

HOW'S WORK S2 TWINS FINAL

Voiceover: [00:00:00] 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.

Esther Perel: [00:00:26] So I'm gonna listen to each of you, see if I can discern your voices. The voices of identical twins.

Speaker 1: [00:00:34] Well, we'll see if she can figure it out.

Speaker 2: [00:00:36] Okay.

Esther Perel: [00:00:37] Let's go.

Speaker 2: [00:00:39] So I'm older, 30 Seconds older.

Speaker 1: [00:00:42] [laughs].

Speaker 2: [00:00:43] We always, like, dress the same, like, played the same sports.

Speaker 1: [00:00:46] It was just us, like, we just were so content, happy, being with each other. Almost, kinda, like those creepy twins you, like, see in movies.

Speaker 2: [00:00:53] [Laughs.]

Speaker 1: [00:00:55] [Laughs].

Esther Perel: [00:00:56] Yes. So one of you has a deeper voice than the other.

Speaker 2: [00:00:59] Oh?

Speaker 1: [00:01:01] My guess is you have the deeper voice.

Speaker 2: [00:01:04] Yes.

Speaker 1: [00:01:05] [laughs].

Esther Perel: [00:01:06] They started doing business together in their teens, in small town Texas.

Speaker 2: [00:01:11] We were 14?

Speaker 1: [00:01:13] Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:01:13] We started detailing cars. My parents told us, if we wanted a car that we would have to pay for it ourselves.

Speaker 1: [00:01:20] What made it flow for me was, like, there was not one of us in charge and one of us as a follower.

Speaker 2: [00:01:26] True.

Esther Perel: [00:01:27] They've had three businesses since then and they're still in their 20's. They've asked for this session because they've been getting into more and more power struggles.

Speaker 1: [00:01:39] I don't know if it's gonna work for us to work together without us just, like, fighting like crazy.

Esther Perel: [00:01:45] The way they understand it is that one is the natural-born business person. He has the talent, he knows to command a room. And the other doesn't seem to pull his weight.

Speaker 2: [00:01:57] Put me in a room of business men to pitch an idea, or try to raise money, I'm, like, shutting down.

Esther Perel: [00:02:04] There has been such an investment, as a unit, inseparable, identical twins.

Speaker 2: [00:02:13] I think it's even gotten to the point where if we wanted to get married, our partners probably won't understand us like the other one does.

Esther Perel: [00:02:21] But there is more to this story.

Speaker 1: [00:02:23] One of the big differences, that's, like, observable, is that I'm gay and he's straight.

Esther Perel: [00:02:28] Differences in identity have impacted, not just their personal relationship, but their business relationship, in ways that they have never spoken to, or admitted to each other. So before we go, actually, in the muck give me a tiny bit more, you know, what is the, kind of, the general, broader, culture that you grew up in?

Speaker 2: [00:02:56] So, the context we grew up in was extremely , extremely evangelical Christian. We didn't know anything different. I got pretty sucked into, uh, church here. That was just, very, very, very divisive. Just, kind of, hateful, honestly. And then he came out as gay, and all of a sudden it was like protection mode? So I mean, I'm thinking the past six years, that's, kind of, my context for this broader background was a very Christian background, Broken away from that and he's had... people would, like, come after him pretty aggressively, in a hateful way. That's- That's the context [inaudible 00:03:43] trying to get straight into all the muck. Okay, I'm done.

Speaker 1: [00:03:47] Um, I feel similarly. I think what I was gonna add is I- I think the context is, like, we saw a "right" way to be, like, look, present yourself, the type of work you do, and everything like that so it was a lot of the same, you know? My dad, successful, was kind of like in that circle of people and so my culture for what it looked like to be successful, or a man, was very... I had to be that certain way? So I would say that that's definitely what we absorbed for a really long time and that's, kind of, been turned upside down in the last three years. Our family just has completely come behind me after coming out as gay, like, so supportive. I don't even remember telling them because it was so not a big deal. I think our family had, as a result, lost good number of friends since then so I think the culture we grew up in is- We don't think we belong in it anymore.

Speaker 2: [00:04:47] I agree. We also- That's one of the reasons, I think, we've become so tight. We've always been tight, but whenever we felt outnumbered, we'd always have each other to go to. I still feel like I'm hyper-aware and hyper-protective from, maybe, the past six years which I think might have caused some issues. Um...

Esther Perel: [00:05:10] And why is it three years and six years?

Speaker 2: [00:05:13] I'm saying six years because that's about the time since we graduated from college and, uh...

Speaker 1: [00:05:19] Yeah, I- So, I'd been, like, comfortably out, open, gay for three years but the questioning. The first three years was probably a lot more questioning and I think that's where-

Speaker 2: [00:05:31] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:05:31] So, I think I've just understood something, um, but tell me if that makes sense. While your brother is thinking about what he wants to do, and what's going to be the next business, you're figuring out who you're gonna be.

Speaker 1: [00:05:47] Uh, yes. Oh my gosh; because I have felt, like, behind... Like if- Like if he's here and I'm here, I feel like I'm trying to catch up but that makes a lot of sense because I was forced to consider so many things that maybe you haven't had to.

Esther Perel: [00:06:04] You are in the midst of confusion, in the midst of measuring the risks of what it means to come out as gay in the middle of a Christian, evangelical, family and culture. He is thinking, "What do I wanna do next?" And you're thinking about, "What am I gonna be next?".

Speaker 1: [00:06:23] Yes. Wow.

Speaker 2: [00:06:24] Wow. That- I mean, even from my perspective, that feels extremely accurate because I felt very, very, torn because I'm thinking, "I want to go do this," and "I wanna build this.", And then I also know that- all the crazy stuff that you're having to go through, and so, I felt like I'd put all that on hold, or give it away, just to- because I knew all the stuff you were going through.

Speaker 1: [00:06:54] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:06:54] Because you had free energy.

Speaker 2: [00:06:56] I did.

Esther Perel: [00:06:56] Your psychic energy was available.

Speaker 2: [00:06:58] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:06:58] His psychic energy was taken up with secrecy, with being closeted, with the fear of rejection, the fear of excommunication, etc. etc. When you've got so much psychic energy taken up by that, you're not as available to think about what's gonna be the next gig.

Speaker 1: [00:07:16] Oh my gosh. That- Yes, because, I mean, I'm even thinking about, like, it's-it's generally him that comes to me for a business idea for us, and, I mean, when you- I wonder if you agree.

Speaker 2: [00:07:31] Yeah. Yeah. I agree.

Speaker 1: [00:07:32] Yeah, and it- and it, it- I can't think of a time where it's been opposite; like a legitimate business idea where I have come to you. Yeah, we're talking, like, more than just a one-off idea, we're talking about, "Let's pursue this."

Speaker 2: [00:07:46] Yeah, yeah I think so.

Esther Perel: [00:07:48] And had that been okay? Or- or was it interpreted as, He's better at business, he has a better Knack. He's the real one, you're the follower. He's the leader? I mean, that may be true, but there's a reason for this. He's free to think about ideas because he's got nothing else that's important to be thinking about.

Speaker 1: [00:08:10] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:08:11] And during that time, you're trying to think about, "Am I gonna keep my family? Is my mother going to be upset, my dad going to be upset?" You know, "My community? What price will my family pay? What price will my brother pay?" Who can think about the next business when you're busy with all of that?

Speaker 1: [00:08:26] Oh my... Totally.

Speaker 2: [00:08:27] Damn... Wow.

Speaker 1: [00:08:28] I mean- I, I just-

Esther Perel: [00:08:29] But say this in your own words, because I'm must throwing this out there. You tell me your experience in your own words, or tell it to him because I'm not sure that that's even something you guys have ever really talked about.

Speaker 1: [00:08:41] Yeah...

Speaker 2: [00:08:42] Kinda not.

Speaker 1: [00:08:43] I mean, I think you are so naturally gifted with business and you have the education to back it up and I don't, and then, you know, on top of that, just, kind of thinking about the culture question, I think I imitated you a lot because you looked and sounded like and... I mean, we looked the same-

Speaker 2: [00:09:00] Yeah.

Speaker 1: [00:09:00] ... but, you know, like, you fit in way easier with those people. And so, I think as a result I, kind of, just have imitated you in certain business scenarios because it's hard for me, you know, I think I have this feeling that, like, if- if a businessman knows I'm gay they're, like, not gonna wanna do any

business with me, and so I just have felt like there's no way for me to be successful without you here.

Speaker 2: [00:09:27] Yeah, that's... Um, I'm-

Esther Perel: [00:09:28] Just let this land on you for a sec.

Speaker 2: [00:09:39] Okay. Thinking about that, and thinking about how I have interpreted that, I think the language that we used was, like, follower right? Or that, like, one of us has these gifts, the other is kind of the one following. It's weird because I've known the context that you were in with all of that. I don't know why it's hitting me a little differently now, but maybe, like- maybe I'm just starting to grasp how horrible of a time that was for you that, I hate to say it but, and that is how I have interpreted it as, you know, I come to you with, ""et's do this, let's do this, let's do this, this, this. You need to take this task, I'll take this task. We'll do- you know, go about it this way."

I've taken that as, you don't really- It's not, really like a huge interest of yours. It's not something you really, like, care about too terribly much. That's for sure caused me hesitation. But- but now I'm sitting here, thinking, [laughs.] maybe I misinterpreted this whole thing.

Speaker 1: [00:10:39] I mean, I don't want to overlook, maybe, the idea that, you know, you have the education, and I think I can fake it, but I feel like I have to be you. I think what I'm saying is; I have no idea how I would ever go into a room and raise money from, like, a group of successful-looking men at a bank-

Speaker 2: [00:10:58] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 1: [00:10:59] ... without you there and I'm sure that feels like, I would guess that feels like a lot of pressure.

Esther Perel: [00:11:06] For years, they thought one of them is the talent, the natural born business guy, and the other one just didn't have much to contribute. And so one feels like he's doing it all, and the other one feels like no matter what he brings, it's never really valued but as I listen to them, it becomes much more clear to me, that maybe this is not just an issue of power, and more the consequences of identity.

This is a question. I don't know how to be, because if I was me, I don't think they would want to do business with me, so I have to imitate you. If, therefore, or maybe, question mark, if I was me and knew that that would not become a cause for them not wanting to work with me, maybe I won't shut down. Maybe I don't shut down because I don't have the knack for it, even though I may be interested in other things etc. but maybe I shut down because I realize that very, very, early on, I've learned that, you know, this thing called being a gay man, isn't going to get me business. So of course I shut down and then I try to think, how do I do what you do?

That's not the only thing, but basically, if you can't be who you are, you have to be somebody. [laughs.]

Speaker 1: [00:12:45] [laughs.] yeah. Yeah, I know.

Esther Perel: [00:12:47] And since you have him so close to you, the easiest one to imitate is him.

Speaker 1: [00:12:54] Right. I mean, especially this, like, idea that we're, like, a unit, you know.

Speaker 2: [00:12:58] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 1: [00:12:58] So, yeah, we look the same, we sound similar, people think we're the exact same. So I think, of course, I would imitate you.

Speaker 2: [00:13:07] I mean, at the same time, you were imitating me, I was imitating people trying to figure out who I was too. Does that make sense?

Speaker 1: [00:13:16] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 2: [00:13:16] So, I guess my point is, I was completely making it up, like...

Esther Perel: [00:13:24] Yeah, like every you person does.

Speaker 2: [00:13:28] Yeah! [laughs.]

Speaker 1: [00:13:29] [laughs.]

Esther Perel: [00:13:29] [laughs.] I mean...!

Speaker 2: [00:13:29] [inaudible 00:13:29].

Esther Perel: [00:13:30] That is part of the, you know? You're looking at the business dudes and thinking, you know, "That's what they do, I'm gonna copy that."

Speaker 2: [00:13:37] Yeah [laughs.].

Esther Perel: [00:13:37] And he looks at you and says, "I'm gonna copy that."

Speaker 1: [00:13:40] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:13:40] But he thinks you've got it figured out because you, at least, know who you are and you don't have to hide it. So he thinks you sound so confident.

Speaker 1: [00:13:50] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:13:51] And you're saying, I've got the confidence of the 23 year old which means, "I'm arrogant."

Speaker 1: [00:13:57] [laughs.] Exactly.

Esther Perel: [00:13:58] You know, some people, when they're shy, shut down and some people, when they don't feel very confident, they become more arrogant to compensate for it. So you went in those two directions.

Speaker 2: [00:14:14] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:14:17] And while I'm saying this, I'm well aware that this is not just a matter of individual differences. His threat detector is not mistaken when it

tells him that the businessmen in the room would probably not give him a penny if they knew he was gay. It's not just shyness. It's shyness in the backdrop of homophobia, including that of his closest person: his twin brother.

There is a possibility also, especially you are studying something completely different. You're studying human behavior and human psychology, that maybe you're not as interested. And would that be okay? Must you work together? Must you do business 5,6, and 7 together? Are there other ways that you can do some of them and not all of them? Can you have separate careers? That's the question too.

Speaker 1: [00:15:28] Yeah... That is, like... I think I feel like that is the question, and, you know, I think I'm a little afraid of that question of, "Am I less interested in this?" because I think, if I'm being completely honest, I think I am less interested. Part of me is like, "I want to become a therapist." And then it's like well where does that leave me? I- I hate saying this but I'm terrified you're gonna make a lot more money than me and I'm nervous that if we were to part ways that I'm going to get left behind.

Speaker 2: [00:15:59] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 1: [00:16:00] But yeah, I mean-

Esther Perel: [00:16:01] Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! One sec. "If you are a successful business guy and you make much more money, I am left behind because I am- because I become a therapist.?" Which is, by the way what I do. [laughs.]

Speaker 1: [00:16:17] [Laughs.].

Speaker 2: [00:16:17] [Laughs.].

Esther Perel: [00:16:17] I don't consider myself left behind, but. What exactly are you say- Of course, of course, if you want to make money, never become a therapist. That is not the way to be rich. You can survive and live okay, but no. It's no business, that's for sure. Um, you don't become a therapist to make money, but that doesn't mean you're left behind. What does that expression mean for you?

Speaker 1: [00:16:40] That is such a good question. I think feeling left behind would be, like, looking back and having a regret that I didn't end up making a decision to work with you and, I mean... Honestly, I think left behind, to me, feels like I don't make as much money.

Esther Perel: [00:16:58] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 1: [00:16:58] And I know that doesn't even make sense.

Esther Perel: [00:17:00] Well, unpack it a little bit. Talk about money. We've already talked about sex, we can talk about money-

Speaker 1: [00:17:07] [Laughs.].

Speaker 2: [00:17:07] [Laughs.].

Esther Perel: [00:17:08] ... and when we talk about death we'll have covered all three!

Speaker 1: [00:17:12] That's true. Yeah, we'll cover it all.

Speaker 2: [00:17:13] We'll cover it all.

Speaker 1: [00:17:14] Um, I... I think we each have a bit of a complicated relationship with money. My family didn't struggle for it growing up, like, that wasn't a thing that we, like, had issues with. I do think that, maybe, the people that we were around, like... Ugh, this sounds so basic, but, like, it seems to me like some of my memories of the happiest people we were around, had a lot of money.

Esther Perel: [00:17:40] Did you learn that you are more valued if you have more bills in your pocket?

Speaker 1: [00:17:49] I think my dad had the idea that I would go to business school as well or that I would go to law school as well, and I th- I just, I knew early on I really didn't wanna do that, but you were doing it. and so I thought I should do it, but I remember, like, conversations that I had about, like, "No I actually think I wanna go to become a therapist." and it would always turn back to, like, "Well, you know, you wanna..." basically the idea, like, you wanna make sure that you're set up to do well.

Speaker 2: [00:18:18] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 1: [00:18:19] And I- And I think that, like, enough conversation of that made me second guess so much going this direction, which is probably why I, you know,, could have gone when I was 22 and now I'm 29, almost 30. It was always, like, no questions asked about why you wanted to do that, like, no- no interest regarding the whole profession and what that could look like, it was always, you know, "Maybe you should go to business school, too, so that you can learn how to make money through it.", or... and it was never really focused on.

Speaker 2: [00:18:54] Yeah, and I think that you were getting, like, all that attention. You were like- You started getting, like, more questions asked or, like, interest shown towards you.

Speaker 1: [00:19:01] Yeah, 100%, I did.

Esther Perel: [00:19:05] What kind of questions?

Speaker 2: [00:19:07] Questions that you would- That I would think of in conversation that's engaging, like, "Well how would you see this going?", or you know, "How do you see developing?".

Esther Perel: [00:19:17] I see. So you're [inaudible 00:19:18] attention because your father can relate to what you do-

Speaker 2: [00:19:21] 100%.

Esther Perel: [00:19:21] ... and so he talks to you; he's interested, he has ideas, and etc. etc.

Speaker 2: [00:19:26] Yes.

Esther Perel: [00:19:26] Whereas, with you, he doesn't know what this is about.

Speaker 1: [00:19:30] Well, I think it's probably worth noting that, like, when I told him I got into business school, they were, like, screaming over the phone, jumping; they were so excited. And when I got into therapy school, they were excited but it was definitely a different reaction.

Speaker 2: [00:19:46] Definitely a different reaction.

Speaker 1: [00:19:48] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:19:54] It's not just that one son was more talented or skilled than the other, it's also that the talents of one son were more valued than the other, simple because the apple fell closer to the tree, and so if therapy had been valued similarly as being a business person, or going to law school, both children would have grown up with the sense that they are both talented. It's hard to say, "This is what I want." When you're faced with a family that may not appreciate that choice, and you care about their reaction.

Speaker 1: [00:20:38] I think I just felt kind of stupid. I just feel like me going that route, 10 years down the road I'm going to end up regretting it and you're gonna have had, you know, this great experience with business, and I'm gonna, like, be just trying to make ends meet.

Esther Perel: [00:21:06] And you wanna know how your brother reacted when you got into therapy school?

Speaker 1: [00:21:11] [inaudible 00:21:11], how did you react?

Speaker 2: [00:21:13] Oh, are we your observation, or just me?

Esther Perel: [00:21:16] You. You.

Speaker 2: [00:21:19] Okay, I was thrilled. I mean, I think you know that-

Speaker 1: [00:21:22] Yep.

Speaker 2: [00:21:22] ... but I was thrilled. Correct me if this is wrong, but what I remember is that I'd been telling you, you should apply to this program and go for the past three years now. Right? Is that all accurate?

Speaker 1: [00:21:36] That's right, yes.

Speaker 2: [00:21:36] Like, I mean, whenever... In business stuff, I immediately call him if it has to do with instincts with people, or anything like that, and- 'Cos it really is what he is absolutely phenomenal at. And so, I was thrilled I finally felt like you were doing what you had actually wanted to do for so long.

Speaker 1: [00:21:56] Yeah, you were, I can- Like... If anything, you- you've been trying to talk me into actually doing it for a long time and then I had talked myself out with, like, all the things I'm considering.

Speaker 2: [00:22:07] Yeah.

Speaker 1: [00:22:08] That, you know, it would not be the most practical move.

Speaker 2: [00:22:13] I mean, to be fully honest, I- I feel like I run a- a, a broker role, or a middle-man role between explaining to our parents that, no this is actually the best thing. This would- he is built for this. You know?

Speaker 1: [00:22:31] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 2: [00:22:32] I mean, out of our immediate family, I'm for sure the only one.

Speaker 1: [00:22:36] Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:22:36] [inaudible 00:22:39].

Speaker 1: [00:22:38] No, I think you're the only one who- well, our mom...

Speaker 2: [00:22:42] Yeah.

Speaker 1: [00:22:42] But other than that, like, you're the only one who's shown, like, genuine curiosity for why I wanna do what I wanna do.

Speaker 2: [00:22:48] Yeah... Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:22:52] Your brother says, "Any time I start a business, even if you're not equal with me in terms of the actual structure of the business itself, whenever I have an interpersonal question, I turn to you.". So, that too has value in a business.

Speaker 1: [00:23:17] Right...

Esther Perel: [00:23:19] Value is measured by all kinds of criteria; contribution, you know? 50/50 may not just be about how many hours you put in and how many hours he puts in. Maybe it's about how you save a certain situation. Maybe it's about how you know who to hire and not hire, you know? Lots of other pieces that create, that give a sense, of equity, and equality, and fairness in your partnerships.

Speaker 1: [00:23:49] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:23:50] And if you're gonna continue work together, maybe you won't be 50% in terms of the full business, you will have shared in every single one of them, parts of you, because you wanna have other work that is not related just to the business, but you will need to think about the richness of possibilities, about how you partner, rather than just, "We're going in it, we both sweat the same way, we both invest the same amount of hour, we both, you know..", It's not going to be about similarity. It's going to be about complementarity.

Speaker 1: [00:24:25] Hmm.

Speaker 2: [00:24:26] That makes a ton of sense. I said that- that I would call you if there was any sort of, you know, interpersonal- people issue.

Speaker 1: [00:24:34] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 2: [00:24:35] Am I off on that, because that's all that- It seemed a little like... Am I off on that is my question.

Speaker 1: [00:24:43] Oh, No. No, no- no. I don't- I think you're- I think you're off, maybe, on that... maybe... I don't- I don't feel like you consider that, bringing value to the business. I feel like I'm just your first call.

Speaker 2: [00:24:58] Oh no... That's not- No. That's not what I think. Is that, I mean, is that why you thought that I- Why you think that I'll call you? Or am I- am I- am I missing something? In my- In my head, am I thinking that I ask you for your opinion on stuff a lot more than I actually do?

Speaker 1: [00:25:20] That's a good question. I think you... No, I think you do ask me. No, you're not off. You do ask me but it doesn't feel like part of the business, it just feels like our relationship.

Speaker 2: [00:25:33] Okay.

Speaker 1: [00:25:34] So, Like, in terms of it bringing value to the business, I wouldn't consider that.

Speaker 2: [00:25:40] Okay.

Speaker 1: [00:25:41] Or, It doesn't feel like that to me.

Esther Perel: [00:25:43] It's a very important thing that you've just discussed because what you're saying is because talking about people and having relationship talks, and having interpersonal understanding types of conversations is what we do as brother, it doesn't feel like it's a full set of skills that I bring that contributes to the success of the business, whereas your legal knowledge; that can be measured, quantified, separated, delineated, but psychological knowledge, that's part of what every relationship has, therefor it's what we just do as people and as brothers.

Speaker 1: [00:26:25] Yes...

Speaker 2: [00:26:27] [Laughs.]. I'm just laughing because it just, it seems like- go ahead.

Speaker 1: [00:26:30] No I [inaudible 00:26:34] interrupt you, so.

Speaker 2: [00:26:33] No, go ahead, I didn't have anything to say.

Speaker 1: [00:26:36] [Laughs.]. I think you- I think you have more measurable knowledge than I do.

Speaker 2: [00:26:41] I do to. We were talking the other day about being in control on decision making and, I feel like an asshole saying this, buy a majority of things, I need to be in control. For example, how do we expand, how do we raise money, all of that I felt like I needed to be the one in control for that and- and that hasn't really left much roof for you.

Speaker 1: [00:27:07] Yes, I agree. I agree. I feel like you've tended to be in control. I would say, like-

Speaker 2: [00:27:13] And I don't- I don't like that. I'm not trying to be like, I don't know.

Speaker 1: [00:27:17] No, I was just gonna say, I mean, I think... I sometimes wonder if have this, like- If you had, like, this instinct of being my twin, knowing that I had no idea how to show up in front of a group of men that intimidated me, and if, like, you might have- I wonder you took on, like, a- more of like the leader of us role early on and it just hasn't, like, gone away.

Speaker 2: [00:27:40] I- I think I, I- I think I did, but we had never... It's something we had never explicitly talked about until, I don't know, the past 6 months or something? It sounds like you and I [inaudible 00:27:52] didn't really feel like you fit in with a lot of, like, guys who were, you know, we grew up with, or in our class or played sports with or whatever. I guess for as long as I can ever remember, I've felt in protective mode. Maybe a good way to explain it is this: whenever he moved to go to therapy school, and I don't know if I've told you this, I was sitting with my therapist, talking and she asked, "How is it?", you know, "how is it with him being gone?". The way I explain it was, I feel like I've been- Like a mean dog protecting you from people here for a long time, I think it's become much more pronounced in our twenties but even early on, whenever it was subtle I still felt like I was [crosstalk 00:28:34].

Esther Perel: [00:28:34] Meaning you always sensed that he was slightly different. You didn't necessarily know why, and you think that he was more vulnerable and that you were the more conventional, conforming, guy.

Speaker 2: [00:28:47] Yes.

Esther Perel: [00:28:47] And it wasn't a stretch for you to adapt yourself to the rules of the game and the norms that were expected, and so you wanted to protect him.

Speaker 1: [00:28:57] Exactly. I mean, from a- for as long as I can remember, it's been like that, and I'm t- I'm just tired. I'm tired of- of-

Esther Perel: [00:29:09] From protecting you, it became needing you.

Speaker 1: [00:29:13] Yes. That's- yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:29:14] All right. This is a tough conversation to have-

Speaker 1: [00:29:18] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:29:18] ... and I don't think that much of this has ever been said between the two of you-

Speaker 2: [00:29:23] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:29:24] ... and you're doing good. You're doing fine. The, you know, the fear that if we out this all out there, what is this gonna do to us? Your bond is so strong, you know? It will only get stronger.

Speaker 1: [00:29:37] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:29:38] So be honest.

Speaker 2: [00:29:40] Okay, so, whenever I think about going ahead with business, this is the intersection I think of. Is, with all of the, I guess, discrimination is the best way I know how to word it, that you have faced, I've... You always know where I'm gonna land. I'm always gonna go to that for you. But I've thought, what happens in the intersection of, we're working together and you- you need protection. Let's say you need someone going to bat for you, and let's say that those, like, one is going to demand everything... you can't do both. And, Like, I- I- I- know where I'm gonna land every tingle time. I know I'm going to choose you every single time and so when I think about that in a business context, I think, then is it easier for us to just not work together, to not complicate those things, so that it's- these goals I have aren't held back, [inaudible 00:30:40].

Esther Perel: [00:30:41] More- being a more excepting environment, maybe?

Speaker 2: [00:30:45] Yeah, being a more excepting environment. I mean, Like, if it comes down to you vs the business, I will always choose you and so it makes me think, well is it better for us not to work together so I don't have to choose, so that I can do both?

Esther Perel: [00:31:03] What I'm hearing him say, and which may be one of the hardest things for him to articulate is, "I love you, I will always protect you, but I am not sure I want to work with you as a way to protect you. That being business partners has been as much about creating an anti-discrimination shield, as it has been about creating ventures together.

Speaker 1: [00:31:42] I'm trying to think of a situation where it would be like, protect me vs the business, and I'm having trouble thinking about that, but I guess, I'm wondering if it's more like, you, since, like, it's gonna be conflict or the b- like, appease me in a conflict or business. Is that what you're saying?

Speaker 2: [00:31:59] Yeah, I think the best- I think the best way yo explain this is with our second business.

Speaker 1: [00:32:04] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 2: [00:32:06] Is that okay?

Speaker 1: [00:32:06] No, It's fine.

Speaker 2: [00:32:06] With our second business that I'd done for about two years by myself, he was going through a particularly- this was probably the window of times that was most difficult for you.

Speaker 1: [00:32:18] Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:32:19] Just- Just people coming after you, like cr- it was awful.

Speaker 1: [00:32:23] Like- Like being sent to conversion therapy at the same time that I'm trying to, like [laughs], run a business with [inaudible 00:32:30].

Speaker 2: [00:32:30] Yeah. Yeah. I mean... And so that went-

Esther Perel: [00:32:33] Isn't is strange how people sometimes say some of the most painful things with laughter.

Speaker 1: [00:32:40] Oh yeah... [inaudible 00:32:41].

Esther Perel: [00:32:41] Like you just did?

Speaker 1: [00:32:42] I did, I'm doing it again!

Esther Perel: [00:32:44] I mean, I am cringing just hearing this.

Speaker 1: [00:32:48] Yeah, because I talk about it and, like, I make jokes about it but, I mean, I was- it was awful, and it was, like, relentless.

Speaker 2: [00:32:58] I mean, it was, I think, just... You hear over, and over, and over again- I'm saying this from what I've observed hearing, but you've heard a thousand times more- you know, kill that part of yourself. Kill this part of yourself. Kill this part of yourself. This part of yourself should die. You know, and just, I think that I- I have the luxury of not having that told to me every week and-

Esther Perel: [00:33:20] Yes, so you can think about business. He's thinking about surviving.

Speaker 2: [00:33:24] Yeah. And, so it got to a point where I was- my mind can just run away, and so I was really worried about him and so, I just said- I said, you know, just- let's just half it. Let's half the business. You leave- He was working at a job that was awful. I just said let's just- let's half it, um, and I guess that the one I think of with that. With a scenario in the future where it's like, do I have to choose.

Speaker 1: [00:34:01] Like-

Speaker 2: [00:34:01] Because in that situation, I'm now realizing I probably didn't have to choose, but it felt like I did.

Esther Perel: [00:34:09] And what did you have to choose? Between what and what?

Speaker 2: [00:34:11] Between keeping full ownership of my company, and, uh, and going this route that I wanted to go which was raising, you know, money and just a totally different route. And so, I gave up half of- I gave up half of that and then-

Speaker 1: [00:34:30] Gifted it to me.

Speaker 2: [00:34:31] And gifted it to him, um, just to- so we could... In my mind I'm thinking, let's just, like, go do this together. Let's get you out of all this terrible situation that you're in, and- and then it, you know, it also came down to decision power. I think it, kind of, split 50/50 and I did that, he never asked me to do it and I think I have quietly... I hate saying this. I think I have quietly resented that for a long, sorry, for a long time.

Speaker 1: [00:35:08] I feel kind of like an asshole saying this but-

Speaker 2: [00:35:10] [laughs.].

Speaker 1: [00:35:10] ... I think part of me is like, why didn't, you know... Well, one, I mean, thank you, like... I didn't. I [inaudible 00:35:17] like an asshole for saying that.

Speaker 2: [00:35:18] I don't even want you to say that.

Speaker 1: [00:35:19] But like, beyond that, I don't- I never asked you to do-

Speaker 2: [00:35:22] I know.

Speaker 1: [00:35:22] I never asked you to give me half of a business because you thought I was gonna, like, go off the deep end and...

Speaker 2: [00:35:27] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:35:27] What was your fear for him?

Speaker 2: [00:35:31] That he would- that he would die.

Esther Perel: [00:35:33] From?

Speaker 2: [00:35:35] Suicide. One of my closest friends in the world died in that exact same month of time.

Esther Perel: [00:35:42] Under the same circumstances?

Speaker 2: [00:35:44] Not the exact same, but there was a lot of overlap. You know, I would- I would just picture it which is where my mind can run off but...

Esther Perel: [00:35:54] You pictures him taking his life?

Speaker 2: [00:35:57] Yeah, yeah I did, and it was-

Esther Perel: [00:36:00] Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:36:01] You know, and so at that sort of thing It's like, Okay, I'll do your- And it's- and I know you... Now I'm like, my mind- my mind ran away with this, so I- I want to be clear that it wasn't something where he's coming to me, being like, "This is...", you know, "I'm thinking about this." 'cos that wasn't the case but...

Esther Perel: [00:36:20] No, I understand you. I understand you. It makes a lot of sense.

Speaker 2: [00:36:24] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:36:24] You- you- you thought, "I need him close by. I don't want to lose him, like I lost her."

Speaker 2: [00:36:31] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:36:31] "I know what he's facing, or I don't but I have some vague idea of what he's facing when he's not saying it with laughter."

Speaker 2: [00:36:38] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:36:39] And he's not telling you what he's facing because- because he... I don't know why actually. Why don't you tell him? And you didn't tell him what you were going through.

Speaker 1: [00:36:50] I-

Speaker 2: [00:36:51] Don't be filtered on this.

Speaker 1: [00:36:53] He wasn't accepting at first when I first came out to him, which is so interesting because, like, if I think, like, biggest ally now, it's you. But it wasn't the case at the beginning. I think you were, like, shocked, or to me it felt like you were shocked and disappointed, and I remember at that time, you told me, like, "We should never work together again, because you've been lying to me for however many years, and I'm just finding out." I didn't actually tell him. He found out by coming across some messages with somebody. I think- I think he felt, I mean... To me, it seemed like you felt so... It was like I'd lied to you.

Speaker 2: [00:37:34] Yeah, that's- it- at... I mean, yeah, it felt like that. I don't feel that way anymore, to clarify.

Speaker 1: [00:37:38] Oh yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:37:39] But, yeah, at the time I was- I was just, like, "He's been lying- He's been lying to me, I can't- I can't...".

Speaker 1: [00:37:47] And I think after that, too, I didn't tell him stuff for probably another year or two. Even though he already knew I was gay and all of that, I think I was just, like...

Speaker 2: [00:37:58] Yeah, I mean, you made a deliberate point, for good reason, to say, you- you're cut out of this whole piece of my life. I'm not telling you anything, don't ask me, I'm not gonna answer.

Speaker 1: [00:38:10] Yeah, I forget about all that.

Speaker 2: [00:38:11] Yeah, so I mean, for about a year and a half, I guess, you know, you made the call to cut me out completely.

Speaker 1: [00:38:19] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 2: [00:38:20] So, and that's- that's all in that time. It's all in that time where, you know, I said, "Let's split the business." And then resentment slowly building up. It's like- it feels I would just flip back and forth between being like, "Why did I?" You know, just resenting that, and then being like, "I'd lose everything I can to make sure he's okay." And it was just like, almost hour to hour, flip.

Esther Perel: [00:38:52] So, basically, one of them says to the other, "I'm gay.", and the first reaction is, "Why have you never told me? You lied to me.", and then the other one says, "Well if I can't talk to you and you resent me for it, then I'm not going to tell you anything.", and then this one becomes aware of the challenges that the other one is going through with reform therapy and the danger that his brother lives with, and he realizes, "He's got only me. I'm the only one who can save him and protect him, and I don't wanna lose him like I lost my friend.", but then he gives him half the business, which he then resents because he experiences

it as the only way to make sure he can protect him. And everything gets all mixed up.

Is he the only one with dark corners, or do you have your own?

Speaker 2: [00:39:55] Oh my, yeah, I have my own.

Esther Perel: [00:39:59] Can we put those a little bit on the table, too?

Speaker 2: [00:40:02] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:40:02] So that you get a better understanding, together, of some of your vicious fights, or intense fights; they may not be vicious, but they can get really intense.

Speaker 2: [00:40:11] Intense, yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:40:13] Partly because they sit on all kinds of detonators.

Speaker 2: [00:40:19] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:40:20] And he's not the only one that has a detonator. You have some too.

Speaker 2: [00:40:25] Yeah, so six months after my friend died from suicide, I was, uh, [rafting guide 00:40:35], and was involved in an accident. An 11 year old kid drowned, and quite a bit of feeling responsible for that, and so, I mean, I came- I came home to this business that needed to be run-

Esther Perel: [00:40:53] Were you responsible or not?

Speaker 2: [00:40:55] I'm sorry?

Esther Perel: [00:40:55] Were you responsible?

Speaker 2: [00:41:00] Uh, no. No, I- I've been, honestly, in therapy since it happened and I'm- I'm comfortable enough with that, now.

Esther Perel: [00:41:08] Okay.

Speaker 2: [00:41:09] I mean for, you know, the immediate three years after, I was like, "This is my fault. I could have changed it.", but more so, I could have changed it, that was what I just felt so intensely. And so, I mean, I came back, I've since learned about trauma and going through that. A lot of those months, and the year after, just fell completely dark, like I don't even remember a lot of it. It was awful. And, I mean, you took care of everything.

Speaker 1: [00:41:46] Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:41:47] Business-wise, but I- I don't know why this is the first time I'm actually thinking of that piece, like... I honestly don't even remember the rest of that year. It was awful. And then- and then-

Esther Perel: [00:42:02] Sit with this just one sec. Let this sinc in just one sec.

Speaker 1: [00:42:13] So, I mean, now I'm sitting here thinking, that's when you took care of me. I felt like I had taken care of you for, well, maybe I did a shitty job of it but, but, like, that's, I think that's, like, when you actually took care of me, and took care of the entire business.

Esther Perel: [00:42:37] What's it like to hear him say this?

Speaker 1: [00:42:40] Oh, that makes me... I'm, like, sitting here, honestly trying not to get... I'll cry if I need to, but... Oh, it makes me sad. It's really sad because I look back and remember how anxious, and how depressed, and how, like, intense those could feel at times.

Speaker 2: [00:42:58] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Speaker 1: [00:42:58] But those feel, like, incidental. I guess what I'm saying is that, yes, I think I did take care of you a lot that year, but it didn't feel like much of a burden.

Esther Perel: [00:43:12] But you had an accident on the job, right?

Speaker 2: [00:43:16] Ah, yes.

Esther Perel: [00:43:17] That's basically... And you felt very, very guilty and responsible for the death of this child.

Speaker 2: [00:43:26] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:43:26] So you had been able to save your brother but not this kid.

Speaker 2: [00:43:30] Yeah, and it was all... I mean it was all within six months that all of this happened. Probably the most pronounced thing I remember about that year following was just, like, you know... I- I could not- I would go to sleep and I would dream about it. I'd wake and, I'd think about it. There's just no escape from it. It kind of, I mean, it kind of felt like one of my only escapes was the business, just to focus on this stuff but it would still follow me there, and then I would just get, you know, go into this hole and go off the grid for...four weeks at a time, or something.

Esther Perel: [00:44:02] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But see, here's the thing. You, Mr. Businessman, Who in your mind think, "I'm always doing more, I know it better. I've got that natural talent.", you then say, "I gave it to him.", and you completely forget that for a year or more, he's running it.

Speaker 2: [00:44:26] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:44:28] And because he constantly thinks that what he has to offer isn't substantive enough, and doesn't have enough business value, and he's constantly trying to prove to you that he's worthy of being your partner in business, I'm not talking in life. For a long time he accepts the language of you gifted this to him. I mean, the company, all in all, how many years did it last? If he took care of it for a year and a half then there was only another year and a half where you did more.

Speaker 2: [00:44:57] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:44:58] It's not like this is a 20 year business in which he did a year of leadership. Right?

Speaker 2: [00:45:03] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:45:04] But your concept of, "I do more.", and his concept of, "I don't do enough.", are married together.

Speaker 2: [00:45:12] Huh... That's really interesting. What do you think.

Speaker 1: [00:45:19] I need to think about it. What do you think?

Speaker 2: [00:45:20] I mean, I'm relating to what was just said on my part.

Speaker 1: [00:45:25] Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:45:25] Like, trying to work my way to where it feels, I guess, equal value.

Esther Perel: [00:45:34] We think we have power struggles, but in fact, we are afraid of loss.

Speaker 2: [00:45:42] I relate a lot to that.

Esther Perel: [00:45:45] What we're really fighting about is how do we find a better way to stay together because I don't want to lose you.

Speaker 2: [00:45:51] Yeah, okay, that... Yeah, that- feels really accurate.

Esther Perel: [00:45:55] It's not about power, it's about loss.

Speaker 1: [00:46:00] Oh my gosh.

Speaker 2: [00:46:00] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:46:00] It's not about which position is better, it's about how do we find a way to stay together, but not in that kind of together. How do we continue to work together, but not in a way- not like this?

Speaker 2: [00:46:14] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:46:16] So, in a way you fight because that's a way to stay connected. If we fight, then we're involved with each other.

Speaker 2: [00:46:25] Yeah.

Speaker 1: [00:46:26] Yeah.

Esther Perel: [00:46:26] If we start to think about other ways to be involved with each other, you- we may not fight nearly as much about these things because when it comes to strategy, on some levels he thinks you probably have a perfectly valid strategy. Maybe it's not the only one, or the right one, but it's fine.

Speaker 1: [00:46:42] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Esther Perel: [00:46:43] He doesn't care about the strategy, he cares about your caring about him.

Speaker 1: [00:46:47] Oh my gosh. That is, like... completely on target. I, like, you know how I've kind of said, like, at times I've felt erased by the business?

Speaker 2: [00:46:57] Yeah.

Speaker 1: [00:46:57] To me, I- yes, I didn't- I don't want to get, like, lost. I don't wanna... I feel like I would, like, lose- I just find- yes, I feel like it's not a power struggle. It's a loss. Like if- Like that I would lose, like, just be erased from it.

Speaker 2: [00:47:11] Yeah.

Speaker 1: [00:47:12] I- I'm fumbling my words but I think you know what I mean.

Speaker 2: [00:47:14] No, it makes sense to me, I mean, I'm thinking of fights we've had, and the fight gets to the point where he's thinking, "I want to- I'm out, I'm not gonna do this anymore.". Immediately, I'm like no, no, no, we'll change it because I don't wanna work differently, I just want to be, well, honestly [crosstalk 00:47:35].

Esther Perel: [00:47:36] I wanna be in charge, and I want you next to me.

Speaker 2: [00:47:46] That is a very good way of putting it. Very articulate and accurate.

Esther Perel: [00:47:46] And he says, "I don't want to be in charge and I want you next to me.". It actually- It fits, actually.

Speaker 2: [00:47:49] It kind of does.

Esther Perel: [00:47:49] It kind of fits, but you have to find formulas for it, and for that you have to become flexible and try out a bunch of different things, knowing that the one that you have now, isn't working so well.

So, as they leave the session, how can these two stay as close, and as caring and protective of each other but create a bit of a separation between what needs to be done as loving brothers, who have such a powerful bond, and business partners who are trying not to be cast in a bind.

Voiceover: [00:48:46] Esther Perel is a therapist, best-selling author, speaker, and host of the podcasts, *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's show-notes go to 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 Polegreen, Colin Campbell, Courtney Hamilton, Nick Oxenhorn, Sarah Kramer, Jack Saul, and the entire Esther Perel Global Media team.