



To our dear listeners,

I could not be more delighted that the time has finally come to share with you our labour of love. Over these last few months, our team has invited you to join us as we recorded some truly magical conversations with our first group of guests on the show, and the positive reactions have been overwhelming. And as for this team that banded together, the wonderful, hard-working, and talented Pod Squad™; without them, this would all still be yet another good, but fleeting, idea in my mind.

But why this podcast at this very moment in time? Each time I am asked I explain how long overdue I was for a new passion project, I tell of my desire to “make healthcare more human”, and of wanting to normalize failure [please refer to the show trailer and the ‘About Us’ section on our website for more on the latter two]. While all true, these answers are only a small slice of the whole story.

Graduate school can be really hard. While I am well aware that this is hardly a revelation, it has felt far more personal lately. As I crossed over the halfway mark this past June, I could feel the bright fire that burns in my belly growing weaker and it all began to feel like a chore; even my most favourite parts. It had been the end of a particularly tough term that had me grappling with criticism that my rough edges needed to be dulled if I were to find success in this field; that my voice, or rather the opinions that come along with it, can at times be abrasive.

I let myself feel angry and sad and hurt and confused; let myself wonder if they were right and toyed with the idea that maybe it was better to quit while I was still ahead. Even those of us who appear to don impenetrable armour can have our feelings hurt, our souls deflated.

Perhaps I simply needed to stifle my voice, work harder to fit the role of well-behaved woman; but the more I asked for permission to share my voice the more I was allowing them to demand that I ask for it. So I resolved to create a safe-space for my voice and the voices of others. A space to tell stories that are beautiful and heartwarming and hell-raising and, at times, controversial. There we would question the boundaries between success and failure, tell stories of being and becoming, and most importantly we would tell stories of our shared humanity navigating our way through this thing we call life. Those people who heal you with their hands and their hearts, sometimes they need healing too; and their stories are too often left untold. I want to tell those stories.

Am I qualified to act as a leader in this endeavor? Probably not. And I definitely don't have a "voice" for radio; between the adenoidal quality it bears and its hyponasal tone, many a listener wonder if my cold is contagious or if I need a tissue. To answer your questions: I am perfectly healthy and, if you must know, have spent years of my life in and out of ENT offices followed by surgeries that have finally allowed me to breathe the way I now understand most humans have been doing all their lives. I used to hate how I sounded, how others sounded when they imitated my voice; but what a gift I have been given, this voice unique not just in its sound but in the views of the world it projects. So left to choose between self-loathing and self-love, I chose love.

Bronwyn, Rachael, Harrison, Stephanie, Ariana, and I have worked tirelessly to create something beautifully human. The episodes are edited for clarity and ease of listening, but the unfiltered conversations you are about to hear are the real deal. They are, at times, imperfect; we stumble over words and lose our train of thought, and leaving some of this for you is our deliberate celebration of the messy business of being human.

**Until next time,
Lee**