

TDS S6 E10

[00:00:00] INTRO: AURRA...

[00:00:06] **Samantha Baines:** Hello. I am joined by Jacqui Smith; former home secretary and MP, 2020 strictly contestant, political commentator and host of podcast, For The Many, Jackie, welcome, hello, good morning. Lovely to talk to you.

[00:00:23] **Samantha Baines:** Thanks for coming on. I'm so excited, there's so much to cover.

[00:00:28] **Jacqui Smith:** Oh, gosh, that sounds a bit ominous.

[00:00:30] **Jacqui Smith:** No, I'm, I'm really looking forward to it and I love your podcast. Yeah, lets crack on.

[00:00:37] **Samantha Baines:** Love it.

[00:00:37] **Samantha Baines:** I like that you're sort of taking a stance already. You're like, let's get moving with this, I'm a political commentator, I'm used to being fast and having opinions on things, I like it.

[00:00:48] **Jacqui Smith:** I've got some

[00:00:49] **Jacqui Smith:** sound bites ready for you?

[00:00:50] **Jacqui Smith:** no, no problem.

[00:00:52] **Samantha Baines:** Ideal, ideal. So you are divorced?

[00:00:57] **Jacqui Smith:** Nearly very nearly.

[00:00:58] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, it's so not [00:01:00] legally yet.

[00:01:00] **Jacqui Smith:** Not quite know for half, halfway there.

[00:01:03] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah it takes a long time doesn't it?

[00:01:05] **Jacqui Smith:** Well it does, yeah. We're doing it reasonably, amicably and as far as possible minus lawyers. So, um, that does take a bit longer, but it's probably a slightly gentler process.

[00:01:17] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. So how do you feel being a divorced? Uh, we'll let you have the title, even though it's not legal yet. How do you feel being a divorced person?

[00:01:29] **Jacqui Smith:** I feel sad. Uh, I mean, is there anybody who comes on and says, oh, I really, really always aim to be a divorcee. I doubt it. But I had been married for 30 years when I separated from my husband and it was the most difficult thing I've ever gone through.

[00:01:54] **Jacqui Smith:** And I had always pictured myself as [00:02:00] somebody who would, you know, grow old with him. So it's been, uh, enormously difficult, frankly, in terms of the sort of change to my life, the change to my expectations, the thing that you, you know, I'm sure everybody says, but you don't really realize until you're in that position, is that, of course you're not just losing the past, you're losing the future as well

[00:02:20] **Jacqui Smith:** when you get divorced, because everything you thought was going to happen. Everything you assumed about yourself and your, your relationship. What you were going to be doing and your retirement et cetera also goes at the same time as you, as you get divorced. Yeah. Difficult, I think is the best word.

[00:02:38] **Samantha Baines:** It's interesting you said that you imagine you'd grow old together. Cause I think a lot of us have that. I had this image, I don't know if you had an image of growing old together, but I had this image of me and my ex-husband you know, grey hair, sitting at a kitchen table, reading the paper, you know, having a cup of coffee, [00:03:00] kind of just really content in a lovely house

[00:03:03] **Samantha Baines:** that is our kind of dream home. Did you have an image in your mind of growing old together?

[00:03:09] **Jacqui Smith:** Oh, totally. I did. And it was partly informed by my mum and dad who had a very, very long marriage that only ended when my dad died, which happened just after I separated from my husband. So that was a pretty dreadful time.

[00:03:28] **Jacqui Smith:** But, um, it involved all of those things. Funnily enough. It also involved traveling and the, we can go off and do this and we can do the other and we can spend more time together and we can have grandchildren and, I mean, I could still have grandchildren, but you know, I could sort of picture us with our grandchildren.

[00:03:46] **Jacqui Smith:** And so it's all of those things that have gone. And, and I suppose, you know, without focusing too much on the sad, but this point about, I didn't have a, you know, I [00:04:00] didn't get married in church, but I'd always thought that it was, you know, till death us do part. And as I say, my, my dad died and one of the, almost the most heartbreaking times for me.

[00:04:13] **Jacqui Smith:** In terms of the divorce was the point at which he was very ill and my mum was caring for him. And I just saw, I'm never going to have that care either for myself or for, or to be able to offer it to my ex-husband. It almost felt like I'm not going to be able to complete this project by getting to the point where we come to the end of our lives.

[00:04:39] **Jacqui Smith:** And I found that, at the time, I found that so difficult because I had seen it as a lifetime project, you know, and then all of a sudden it wasn't anymore.

[00:04:48] **Samantha Baines:** It's really interesting that you say see it as a project as well. Cause I can totally, I think, you know, we're both career women, if you want to put it like that in the eighties way.

[00:04:59] **Samantha Baines:** [00:05:00] Um, and you know, we, we do a lot and we love our work so I can definitely relate off like, I have a- something that I'm working on right now and I need to see it to the end. And I think I can, yeah, I can totally see how marriage kind of seems like that. And then when it's cut off, you know, whether you expected it or not, it feels unfinished.

[00:05:22] **Samantha Baines:** Doesn't it. So how, how do you go about finishing the project when you're not with the other person?

[00:05:30] **Jacqui Smith:** Isn't that so difficult? And I think the other thing we probably share because we work so much, is an idea that we're powerful in terms of problem solving and that if something goes wrong, we can sort it out.

[00:05:45] **Jacqui Smith:** And I know that, you know, that was my approach. I mean, we broke up, but it took quite a long time because we separated. And then I, I sort of thought I can sort this out. If we work hard enough, we can sort

this out. [00:06:00] You know, I kept trying, we had counseling, et cetera, et cetera. And coming to the point where I had to accept that this was not a traditional work problem, that if only I worked hard enough I could solve, was a really important, but really difficult time for me.

[00:06:19] **Jacqui Smith:** And one of the things that has changed me the most, this understanding that sometimes there are things in your life that you just have to accept and live with. That you can't solve, that you can't put right. You know, a lot of my life is about let's solve that problem, let's change that thing, but this is something, the most important thing in my life.

[00:06:40] **Jacqui Smith:** And I actually couldn't control it. And coming to that understanding is enormously difficult, but actually it's the absolutely key thing for getting over the breakup of that, in my case 30 year relationship, you know, all of it, it had been more of my life, than it [00:07:00] hadn't been of my life because I was married when I was 24.

[00:07:03] **Jacqui Smith:** So not being able to solve it was something really difficult for me to come to terms with.

[00:07:08] **Samantha Baines:** Its funny because my dad died just before I, well sort of in between my weddings. So I had a small wedding, so he could be there. And then he died before our big celebration. So I was also going through the, um, you know, dad dying grief and I think grief taught me that as well.

[00:07:29] **Samantha Baines:** You've got to accept it. What was it like for you having these two big life occasions at the same time?

[00:07:36] **Jacqui Smith:** It's interesting isn't it? I mean, I had some counseling, which I recommend by the way, it was recommended to me and I recommend it in terms of finding somebody that you can talk to who has to listen.

[00:07:49] **Jacqui Smith:** No, that's because you're paying. That sounds dreadful-

[00:07:51] **Samantha Baines:** but that it's true.

[00:07:53] **Jacqui Smith:** It's true though isn't it. You talk a lot to your friends, your family, your family, and actually you should accept that when they want to talk [00:08:00] to you, but after a while you think I don't only want to be talking about my pain to these people that I love and who love me.

[00:08:07] **Jacqui Smith:** So I had some counseling and some therapy. And, um, the thing that was most striking to me was she asked me about my dad and asked me to talk about him. And I was more upset about that than I was actually about the divorce. And I, and she said to me, you know, you you're sort of covering the grief that you feel,

[00:08:32] **Jacqui Smith:** for losing your father in the grief that you're feeling for the divorce and to work through some of that and to realize that was really quite important, I think. And, um, I mean, you know, it was, it was dreadful, it was awful. It was to, you know, the two men who'd been most important in my life *tearful* sorry,

[00:08:57] **Jacqui Smith:** who went at the same time. And Um, [00:09:00] That's just that's erm uh, you can't really say that one, makes the other worse.. Cause they were both so awful that, um, it wasn't that- there's not like a competition of, oh my God, which was the worst one, but it was more to handle, uh, all in one go.

[00:09:18] **Samantha Baines:** When you said the two men in your life going, that's exactly what I felt when my dad died and I split up, I was like, all of these men I've sort of depended on.

[00:09:31] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. You know, and I still had my mom and she's incredible, my sister and all my friends, but it was something about these two really sort of big male figures in my life had all of a sudden gone. And then I've mentioned this before, but then my cat Albert died and that tipped me over the edge just because Albert was a boy too.

[00:09:51] **Samantha Baines:** And it sort of bring back all these feelings about losing all the men. And I was like all the men around me disappearing, even the cat. And, um, and I mean, I [00:10:00] laugh about it now, but it like, it upset me. It really sort of triggered those emotions that I'd felt sort of, I think it was about a year before when the, after the cat died.

[00:10:11] **Samantha Baines:** Um, and yeah, it definitely felt like this gaping hole of like all the masculine in my life had erm had gone. So how do you go about filling that hole- that sounds a bit rude,

[00:10:28] **Jacqui Smith:** Yeah it's a bit smutty.

[00:10:33] **Samantha Baines:** You go dating

[00:10:35] **Jacqui Smith:** Shall we get on to dating in a bit. I mean,

[00:10:39] **Jacqui Smith:** seriously, of course the first thing that you have to do is to recognize that you can love men, but you can also

[00:10:50] **Jacqui Smith:** be alone and you can be strong enough on your own. I mean, my sister and my friends would probably say, I still haven't got to that point, but I'm [00:11:00] better than I was. You know, I, I had never not been, in from the age of 16, I had never not been in a relationship. I hadn't lived on my own from the time that I was 24.

[00:11:14] **Jacqui Smith:** In fact, I'd never lived on my own because I'd lived at home before that. So the first thing I think you've got to do is understand that you can do those things. And then was I completely ready when I started dating? No, but I like men. I like them in my life. I think they're attractive some of them. And um, so then you get to, then you get to the point where you think, okay, well let's find a new one.

[00:11:43] **Jacqui Smith:** Um, and that's where we get to the dating.

[00:11:45] **Samantha Baines:** Should we, before we delve into dating, should we go back a little bit and to living on your own? Because I was the same, I'd lived in like house shares, I'd live in my parents. And then I just lived with my husband and I never lived on my own before. And it's a bit of [00:12:00] a shock.

[00:12:00] **Samantha Baines:** I love it now, but it's a bit of a shock to the system. How did you deal with that? Did you have to get a new property or did you stay in the house.

[00:12:09] **Jacqui Smith:** I was very lucky that I stayed in our house and I've now bought my husband out of the house. So it's all mine, but I, you know, nobody could call me handy around the house,

[00:12:22] **Jacqui Smith:** I think it would be fair to say. So some of these things are just so triggering aren't they like, I can remember only about a week after my husband, uh, left the washing machine broke down right. I was beside myself because I sort of thought, well, when I lived with him, I would have just said to him, can you have look at the washing machine?

[00:12:48] **Jacqui Smith:** And then if he hadn't been able to mend it, he would've got the menders in. And all of a sudden that responsibility fell on me.

You know, I got some new pictures and I wanted to put them up and I had to [00:13:00] find a hammer. In fact, one of the liberating things I did was to go out and buy my own, slightly girly toolkit. So that I'd got my own hammer.

[00:13:11] **Jacqui Smith:** I mean, the extent to which it's been used in the last three years is pretty negligible, but at least I thought to myself, look some very basic things. I've got a screwdriver and I've got a hammer I can sort of survive. And then of course the other thing I realized, there are loads of people you can pay to do things.

[00:13:26] **Jacqui Smith:** So, um, the sense of satisfaction that I got when I rang up the local washing machines repairers, and they came round and took the 50p out of the pipe and it worked again was sort of one of the first moments when I thought, oh my God am I actually going to, manage to do this. I strongly recommend if you're in this position, you've got to sort of get your house back because it's lovely to stay in the same place that you've always lived in.

[00:13:57] **Jacqui Smith:** But of course it was yours [00:14:00] together. So there's an element of, you know, the practical things like, the bits he wants to take and the bits you want to keep. And then there's just the making it, your place and tidying stuff up and getting control and putting your own pictures up and getting new furniture,

[00:14:22] **Jacqui Smith:** because some of it's gone with him in a way and some of it you sort of think, right, well now is the time to get rid of that and get something new and create that space. And, you know, one of the things my sister said after, after a few months, she came and she said, you have now made this house your own. And it felt so important to me and I felt comfortable in it.

[00:14:42] **Jacqui Smith:** I still don't like living on my own. I mean, I'm lucky now that one of my sons is living with me, but at least I now know that I can do it. And I sort of always thought I would never be able to.

[00:14:54] **Samantha Baines:** I can definitely relate to all of the making the house your own. I mean, [00:15:00] I've talked about this a lot, but I basically painted everything pink.

[00:15:03] **Samantha Baines:** I painted the bathroom from the kitchen pink. I had a pink renaissance; I bought a tool kit, just like you were saying, I bought a tool kit and it is pink. And my uncle took the piss out of me, but I put, I put shelves up myself and drilled into the wall. The, the euphoria, I felt it myself,

but I do think there is that thing isn't there of knowing when you can't do it yourself.

[00:15:28] **Samantha Baines:** I think I had a big thing after we split up of, I have to do everything myself now and I can't call in the experts. You know, I have to fix the washing machine myself. I have to learn how to do all these things that actually really stressed me out. And I remember one occasion when I was trying to

[00:15:46] **Samantha Baines:** dismantle an Ikea, uh, unit to, cause it was all tatty and dead, uh, to take to the, oh no, maybe I was selling it, anyway I had to dismantle this Ikea unit and I just [00:16:00] couldn't do it. And I cried. I sat on the spare room floor with this unit that I just couldn't pull apart. And I was like, I'm not even putting it together.

[00:16:10] **Samantha Baines:** I'm just pulling it apart. And I cried out of frustration because I knew that he would have been able to do it. And in that moment it felt like he'd won or something. And then I calmed down. And remembered that you can ask other people to help you do things. And yeah, definitely that's a revelation.

[00:16:31] **Jacqui Smith:** You can ask people, you can pay people.

[00:16:34] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah.

[00:16:34] **Jacqui Smith:** People will offer, take them up on it. Uh, it's doable. And, and that's the, I think when you first are on your own, you've sort of can't imagine that things are doable. I mean, I've got, we had at that time two dogs and sadly, you know, going back to what you said about your cat. I mean, I had to say when the male of our two dogs died, At the very beginning of this year.

[00:16:58] **Jacqui Smith:** That was another [00:17:00] moment when I sort of thought, oh God something really important from my life has gone, but, and sorry, and the reason for the talking about that was because I suddenly thought, how am I going to go to work and look after the dogs? And how is all that gonna happen. And how am I going to be able to cope with everything?

[00:17:18] **Jacqui Smith:** And you have to take it one step at a time and you have to accept help when it's offered. And then you begin to realize that actually it is completely possible to live on your own and to cope with things with the help of friends and family, who you, to be completely honest, who you

probably, in some cases re-engage with, in a way that you didn't do when you were a couple and you were dependent on each other.

[00:17:44] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah, definitely.

[00:17:45] **Samantha Baines:** I was going to ask you about friends and family. And was there anything they did in particular that was really useful or good at that time. And just in case any friends or family of someone who's going [00:18:00] through this now are listening, you know, what can they do? Or what in your experience did you, the people who surrounded you do to make you feel particularly held or loved or supported.

[00:18:10] **Jacqui Smith:** Listen to you?

[00:18:13] **Jacqui Smith:** Ask you how you're doing in the case of my sister, who'd also been through divorce, tell you that you will feel better and you don't believe them, and they keep telling you it. But in the end you do feel better. Take you out for fun things, because all of a sudden the person that you would have gone out for a drink or a meal with isn't there anymore.

[00:18:37] **Jacqui Smith:** So, you know, invite you to things, go with you, be your plus one to things, when you haven't got the person who you would usually have, have gone with, um, make you laugh when you think you're never going to. In the case of my niece, sent me that Dua Lipa track about new [00:19:00] rules in order to help me to tell me, to pull myself together, um, or all those things care I suppose, and offer.

[00:19:13] **Jacqui Smith:** And then in the case of you, if you're going through it, accept that help don't think to yourself, I can, I've got to do this all on my own. I can't, you know, I've got, I can't accept any help. People want to help you and to reach out to you and so accept it.

[00:19:31] **Samantha Baines:** I'm just imagining you dancing around your kitchen to Dua Lipa now.

[00:19:36] **Samantha Baines:** That's the way-

[00:19:37] **Jacqui Smith:** if you're under him, you ain't getting over him.

[00:19:43] **Samantha Baines:** It is funny cause we've talked about, um, songs on the podcast before as a kind of Anthem for your divorce. And did it, do you think Dua Lipa is your divorce anthem.

[00:19:56] **Jacqui Smith:** Oh God. I've got so many, I've got so many playlists.
[00:20:00] So I've got uh, really sort of sad playlist, which was essentially what I listened to at the point at which I split up.

[00:20:10] **Jacqui Smith:** And, you know, I, I sort of do believe this thing about, you've got so many tears in you and you might as well just get them out. Don't try not to cry, you know, sometimes just have a good cry put on your crying music and just go with it. Then, I've got to a playlist that is, that is called, it's sort of based around Gabrielle's song, Rise.

[00:20:36] **Jacqui Smith:** And it's got all sorts of songs like that on it. Some sort of saddy, sad, end of relationship ones. And then some sort of positive ones um, I play that playlist and my sons say, oh my God mum, you're getting divorced, we get it, do we have to have this playlist on again? And I say, shut up this is, this is my rise playlist. And I'm jolly well playing it. [00:21:00]

[00:21:01] **Samantha Baines:** I love that. I ha- I have a similar playlist for the kitchen, which is like Cher, RuPaul, Britney Spears. It's just like, upbeat joy songs. So I'm interested to talk to you about work during this time. Because obviously you've done so many amazing things. How did you keep going with the work side of things or did you keep going and what got you through?

[00:21:29] **Jacqui Smith:** Well, not only did I keep going with the work side of things, but the work side of things kept me going I think. Work has always been a very special part of my life and I was at the time I was chairing a very big NHS trust in Birmingham. I was chairing a children's trust in Sandwell. I was doing my sort of media commentary work and some work overseas.

[00:21:52] **Jacqui Smith:** And, um, I can remember going into my uh, to the NHS [00:22:00] trust where I worked and actually, you know, I was close obviously, cause I was the chair to the CEO, but actually talking to her about what had happened to me and her being immensely supportive as were the senior people in the other places that I, that I worked and I sort of hummed and ermmed about whether or not to even say anything, but I was very glad that I did because apart from anything else, I was a bit of a mess and would sort of tear up in meetings, things like that.

[00:22:24] **Jacqui Smith:** But it was there just being there, their understanding, their support without it being sort of desperately touchy, feely, but just the opportunity to go somewhere, do something with people that made me feel in control of something that brought me into contact with people that made frankly, all of the difference.

[00:22:50] **Jacqui Smith:** And I don't necessarily recommend this, but I probably only had about two or three days during, in fact, the whole of the last [00:23:00] three years. Um, when I just sort of woke up and thought I can't face it, I absolutely can't face it. Uh, now, as I say that worked for me. What I would say to people is this isn't, this is, you know, this is a heartbreaking and time and

[00:23:16] **Jacqui Smith:** you need to look after yourself. And if you need to have some time off work, you should have some time off work. But just for me, it was frankly easier or more soothing to go to work and be absolutely absorbed in that than it was to not. Um, and I consider myself really fortunate to have been able to do that.

[00:23:35] **Samantha Baines:** I had a similar thing, I think I just- I was working on a new show in the west end and I just launched myself into all of the work for that show. And I was doing it like six days a week. So I didn't have time to think. And in hindsight, do you think you should have taken a little bit more time? Was it too much of a distraction?

[00:23:57] **Jacqui Smith:** I don't think that I should have [00:24:00] taken more time off because that just wouldn't have suited me. But you can't just push your feelings away. You can't just think I'm just gonna, you know, I'm just going to keep busy and it'll go away. You have to process those feelings you sometimes have to work on them. This is part of the reason for the therapy

[00:24:22] **Jacqui Smith:** I think. You have to just go through it. You have to find the places where you are able to just experience and hold what you're feeling and what you're, what you're going through. So I wouldn't have been able, you know, if I suppose I'd said right, that's it. I'm going to have a sabbatical or something that, that wouldn't have made me more likely to do that.

[00:24:47] **Jacqui Smith:** But other things- I had to do other things in order to make sure that I did it because you cannot just push it away. Something this big, this significant in your life [00:25:00] you can, you've got to process it and work it in some way or another.

[00:25:03] **Samantha Baines:** And I want to talk to you about the tearing up in meetings, because I had an occasion where I, a song was played during rehearsals for magic Mike, and it was my wedding song and I just obviously burst into tears and ran to the toilet.

[00:25:19] **Samantha Baines:** And, what was it like for you? Cause I'm not used to crying. I'm, I'm a comedian. I'm very open about all of my feelings, but

I'm not used to crying in front of people. And I was very aware of this kind of stereotype of the sad, divorced woman who just cries and then is bitter and wears Leopard print and goes out and I didn't.

[00:25:39] **Jacqui Smith:** I wear Leopard print.

[00:25:40] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah, I mean, I love Leopard print and I love going out. But at the time, I didn't want to be that cliché of like,

[00:25:47] **Jacqui Smith:** Well exactly.

[00:25:48] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, you can't get through work without crying. Did you feel the pressure of that? And how did you deal with tearing up in meetings?

[00:25:56] **Jacqui Smith:** Yeah. Well, first of all, I think that's why it was important that [00:26:00] people around me knew what I was going through.

[00:26:02] **Jacqui Smith:** So they didn't just think, oh my God, what's up with her. They sort of- I mean, you know, I wasn't sobby. I was sort of sitting there chairing a meeting sort of sobbing. Um, and actually I learned really, really good tip from my PA who said to me, you know, when you sort of feel that coming on and you think, oh, no, I'm going, I'm going, I'm going, if you lift your head up and look at the scene, If you look upwards like that, it really, really helps.

[00:26:27] **Jacqui Smith:** It works. So probably what my colleagues saw more often than me tearing up in meetings. Was this me suddenly looking, they probably thought to themselves, what the hell is she looking at the ceiling again for? But that was because-

[00:26:41] **Samantha Baines:** She just really cares about lighting fixtures at the moment. I don't know what it is.

[00:26:47] **Jacqui Smith:** Is she checking out the dusting, or what.

[00:26:51] **Jacqui Smith:** It works. I still do it now when I, when I sort of tear up. So, um, I mean, you know, I think [00:27:00] had I been going into the office and sort of spending all day crying, I probably wouldn't have taken some time off, but I don't think it's unreasonable for people to demonstrate that they have feelings whilst they're at work.

[00:27:15] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah, no definately.

[00:27:17] **Samantha Baines:** It's the ad break. So it's a perfect time to remind you to hit subscribe, to be notified about more episodes. You can also leave us a lovely review because honestly it makes a difference to the chart positions. And one time I was in the charts next to Michelle Obama. And I was really thrilled about it.

[00:27:37] **Samantha Baines:** So it'd be nice to do that again. You can also join in the conversation on social media. We're on Twitter and Instagram @ divorce pod. We have a website, the

[00:27:47] **Samantha Baines:** divorce social.com.

[00:27:49] **Samantha Baines:** And you can also join us for our like 90s style divorce chat room experience over on Patreon. So just go to patreon.com

[00:28:00] forward slash Samantha Baines-

[00:28:01] **Samantha Baines:** B A I N E S and it starts at two pounds a month. And we all have lovely and awful and amazing chats. See you there.

[00:28:10] **Samantha Baines:** I always talk to people on the, on the podcast of did they have a particular low moment and mine is crying face down on the slate floor in my kitchen. And just looking, looking at the little pool of tears.

[00:28:24] **Samantha Baines:** And I was going to say to you, did you have a low moment? And do you have a favorite place to cry? Cause I'm always on the floor when I'm crying.

[00:28:31] **Jacqui Smith:** I had quite a few moments. Um, I think my favorite place to cry is probably sitting on the side of my bed because the times that I feel most like crying are usually first thing in the morning when I get up and you sort of realize you wake up and you [00:29:00] realize

[00:29:01] **Jacqui Smith:** what's missing, then you sit up and then that's the point where you sort of start crying or you've taken a nap, you know, I can highly recommend when you are sad taking naps. You know what another thing my sister said to me is look, being sad is really tiring and it absolutely is. So, you know, you you'd have taken a nap, you'd have woken up and yeah.

[00:29:24] **Jacqui Smith:** You know, you have that awful moment when you just wake up and you don't, you forgotten that this awful things happen to you

and then you remember it and then you sort of sit yourself up and then you have a cry. So I suppose that's my, to the extent that it's my favorite. It's my most regular place for crying. Um, oh dear,

[00:29:45] **Jacqui Smith:** the other, the other place. Uh, is I love yoga and the yoga class that I go to, we sit down and we have three minutes meditation at the beginning. [00:30:00] That moment when you just stop from the things that are all around you is the other moment when I absolutely will tear up, you know, to the extent that she just used, she just like automatically puts a box of tissues by where she knows I'm going to be now, because even now, you know, I will, that will be the moment when it will come over me and I will sort of spend three minutes both

[00:30:25] **Jacqui Smith:** meditating, but also with tears falling down my face. And luckily I do this class with friends and my sister and my sister-in-law. They know that that's good. They're sort of used to it. Oh, she's going again. Right. Whatever, get on with it, down with dog.

[00:30:40] **Jacqui Smith:** And, um-

[00:30:42] **Samantha Baines:** you don't want to downward dog when you're crying.

[00:30:49] **Jacqui Smith:** By the time we get to the end of that three minutes, I'm still ready to go, you know? Um, but that's the other moment I'm afraid when I, when I cry.

[00:30:58] **Samantha Baines:** I like that three minute [00:31:00] allocation, that's quite concise, isn't it? Because I can go on for hours, if I'm in a wallow and I cry and then you run out of tears, but you keep thinking and being miserable and then you cry a bit more.

[00:31:12] **Samantha Baines:** I can- yeah.

[00:31:13] **Jacqui Smith:** And then you get really thirsty because you've cried, you've lost so much.

[00:31:18] **Samantha Baines:** And then sometimes I'm crying for so long that then I forget that I was crying. Cause it it's just been going on for ages. And then I find myself like watching TV or reading a book and I'm like, oh yeah, I forgot I was crying.

[00:31:30] **Samantha Baines:** I was meant to be sad, but it's fine now. Um, but yeah, sometimes I need something like something to cut it off otherwise it'll just go on all day. Uh, I normally go for a walk to cut off my crying. And also when you go for a walk and cry, it feels more like a music video. So the performer in me enjoys that. Or trains.

[00:31:51] **Jacqui Smith:** I live in the Malverns, I live in Malvern where -with the Malvern Hills. In fact, I can look out the window, I'm sitting out now and look at them. [00:32:00] So there are, those are lovely walks and you're right. That's another time, isn't it. When you sort of go for a walk and then you're in a beautiful place looking at a view and it sort of comes over you a bit.

[00:32:13] **Jacqui Smith:** Um, that's good. That's fine isn't it? That's what nature is for.

[00:32:18] **Samantha Baines:** You gotta get out. Yeah, that's what nature is for, crying.

[00:32:23] **Samantha Baines:** Lovely. Beautiful views and -

[00:32:30] **Jacqui Smith:** soothing you. What do you do? I can always remember one of my counselors I think, who said you need to find those tactics for self, self soothing. Not least because otherwise of course the temptation is to go back to sort of try to go back to try to message your ex to sort of, you know, uh, in a slightly desperate way.

[00:32:55] **Jacqui Smith:** And, um, so therefore you need to find your other ways [00:33:00] of, of soothing yourself.

[00:33:01] **Jacqui Smith:** Did you have, do you have tactics for self-soothing

[00:33:05] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah, mine, well it doesn't

[00:33:08] **Samantha Baines:** sound soothing, but mine is distraction. Cause I can get really into, I guess it's like me with work or like a project or like if I'm writing a children's book, I get really obsessed with the thing and then I just do it, do it, do it until it's done.

[00:33:25] **Samantha Baines:** And I'm the same, I guess, with emotions. So I get really into feeling sad and then just keep wallowing. So I distract myself by going for a walk. Or watching a really great TV show or reading a really great

book, normally, my three. But also, I ha well, I, we had two cats together and I still have one of those cats.

[00:33:46] **Samantha Baines:** And now I have a dog, a little puppy called Custard. And honestly the dog has got me through, uh, I've I've only had her for, you know, six months now, but even now she just, you [00:34:00] know, makes me get out of the house every day to take her for a walk. You know, if I start wallowing and she'll just kind of walk up what she's quite small, walk up on me,

[00:34:09] **Samantha Baines:** want me to throw her ball and it just kind of reminds you that there are other living things in the world, and I love you unconditionally, unconditionally love you. Um, you know, even when I accidentally trod on her paw, when she was tiny and then she was really upset about it, and then I cried cause I was upset about it.

[00:34:31] **Samantha Baines:** She still loved me. Um, so yeah, so I think pets as well, get me through. But also I do need to cry sometimes, so I just let myself cry or have a day of doing nothing.

[00:34:43] **Jacqui Smith:** And that's fine, isn't it. And you've just got to let yourself do that, but you know, I think I might possibly have used this whole service thing as a desperate excuse for self-indulgence because I, um, I'll tell you I've bought so many scented candles.

[00:34:59] **Jacqui Smith:** I thought to [00:35:00] myself, you're feeling sad. You've got to get some really expensive stuff to put in the bath so I done that. I, I agree with you about TV programs as well. You know, I deserve to sit on the sofa and watch, you know, in my case, I just love the more gory murder, the better actually. So, you know, I deserve to sit on the sofa and watch Silent Witness from the start, for as long as I want to.

[00:35:27] **Jacqui Smith:** And it's helped is all I can say. So find your thing.

[00:35:32] **Samantha Baines:** Well, I am not good with gory murder, but I was in Silent Witness and I have to stand over- yeah,

[00:35:40] **Jacqui Smith:** What were you?

[00:35:41] **Samantha Baines:** I was in a couple of episodes. It was, it was a couple of years ago. And I'm in like two episodes and I'm a plain clothes detective, can't remember what my name was.

[00:35:50] **Samantha Baines:** But, but we had a dead body when we were filming. It wasn't a dead body obviously it was a little live woman, but she had to lie in the kind of little zip-up bag. [00:36:00] And I had to stand over her and like point it, you know, a bruise that she had on her neck. And even that freaked me out. Cause I don't like, I mean, I think I can deal with Silent Witness, but like really gory stuff,

[00:36:12] **Samantha Baines:** like I can't. Or like horror scares me too much. So I was like, it was really freaky cause obviously she's acting dead cause that's her job. Um, but I was like, oh, this is so weird. What if she suddenly comes to life? And obviously she will because she's alive. But like in the scene, I was very freaked out. This person was a brilliant actor and she had had lots of other scenes.

[00:36:34] **Samantha Baines:** So she was just lying down, dead for this one bit. But, um, but yeah, because, and they have little merkins and stuff, for pubic hair so that they don't have to show their own pubic hair. Like if they're naked on the autopsy table, which I quite like, it's like a little pair of fur pants.

[00:36:51] **Jacqui Smith:** Does that make it better if you're you wearing some very pants as

[00:36:55] **Jacqui Smith:** opposed to your own?

[00:36:56] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, I'd rather, I'd rather wear a little [00:37:00] fo fo Muff, if we're going to call it that, than show my own. Would you?

[00:37:06] **Jacqui Smith:** is this the moment when we get onto dating?

[00:37:09] **Samantha Baines:** I feel like it could be, pubic hair fashions in dating. We have actually discussed that before.

[00:37:18] **Jacqui Smith:** Have you?! All your hangups, when you start, you start dating.

[00:37:21] **Samantha Baines:** Well just because, you know, I'm I'm still dating at the moment, sort of on and off and, um, you know, pubic hair fashions changed and they, and then, you know, I date men and women.

[00:37:34] **Samantha Baines:** And so some people have it all shaved off and some people have it really full and other people have a little strip and I'm like, oh God, what am I meant to do?

[00:37:43] **Jacqui Smith:** Yeah.

[00:37:43] **Samantha Baines:** What was your, um, I don't want to ask you what you have down there unless you want to offer. No, but what did you have any worries when -Samantha Bains

[00:37:55] **Samantha Baines:** asked, ex politician, Jacqui Smith, [00:38:00] what's in her pants. I'm not going to ask you that.

[00:38:02] **Jacqui Smith:** Home secretary jackie Smith, have you got a Brazilian or not, answer the question.

[00:38:08] **Samantha Baines:** That's a headline, isn't it?

[00:38:12] **Samantha Baines:** No, but did you have any particular worries of stuff like that when you started dating?

[00:38:18] **Jacqui Smith:** Look, I had been married. I had been with my husband for 32 years. I had not had sex with anybody else for 32 years. I haven't seen, I'm just trying to remember if this is true, you know, I hadn't seen anybody's parts apart from my husband's cock for 32 years.

[00:38:41] **Jacqui Smith:** So yes, of course I had worries. Um, And, you know, do I, am I have I even been doing it right? How's it going to work? All of that stuff? Um, I've had another relationship since I split up from my [00:39:00] husband, although it's now over. And actually it just, I can't say it was like, I wa- I was when I was 16. But I think as long as you go into these things with a sense of, as long as you find the right people and you go into it with a sense of sort of care and kindness for each other, it sort of works out.

[00:39:20] **Jacqui Smith:** You know, even if the relationship then finishes, you know, during the time that you're in the relationship, it, it works out. So, you know, if there are people listening to this who are thinking I'm never gonna. Find somebody else I'm never going to have sex again. What, what am I going to do? You know, because to be honest, you're young, I'm 58, right?

[00:39:42] **Samantha Baines:** You're still young.

[00:39:43] **Jacqui Smith:** Thank you. Thank you. And still able to have sex just in case anybody's interested. Um,

[00:39:49] **Samantha Baines:** In having sex with you, or just interested in whether you can have sex?

[00:39:53] **Jacqui Smith:** Both to be honest with you.

[00:39:56] **Samantha Baines:** Great.

[00:39:58] **Jacqui Smith:** Um, but [00:40:00] you know, at that age you sort of think, oh God, am I, is that, is that, is that, is that me over with now?

[00:40:06] **Jacqui Smith:** Well, anyway, in my experience, it isn't. So that's the good news.

[00:40:10] **Samantha Baines:** That is good news. Um, it's, it's funny though, isn't it? The world of dating? When you're kind of in the public eye a little bit.. And has anyone ever brought up things from your past? Because obviously there was the expenses scandal happened and your ex downloaded porno films,

[00:40:32] **Samantha Baines:** which

[00:40:33] **Samantha Baines:** I'm sure many people's exes have.

[00:40:36] **Jacqui Smith:** Claimed for them on, uh, the broadband bill, yes.

[00:40:41] **Samantha Baines:** What a joy to receive that.

[00:40:44] **Jacqui Smith:** Indeed.

[00:40:44] **Samantha Baines:** Uh, um, has anyone ever like brought any stuff like that up or like made difficult jokes about your past.

[00:40:52] **Jacqui Smith:** Do you know actually people have been just really lovely. And I mean, [00:41:00] part of the reason why I want people to know who I am before I meet them is so that if that is a big problem for them, they've basically, you know, can say, no, I'm not interested.

[00:41:13] **Jacqui Smith:** So that we don't have to, you know, I don't have to talk about it a lot because I don't much like talking about it as you can imagine, but actually what people tend to say to me, and this is really lovely is that they'll say, look, I'm not going to Google you. I will listen to what you say about yourself and I'll believe that.

[00:41:33] **Jacqui Smith:** And you know, the other thing that the person I was in the relationship said, which I really was very grateful to him for was, you know, he said, look, I'll, I'll believe what you tell me not what other people tell me. And I won't talk about you in public. And, um, that was just lovely. And that's how most people have behaved actually.

[00:41:56] **Jacqui Smith:** And then, you know, obviously when I get to know people more, I [00:42:00] will talk about what I went through because it is a very- going- being the sort of face of that scandal, and particularly the impact it had on my family is something that's a very important part of my past. So I will open up about it to people, but I don't want to talk about it on a first date precisely because it's so difficult.

[00:42:22] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah well, it's good that, it sounds like you've dated lovely people.

[00:42:26] **Jacqui Smith:** I have actually, I have yeah.

[00:42:29] **Samantha Baines:** I had an awful date the other day where a guy who had quite, I mean, I don't talk about my political opinion on this podcast, but, um, who had a differing political opinion to me. And so we started having a bit of a debate and then I thought this isn't a good idea on the first date, like let's just get to know each other.

[00:42:50] **Samantha Baines:** And then he started telling me about how he loves Jordan P- is it Jordan Peters or Jordan Peterson?

[00:42:57] **Jacqui Smith:** Peterson.

[00:42:58] **Samantha Baines:** Peterson, Jordan [00:43:00] Peterson, um, who has spoken out, um, uh, lots of people would say in a sexist misogynist way. So I fed that back to my date and he said, um, well, I don't know about that, but he still says some very sensible things.

[00:43:19] **Samantha Baines:** And I thought, right, well, that's the end of this date. Like I can't, and like we'd already- like first date we had a political debate. Uh, and then to go into Jordan Peterson, and I was like, this is too far, like I can't. Um, I don't even know how we got on to it. So, um, I sort of imagined that you'd have that all the time, but it sounds like you have a lovely time.

[00:43:40] **Jacqui Smith:** Well, I don't, um, you know, I, I want people to understand the outcome that I come from a political background, but I've never

said, I can't, you know, I've never said I'll never kiss a Tory. I've never said, you know, you'd have to be exactly in line with my political views in [00:44:00] order for me to date you. I mean, if I'm Frank, I would find it difficult

[00:44:04] **Jacqui Smith:** I think to have a relationship with somebody that didn't broadly share my values. And I wouldn't date, somebody who I felt was going to be misogynist or racist or who I just, you know, couldn't imagine spending any time with, but I'm not going to, you know, you don't have to sort of tick, I've always voted labor box, in order for me to go out with you by any means.

[00:44:34] **Samantha Baines:** Well, that's good to know I'm sure a lot of people are-

[00:44:37] **Jacqui Smith:** I don't want to narrow the field too much.

[00:44:41] **Samantha Baines:** So any advice for anyone looking to date at the moment, maybe they're a similar age to you, cause you said you felt like that was the end for you, and then, then it wasn't, which is lovely. So any, any words of wisdom?

[00:44:58] **Jacqui Smith:** Well, I'm not sure. I mean, you know, [00:45:00] given that I'm now single again, I'm not sure I'm the best person. But anyway, um, I have had some lovely dates and I, and I've had a lovely relationship post my marriage. Uh, my first piece of advice is do it. It's not as scary as you think it's going to be. Um, don't sort of think, oh, well, uh, I can't use a dating app because I'm too old because trust me, there are loads of people, our age on the dating apps.

[00:45:27] **Jacqui Smith:** And in fact, a lot older. Go into it with uh, sort of - one of the, one of the problems with having been married for so long is that you have to get yourself out of the mindset of thinking if I meet somebody it's because I'm going to be marrying them and spending the next 30 years with them. No, it isn't.

[00:45:42] **Jacqui Smith:** It's because you're having a cup of coffee and a chat with them. And you know, my sister, my sister is constant. My friends, even my sons, when I go on a date, they go, oh, bloody hell mum, you don't have to marry them. Just, you know, it should be fun. It should be about meeting somebody new. [00:46:00] And if it goes somewhere, that's lovely.

[00:46:01] **Jacqui Smith:** And if all that happens is you have a lovely meal or a coffee or a drink or a walk with somebody that's lovely. And if they're an absolute twat, well, you don't have to see them again. So it's sort of win-win but then again, perhaps I'm going to meet somebody dreadful the next time I go on a dating app.

[00:46:22] **Samantha Baines:** Oh no, I hope not.

[00:46:23] **Samantha Baines:** That's good advice for me as well, actually.

[00:46:25] **Jacqui Smith:** Good.

[00:46:25] **Samantha Baines:** I keep going on dates and thinking, you know, on the first date I'm like, well, is this going to be long term? Like what's, what's, you know, um, what's going to happen in the future instead of just having a nice time, um, which is very important. Now I did want to speak to you about Strictly [Strictly Come Dancing] as well, because obviously you were on 2020, uh, Strictly in the UK.

[00:46:51] **Samantha Baines:** And you did an amazing job. What was doing Strictly like when you're like newly divorced [00:47:00] and separated and wearing sequins on the telly?

[00:47:04] **Jacqui Smith:** Look, that's part of the reason why I did it, to be honest with you. Because, you know, I think for any of us who go through a divorce, it feels, you know, it feels an ease, the end of something.

[00:47:18] **Jacqui Smith:** And as I've already said, you know, at my age, you sort of think, oh right, well, is that yet? Um, And I felt I can either just continue to sort of wrap myself up in misery or I can try some new adventures. And I had been on holiday on my own for the first time ever. And then they contacted me for, um, Strictly and I thought

[00:47:45] **Jacqui Smith:** yeah. Do you know what? Let's go for it. I have never regretted doing that. I absolutely loved it. It was a fantastic adventure. It's very kind of you to say what you said about me, but I did of course go out, [00:48:00] um, uh, at the first opportunity. My argument is that's because there were fewer of us on it cause it was a real COVID Strictly last year.

[00:48:08] **Jacqui Smith:** So I would have lasted a few more weeks if there'd been more people. Um, but I loved it. And it's probably not something that I would have done had I still been married. Uh, so I see it as a fantastic adventure

and, you know, everybody can't go on strictly, but I think everybody can think about what's the thing now that would

[00:48:37] **Jacqui Smith:** be a big adventure for you or something that perhaps you're slightly scared of that you could do. And I would strongly recommend doing it when you decide what that is.

[00:48:47] **Samantha Baines:** So with, with all that's happened and all the challenges like Strictly and all the, the work achievements that you've made since you separated and you've had a [00:49:00] new relationship, you've been dating, how do you feel now?

[00:49:05] **Samantha Baines:** About divorce and separation and your recovery?

[00:49:11] **Jacqui Smith:** I feel, most of the time, I feel optimistic. I feel proud that I've got this far. I feel excited about the new opportunities that are available to me, you know, not just in terms of relationships. But uh, just being responsible for yourself gives you a certain amount of freedom and liberation.

[00:49:38] **Jacqui Smith:** Oh, you know, I'm not, um, starry-eyed about this. I still, now will have times when something will remind me of my marriage or my ex-husband and I will be crying again. And I think I'll always, you know, I, I think I will always be like that because it was a very happy marriage and it [00:50:00] was an enormous part of my life, but I'm more accepting of the fact that that's the case now.

[00:50:06] **Jacqui Smith:** So, you know, as I say, as my sister used to say to me, and I didn't believe her, I will say to people who are sort of in the thick of it, it will get better. Uh, I promise you it will get better.

[00:50:20] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, thank you. It's been so brilliant to chat. I've thoroughly enjoyed it.

[00:50:24] **Jacqui Smith:** And lovely to talk to you.

[00:50:25] **Samantha Baines:** Where can people find you on social media and things and your podcast?

[00:50:30] **Jacqui Smith:** They can find me on Twitter @Jacqui underscore Smith 1. They can find me on Instagram at Strictly Jacqui. Uh, they can listen to

our podcast, For The Many, on all good podcast platforms. And it's, uh, if you have trouble, it's a global podcast, so you can get it on global player.

[00:50:49] **Samantha Baines:** Brilliant. Well, thank you so much.

[00:50:51] **Jacqui Smith:** Thank you.