



0:00: Hey, it's your friend Sarah, and welcome, welcome to Stories of Survival in the Modern Age.

0:14: Today I'm chatting with Lauren Sellick.

0:17: Lauren fell in love and believed she'd found her person.

0:21: However, not long into her marriage, everything changed when Lauren discovered there was another woman and another baby involved.

0:29: What followed was a period of extraordinary upheaval, bereavement, redundancy, lockdown, and becoming the victim of not one but two romance scams.

0:41: Perhaps though, perhaps the most

powerful part of Lauren's story is what she discovered about herself along the way, her deep need to be needed and how that shaped some of her relationships and choices that she's made.

0:57: When she later did become a mum, she found herself struggling in ways she hadn't expected.

1:03: She was referred to the perinatal mental health team, offered a place in a mother and baby unit, and found herself questioning something that perhaps many mums might find almost impossible to admit.

1:15: How can I be what my baby needs when I don't even feel that she knows I'm her mummy?

1:21: And yet from that difficult place came something really rather lovely.

1:26: Drawing on her background in animal behavior and welfare and her experience teaching animal studies, Lauren has created a business that brings nature into the lives of other parents and their little ones, helping them connect, communicate, and discover the world together.

1:42: Lauren, welcome, welcome to Stories of Survival in the Modern Age.

1:47: Thank you, thank you for having me.

1:49: Oh, you're very welcome.

1:50: That's quite a myriad of life events.

1:54: Perhaps I think there's so much more to your story.

1:58: So I wanna start right back in the beginning before everything changed Lauren, if we can.

2:03: you were happily in love and you thought you'd found your person.

2:07: Tell me about that Lauren back then.

2:09: What was life like for you?

2:13: Well, the, I met my husband, and instantly, I knew I was gonna marry him.

2:19: So it was like instant love at first sight.

2:23: we moved in together pretty quickly.

2:25: I think we'd been dating maybe 6 months and then we moved in.

2:30: We'd been together maybe 6 years before we got engaged.

2:35: Then we had been together probably about 9 years by the time we got married.

2:41: and then it was, after 6 months after we got married that, he started having an affair, which I didn't realize at the time.

2:53: and then that went on.

2:55: And I think we were married, we were married for about a year and a half, before he left.

3:01: It wasn't the case of it was a whistletop romance then, you'd clearly been together for some time, hadn't you?

3:09: Yeah, yeah, and I sort of like held the household together, I sort of did all the sort of cooking, the cleaning, I'd pay for, if we went out for tea or things like that, it sort of, he had a job and he, Worked in hospitality, so he used to get quite a good amount of tips, but, he would spend it on silly things, so I sort of financially supported, But that's what I thought that he did as a as a couple, like if he needed something, I'd provide, I would have hoped if I'd needed something he would have provided, but I'm quite self-sufficient, I don't sort of rely on a lot of people.

3:52: Amongst this.

3:53: This, journey, cer certainly towards the end, there was a bereavement as well.

3:58: I know we, when we met and we had coffee together, you talked about losing your grandma, and she was very much an integral part of the familial unit, wasn't she?

4:09: Yeah, so my grandma was like the fan pin.

4:12: She held everybody together.

4:15: my granddad always, even my grandma had done like a family gathering, Granddad would be sitting in his chair with his vest on watching telly, like, not moving, whereas my grandma would have done like the buffet and, be the hostess.

4:30: so we lost my grandma on the, Boxing Day, my husband left on pancake day, so that was on like a couple of months later and everything just sort of, everything just sort of snowballed, cos I didn't, at the time when he left, I didn't realize he was seeing somebody else, He'd sort of gone AWOLL, just was not speaking to me, and I'm like you can't, you can't not speak to me, we're married, you can't just disappear, and then I did the, the mum thing of saying if you don't answer my messages, I'm going to start ringing around all your friends, and then surprisingly he did answer my phone call.

5:11: he broke up with me on the phone, so considering we've been together 11.5 years.

5:15: A 5 minute phone call, it was the end of my marriage.

5:20: on the phone I was like, have you met somebody else?

5:23: no.

5:23: He said that he was just struggling with stuff at the moment and he just needed, he just needed, time, just needed to be away from everything.

5:31: But he sort of completely went AWOL.

5:33: He wasn't speaking to his family.

5:35: He wasn't speaking to his best friend, He just sort of started just cut ties and then started a new life, completely living a double life, and nobody even knew about this other part of his life at the time.

5:51: Yeah, I'd say definitely.

5:54: Yeah.

5:54: That must have absolutely taken the wind from your sails.

5:59: Yes, 100%, because I'd never really been in love with anyone before.

6:05: I'd probably say when I was 16, my boyfriend when I was 16, but, Like, everyone's in love when they're 16, aren't they?

6:14: so it was, it was sort of it, whilst I was married, I sort of thought if I loved more, if I loved harder, if I poured myself in, it'd be enough for both of us, so it was, Like, I, I just, at the time, couldn't fathom that we were, we were married.

6:34: Like, it wasn't just a relationship.

6:36: We were, we were married.

6:38: But But yeah, and then I never, never heard from him again.

6:42: He came to collect his stuff that I'd packed up for him and then that was it, never.

6:48: Never have we we seen each other since, wow, wow, and then so, so moving on, I mean after that betrayal, I'm sure it took you some time, did it not, to, to be able to trust anybody again.

7:05: It probably should have taken longer, I'm a very, I'm a very social person and I've always sort of needed that.

7:16: Stability of having a partner, like I don't need them, sort of, physically there all the time and I don't need them for, I just, I just like having someone knowing that I've got a person, so I think I can't I, I think it was less than 6 months.

7:36: He left on Pancake Day, lockdown hit in March, and then it was when the restrictions started to lift, so you got to meet people outside, I went on dating apps for the first time and was talking to, talking to a few people and that was nice and boys were telling me how pretty I was and it sort of massively boosted my ego, and, Then that's when I started speaking to, Lewis who was the romance scam.

8:10: So, but in, in between, in between those bits, I was working at the time at Pets at Home at head office and.

8:22: They were having a restructure, so the redundancies were on the table, and I'd been there 10 years.

8:27: So I was like, I'll just take, I'll just take redundancy.

8:30: I'm not in a, a mental place to be fighting for a position.

8:35: And the way there was enough jobs for everybody, but they'd, I was in the learning and development team, and they'd restructured the, the areas, and we'd all want the north.

8:46: So.

8:48: Either I would have got the north and that would have been fine, or I would have ended up being in the south and driving and I was like, no, I'll just take redundancy.

8:57: but very, very kindly, lockdown hit and the government put furlough out and they said we're gonna pause the redundancies and we'll furlough you and pick redundancies up again after furlough, so, which they didn't, they didn't need to do, they could have just, you've got you've already, you've already decided you're gonna take redundancy and we're gonna.

9:17: We're gonna pay your redundancy and that's it, so, that was very stressful, so when this, handsome, charming, individual person yet came into my life, I was already quite, needing to be needed because I'd, my husband had sort of left and so didn't feel wanted there.

9:41: I'd been made redundant so I didn't feel wanted there.

9:45: Because of lockdown I couldn't even have like a leaving do, so I didn't get to say goodbye to anybody.

9:51: when I dropped off my laptop and things at head office, there was nobody there, you weren't allowed to go in, but just all felt very isolating, Did you recognize, did you recognize at that point, Lauren, that you, I, I don't want to use the word needed, but that you felt this need to have somebody or something around you in at that point in your life.

10:15: I'm not sure if I.

10:17: Knew how much I needed people, cos I'd always sort of felt like that, like I got picked on quite a lot in, in school, both in primary and secondary, and, Like I, I really like being around people and, in primary especially, I'd have friends who would, Be happy to come to my house and be happy for me to go to their house, but I wouldn't be allowed to speak to them in school, nobody that with your friends, so it would make it sort of, I've always sort of felt less than so.

10:56: I like I didn't deserve.

10:59: Friends or I didn't deserve, all this sort of attention and admiration, so, I don't So I don't know if at the time I would have noticed.

11:14: how much?

11:17: I needed somebody and I'd not, considering all this stuff had been happening, I probably was starting to to get a bit pooy and I'd not sort of realized, cos it was, it was lovely, I was on full wage and it was sunny and I was doing nice things, so I probably hadn't really noticed.

11:41: that I was starting to slip, I.

11:44: And then because I, I would imagine because of that situation and that, slip as you, as you call it there, you were perhaps willing to overlook that there might have been some flaws in these other people that perhaps today, now that you're on the other side, you would absolutely spot that a mile off.

12:06: Yeah.

12:08: And, another problem I think I I tend to face is I'm very sticky, so even if it's not the best situation, That person, that job, that whatever, that's mine and having, Just the fact that I've got them and they're mine, I'll, I'll put up with an awful lot that I probably shouldn't.

12:31: Do you think, do you think that's changed now, that all of that's behind you, do you think you're less sticky or do you, is it just a case of you're more aware of it, you're more present to it?

12:44: I think I'm probably more present to it, so my current partner, I feel like I definitely, Started that relationship a lot slower than I would normally do and I definitely feel a little bit more hesitant, than I would normally do, whereas normally I very much wear my heart on my sleeve, and I'm 100% all in, like from the beginning, whereas I think this time, I, I am A little bit more reserved, yeah, yeah, so, so then just for the benefit of our listeners, Lauren, I mean the, the two people that did scam you, we're not talking like a few, a few pounds, are we?

13:28: No, so, the, it was, it all ended up being probably about 40,000, 440.

13:37: Yeah.

13:39: Yeah, and look, cos with Lewis, he Worked self-employed as an aircon type fitter in commercial properties, and he'd send me, he'd ask for some money and then lay it on thick like you're the only person I can ask.

13:56: I literally don't have anybody other than you, like I, I don't even have enough money to go and buy a sandwich.

14:04: if I wish you'd trust me this one last time.

14:07: If you don't lend me this money, I can't work.

14:10: If I can't work, then I can't pay it back.

14:12: And he'd send me screenshots of emails from, like, the contracts he was getting with his payday.

14:20: then he, he invented another character called Jeff, who was his solicitor, because he'd got in trouble with the police.

14:29: So then Jeff was messaging me, and, Like me and my friends sort of be like, we, we knew Jeff wasn't a real person, whether Jeff was a a real person in his life, but, I don't think Jeff was a real person on the phone, but even little things like, if you're texting, I don't know if you've ever noticed, but if you're texting, if you press the space button twice, it puts a full stop.

15:00: and sometimes, especially if he was texting fast.

15:03: He, he, it was just like a style that I noticed he'd have these random stops in or he'd have two spaces or something, and Jeff would have the same style, so it was the same, it was the same person, and me and my friend would sort of like, giggle about Jeff, being a pretend person, but I've got to a point where, I was so far in that do I either lose it and cut ties or do you, do I believe that, He is gonna have this.

15:38: Payday and I'll get it back.

15:41: I'm, I'm a very nice person, like I would, I'd never leave somebody without being able to pay for a sandwich, and what if he was telling the truth that he couldn't have anybody else and.

15:49: And he was mine, so I just felt like I needed to nurture and, but I did, I did go to the police.

15:56: Eventually did go to the police, but because we had physically met, we'd only met, I think it was like 1213 times, because he didn't live in my he didn't live in my town, There was nothing they could do.

16:11: If it had completely been online, I would have been entitled to every penny back.

16:15: But because we'd.

16:18: no, they couldn't do anything.

16:20: So you pretty much, well, not pretty much, you had to just write off that and chalk it down to experience.

16:28: Yeah.

16:29: And that must have been a very big pill to swallow, Lauren, I would imagine.

16:35: Yeah, I think before having my little girl, it didn't upset me as much, because.

16:42: I'm very self-deprecating and, and a bit of self-sabotage maybe, but, and like maybe I didn't feel like I deserved that money anyway.

16:51: But now I feel guilty because that could have been a deposit for a house.

16:56: and I feel like I've let her down because we don't have our own house.

17:01: And we should do because I'd have that money.

17:04: But, I see, so it is hard, but, The There's nothing I can do about it, so.

17:19: And so brave.

17:21: O, 100% you're brave, you know, to, to even accept that vulnerability, and to step out of your comfort zone and asking for that help was definitely very brave and very vulnerable, and now, you know, you do have a lovely little girl that you can nurture.

17:41: but obviously there was a little bit of, of upheaval in the middle of that process, that, that, that we talked about, and, and if you feel brave enough to explain a little bit about that, that process that you went through, I think, I think that would add, you know, life to the, to the story as to, as to where we are today.

18:05: Yeah, so, me and, her daddy met, we were sort of, so I was taking everything slow.

18:12: So we have only really saw each other at the weekend maybe.

18:16: We'd been together maybe 7 months and I accidentally got pregnant.

18:19: Now, me and my ex-husband were trying to get pregnant and we had started down the fertility route, so I've been to specialists and all that sort of stuff, which made it hurt even more when he'd, Got this other woman pregnant, I'm also quite, I'm not very good at noticing when I'm, not very well, one of the ladies who I was working with had sort of, Said right you you need to go to the GP like you're not, you're not, you're not well, and I was like no, if I get signed off work need me, you'll be short staffed, like what are you gonna do, and she's like no you you're more important, otherwise you're gonna end up in a mum and baby unit, so, I mentioned it to my midwife, she said that the perinatal mental health team are only for mums who are really poorly.

19:14: Well, I'll put a referral through but you probably won't, won't get seen, And, luckily I did, I, I did get on, on the, the perinatal mental health team.

19:26: But, I pulled, I pulled some stats on it.

19:29: So University of Oxford said 3 in 10, of new or expectant mums suffer with, mental health problems.

19:40: One, So, 4 in 1000 are what they're classed as severe.

19:44: So, that's the ones who would end up being, referred to, and, peri, the perinatal mental health team.

19:50: And this could be things like depression, anxiety, but things like OCD or, psychosis.

19:58: so, that's what I, I had depression, anxiety, but was suffering with psychosis as well.

20:03: So, I was seeing, Dark shadows, a lot of cats, audible, Things, so I was, I could hear people saying my name quite a lot, or, music was another one that that I could hear.

20:20: So 20% will enter pregnancy with an already existing problem, so things like that can get compounded, and then 15 to 20% develop them postpartum.

20:30: So that's 1 in 5, Women that will develop mental health issues like from having, having a baby, it is very, very high suicide risk, postpartum, and this is to do with, so within the 6 to 12 months, so the first, At 0 to 6 weeks, they like that slightly differently, but the 6 to 12 months after birth, suicide is the leading leading cause of death in in mothers.

21:06: 33% of this is linked to mental health issues, 46% of these women who died during or shortly after the pregnancy already had known pre-existing mental health problems, so that 46%, maybe if they'd been supported a bit better if they'd, Like me when I went to my midwife, hadn't been fobbed off.

21:31: May have, may have been better, other sort of maternal deaths were things like blood clots, cardiacs, sepsis, things that you sort of expect, but, I thought that was, that was really high, that it's the leading cause, the reason they tend, yeah, the reason they tend to class that first six weeks slightly differently is because, Pregnancy takes a massive toll, so you've got that massive hormonal shift, so you've got things like estrogen plummets by 90%, progesterone, crashes out at about 88 to 90%, and this all happens within a couple of, couple of days after pregnancy.

22:09: So you, it's very, very common to get sort of the baby blues, but they tend to peak out between 3 and 5 days, most resolve in 2 weeks and 70 to 80.

22:20: of mums are gonna experience that.

22:23: So that's, that's why they tend to group that first six weeks slightly differently.

22:28: I was watching, a documentary by Louis Theroux on mum and baby units.

22:34: So there's not as many mum and baby units as I expected there to be.

22:37: So we've got one in the Northwest, so one for Lancashire, which is in Chorley, but I think in total there was only about 23.

22:47: In the whole of the UK, that's not a lot, is it, 23 when you consider how many.

22:54: People are in the country and how many females of childbearing age are in the country.

23:02: Definitely.

23:03: and it's this sort of post-pregnancy is this perfect storm for mental health problems.

23:11: You've got that massive hormonal shift, you've got the extreme sleep deprivation, so newborn babies, wake up, Periodically, I can't think of the word, periodically throughout the night, which stops mum's getting into REM sleep and REM's needed for your emotional regulation, things like that, like my little girl, the problem if you're breastfeeding, problem with breastfeeding is the best milk supply comes in at about between 11 and 6 in the morning, which is exactly the time you're not getting any rest.

23:50: Yeah, so they, so she would, I'd be awake from, sometimes I'm quite glad I was really poorly because I don't know how I would have survived.

23:58: I was awake from, from 11 till 6 a.m., we'd sort of sleep in between, right before that, but she would constantly feed, for the first few months within that time period, cos it's the, it's the most nutritious, it's the most, dense, it's, it's the best milk that you produce cos.

24:17: In the wilderness of when we were cavemen, that's gonna be the safest time to feed, you're not gonna get eaten by a dinosaur or whatever.

24:27: so you've got all this sleep deprivation, not only is the sleep deprivation causing your amygdala, To become super hyperactive, but you're massively increasing your cortisol levels, which is your stress hormone, so you've got this massive cortisol spike during birth, then for months on end cos you're not sleeping, then if you've got something already underlying, there's the trauma of birth, even if it's a, generally un-traumatic birth, if you've never had a baby, That stuff's scary like, and it's painful and but most, most births have some sort of trauma, unsurprising that, any mum would go through any sort of mental health, Episode.

25:14: Without skipping over too much of the detail of your bonding with your little girl, you're in a position now where she's, did you tell me she was 33 and a little bit?

25:27: So they're absolutely now for you, is that very tight bond with her, despite.

25:34: Everything that you've gone through with her, and that must be just for you a very lovely thing now to have this little person that does need you, that you sort of outpour all of your, love and attention towards and, and that's got to be very rewarding for you.

25:55: Yeah, so, the perinatal mental health team did an amazing job, and it started to really click.

26:02: We did this, Intervention called VG, one of the ladies had come out and literally I think maybe she'd be there for half an hour, 45 minutes and just recording me, And then she'd take that that video away, with no one like she'd just literally be sat there recording, she wouldn't give me any prompts or anything, she'd take that video away, find three clips, like, So many seconds' worth of a clip out of the whole thing and then I'd come and we'd review them together, so some of the things that I was, I was struggling with is, how does she even know that I'm a mummy, and everyone would say well she's been inside you, she knows your smell, and, I know that people can adopt babies from, from like when as soon as they've been born.

26:52: So how important is that, that just because she's been inside me, like how does she know that I'm a mummy, like somebody else could have adopted her and they'd have the same relationship, so that didn't make me feel better.

27:06: I was worried that I'd give her away.

27:08: I, I was convinced that if somebody told me they needed her more than I did, that I'd, I'd give her away.

27:14: And I was so convinced she wouldn't like me, like she just, she wouldn't know who I was and she wouldn't like me.

27:19: So one of these video clips.

27:22: She was literally, she was just in my arms, there was.

27:25: Like I would never have even noticed it, but she was in my arms.

27:28: She put out her hand and I put my finger in it, because up until, I can't remember what age it is, but up until a certain age, they've got a primitive reflex where you can put your fingers in a baby's hands and lift them up with them, and it, it's to when they'd hold onto our fur as monkeys, but anyway, they, they lose it eventually, so I just put my finger in it and she was saying, Like what, what do you think she's feeling?

27:49: I was like, oh, it's just a, it's just a reflex.

27:51: I do it because I like it.

27:52: And she's like, no, watch her.

27:54: And she literally just as soon as she held my my finger, she literally just melted into my arms.

28:00: She's like, she, she's feeling comforted, she knows it's you, like she does like being with you.

28:07: And that that individual point, it massively turned it around.

28:12: I really struggled speaking to her because they, I mean, all they do is cry and sleep, like they don't really communicate back.

28:20: I really struggled speaking to her.

28:22: I'd read to her, but conversationally.

28:26: I don't think I sort of started to talk to her conversationally until she was about 6 months.

28:31: I don't think I told her I loved her until she was probably about 1, because I was so scared she would, she'd reject me, so it was almost, Protecting my heart, But now, she's like my little shadow and she's everything that I needed, so I think that's one of the reason that I feel like I don't need to outpour into all these people cos I've got my little person who I can just, Pour everything into.

29:05: Yeah, and that's, that's an absolutely wonderful, wonderful thing.

29:09: Bringing all that back full circle, Lauren, we've, we've sort of said in your intro that, that you now have brought all of that wealth of knowledge from your animal welfare, your education, what you learned when you were working at Pets at Home.

29:27: And, and now you sort of work with other, mums, parents, and their little ones and bring all of that together.

29:36: So let's sort of just chat about that for a couple of minutes.

29:39: I was working at Maersk College, which is an EA, so post 16, but one of my favorite things to do in, in there was trying to make the learning, interactive, so making, activities rather than just sort of talking at them, and then, and so I've taken that part, I've started, Mum and mum, baby and toddler classes, which is unsurprisingly very similar to 16 year olds trying to herd toddlers.

30:10: So, but it's called Wild Minds and it's all about bringing the outside in.

30:15: So rather than needing to rely on the weather, as today is a perfect example, it's absolutely pouring down.

30:21: we do a different theme each week based on British wildlife or habitats.

30:27: This week is reptiles, which we've got 6 native species, and then I read 2 stories, try and make them really interactive, but the main part is, I create these activity stations.

30:41: So, with the station, I'm bringing in, my knowledge of animals, my knowledge of ecology, my creativity, learning things that I, I was doing at Pets at Home, and, At my school and then also bringing in developmental stuff that I was working on with the perinatal mental health team, all the developmental stuff that I was obsessively Googling to make sure that I wasn't holding her back in any way and how making sure her brain was developing properly, and I've designed them to be interactive, working on fine motor skills.

31:19: And then on the back, I've got, backboards with fun facts, so if mums want to read those for either themselves or read them out loud for the children, but also conversation cards, so different age groups, I've got nice gentle prompts that'll help the mum get the most out of the station, but also help facilitate that conversation.

31:41: So not only is this gonna support mums who are struggling to talk or struggling to bond with their children, it's also gonna Hopefully help support the word gap.

31:50: So there is, quite a lot of things about, children from more high deprived areas, having less words that they hear each day.

32:03: It makes sense that if you're working two jobs, if you're worried about your credit card bill, if you are worried about putting food on the table, the last thing you want to do is sit and have a conversation with your child, So having these conversation cards and these interactive rhymes just help mums have a

little prompt of talking to their talking to their child and if they don't feel comfortable doing it in the room, because I'm very new at the moment, there's, I don't have a large cohort, if they feel like, oh, if I read this out, Lauren's gonna hear it and I feel embarrassed.

32:36: I can always take photos of it and do it at home.

32:38: Like they don't have to do it in the room, they don't have to use it at all if they don't want to, but it's, it's there so they can.

32:44: And I think if I'd, if that had been around whilst she was much smaller.

32:49: It would have really helped me speak to her, like just give me some ideas.

32:53: sometimes we'll watch CBeebies and they'll do like, let's go on a shape walk, and they'll walk down the street looking at different shapes.

33:01: I would never have thought about doing that.

33:03: so sometimes just having an idea, you can use it in different scenarios then.

33:08: Of course you can.

33:09: Of course you can.

33:09: I, I was out walking, I was out walking Lauren just this morning and as I came off the river, there's a beautiful.

33:15: Rainbow and I, I actually stopped for a moment because it was the full arc of the rainbow, and, and just little things like that just bring you back into the present, don't they?

33:27: Before we go, I want to ask you my quickfire 5 questions.

33:31: If you, if you feel up to the, if you feel up to the challenge.

33:35: They're super easy.

33:36: The first one is what's your best, what's your comfort food, what's your go to?

33:41: Oh, comfort food, probably chocolate or ice cream, no, it's got to be ice cream.

33:47: Yeah, ice cream.

33:49: And is there a, is there a book that you currently enjoying or an audio or a podcast?

33:56: No, I've, well at the moment we, I try and read to my little girl every night and we don't have a favorite, she has a favorite book, I try and hide it sometimes cos I'm sick of reading it, but, I, I, I particularly like the rhyming ones, so we like the Julia Donaldson ones, but any with a, with a rhyme, I like, I like the rhyming ones.

34:17: Good for you, that's wonderful.

34:19: And in this moment, what's the one thing that you're most grateful for, Lauren?

34:25: Probably my little girl, like she, she's literally the best thing that's ever happened to me and I feel complete with her.

34:33: Lovely, lovely.

34:34: Do you have a go to self care practice?

34:41: probably a bath with bubbles.

34:43: I think it is for a lot of people, a bubble bath.

34:46: And finally, what's the one, what's the one thing if you had a conversation with a 21 year old version of you, what would you tell her?

34:57: That you're enough, that.

35:00: You're clever and you don't need to rely on other people when, You feel like trust your instincts, when you feel like something's not right, it isn't, and you, You have the right to leave if you want to, you don't need to worry about anybody else.

35:19: Lauren, thank you so much for chatting with me today.

35:21: Thank you for having me.

35:23: Lauren's story is a reminder that sometimes we can spend years looking outside of ourselves for proof that we matter to a partner, a job, a relationship, when actually the person who needs our love, trust and attention the most is ourselves.

35:41: What struck me about Lauren's story was that she didn't suddenly become a different person.

35:47: She became more aware of herself, more present to her choices, and perhaps most importantly, she discovered, didn't she, that she didn't have to earn her worth by being needed by somebody else.

36:01: As Brené Brown puts it, talk to yourself like you would to somebody you love.

36:07: And perhaps that's a lovely insight, a lovely thought to leave you with today.

36:12: You don't have to pour everything you have into somebody else to be enough.

36:17: You don't have to make yourself smaller or prove your worth, or wait for somebody else to choose you.

36:24: No, sometimes, sometimes survival is about finding your way back to you.

36:29: And learning to trust that you were enough all along.

36:34: Thanks for trusting me and thank you for sharing this episode with people you care about.

36:39: And when you come back, I'll be here, ready to meet you where you are.

36:43: And so until next time, stay safe, be well, and of course, as always, be your own definition of amazing.

END