to her, including the emphasis about being needed. And it is the experience that often people have when they don't feel lovable. I won't be loved, but I will be needed instead. And that will give me a sense of relevance. So when she starts to talk about I could be better, or I could be happier, these are actually words that for her. Take her out of the narrow track of being needed and more into a language that involves a sense of self love. And I don't usually put such emphasis on those words because they're so overused these days. But for her, they actually mean something very unique. I hear you loud and clear. We will make sure. That we do not land on the side of how do you make better what you have. Partly because I'm sure everybody else has already helped you with that. You must be getting advice all the time because you often are upset and complain a lot, and so people must be giving you all kinds of advice and it's not helpful. So I'm going

to try not to give you advice because the fact is that you are sharp and you know everything. And here you have a job that tells you what they need from you. They articulated and there is something that has been really good and safe for you, but it has turned, and at this point it becomes, every time you look at it, you're not seeing all what you're doing. You're saying. Or what you're not doing. Right. And so you can't even say, I like where I am. I love the work I do. Which by the way, you could go do somewhere else and make twice as much tomorrow morning because you good. Is the family black? No. And what is their cultural, religious, ethnic background?

Sister 1: Um. Yeah, just white family,

Esther: you know, as if you know something, but things black, you know, something, you don't know much of anything. But, um, what I'm saying is you're the only person that in the family and you're not from the same community and they leave you the entire institution. So you're good.

Can we establish that not just. I do what they need me to do.

Sister 1: You good? Great. Right?

Esther: You run an entire institution. So is that the baseline from which we are going to start?

Sister 1: Yeah, it's fine.

Well, I mean it is. It's true. And I, and that's another part too, is that I, I S I've stopped trying, which is actually slowly killing me. Yeah, my creativity's down. My thoughts are down. My, I have, um, I bake cookies and everyone loves the cookies, so I have a business idea, but there is this whole thing in dynamic that happens when it comes to like self-esteem, feeling like I can do it, not feeling like I incapable. And then when I, by the time I get off work, I just want to crash and my brain shuts down. My body just starts to like, we're done. And before you know it, I'm, I'm knocked out or I just, I just don't want to move. So

Esther: the part of you that says, I'm done, how does it speak to you? Don't even bother. You can't do it.

Sister 1: It's, it's, it's just negative. You know? I'm like, your sister's younger than you and she's doing way better than you. So all of that is, that's where I'm saying like, I have really lost motivation. I just sit with

Esther: it. You're going to get depressed. Right? It's not just that you're going to be not motivated, you're going to get

Sister 1: the PR.

Esther: Right. Okay. So to me, that's a piece of what we want to address and then see how you continue that at home, but you're being dragged down so you're not acting here, you're not working. You kind of understand still. But you're not moving into your own passions because you're afraid and then you become immobilized.

Then your sister tries to move the rock, but it's like Sisyphus, you know, she pulls to say push as a person, and then when she arrives at the top, it goes down and then she gets frustrated with you and then you feel you can't talk to her and then you think there's nobody I can talk to. And then you go in, you close up even more, and then she feels like, you know, she starts to have kind of survivor guilt. She feels like she can't be really successful because she feels guilty about the fact that things go well for her and not for you. That a bit of the story,

Sister 1: it's accurate for me.

That's awkward for me.

Esther: The reason that the advice that people keep giving her all the time is not helpful is not because it's bad advice. It's because there is a dynamic and the dynamic is the power of the helpless. The power of the helpless is the person who is down the despondent stuck that enlists and activates. Everybody around them to tell them what to do in order to improve the situation. And then their power is the one that defeats such great ideas that everybody else has come with. And in the end, they managed to make the other people feel as helpless with them as they feel vis-a-vis their own situation. That classic parallel process, I can't emphasize it enough. And anyone here who has had members in their families who were depressed, who went down, who were frozen, immobilized, stuck and who have tried to swirl around them for years, telling them what to do. Have you tried this? If you've done that in the end, the people who are supposedly the competent, resourceful ones and the feeling just as flat and just as helpless as the person that they're trying to lift, and that is a real perverse reversal of power.

That's what I'm imagining happens. It's like instead of this unit that can be so resourceful and where you could just generate so much energy together, it becomes the four years in one day. It's a combination of competition and envy and guilt and all the different dynamic. I don't even know where mom fits in because there's three women, I imagine. Is mama part of the triangle

Sister 1: mostly her triangle? Not so much mine.

Esther: Okay. Where do we put mom in this story? Give me her lines.

Sister 1: They're hiring me over here. They're hiring over there. The county's hiring, they're doing this. Um, and we're always talking about the latest diet and how to lose weight. So what I've, I feel like I'm always in this pattern of just not feeling good

Esther: enough. And when you would, your sister. The

Sister 1: same and when you, as far as feeling like not good enough

Esther: and where are the places at work, you do have moments when you feel I own this. Yeah. I'm imagining because you are so good at what you do, that there must be many situations at work where you actually experienced the confidence.

Sister 1: Well, everyone comes to me for everything and. That feels good. But the odd thing is, is that before there was never a promise to keep my job and it felt like it was ready to slip away. And I think I felt like I had a fight. And then this time she pretty much told me, you're a value. I want to keep you so I'm not going to let you go. Other people might have to go, but you're not going. And it might be where part of me, where I'm just like, I. You told me where you want me then cause I don't get it and if it's horrible enough and I don't like it, no, then I'm going to have to make some decisions. And this is where I felt like this is perfect timing

Esther: though. We're going to make decisions

Sister 1: on your own,

Esther: right? I mean that it is really what you want. You want to feel like you drive this

and. There's no way you won't be scared

and there's no way that she hasn't been scared or me or anybody. This idea that you have to be confident first. So that you can start something or try something next. I think the confidence comes from trying it, shaking, getting help, trying a little more, and that's the way it's going to happen. So I think instead of fighting your fear, we're going to invite it in first and foremost. First of all, that fear may have some good side to it. It makes you more cautious. We're not going to just think the whole fear is one negative drill, but we're not going to imagine that this is going to happen when it becomes so intolerable. Because what will make you ill is if you don't do anything.

Sister 1: It's already started.

Esther: Right? Is is this, it's that sense of despondency. It's, I'm giving up. I don't want to do anything. I have no motivation of my own. I'm surviving, but I'm not living. That's ill

tell me.

Oh, I agree. I agree. I think it just kind of hit me.

Sister 1: I always told myself I can never do like a suicide or anything crazy because I know that I have a purpose,

but when you just said that, I just realized. The, that is a type of suicide to my soul, my spirit.

Oh, I'm so glad there's not mirrors in here, so you can see what this face looks like. My goodness. Oh, sorry.

Esther: There's nothing to be sorry about.

Here's the thing.

If you've been walking with a cane

today, you don't have the cane. You realize how much weight was put on it and how much you got used to having the cane and your job is the cane. But also how much it prevented you from actually holding your own pride. Your posture is your prize. I have never met somebody who left a place after thinking about it for years the way you do and stood to regret it never, and it suddenly feels like they're moving. Their body opens up. Air comes in lightness, dread as well, on occasion, but at least dread and fear is part of taking risks, but it's not like they're frozen stuck then, or what you call the suicide of the soul.

It's important for me to normalize her fear. She's about to do something that she's never done before. She's being employed, and the transition from being employed to becoming freelance is a very big transition. But I'm also trying to tell her. What is being stuck. Being stuck or being frozen is being in a state of contraction. That's what happens when fear grips us. Your shoulders go up, your chest tightens, you get the knot in the stomach, and that contraction doesn't allow you to think or to open up or to breathe. So I'm giving it to her in the physical translation, a birdie that opens up. Up that the shoulders open up, the chest opens up, and that is what I'm talking to her about, the breathing metaphor that she can experience physically and that she will experience emotionally and mentally.

So now we need to think who is going to be your resource pool because she can't do it alone.

I certainly can't be your mom. The shaking. It says it all to shit in your head. Xerox who? Who had the resources, four or five people who are going to become your witnesses to whom you say, I'm going to go on this. Can I count on you? Whatever, to give me advice to help me find resources to vent to if I need to cry too, if I need to. I just need a few people who are going to accompany me on this road and they don't have to be your closest people. They can be people at church that you think that person,

Sister 1: just accountability buddies.

Esther: What did you call them?

Sister 1: Accountability buddies.

Esther: Let me try to say that in English. Accountability buddies.

Sister 1: Yes, like accountability,

Esther: but yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes. I understood what it says. I just couldn't get to them.

It's a little bit, you got that. Do you know what they stand for? No, I think I have like three or four. Okay. What are their names? Just first names.

Sister 1: Phyllis. CJ, PJ. I want to say Diana and Yvonne.

Esther: Great. Imagine they're here. You've gathered them Sunday afternoon, and you're going to make them an announcement and an invitation. What would you say.

Do me a favor. Stand up. You too. So they're right here and you will just stand right literally behind her as the backup. Okay? So this is the force that you're going to get from behind you, and they're all here. Your little resource group.

Sister 1: Um,

Esther: this is a theater because you're making a big declaration.

Sister 1: Well, I think the first thing I would say is, um, remember how excited I was when I was telling you what's decision I was going to make. And all of you guys have always said, do it. Scared, do it with fear. So I've decided to jump and I'm stepping out and I need your support whether I run. If I'm quiet too quiet, I'm asking for your help to call me on it because I understand it's going to be hard. I understand that.

Esther: I'm going to

Sister 1: feel like my whole support and everything that I have has been shaken. Okay.

Asking for you to be my strength. And I want to move out of the way and in the right way.

Esther: Now going to good. Go into the more detail. What do you want specifically from them? Do you want to meet them once a week? Do you want to have a call and you can always turn. So your secret force here, call sister when you want to get more ideas. She may have plenty because she did this, by the way. Remember she did what you are doing. You only see her now. She wants was shaking like you. Is that correct what I'm saying? Yeah. Yeah.

Sister 1: Every, I'm always afraid. I'm always afraid.

Esther: And this is not like you're making a statement. You have to hold yourself to what I imagined.

Sister 1: I mean, I would ask probably Phyllis for support when it came to sticking to my, my budgeting. PJ is well, cause PJ is amazing with budgets. Um. CJ, I would focus on just helping be that good spiritual eye and keeping me really grounded and focused. She's, she's a good encourage, very sweet and calm with it, and it just, you just feel lifted when I'm speaking with her. So I would ask for that support. Um. I'd also want to set a timeline so there's no backing out of it.

Esther: What do you want from Diana?

Sister 1: Uh, she's a straight shooter and she would just call bullshit immediately. Kind of slapped around a little bit and put you back together and you're like, come on

now you know who you are. Let's go. And Yvonne was another person I named, but Yvonne has already left the company. So Yvonne would be the encourager of knowing. It's so good over here on this other side, it's okay,

Esther: so you have a whole choir.

Sister 1: Yeah, and that's where I

Esther: see the idea of dates would be when.

Sister 1: I have set a six month plan is to be out of there by the end of the year. And you know, within that, that means also having some goals of being, um, having some things laid out that I am, um, consistently doing towards building the cookie company as well.

Esther: Probably. I have an idea. Imagine you do meet with all of them and you say. And need us to sit together a couple of hours today. Can you help me make a plan?

Sister 1: They would.

Esther: Can we establish that you would do that within the next two weeks?

Sister 1: Yes.

Esther: Yes. And when you're done, that will give you my personal email. Just send me direct done. Done. That's so if you want to send me more, I'm happy. But you know, it's just, I did it. I said, we made the plan, and the plan involves the accountability with the buddies so that every week you show them, I've done this, I've done this at work. You say, nothing. You basically will tell them at some point, this has been an amazing experience and I have decided that I want to try something else at this stage of my life. That is all, you don't tell them a word about whatever thoughts you have about the company. It's irrelevant. Yeah, no need. Exactly. I like that. That's a whole other phase, you know? That's just the phase that is beginning to breathe. Yeah, we can send.

Sister 1: That really floored me when you said about the, um, the suicide of the soul, because I, I wouldn't have said it just in those words, but that's really what I've been feeling for you. For a while, and I, I, I, it makes, it makes me relieved to know that you recognize it even if it's just in this moment because you can't act without knowing. I think you're going to be great. I know you're going to be great

and if you need any help with your plan and just let me know. And now I'm in the background and I'm in the background, but I'm happy to help you. I just want you to mean it and be committed to yourself and committed to being better in this way. I'll do whatever I can help you.

Esther: Yeah, I know.

Sister 1: I believe that's even something I've told Diana when she's asking me about it, like, well, what's going on? And will you say your sister does certain things? And I

was like, I wouldn't dare approach her until I've had some stability. Because I'm so inconsistent. She needs to know that I'm consistent before she starts putting her name on stuff. That's just how she works. Family or not, you know, she'll be there to support as much as possible, but I know how she works when it comes to business and so forth, and things will move when they need to move.

Esther: And I'm here

Sister 1: when you're ready in here if you need me, but I do appreciate you. Acknowledging and understanding that from a business perspective, it's better for me to have boundaries. Cause what? I don't want us to be frustrated with you because I feel like you know, my time has been mismanaged or misused. So I appreciate you acknowledging that. Yeah.

Esther: I'm also thinking, you know, there's a bit of energy that's been released right now. But we want to make sure it doesn't, it's like a balloon that you don't put a nut. And so I do think that connecting beyond your friends, also with various organizations that help women who start companies, um, and that's where you may be able to be helpful.

Sister 1: Yeah, there's a lot of resources. She's right. There's so many resources. And I think also too, that's a great way to start, um, kind of focusing your energy and your time on that kind of stuff because it keeps you in that kind of vortex of moving forward in the vortex of sailing and the vortex of what's next, what's next, what's next, because that's the whole thing about being an entrepreneur. You have to keep moving, even if you hit a block, you have to pivot and move to the next place. So I think, I think she's absolutely right. So I'll connect you.

Esther: You have six months, you're going to stay at work and you're going to enjoy the fact that work gives you a stability. And that at this point, do not have to do too much. But do you experience it as a betrayal if you stay while you're thinking about something else. No. Are we clear on that?

Sister 1: Very clear.

Esther: You are allowed to say after 20 something years in a company, I would like to try something else.

They don't have to reject you for you to reject the more.

Sister 1: Correct.

Esther: You can have a simple, healthy sense of entitlement that you've always wanted to try something else, that you know that you have a knack for the cookies and that you get tremendous joy in giving people something that makes them feel joy as well. Cookies, a joy. That's how I'm imagining right. You may want a small little shop doesn't have to be a mega thing. You will keep it at the level that suits you. Don't you know the word entrepreneur always means you have to go and scale big? No, but it will be yours and it will be about something that that you like. We don't

change the world with cookies, but. You make the day sweeter for many people, literally speaking.

So now I want you to imagine something. We're three years later and I happened to run into you and I see on the street and I'm going, Hey. I've been meaning to ask you all these years, what happened at that time when we met the last time, you were quite stuck and wondering how you were going to extricate yourself and talking about this very powerful image that that shook you even when you talked about the suicide of the soul and that this was really a rescue mission for your own soul. What happened? What did you do. So as we begin to breathe into open her body physically, I also want her to open and expand her horizon, but not by imagining herself in the future. But by actually meeting her. In the future in this kind of future projection. I meet the person at their arrival, at their destination, what they wanted to do, they have actually done, and now we're going to go backwards and see what were the different building blocks that led them. To that place. I locate them in that place. You know, they're living in a different city. They've cut their hair, they look different. She's region, she's, she's rigid because she's living the life she wants to live. And now tell me, how did you do this and who was there for you and when we do the important turning points. And do you remember when you told me back then that you never thought you could do this? This is amazing. Look at you. And you create the ability to look on the inside between one part of me and the other part of me, but from the place of the arrival point rather than from the place where you feel contracted and stuck. That's the kind of future projection that I like to work with a lot.

What happened? What did you do. Did you ever meet with this gang of, uh, accountability

Sister 1: buddies,

Esther: buddies call and get that point?

Sister 1: Um, yeah. Cause we actually sat down and set up a meeting. Had some very good supportive, intelligent people around me.

Esther: What did you create actually? How did it, what did you actually,

Sister 1: we created a a four plan, an exit plan, basically

Esther: I'd like to find, did you start the company literally when you left or a.

Sister 1: Um, I S started three months, um, in, uh, before, um, I left. Um, I started going to the different market nights. I started going to different companies. I actually got more active with putting the name out there with lots of friends and family and people just being excited about it. There's a lot of word of mouth, so people knew where to find me. On the various market nights.

Esther: And so you began by selling in markets.

Sister 1: Yeah, every single week. It just, the line started getting bigger for the cookies. Finally, we got to a point where I needed a place to actually make the cookies, so it became a small storefront. And as we're moving forward, our next goal here is we're getting ready to actually look into franchising because there's people that are wanting to have it as well.

Esther: Incredible. Do you remember the moment when you knew this is actually going to happen? That you said, this is really, this is real now.

Sister 1: but I walked out with that last box. I put it in the back of my Prius.

Intro home. I knew there was no turning back.

Esther: What kind of moment was it for you?

Sister 1: It was like running off of a cliff in Paris. Ellie, scary. It's so free falling. How here? Trusting the WID.

Not sure how it's going to land,

but we'll land.

We'll have to trust the process. Yeah.

Esther: Take another deep breath.

What are some of the other things that you had to let go off and things have really moved.

When you think about, and I don't know if it has to do with how you grew up, but I often think that we, we do bring a certain history with us. You know, what happened to you or what did you experience growing up that made thinking of you so much more fraught.

Sister 1: The, the relationship between my mom has been a constant, I believe. I, I feel like I had revelation that she, she was just young. She was 19 so she was not ready for kids. My father had already been a father

Esther: and she resented and somewhat having a child and being trapped.

Sister 1: She will not admit that. I

Esther: know I just said it as bluntly as one kid.

Sister 1: She will not say that. Um, and that is what I feel that that was my revelation for myself. Can

Esther: I ask you something? How similar is your relationship with your mother to your relationship with your boss?

Sister 1: Similar. Because I'm always looking to please them instead. And that's the part where like I just realized like it's just, it's my healthy, I'm trapped in this, this thing.

Esther: And how similar is the burst to the mother?

Sister 1: I watched the boss and her daughter's dynamic and it's constant and I get trapped in that as well.

Esther: So the two mothers are not that different. And you end up acting not too differently to your mother and to your bus.

Sister 1: Well, yeah. It gets kind of stuck in that same kind of relationship.

Esther: Okay. Okay. She

Sister 1: just quiet won't speak. I mean, it wasn't until, I don't know, the last maybe eight years or so that I've decided to have somewhat of a

Esther: voice.

Sister 1: And Oh, she couldn't, she did not like that at all.

Esther: Now you're talking about your mom,

Sister 1: right? My mom, once I started speaking up for myself, she didn't like that, and then that's where I think you started seeing more of. My mother kind of guilty me, shame me. Bullying verbally in a sense. I don't like to use the word bullying, but I understand.

Esther: What does she say

Sister 1: is bullying if she pounces on her, if she knows that if she were to speak to me, I would disengage. She and I feel like only a bully would do that. Only a bully would attack. The perceivably

Esther: weaker thing is that she's not different. It's not that she has a preferential treatment, it's that you have basically through your own responses, shaped the change of her behavior. Absolutely. But otherwise you would both get the same treatment. Oh, definitely.

Sister 1: She's always been the one that's like, no, she's been the kid that like, you know, I want to do this. Right. And she, she goes and she does it and you know, no one she probably shouldn't have or. You may say, here's the boundary, but I'm going to push it a little bit. And that's been her. Me. I'm like, Oh, there's the boundary. Um, uh, you know, like, Oh, I see. But I, I won't, I don't really go that near. I'll walk right up and, but I will never cross it. And that, that's always been my thing. But

Esther: she was

Sister 1: like, get out of my way. People coming through what a party dress, you know, you're like, Oh. Yeah. So that's, that's the difference,

Esther: which is exactly why I said, I don't want you to just come close to that boundary today and then leave here and lose it. Right. You just gave me the image for this. You come close to it, you'd kind of hover, but then you walk back.

Sister 1: Yeah. So that's, that's the difference. Clearly there's, there's a lot behind the scenes I think with my mom and, and myself. And then even with their relationship gets in ours.

Esther: This is a few systems here, right? I mean, you really drawing the system between you and your mother, your sister, and your mother, the two of you, but also how similar is your relationship with the mother of the company, which is your big boss and you, and how similar that relationship is to the one that you have with your mother. Yeah. We often bring our family models to work. You don't like it? You just saw it. What did you just see?

Sister 1: I also get trapped in a spot to where, um, the boss's daughter will call her my supervisor instead. So, um. She has a tendency to just fight, fight, fight, fight, fight, and that it, it puts me in a situation. Here's the correlation. It puts me in a situation where I feel I have to make peace between the two and be the mediator and, and make sense of what was there or

Esther: in your boss and your supervisor. Correct. The way that you do between your mother and you see. Exactly. Interesting.

Sister 1: Exactly. And I'm growing exhausted of that as well.

Esther: So you exhausted and at the same time you, you get to Doost because if mom comes to talk to you about your sister, on the one hand you don't like it, but on the other end, those are the times when she actually seeks you out and for a change. She's not talking about you and what you're not doing. Well. So it's a bit of a, it's a seductive trap. I can imagine the same thing happens with you boss. The owner comes to talk to you about her impossible daughter, and it elevates you in a relationship where you don't feel valued enough. Right. It gives it, it bestows value on you. Importance. Is there something of that? I

Sister 1: mean, I may be, Oh, I think you make perfect sense and I actually agree with you. Everything is so toxic. And I, I, I just realized how negative I have. I am in life. I just, this is not what I want anymore. It's just I don't want anything to do with it. I, I just, I want to be happy, you know? Um, and no offense, I, I want to get to the point of happy care. I care less what you have to think. At the same time, I never, I didn't ever want to be, I always want to care cause I, I just, that's me. Who would I be if I didn't care? And there I just care about the shit. It's important. That's the difference. I do care. I just don't know. I don't choose to put my energy towards things that only serve to bring me down or other people down. Now, if you want help with working through something, I'm your friend. I care. Let's talk through it in a helpful, productive

way. But as soon as it takes a turn where I feel like you're just looking for a way to unload, I don't want to be involved in that because I don't feel energetically that that's that. That's just not the spirit that I want to be. Engaged in. Do you understand what I'm saying? I do.

Esther: Today. You feel it's the dumping version or you feel that it's different? There's a different quality today. Yeah. Here three.

Sister 1: No, I think this is edifying. I think this is growth. I think this is, this is you are trying to grow and I want to be a part of that process. There are unkind and unfortunate things that have to be said in the process of working through those things that I don't mind. It's uplifting. If we ended up here just talking trash about about her, her two bosses, I wouldn't, I would disengage because that's, there's no, there's no resolution in that. There's no growth. I

Esther: can imagine because you've been there 20 something years that your credibility's thin. Just so you know. That's part of what I'm hearing you say is, I've heard this, I've been there. You've been on the edge of leaving a dozen times. How will we know this one is different? Sure. On some level you will only know this one is different when it happens, and when you see the steps in between and you need to be aware of that. Is that. Her radar is between, are we in the venting mode or are we in the venture mode? And uh, you have an ally in the venture mode. You don't have an ally in the venting boat and inside of you, these two live when you walked in, the venting has been the one that's occupied you in the last few months. More loud and clear to the point of suffocating.

You leave with a little bit more volume again to the venture one, but we need to keep that volume up. Hi, because the other one is ferocious and it's ferocious in part because there is such a strong similarity. Between you and your supervisor and your boss as there is between you and your sister and your mother. These two are mirror relationships, but when I'm stuck, I think that's secondary to the bigger hook. And the bigger hook is the mirroring of this triangular dynamic in which I think you and the mother of the company, when she comes to you and she elevates you in that triangular way, it's a, it's very potent. . It's a hard one to walk away from. It's an ultimately liberating one to walk away from. Yeah. But how it will be for you, you will tell us, I think out loud, but I can't predict for you. Yeah. Do you know? I think that that's the beauty of the surprises that we have about ourselves for that matter.

How is this? This

Sister 1: is great. This is more, I'll say what I'm taking with me is, is there a moment when I described leaving? I think that was most powerful. I think it was very vivid. You know what? I was super, I have a fear of Heights. So that's how like scary it is for me to, to try to even think about jumping off of anything in this moment. Like that's what it feels like. But then how free and cool it is to be able to just see everything from a whole nother perspective and know that you have no choice but to trust at that

point. And that's the part that, um, that I'm holding on to. It's running over and over my head.

Esther: Beautiful. Okay. Anchor that image in your body and take it with you. Yeah.

When the youngest sister first reached out, there was both an expression of exasperation. I'm tired of constantly trying to help her, to push her, to give her advice, to encourage her, and she does nothing with it and frustrated and also an expression of love and generosity. I want to help her. She stuck and I would like her to be able to leave and do that, which is with wanting to do for so long.

Sister 1: But

Esther: what also emerges here is one of the deeper questions about relationships is how much do we push others? Encourage them, believe in them, and how much is accepting their limitation, not just a giving in. But also an acceptance. And that is one of the most difficult interpersonal dilemmas that many of us are grappling with, beat in our own families or beat as a manager and an employee or between colleagues. What is the limits of DOD person and where do we artificially limit them?

I start PRL as a bestselling author. Speaker. And host of the podcast. Where should we begin to learn more about SDA per L's world? To sign up for her newsletter or to apply to be on the podcast, go to dot com slash how's work? How's work is produced by magnificent noise for Gimlet and SDA per L productions. Our production staff. Includes Eric Newsom, evil wold Trover, destri Sibley, Alex Louis, Kristen Muller, and our coordinating producer is Lindsey Retasky. Our recording engineer is Noriko Okabe and Damon Whitmore is our mix engineer. The theme song was written by Doug Slaven and the executive producers of housework are STI PRL and Jesse Baker. We would also like to thank Nazneen Rafsanjani, Matt Lieber, Darien LA beach, Courtney Hamilton, Kelly Rose, Nick oxen horn, Dr.

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