

TDS S6 E2

[00:00:00] Aurra intro.

[00:00:06] **Samantha Baines:** I am joined by Laura Friedman Williams, author of available. Welcome to the divorce social.

[00:00:13] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Thank you so much for having me on this morning.

[00:00:15] **Samantha Baines:** Well, it's morning for you, but it's afternoon for me,

[00:00:18] **Laura Friedman Williams:** right? It's cocktail hour for you, right. And coffee time for me. So yeah,

[00:00:22] **Samantha Baines:** I've already had some cake in the morning as well.

[00:00:26] **Samantha Baines:** So you are. Divorced. How does it feel when I

[00:00:31] **Samantha Baines:** say that to you?

[00:00:32] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Well, to be honest with you, my divorce papers are not yet signed. We're in the final throes of the divorce. It's been a very long and drawn out process. So it's been three and a half years since I've been separated. I think of myself as divorced now because we're, you know, leading completely separate lives and it feels on the one hand.

[00:00:54] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Totally thrilling and liberating. And on the other hand, I still feel really devastated by [00:01:00] it for a couple of years. I think I tried really hard in, in the immediate aftermath of the separation to view it one way or the other, like I was down and out. I was devastated and now I'm back. And now I kind of see theres both.

[00:01:12] **Samantha Baines:** It's interesting that you still feel both after three and a half years. Do you think some of that will be lifted when the divorce is finalized and you've got that piece of paper? Or do you think you'll always feel?

[00:01:24] **Laura Friedman Williams:** No, I think I'll always feel this way. It's not, by the way. I mean, no offense to him. I'm not devastated by losing him.

[00:01:32] **Laura Friedman Williams:** We were together a long time. Like from the time I was, we were 20 years old. So for 27 years we were together. And we had a good run. You know, we had our ups and downs for sure. It's not so much that I'm devastated by losing him personally. I don't want him back. I never did. As soon as it was over, it was very much over in my mind.

[00:01:52] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I never tried to get him back or, or hope that he would want me back. Even it's the idea of marriage it's giving up on [00:02:00] the idea of marriage and giving up on that notion of happily ever after and the things that I wanted for so many years. When I was a child growing up, it's very hard to let go of that ideal.

[00:02:11] **Laura Friedman Williams:** So I think in one way, I'm planning my divorce party and it's going to be a doozy it's too bad. You're not on this side of the ponds because I, I can't wait. I mean, I've been building this up with my friends for so long. Um, so I, I can't wait for it to be official, but I also just feel like. Divorce is in my mind like a death and you grieve it.

[00:02:32] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And it was a long marriage. I expected it to last the rest of my life. And so I have pangs that it's gone.

[00:02:40] **Samantha Baines:** Tell me about the divorce party plays. What are they going to be? Penis shaped thing, or vagina shaped thing.

[00:02:47] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I haven't really thought about that. I've been thinking more about like edibles alcohol and rollerblades. That's really like,

[00:02:54] **Samantha Baines:** Rollerblades, sure

[00:02:58] **Laura Friedman Williams:** those are my [00:03:00] three.

[00:03:00] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Yeah. Honestly. And the most important thing is just like my team right. Of women. So I don't even need anything really, but them they're like the main event of the party.

[00:03:10] **Samantha Baines:** Why roller skates?

[00:03:12] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I just love to roller skate and I, I had. In my old apartment that I just had to move out of, you know, our family home that we sold in June and moved out of.

[00:03:21] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I had this pair of roller skates on the bookshelf. We had this massive wall of shelves. We had very high ceilings and my husband and I had had a big fight about whether or not to have these shelves. I didn't want them. Cause I decided at this point in my life, I didn't want stuff anymore. So insisted on having this wall of shelves and he said, but the deal is you can put whatever you want on them.

[00:03:39] **Laura Friedman Williams:** So what I put on them was a pair of rollers. And so I had this big blank wall of shelves and a pair of roller skates. And so the roller skates became very symbolic to me over time of, you know, the sort of new life that I was going to have. And that's, I just want to roller skate around, I guess it would be like my tiny new apartment.

[00:03:56] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I had to roller skate around it.

[00:03:58] **Samantha Baines:** I'm just imagining you in like [00:04:00] divorced world, just rollerskating everywhere, like to the loo, to the shops to school pick up.

[00:04:07] **Laura Friedman Williams:** That would be amazing. I have to get good enough so that I. Go to school pickup without mortifying my daughter. Cause she's starting middle school. I think if I could get really good, then I could be cool enough to do that.

[00:04:19] **Laura Friedman Williams:** But I mean, that's a good goal. That's a good post divorce goal.

[00:04:22] **Samantha Baines:** I just want to go back to what you said earlier about kind of grieving the marriage before you have your roller skating party. And, um, and you said the words giving up on marriage and giving up on that ideal. Do you think you have given up or do you think you could have it again in the future?

[00:04:40] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I think someone could have it again in the future. It won't be me. I don't want it again. I think that for me. I never want to sound negative. You know, I'm in general, a pretty optimistic and positive person, but I feel very disillusioned in my middle age about what marriage really looks like. And this [00:05:00] idea that a successful marriage is basically a marriage that stays together.

[00:05:04] **Laura Friedman Williams:** No matter what, I never saw myself as not being married. It was. So much as something that had crossed my mind, I

was a very trusting person. I'd been with my husband since we were practically teenagers and I expected it to last a lifetime. So those, those were my expectations. And I fully believed this notion of like, you find your guy, you settle down, you have babies, you make a nice household and that's it.

[00:05:26] **Laura Friedman Williams:** That's your life for better for. And I don't believe that that's really like the healthiest choice for people anymore. Like, it's not what I want for my children. For example, I have a 21 year old daughter and I'm constantly like, don't settle down. Don't get married, have the babies. If you want, you don't need the ring or get married, but understand

[00:05:46] **Laura Friedman Williams:** that you're compromising something because everything we do is a compromise. I don't think I understood that. I don't think I understood how much compromise there was in terms of how much you have to compromise yourself, your own ideals, your own lifestyle [00:06:00] choices, your own professional goals. There's a lot of compromise in marriage.

[00:06:03] **Laura Friedman Williams:** So now I don't want that. Now I'm 51 and I feel pretty independent for the first time in my life.

[00:06:10] **Samantha Baines:** And what do you think it is about marriage? Cause you said you say to your daughter, you know, have the babies if you want it to, but you don't need that ring. That piece of paper. What is it about marriage that starts all those compromises? Do you think?

[00:06:23] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You're locked in together? And I think that the motivation to keep compromising and communicating well and really like supporting and respecting each other. It starts to wane. I have to be clear. I know that's not always true. And my marriage was very subtle. I'm talking about something that happened over 27 years.

[00:06:42] **Laura Friedman Williams:** This was not, you know, I think that we, we were very young when we got married, we were 25 and we definitely supported each other. We didn't have children. Our lives were relatively uncomplicated, but life's the things that you can't see. You have no idea how you're going to react to them. So you don't know what something feels like.

[00:06:58] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It's sort of like when people say.
[00:07:00] Oh, well, if my husband had an affair, I would do this. Well, you don't really know what you would do. You're not in the situation. Whatever I

thought I would do is not what I did. I think with marriage, particularly like as time goes on you've children, maybe we had three of them.

[00:07:15] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Your parents die, your friends get sick. You deal with illnesses, businesses go up and down. Finances go up and down. You're battling really significant challenges in life. And it's very hard to constantly be a team in that. And to always, also want to be on the same page. And he and I were very different people.

[00:07:34] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I think the things that we felt complimented each other, like he was much more outgoing and much more of a risk taker and an entrepreneur. And I was more of a sort of settled homemaker and a nurturer that complemented each other for a long time. That was really great when we were 25 and 30 and 35.

[00:07:51] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And now suddenly we're in our late forties. And we're not those people anymore.

[00:07:55] **Samantha Baines:** I can totally relate to that though. I think in my marriage, my [00:08:00] father passed away and it was the first kind of big thing that we had to deal with really as, as a couple. And I think for us that's what started the breakdown. So take me back to the breakup.

[00:08:14] **Samantha Baines:** Where were you in the world? How old were you, how did it sort of kick off? Did you make the decision? Was the decision made for you?

[00:08:23] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It was very much made for me. I was, we were in our late forties. I was 47. Our eldest daughter was a senior in high school, so we were getting ready to send her off to college.

[00:08:32] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And our youngest was six years old. So. You know, span of ages in the house. And we just bought and renovated like our dream apartment, you know, we've moved maybe eight times since like our daughter was born in the 21 years. I think we moved eight times and this was our forever home. We got it. We rebuilt it.

[00:08:47] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It was, you know, this beautiful apartment. And I really see that apartment. I don't want to blame the apartment. I think the thing is that you move into the apartment, that's your goal and aspiration, and then you realize it's not enough. It's not what you [00:09:00] actually wanted. For me, it was, it was enough for me.

[00:09:02] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It was what I wanted. It wasn't what he wanted. So I was really blindsided. We were living in New York city. I found out that he was having an affair. I found out on my own because he was acting very strange over a couple of maybe, maybe months. And he become very hostile and cold to me, which was not his nature.

[00:09:20] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And so I did a little snooping, which again is not my nature and I've had it. He was having an affair and for me, The knowledge of the affair, it was so earth shattering. I would always said that I believed if you had a one night stands, like for me sex, I believe that you can have sex without emotional connection.

[00:09:38] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And so he travels a ton for work. I wouldn't have been shocked to find out that he had had a one night stand along the way and it wouldn't have killed me, honestly. I mean, maybe it would have I, again, I, I just said a minute ago, you never know how you'll feel. I don't think it would have killed me. This was a different situation.

[00:09:53] **Laura Friedman Williams:** He had fallen in love with another woman. He was talking about leaving me. He had been with her for months.
[00:10:00] There was a level of deceit. There was a whole second life under the life that I understood. I was gutted by it. And we seperated immediately within 48 hours. He had moved out. That was because I'd asked him to and he thought we could rebuild.

[00:10:16] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You know, he was like, we're going to be better than ever. This is going to be the catalyst. Now I know I want to be with you. That's what he said to me- now. I, I know that I have had this. I know I want to be with you. I just want things to be different. You know, I want to go to burning man. I want to like travel the world.

[00:10:31] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I was like, I like our lives. We just built this dream home. I don't want to go to burning man. I I'm, you know, and I, I understand he was craving this adventure and this newness and he had a curiosity and I didn't have that, but for me, the minute I understood, I felt so betrayed. And I'm still wrapping my head.

[00:10:51] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I mean, three and a half years later, I'm still wrapping my head around. How does something like this happen under your nose and you not know about it, you know? And I'm still a very trusting person. I don't think that [00:11:00] any of my trust is really in people in general

has been eroded. So we, we tried for several months, we separated, we went to couples therapy.

[00:11:08] **Laura Friedman Williams:** We had to be in touch all the time because of the children. But it was, it was pretty clear to me. Like within a couple of months, it was clear to me that the marriage was over and it ultimately was the one, I was the one who had, who said, I want to get divorced. It was ultimately my decision, but he, he definitely drove that train,

[00:11:23] **Samantha Baines:** going to take you back to that moment where you discovered he was cheating and that he was in love with someone else.

[00:11:30] **Samantha Baines:** How do you think that manifested physically in you?

[00:11:34] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Oh, God. I mean, I felt sick obviously, you know, like full on body shakes, sweating, panic attack, nausea, sick. Like I had a flu, you know, for a few days. That's how it manifested itself in me physically. Um, and I think actually it was so shocking. Too much for me to take in.

[00:11:56] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I think the weight of it didn't settle. I actually remember, I [00:12:00] remember opening, um, WhatsApp on his phone and seeing the texts. And I remember the words, like I couldn't connect them. I was watching them on the page and they were sort of floating off the page to me. Like I remember being able to see certain words, you know, wife, soulmate, divorce, like all these words.

[00:12:18] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I closed it quickly. It was like, it was like seeing, it was like stumbling on like a dead body and then having to like race out of the room. That's how I felt. I was like, oh my God, I have to get out of here. This is, this is sickening. This is the most horrifying room I've ever been in. And I went to him immediately.

[00:12:35] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I turned the phone off and I went and he was sleeping and I woke him up and I said, I know everything. Like, explain this to me, please explain this most panicked and he was angry. He was angry at me. He was defensive. He was not prepared. He was ill-prepared for my, my response. He was not prepared for me to find out.

[00:12:52] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I think he was planning to tell me on his own terms.

[00:12:55] **Samantha Baines:** I think that's so interesting. What you said about certain words stuck out to you [00:13:00] because definitely in my life. There's certain things people have said to me or things my ex used to say to me, over and over again, and arguments that stay with me those sentences.

[00:13:11] **Samantha Baines:** Was there a sentence or a moment of that experience that stays with you when you have your pangs? Do you remember?

[00:13:20] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Yeah, it was the word soulmate that she was his soulmate. I mean, I don't know, you know, as a, as a woman, as a wife, as a person, I don't know how you get over. You know, spent 27 years with this man I've, you know, built a home, raised three amazing children.

[00:13:36] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I sacrificed and compromised a lot. And that word soulmate, like how do you give, how do you just give your love to another woman and come home and look at me? How could you do that for more than a day, let alone for months come home and look at me and what killed me about it. About that word soulmate also was that he'd been quite mean to me during that time, those months when he was having the affair, he was, and I get it, he was [00:14:00] angry, you know, I probably would have been too if I was off

[00:14:03] **Laura Friedman Williams:** having an affair and in love with somebody else and had to come home to him. I'm sure I would've hated him too. So I get how coming home to me, you know, making meatballs in the kitchen, you know, asking him to help me put the kids to bed or not put his dirty dishes in the sink or, you know, not drip, like coffee on the floor.

[00:14:20] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I get how that would make me seem like utter drudgery. I get it. But I felt it. I internalized it in a big way. I felt like something was really wrong with me. And then when I found out he was having an affair and had this soulmate, it was confirmed for me that there was something wrong with me because how, who would reject this?

[00:14:40] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You've known this woman. You've known her since she was 20. You've watched her do all these things. And yet somebody else's now above her. How could you feel anything other than utterly rejected and like totally broken?

[00:14:52] **Samantha Baines:** How did you deal with the feeling of rejection?

[00:14:56] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Well, that was, I mean, that was a [00:15:00] months long process and obviously it's, you know, it's still going in many ways, I'd say for about five, six months.

[00:15:05] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Um, how I dealt with it was like not very gracefully. I probably just cried around the clock, you know, and cried to my friends and cried alone. And I was, you know, I just, I don't even know how I got through that time. It was so heart-wrenching when he left. And then all of a sudden he just was not living with us anymore.

[00:15:23] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And all of a sudden, for the first time in my life, I'm 47 years old. I'm living as the only adult in my house. My kids have lost their father. Two of my kids weren't speaking to him. They were so angry by what had happened. They knew about what had happened. Pissed. So I was a single mom to two teenagers, and then I had this little girl who was heartbroken that her dad was gone overnight.

[00:15:44] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I dealt with it the best I could. I was there for them. I think often I felt like they felt like it happened to them. And I would sometimes have to be like, Hey guys, I'm hurt too. You know, this is hard for me to like, dad did cheat on me, not on you guys, but my goal was to be their mom [00:16:00] and to get them through it, like that was in the winter.

[00:16:03] **Laura Friedman Williams:** By summer. I think I started to feel like everybody was sort of getting their groove back and, um, I felt so dead inside. I felt so. Unlike the woman I had once been, I think I'd always seen myself as a very vibrant and outgoing and happy person. And none of those things were true about me anyway. And I thought like, is this what it's going to be now?

[00:16:27] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I'm 47 now. And this is what the rest of my life is going to look like. So I, I just saw like, something just turned in me. I really have to say I had this like revelation of like, I'm either going to die like this, or I'm going to learn how to live again. And I'm going to opt for life.

[00:16:44] **Samantha Baines:** Wow. I can totally relate to that.

[00:16:46] **Samantha Baines:** I think I had, obviously those really hard times. I wasn't married for as long as you are. I was only married for a couple of years, but I had that sort of crying, not getting up, not showering. My sister told me I smell. Then I had a shower. [00:17:00] Um, but like just terrible times. And then I sort of thought, well, fuck this.

[00:17:06] **Samantha Baines:** And like put some makeup on and put some brightly colored clothes on and went out and had a lot of sex was how I dealt with it. Cause I think, you know, my ex didn't cheat on me. That's not why we broke up, but I think any sort of breakup of a marriage is especially if the other person wants to break up with you, feels like a rejection as well, and feels like, well, why didn't this work?

[00:17:32] **Samantha Baines:** Why couldn't I make this work? Why wasn't I good enough for this to work? And so, yeah, my, my answer to that was having a lot of sex, which is very nice for awhile. Um, I'm still wearing bright clothes now, so that, so you said there that two of your children, and obviously you talk about it in your book, two of your children, wouldn't talk to your ex initially.

[00:17:57] **Samantha Baines:** How did you deal with that as a [00:18:00] mum, because I can imagine myself I'd feel quite pleased initially, that they were on my side, but then you've also got to negotiate that it's their dad.

[00:18:10] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Yeah. It was messy. You know, I felt like I didn't need them to fight for me, you know, because I had my own fight and their fight was sort of making it more complicated because it was making it about them and I needed it to be about me.

[00:18:22] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Like I needed them to sort of like calm down so I could be like, ok, this is my marriage and I really never had the luxury of doing that. I think with both of them, they are so different. You know, my, my older daughter confides in me about everything and she, you know, can articulate how she feels about like having a chipped nail.

[00:18:42] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You know, we could talk about that for hours at a time. She, she doesn't care about her nails, but, um, any minutiae she can talk about for hours. Whereas my son is like, Yeah, that's cool. You know, then we're fine. That's fine. So th th the ways that I dealt with them were very different. I think I, I would say I spent a lot of time lying on my [00:19:00] daughter's bed, listening to her, you know, rage and anger and tears.

[00:19:04] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And then I would sort of leave her room and go and coax my son to try to do some of this. And we had a few nights of me just saying to my son, like, you gotta let it out. You're just going to have to come out with it. And he was bottling things in. There were things that he had seen that he didn't want to tell me about.

[00:19:19] **Laura Friedman Williams:** He was really scared of hurting. Um, and I was like, I'm so hurt. It doesn't even matter anymore. Like just telling me everything I needed. It's worse for me to watch you suffer than to just have you come out with that. Let's just have it all out. So I think our communication, you know, was very open mine and the kids.

[00:19:37] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I definitely I heard my daughter screaming at my husband sometimes over the phone and thought, well, that's, I mean, when she's mad, forget it. You don't want to be in her path. So he deserves that for sure. Um, but it's funny. Cause there was one thing that happened that was a little bit of like this, this big fuck you gesture was that my son got a tattoo on his shoulder that said mom and [00:20:00] I was so touched by it.

[00:20:01] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Like he and I had never had a great relationship and we'd really like lean on each other and, and bond. So I was really touched by it and my daughter was like, um, do you think he got that because he loves you so much? Or he's just trying to say, fuck you to dad. And I was like, oh, I don't know. I didn't really think about it that way.

[00:20:18] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I'm going to go with, he loves me so much,

[00:20:23] **Laura Friedman Williams:** so sure. There was certain part of me that was like, you. Are such an asshole and you lost everything because you lost your children and you have no guarantee that you'll ever get them back and I'll always have them. So I may not have my dignity right now. I may not have my, you know, confidence, but I've got my kids over time.

[00:20:44] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It became different because it's really hard. Parent teenagers, especially completely by yourself. And so I started really pushing them, like, listen, dad made a mistake. He's human. What happened is between him and me, please talk to him. And then that had [00:21:00] the opposite effect. They were like, mom, we'll figure this out on our own time.

[00:21:03] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You're pushing us at him is actually making us just annoyed and crazy. Like, we don't need you to help us figure this out. So what I finally did and it took me a long time, I just modeled forgiveness for them. I forgave, I didn't forget but I forgave him. I tried to understand what had happened to lead him, to have this affair.

[00:21:24] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I modeled for them what that forgiveness look like. And eventually they forgave him. I think they're still working on it. You know, it's not, I wouldn't say like, everything is not like rosy and back to normal, but they have relationships again and, and it's still a work in progress.

[00:21:38] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. Well, I love that you modeled forgiveness for them.

[00:21:43] **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. I was in the [00:22:00] charts next to Michelle Obama and I was really thrilled about it. So it'd be nice to do that again.

[00:22:05] **Samantha Baines:** You could also join in the conversation on social media. We're on Twitter and Instagram at divorce pod. We have a website, the divorce, social.com. And you can also join us for our like 90s style divorced chat room experience over on Patreon. So just go to patreon.com/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 then.

[00:22:36] **Samantha Baines:** How did you cope with that sort of recovery then for yourself? Because obviously you had to be there a lot for your children, but for yourself, was there anything you did in that period where you're like, just getting over the kind of hurt and the crying all the time, how do you get back to you and get that confidence back?

[00:22:54] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Well, originally I didn't, and I think that was very much in keeping with my belief as a [00:23:00] mother, I had like a real martyrs view of motherhood, which is like, everything is for the children. You can't be happy unless your kids are happy. The kids always come first. You're only as happy as your least happy child.

[00:23:11] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You know, I ascribed to all of that. And, um, as a stay at home, mom, I really didn't have a lot going on besides my kids. I wasn't even really thinking about myself in that way. And then when I had this revelation, I basically, Sam did what you did. I went out and had tons of sex. I had so much. With so many different kinds of people that it became, it was, it was twofold.

[00:23:35] **Laura Friedman Williams:** One, it was fun and it was a distraction and it built my self esteem again. And two, it made me start caring about myself. And after I carved out the space for myself and I realized the greatest thing about sex is that nobody can be with me when I'm doing it, except for the partner I'm having sex with. And so I'm not worrying about who is getting fed or who is need to [00:24:00] dry ride somewhere or whatever.

[00:24:01] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It's just about me. This is my time and it made me feel so powerful. And so fulfilled. And so I just had more of it. I was like, I went through like my total, you know? Sow your wild oats kind of phase that I never had as a teenager because I settled down so young and I asked questions also. That was the only thing it was I was constantly asking questions of men, understand what they liked and what was interesting to them. Not because I wanted to please them, but because I was just curious, like, it's been so many years since I've been. You know, as the, as the saying goes, I got my groove back. Once I started doing that, I realized, oh my gosh, like this woman who is not a mother, who's not a wife has been so dormant for probably a couple of decades. And like she's alive again. It was so thrilling.

[00:24:47] **Samantha Baines:** That sounds great.

[00:24:48] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Yeah, it was, it was, it was pretty great.

[00:24:50] **Samantha Baines:** You say you are asking men lots of questions because you're interested. Were there any illuminating answers that you got or any [00:25:00] answers that have kind of stayed with you?

[00:25:01] **Laura Friedman Williams:** One was about hair in general. Body hair, I think has made a comeback, but in the men I asked loved no hair. I think it feels like cleaner and smoother and they can get in faster. There's less in their way.

[00:25:17] **Samantha Baines:** Wow.

[00:25:19] **Samantha Baines:** So less in their way

[00:25:21] **Laura Friedman Williams:** yeah. There's less, you know, there's, it's like right to the scalp. You just right there. A couple of men asked me if I would consider waxing everything off. And at first I was like, that is so rude.

[00:25:31] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You know, that's like, I'm not asking you to wax anything off, you know, your chest hair or whatever. But the truth is

that I actually found that men who groomed down there, it was much more lovely. I appreciated that too. Once I saw what's groom grooming looked like I really could never go back to ungroomed.

[00:25:49] **Laura Friedman Williams:** So in men. So that was one, one area. I,

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[00:25:53] **Samantha Baines:** Really?

[00:25:53] **Laura Friedman Williams:** yeah

[00:25:53] **Samantha Baines:** I think the balls look really weird. I think it all looks very weird when it's bare.

[00:25:58] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Oh, Sam, I don't look, I, I, [00:26:00] I keep my eyes closed. I I'm just talking about how it feels.

[00:26:03] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, okay. Right. Who doesn't feel a bit stubbly. And then if, if you're both stubbly, its like velcro.

[00:26:11] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You can't have stubble. You have to be on your game.

[00:26:14] **Samantha Baines:** It needs to be clean, shaven.

[00:26:17] **Laura Friedman Williams:** That's what I'm saying. I mean, do you have to go, you have to, you got to pick a lane. If you're going to go balls and be smooth and bald. If you're going to have hair, then be, you know, soft and you know, full. But I don't like, I don't want to get a full mouth of hair.

[00:26:29] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I'm sorry. I don't. It's it's and it depends on the man. Some men are hairier than others and women too. Um, so, okay. That was, that was one area.

[00:26:40] **Samantha Baines:** Well, just on that note, I actually had sex with a guy who was like, who's really into very full bushes. So he was like, throw it out, like, come on as much as possible.

[00:26:54] **Samantha Baines:** I, well, I don't have that much growth. Like it's sort of, well, it stays [00:27:00] in one area, but I, I, I grew it out. I was like, yeah. All right, sure. Why not? But he was like, so into it.

[00:27:10] **Laura Friedman Williams:** That's very funny. I think that's like a, it's like an interesting fetish, right? Like men who love to have sex with pregnant women or whatever, I guess is just like having a full Bush, you know, there's, I personally.

[00:27:22] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I think pubic kind of woman, I would like to see pubic hair. I mean, I just think it's part of a women's anatomy. And to me it's very like seventies and, you know, I grew up with those books, like, know, know , your body or our bodies ourselves and the joy of sex and those women had trees. Those were not even bushes, you know, back then they were like full

[00:27:43] **Laura Friedman Williams:** broad trees

[00:27:45] **Laura Friedman Williams:** literally.

[00:27:46] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And you know, I'm going to be honest, like I CA I'm Ashkenazi Jew. Like we we've got hair. So I'm if like your boyfriend had asked me to grow mine out, I think he would have been amazed by what I could do. Like I [00:28:00] could make his fantasies come true. I think I really could.

[00:28:05] **Samantha Baines:** But I've never, honestly, I've, I'm really interested in this.

[00:28:08] **Samantha Baines:** I've never had it all off. And I, and I spoke to someone, I think she was in her sixties and she said, you've got a keep a little bit, a little bit because when you get older, it needs a little bit of coverage.

[00:28:23] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Oh, interesting.

[00:28:25] **Samantha Baines:** How did it feel having it all off for

[00:28:29] **Samantha Baines:** you besides painful and humiliating?

[00:28:32] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Uh, it felt nice. Other than that, I mean, I basically, I went to like a place, you know, and I had it all, not wax, but sugared, which is like waxing. I had it. I was like, just take everything. Like, I don't want to, I don't want there to be one hair left. I want to see what this is. If I'm going to do it, I want to do it all. And it was objectively humiliating.

[00:28:49] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I mean, when you're like lying on your stomach and you're holding your ass cheeks open for somebody to get in there with a ball of waxy sugar, I don't know. Like

[00:28:57] **Samantha Baines:** I've had my bum hole waxed and its [00:29:00] like you're on all fours and they're , like, and spread your bum cheeks. And they're just having a normal conversation with you. You're like, I might just like poo in your face.

[00:29:08] **Samantha Baines:** Like if I farted right now, like anything could happen.

[00:29:14] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It's so weird. And I had those moments just wanting to be like, are you okay? Are you like, I know you do this all the time, but are you okay to,

[00:29:22] **Samantha Baines:** I'm sorry, I wouldn't. I was very British. I wanted to be, I'm sorry that you're just staring into my bum hole.

[00:29:31] **Samantha Baines:** I don't

[00:29:31] **Laura Friedman Williams:** know if I apologize like that. I actually just felt very defensive. Just so, you know, I know that I'm not responding very well to the pain right now, or the humiliation of this, but like I have given birth to three children naturally. So like, keep that in mind while you're looking down there. And like, I did it without crying and like, I know I'm crying now, but I'm not always like this.

[00:29:48] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I felt very like, just, I was so embarrassed. I was more, I was just humiliated. So I did it. And, um, the guy I was dating was like, oh, I can't wait to see it. I was like, you know what? Fuck you. You're [00:30:00] not even going to see it. I'm so mad at you that I did this, like for you that I don't even want you to see it.

[00:30:05] **Laura Friedman Williams:** But he did. And he you'd like loved it and I kind of loved it too, because it just like, it feels so clean and smooth. I do like the way it feels that being said, I, I can't, I couldn't go back. First of all, I'd have to go to a different place every time. There's no way I would return to the scene of the crime.

[00:30:23] **Samantha Baines:** Like a tour of wax parlours

[00:30:26] **Laura Friedman Williams:** pretty much. I live in New York. City's that's fine. There's one on every corner. I mean, I could make it work I'd last for a very long time before I'd run out of places. But I decided I couldn't do that again. So I, I just, I just actually bought this like \$10, like bikini trimmer. And, um, I just do it myself, like all the time and it keeps me, it's like, if you do it all the time, it's takes a second and it's not painful or really humiliating.

[00:30:49] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I mean, I definitely know my parts better than I have ever known them before. Cause I've gotten very up close and personal, trying to get every last hair every once in a while I'm told I've skipped a section. Um, so, you know, [00:31:00] But I'm doing okay and I'm not humiliated or in pain. Wow.

[00:31:04] **Samantha Baines:** So that was one of the things you learned from asking men.

[00:31:08] **Laura Friedman Williams:** That was one, the other big thing, the category that I really tried to delve into was oral sex. So what I found really fascinating in every man that I was with was their desire and almost. For oral sex to be giving it to, they love to get between women's legs. I mean, every man I know, asked me pretty much, if he could go down on me and most of them asked, which was interesting to me, like if it was okay with me, I guess a lot of women.

[00:31:35] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Like it. So I thought it was nice that they asked. I like it. So it was fine with me.

[00:31:39] **Samantha Baines:** That literally sounds like the dream. Like, can you send them all over here? Because I feel like guys in the UK, not the same.

[00:31:47] **Laura Friedman Williams:** They don't ask?

[00:31:48] **Samantha Baines:** They don't ask and they don't do

[00:31:51] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I'm actually I'm shocked.

[00:31:52] **Samantha Baines:** Well, obviously there's lots of different people, but the majority of guys that I've had sex with have not been like, [00:32:00] can I

[00:32:00] **Samantha Baines:** go down on you?

[00:32:01] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I feel like I need to take a research trip.

[00:32:02] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah. They're like, can you suck my Dick, but not, can I go down

[00:32:07] **Samantha Baines:** on you?

[00:32:08] **Laura Friedman Williams:** In fact, I had this really funny experience. Like when I first started going online, I went on like Tinder and I was having this really nice chat with this guy.

[00:32:16] **Laura Friedman Williams:** He was like coaching his kid's soccer team who was like, all super sweet. Like I'll text you when I'm back from, you know, the soccer fields and we made a date to get together. And he said, okay, there's one thing I need to tell you, uh, before we go out and this is really important to me, and it may be deal breaker for you, but my, my wife, um, you know, for years I was married to her and she didn't let me go down on her.

[00:32:35] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And so now it's like a requirement. Like I have to be able to, I have to know that I can go down on a woman for like hours at a time if I want to, but for as long as I need to.

[00:32:44] **Samantha Baines:** Oh, I need to meet this man.

[00:32:50] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Well, I mean, I can definitely connect you. The thing is I was like, no, thank you. Because hours?! It felt a little bit to me like, um, this, you have like an oral [00:33:00] fetish, you know? Cause I was thinking like, I mean, it's one thing to ask me if I'm open to oral sex. Um, it's another thing to assume that I'm going to have sex with you and that I'm going to want you to go down on me and that it's going to be okay for hours at a time.

[00:33:12] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I mean, I'd probably fall asleep, honestly. I can't, I can't sustain anything that long.

[00:33:17] **Samantha Baines:** Well, hopefully he'd be skilled enough that you wouldn't fall asleep,

[00:33:22] **Laura Friedman Williams:** but I felt like he was very inexperienced. Remember he was newly divorced and his wife never let him, so it was like, are you practicing on me? So I said, no.

[00:33:29] **Laura Friedman Williams:** So I think I'm trying to remember if there was anything else besides pubic hair and oral sex. Those were the two. Those were the two big categories of inquiry

[00:33:37] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I had.

[00:33:38] **Samantha Baines:** I love this. We, I feel like we've all learned something here. Take forward into our sex lives. I might try, I might try and get taken it all off. Pubic hair.

[00:33:48] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Going to grow that trust back in like five minutes.

[00:33:52] **Samantha Baines:** But its so itchy, like its itchy normally when it grows back.

[00:33:57] **Laura Friedman Williams:** No, because you're not shaving it. You know, if you, if [00:34:00] you do it, like if you get these Clippers, um, they're not, they're like, it's like a bikini trimmer now. It's not even that fancy. No, no, no. It's not even.

[00:34:10] **Laura Friedman Williams:** It's like literally like a \$10, like battery operated, bikini trimmer, and it trims it down to the root, but not under the root. So when it's growing back, it's not pushing through the skin. That's what makes it itchy right.

[00:34:22] **Samantha Baines:** Yeah

[00:34:22] **Laura Friedman Williams:** which is why I say I have to do it every day. Like where every few days, and it won't be itchy.

[00:34:27] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I promise it wont be itchy. That would be a deal breaker for me.

[00:34:29] **Samantha Baines:** This is going to change my life. So, um, we should talk about your book cause I reading it. It's hilarious and very moreish. Um, I just sit down, I get carried away. It's great. Um, and you say in your book that you started writing it because you were having all these lovely sexual times and your friends were like, you have to write this down.

[00:34:51] **Samantha Baines:** Go and write this down. How did you change from kind of being forced to write it by your friends, to thinking, gee, you know what, this can be a [00:35:00] book and this could help people.

[00:35:02] **Laura Friedman Williams:** That's a good question because it definitely was like, you know, uh, the grieving process, a process, I think in the beginning, friends were, you know, like I've always liked to write, but just not had anything.

[00:35:15] **Laura Friedman Williams:** To write about. So the writing that I did was, you know, like helping friends write speeches for events, or, you know, their husband's 50th birthday party I'd write the toast or bar mitzvah speech or whatever. So yeah, the friends were like, these stories are so funny, you know, about dogs and bedrooms and, you know, men who lose their condoms inside of you, all, all kinds of things.

[00:35:35] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And so I did start writing them down just anecdotally and, um, and then I sent pages to a couple of girlfriends of mine. I used to work in publishing like 20 years ago before I stopped working. Um, so I still had a couple of friends that I'd kept in publishing and I sent it and was like, what do you think this is probably nothing.

[00:35:51] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Right. And they were like, Ooh, it's actually something you should keep writing it down. And so I did, I just kind of kept going until I had, and I sort of, I [00:36:00] knew at the outset that I wanted to number the men, you know, that it would become less important to me. Who the man was then the fact that like, okay, this was number one.

[00:36:09] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You're the first man. This was my experience of being with the first man, your number twos, my experience now that I've had the first man. Okay. Now by number eight, I'm pretty experienced to know what I like. And don't like, and there were some bumps along the way. So I guess over time, I just sort of kept writing more and more.

[00:36:25] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And one of my friends who had sent it to she's now she worked as an editor for 20 years and she's now an agent. And she said, I think you should try writing the center proposal and see what you can do with that. See if you can sell it. And I did, I started writing it and then a couple of things happened, one.

[00:36:39] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I realized I had to be a little bit more honest, like it wasn't all fun and games. And I felt that to present yet, like sex in

the city part, two girls gone wild, you know, 50 year old woman finds her mojo and sleeps with half of Manhattan. That was part of the story. And it was a really fun part of the story is some, a little more salacious.

[00:36:59] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Right. [00:37:00] But it wasn't the truth. The truth was that I was still in pain that I could have sex with. And be thrilled and still wake up and feel like, oh my God, my marriage is over. So I felt it was very important to write a book that was well-rounded. And so some parts of it were extraordinarily painful for me to write, because I talk about the end of my marriage and about acknowledging and about my kid's pain and about trying to find myself even in the pain.

[00:37:26] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And then when it was like, sort of a nice proposal and ready to go, and I'd been working on it for like a year. And my agent was like, okay, I'm going to send it out. I was like, yeah, no, we're not sending this out. I've got children, I've got parents, I've got friends. Like, nobody needs to know what I've been up to in my private life.

[00:37:42] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Like this is, I know what I look like to people. I've been like the ultimate mom, you know, PTA president at every school and like, no, no-one need to know this. So I asked her not to send it out. I decided I wouldn't do it after all that it would just be like a project that I knew that I did. And [00:38:00] that was like an arrest in my computer.

[00:38:02] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I felt really like sad for myself when I made that decision, because I thought, wow, this is like the woman that I'd been all those years where I felt sort of like boxed in by these rules. That I had created. So I just kind of ripped the bandaid off with a lot of encouragement from friends and my mother, I ripped it off and I, and I decided to go for it and expose myself.

[00:38:22] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I'm glad I did, because I think there's nothing I'm writing about that is anything to be ashamed of for myself or for anybody else. And I think that I realized and writing all the fun stuff, but not the other. There was still so much shame involved in saying I own who I am. And I feel now I own who I am.

[00:38:42] **Laura Friedman Williams:** This is who I am. I am. I am a woman. I am a wife, not an ex-wife. I'm sorry. I'm an ex-wife. I am a mother, most importantly. And I'm also a woman with a private life. It's not so private anymore. I mean, everybody knows about it, but you know, they're not in the

bedroom with me. So there's that, there's a little, little level [00:39:00] of privacy.

[00:39:00] **Samantha Baines:** I love that. Cause I'm an oversharer. And I come from background of stand-up comedy. So my life has literally always been on stage. And I think a lot of times people say to me like, oh my God, how can you share all that? And I think there's a line. Like I don't share absolutely everything, but just like you said, and what I'm really enjoying about your book is you share the hard times as well as the sexy, great times, which definitely makes for a more rounded read and also.

[00:39:29] **Samantha Baines:** You can relate to, well, I can relate to so much of it. And I think that's so important because we want to like live vicariously through the fun, sexy stories if they haven't happened to us. But then equally, you know, we can see that it may be, comes from a place of, of pain or whatever, kind of fueled that.

[00:39:48] **Samantha Baines:** And I think that's, what's really important. And that's what I wanted this podcast to be as well is like, yeah, I'm a comedian. But we don't just tell the kind of silly fun [00:40:00] stuff. We also talk about the hardest stuff because that's life, isn't it, the ups and downs.

[00:40:05] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I love that. And I appreciate that. And those are the podcasts I listened to.

[00:40:08] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I'm an avid podcast listener and I listened to yours. Before being guests on it, which is nice. It's always like amazing to be a guest on a podcast that you enjoy. And there was one episode recently that you did with a woman who talked a lot about sex and about finding her, you know, how, how she really did not was a very asexual person in her marriage and became very sexual afterwards.

[00:40:27] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I really related to so much of that. I mean, I relate to a lot of what people say on, on your show and other shows. And then I learn also, and I think the point is like, we're human we're well-rounded right. Like nothing is, I understand something now in my life, which is that like black and white isn't doesn't exist.

[00:40:44] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Like everything is shades of grey, you everything. And because you feel one way, one minute doesn't mean you won't feel the opposite in five minutes. So I think. A lot of women, what they don't

understand if they're not divorced is that divorce is extraordinarily painful. Um, it's not like, just because so many women do and men, [00:41:00] men too.

[00:41:00] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I want to say that just because so many people do it, doesn't make it. Okay. It's a horrible thing to go through. It's really, gut-wrenching, it's really forces you to reinvent yourself. And if that's not something you wanted to do, that's going to be a tough process. But I think it's important for women to see that it's totally possible and doable and it's not going to all be fun and games.

[00:41:19] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I never want. Be in front of people and act like this is easy or like, okay, you'll just go out and you'll meet a guy. Like, it'll be fine. Dress up, put on a thong, use the trimmer I told you about, you know, put on some body oil, go out and own it because that's like a part of the story. And the other part is it's going to be really hard.

[00:41:37] **Laura Friedman Williams:** You're going to feel really vulnerable. You might be embarrassed. You know, all of those things are true too. So I just felt it was, it was very important to me in my book to be authentic. And, and to say authentically that, you know, there's going to be really embarrassing moments and really thrilling. And really sad moments and joyful moments.

[00:41:57] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And like, we just, you know, have to represent that for each [00:42:00] other.

[00:42:00] **Samantha Baines:** Definitely. I love that, well, where can people buy your book and what's it called?

[00:42:05] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Okay. It's called Available, a memoir of sex and dating after a marriage ends. It is available in England, in the bookstores everywhere it's coming out in the U S.

[00:42:17] **Laura Friedman Williams:** On September 14th. So it probably by the time this podcast is out, it'll already be available. There's also an audio version and I did record the audio. So if you, if you haven't gotten sick of my voice yet and want to hear the audio, it's, uh, it does exist. And I'm on social media, Instagram and Twitter, and medium.

[00:42:36] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And I actually really like hearing from people because it makes me happy to hear that, you know, someone's read my book and it's made them feel hopeful or that they related to it or whatever. So people want to DM me , reach out to me. I'm always happy to hear from them,

[00:42:48] **Samantha Baines:** I love that you voiced it yourself as well.

[00:42:50] **Samantha Baines:** I have two children's books, slightly different. I got to voice one of them, myself, and it was the most fun experience. And also, did you find that you'd forgotten what you'd [00:43:00] written?

[00:43:00] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Um, yeah, I mean, there were times, and especially like I do explore a little bit how I was when I was having sex with a lot of men that I was learning this new language of sex and of like what men call, but like the first time a man said pussy to me, I started laughing.

[00:43:15] **Laura Friedman Williams:** I just couldn't believe people actually talk about it. Now. It just rolls off my tongue. But when I was recording the book, there were like lots of moments from using words like pussy or cock or blowjobs or whatever. And I've got two men on the headset with me. Um, you know, the producer. And I, at one point I said to one of them, this lovely British man, like, um, you know, sometimes this is a little, little awkward for me, you know, knowing you're in the headset, he goes, well, I did wonder about that, Laura.

[00:43:41] **Laura Friedman Williams:** And, um, and we got a good chuckle out of that. So yeah, it was, it was pretty funny when I was reading it, I was like, oh my God, I wrote that. Like, why do I always feel the need to say all these things? Why don't we, why don't we just put this all out there all the time? So, yeah, it was, um, sometimes pleasant surprises, and sometimes like eek, its too late

[00:43:57] **Samantha Baines:** Love that. Well, I can't wait to listen to it. Um, [00:44:00] thank you so much. This has been so lovely.

[00:44:03] **Laura Friedman Williams:** Yes, lots of , lots of laughs. . So thank you for that. I needed that.

[00:44:06] **Samantha Baines:** Well, thank you for providing them. I can't wait to shave my bits now. Not shave use that. special machine trim, trim them.