

How's Work? with Esther Perel

Season 1: Ep. 9 - Separated at Home But Still Together at Work

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

Man: are real. We get along really great. Ah, we just, we've had issues. I've had a couple of affairs. We've filed for divorce. We aren't really doing that now. It's kind of just at a standstill.

Esther: And when you work together, how would you describe your working relationship?

Man: It's good. Um, we both know each other's strengths and weaknesses, so like, I know I'm not good at the things that she's good at and, um, and I know that she's exceptionally, really good at what she does.

Esther: This couple has been together for about a decade and they own a winery and a restaurant. Their relationship, their intimate relationship is in shambles. Their business relationship works, but at this moment, it's also very clear to them that unless they are able to save their marriage, most likely they will not remain business partners.

I just, I feel continually undermined. The child has always been that place where I've been needed in. I feel important. A lot of the people

Woman: that 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 in a very busy place and no one will make eye

Man: contact with you. I mean, it feels like a breakup.

Esther: It doesn't feel

so how's work

Woman: we have not lived together. In, gosh, two years. In two years, we were sort of just working together. Um, not cohabitating at all.

Esther: And what, what happened then? That's the first affair.

Woman: No, that, well, it was the second, but the first affair happened before we started the business. Um, the second affair happened during the start of the business. He moved out during that.

Esther: So you have not lived together for two years and you meet outside of work. You have a relationship outside of work as,

Woman: yeah, we'll have dinner together or like co come over. Um, we do. Have conversations about our relationship alone together. Um, that's kind of how it operates right now.

Esther: And when you talk about your relationship, what do you talk about?

Woman: Either where we're going, how we're going to grow those, the things that have happened. Um, as far as communication goes. We haven't communicated well and so just trying to have more honest conversations with each other. I dunno about like about everything,

Esther: but you primarily process it and think about it or you live it in your business. You living it, you have obviously invested energy, creativity. Um, the direction, vision, your name, it, and your personal relationship, you invest or you just do. Um, Oh, that's,

Woman: I don't know. I mean, I try to invest as much as I can, but we

Esther: don't

Woman: really don't spend that much time together at all. So, um, anytime that. That I would like to spend more time together. Um, he definitely pulls back a lot, or it becomes triggered more easily.

So it's sort of like I have to pick and choose a little bit.

Esther: And you feed on probation.

Woman: Yeah. Yeah. Never thought of it like that, but yeah.

Esther: Thank you. If you behave badly, he takes a few more steps in and takes a nine hour drive.

Woman: Yeah, yeah.

Esther: That's how he punishes you or that's how he protects himself.

Woman: Exactly. Yes.

Esther: Going 100%

Woman: I don't think. Yeah. Yeah, definitely is how he protects himself

Esther: and the question that you both have is what? Where is our relationship going.

Woman: Yeah. Right now, I don't know any direction of

Esther: anything. Is that the question?

Yeah. You know that your business is going, so that's a given. Then you have to decide where is our relationship going, and then you have to decide if regardless of which direction it takes, if you will continue to work together. Right. That's kind of the pieces. You clearly want her to work with you. You're not sure you want to live with her. You're not sure you want to be in a romantic relationship or you're not sure which kind of relationship you want to have with her.

Man: Like when we had filed for divorce. I, um, basically for me at that point, I said, okay, I'm just, I'm not going to get myself locked into another monogamous relationship. It's, I, I fail at them all the time. It would be a better option for me just to

Esther: first marriage.

Man: Second. Um,

Esther: the same thing happened the first time around.

Man: Yeah. With other factors as well. Um,

Esther: can I ask you how old

Man: you, you, how old I am now? 38 31. Yeah, I got married when I was 21 the first time. Um, I'm really good at keeping secrets, but I don't like to keep secrets. It's a lot of pressure, so I thought it would just be better to, um, just live that life like an open relationship life. For a lot of me feels at this point. I don't know that it's something that, um, she can be okay with. Like, we've been going to counseling for months and I, I don't feel that anything's heading in that direction personally.

Esther: She wants sweat,

Man: um, move back in, you know, the, I feel like she just wants everything to go back to what it was like, just, you know. Are,

Esther: you can talk to her

Man: or monogamous relationship, um, you know, and just back to normal, like what we would call normal and, um, and I don't want that, but what will happen is I'm going to go out and I will do the exact same thing again. And, uh, it's too much work to keep a secret like that. I'm not going to do it anymore

Esther: because it's too much work. Uh, because it's so hurtful

Man: both. Oh, I know. It hurts her.

Esther: I'm going to go back to what you described before. What have you been doing for these two years

Man: in the personal relationship? Just kind of existed like we would, we'll hang out, go do things, go to dinner, come to the city. You know. Just stuff

Esther: and what are you holding on to?

Man: For me, it's um, feels like freedom. Like it feels like I don't have to do what someone else wants me to

Esther: do, but I get that. But that doesn't tell me why you doing, if, if that's so clear to you, why are you dragging this for two years?

Man: And tried to get divorced, filed for her, did everything. Um, she asked me not to.

Esther: I think that he did not go through with the divorce because on some level he's not ready yet to let her go from the business, but that is never said explicitly, and I don't have a proof of that. That is just my sense. But you seem to be very clear in your business life. Nobody pushes you around you do what you want. You've been a major principle of your life. What's different here?

Man: Um, I love her. I don't love the business. I mean, I started saying that a little bit. It was a. Good lesson for me to learn. Cause when, when that first business that I had that I did love so much, I really like, I remember that feeling like just like I, it felt like a thing that I was literally had love for. And when it all ended, I realized that it never loved me back and it never would. So I kind of grounded myself on the principles that of business and money will never love you back. So don't fall in love with either one of those. Some much more. I just treat it like a thing more successful because of it too. But I can't do that to her

Esther: because we'd heard because

Man: I care about her. Cause I do love her. But, um,

Esther: you could talk to him, you know

Man: Sheila, she knows all that.

Esther: Yes, but it's like she's sitting right next to you.

Woman: It's weird to me though.

Man: No, but I mean, I do love you. It's just, um, my biggest hang up at this point is that we're just going to continue to like go to counseling and like talk about the idea of all that stuff, but never actually put anything into play. You know what

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Esther: mean? Because the personal aspects from what I understand is on life support.

Man: Good. Say that again.

Esther: You're trying to make sure that it doesn't die, but it isn't a state of survival. It's not striving. I mean, you can actually compare immediately because you leave your house, you go to your shop, and in your shop or in your business, you immediately see what energy does and that energy is not coming home.

In the situation of stable ambiguity, which is a term that my colleague Terry real often uses. When can see two people that are too immature to make or to remake a commitment, but also too afraid to let go and go out on their own. So it's stable, but it is completely ambiguous. Hence, they've spent two years talking about the relationship auditing it versus being in it or investing in it, and they know the difference because it's exactly the opposite of what they have done in their business, which of course is a successful business by virtue of the fact that they invested a lot in there, all kinds of resources that they don't know how to bring into their own private sphere.

Man: I know that I can go home to her. I know that I can invest all my energy into her and for a long time that's what I did, but I also know myself well enough to know that I'm going to do the exact same things that I've done in the past.

Esther: That is what

Man: I'm going to have more affairs

Esther: because what do they mean for you.

Man: Um, for the eight years that we lived together, there was never really a time that she came to me for sex. It was always me coming to her and that for me, that makes me feel unattractive. Like, you know why? Cause I've had other women come at me or, and it feels great. But you know, so for, for eight years not to not have someone pursue you is after awhile. It doesn't take a whole lot for another woman to say, Oh, Hey, you know, I really think you're hot. I want to do this and this and this to you. And you're like, okay, let's, that was great. And

Esther: now what's your experience with her sexually or you intimate together or you sexual together.

Man: Not really, no.

Esther: Because,

Man: um, we both decided it's, um, too complicated right now to include that. We tried. Um, it made things very uncomfortable. Um,

Esther: explain.

Man: Um, we had sex a while ago and it was, um. It seemed to create more problems than it solved

Esther: meaning.

Man: Um, she was very upset about it for a long time. Like, um, on her side, she wanted to talk about it nonstop. And for me it was turning into such a big ordeal that it was like, wow. Like I wish I'd never done it in the first place cause it's now like all we do is talk. That's all we talk about. And, um. So finally came to a point where she just said, we just need to make a decision if we're going to have sex, we're not going to have sex. And I said, I don't think we should because it's too, it's too much of a production. Like it became too big of a thing, like, and just for, it was more discomfort for me than it was even worth doing.

Woman: Um, I've wanted to do, I tried to have a conversation with him about. Us than sex a few times, um, in the past few months. And they were, each time I had that conversation, he was extremely uncomfortable. Like, um, he could, he just, he didn't want to talk about it at all. Um, and so that was kind of just where it left off. Like I didn't want to push him too

Esther: far and you have to approach him. No talking. I

Woman: don't, I didn't even think of to just approach him like I, I felt like because we hadn't had sex in so long that we, there should be a conversation about it before. That was my thought process.

Esther: What a strange idea.

The strange thought I'm referring to is that two people talking about all the obstacles and all the reasons for why they don't want to be together doesn't always lead them to then want to be together. At some point, you need to reach out if you want something to happen, and just talking about why you're not reaching out doesn't make that happen. At the same time, part of what she wants to talk about, the sexual encounter. That they had is because for her it changes who is coming to work the next day. Is she still the wife? Is she the business partner? Do they have a romantic relationship to the heaven, intimacy with each other, or are they just discussing project staffing and spreadsheets? So. You're sitting here, you hold hands as if you know your life depended on it from the moment you walked in, but you're not going to be sexual yet. You're not going to let yourself be too interested at this point in other people. If I understood you correct. Right. So you're going to choke on your own juices here. This doesn't make sense. And you have a couple of therapists as a way to kind of maintain the life support. So that it doesn't really come to a resolution in one direction or another, and the business is doing really well, but not the relationship. And it's two years of this. So

my day going to do, because this is not viable. It's like talking about opening a business, but not doing it. You either are in your relationship, you're in your marriage the same way that you're in your shop, and then you act accordingly rather than observing it together, analyzing it, taking it apart, and squeezing the life out of it. Yeah. At this point. Who knows where he's at and he may just be, this is way too complicated. We don't completely understand why you keep going home for dinners or come to the city or duel. I mean, of course you do it because you enjoy her and because you're attached to her, but in a way, neither of you is allowed to move.

Everybody here has to wait and somehow you're able to keep that separate from the shop. And on occasion you have an argument that kind of brings energy, a bit of friction. Otherwise the whole thing is rather, huh. So does that capture it or am I missing pieces?

Man: I think that's, yeah. Nailed it.

Esther: Nailed it. Okay. And you're more attached than you would like to be. Yes. Not because you don't want to be attached, but you're more attached than is comfortable for just getting up and going. Because if you were clearly decided that you would have pursued with the divorce, you know, in, in the realm of, of emotions, you're used to leaving it to the women basically, and then you present yourself as cool guy. And it's a fake image by the way. There's lots of things happening inside of you and it's great. And why do I say that? Because non monogamy is not an answer to those things. It may be a life choice for a lot of things, but it doesn't resolve this quagmire you're in. We, we, it's like two different stories.

Man: Yes,

Woman: sir. Just made such a good point about, um, I like, I have just been like, and, and I think you have to kind of just like, just, just treading water, waiting for something to happen, but it's not just gonna happen. Like we actually have to live it and do it and make it happen. Not in five years from now, like putting action to things as what

Man: we want to say.

Woman: Um, a commitment.

The security, like I don't, I don't have any of that right now. I don't, I don't want you to come.

Esther: Just

Woman: come home right now. Like I've said before, like I don't, like, I don't, I don't want that right now.

Man: I don't,

Woman: I don't know if I even want that necessarily permanently, but I, I want like, I want the time to be able to, to, to actually live it. Like when you just are at work or by yourself. We kind of just, nothing happens. I'm just kind of sitting, waiting around.

Esther: So you, yeah,

so your whole life is pretty much. Waiting for him to figure out what he's going to do.

Woman: A lot of it is, yeah,

Esther: and your employees as well. I imagine it's a small shop, so people are not even your employees. You don't maybe even call them like that. You have a much

more personalized relationship with them, and they have lived the saga of the owners for the last two years.

Man: Well, the

Woman: last, the last few months anyway, but not, not as, I wouldn't call it a saga, but maybe a walking on eggshells a little bit. Just not, maybe a little lack of security in them as well.

Esther: Like where is this business going? What will happen to it if they stay together or if they don't, particularly if they don't stay together.

Man: Um, I was very blunt with everybody. Um, when I told them that we were getting divorced and you know, obviously everybody asks why. And I'm, I become a fan of just laying it out there as I just said, I had an affair. And that's that. And um, cause if you only answer it, then just rumor starts. So we keep it very open. Workspace where people feel comfortable. Like I've always told everyone, you can tell me whatever you want. So a lot of people, you know, called me an asshole and stuff like that, and I let them vent it out on me and get it out. And it's like, that's fine. You know, you can, it's, um, it's OK. you know, like if they can, they can feel however they need to feel

Esther: when a married couple are also business owners and they're going to . Major timeouts, the idea that their staff is not affected by it is not that different from parents who are going through divorce and think that their children are not affected. It just doesn't work this way and you want to stay in the shop.

Woman: I deal

Esther: regardless of what happens between the two of you.

Woman: Um, at this point. Yeah, I

Esther: do because?

Woman: Because I'm proud of it because I worked so hard for it because, um, I'm really good at

Esther: it.

Woman: We are a really good

Man: team

Woman: there. Like I, I couldn't imagine. Working with anybody else or bringing anybody else in

Esther: like great team.

Woman: That's

Esther: what I

Woman: really like to

Esther: do that. And what would it take

Woman: for me? Like I'm doing it like I'm trying to, like I'm supporting him. I've, I. I feel like I don't know how much more I can do as

Esther: far as, actually what you need to do is probably less for him. You still have a life of your own as well.

do you have any?

Woman: I'm trying. I really am. I, um. I do. I'm not, I don't go to the business on the weekends, and so I always do my staff, which is good. I don't know. I .

Esther: I want to talk shop and I want to talk sex because the sex for him is a major part of why the relationship is fraught. And. And the shop becomes one of the main ways in which you stay connected. When you let the other connections. Which one are we doing first?

Woman: We can talk about the shop

Man: first.

Sure.

Esther: Go.

Man: Trump is fun.

Woman: Um, I always get so emotional about it because it just is like, I've never had such a, uh, a partnership like that we have in our business, never had that anywhere else. And it, it is a, it is a little sad that it's not in our. Romantic relationship, but like in business, it's so like special to me.

Esther: Whose business is it? Ours. But if you were to split, he would keep it.

Man: I actually don't care. I honestly don't care. When we were getting, when we were doing our divorce stuff, I told her, why don't you and your mom take it and you guys can run the whole thing. Like, I don't care. I don't care about it at all. Like I'm not afraid to walk away from it all because I know I can just start it all over again and in two years we'll be back where I'm, where I'm at now. I feel like she is.

Esther: Talk to her.

Man: I feel like you're aware. I was with my first business. You're in love with it. Like you're in love with this thing that doesn't care about you at all. I know you love it, but, um, it's never going to love you back.

Esther: The way that he sees her love for their business as similar to the way he wants was in love with his company is a little. To facet because what he's a meeting as well for himself as for her, is that when you start a new company and you pour your soul in it, your heart in it, you give it your best. You. Are indeed passionate about it in a way you feel erotic, meaning you feel imaginative, alive, present, focused, curious, engaged, and all of those erotic ingredients you know of liveliness and alive. Newness are part of what gives you a sense of identity, a sense of self worth, a sense of accomplishment. And those need to be acknowledged for what they are as well. I think that

Man: you are, you are associating those emotions and wanting to connect with me through that. I don't know that it's the business itself. I think that you're using that as an Avenue towards me, but. It's two completely separate things. I think there's that thing that has its own identity and then there's our relationship. You know, I could sit here and rattle off a thousand things that I enjoyed doing with you that I missed doing with you, but there's also the whole picture of like my feelings towards you. Which aren't what they ought to be. And, uh, and that sucks. And I've said it to so many people. I wish I was just crazy about you. Like, I wish I just want to attack you all the time, but it's like, you don't, I wish I did. They don't. And it's like, you know, and I just feel like, I feel like what? For me, I'm hopeful that I would, but I don't know how to get there.

Esther: You're hopeful that you would become crazy about her.

Man: Yeah. I love that. I was just like

Esther: that you would need to feel that she doesn't just love working with you, but that she also loves making love to you.

Man: Yeah, and I don't, I mean like when it comes to the actual sex side of things,

Esther: talking about the act, I'm talking about being desired.

Man: Yeah. Right.

Esther: You feel that she cares deeply. You feel even that she loves you, feel that she admires you and your work. You feel that she deeply appreciates the professional partnership, the creative partnership, the business partner, the excitement of that, but she doesn't get excited about you in the desire part.

Man: Yeah,

Esther: and that's what this is about.

Man: She goes like, she says she does, but. You know, in 10 years there really hasn't been a time where that was shown. I mean, to me, like the, like just being asked, when are you, when are we going to have sex again? Isn't really sexy. Like there's nothing like that. That's what would be said to me. Like we'd go so long

without having sex and then it would just be, when are we gonna have sex again? And I'm like, it's not my job. Like you want it, get it, do something to get it.

And it's been, and now is like, it's not even just that though. Like, I mean there's like a whole array of things and I love that she's out doing her own thing now because. The dependency that I felt in the past was just overwhelming. It's like, it's hard enough for me to live my life. I don't want to live your life for you too. And you know, it's like back then, like when we were in a relationship, it was like, you know, I'm hungry. Okay, what would you like? I don't know. Okay, how about here? No, I'll hear it. No, I hear it. You know, it's like, like I just felt like all of everything that she did hinge on me. Like, and I had to make every single decision for us. Like every once in a while she'd be like, I want to go here. And it's like, thank fucking God. She wants to go somewhere. Like I don't have to be the one, I don't have to be the provider right now. It's a lot of work. Cause what it is like, and it's not, it's not fun work either. You know? It's just like, I just always felt like it was like, here's my problem. We can do about it. It's like lawfully don't doing anything about it. I'm not going to do anything about it at all. I'm sure you've heard stuff like that

Esther: before, but I'm glad to finally hear you say it. I've said it. This is the first time I actually am experiencing some energy from you.

Man: Let me get myself charged up here. When you're charged up here.

Esther: That's probably much better because the lifeless version of the, I'm cool. I'm Teflon. Everything rolls off me. Met with her tears is a deadly potion. It really, we won't survive this. You can do another two years of it, but you it it, you want recharge, you need to recharge batteries if at all. Okay. So I am very pleased to finally see you express something with energy.

Emotionally speaking, if I see someone who is living with a lid tight on top, it immediately makes me wonder what is it that is being kept in the pot? And so one has to go and go back into in time. Otherwise he comes across as slick and everything rolls off of him. And I'm not sure that that's the true story. That is the quality, that is the ethic that emanates from him, but that's not the whole purse. I, the more I asked him to speak and the more he stays on the same note, he has told me everything in exactly the same node. There is just no modulation even in his voice. And for me that is such a giveaway when the first does not have any modulation. It tells me how everything had to be flat and things get flattened often after they have been overwhelming. So keep going. Because it's not so simple. You have your, you have your resentments and you have your, your complaints and you have the things for which you have stayed out of the house for the past two years and they're not just about, I want to be nonmonogamous. They have to do with what you felt in relationship to her in which you felt that you were the battery back. Yeah. And, and work because she has a set of skills that are so unique and separate and differentiated from you. This is finally a place where you can rely on her for something to the point where you say, don't even show me. Do it yourself. Because

that's the level at which you rely. And it's such a relief to have her Excel and you'll be able to say to her, do it, and we're getting somewhere.

Man: I mean, it's. With you. We are. I mean, there's stuff that we've talked about before. I mean, it's not, this isn't like new

Esther: news and bring up the new thing that you have not said. There's a lot here. And I

have to,

Man: no, I mean, this is, um, I appreciate that you're doing like all these things on your own and everything. Um, and you're like, you're, you're living a little bit. But I mean, there's, there's still so many things. I'll give you an example. Something that pissed me off so much the other day pissed me off to where what I wanted to do was just go out and get my car and leave is I love, I love messing with everybody. I love talking to everybody. I love, I love it. That's me. We went out to dinner the other night. And, and then when we went in, I started messing with the waitress right away. And I'm like, cause the waitress was like, just real happy all the time. And I was like, and I was like, kind of just having fun with it. I'm like, wow, Hey, how are you? You know, like really going and, and for me that was just a lot of fun. But you did a mom move there and you said, stop. Okay, that's enough. That's enough. But you know what? It wasn't enough for me. I wasn't done. I was having fun and you said, Nope. Nope. You have to stop having fun now. And you do that all the time. You always were the person to keep me in check. I get it. You had to pull me back like, Nope, Nope, Nope, no. Yeah, that's enough fun. That's no fun. And I got to tell you, I like not being around you like being able to like go out, like, you know, go to go to a restaurant somewhere, like go in and start talking to people. It's so much fun. But you say, no, no, you got to stop doing it. Why? Why? If you don't like it, that just means you don't like me. If you're saying to somebody, don't change that about yourself. Okay, then change this and then do this. Like, just give up like you don't, it's a whole package or no package. That's literally the way I look at it. I get it. It's just.

Is there enough emotion?

Esther: It's better.

Man: Nobody really. I really do feel like

Esther: at that moment and continue.

Man: No, because? Because if I do that,

Esther: she killed it.

Man: Yeah. Yeah. It's dead. It's dead. It's over. And when you

Esther: say mom, move, it's the container.

Man: Yeah. It's like, okay, you're, you've had enough fun now you need to stop.

Esther: The key sentence of this whole vignette is you did a mom move on me. I was experiencing joy. It doesn't matter the specifics of the flirting of the waitresses. I experienced something and you put the lid on me, and this is where I begin to see the connection between his own. Relationship history and how he hears his wife and how he reacts to what his wife says and thus to him, and how the various stories of his childhood and his present come together.

And you can't just say, it's okay. I'm having my phone. You have your drink. I have my phone. You can't just simply assert yourself. We don't either.

Man: I couldn't in the past. No. Ah, no, I couldn't in the past. I just, um, I will always be the one to give up. Oh, always give up first. And I think the reason for that is because of my mom, because when, one time I came home, I thought I was eight years old and they was complaining about this kid at school that always was in a Crotty and would hurt me, and I was complaining about it and I was told right there, I can't hear, I can't listen to this anymore. I don't want to hear complaints anymore. I'm not going to listen to you if you don't have something good to say. And I'm. Um, it was a combination of that. And literally she was like, antisexual, like she wanted nothing to do with sex at all. Like we never talked about it. It was something, you avoid it with everything in you. Um, so. I basically just, I developed this second half of me where I, I would be myself over here, but then give my mom whatever she wanted. Like I would be the person that she wanted me to be. I really wasn't, but I got really good at faking it.

Esther: As I listened to him. One thing becomes imminently clear is that in the marriage, his wife has slowly become a representation of his mother. On both fronts. The person who squishes him and puts the lid on him and the person who is intensely anti-sex, and I finally understand what sex means for him and why non-monogamy is so important to him because the non-monogamy becomes the marker of showing that I will never just have one woman put all the rules on me. So if I multiply them, I said two rules at work. He has a differentiated sense of her and therefore she can shine and he can comfortably rely on her and they can be wonderful business partners.

Man: So when she says, stop doing that, instantly I'll stop. Because it's like, okay, it's not worth, it's not worth making her uncomfortable, but by doing that over 10 years, I'm just, I'm always giving myself up. I'm not being myself,

Esther: except in DFS. They become the place where you don't have to be curtailed, contained, or present a false self.

Man: Yeah. Oh yeah. I'm very used to having secrets. It's like ingrained in me. It's almost, it's almost uncomfortable to not have a secret.

Esther: Yes. That's a piece you will need to learn, by the way, in any relationship you will,

Man: because that

Esther: package leaves with you. That doesn't stay, that doesn't belong just to this marriage.

So she relies on you for more than you care to, but you parade for her and placate her more than she cares too.

Man: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know how to not do that.

Esther: Okay, so

Man: it's like.

Esther: Yes, but if she's about to become more independent and have a life of her own and decide which restaurants she wants to go on her own, then you have to work on not placating.

Man: Hmm.

Esther: When? Meaning that those are fundamental ingredients. If you're going to stay a couple

somehow they don't interfere in your being a business couple. Or business partners

because the defense, the dependency is different and the or the interdependence is different. their skill set is so differentiated from years and years from hers that you don't experience her being too dependent and you don't experience him being too fake. You get the authenticity, you don't get at home and you get the confidence you don't get at home.

At this moment, I'm well aware that we are arriving at the end of one session and that there are still many things to cover and uncover here. So I'm thinking about what is a place of departure that each of them can take in the hopes that they can either preserve, protect the relationship, the romantic relationship, and improve it knowing that at this moment. The professional partnership. The business partnership is likely only to continue if the marriage does. Can I throw one out?

Woman: Sure.

Esther: You know how the entire session he's had his hand on you? Yes. On occasion at home. Just take the hand under your shirt

while you're telling him about the stuff you've been doing. Okay. Okay. Can you be that bold? Yeah.

Woman: Yeah. I'm not as, I'm not, I think his perception of me is different than what is actually me.

Esther: I am, I would agree. And if you can do that one in the office, cause you're the only ones who are actually allowed to have an affair in the office. I mean, come to

think of it, you are co owners, right? Who happened to also be partners in life. They can, they, they're not even friends aggressive if they have an affair in the office. But that's what you need to, that's the energy.

Esther corral as a bestselling author, speaker, and host of the podcast, where should we begin to learn more about STI PRLs world to sign up for her newsletter or to apply it to be on the podcast? Go to . Slash how's work? How's work is produced by magnificent noise for Gimlet and SDI PRL productions.

Woman: Our production staff

Esther: includes Eric Newsom, evil wool, 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 Esther Perel 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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