

# HOW'S WORK S2 MODELS FINAL

**Voiceover:** How's Work 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.

[00:00:28]**Esther Perel:** Do you wanna to call each other by your names or do you want to keep that anonymous and say you and she and-

[00:00:36]**Jane:** Let's try with you and she.

[00:00:37]**Fi:** Yes.

[00:00:38]**Jane:** Um, yeah.

[00:00:39]**Esther Perel:** Do you have aliases?

[00:00:40]**Fi:** I had one because I joined new agency that was like, okay, now you need to have a new name because you were already in Paris and they know you by your first name and we want to rebrand you. So they called me Fi. It's a nickname, not many people use.

[00:00:54]**Esther Perel:** Okay, Fi. And you?

[00:00:57]**Jane:** I don't really have any.

[00:00:59]**Esther Perel:** You wanna invent one? I mean, when you model you're so many other people anyway, pick one [laughs].

[00:01:06]**Fi:** Um, Jane, no.

**Jane:** I mean, that would be easy and something that's not too noticeable, yeah, Jane.

[00:01:16]**Esther Perel:** Okay. Jane and Fi.

They were teenagers discovered, thrown into a profession that took them way beyond their years. They didn't choose, they were chosen. Once chosen, they had to prove their devotion. And this devotion is right at the center of our conversation, as they are talking about wanting to leave the profession. Leaving the field is very, very difficult when you have sacrificed years to making it.

So, many people come to me to talk about how to leave a partner. You are coming both of you to talk to me about how to leave a profession.

[00:02:17]**Jane:** Yes.

[00:02:18]**Esther Perel:** With whom will you have had a tumultuous relationship.

[00:02:22]**Jane:** Such a tumultuous relationship.

[00:02:24]**Esther Perel:** Right. Since adolescence. So this is a long-term relationship.

[00:02:28] **Jane:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:02:28] **Esther Perel:** So that's an interesting thing. We came to discuss with you how we can leave our modeling careers and why it has been so difficult for us to do so. Would that summarize it?

[00:02:40] **Jane:** I think so. Yes, for me it would.

[00:02:44] **Fi:** And take the good things and, and not take the bad with us.

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

[00:02:49] **Fi:** Yeah.

[00:02:49] **Esther Perel:** Is leaving, never modeling again, or is leaving, changing your relationship to modeling?

[00:02:59] **Jane:** I think it's the second for me. Yeah, I would like to know how to do the leaving if I want to, because I feel like now I don't.

[00:03:07] **Esther Perel:** What's the hook for you?

[00:03:09] **Jane:** I, I don't know. I've been trying to find this out and I don't, what I've come to think is that it's maybe that I never managed to do the industry on my terms. So I feel like every time I came back with new tools, like a new education or new ideas, and I was like, "Okay, I'm gonna do it my way. I'm gonna manage my career. I'm gonna talk about where I want to go." And I had all these ideas of how my career would be. But every time I would be going back into the, the mode of a chess piece where I was being put all over the globe, wherever they needed me or wanted me. But it was never, I never felt like an actor in the process. Or like, for some reason having kids is the only way where agents give you the agency to, to manage your agenda [laughs] which is funny.

[00:03:54] **Esther Perel:** So this is the legitimate way for a woman to stop being a model is to say, "I am now on my way to becoming a mother."

[00:04:04] **Jane:** Yeah. Or to at least say modeling is not my main priority right now.

[00:04:08] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:04:08] **Jane:** I always feel like it has to be all in or nothing.

[00:04:11] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:04:12] **Jane:** Yeah.

[00:04:13] **Esther Perel:** How about for you?

[00:04:14] **Fi:** Yeah. I second, that. It's interesting, I mean, I never thought about that, but for me, now that I'm transitioning into motherhood myself, why is it still difficult for me to quit modeling? And it's this fake promise of the next big job is just around the corner, or one more job, one more easy job, you know, how nice would it be if I will be able to work as a model once a month with only all the pros and none of the cons of, you know, having to be ashamed, of making sure your skin

looks good, making sure you hair looks good. And then, if a job comes, you know, you always need to be available. And for the agencies, it's like modeling first.

[00:04:58] **Esther Perel:** How do they indoctrinate you with that? There's a thousand other girls who would be clamoring to do this job if you don't really want it more than anything.

[00:05:12] **Jane:** I think definitely what you said, so firstly, that there's this constant, this lurking idea of there are so many women and girls who would want to be in my position, or would want to be in your position. So, how dare you say no to something now? Secondly, I also think there's a big culture of, of creating the idea that girls who say no to these things are difficult. And once you're difficult and placed in a box of difficult, they just won't put you forward to work anymore. I've had it so often that bookers would say to me, "Oh, she's just always asking about her schedules. She's always canceling on things. She's so difficult to work with," yeah.

[00:05:53] **Fi:** What I noticed after all of those years of modeling that knowing that I could set my own boundaries, especially with, uh, you, you don't always have a place where you can change privately. I never knew how that influenced me, that it was so difficult for me to feel my own boundaries within that and that it was also okay not to feel okay with it. That I could ask for a changing room or a private area where not everyone else said could see you change.

[00:06:21] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:06:21] **Jane:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:06:22] **Fi:** You get a comment of, "Yeah, let's not be difficult with changing." And like, it's my body. And I don't, apparently don't get to have any agency.

[00:06:32] **Esther Perel:** I'm hearing two things. Um, anything that you ask for that has to do with boundaries or my body still is mine, just about anything that would say, I am not submitted to my industry, runs the bias of being considered not committed enough and difficult.

[00:07:00] **Fi:** Yes.

[00:07:00] **Jane:** Yes.

[00:07:06] **Esther Perel:** Difficult is often a euphemism for that other word that starts with a B. Difficult means you're not obedient. You must not really appreciate the opportunity that is given to you. Other people would just be so appreciative and so thankful you are making demands, who gives you that, right? But when you are a teenager who on the one hand is still in an obedient position and you are also trying to claim your agency as a young model, that becomes very complicated.

[00:07:44] **Fi:** That also beauty is, is luck. I mean, I can't, I can't change the way my face looks. Well, you can, but you know.

[00:08:01] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Tell me about that, it's like, the, the thing that I'm building this whole life upon, is something that I had nothing to do with. I mean, I do in the way that I control that I try to improve on it, and keep my weight down and all of that. But the, the raw material of it-

[00:08:21] **Jane:** Hmm.

[00:08:22] **Esther Perel:** ... was just handed down by the heavens and by nature.

[00:08:26] **Fi:** It's, it's such an interesting dynamic of wanting to have control over something that is uncontrollable.

[00:08:32] **Esther Perel:** Hmm.

[00:08:33] **Fi:** It always needs to be perfect. You always need to have perfect skin, perfect hair, perfect body. While, especially as a woman, sometimes your body changes within a month. I get constantly judged by everything. And that, that was very difficult for me, yeah.

[00:08:52] **Jane:** Hmm.

[00:08:53] **Esther Perel:** Do you think that, the obsession with weight is one of the counter forces to that? It's like the one thing supposedly you, that you can control?

[00:09:06] **Fi:** Well, I never managed, so I don't know, not for me.

[00:09:11] **Esther Perel:** You never managed or would you also say you never really wanted to? Is there, is there a part of you that wished you could have, or is there a part of you that says my healthy side is the one that actually didn't submit to these draconian sizes that they were wanting for me?

[00:09:31] **Fi:** For me, definitely my healthy side. When I was 16 or 17, I once got into a period where, because of stress, I lost weight and I was so curious, okay, do I lose more weight? Can I lose more? And, uh, I would have, I think it was only a week where I would only have dinner. And then at one point I was so dizzy during the day that. I felt, okay, this isn't healthy. This is not what I want. Later, I basically tried every diet, every workout, everything they advise me to do to reach those sizes, but never in an unhealthy way.

[00:10:08] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative]. What about you Jane?

[00:10:11] **Jane:** Hmm. No, definitely. It, it was an eternal struggle 'cause I had the fortune of always being told I'm slim. So I used to defend like, 'No, I don't have to lose weight for this job.' And then at some point I did have to. Um, but I never really went that far because there was always a side of me saying like, "This is not the way bodies should look." And more in, in a internal struggle with the measurements that, that, that were put on me. Um, I never had like an eating disorder, but I was definitely like a lot of my daily thinking was around meals and food and making sure that I could eat healthy, eat the kind of food that I had to eat to maintain my body in social situations and stuff like that.

[00:10:57] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:10:59] **Fi:** And you get, what I notice is it's not an eating disorder, but distorted eating behavior and distorted body image. I mean, at one point I was wearing size extra small and I was still thinking I was fat.

[00:11:09] **Jane:** Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah. I remember this moment of coming back from being in studies and they'd asked me to come to a show in London. So I came in, I was looking around coming from this vision of seeing, you know, student bodies, which are maybe not the healthiest, but, and then seeing how thin people were around me. And I was like shocked, as like I, people see me like this too. Like I belong to this, this group and I used to find this normal bodies.

[00:11:37] **Esther Perel:** You know, if I go back to the, the original question about-

[00:11:41] **Jane:** Hmm.

[00:11:42] **Esther Perel:** ... how do we say goodbye, or how do we change our relationship to modeling? I was thinking, what happens for you internally that keeps you from leaving this industry? And is this something that is more akin to you? Or do you think that there is something about this profession that makes it hard to leave?

[00:12:06] **Jane:** I think Fi already touched upon this thing of how, uh, there's always this feeling of maybe it's an internalized idea of, it's an easy job and I can win the lottery again and make money in an easy way. So there's always the idea of like, I might get that one job that I've always wanted. I think for me, it's also, I started doing this when I was 15 and uh, for the most part of my life, I've been resisting the identity of a model or to be a model meant to be dumb and to just be pretty. So I always felt very defensive against the label of model.

[00:12:47] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You were just presenting it as I'm doing this for a short-

[00:12:51] **Jane:** On the side, yeah.

[00:12:52] **Esther Perel:** On the side. Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:12:53] **Jane:** This is something that doesn't define me. But then as I grew older, I think you realized that, you know, what you do does define you to a degree and, and maybe letting go of that and just becoming, like, Jane is scary.

[00:13:08] **Esther Perel:** How do you identify in a positive way with a profession that is at once revered and degraded? If you are a pianist, you can fully identify as a pianist positively, internally, as well as externally. You value it. Society values it. But when you are a model, society idealizes you and devalues you both at the same time. Puts you on the front of the magazine. And at the same time says, pretty and dumb. And therefore, she diminishes the importance of this career for her, which on the one hand she's deeply attached to in a complicated way. But on the other hand, she keeps saying, I'm just doing this for a while. That isn't all of what I am. I'm not gonna do this forever because I have other aspirations that are more serious, more hefty, more rounded.

[00:14:18] And this whole conversation surrounds the multiple experiences of ambivalence about their profession, leaving it, staying in it. And the other choices that they're making instead of it. How about you?

[00:14:41] **Fi:** Um, it's uh, it's like an addictive relationship. You have a high highs and low lows? The highs are the travel, the living in New York, making easy money,

going to these beautiful places makes it so difficult to, to quit. And that was the other thing I was thinking about is, after all of the times I called my parents crying after they measured me at the agency and it was still not good enough. They always said, "Keep on going, keep on going. You can do this." And I would just go for it. So I was thinking maybe that was like giving up.

[00:15:22] **Esther Perel:** Ah, you don't quit.

[00:15:24] **Fi:** Yes.

[00:15:24] **Esther Perel:** Okay. So it's that value of, we don't quit.

[00:15:29] **Fi:** Yes.

[00:15:30] **Esther Perel:** And what happens if you say, I want a change.

[00:15:36] **Fi:** They would support that as well.

[00:15:37] **Esther Perel:** Okay. And would you support it?

[00:15:41] **Fi:** I want to.

[00:15:44] **Esther Perel:** Because inside of you, you think somewhere I am quitting. Do you think going to study psychology is choosing something you care less about so that if you're not as good at it, then you won't have to be so crushed?

[00:15:56] **Fi:** Right, could you say that one more time?

[00:16:00] **Esther Perel:** [Laughs] You see, when you have a passion, it could be art. It could be modeling. You know, you are so identified with what you do that if a job doesn't go well, it's not the job that didn't go well, it's something that's missing with you. If you choose something, which you are slightly less identified, it's sometimes the difference between a profession and a vocation, then a few things don't go so well, you don't feel like it's such an intimate statement about you.

[00:16:37] **Fi:** Yeah. But that's so difficult with this work because like, it's the way you look and it's your body. So it's so incredibly personal that if you don't make it, it's it's my fault.

[00:16:50] **Esther Perel:** That's right.

[00:16:51] **Fi:** I haven't been good enough.

[00:16:52] **Esther Perel:** So the question is, when you go to study psychology or anything else, do you feel like you chosen kind of an easy way out?

[00:17:05] **Fi:** It's it's the other story, you always have, like, "Oh, if this doesn't work out, I'll just go back home and study." Um-

[00:17:12] **Esther Perel:** But in your mind, if I was truly successful at modeling, I would not be studying psychology.

[00:17:18] **Fi:** ... Yes.

[00:17:19] **Esther Perel:** Right? So this is fraught, and, and it's not the psychology. It's that you choose to study. The fact that you choose to study in your mind is predicated on, things don't go well, I have something to fall back onto. And so this new career becomes my hiding place.

[00:17:44] **Fi:** Yes.

[00:17:45] **Esther Perel:** And so I import into my new career also an ambivalence. I'm here, but I'm only really here because I couldn't really do it as well as I wanted to there. So you may leave modeling, but you won't really have joined the new career.

[00:18:08] **Fi:** This is very difficult to process. It's a very-

[00:18:11] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:18:11] **Fi:** ... I, I, what I notice I'm like tensing up, it's getting quiet inside it's uh-

[00:18:18] **Esther Perel:** Yes. Because what stands out for me is the conflictual relationship to the choice. And what I would really hope is that you not leave one ambivalent relationship with a profession to create another ambivalent relationship with another profession. Behind it somewhere it is, I couldn't really be with the person I really wanted to be, so I married the other one.

[00:18:49] **Fi:** Yeah. And it's so, so difficult because I always try to fight against making modeling part of my identity. And then now coming to the point where, no, it was part, it was, realizing it was more part of my identity than I was willing to let it consciously.

[00:19:11] **Esther Perel:** What would you say, Jane, on this, is, is public health-

[00:19:16] **Jane:** Oh, it's my dream.

[00:19:18] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:19:18] **Jane:** Yeah, I quit at a high point I think in my career to do this, but I wanna hug Fi, but, we're really far away.

[00:19:28] **Esther Perel:** Give her the hug.

[00:19:29] **Jane:** I'm giving you the hug.

[00:19:32] **Esther Perel:** Exactly [laughs] what I said to her was, she got stiff-

[00:19:37] **Esther Perel:** ... because on some level it landed.

[00:19:41] **Jane:** Yeah, I saw that. I saw that Fi.

[00:19:45] **Fi:** Yeah. That's difficult because psychology, what I do now is, I love it so much as well. So then it's, it almost feels as if I started doing it for the, for the wrong reason.

[00:19:56] **Esther Perel:** So what? That doesn't mean that you continue for the same reason.

[00:20:01]Fi: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:20:03]Esther Perel: That's just how it started. But part of what we're talking about is, what are the high stakes professions and how we then sometimes choose a lower stake profession where we don't feel like we are set up with the same kind of anxiety about making it or not making it. Um, when it started from you saying, "On some level we don't quit in my family and I was encouraged to continue because we have an edifice of not quitting." If I said, I want to change, my family would support me. But how do I say I wanna change without it not being experienced as quitting? Because if I leave would I quit, then my chance of psychology is predicated on this sense of failure, which is why Jane started by saying, "I left on a high note." She responded exactly to that thing. And then we cut you off so you can continue.

[00:21:10]Jane: Uh-

[00:21:11]Esther Perel: But you can talk to her too before [crosstalk 00:21:15].

[00:21:14]Jane: ... I wanted to say, I wanted to ask you what then defines success for you in modeling Fi because you managed to have a living wage and like you traveled the world, you saw a lot of things. So then, then what is your definition of success in this industry?

[00:21:31]Fi: Well, I remember the, the first, the first four years of full-time modeling, um, they said, "Oh, you could do Vogue," and you know, "Oh, you would be perfect for Ralph Lauren," and, and not getting any of those.

[00:21:45]Esther Perel: Hmm.

[00:21:45]Fi: Um, what happened to me as well as after those, I think after three and a half years of constantly trying to, uh, get the measurements needed, and just pushing my own boundaries, I was so tired and unhappy. I just like, uh, that's when, that's when I quit or what that's when I said, "Okay, I'm gonna study because I'm so unhappy."

[00:22:09]Jane: It's funny because we've had such different careers, but like, I still recognize a lot of the same feelings. Like, I did get to what they promised me, but still the structure stays the same. Like, you're still fighting for clients all the time. There's no sort of counting on being rebooked by people. And, uh, a lot of the insecurity stays same, no matter what level you're at. Um, and like, I also got really unhappy, that's why I was like, "I think it's time to go and do the thing that I've been maybe a bit scared to do in the last year, but actually really want to do, which is study."

[00:22:46]Esther Perel: And what's that experience like for both of you? Because in a way, you had different kinds of adolescence, you, you became adults first-

[00:22:58]Jane: Hmm.

[00:22:59]Esther Perel: ... and now you're going back to being students.

[00:23:02]Jane: Yeah. I felt there were a lot of gaps. Like I'd grown up in, in, you know, um, miles in, in one way. But then, on relationships, for instance, I was, I don't feel like I, I, I was as mature in my relationships as I was in, uh, knowing how

to do taxes and how to find an apartment, or to figure out how a stove worked. Like, I think I had all of the practical stuff down-

[00:23:29] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:23:29] **Jane:** ... and a lot of the boundary setting, a lot of the also exploration, I think a little bit.

[00:23:37] **Esther Perel:** And so, what you're saying is that, in a profession where you often have very little boundaries, it creates a challenge in more intimate settings?

[00:23:48] **Jane:** I think so.

[00:23:49] **Esther Perel:** Tell me more.

[00:23:51] **Jane:** Um, we were talking a little bit about nudity and how there's no boundaries with that. And also I think it's the same with pain. You start to almost, I think I started to distance myself from my body because it was often uncomfortable either because I was more naked than I wanted to be or because I was in clothes that were uncomfortable, or it was cold or it was too hot. So I think I really started to distance myself from the way I was feeling, and that also played over into relationships. So I didn't really, for a long time experience a lot of pleasure from my body either. So for a while I even thought I had something like, um, how do you call it again? Um, where you, when you're not at all in touch with your body and you feel like you're constantly in a sort of cloud, um, disassociation.

[00:24:36] **Fi:** Disassociation.

[00:24:37] **Jane:** Yeah, for me, it felt like that, like I didn't, I was going through the day and I was, but I felt like I was more often somewhere in a cloud or somewhere nearby than, than really in my body and experiencing myself.

[00:24:51] **Esther Perel:** How does the experience of being touched the whole day, your hair, your clothes, your shoes, your feet, your, um, how does it influence the way you then experience touch outside of modeling?

[00:25:06] **Jane:** I think, uh, I mean now if I go to shoots, so, because I've been, I'm in a lovely relationship now where we have a lot of trust and like, also through dance, like I've rekind- like rekindled this connection with my body. Uh, I love dancing and I think that's been super therapeutic for me.

[00:25:25] **Esther Perel:** What a great idea.

[00:25:28] **Jane:** Oh, it's so good. I always recommend it to models. It's great also for posing, but also to rekindle. Um, but yeah, now I find it so hard to be on set, to be constantly touched and to, to be like, to have people in my space the whole time without negotiating this. And I do feel that for many people in industry it's changed also, like we have the Me Too movements, which overthrew a lot. So I have a lot more, like lately I worked and someone was asking my permission to tuck in a shirt. And I was like, "Oh, this is so pleasant. I can tell you it's okay." [laughs] And it also felt okay then, but, um-

[00:26:03] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:26:04] **Jane:** ...yeah, I think I, I was closing it off so much, the touching on set that also it closed off the touching when I wasn't on set. I think to distinguish those two is almost impossible or at least for me at that age, it was.

[00:26:19] **Esther Perel:** What changed it?

[00:26:21] **Jane:** Dance [laughs] definitely dance.

[00:26:30] **Esther Perel:** It's an amazing thing. Here are these women whose entire career is about their bodies. To then hear them talk about this, how dissociated they are for those very bodies. How much they can't separate the touch from a loved one, from the touch on the set, and how much dance give her an autonomous venue to reconnect with her sensuality, with her senses, with movement that is not about performance, but about experience.

[00:27:14] **Fi:** I completely recognize being cut off from the body, but what changed the most reasonable was last night, uh, where I was looking at my pregnant body and I loved it so much. And I felt so pretty, even though my belly was big and you know, I gained a bit of weight, but I just felt so beautiful. "I was like, wow, this is, this is, this is womanhood."

[00:27:34] **Esther Perel:** Hmm.

[00:27:35] **Fi:** Um-

[00:27:35] **Esther Perel:** So if you allow me a little grammatic editing.

[00:27:35] **Fi:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:27:36] **Esther Perel:** It's not, I felt so beautiful even though I was pregnant.

[00:27:43] **Fi:** Is that, that's how I should say it?

[00:27:53] **Esther Perel:** No. That's how you said it. It's like, despite my being pregnant, I still found myself really beautiful.

[00:28:00] **Fi:** Yeah [laughs].

[00:28:01] **Esther Perel:** If you change the grammar, you may change the meaning.

[00:28:05] **Fi:** Yeah. Wow, bad habits die hard. Huh?

[00:28:07] **Esther Perel:** Hmm.

[00:28:08] **Fi:** Uh, being pregnant makes me feel very beautiful.

[00:28:14] **Esther Perel:** Beautiful. Very nice.

[00:28:16] **Fi:** Yeah. With the belly and all of the other, you know, the, the bigger boobs. All of the other changes, [inaudible 00:28:24], yeah, it makes me feel really beautiful and very like a woman.

[00:28:30] **Esther Perel:** You know, there are artists who let's say they play music.

[00:29:11] **Fi:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:29:12] **Esther Perel:** And for a while, played in big concert halls. And then at some point, she, he, the band, they, uh, were no longer on the top of the charts. So, equivalent of you're no longer on the front cover of Vogue. But that doesn't mean they stop playing, there are many, many bands who once used to feel big halls that now do small venues and small clubs, but they continue to play. And so there's often this conversation. If, when it's no longer big, you should stop or can you still find tremendous joy in doing small venues and being thankful that you've been able to play for 40 years?

[00:29:57] **Jane:** Yeah.

[00:29:58] **Esther Perel:** I like the metaphor. It works for me, but I'm not from the industry. You have to tell me if it carries over.

[00:30:04] **Jane:** I, it works for me. I wonder if it works for my agent. I mean, no, she's super supportive, but if it works in the sense that, how the industry responds to it-

[00:30:14] **Esther Perel:** Yes.

[00:30:15] **Jane:** ... it's worth trying out, I think. And that would be nice. 'Cause I do, I mean, uh, my body just knows how to be in front of the camera after all this time. Like, there's a kind of playfulness and creativity that I do like about being in front of the camera.

[00:30:31] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:30:31] **Jane:** I think also I really appreciate, especially now that I'm more in academia, the short reward span of modeling, you know, in one day you create a product that's then done. And I don't think there's many jobs in which you have a one day cycle, which is something I really like.

[00:30:49] **Fi:** Yeah, I never thought about it in that sense, 'cause it was always for me, it, it was a step down and I would still have these high hopes. Uh, how do you say that?

[00:30:59] **Esther Perel:** Um, [foreign language 00:31:02].

[00:31:04] **Fi:** [foreign language 00:31:05].

[00:31:04] **Esther Perel:** That you wanna keep the highest standards.

[00:31:06] **Fi:** Yes, exactly, yeah, pregnancy brain [laughs]. So I still want to maintain those highest standards, but thinking about adding it's like if I can still do a job, once it comes up, and also maybe to finally accept that side of me as well, that likes to be creative-

[00:31:29] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:31:29] **Fi:** ... and that I can be both. I can be a model or someone that is viewed for their looks. And then on the other side, be someone that's viewed for their thoughts.

[00:31:40] **Esther Perel:** So the, the personal memory that was spurred for me and I, I really didn't think about it until now when we are talking together, I had arrived in New York, late 20s, and I had worked in the theater and I had studied psychology at the same time. And I kept thinking, it's a choice. It's an either, or. And the best thing I found was a therapist who said to me, why do you have to choose, bring the qualities of one into your life of the other? And she liberated me. My life is bigger than just my profession. And I want in my life a number of things-

[00:32:22] **Fi:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:32:23] **Esther Perel:** ... you don't have to choose. There are lots of people who do more than one thing. Modeling is a part of your identity at this point. It's not, this one leaving that identity and going to find another, you grew up with it. You need an agent who accepts it. And I could imagine agents who only want diehards, but I could also imagine agents who like to have a stable of a few people who they can use whenever. Who they're not nearly as responsible for, you know, who have a life away from them, but they enjoy every once in a while to be called in. Is that realistic, or am I totally off the charts?

[00:33:04] **Fi:** I think is realistic if your center doesn't depend on it. And if it's really just for fun that you wanna do it once every so often, if something comes up.

[00:33:12] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative]. As I listened to Fi I identified with her desire to start a new profession, but stay connected to her career as a model. But I missed it, because it wasn't that she wanted to be able to do both. She actually wanted to be able to separate herself from the darker side of modeling, from the place, from which she experiences herself as a casualty of the profession in a constant state of self-evaluation. Shall we talk money, that's a piece we haven't really touched.

[00:34:03] **Jane:** Oh, I was gonna, I was gonna ask something else.

[00:34:06] **Esther Perel:** Yeah, Jane, go ahead.

[00:34:07] **Jane:** I, I, I understand this for myself, and it feels right, but I do have a lot of difficulty with the industry and how much I feel I should, or shouldn't be part of that. It's such an abusive industry for many people. And then, it's also so close to escorting at times, I've seen a lot of people go really bad in this industry, like eating disorders, you know, mental health issues. And, sometimes, uh, it then almost becomes for me, like is my personal enjoyment of something bigger than the concerns that I have.

[00:34:41] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:34:42] **Jane:** And I think we're both like Fi and I are trying to work on improving these industries, but like, it's a, it's a really dark one for many. Like I've had the, the racehorse version of it.

[00:34:55] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:34:55] **Jane:** I mean, it goes all the way back to, to factory workers. Like, uh, I've done brands that I now wouldn't really wanna model for anymore because of

their ethics personally. I don't, I don't wanna be responsible for someone having a non-living wage or getting poisoned from like coloring on clothes. Maybe it's too big of a burden to take on for me personally. But I do find that something that the industry is a bit frivolous about. But models are my niche-

[00:35:24] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:35:25] **Jane:** ... so that's something that I can affect and maybe the other people on sets. Um-

[00:35:29] **Esther Perel:** And how much is there voice among models to change some of these norms?

[00:35:37] **Jane:** ... Well, the issue I think is that we're very isolated. There are voices every once in a while, but there's little collective voice, it's growing. Social media has helped, but, uh, you almost have to pull everyone in one by one. And like, there's not many connectors.

[00:35:55] **Fi:** Well sometimes it feels as if the agencies are holding the girls that wanna reach out to the younger girls to help them, that they don't like it when girls talk amongst each other, or exchange information, because that could weaken their position.

[00:36:11] **Esther Perel:** Hmm.

[00:36:11] **Fi:** If they stay in control, and control the message that the younger models get from them, it's safer for them. I see you smiling, Jane.

[00:36:22] **Jane:** Yeah. I was thinking about something else, which is sort of unrelated, but also related. I remember coming back to New York after I'd studied, and I was seeing new agencies because I wanted to leave my old one. And there was this one agent who I was being interviewed by and they were like, "Why do all these models leave? And then think they can come back." I was like, you know, I was 21 and I was being put away by this guy of like 65. And he was just like, "How dare you even think that there would still be an industry left for you to come back to?" [laughs] I was like, uh, I think I actually said that, I felt that I was now more able to pick up on cues they were giving me on set because I'd actually read the books and I knew the movies and I could talk back-

[00:37:10] **Esther Perel:** Hmm.

[00:37:10] **Jane:** ... because I had the knowledge to be an adult on set also. And that I could put more of myself into it because I understood myself better. But, uh, I don't think that really landed. 'Cause they, they never asked me back.

[00:37:25] **Fi:** It's not an industry where you're really allowed to make any mistakes.

[00:37:28] **Esther Perel:** It's also an industry where you are meant to elicit the desires of others, while you have to inhabit the restrictions in you.

[00:37:35] **Jane:** Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

[00:37:37] **Fi:** Yeah. And that's, and that's the model you grew up in.

[00:37:41] **Esther Perel:** How does this influence at this moment, the way you learn to express your desires? Because we started to talk with Jane before about touch, but I'm thinking even more broadly, how do you deal with things that are not part of the code of discipline of what is good and not good for you? Food being one of them, sex being another one, staying up late, how do you give yourself permission? How do you let yourself be loved by a boyfriend that isn't looking at you on a magazine page?

[00:38:14] **Jane:** It's funny. 'Cause I was thinking about that actually that we have, uh, two types that kind of coming into the industry, the ones that, uh, hyper control themselves, which I think Fi was, but I too, like, I wouldn't go out late and I wouldn't go out partying. And then you have the ones that just go and they go to all the parties and they stay out late. They still go to work and it's all fine [laughs] but me that was never the way I manage it.

[00:38:37] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:38:38] **Jane:** Um, I think it was so quite controlled, yeah.

[00:38:43] **Esther Perel:** It's so funny because you're answering me about boundaries and I'm asking you about permissions.

[00:38:49] **Jane:** Oh, that's funny.

[00:38:50] **Esther Perel:** I mean, I understand that there are two, uh, ways that, that some ma- many models will behave is [inaudible 00:38:57] control and restriction.

[00:38:59] **Jane:** Yeah.

[00:38:59] **Esther Perel:** But I'm asking you, how you allow yourself to let go, how you give permission to yourself, how you let yourself be touched is one, but also how you let yourself be loved, how you let yourself experience pleasure. Um, especially given that so much of what you do is to create pleasure for those who look at you.

[00:39:20] **Fi:** I think I'm like a 10% good at it.

[00:39:24] **Esther Perel:** I would definitely say go dancing.

[00:39:28] **Jane:** Yes.

[00:39:28] **Esther Perel:** You know, preferably not in front of a mirror.

[00:39:31] **Fi:** That's how I learned to pose.

[00:39:36] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:39:37] **Fi:** I would just put it on, put music on, and then dance in front of the mirror so I could see my, the way my body would move.

[00:39:44] **Esther Perel:** Yes. So I could see how I look. But the more I looked at how I looked and the more I imagined that how other people want me to look and look at my look, et cetera, the whole thing becomes so externalized that I have very little idea of what I'm feeling on the inside.

[00:39:59]Jane: Yes.

[00:40:00]Esther Perel: What happens when I just, when I give myself over to my own pleasure to my own mounting sensation without, without the eyes?

[00:40:11]Fi: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I have that when I eat really good food.

[00:40:14]Esther Perel: Okay. And can you eat really good food without all the critique and the evaluation afterwards?

[00:40:23]Fi: Yes.

[00:40:24]Esther Perel: Good.

[00:40:25]Fi: Food is not an issue anymore.

[00:40:26]Esther Perel: Wonderful.

[00:40:27]Fi: Yeah. Good food and good wine.

[00:40:30]Esther Perel: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you understand, I'm talking about play. Play is unselfconscious. If you're measuring, watching, controlling, evaluating, you're not playing.

[00:40:41]Fi: Yeah.

[00:40:43]Esther Perel: You, you're practicing a discipline of some sort, but it's not about play and pleasure.

[00:40:49]Fi: I love the more of that [laughs].

[00:40:51]Esther Perel: [laughs] Yes. Because I think that you will be able to keep modeling going if it becomes that source of pleasure as, as well. I don't have to leave it to change my relationship to it.

[00:41:03]Jane: Yeah.

[00:41:03]Esther Perel: What I enjoy is the movement. There's something very creative about it, you know, and artful and, um, and powerful then I'm sure the money is a piece of it as well. It does give, it gives you freedom.

[00:41:19]Jane: So much freedom.

[00:41:20]Esther Perel: It gives you freedom.

[00:41:21]Jane: Yeah. It's so sad that it's still the only industry where women are paid more than men, together with escorts or sex workers. But yeah, I, I definitely appreciate the freedom that it's given me in my life.

[00:41:37]Esther Perel: What have we not touched?

[00:41:39]Jane: I think that part-

[00:41:40]Esther Perel: Money.

[00:41:41]Jane: ... Freedom.

[00:41:42] **Esther Perel:** Freedom [laughs].

[00:41:44] **Fi:** [laughs].

[00:41:46] **Jane:** Yeah. I think I have a weird relationship with money, which worries me sometimes. 'Cause I, when I was 17, I think I started making more money than my parents who were both doctors. For me, the abstraction of money in this industry is a really interesting one 'cause they call numbers out to you. And they're of such a degree that you can really fathom them, the touchableness of it. Like at 16, I was making so much more money than my friends who were doing, you know, like a, a, a little side jobs somewhere in a cafe. Uh, and I was lucky that I still have it because I also so many, many around me respond to it with, uh, "Oh, this is going to be forever. And I'll just spend it." I've seen so much money spent and wasted. Uh, it's given me freedom to make choices now, which is really nice, but I still, I'm worried that it will run out and I actually don't know how to manage it properly sometimes.

[00:42:39] **Esther Perel:** Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's an interesting dilemma also that in a job that's a one day, where you can make money for months. The regular job where you go and you work every day and get a little bit for the end of the month is a very different reality.

[00:43:01] **Jane:** Yeah. But it makes more sense, 'cause we wouldn't get paid per job. You would get paid months and months later. And there would be a bulk sum of all these things combined and deducted and added and flights would be gone and model's apartments. So it's so intransparent that, I, I never knew what was mine, what was the agency's? So it never felt real. [crosstalk 00:43:26].

[00:43:27] **Fi:** Yeah, i wanna actually-

[00:43:28] **Jane:** Go ahead Fi.

[00:43:29] **Fi:** That's interesting. I always ask, like, what's my fee for the day and I have bookers email me back saying, "Oh yeah, you're always so funny. You always ask for your day rate." I was like, "Why is that funny? That should be a standard thing in your email, when you send me the booking confirmation, this is the money you make."

[00:43:50] **Jane:** But also that you're put in the position of having to ask-

[00:43:53] **Fi:** Yeah, and being seen as difficult because I asked like, what's my wage.

[00:43:57] **Jane:** Yeah. And I think also the, sometimes the reward of what you do against how much you work for it, is so weird. So there'll be a super tough day and you get paid nothing. And then there's a super easy day, and it's really well rewarded and it just always seemed, um, almost like a monopoly money, you know? 'Cause it couldn't be real, because I didn't put the effort in that was rewarded with such immense sums. So I always found that one really strange as well.

[00:44:27] **Esther Perel:** Um, is there anything we didn't touch on?

[00:44:32] **Jane:** No, not that I can think of, for me.

[00:44:34] **Esther Perel:** What about you Fi? Because I think the thing that I said to you about psychology, where you basically froze on me, if you think that you chose a profession because you feel like you didn't really make it in the other one, and this is a fallback on some level you will be left with, I did this because I couldn't really do the other thing. Versus I did the other thing, and it didn't fully take me to the places where I had been promised as a teenage girl. You know, they promised me I would be the next, you know, star of [inaudible 00:45:11] and all of this stuff. It's like Cinderella stories they told me. And as I matured, I realized that may not happen, but there's a number of other things in there that I find really very captivating. And, uh, and I'm gonna create actually a life that's a patchwork of a number of different things.

[00:45:31] **Fi:** Yeah. For me, it's the adding. 'Cause I came into this conversation thinking, okay, there's this pain I still feel surrounding modeling. And this negative view I have of it. And I feel lighter. And if I can look back upon it with learning opportunities, rather than pain about not having been able to make it and not view it as quitting, but as adding something else after my model days. Now I feel like the author instead of the victim.

[00:46:03] **Esther Perel:** Good. What about you Jane?

[00:46:06] **Jane:** Um, I'm still thinking a lot about the financial parts [laughs]. Um, it's partly about, uh, taking ownership of what I've done I think. It's partly, what you said, like a reward for my abilities at that time apparently [laughs]. But also, I liked the idea of playing for smaller venues that I once frequented. It's a nice feeling. Um, and it's something that I think I can try to play it at my terms now. And if the industry doesn't want that, that's also okay for me. But if there's the occasional like comeback show, that will be quite fun. Um-

[00:46:49] **Esther Perel:** So I think you have your feet on the ground both of you, very much. But it's a tough landing [laughs]. [foreign language 00:46:59].

[00:47:11] **Fi:** [foreign language 00:47:04].

[00:47:11] **Esther Perel:** When I listen to them describe their life as models, I hear the similar story that raises the same elements be you a child actor, or a musician or a child athlete. All these youngsters grow up within the field. Their entire stages of development are merged with the profession. And when they decide to leave it, the struggle becomes, how can I leave, but still take parts of me with me.

[00:47:49] **Voiceover:** Esther Perel is a therapist, best-selling author, speaker, and host of the podcast, *Where Should We Begin?* And *How's Work?* To apply with a colleague or partner, to do a session for the podcast or to follow along with each episode show notes, go to, [howswork.estherperel.com](https://howswork.estherperel.com). *How's Work* is produced by Magnificent Noise for Gimlet and Esther Perel Productions. Our production staff includes, Eric Nuzum, Eva Wolchover, Hiwote Getaneh and Kristin Mueller. Original music and additional production by Paul Schneider. And the executive producers of *How's Work* are Esther Perel and Jesse Baker. We would also like to thank Lydia Polgreen, Colin Campbell, Courtney Hamilton, Nick Oxenhorn, Sara Kramer, Jack Saul, and the entire Esther Perel Global Media team.