

Announcer (Jesse) ([00:02](#)):

None of the voices in the series are ongoing patients of Esther Perel. Each episode of Where Should We Begin is a onetime counseling session. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality, names, and some identifiable characteristics have been removed, but their voices and their stories are real.

Him ([00:30](#)):

I just remember her saying, "Well, if you knew the truth, you wouldn't be able to handle it."

Esther Perel ([00:33](#)):

We've been together for almost two decades.

Her ([00:37](#)):

We met each other when we were in eighth grade, and we got together our senior year. Pretty much been together ever since.

Esther Perel ([00:49](#)):

They've been disconnected from each other for a long time.

Him ([00:52](#)):

It's always kind of been rocky. It's always kind of had its ups and downs.

Her ([00:57](#)):

And it felt I was one of his priorities.

Esther Perel ([01:00](#)):

They each are acutely aware of how they wanted something more from the other. More attention, more desire, more affirmation. And after years of complaining about the lack of affirmation, they each found other people to give them the attention they so much craved.

Her ([01:22](#)):

So it was like a total of maybe six infidelities, I guess you could say.

Him ([01:29](#)):

Mine happened a year after discovery of hers. That point I was in such a dark place to hear someone actually tell you that you're good enough. Here we are. Well now, it's four years later.

Esther Perel ([01:44](#)):

They're not in the grip of it, but they're still dealing with everything that led to it.

Her ([01:51](#)):

I feel like he's disconnected and he doesn't want to talk to me or he's afraid to talk to me.

Him ([02:02](#)):

I keep trying to improve myself to be able to be the person that I feel like she needs. And maybe that's the part that hurts the most is I just feel like I'm always trying to improve myself for her, and I just feel like it just never measures up.

Her (02:15):

I feel like he doesn't like to share things with me, doesn't like to communicate. More so now as the years have gone by, I feel like I withdraw a lot more when I feel him being distant.

Esther Perel (02:39):

So if he withdraws, you withdraw. And when you withdraw, then?

Her (02:45):

We're just basically like roommates, I'd say, and we just are parents and there's no real romantic connection. I've realized that really do need that, but I just don't want it to be fake, or forced.

Esther Perel (03:07):

On your part or on his part?

Her (03:09):

His part. I don't want to tell him. I don't want to be the one to say, "Hey, you didn't come and kiss me." But yet I still do.

Esther Perel (03:20):

Is that part of broader expectation that you are to be the pursuer, and she can respond?

Him (03:31):

I think and one line she always uses is, "I shouldn't have to tell you, you should know." So yeah, I think a lot of times it is like she expects me to fully pursue her. I feel like I've used the word kind of like shut down. It's probably accurate. I feel like everything that happened, I was like, "Why would you open yourself up to that possibility again?"

Esther Perel (04:01):

Can I just ask you for a moment? Give me a bit of background, so I know what we're talking about.

Her (04:10):

Well, the infidelity on both of us. Both of us had affairs. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. And to me, I feel like there has been infidelity from the beginning with his porn addiction. And I don't even know if he considers it an addiction. It was just something guys do. It's just a guy thing, guys do this. To me that was betrayal. And I let him know that, and he would just reassure me that it's just a guy thing.

Esther Perel (05:02):

So betrayal for you. Tell me about the betrayal.

Her (05:08):

Him watching porn. Him being okay with it and trying to convince me that it was okay, even though I voiced to him that I wasn't okay with it.

Esther Perel ([05:28](#)):

The betrayal was that he was watching, watching more than you cared for, watching other women and rejecting you, making you feel that there was something wrong with you for judging it, or being uncomfortable with it. Where was the betrayal for you? There's lots of pieces to this. So I want to make sure that I really know what you're experiencing.

Her ([05:54](#)):

Yeah. I would say, him watching it and me feeling like that was what he wanted, and I wasn't able to fulfill his fantasies.

Esther Perel ([06:09](#)):

And part of it was, you didn't care for it. You were not at all attracted to the same kind of play. You thought he's trying to put a different thing on me that has nothing to do with me. What's-

Her ([06:24](#)):

Yeah. I wasn't ever really into it, I just went along with it because I thought that's what he wanted. And he would ask if we could watch, I would agree to it and I would feel gross after, because anything that I would see, and then if he would try that in the bedroom, it just kind of shut me down.

Esther Perel ([06:55](#)):

You're shaking your head. Tell me what you're saying yes to.

Him ([07:00](#)):

Oh, just that if you ever brought anything into the bedroom, where did you learn that? Where did you see that? What have you been watching? What have you been doing? You had to keep it very vanilla, because anything outside of the ordinary was, I think instantly kind of be a trigger for her, and she'd start putting up the walls and you could feel that separation of kind of like, well now, you're kind of like, "Okay, I'm going through with this, but I really don't want to be here anymore because now I'm thinking about what you've been doing."

Esther Perel ([07:31](#)):

And what were you into that we're talking about? So I have a sense.

Him ([07:36](#)):

I think for her it was like she came from a very conservative family, mine was a little bit more open. So I experienced sexual images and stuff really young, around like eight years old. And I think I pretty much introduced her to all of that stuff. I didn't ever really have anything. I was like, "Oh, that's my thing. I love that." So any time we would try to bring anything to the bedroom and be kind of excited or change it up a little bit, I say that was usually met with, "Well, where did you see that? Or where'd you get it from?" And so we just kind of learned over the years. Like, "I can play with therapy here in my mind, but you can't really act on it."

Esther Perel ([08:24](#)):

But you were eager to bring all kinds of things to the bedroom and less curious about her.

Him ([08:35](#)):

No, I think at first I was more interested in seeing what we can do together. [inaudible 00:08:43] there was a lot of eroticism in there, and excitement of like, Oh... Because we're both pretty much knew this except for what I had seen. And then instantly there was kind of like... I would say there was kind of shut down of, "That's gross." Again, it was something I could play with in my own mind, but it wasn't something I was ever then comfortable with bringing back.

Esther Perel ([09:06](#)):

And that's when you feel that he began to lie?

Her ([09:12](#)):

No. I don't even remember when I found out about his problem. [inaudible 00:09:21].

Esther Perel ([09:24](#)):

But is there an agreement that this was a problem? Or was the problem that you wanted to share certain fantasies with her and that that was not at all what she wanted to explore with you and therefore you took it underground? Where was the problem?

Her ([09:41](#)):

He would do it by himself, and he would even say, "I just do it for the end results."

Esther Perel ([09:55](#)):

The conversation about sex and sexuality, instantly devolves in a conversation about porn. They grew up with attitudes towards sexuality, that were often negative, filled with shame, filled with guilt, filled with an idea that sex should be preserved for marriage, that it should be missionary, clean, and fertile. It is not unusual for people to grow up with negative messaging around sexuality. For them, it was rooted in their Christian Mormon background. And so much of what they've experienced for years, is the consequence of ignorance, negative attitudes towards sex, and the inability to communicate about it. And so it became a silent sexual rut.

Her ([10:57](#)):

And as far as not wanting to do things with him, I feel like he was already experienced, and I wasn't.

Esther Perel ([11:09](#)):

I'm wondering if he really had much experience, he had very little experience. He had experienced with himself in his own fantasies, jerking off by himself, that is not communication. That is not being with a partner.

Her ([11:23](#)):

No, that's not. And he has always said that that was his escape and that was his way of love, to feel loved or to feel wanted. He always felt like, if somebody loved you, they would want to do that with you.

Him ([11:40](#)):

My thought was more like, if you really love me, you'd want to be sexual with me.

Esther Perel ([11:45](#)):

Yeah, but she didn't feel that you want it to be sexual with her.

Him ([11:48](#)):

No, she didn't.

Esther Perel ([11:49](#)):

You think you were trying to be sexual with her, and intimate with her. I understand that, and on some level, it makes a lot of sense. From where she was, you coming there, with your bucket of play that you had done by yourself all those years, that had very little to do with her and didn't ask her anything about herself, didn't feel like any particularly curious move on your parts.

Him ([12:15](#)):

Every experience with her was to be with her, and I think that's something I tried to explain to you a lot of times. You always thought, "Oh, you want me to be like her, [inaudible 00:12:24] like her, looks like this." No, I didn't need you to be anyone other than yourself. And the only things I ever did bring in was because anything I watched was like... The only thing that actually turned me on about watching it was like, Oh, I would love to do that with you. I didn't ever watch it and be like, "Oh, I want to do that with her." It was no like, "Oh, how great would it be to do that or experience that with you?" I think that got lost probably somewhere in translation a couple of times or maybe [inaudible 00:12:53] even want to believe that, but that was conversations we've had before.

Her ([13:00](#)):

Okay. So you just watched this sort of a research project?

Him ([13:05](#)):

I guess that's a way of looking at it. It was just like, "That's a new one. That's interesting. I wonder what that would be like."

Her ([13:10](#)):

But knowing that I was not okay...

Him ([13:14](#)):

Which is why I didn't ever bring it in.

Her ([13:17](#)):

No, but I was not okay with you watching.

Him ([13:19](#)):

With me watching it, yes. But I think the reason I kept watching was because that was the only place I could live it out.

Her ([13:25](#)):

Yeah. I voiced how it made me feel, and he wasn't willing to stop for me, or to even be honest about it with me. I think, if he welcomed me and say, "Hey, I'm struggling." That would have made a world of difference.

Esther Perel ([13:59](#)):

It's a sad bind that you both got yourself in, because he wanted to share it with you. And then once he knew that you were not open to it and turned off by it big time, he took it privately, in order not to impose it on you, and felt okay, you'll be my personal sexual world. I'll have one world with you and one world with myself. And he didn't mean to not tell you, but when he told you, there was not a good consequence. So in a way, he may have lied, but there also was lying invitee. There was a person who said, "Don't tell me. I want you to tell me, but don't tell me."

Esther Perel ([14:52](#)):

And then, I don't know if he thinks it's a problem. He thinks he found a solution. I kept it to myself. I didn't impose it on you. I didn't ask you any more, any of this stuff. What more do you want? He says, "If you had loved me, you would have done this with me." You say, "If you love me, you would have stopped watching porn." Each one said to the other, "If you really cared about me, you wouldn't be doing what you're doing." And how many years of this?

Him ([15:21](#)):

[inaudible 00:15:21].

Her ([15:22](#)):

Together? 18.

Him ([15:23](#)):

18, almost. That's good.

Her ([15:26](#)):

Yeah. I don't think he really ever explained to me why he did it. I think that's where to me became the problem.

Him ([15:40](#)):

I probably didn't even fully understand it at 18, 19. I don't think I had any understanding of myself that deeply.

Esther Perel ([15:48](#)):

And what did you come to understand over time?

Him ([15:51](#)):

Growing up, I never saw a lot of examples of relationships really. I very early in my life connected sex with love. I always felt like nobody was ever going to want to be with me anyway. I can remember multiple times as a child, thinking I was going to grow up alone. I never thought I was going to have a girlfriend, let alone a wife. That seemed absolutely impossible to me.

Esther Perel ([16:19](#)):

Why so?

Him ([16:23](#)):

As a kid, I always felt [inaudible 00:16:26] different, [inaudible 00:16:27]. Different outside. I grew up in a very interesting family dynamic of... I'd describe it as being literally the black sheep of the family. My parents are white. All my siblings are white. Cousins are white. Everyone in my family is white, and then there was just me. And so as a kid, I didn't understand why I looked different, just knew that I was. And not that my family ever made me feel like I didn't belong or that I was an outcast, but I think I just kind of put that on myself just because I look so differently. And when you start to get friends and they come over and they see you and they meet your parents and your siblings is up, then you're kind of like, "How does this all work?" And so, I think at that point then I started to recognize that I'm different. I go to a friend's house and everyone looks the same and come to my house and I'm just blob.

Esther Perel ([17:24](#)):

I'm not blob. I'm black, they're white.

Him ([17:28](#)):

Yeah. I'm literally the spec in the snow.

Esther Perel ([17:39](#)):

He describes being one of very few black people in his entire community, church, and school. And he also describes an entirely white family, in which he is the only black person. The family is organized around a secret, so much so that he knows not to ask. He knows he's black, he doesn't know why.

Him ([18:13](#)):

There was a scene. I can remember being like eight years old and watching Beauty and the Beast, and hearing the very first opening line of Beauty and the Beast was, for who could ever love a beast. And I remember crying in the middle of the movie at eight years old, thinking that that was like me. No one's ever going to love me, because I'm like this beast. And so when I found porn and anything else, I was like, "Oh my gosh, here's the thing where there's black guys and white girls and everything else. There's all these different mixes and anything you can think of, it's there for you, and people are just willing and totally into it." And so it allowed me to go somewhere where I could fantasize about being accepted to that level. And so for me, it instantly became kind of a place where I could go when I didn't feel accepted, when I didn't feel loved. Don't think I ever had it to a point where it overtook me though, to where I was like, "Oh, I've got to do it. I'm doing it multiple times in a day."

Esther Perel ([19:18](#)):

Hold on one moment, and ask her, since she wanted to understand, what was this for you? Ask her how she just heard what you said.

Him ([19:28](#)):

Out of all of that, what did you hear?

Her ([19:34](#)):

You saw porn as love, so to you, if someone is attracted to you, then they love you. To me, that's mainly like on a physical level, but to mean like... And I don't know if I'm the only one that feels this way, but porn is not love, it's purely just people feeding others fantasies. So like you said, you can find anything you want, but that's not connection.

Him ([20:12](#)):

Yeah.

Esther Perel ([20:18](#)):

She began by listening to him, and then she brought the focus back onto her experience very quickly. And so as a result, she heard him talk about love, but she didn't hear him talk about the underlying, much more fundamental need, which was to be accepted. When you think of yourself as the beast, you think of places where perhaps there are others like you.

Her ([21:01](#)):

To this day I tell you that if I don't feel connected to you on a higher level, a more emotional level, I'm more withdrawn with the sexual part of it.

Him ([21:19](#)):

When you told me is like, after the affairs, I think we had sex once a few weeks later or whatever, and you told me then, "This is the first time I've ever felt connected with you and we've had sex." Then I was like, "Oh my gosh, how's that possible?" Because for me, sex for me then, that was how I was able to connect with you. That was a blow to me. I was like, "Oh my God. How? We've been together at this point, what? 12, 13 years, and this is the first time now after 12 or 13 years that you're saying now I feel connected to you?"

Her ([21:57](#)):

But that was after the affairs, and while we're spending 24/7 with each other, you want to [crosstalk 00:22:04].

Him ([22:03](#)):

Well, for the first few days, and that-

Her ([22:06](#)):

We were having deep, meaningful conversations. We were connecting on the level that I needed from the beginning. I'm realizing right now that we kind of went back. We started with sex, that being number one thing, over versus conversation and deep, meaningful connection that I needed. I feel like I was

crying out the whole first... What? 15 years of our relationship, just be wanted by you, other than sexually. And also sexually, because to me, you were watching porn, you were looking at the pictures. To me that just told me that I wasn't what you wanted. I was shut off. Not that I want it to be, but just I guess in a way I did it to protect myself. I don't know.

Him ([23:25](#)):

I think that was part of why the affairs hurt you so much, because like I said, because I connected.

Esther Perel ([23:31](#)):

Can I ask you to try something? Because you've just listened to her, and she explained to you something very, very important. And if you hear it and you respond the way you're about to do, it's still is you with yourself. I did what I did because I felt what I felt because I... And I want you to do the same exercise I asked you to, just before. What did you just hear? Because your wife just said something, that if you listen to it carefully, you'll actually understand her behavior over almost two decades.

Him ([24:26](#)):

Yeah, I did hear... One of the things you said that was kind of an [inaudible 00:24:31] for me just now was, like when you said, "I wanted the communication. I wanted you to want me but I wanted you to want me for the communication. I want you to want me for the connection, but not the sexual sense but the communication." And I heard it put that way before. I'd heard you say, "All I'm good for is my body, and all you want me for is this." But I had never heard it, or thought of it like, "I want you to want me for my communication, and I want you to want me for my conversation." Don't know why I didn't like...

Esther Perel ([25:13](#)):

Did he get it?

Her ([25:16](#)):

Yeah.

Him ([25:16](#)):

Did I?

Her ([25:16](#)):

Yeah. For me connection, I wanted a friendship and then, we talk and connect on the emotional level first. That was your way of showing me that you loved me, but I didn't receive it that way.

Esther Perel ([25:42](#)):

But you also add, "It's not just I wanted you to just talk with me. I wanted you to be interested in me." But you were so busy making sure that I would be interested in you. You were so busy making sure to confirm that you will be wanted, you are lovable, that you didn't realize that you were rejecting her.

Him ([26:04](#)):

Yeah. I wasn't ever doing that saying in my own, and I was never doing anything that I was viewing it as, Oh, I'm choosing this over her, but I'm not comfortable bringing that to you for what it will bring up in you that... I'll just do it quietly over here.

Esther Perel ([26:23](#)):

You see, you both have been operating from your own internal logic, and it's been so powerful. It's been so many years. Each of you, consistent with your own logic, interpreting everything the other person does, from that logic. And it makes sense. From where you come from, it makes sense. And part of what I hear him say is, "I'll satisfy myself, that way that's taken care of. So I don't have to come to you to be rejected by you, and feel what I felt my entire childhood growing up, that nobody's going to want me."

Him ([26:59](#)):

She said it much better than I did.

Her ([27:01](#)):

[inaudible 00:27:01].

Him ([27:03](#)):

That was what I was trying to say. That was much...

Esther Perel ([27:06](#)):

The sad part is that each of you lives for 20 years feeling rejected by the other. So after years of his finding acceptance, in his own private erotics, she began to travel with his sister. They'd go to clubs, she'd hook up with strangers. They were a string of one nightstands. She makes a strong point of saying, "There was no penetrative sex." But hey, where does sex actually start? What was clear is that everybody had found their own source of acceptance, and it wasn't with each other. And at that moment, the conversation moved from talking about porn, to talking about cheating, infidelity, and betrayal. What did you learn through those experiences? What do you learn as a woman?

Her ([28:11](#)):

I mean, I knew that I was craving his attention, and I knew that that's something that I needed. And so, going on these trips and getting that attention, I felt like it just gave me a sense of, I still do have it, I still do about attraction. I am attractive to certain men, because I did not feel it from him. I more oftentimes think back of how ashamed I am of myself for letting myself do that. Because to me, it didn't mean anything. It was always a one time thing. There was drinking involved, intoxication. I went into it fully expecting to just get a break and to get some time away from the kids and just to myself.

Her ([29:30](#)):

And I remember leaving the trips, just so upset, that I didn't get that, that's not what it was. And I think I even came home and will tell you, "Please don't let me go on another trip with her. Just say no next time, so I don't have to." Because anytime I would say no, it was a push and manipulation or like, "Oh, I'll pay for it. I'll pay for everything." And I'm not giving excuses or anything of why I did what I did because I know I have my free agency, but I was just in a vulnerable state. And [inaudible 00:30:17] she knew that, and she in a way prayed upon that, I guess.

Esther Perel ([30:27](#)):

You experienced the same with your husband, and with your sister in law, that on some level, your sexuality ends up in the hands of the other person.

Her ([30:38](#)):

Oh yeah, I guess. Yeah. And I also feel bad because in a way, we both betrayed him. That's his sister, how could you do that to him also?

Esther Perel ([30:58](#)):

What she tells, is the plate of many women, who don't own their sexuality, and who find themselves, in an experience with where they feel preyed upon, where the other is the predator. Even her sister in law, she never really could own and see what she wanted. Her best she tried to say what she didn't want. And part of her process now, is to reclaim her sexuality and become the owner of her own eroticism. Do you see your whole experience as a negative experience?

Her ([31:54](#)):

I mean, no. I think we were kind of stuck, in our relationship, and what I was doing wasn't working, talking about it, talking about my needs and how I felt that I wasn't a priority, wasn't getting anywhere. I'm not saying that it was the best choice to make, to get unstuck, but...

Esther Perel ([32:29](#)):

It's affective.

Her ([32:31](#)):

Yeah. And then also, I mean, somewhat of a good thing is that he learned a from it, because we went to his parents and told them.

Him ([32:47](#)):

It's true.

Her ([32:49](#)):

And so I don't know if that would have ever happened.

Esther Perel ([32:53](#)):

Tell me.

Him ([32:56](#)):

That I was a product of an affair, and that's why I was always different. They didn't ever want me to feel like I wasn't theirs, so they never told me growing up, they always had some other story of like, "Oh, we just have more Indian in our family, and I just got the more Indian blood or whatever else." So, took them 32 years before they finally told me, because I went to my dad after finding about her, and I was like, "Dad, I got this. I don't know what to do or how I handle it." He kept telling me, "You stay with her, you continue to lover her." As a dad, I was like, "I don't know how I can do that. I feel so hurt. How would you handle it?" And he was just basically more like, "Well, how did you get here?" I don't think

my parents would have told me, otherwise. I'm pretty sure they would have both taken it to the grave. I've just been left to figure out whether it was true [inaudible 00:33:58].

Esther Perel ([33:59](#)):

What did it do to you, to have them actually spill it out?

Him ([34:04](#)):

I guess there's a childish part of me that was still wanting to hold on to, maybe I'm just this miracle baby, because my dad was an incredible man. He never once made me feel like I wasn't his own son.

Esther Perel ([34:20](#)):

Beautiful. Beautiful. And mom?

Him ([34:21](#)):

Mom the same way. They both love me unconditionally.

Esther Perel ([34:28](#)):

But you're the one traveling around life wondering why people will never love you.

Him ([34:33](#)):

Yes. Yeah.

Esther Perel ([34:36](#)):

And how do you square one and one?

Him ([34:38](#)):

I didn't really have any evidence to backup while that I didn't belong, because my family never made me feel I didn't, but I think I got the, I'm different and no one's going to want to be around me more from my slams.

Esther Perel ([34:52](#)):

And from the secret.

Him ([34:54](#)):

And probably from the secret that nobody wanted to talk about.

Esther Perel ([35:03](#)):

The tragic part here, is that in order for him not to feel different, which his parents saw as the ultimate expression of love, they denied his fundamental difference. They try to make love colorblind, rather than accept him, with his difference. Do you feel that you are more prepared in this moment, to take ownership over your sexuality, so that you don't find yourself each time in compromise situations of things that you kind of want, don't really want, have to get drunk to explain? What you know is that you don't want what they want, but it's not clear that you know what you want.

Her (35:59):

Yeah, that makes sense. And I would like to know [inaudible 00:36:03], to take ownership.

Esther Perel (36:07):

And how would that look? What would be some steps that you would take for that?

Her (36:12):

That's the thing, I feel like I don't know. I've let him know that I don't feel heard or respected.

Esther Perel (36:28):

Stop, because everything you say, is what you don't.

Him (36:32):

We had this conversation.

Esther Perel (36:36):

It's what you don't.

Her (36:39):

Yeah.

Esther Perel (36:40):

So what you want, is not expressed by what you don't want. So this is an affirmative statement. I want.

Her (36:52):

So I want to be heard. I want to feel respected, by you and the kids. I feel like there's a lack, which turns into me losing my cool and yelling, to be heard. I feel like that's the only way that I am heard is if I'm losing my shit. I hate that. I do not want to be like that, because that's how I grew up with my dad.

Esther Perel (37:40):

What is your background?

Her (37:43):

I was raised in a pretty strict LDS family, and I'm the baby of nine kids, so big family. Well, to follow the rules, get in trouble. My dad had a pretty bad temper, and I was scared, I don't want my kids to be scared of me. And he always tells me that they listened to me out of fear and they listened to him out of respect. I want to know how to get them to listen to me out of respect.

Esther Perel (38:30):

Can I ask you something? As = the youngest of nine, did you learn to make claims or everybody spoke for you?

Her (38:48):

I believe that everybody spoke for me. I've lost my voice, and like when I meet people, I'm always super quiet, and reserved, when in reality I'm super bubbly and funny. I don't know. I don't feel like people care to know me or hear me.

Esther Perel ([39:23](#)):

My husband doesn't care. My children don't care. No people don't care. His sister doesn't care. You two have a way of seeing the relationship world around you, from a very particular lens. None of these people respect me. None of these people listen to me. None of these people pay attention to me. None of these people know what I want, and I would love for them to be different with me. And I'm going to invite you to change that. I actually want to ask you something that's a little bit more difficult, is what do you want? Not what you want from others, because even when you yell in order to be heard, you feel like they pushed you to yell. Everybody's responsible, for your actions, but you.

Her ([40:29](#)):

Yeah. Maybe.

Esther Perel ([40:32](#)):

So...

Her ([40:34](#)):

Yes.

Esther Perel ([40:35](#)):

Go ahead.

Her ([40:38](#)):

Well, I would rather be more outgoing. I would rather just say what I want to say rather than fear how it's going to be taken or...

Esther Perel ([40:56](#)):

No. No. No.

Her ([40:57](#)):

Oh, sorry.

Esther Perel ([40:58](#)):

That's the other one.

Her ([41:03](#)):

I guess I want to be free of that. I want to feel free to be able to say what comes to my head, when it does.

Esther Perel ([41:12](#)):

I want you to take a pad. I want you to ask her 10 words, so that you develop your curiosity about her.

Him ([41:22](#)):

I want to say that too.

Her ([41:24](#)):

We did.

Esther Perel ([41:26](#)):

Good. You just take notes. You don't breathe down her neck.

Him ([41:30](#)):

Oh yeah.

Esther Perel ([41:30](#)):

You just record. If you want it too much, then won't be able to want, because she doesn't know how to want what you want and still feel that she owns it.

Him ([41:40](#)):

I guess, I [inaudible 00:41:40]. I would love to know like 10 things you want.

Esther Perel ([41:47](#)):

It's what you will do with each other. It's not just what you're going to promise you won't do with others. Ironically, the only other time they had had a deep, meaningful, honest conversation about their relationship, was in the immediate aftermath of their affairs, which is actually not uncommon. This was probably the second conversation, and that in itself, beckons for a third.

Announcer (Jesse) ([42:41](#)):

Esther Perel is the author of *Mating in Captivity*, and *The State of Affairs*, and also the host of the podcast, *How's Work*. To apply with your partner for a session for the podcast, or for show notes on each episode, go to [whereshouldwebegin.estherperel.com](http://whereshouldwebegin.estherperel.com)? *Where Should We begin*, with Esther Perel, is produced by Magnificent Noise, for Gimlet and Esther Perel productions. Our production staff includes Eric Nuzum, Eva Wolchover, Destry Sibley, Hiwote Gatana, and Olivia Nat. Recorded by Norika Okabe. Kristen Mueller is our engineer. Original music, and additional production by Paul Schneider. And the executive producers of *Where Should We Begin*, are Esther Perel, and Jesse Baker. We would also like to thank Nazanin Rafsanjan, Kourtney Hamilton, Lisa Schnell, Nick Oxenhorn, Dr. Guy Winch, and Jack Saul.