



EmotionalAffairJourney
Follow our journey as we save our marriage after an emotional affair

The Unfaithful Female – “Lisa”



“Lisa”

Doug: The first question that we’ll start things off with, and I’ve been doing it with everybody that I talk with, is just tell us briefly a little bit of your affair story as far as how it started, what type of affair it was, who pursued who, how long did it last, that type of thing.

Lisa: I had been married about five years and relocated to another part of the US. Didn’t have a lot of family around, just my spouse and I, and we were going through a lot of challenges. I was having a lot of health issues. We had stress with him losing the job that we had relocated for, problems with his quasi-adult children, me missing family, and just a lot of a downhill slope, and unfortunately communication not being strong between the two of us was one of our cracks in our foundation. And me not feeling good about myself, just as far as a whole bunch of things, and became very vulnerable.

I’m in a work environment that involves a lot of contact with individuals. I’m in the HR field. I was at a job fair. I’m pretty outgoing and extroverted and so on. Someone started talking to me, another HR professional. Not in my same organization or even industry, but we started talking and idea sharing. I was sharing that I need some information on one, two, three. I’m new to this part of the country. I don’t have any networking resources, and this person was like, “Oh, I can get you XYZ.” We started sharing. We swapped business cards, etc. That then led to e-mail, and they were always on the up-and-up, professional and everything, but quite honestly, it started to put the switch in my brain, like, “Wow. Someone finding me.”

In retrospect, I can look at this now a little easier because it’s about a year out since everything has been disclosed to my partner. I look back and say, yes, it was that adrenaline. Someone finds me interesting. Someone thinks I’m attractive. Holy cow. Then it turned to text messages that got a little flirty. We had coffee a few times. Then, subsequently, I was seeing this person on and off for two years, which every time I say that, I just cringe because I look back and I think, my gosh, I never thought I would be that person to be that vulnerable and susceptible and I’ve always had the mantra of anybody that cheats on their partner, oh my goodness, they should be locked in a cage kind of thing. I’ve always had a very strong opinion about that, and here I am walking in those shoes.

Doug: Yeah. You probably thought that if your husband cheated on you, that would be the end. You’d walk out the door or kick him out or whatever.

Lisa: Sure. Oh, my gosh, yes. I'd be the first to be very vocal about it. So, here I am in that position saying, "What the heck?" I look back, and I've been in therapy now for a year to really try to unpeel the onion to say, "How did I get to that point?" I was diagnosed with clinical depression, some very bad issues with sleep and hormonal issues. I certainly can't blame it all on that with menopausal challenges and depression. And I wasn't taking care of myself as far as therapy prior to that and medication. I'll be the first to say there was a need there and I wasn't addressing it. I was just [3:37 inaudible] to get help in that respect. My partner was trying. He felt me slipping away. I was like, "Yeah, I got this. I'm fine. I'll get past it." Well, I got past it alright. I had an affair.

Doug: I don't know if you'd call it unhappiness or discontent or whatever with your marriage. Did you and your husband talk about that prior to the affair or anything?

Lisa: You know what's funny? He tried. He really tried to break through my shell and I kept brushing it off. "Oh, I'm fine. It's just because I'm not sleeping. It's because I'm having hot flashes. It's because-because-because." I kept defaulting to that. And I think I was afraid to look in the mirror and realize we've got some problems here. Again, selfishly, not taking care of myself from a mental health standpoint. He and I, as we try to, I'll say, recover from all of this, have really started to look at that and doing my own self-journey and he with his. He takes some blame. He's like, "Oh, I should've just put an ultimatum in to say if you don't get it together and go back and talk to someone and perhaps get on some kind of medication and we get into counseling together, I'm going to leave." In retrospect, he was like, "Why the heck didn't I do that?" Well, could've, should've, would've are normal in this kind of situation. I'm going to write a book.

Doug: Yeah. Call it "Would've, Could've, Should've."

Lisa: Yeah, I should, right? He and I were just talking about this this morning. I've read 30 books on infidelity. There's such a fog there. I look back and I say, "Who was that woman? Who was that person?" It just doesn't even feel like me in my own skin.

Again, I'm not making excuses. I own what I did and it's heinous what I did, how hurtful. I look at him now and the hurt cracks my heart open. It's horrible. But, there's my story, kind of, sort of.

Doug: Okay, I appreciate it. Some little, quick things maybe just to follow-up on that. The affair obviously is over at this point in time. When is the last time you've had contact with the affair partner?

Lisa: Let's see. It's almost been a year, but July we were texting. I saw the person in person in July. There was no intimacy. Honestly, what had happened, the early part of 2017, I started to

have this shift of maybe waking up a little bit and realizing ... The guilt, the shame, was always there but I think I was really starting to feel it and be able to process it, and I started to break away from the person. Texting still. I'm not going to doubt it was still an emotional affair, but the physicality was stopping. The last physical interaction with this person was in May of 2017. Honestly, after the interaction, I broke down. I hit the wall. I'm not going to be dramatic and say it was a nervous breakdown, but it was an emotional breakdown.

The interesting thing in this affair, too, I've never talked to this person about ... Obviously, they knew I was married. This person was not. But, I never talked about my marriage and I think it was pretty evident that I was unhappy in some capacity or else I wouldn't be doing what I was doing. He was relatively intelligent and could figure that out. But, there was never a big sharing of my marital life, like, "My husband frustrated me. He didn't empty the garbage," or something. I never showed my true self to this person. When I was with this person, I was Lisa the resume'. I was Lisa, the professional. Lisa, the whomever. I was this person who "had it together" but I didn't. Who am I kidding? I didn't.

I didn't know his birthday. He didn't know mine.

Doug: Really?

Lisa: Yeah. I was pretty good at compartmentalizing and that's been explained to me, the psychology behind that. Well, if there's not a lot of depth there, you kind of validate for yourself, "Well, it's really not nothing. It's not anything if they don't know one, two, three."

It was always on his terms – time, date, and place – with how it was going to occur. There's just a lot there. That's the last time I had physical interaction with that person.

Then, from there, it was e-mail and text messages and then I sent the final letter of "I can't talk to you. This is over. I have to get myself together." That was sent via e-mail in early August of last year, 2017.

Doug: I find that interesting that you guys didn't share a lot of those different stories and complain and things like that.

Lisa: No, there was none of that.

Doug: So, does that indicate then that maybe this whole thing was kind of more about a physical need as opposed to emotional needs?

Lisa: Yeah. I think a little of both. Actually, my own psychology and how I'm wired is that I've always identified my self-worth through my job. Honestly, I've been married to my career for 30 years. I've had two marriages now, and I always saw my self-worth as ... And a therapist said to me, "You see yourself as your resume'. You've got a pretty impressive resume' and

that's how you validated your self-worth." There's a bunch of psychology in there that I won't go into, but there are some reasons why in my development, in my psyche and so on, and family things and things that have occurred. That was always my safety net was my job. And that's how I saw myself as the shining star.

Me sitting down and BSing and talking with him over a coffee was a high for me. That was just like, "Woo-hoo! This is great." You don't think of it consciously when you're sitting there, but you come out of that like, "I feel like a pretty smart cookie. Wow, maybe this person thinks I'm okay, etc."

There were times when we would have interactions, and honestly maybe we ran out of time and there wasn't time for intimacy like that. I was almost relieved at times that, "Yeah, okay, whatever. I don't need that. I don't need the intimacy from a sexual standpoint because I got my turn-on. I got that dopamine push," in your brain from just talking and BSing. Intimacy was very mechanical. I don't want to get graphic, but it was very mechanical. There wasn't a lot of ... It was one, two, three, let's get it done. Let's go.

Doug: Not a lot of romance.

Lisa: No, no, no. And trying to explain that to my partner that there wasn't this, "Oh, my God, I have to have you." It wasn't like that. And that led me to really look at myself and talk about disgust because I look at that and I think, "Oh, my gosh." It's horrible enough what I did, but I feel a lot of vulnerability there as far as feeling used. I allowed it to happen. There wasn't a gun to my head, thankfully, but I did it. That was a very, "This is part of the agreement. This is what we're doing." I never want to feel that way in any relationship. It's kind of a gross feeling.

Doug: Is that something you're addressing, the feelings that resulted from that in your therapy?

Lisa: Oh, my gosh. Oh, yeah. The book of shame and guilt and the reasons why, I've spent a few copays on that.

Doug: And you're probably a Brené Brown reader?

Lisa: Oh, yeah. Every webinar. Every book. Every YouTube. TED Talk. You name it, I've been there. I really had to shift now the paradigm in my thinking, too, about work. I put the foot down and said, "No more." I relocated to another part of the United States, so I'm seeking new employment and I've really made it known that I don't need to be at this particular level of professional status, what I was doing, and really change my thought about work. When I die, on my gravestone, I don't think my family, friends, or child is going to say, "Wow, my mom was a really good HR, etc." I would like to think that they don't care where I work. They're

going to care about whether or not I was a good, decent person, a loving, caring family member.

That was really a smack in my head when a therapist said to me, “Nobody cares about your resume’ when you pass away.” That really snapped me out of a lot of certain things and how I look at myself, but I understand more why I put that pressure.

Doug: Sure. Understood. The most often-asked question in this survey that we did from betrayed husbands. We separated things out and had betrayed husbands say what their struggles were and what questions they had. The number one asked question is a combination of questions, but it starts off as, “Why?” How could you betray me? Did you stop and think about the pain this would cause me and your children? How do you address that?

Lisa: Yeah. When I addressed that to my partner ... We don’t have any kids together, but still, the pain of looking him in the face and saying, “Oh, my gosh.” I did have guilt. There were times I would walk away from being with that individual and say, “Oh, my gosh. I feel dirty. I have this shame feeling.” But, I would compartmentalize it. I would try to put it in a little perfect box, wrap it in brown paper and put it in the closet until next week or two weeks from now, whatever the case may be, and deny it.

One of the things that both of us have kind of unearthed in our therapy together is I understand how much now he truly loved me. And I’ll say loved, past tense, because he’s obviously been very hurt by what I’ve done and still loves me, but there’s damage there. I don’t think it’s at the same level he loved me like he did once. I don’t think I ever let him in to really be able to feel and understand how much he had unconditional love for me. I don’t think I ever felt that and knew that, but I also don’t think I was able to, because of my own stuff and baggage, to accept and to really know: what does that mean? What does that feel like? I’m feeling that. Does that satisfy his hurt? Of course it doesn’t. But I think it’s giving him some understanding of just where I was and wasn’t emotionally.

We had only been married five years. We look back and there’s a lot of, “Wow, we should have waited before we got married.” We got married pretty quickly. We dated a year, and then boom, got married. There were quasi-adult kids involved and there was some drama there. We didn’t talk about some things that we really should have, like finances and goals. What were we thinking? A couple in their late 40s, what the hell were we thinking? We weren’t thinking.

Doug: Crazy in love.

Lisa: Yeah. Crazy in something. But, we look back now, and honestly, our conversations in light of all of this have been probably more – though it’s a very hurtful, painful time for both of

us – have been more rewarding. And I’ve learned more about him in the last year and he has learned a hell of a lot more about me than I ever have known. Just stuff that’s come open, I go, “Wow.” The good stuff, the bad stuff, everything. That aspect of it, I think that’s helped us to bond, certainly.

Doug: Absolutely. Linda and I had that same experience. Obviously, you have a lot of hard, difficult, emotional discussions when you’re recovering from this stuff. And they’re not fun. They’re painful and everything, but the end result, typically, is it brings you closer together and helps you to reconnect in a lot of cases, as long as you don’t let your anger come out or frustrations, emotions, and all that other kind of stuff, it usually ends up being a good result.

Lisa: We definitely had those moments of anger and frustration, certainly. There’s **[17:50 inaudible]** when someone is hurt so deeply, both of us. That’s something you have to navigate, and eventually – hopefully – you get to the point of being healthier in how you convey that.

Doug: Absolutely. Going back to while the affair was going on, do you feel that your attitude or your treatment or your behavior towards your husband changed drastically during that period?

Lisa: Definitely. I was the perfect example of kick the dog, very passive-aggressive, pulled away even more. But, it’s funny, he recently said to me, “You know, I think back. You changed your hairstyle and your hair color.” Certain behaviors like that. He said, “You started wearing a different perfume. I just thought you were changing things up because that’s kind of your thing, etc.” But, then he said, “Now I think you were changing that up because of being involved with someone.” Yeah, you’re right. I’m sure that was why.

But, my behavior to him was I shut down to my partner. Our intimacy fell off. Even before having an affair, our intimacy between the two of us had fallen off the rails. Then it even lessened even more in that capacity, but he sees it as, “When I think about you and your relationship with this other person, you were never happy about anything. You would want a new dishwasher,” let’s just say, which is true. “I want a new dishwasher!” He would get me one. Then I would still moan and groan about the dishwasher. It still wasn’t good enough. There was a perpetual blanket of doom and gloom. He said, “It was a wet blanket on you all the time. Nothing made you happy at all. It was never good enough, fast enough, nice enough, heavy enough.” I was like, “Wow. How did you tolerate that?”

He turned to a lot of hobbies. He got back into the gym. He was working out. He turned to a lot of things to get the hell away from me, quite honestly. And I get it. I said, “Oh, my God, if that was you acting that way with me, I would have clobbered you.” He said, “Yeah, trust me,

there were times when I wanted to smack you in the head.” He never did. There was no physicality.

But, I get it. I look back and I think, “Wow.” That’s what’s so startling to me when I look at him and I say, “Oh, my God. This man is incredible.” It gets me emotional thinking about it. How did he hang in there? That, I think, is an example. He was trying to hang in there. He never thought I would do anything like that. He thought it was just hormonal, it was this, it was that. He never in his brain ever thought there would be anything like that. That’s unconditional love. He was hanging in there.

When everything started to come out and I was trickling things out, unfortunately, like a lot of people do, I remember sitting back and looking at him and saying, “Oh, my gosh, this man is really putting in the effort.” We both remember the moment where we were. He said, “I remember you sitting there and looking at me like, ‘Oh, my gosh, he’s really trying.’” This couple activity we were trying to go through with healing. But, I wasn’t showing all my cards, unfortunately. It’s quite the experience. That’s for certain. But, my behavior towards him was really, really toxic. It got worse.

Doug: Yeah, that’s typical. I was reading an article this morning. It was either on CNN or Psychology Today or one of those. This woman was writing about why women have affairs. She had done some interviews and things like that. One of the things that she had discovered was that a lot of women have affairs not necessarily as a reason to get out of the marriage, but as a reason, actually, to stay in the marriage, to find something outside that they weren’t getting but they still loved their husband and they certainly didn’t want a divorce.

With that said, what do you feel that you were getting from the relationship with this person maybe that your husband wasn’t providing?

Lisa: He was working a lot of hours with his job, too, and I think I was missing us. Besides my own issues of being depressed and everything even before my affair, I think that really started the ball rolling. We lost our way, both of us, and I think lost us. The five language signs or the love language, that book, I’m a quality time person and he’s an affirmation person. I want quality time and he wants verbal acknowledgement. We both said we really lost ourselves even before. Two years before my affair, a year-and-a-half before, we lost our path with each other in staying connected. And not just going to the grocery store together, but really staying connected and making time for each other. I think that was one of our biggest downfalls with that.

He was always very complimentary of my appearance, even though I wasn't thrilled because my body was changing and different things. He was always very supportive of my career as I worked up the corporate ladder.

I think the biggest thing for me, I think for my own psychology, was that praise. Though I was getting it from him, I think I had anger and resentment towards him. Actually, I know I did. Not I think – I know I did because of losing our past. I think I was shutting down on him. And then here's someone on the outside rolls up to me. I'm extremely vulnerable. And this person starts to flip the switch on, all tied into my work. Then here comes the second phase of, "Oh, and by the way, I find you attractive." Does that answer your question? I'm sorry, I ramble on here.

Doug: Did you ever feel that you got to the point where you didn't think you loved your husband anymore?

Lisa: No. And that's the real dichotomy there. I even said to him, "I never stopped loving you." Of course, in the beginning, he's like, "How the heck can you say that?" I think he understands it more now. I still had love for him, but I was trying to compartmentalize it. There was still a level of love and I think that's what I realized when everything started to roll out. I looked back. At first, it was, "Oh, my God, what did I just do? What the heck have I been doing?" Then I realized I love him. I still loved him.

In early 2017 when I was kind of coming out of this fog – call it what you want – I remember going on a couple of business trips. I wanted him so desperately to come with me. I was like, "Look, they're putting me up in this resort. This is going to be great." He was already like, "Look, I've tried to rekindle with you." He was already hurt. This is even before he knew I was having an affair. He was frustrated with me in the lack of taking care of myself and our lack of emotional connections. He was like, "I'm not coming with you to Palm Springs," or wherever. I think back about that as a desperate attempt to try to reconnect because I still loved him.

When he would be expressive with a birthday card or he would give me a gift, my reaction was so emotional, a coffee mug evoked tears. Go figure. I think that was my guilt and my shame coming out and not being able to even admit it to myself. It's a bizarre phenomenon that I feel. I've read a lot of people have felt the same. You still love your partner. It's just a weird push and pull. Just a very odd feeling.

Doug: Yeah. You said this has been about a year since it ended, right?

Lisa: Yeah. The e-mail that I sent, he watched me send it, was sent the first week in August and there's been no contact from the individual whatsoever.

Doug: Obviously, during that period of time, there's always a lot of discussions about this stuff, as we've mentioned. Outside of your therapy sessions, did you say you do joint therapy?

Lisa: Yeah. Initially, I jumped right into therapy to get myself together. He waited a hot minute to do it. We had some challenges around that. If anybody is listening to this, I would recommend a his and her therapy and then come together as a couple. I went right in and started pulling away my rotten onion and trying to figure out myself. He came into my sessions a couple of times, but when he started therapy, his therapist didn't want me in the sessions. We look back and that probably wasn't the best thing because he really needed to be heard with his advocate in a neutral, safe environment. We've learned a lot of lessons there. So, now we have joint therapy and we still do individual to work on our things. But, I think that's critical.

Doug: Do you guys talk about the affair very much outside of therapy?

Lisa: Well, let's see. This morning at 7:30 on his way to work, we had a lengthy conversation. Every day. Every day. It gets weary. Over the weekend, he said something to me. "Does this make you weary?" I'm like, "Yes."

Even when it's not a confrontational conversation, even when it's just, "Wow, that was a trigger for me," or, "Man, Lisa, I still can't get my head around this. Do you still believe this happened?" It's not challenging. We both have been able to really take some emotion out of this. Every day it comes up in some shape or form. Even if we make a pact that, look, this weekend we're going to go to the beach and do this, this, and that. We're going to try to put that on the back burner for a minute. It always come up. Even if it's just a little nugget of, "Hey, did you ever think that a year ago we'd be sitting on a beach right now having a glass of wine?" I'm like, "Nope." It comes up.

Doug: Full disclosure here. You and I have talked before. In our previous conversation, I believe your husband and you currently do not live in the same place due to work constraints. Correct?

Lisa: That is correct. I'm in the southern coastal part of the United States and he is in the northeast.

Doug: Do you feel that a lot of those discussions are somewhat related to that fact, that you're not together all the time?

Lisa: No. I think what's been a luxury ... Things happen for a reason. I haven't been able to find an appropriate position yet to where I am in the United States, so I've got a lot of flexibility. I've lived now in this part of the country for a couple of months now and I actually go where he is at least a couple of weeks a month. I just came back from being there for two weeks with him. But, we Skype.

I think some of the distance is good for us in some ways, because initially, when all this disclosure happened and he very well could have kicked me out on my tail, kicked me out of the house, he didn't and I'm very grateful for that from a fiscal standpoint, from an emotional standpoint. But, in looking back, I think a separation, even just if it was a confuse weeks, a month, for us – not for anybody else, I don't know – it probably would've been good for us because I came home from work every day looking at him. He came home from work every day looking at me and it was hard. Even if it was just a quiet night and we were just tolerating each other and the situation, there's a heightened emotion there. I think it would have been healthier if we each could have been in our own corner. I wish we had done that.

Now, I think this kind of helps us. Honestly, he's residing in another part of the United States and he's staying with some of my family members, which I think has helped him because they're very supportive of he and I working through this. They know what happened. We're very open and honest with our family about this. We're not hiding from it. And he's been able to get some insight from my family to say, "What's up with her?" Does this sound like her? They've really helped educate him about, "Yeah, this is such a bizarre scenario. We don't know Lisa as that, etc." There's been a lot of helpful insight he's been getting from my family. And me, too.

Actually, through all this, this has caused me to be a lot closer to my family members and talk about things, childhood things that have never come out before. And he gets it. There are times when he's like, "I get it. I hear now how you were raised with certain things and this kind of makes sense now."

Doug: It's a whole family of origin, figuring out why you are the way that you are.

Lisa: Yeah. I said to him, "Would you have married me if you knew all this." He's like, "Yes. I still would've married you. It wouldn't have scared me away." Because of the job he's in, he has a lot of flexibility. We try to work it out that we don't go more than a week or so seeing each other.

Doug: Do you feel that you have a pretty good understanding of what your husband has gone through and the pain that has affected him?

Lisa: Initially, I was in my own swirl. I was hyper-focused on me. It hurts me, I feel this, I feel that. I'm trying to unpeel the onion. I'm the bad guy. I've got the scarlet letter. I would sit there and say, "I understand how you feel." I didn't understand it. Not like I do now. When I think back the phases of this, of grieving, or the phases of all this experience, it's become more and more apparent. And being able to stop and listen, and listen for him, listen to what he's

telling me, really listen and try to equate to if I feel this, he's got to feel ten times worse. I think I have a heck of a lot better understanding now. He's a big user of analogies.

Through therapy and understanding my hurt, but then re-shifting that focus because it can't be all about me now. Everyone is focused in their treatment. You've got to be. You've got to take care of yourself. But, now really being focused on him, too, I got it now. It took a while because I couldn't hear it. I couldn't hear him and his cries of pain. I wasn't able to really listen to that.

So, when I read all these books and articles, honestly, in retrospect. I've got a library full. I've got like 30 books on everything. I wasn't getting it. When they say do full disclosure at the start, I didn't do that. I'd love to know who actually does that.

Doug: Yeah. It rarely happens.

Lisa: Yeah. The more people I talk to and professionals like yourself, in supporting people I talk to, everyone is like, "Nah, I never did that." People on message boards and so on. Again, you look back and say, "I should've done this," or, "I could've done that." But, my understanding of his hurt, I've seen it exhibited in a lot of different ways, whether it's anger.

Honestly, he had some health issues that came up. Two surgeries after all of this was disclosed. He had emergency appendicitis. He had a kidney issue, and he got the flu in the course of three months. I remember just sitting in the hospital watching him sleep just crying and saying, "Oh, my God. Is this a coincidence?" I don't know. We laugh about his appendix scar now, but I say to him that's a battle wound. I really think it is. He has went through such horrific health stuff going on, and yeah, appendix happens to a lot of people, but the timing was rather interesting. He goes, "That scar, I look at that and I think about us. That's a reminder of us every day." Me, too. When I see it, I think of it, too.

Doug: Sure. Do you think at this point he's forgiven you?

Lisa: He wrestled with forgiveness a few months after everything, last fall. But, we look at it as I think there's different phases of forgiveness. I don't think forgiveness is, "Oh, I forgive you now. I'm going to wipe my hands clean. You're forgiven." I don't think it's that easy.

And he's a very forgiving person. He's got the longest rope of forgiveness that I've ever seen in anyone. I think he does, definitely, on one level. But, I still think there's anger. And right now he's kind of going through this phase of, "Damn, am I angry. I did this, this, and that for you and all these material things, etc. You still did this. This hurts." I think he has forgiven me, but we both feel that there's different phases of forgiveness. He's not a revengeful person or anything like that. Again, he's very forgiving in general of people.

I think he has, but I don't know if there's different levels of it. That's our interpretation.

Doug: I think you're right. For our situation, as an example, and you kind of alluded to it, Linda did not get angry at first. She was freaking out too much. The anger came later. It was after, when she said she had forgiven me. You kind of get mixed signals. It's like it's a whole other facet of it that you have to work through.

I think some of this, as the unfaithful person, you kind of feel she's forgiven me, so to some extent, I'm off the hook.

Lisa: Right, the sigh of relief.

Doug: Right. Then, later on, you find out they're still getting mad about stuff and still asking questions and still rehashing things. It's like, well, what's going on here? It's a struggle.

A couple more things I wanted to address before we wrap it up here. One of the things when you go through this is it's a tremendous learning experience, so can you maybe share some of the things that you feel you've learned about yourself and about marriage as a result of everything?

Lisa: Sure. I think some of the things that I've learned about me, certainly there's some patterns within my family that I've kind of realized, hearing some family stories about things, but also really looking at what I was exposed to as a child. Then, in those developmental years of how you see relationships portrayed and being a person that was very avoidant in the job that I had, I was very direct. I can hire and fire; I don't think twice about it. Boom, boom, boom, get it done, give directions, etc. A great communicator.

But, when it came to my personal life, I stunk. I really stunk at it. It was always about control. I was always in the mindset of ... Because, at work, I have to be kind of controlling certain situations, especially what I do with people and the kind of work that I do. But, in my personal life, I always tried to be five steps ahead of the conversation. How am I going to answer that question? He or she is going to ask this. I better have the right answer. I realized how truly insecure I was.

The whole control thing goes back to fear and insecurity. I go back 50-something years and I try to figure out. I know why now, why that is. So, I've learned a lot about myself in that respect and then trying to change that thought process. And now being also so much more self-aware and being in the moment.

It's funny, I was with family recently and I had my siblings say to me, "Oh, my gosh, you're actually calm and peaceful, even though this past year has been so catastrophic for you and

your partner. My gosh, you actually stopped and said to me, ‘Did you hear that bird? That’s a crazy chirp, isn’t it?’ A crazy, simple example.

To be in the moment and not worry about 50 other things or trying to be 50 sentences ahead of the other person. I don’t remember when I’ve ever had self-awareness like that in probably my lifetime. You look back and you say, well, that’s pretty sad. I have made a pact with myself that I never want to be in that space again. I really want to have a better balance, where it’s work life, family, all of that. There’s never going to be a perfect balance, but I have to be healthier, whether it’s with my partner now or if we don’t work out, for my family and for myself, and anyone else that should come into my life. It’s definitely been a learning opportunity.

What was the second part of your question? I’m sorry.

Doug: That was pretty much what you thought you learned. That leads to the next question. What are you still struggling with?

Lisa: What I struggle a lot with is – and I really try to release it, but my shame and my guilt. Having that scarlet letter. In our society “men are expected to cheat’ – not expected, but men cheat. In other countries, men have three wives or whatever. It’s much more, I’ll say, accepted, discussed, etc. With women who have an affair, it’s the scarlet letter. I’m not going to use profanity, but you can fill in the blanks. A woman is this, she’s that. She’s got the scarlet letter tattooed right on her forehead. So, that guilt and that shame around that is immense for me. It’s still a pretty big factor. It’s not as bad as it was.

I had people that I thought were advocates that would have my back. Not that I expected them to be “Rah-rah! We’re on team Lisa! You’re the best!” But, I had people that were close to me turn to me and say, “Well, you’re a _____.” Fill in the word. And just be crushed by that. I got it. I know. I know that word and I’ve called myself that. That’s a really big nut for me to crack because I don’t think I’m an evil person. I don’t think what I did was appropriate. I own it. It’s horrible. It’s heinous to do that to a partner and hurt somebody so deeply who truly loved you. My actions were horrible, but I don’t think as a person I’m an evil individual. That’s a hard thing for me to get around.

I also struggle with having such hopeful moments. We have a great weekend. We have great conversations. But, then, my partner gets angry about something or I get prickly about something. Then, I’m like, “Forget it, I’m just tired. This isn’t working and I want to give up.” I want to give up for a minute, an hour, half a day maybe. Then, I’m like, wait a minute. We’ve come so far and I know how I feel about him. He expresses how he feels about me. This is part of it. This is part of the struggle. My previous mode of operation was I would walk away. That’s

what I told him. How I've dealt with previous relationships, I get a whiff of something and I'm out. I would leave.

In this particular situation and relationship, I care too much. I love him too much. I realize what I've done. The easier solution would have been to walk away, but then I would have probably started the same pattern over of poor communication and all these things. Honestly, I wouldn't be where I am today. He's had huge development in understanding of himself, too. But, that shame and guilt is just brutal. I get very impatient because I want to fix his healing. It's like if there was a magic pill, recipe, I don't know what, I would do it. I would do anything to remove his pain. There's no quick solution. I hate the words it takes time. Yeah, well, come on. My clock is ticking. I'm pretty impatient. But, I know it's baby steps.

We just had a conversation recently. He brought up that piece. He said, "We need to celebrate our small successes." We need to celebrate that we can have a great weekend. We can do this, we can do that. We don't cry every day like we used to. We're both sleeping better. We're both exercising more. We're doing all these things. Let's celebrate that and not dwell on, "This sucks This was really the worst time in our lives." Not forget about that, because we never will, but I think that's important, too, of acknowledging.

Again, we're further out obviously than people who are D Day, day one type of thing.

Doug: I think that's a wonderful point you made, though. It's tough for people to do that. It really is. But, it makes a lot of sense. Showing a little bit of gratitude and celebrating successes like that. I think that's wonderful. Maybe I'll write an article about that.

Lisa: Yeah. I recently went to an infidelity support group. There was maybe one other person. They were like five years out, but there were people who were right in the mix. Things had just happened in the last month, the last two months. I just sat there hearing their stories. Everybody has a war story. There's children involved and their affair partner got pregnant, this and that. What?!

I left there and I called him and I was like, "Oh, my God. You and I are like plain vanilla. These poor people going through this." I just wanted to hug this girl or hug this fella and say, "Oh, my gosh. Please trust me. It will get better." But, when you're in that D Day moment ...

Again, I'm further out. It's not easy, but it has gotten better for us.

Doug: Well, that's good. I guess we can draw to an end here. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me here today. I appreciate all the insight and information you've given us. I think it's going to be very helpful.

Lisa: No problem at all, Doug. Anyone going through this, it's patience. If you're a faith-based person, turn to whatever you believe in. I think that's helpful. It does get better. Even if the relationship doesn't remain, hopefully you as a person, as an individual, will learn from it and be able to grow your journey as a human on this planet. You got to try to do the best you can do every day.

If you need anything else, Doug, by any means, please don't hesitate to ever reach out to me. I enjoy being a resource.

Doug: I appreciate it very much. Thanks again. You have a wonderful day.

Lisa: Okay, thank you.

Doug: Take care. Bye-bye.

Lisa: Okay. Bye-bye.