

I've Had 100 Conversations With You In My Head Part 2

Her: I went in for a checkup and they saw something and they tested it and said, "yeah, by the way..." The doctor who delivered both our kids sat there telling me this.

Esther Perel: Were you relieved that it came out?

Her: I've asked you this before.

Him: Yes. It was one of the worst possible ways of finding out, but I was relieved in a sense.

Esther Perel: The discovery of an affair or of infidelities is often dramatic, but this one had a particular sting to it. Here she was, a sex educator herself, going for her routine checkup and finding out that she's having an STI. An STI that he passed on to her from months of going to massage parlors with a happy ending.

This is a couple you've met. They came to us in 2017 in season two. And the title of that episode is "I've had a hundred conversations with you in my head."

Can you lean on him a sec? Because you don't know what it's like to have difficult thoughts and feelings and lean on him.

Her: He took dance lessons...

Him: I took dance lessons.

Her: ...without me.

Him: My goal for that, I originally started that with only one thing in mind, this is going to spark us.

Esther Perel: And now?

Her: I love that he tried. I loved that it mattered to him.

Esther Perel: You said that to him? I have a feeling not.

Him: No.

Esther Perel: Because you see right now you're in the betrayal, and what you've just added is how much he had tried to bring you. And he was invested in maintaining an erotic energy between the two of you. And when you start to get those images, that's the stuff you need to think about.

Therapy is an endeavor that is often conducted without knowing what is the customer satisfaction. We don't really know how all of this is going to metabolize over the years. To come back to couples, especially couples who've stayed together and to be able to distill with them, what was the impact of this affair on them over time? What legacy does it carry for them? What is the meaning that they've given to it? And what do they still grapple with at this point is an unusual opportunity that I was very much looking forward to. Tell me, I mean, what was it, two, three years ago?

Her: Four.

Esther Perel: Four years ago. Oh my God. So I, you know, we met at such a turning point, such a crucial moment in your relationship, and we have no way of knowing when we reach out, if you're together, where you're at, what's the story. So tell me a little bit.

Him: Well, you want to start or?

Esther Perel: Now you just did, so go.

Him: Okay. So, um, the one particular thing, I just remember her saying, um, after that session with you, was that, um, for the first time she, you gave her hope you gave her hope for what we can still be. I mean, I was always hopeful, but, um, it didn't look good.

Esther Perel: Did it last?

Her: We're still here.

Esther Perel: Yes, but. That's one indicator.

Her: It was, it was important, you know, because at that time I needed to borrow someone's hope and I think you tried to help us in that session, have something to hold on to, to build from.

Esther Perel: And, I know that's what I did. And my question is, did you use it?

Her: I think I did, but it was, it was hard. For me, I know one of the things you said was for me to work through the traumatic episodes, not the traumatic episodes, but rather the reoccurring flashbacks of the traumatic episodes, was for me to lean into what he tried to do for our relationship. And to remember those things just as much, and not only remember the painful parts. And I remembered that many times.

Him: There was a lot of PTSD moments throughout the years, even to this day, there are certain time periods of the year. Let's say for instance, when, when our anniversary of our marriage, um, very like it always flares up around that time because we start thinking about the marriage that was.

Esther Perel: What do you do on those days? You, each retreat, you go silent or you kind of say it's one of those days and you make it overt and you acknowledge it and you normalize it. And there may be other options.

Him: I think we do a little bit of all those. Um, I know at first, you know, as it approaches, you kind of like, ah, okay, I'm going to have to deal with it. And then we talk about it. You know, we have, a good cry session usually, right? You would say?

Her: You know, for me it, it still happens, but it doesn't last. And that's what I tell myself. It's part of my story. It's part of my life. It's not something that takes me out at most. It lasts a couple of days and then I move on and that's just kind of how it is, so.

Esther Perel: You know, when I wrote, stood at the state of affairs, I had this sense. Over time, people can metabolize these experiences in kind of three major directions. One, I called stuck in the past. They regurgitate and it comes back all the time and they gnaw at that bone and they can't move forward and they can't establish any new trust or joy or significance.

And then another group that I thought. Um, survivors and they kind of put it on the side to try to talk about it, the least possible, uh, they saw it as a terrible crisis that they had overcome and they tried everything to kind of re-stabilize themselves. And then the third group that I called the transformers or something like that. And the idea was that those were people who often said this was one of the worst times in our lives, but it actually changed us. Not that we wanted this, but we actually managed to do something with this that put us in a different

place and we are stronger or happier or more connected after it. Where would you put yourself?

Her: Definitely the third group. Definitely the third group.

Esther Perel: That's wonderful news, but...

Her: For me.

Esther Perel: Yeah.

Him: For me as well.

Her: I don't think that our relationship, the way it was was sustainable. I think a lot of the difficulties that we went through in our life, I think it was inevitable that we were just going to collapse in some, some way. And if it wasn't for this, we would never have, have gone into therapy. And we've been doing that for the last four years. And slowly 45 minutes at a time, once a week, I find that she has helped us move closer to and closer to where we can finally work together on some things that can shift our relationship.

Esther Perel: Give me one knot that you're trying to untangle.

Her: So I'll tell you something that I figured out the other day.

Does he know?

He knows. We talked for quite a bit about it. I said, you know what I'm realizing is that every time we get ready for or something, a special occasion, and it requires me to get dressed and I get pretty, and I take time for myself to do those things. I'm very uncomfortable doing that in front of him, whereas that was never the case before I think, um, what's going on, something's happening there.

Esther Perel: What is the gaze that you imagine from him?

Her: I feel so vulnerable in that moment for me to be naked in front of him. Um, there's something there that makes me feel unsafe that he can hurt me so deeply by having unprotected sex and giving me an STI and me not knowing. Um, so I think I fear his decision-making and his all, all in the while, I really also wish that I could lean towards him and embrace that moment to be with him in that moment, because it was always a time when we feel joy in each

other's sexual attraction that we have for each other. And I just haven't allowed myself to regain that.

Esther Perel: And you, you feel that?

Him: Yes, I feel it. Um, it's, um, it's sort of a, a barrier that she establishes in so many ways, where in the beginning I had to learn to be okay with that, um, because I understood my role, but at the same time, I've been going to therapy for four years because I have, uh, issues with my esteem and issues with, uh, my feeling of rejection, but through therapy, I've learned that when she puts up that wall, I know that it's, it's due to the PTSD that she's going through or whatever she went through. It's not because she doesn't love me. I still struggle with it because I do want to be close to her. I do find her very, very attractive, like, like nothing has ever changed for me when it comes to that. Um, but it's still hard to always be the person that if we are going to have any type of intimacy, it's gotta be initiated by me or...

Esther Perel: By you? That's interesting. Cause it you said the reverse back then.

Him: Well, now if... yeah right, because if I leave it up to her, it's it, it could go weeks and months, but I'm always, I'm still after her. I'm still...I still want her.

Esther Perel: And does she welcome you?

Him: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. And even when she does welcome me sometimes, sometimes she welcomes me fully, sometimes she doesn't welcome me fully. So it's kind of like, it gets, there's some awkward situations there still, right, you would say that?

Her: Yeah.

Him: A typical, like, let's say a day, I don't know, a few days ago, you know, we were in bed and I wanted to initiate something, but I get the sense from her that, but what I always told her...

Esther Perel: You get the sense from her that?

Him: I get the sense of her that she was not going to, or into it, so.

Esther Perel: Is that true? Or she wants to be sure that you are really into it?

Music: Well, I ask her.

Esther Perel: What do you ask?

Him: I asked...

Esther Perel: What'd you say?

Him: I said, do you want to get naked? But she doesn't answer. So we've spoken about that where I'm like, listen, I would prefer you say, you know, now's not the time. I don't feel well now, or I just, I'm just not into it then just to leave me there with my own thoughts.

Esther Perel: And your own thoughts still go always in the same corner.

Him: No, they don't go, they, they go to a better place, I want to say. It's not that she doesn't want you is that she doesn't want it right now. So you're going to have to...

Esther Perel: Maybe she doesn't know what she wants.

Him: I wouldn't know.

Esther Perel: But that's an invitation too.

Him: Okay.

Esther Perel: I mean, let me check before I go off on this. Would that be a possibility?

Her: You're good.

Esther Perel: That's code.

Her: I remember feeling because I remember when you said during the session, can you hold her? I was in the midst of the pain. You said do you ever lean on each other? And that was so important because guess how many times I did not lean and sat there thinking, do I want to lean? Do I need to be able to lean?

Esther Perel: And the answer?

Her: And the answer was, boy, look at me holding back from leaning and why. And what often happens is I don't feel you're able to hold when I lean into you. So for example, with the sex in the in bed I don't know that he wants it. It doesn't come across to me that he's confident in his wanting.

Esther Perel: I know that.

Her: And that makes it very difficult for me, to move into it if I feel it, or to explore it if I don't feel it yet, but I'm looking to explore it to then see if, what if. And I feel that he is always, maybe I'm projecting...

Esther Perel: He's waiting for affirmation from you and you are waiting for unbridled desire from him.

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: Yes.

Him: Hmm.

Esther Perel: Can we stand up for a second?

Her: Sure.

Esther Perel: I want to do something.

Now, what happens here is that so often when he approaches her, he doesn't approach her from the place that is very clear and confident and says, I want you. He approaches her from the place that says, I want you, do you want me? And what she answers is a very common response. I have heard many times from female partners, which is nothing actually would turn me on more than your confidence, that you won't get instantly thwarted, that I don't have to reassure you, that I don't have to take care of you, that I know what you want and what you want is me. And therefore I can let go. And I particularly can let go of the burden of responsibility and the burden of caretaking that is often such a powerful anti-aphrodisiac for women. And so to say to him, what if she doesn't know what she wants, but what she enjoys is for you to gradually guide her into her wanting, into her desire. What she also experiences is that his desire went elsewhere. And one of the long-term needs after betrayal in an affair or infidelities is the need to be continuously reconfirmed as the subject of desire that will confer back my value.

And it's all these dynamics of the erotic recovery that follows infidelities over time that they are grappling with at this moment. I want them to have the opportunity to experience this dynamic in an embodied way. And so I designed a little exercise for them whereby I placed them both at two sides of the room. And one partner is to invite the other partner to come over to them, but they can only use gesture, their face, their body. They cannot use words. And it is very important to understand that before people initiate, there is an invitation, it is that invitation that we are exploring at this moment. So I asked him to invite her to come over to him.

Okay. I need you to come here and I need you to go there.

Her: Who, me?

Esther Perel: Whoever doesn't matter. I want to try something. So this is your line, right? Okay. I would like you to invite her to come over to you, but you can't talk with words. You have a whole body that can speak. And I want you to go and walk over to him, if you want, when you want, and as far as you want. And when you stop you just say, this is it, for now. All right? Go.

You started with big motions, big gestures, come on, come over, come over.. And then you stayed put with your hands out and they say, what do they say?

Him: Come. Right?

Esther Perel: And how am I feeling, as I am saying come? How are you feeling?

Him: Not confident.

Esther Perel: You're getting anxious. You're not sure she's going to come. Right. Okay. Ground yourself, right? Now you are already a little bit cheating because you've already been told just now that she really would like to come, but she wants to come to someone who is a confident initiate. Not somebody who says, do you want to come? But somebody who says, of course you want to come. Why wouldn't you?

So, bend your knees a little bit so that you can have flexibility. If your knees are locked, you cannot move. Okay. So what you want to tell her is not "please come so that I won't have to feel alone." right. But honey, I have all the time in the world. And we're going to play. And I'm going to show you my interest and you're gonna come a little bit, and now she's not in the mood to run right over in

order to comfort you so that you don't have to feel bad because then she's taking care of you. And that is not sexual play.

Him: Okay.

Esther Perel: So rather than make it fast, you know, quick so that you don't have to be uncomfortable and make it last.

Him: Okay. All right.

Esther Perel: And imagine, no no, keep going, keep doing. That those motions, those extending arms, those open. You're doing them because you enjoy seeing, what's going to make this woman take a step. I'm curious.

Her: You have to stop. You have to stop. Stop and think. Let's take a, take a breath. Just stop. It's okay.

Esther Perel: Are you more in touch with do you want me, do you find me attractive or can you also be in touch with, I want you, and I enjoy that feeling of wanting you. Desire is to own the wanting. Can you feel that in your body?

Him: Yes.

Esther Perel: Then you can do very little it's. You don't even need to use your hands. You can use your chin with just your eyes, your smile. Your breath. So let's take a deep breath. But don't ask for a response that is meant to reassure you, that you are in the right direction.

Him: I get it.

Esther Perel: You happen to have a woman who really loves to be with you sexually, but it's not really turned on when she has to continuously reassure you. 'Cause then she's in caretaking mode.

Him: Yeah.

Esther Perel: And you are afraid that your confidence would be predatory.

Him: Yes.

Esther Perel: Right? So your predatory fear is constantly holding you back, wanting her to affirm that what you do is okay, it's okay, not hurting.

Him: Yes. Consent is very important.

Esther Perel: But then invite.

Him: There is, yeah, so, so that's, so that's my challenge, right? Um, I'm very big on consent, but how do you separate consent from affirmation?

Esther Perel: Consent is not just when she says "Yes, I want it, I'm into it." Sometimes she doesn't know what she wants and she wants the space to be surprised. And if you wait for the, yes, you're going to get many no's. But if you can live with the "I don't know yet. Sometimes I don't start from a place of desire, sometimes I start from a place of willingness and the willingness leads me to arouse and then the arousal leads me to desire. I'm waiting to see where it takes." That is a form of consent for her. Frankly, if she doesn't want to, she would say it. Don't worry.

Him: I'm sure of that.

Esther Perel: Her no's are not difficult for her.

Her: You just have to trust that if something doesn't work, I'm going to say no. And let me tell you how easy it is for you to get me to come across the room for you. I don't think you even understand how easy it is. When you just give me the space to do it. And sit in yourself and believe that you're worth being flocked to by not just me, but anybody and for you to accept it and like sit in it and be like, damn right. Is this new to you?

Him: Well, um, I think what's new is that when Esther was telling me everything that I was doing wrong, I wasn't, I wasn't conscious of it. Wasn't conscious of it. She made me realize that I do have that consent and affirmation kind of thing, that's one in the same for me. And it's really not.

Esther Perel: Okay, go back. You want to do it again?

Him: Sure.

Esther Perel: Because what's really interesting is when you say I wasn't aware of it, right. What is something that you, that you like very, very much?

Him: Food.

Esther Perel: Yep. Okay. And what's one particular thing you really love?

Him: Indian food.

Esther Perel: Indian food.

Him: Yeah..

Esther Perel: Any dish?

Him: Tikka masala.

Esther Perel: Tikka masala. Okay. When you want that tikka masala, you already imagine yourself eating it, even before you've gotten to the restaurant or the food arrives, right? You have positive anticipation. You're having foreplay, you, you're not busy with the negative consequences. You're having pleasure scripts. Yeah? When you're going to invite her, now we are in agreement that this is consensual.

Him: Okay.

Esther Perel: She told you I want this. And sometimes she may even have it consensually and she didn't really want to, but it was still consensual. I want you don't ask her when she says I didn't really want to, is to say, did you enjoy it afterwards? Did I surprise you pleasantly? You know, and she could still say, I could have done without, yes I could. But at the same time, it still was very nice. You you're staying with it, I didn't really want to, and you get stuck there. For many women, for many people, but let's say for many women, that I was not good. If, you know, I didn't really want, I didn't really want to eat, but you had prepared such a beautiful meal, but then it smelled so nice and I had already eaten, then I knew I was, but then I sat and then I smelled and then I tasted, and then I actually put myself a whole plate. And when I was done, I still thought I shouldn't have eaten. Meanwhile, I enjoyed it totally, while I did. That's a bit of a mindfuck up there. Hot, cold, something?

Her: Oh, right. Huh. Okay. Can I give a little pointer?

Esther Perel: Why are you asking me?

Her: Sit back.

Esther Perel: I'm going to step out so that you can feel free to talk as much as you want.

Him: I'm watching you. And eventually you'll come. I want to taste you. I want to taste all of you.

Esther Perel: Can I come back?

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: So when you sat down now, what did your body say?

Him: So when I sat down...

Esther Perel: Do it, and just let it speak. Let the body talk in first person.

Him: Much more relaxed and comfortable with myself that I don't need to try so hard. Um,

Esther Perel: And when she told you to sit back?

Him: She made me realize that I was still on edge, I was still like, you know, when, I'm going to sit back and when she comes, she comes and I'm not going anywhere.

Esther Perel: And how did you experience her saying sit back?

Him: When she said it, I got it immediately, not just because, I wasn't following a command, it was kind of like, ah, are you giving me a hint? Okay. Like, oh, yeah, I got it.

Her: And it's funny because as I was, as you were trying to bring me over standing and Esther gave you permission to, you know, Hey, anything that works for you, try whatever you want, right. I was picturing you in my head. Like I do hope he sits now. I hope he gives himself permission to sit down and just relax and be right here. You know?

Esther Perel: So there are two things that I want you to pay attention to. This is to you actually, she may not always know what she wants, but she knows when she doesn't want. You're safe there.

Him: Okay. That's great to know.

Esther Perel: Yes?

Her: Yes.

Esther Perel: Okay. But number two, and this one is to you, you need to say, I liked this, this is right, or do that, as you said, when you said sit down rather than getting annoyed and seeing his leaning forward as, oh, he's again, anxious and insecure the moment you just said something, he danced with it and it was totally fine. You do need to give feedback. Just the feedback, so he has a sense as to are we riffing together? We're in sex play together. Let me know where you are. And often in that cultural script that you describe, confidence is described as I don't have to do anything because he knows. That's pressure, and often he knows not all of it. And it would be very different if you just give him a tiny bit.

Her: Yeah.

Him: Absolutely.

Esther Perel: When you say to him, I didn't really feel like it, or I wasn't really in the mood. It helps if you also add when it's the case, but I'm glad I did, or I like when you push me a little bit and the second part of the sentence becomes an affirmation that then transforms into confidence. So when you'd say, where's the confidence, that also involves you.

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: It's not just some raw material that he brings with him.

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: Confidence gets cultivated and gets replenished and gets diminished in a relationship by virtue of the interaction between the two people. It's not something that is static.

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: The exercise took quite some time and we did it again and again, and each time tried a different embodied practice. At first he would make big gestures. And then when she didn't instantly come over, he kind of flopped his

hands as if to say, and now what, and it was filled with anxiety about her coming rather than enjoyment about his wanting. That's why the Indian food was such a good metaphor for him. He knows the experience of wanting something and enjoying it, tasting it and saving it even before he's going to have it, but he couldn't sustain that with her and that wasn't new. So we practiced more. What is inviting, how does confidence really live in the body? How does owning the wanting in that sense, confidence? How does desire live in the body? And we went on like that for a while. And as we sat down again, it was time to go back to what had initially brought them into the office. What did they do over time with the crisis of the infidelity that they had both gone through?

There's a question you didn't answer me before. It was a terrible experience, but it really took us to a very different place. What were you thinking when you said that?

Him: So at the time, in the previous relationship, we always refer to it as the, as the previous relationship, we were so afraid to hurt each other, that we would hurt each other.

Esther Perel: How would you do that?

Him: Um, if I was angry or if I wasn't feeling right about something that was going on, but I would feel that it would put more stress on her or it would, you know, cause more stress between us.

Esther Perel: Stress, you mean conflict?

Him: Yes, conflict. I would not mention it or I would just let it, let it go, even though it really bothered me, I wouldn't speak up and I believe she was, she would do the same thing. So, that has changed. Um, our communication has changed. I've told her things that I know, and she's told me things that I know hurt, but needed to be said. And I think even though it's, it hurts temporarily, but through the long run, you know, now at least I know where she's coming from. I know what she feels that that dynamic has changed.

Esther Perel: And it makes a big difference.

Him: It makes a big difference because I feel I can trust her to say, I don't like it when you do this. Or, and I trust myself to say, I don't like it when you treat me this way, when you treat me like a little kid, or when you look down on me, when I do this or something like that. I wasn't able to do that before. So I would take it. I would get angry because then I would be resentful.

Esther Perel: And never say it.

Him: No, I wouldn't say it.

Esther Perel: Then, what did you do with the resentment?

Him: I would harbor it.

Esther Perel: And then?

Him: And then I would, it would come out at some later point in some awful form.

Esther Perel: Such as?

Him: I would get angry. I would act out I would do stupid things.

Esther Perel: Such as?

Him: Um, well, for many, many years, I was resentful of the fact that she, I, you know, I felt like she didn't want me anymore, felt rejected for so long. I went, I got sex somewhere else.

Esther Perel: So, so you turned resentment into entitlement.

Him: Yeah. That's a good way to put it.

Esther Perel: I deserve this.

Him: I deserve this because I'm so angry, right. I put up with so much shit that I deserve to do this. Well, our relationship now, it shouldn't get to that. If I'm angry now, I'm going to tell you I'm going to be respectful, but I'm not going to pull any punches because I need to get this out. And I hope you do the same, and you have right? We've had many conversations like that, you know.

Her: Can I share with Esther something about what happened this year, that kind of, I think tipped us a little more into the...

Him: Sure.

Her: Listen, we got to figure this out. So in August I discovered that he had a secret account, a secret bank account, and I happened to just turn over in bed at the moment when he put in an ATM card in his pocket. And I knew immediately something's not right. And I said, is this a secret account that you were saving money for to go see prostitutes? And he said, it's not prostitutes, it's gambling. So for 10 months he was trying to make money that he thought was going to help us financially. But I think it was more, I think it was built up resentment, power, I don't know, maybe I'm projecting. The idea of having a secret, again.

Him: It could be.

Her: Gave you a certain power and excitement, maybe that you needed again.

Him: Yeah.

Her: And so I was ready to walk away at that point. I said, okay, we gave this a go, good enough. And it was right on the eve of visiting his family. And somehow there was something about being together with the family that I said at that moment, are you willing to speak openly about what we've been going through? You know, how Esther you always talk about how couples suffer and struggle and go through so much in secret? No one knows anything. And next thing you know, your friends are separating and no one knew. Well, I said, we need to rip this wide open.

When you make poor decisions and poor choices that put our family at risk. I said, it's not just you anymore. It's all of us that have to deal with the consequences of that. So I said to you, no more secrets. Now we all have to carry what you do.

Him: I told the, my parents.

Her: And you have to start to think about the decisions, yeah.

Esther Perel: You alone? Or the two of you together.

Him: I told my parents. Uh, she's, she said that if we go down there, you're going to have to let them know everything. And I did. It actually was, to me, it was a long time coming and I was actually looking for them to lean on now because I was going through a hard time.

Esther Perel: Did you gamble because your employment changed during the pandemic?

Him: Um, I gambled because of many reasons, I think, yeah. I, I think gambling was, uh, an escape for me, something that was like adrenaline. Um, so give you a little bit background story, cause it's not just that. Um, I had been suffering for about three, almost four years with hip pain. Um, I had a severely arthritic hip and I was at one point a very athletic and active man.

Esther Perel: So picture this athletic man.

So you couldn't exercise anymore.

Him: I couldn't walk, I couldn't walk two blocks. I was in pain 24 hours a day. I couldn't sleep at night. I just had my hip replaced, that's how bad it was. So, again, it, it was probably, you know, another thing that I did where I had all this harbored resentment of like just life giving me lemons and you know, I'm going to make a tequila shot out of it. You know what I mean? So I think that was one of the reasons, I don't know what I was thinking.

Esther Perel: One piece that you, your partner here wants to do is to open the secret, so that line becomes more difficult.

Him: Yes.

Esther Perel: And hiding becomes more difficult, right? Because every time you have a secret, you may have adrenaline in, you may have excitement but you also have shame.

Him: Yeah.

Esther Perel: And the more you lie, and the more you hide, and the more you hide, and the more you feel ashamed and the more you feel ashamed and the more you hide and lie..

Him: Yes.

Esther Perel: You're looking at me.

Her: And the less confident you are standing there wanting me to come to you because you don't feel good about where you are. And there is nothing for me to come to because I'm nervous. \Am I going to get chlamydia? Am I going to get AIDS? Or am I going to get the IRS? What am I going to get? Right. And that's terrifying. So it makes it very tough to fight for. I don't know. It's, it's hard. It's

going to be hard for us. If we don't make a decision, you know, not to do stupid things. I don't know, you know?

Esther Perel: We, or you?

Her: You.

Him: I realize that.

Esther Perel: Basically, what she's saying is you make the stupid decisions and I have to make the mature responses.

Him: Right.

Esther Perel: And at some point I'll get tired of it. Is that what you said?

Him: She's right. She's right.

Her: And then the question I have is of course, how do I know that you're not going to keep doing crap like this, but I get it. I have no way to know. I'm just waiting for you to, you know, understand that I need some reassuring, some honesty and some reassuring things from you, as much as I think you want some reassuring things from me when you're, when you want me to come to you.

Esther Perel: You have a love story. That's very powerful. And that you think really transcends so many barriers and is able to overcome so much shit.

Him: Yeah.

Esther Perel: But then you have a view of life, that expression about life gives me lemons. Is there a relationship to life where you feel like my life, you know, it sucks. I don't get what I'm owed. I've tried so hard and I don't, you know, life has been unfair with me.

Him: Yeah. I, I CA I catch myself with that all the time, and these are real thoughts that come into my head.

Esther Perel: So you may have a love story with her, but if you have a not so loving story with life, an unfairness story with life, then you're going to do stupid shit.

Him: Yeah.

Esther Perel: And it's not related to you, but it's related to fuck it, life has not been good to me. It squeezes bad lemons.

Him: Yeah. That's my, that's exactly what my father taught me since I was this big, um, life sucks. You're put on this earth to suffer. You got to work until you die and then you die. So. That has

Her: No joy.

Him: There's no joy in life. And if there is, there's a price to be paid, this is this.

Esther Perel: In what language, in what language does he say out of that?

Him: Spanish.

Esther Perel: Dímelo en español.

Him: La vida es dura.

Esther Perel: Mhm.

Him: El hombre esta en esta tierra para sufrir.

Esther Perel: Y para trabajar.

Him: Y para trabajar y despues que trabaje vas a morir y si algo bueno te pasa lo vas a pagar. Sí de una forma u otra lo vas a pagar.

Her: Well I fucking paid for it, all right.

Him: Sorry.

Esther Perel: She's very tolerant. But you're more giving than she gives you credit for too. It's both and. The first time you came, you came to get the hope that you, there was a future to the relationship. The second time you come is that you want to have hope or to, it's not to have hope you have it, but you want the permission to have it. You want the affirmation for the hope that you could also actually reclaim him. That doesn't totally cure the idea that he can sometimes feel so bad about himself that he doesn't think about others.

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: It's kind of an interesting form of selfishness, self absorption.

Him: Yeah.

Her: One of the things I thought about that could be helpful, like me with my, you know, covering, running away, shielding myself, little kid, almost. Um, also, I don't know, being a little bit kind to that when I do that for myself to say, okay, I know what this is to see it, to recognize that I'm trying to protect myself. Okay, that's a nice try. It's good. But I know it's not the answer, but I understand. And I appreciate the fact that I'm looking to preserve myself in some way. Okay, and then maybe I don't have to hold onto that so long.

Esther Perel: You can try that.

Her: And the same with you maybe to say, yeah, you know, it's a part of you, but maybe it's, you know, it doesn't serve you anymore.

Esther Perel: Oh, you again?

Him: Right, right. This guy again.

Esther Perel: This guy, this guy.

Her: Yeah.

Esther Perel: What's his name?

Him: Bitter boy.

Esther Perel: Bitter boy. Alright, hi bitter boy. Did anybody invite you today? Do you have anything else to say about the world? Yes. I know what you're going to say. Thank you. You know, bitter boy will accompany you, but bitter boy doesn't have the truth on everything all the time. And bitter boy wants you to believe that you're screwed and life sucks and it's unfair. And no matter how hard you try and it's just so freaking old and predictable. Oh, you again? Hi, you get two minutes of your of attention today, but not two hours,

Him: Right.

Esther Perel: It's not all of you. It's a voice, but there are other voices..

Him: Yes.

Esther Perel: There's so many more things we could say, but we got to stop.

Her: Thank you.

Esther Perel: You're welcome.

Him: Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Esther Perel: Maybe in four years again.

Him: Sure.

Esther Perel: Initially it seemed that his transgression was a direct response to her rejection, that his sense of deprivation would morph into a sense of entitlement. What becomes clear is that this is actually a longer pattern where bitter boy sometimes feels that he's screwed by life. And that turns into a sense of deserving. And so we stop where we normally would say see you next week and let's have another session because we've just in the thick of it. But given the nature of the podcast, I may just see them another four years from now.