

**Esther Perel:** This whole summer, we have been talking about friendship. Friendship in its many, many stages, but this one is different because this is when you work with friends, when you manage to collaborate with them, to co-create with them, when you kind of expand the relationship from friendship into artistic or psychotherapeutic, I would even say collaboration. And that's when I thought of inviting my friend, Paul Browde, who is a psychiatrist originally from South Africa, with whom I have collaborated in conducting relationship retreats with couples and individuals, and I love working with him but there is something very special when you work with someone who is also a friend. It's like playing different kinds of music together at the same time.

So I invited Paul Browde, who usually practices in New York City to be a presenter at my annual clinical conference sessions live, to speak about the healing power of pleasure and to tell his story. And I won't say a word about it because it was so gripping that I just really thought you all should discover it as well. So I invite you to listen to Dr. Paul Browde.

**Paul Browde:** Hi everybody. So I wanted to say, first of all, thank you and I'm talking to you and I don't mean the people next to you, I mean you. Thank you for listening, because if you didn't listen, my voice and my words are completely meaningless. And that's for all of you at home as well. Thank you.

When I was four years old, I was playing with a kid on the beach and my mother turned to my father apparently, so she told me. And said he's gonna be gay one day. And my father said, oh, don't be ridiculous. How can you tell? And she said, I just think he is. Mothers know. I only wish she had told me. If she had told me it would've saved me years of not knowing, worrying that there was something wrong with my body 'cause it didn't do the things that I thought it was supposed to.

I grew up in a house where we talked about everything. Politics, religion, cancer, death, the brutality of the government, but never about sex. And that omission communicated volumes. I was raised in South Africa where the apartheid system enforced the binary. Black and white. Heterosexual and deviant. Moral and immoral.

My father was a human rights lawyer, and my mother, an oncologist, and the bookshelves in their study were filled with law reports and with medical textbooks, and I was drawn to them. Afternoons, I would sneak into the study with my heart racing afraid someone was watching. And beneath the cover of a green book, which was called *Ionizing Radiation in the Treatment of Cancer*, was really a book about the history of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, the ANC. And just seeing those three letters, ANC, made my

stomach clench. That book was banned and the possession of it was punishable. Belonging to the ANC meant prison like it did for Nelson Mandela. And in prison some people were tortured and some were killed by the police.

Another book on the shelf was called *Good Times, Bad Times*. It was a novel by James Kirkwood, and it held the only description of gay sex I had ever encountered. And I returned to it repeatedly. Terrified and transfixed. I wasn't yet ready to confront what it revealed in me.

When I was 18, my parents hosted a lunch and one of the guests was a friend of theirs who was a South African lawyer who had moved to the US. She was now a judge, and I heard her speaking about her city in America. I love my city, she said, we have neighbors from around the world. Everyone speaks a different language. There are gay people. Gay people. I heard it and I stopped listening. I now knew that if I wanted to meet a gay man, there was only one place I had to go. Boston.

So I went to Boston and I confirmed my mother's prediction from the beach all those years earlier.

When I was 25, I'd finished medical school and I was doing an internship in internal medicine at Baragwanath hospital in Soweto. When I found a lump in my left armpit, I was sent for a biopsy and two weeks later, the surgeon called me and said, I want to talk to you. And I went to meet with him and he said, Paul, my boy, I know you're gay and I know that you've just returned from the United States. So when you were under anesthetic, I decided to test you for HTLV3, and I'm sorry to tell you, but the results have come back positive. HTLV3 would later be renamed HIV.

At that time, there was no AIDS in South Africa and I knew how many young men were dying in America. The doctor, in giving me that diagnosis, had given me a death sentence and I was plunged into the fear of dying and a fight for survival.

The philosopher, Martin Buber speaks of two ways of being for the human being. The first he calls the I-It relationship with life. In which we view others as objects and life feels ordinary and routine. We go through the motions as we do most of the time every day. And then he talks about the I-Thou relationship, and that is where we view the world with awe, where we are fully present to the connection that we have with others, where we are in touch with the miraculous and the mysterious of life.

And in the moment of the diagnosis, I was thrust into an I-Thou relationship with my own life. It wasn't the detached, objectifying I-It, but the fully present sacred encounter with my life. And life was asking me a question, do you want to live? And my answer in every cell of my body was, yes.

So as a very young doctor, I pursued my lifelong dream. I gave up being a doctor, and I went to drama school in London. I thought if I was gonna die, I'd rather die an actor than a doctor. Drama school was a huge experience of aliveness, singing, acting, stage, combat, but I kept my diagnosis a secret. It was too frightening and too shameful to speak.

After some years, I found my way back to a residency in psychiatry. I gave up acting and my first placement was in an AIDS unit, and I heard other doctors speak about AIDS patients saying things like, oh, I'd never share a glass with one of them. They say you can't catch it that way, but I never would. Or HIV? Oh, he's a goner. And then I heard an American physician presenting a patient with AIDS using an American medical term that I had never heard in South Africa. This is a 28-year-old shpos. Shpos. S-H-P-O-S. It stood for subhuman piece of shit. Amazing the power of story. That was like, it's 30 years ago and woo, it's right here. The doctors had no idea that I was the them they were referring to. I was the shpos.

As a trainee in psychotherapy. I saw a young man who worked in a different hospital from mine, but he'd come across my records and he found out that I was HIV positive and he used this information to threaten me. Each week, he would ask me how it would feel if he told my supervisors. For some reason he needed to be sadistic with me, but I couldn't tell anyone. I couldn't tell my supervisors because it was a secret and I couldn't stop seeing him 'cause he might then tell someone.

By 1994, my T cells were dangerously low. And I wondered whether the secrecy was beginning to cause me as much illness as the HIV itself could. Thinking back on that now, Maya Angelou's words really resonate. "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you". And it began to dawn on me that living in secrecy kept me alone and in survival mode. And healing doesn't come from trying to survive. It comes from being in connection.

So in 1994, I gave a talk at the American Psychiatric Association Conference on being an HIV positive psychiatrist. I came out as HIV positive and it felt urgent for me that other doctors knew that there were those of us doctors living with HIV and that we were not subhuman, and that we had loving partners and that we were part of communities, and that while I might dying, I was very much alive.

And this talk, thank you, freed me from the tyranny of secrecy. It allowed me to get the supervision I needed as well, and to deal with the sadism of that young patient.

And in active pursuit of aliveness, I took many workshops and experiences. I did the EST training, the advocate experience. I went to healing circles with Marianne Williamson. I did energy work and rolfing. I learned Buddhist meditation and hypnotherapy. I spent time alone in a canyon in Utah having interactions with the non-human world. And I also took medications that began to save my life.

And then in 1995, I attended a weekend workshop at the Body Electric School founded by Sexologist, Joseph Kramer in the early eighties. And Kramer had had a, he'd seen, he'd had a vision of what was coming and he developed a school of massage and he knew that gay men were gonna need to learn how to have pleasure and how to have sex that was connected but that wasn't gonna kill each other. And the workshop he designed was called *Celebrating the Body Erotic*. And the weekend started with a group of men standing in a circle, first invited to breathe together, and then to speak to one another in a set of structured exercises and to look into one another's eyes. And after several hours, erotic touch was layered into the workshop. And the whole point of the workshop was learning how to harness sexual energy as a source of healing energy for the whole body.

And in the *Body Electric* course, erotic aliveness was taught as a portal to pleasure and a portal to connection, and a portal to spiritual transcendence. Everybody, no matter how stigmatized is capable of pleasure. We are wired for it.

Don Shewey, who's a therapist here in New York, has written a book called *Daddy Lover God*. He described the *Body Electric* weekend, and I quote "in the *Body Electric* circle, I felt like a newborn infant parting my eyelids for the first time. I felt vulnerable, defensive, curious, nervous, giggly, judged, and unexpectedly compassionate. To put my hand on another man's chest and feel his heartbeat while I looked to, to his eyes, I had to be awake and alert. To allow someone to see me and touch me, I had to trust. I had to open the door and invite someone in".

The *Body Electric* workshop culminated with an extended communal ritual of erotic massage ending with what the Taoist Master Mantak Chia calls the big draw in which everyone on cue took a deep breath together and exhaled. Three deep breaths. And then on the final one, clenching every muscle in the body tight, the butt, the belly, the hands, the feet before letting go, and with

Carefully chosen music that exhale led to huge emotional releases for the participants. Sobbing, wailing, expressions of pure joy. Don Shewey writes “I felt like I was experiencing my own death. I began to cry, grieving over my lack of generosity to myself, and that inevitably connected with a seemingly bottomless pool of grief over friends who have died of AIDS”.

Surprisingly, opening one's body to feel full pleasure also opened up one's access to grief. And each of these experiences that I had during those difficult times have accompanied me through my work ever since. And my life. So while I don't work physically or erotically with people, I do work to remind people of their aliveness and that their relationships with me, with themselves with one another are not a problem to be solved. A relationship is an adventure to be lived.

And I wanna offer you one practical tool that I found useful to, to give clients, to take home with them, and you can take it home with you. And it's called *The Three Minute Game*, designed by *Body Electric* teacher and sexological bodyworker, Betty Martin.

It's very simple. Two people take turns in asking one another two questions. First question. For your pleasure, what would you like me to do to you for three minutes? Second question. For your pleasure, what would you like to do to me for three minutes? Each answers, and then they get to give each other what they've asked for. Nothing too elaborate can be done in three minutes. So requests are something like, for my pleasure, for three minutes, would you please massage my feet? And then for my pleasure for three minutes, could I caress your ears?

The content is not the point. It's the asking that matters. *The Three Minute Game* teaches players to ask how to give, how to receive, how to say yes and no, how to clarify their desires, how to practice consent, how to differentiate between what is uncomfortable and what is truly unsafe, and to move from shame and isolation into connection. And between strangers, this exercise opens a door to authentic intimacy, but for couples who've lost sexual connection, this is an invitation for one another to join them in the erotic once again. It's not about performance, it's about presence. It's vulnerability and play and aliveness. And whether it's alone or with others, erotic pleasure can transition people from disconnection to connection.

So what our world today has in common with the time of the AIDS epidemic is that people are terrified. Bodies are being vilified and stigmatized. Trans people's bodies are being treated with contempt. Immigrant bodies, women's bodies are being ascribed lesser value. People are afraid to tell their stories

and to say what they're thinking and feeling. And as a result, people are going to die. Those of us who lived through AIDS, whether in our bodies or not, have much to teach those living through this crisis that we find ourselves living in today.

The AIDS epidemic taught us a few things. It taught us that stigma kills not just metaphorically, but literally. Silence, secrecy and shame isolate people from the care and love that they need. It taught us the power of community. When the world turned its back, queer people turned towards one another. We created networks of care. We learned to fight and to love at the same time. And while people were dying, we could be angry and joyful at the same time.

It taught us that truth telling matters. That naming what is happening clearly and boldly is a part of healing. And it taught us about embodiment. That even in the face of death, we can resist the pressure to collapse into despair. We can choose touch, connection, and pleasure. And that when we treat our bodies with reverence, when we honor sensation and touch and desire, we begin to heal. We reclaim what has been hidden. We soften survival patterns, and we come into presence.

And I want to leave you with a few suggestions. Breathe into your body and follow the aliveness and thank your body. Seek pleasure rather than abandon it. Practice the erotic as a way of knowing, not escaping your body. Gather and touch each other in loving ways while staying emotionally connected. Consider that as a therapist or a coach, you are a leader, even if only for one person at a time. Lead your life with pleasure. Nobody can have access to your inner world if you don't give it to them. They cannot take our inner world away from us. Pleasure is not a luxury. It is our birthright and it is medicine.

And just before ending, I wanna say to you that I wanna be really clear to be grateful for the ability to tell my story to you. The story I've told to you today could not be told by everyone. Everyone no longer has the right to tell their story. It's dangerous for some people. And in some places in the world, my story would be a reason that people would be killed.

So I wanna end with one last piece, which is that when I felt stigmatized and alone, I was surrounded one day at a workshop by a group of hospice workers, and they sang this song to me.

*How could anybody ever tell you you were anything less than beautiful? How could anyone ever tell you you were less than whole? How could anyone fail to notice that your loving is a miracle and how deeply you're connected to my soul.*

Thank you.

**Esther Perel:** If you are new here or haven't been here in a bit, welcome to my office. For the whole month of July, I am offering you 20% off for the annual and monthly subscriptions on Apple Podcast.

By joining my Office hour subscription on Apple Podcasts, you'll get an ad free version of these episodes, plus you will have access to my Apple Channel that includes the earliest seasons of the podcast, plus a clinical library of conversations with colleagues, coaches, and other therapists as well.

We offer follow ups with couples as well if knowing more about their stories is something that interests you and that you're curious about.

Join my office hours by clicking the subscribe button on the *Where Should We Begin?* show page. See you there and thank you.

I met psychotherapist and author Nedra Tawwab at a recent gathering, um, an informal conference, so to speak, and uh, I knew her work on boundaries, but I hadn't heard her present it in person. And when I heard her, I thought I would love to invite her to come and speak at *Sessions Live*, my own clinical conference that we held in New York just recently, um, because what I really appreciated is that Nedra's work about boundaries is basically saying boundaries are not walls that you have to create. Boundaries are ways to be open without leaking. That boundaries is not about breaking up. Boundaries is about finding more suitable, appropriate ways to stay connected. And that redefinition has been so highly needed because you know, words in the field of relationships come, they rise, they become enshrined, they become distorted, they change their meaning, they lose their essence. And then somebody comes along that kind of rehabilitates them with more nuance and more sophistication. And this is what Nedra Tawwab did in this very brief and very pointed talk about boundaries.

**Nedra:** Hello. Hi everyone. So in 2020, just before *Set boundaries, Find Peace* came out, my boundaries were tested, of course, right? I had a situation with a family member where I had to set a really hard boundary. After I set that boundary, they text me "have a nice life". I was like, ouch. I just, I wanted you to sleep somewhere else when you came to my house, maybe get a hotel, I didn't know that would end our relationship. And it did.

When we talked about that again, they said, well, the reaction was because you set the boundary. And I thought, gosh, I wish they had my book so they can understand that the purpose of the boundary is to stay connected. It's not to

end the relationship. It's so we can be in a relationship in a healthy way. Eventually we got there, but the initial reaction to hearing something that they did not like was "I'm out of here".

Have any of you ever lost an important relationship because of a miscommunication about a boundary or even someone threatening to leave the relationship? I see one hand. Anyone else? And I'm gonna ask you something very personal, and you can be honest if you want to. Have you ever felt the need to leave a relationship because someone set a boundary with you? Yeah, yeah.

So it happens on both sides. But here's the thing, healthy boundaries are a way for us to connect. Who determines what a healthy boundary is? Sometimes it's like, you know, maybe you do, and sometimes it's talking to other people, is figuring out is this a rule that is punitive? Is this something that could further our relationship?

In my situation, what I noticed was we argue a lot when we stay in the same space. So I think what could be healthier is maybe if we don't stay in the same space, we'll enjoy each other.

So sometimes that explanation of why we have the boundary can be helpful, but many of us may decide, I don't wanna accept your boundary. I will cut you off instead. And when we cut people off, we're saying, we're ending a relationship because the rules of engagement should not apply to me.

Boundaries do not have to mean endings. They are a continuation in a relationship. The biggest boundary that we often set is the ending, right? Like that's the final boundary. So what are all the other boundaries we've set before we've got to the ending?

Not every relationship is going to be perfect. A few weeks ago I was hosting a retreat and I was speaking to a woman who was talking about having a relationship with her alcoholic family member. And I said, well, what are your rules for this relationship? Because she was overwhelmed. She wants them to do something about their addiction. And I said, do you answer the phone when they call after a certain time? Because for most people who have drinking issues, you know it starts at some time in the day. Have you identified that time and maybe said to yourself, I don't need to talk to them after this time? Have you removed alcohol from your gathering so that drinking isn't present? And she's like no, I haven't done anything. I just keep telling them they need to stop drinking. And I'm like, I, I think alcoholism is when they can't, so I think if they could control it, they would. They would. Yeah. Yeah. They, they would



definitely do it. But since they can't, without you saying the only alternative is to be done with this relationship, I can't have any relationships with anyone with any addiction. I know for me that means I have five relationships. No, I'm joking. But there, you know, some people, they have things. So how do we show up in relationships with people who are not perfect? For somebody, I'm not perfect, I don't know who that person is in my life, but I'm sure somebody would say that I'm not perfect. Right?

So how do we create boundaries in our relationships with imperfect people? The boundary is for us to think about. It's not for them to create for themselves. It's for us to think about and for us to know, just because there's imperfections, it doesn't mean that the relationship has to end. There can be some middle space in our relationships. There is perfect and then there's unhealthy and toxic.

What we often see online is everyone is putting everybody in the unhealthy/toxic. We don't have a lot of gray anymore. It's like, I want it all or I want nothing. And I have a lot of rules, right? Like, I wanna be in a bed by 9:00 PM. I want to eat at certain restaurants. I want to do this, I want to do that. All these rules we have for ourselves. How does that work in our relationships? I have to be flexible. If I have a friend who, who wants to hang out till 11, I can't always have my rule. If I have a, a loved one who needs something, I have to be flexible about my rule. But when we don't have that flexibility, there is no middle ground in our relationships with people.

What is toxic? Now, everything is toxic, right? Like people used to come to therapy for real stuff. I mean, really hard stuff. Really hard stuff. Now, sometimes I'm like, uh, you know, maybe you could do a group? I'm joking, but you know, I, I think sometimes we have taken imperfection and made it toxic. We're not talking about abuse. We're not talking about neglect. We're not talking about addiction. We're talking about a person who's too loud and how that just gets on our nerves and we need to create some distance. It's like, uh, you know, I, I think we need to think about this in a different way. Sometimes we have to tolerate people in a different way.

So where is our tolerance going in our relationships? Are we being flexible with different people? Not everyone needs the same boundaries. My friends who I choose in this world, many of them have a lot of the same boundaries as me. So I don't have to tell them a lot of the rules or, or things that I would like because they also have some of those things.

Kids, you may have different boundaries with your kids then you would have with your coworker. Last night I was out and my daughter called me about 20

times. Back to back. Now, if it was an adult, if it was anybody else, I would've been like, hey, please don't call me more than three times unless it's an emergency. But because it's a kid, it's like, ah. Flexible boundary. That's my kid. She can call 75 times and I'm gonna text her and I'm gonna respond.

So are we being flexible with our boundaries? Because sometimes we are using the same boundary with everyone and it's not needed. It's not even helpful for the relationship. So customizing your boundaries to fit the person, the situation is really important.

I know a few years ago we had this movement of folks leaving the workforce because they were like, you know, based on, and I got a lot of DMs based on what my boundaries are, they cannot tell me to be to work at 8:00 AM. I'm like, well, their boundary is eight to four, right? Like your boundary, you wanna wake up, you want a slow morning... Your boundaries might include you not having a job. So it pays to be flexible with your boundaries sometimes. And as I tell my clients, I want you to be happy at work so you can pay for therapy, right? Really important.

Some of our imperfect relationships bring us value. So figuring out how to be in them is important to us. If we have that family member who just will nonstop talk about politics, or if we have that person who is not the best listener, or if we have that person who overshares a bit, our work is to figure out, how do I show up in relationship with this person who I love and I have a lot of things other than this in common with? There is some value in the relationship. This is my best friend since second grade. This is my father, this is my mother. It's not abusive, it's not toxic, but it's very annoying.

What can my boundaries be? Annoying is not toxic. We have taken toxic to mean... this person is always doing something that is now the toxic thing. It's just an annoying thing. There are ways that we need to figure out how do I be in a relationship where maybe I'm not as annoyed? Maybe if I think about this differently, maybe if there's something that I can do to feel less bothered by their behavior. But is the relationship functioning for the two people in the relationship?

Social media has distorted what healthy looks like, right? If we look at the family structure now it is, you know, mom, dad, two dogs, or two dads and three kids, or everybody's dressed alike. And I feel that pressure too. I'm, I, you know, I'll, I'll go and I'll look for the family matching outfits and, you know, there's a lot of pressure for the family to look a particular way. There's a lot of pressure of what fun looks like. There's a lot of pressure of the best way to style a striped shirt.

Okay, maybe that's my feed. Uh, but there is this idea of if it is not this, then it's this.

When I'm talking to clients and I hear them state a problem that I might think is a problem I have to remember. It's not a problem to them, it might be a problem for me. And sometimes when we're looking at things on social media, it will highlight things that's not even a problem for us, right? It's like my partner won't do, it's not even a problem for you. You didn't even have this issue until you looked at this person's post. So noticing when you're looking at things and it's causing you to feel like, oh, I need to make my daughter do this, or my friends need to do that, or my partner needs to do this. It is the effect of what you're seeing. You actually don't have a problem.

People are showing their highlight reels, right? When you see the influencer who's on vacation and they have all these wonderful pictures at a resort, trust me, they have spent the entire vacation taking pictures at the resort. I've seen it. I was once eating breakfast, and I just saw this girl on a beach and she just kept running back and forth. I meant like 20 times and somebody was snatching a picture and I'm like, oh my gosh, that's her vacation. What we will see is this cute little clip, and it's like, I had the best vacation ever. It's like I saw you run across the beach 20 times, right? Maybe it was a good vacation, but it was definitely a busy one.

Don't let Instagram dictate what your relationships look like. Not just Instagram, but all the social medias, right? Don't let them dictate what your relationship should look like, like you determine that, and a huge part of your work is to figure out, do we need to sleep in the same bed? Is that something we should do in our relationship? Do we need to share our bank accounts? Like these are conversations that we have with our partners. We have conversations with our friends. We don't look at social media as an indication of what feels good to us.

On social media, one of the things I've noticed now is all of the therapy speak, and unfortunately I've contributed to this, um, the B word. Boundaries. Toxic. Codependent. It's all over the place. Some of these are not even therapeutic terms, right? Like codependent and toxic. It's not in our DSM, right? It's like not stuff that we really, really use, but it's all over social media. And guess what? People are using it to define other people. This person is toxic. They're a narcissist. And some people are just jerks. They're not actually narcissists. Some things are not boundary issues. Everything is not toxic. Sometimes people are just close and you don't understand it and you say they're codependent.

So misusing these words, or even using them to define behaviors is not something that we need to move towards. We can talk about what we see without saying, this person is a narcissist. We can, you know, have conversations without all the labeling because when we take it back to the person, it never goes well. A narcissist never wants to be called a narcissist, A toxic person, hey, you're toxic and this is what I need you to do. It doesn't go well.

So these terms, although they connect in our brains like, oh my gosh, this is why I'm seeing this stuff. Maybe some of them do apply, but it's also something we can keep to ourselves and maybe not share and identify, over-identify in other people.

It is a way that we disconnect from people because we're no longer seeing the person, we're only seeing the label. We're only seeing the codependency. We're only seeing, this person is toxic. We're not even noticing the healthy parts of the relationship anymore. A year ago you were fine with this person, but now you learned this new word and you're just like, I cannot even deal with them because they're so toxic. Well, last year there's photos of you like having fun. So I know for us it's intended to make us feel better. Like I have a name for it. But it's also a way for us to be divisive, so pay attention to where the terminology is pulling you away from your relationships and not drawing you closer.

The algorithms reward extremes. When I post things about, here are some things you can do to be better in your relationships. It doesn't take off very well. But if I say, here are 10 characteristics of a narcissist... Fire! Because there's terminology that is just like clickbait. But if I say, Hey, here's five ways for you to go inward, it doesn't go very far. So the extremes, it goes much further, and that's a lot of what we see online. It is some of the same stuff over and over. It doesn't mean that other stuff doesn't exist, but the things that we know... the list, the 10 ways to do whatever, those things tend to do much better. So pay attention to what you're seeing in your feed. The loudest thing that we see is not always the most accurate thing.

And so when we are thinking that this might be a possibility, even talking to someone about it to see, talking to your therapist, talking through this with friends, when we think about a person's behavior, are we thinking about it entirely or in this one situation? How did you contribute to the interaction?

As we are consuming content, it's very important for us to think critically. We are often seeing something and we're like, yep, that's it. We're not looking at the caption. There is no deeper dive. It's like this thing has been said, and so it

is. Anyone can create content on social media, children, adults, professionals. So it doesn't mean that it's verified, it doesn't mean that it's coming from a place of goodness. It just means that it's content.

So one of the things we talked about was connection over perfection. People may not be perfect, but there may be some connective tissue in there, and sometimes we have to find it. Relationships can evolve and stretch and still be good. Right? Like perhaps there was a time we spoke to someone every single day and then we moved to once a month. That can still be a good relationship for us. Doesn't mean that there's a problem there. Always leave room for a relationship to have some gray area. It does not have to be perfect or toxic. There's a lot of room in the middle. Thank you.

**Jesse:** *Where Should We Begin?* with Esther Perel is produced by Magnificent Noise. We're part of the Vox Media Podcast Network in partnership with *New York Magazine* and *The Cut*. Our production staff includes Eric Nuzum, Destry Sibley, Sabrina Farhi, Kristin Mueller, and Julia Natt. Original Music and additional production by Paul Schneider. And the executive producers of *Where Should We Begin?* are Esther Perel and Jesse Baker. We'd also like to thank Courtney Hamilton, Mary Alice Miller, and Jack Saul.