

Ep #126: In The Dog House



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sonia Wright

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Welcome to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast*, the only show that combines a fun personality, medical knowledge, sexual counseling, and life coaching together. To create unique sex coaching that helps busy women awaken their libidos, address intimacy issues, and learn how to express their sexuality for the rest of their days. Here is your host, certified life coach and sexual counselor, Dr. Sonia Wright.

Hello, hello, hello, Diamonds, it's Dr. Sonia. And I am here this week with Dr. Kimmery and we are in February now. And I know everybody is talking about Valentine's Day and it's coming up pretty soon. And I just wanted to talk to you all about the other side of Valentine's Day, when things are not necessarily going well when you're actually having an argument. So this week's podcast is about being in the dog house. And so let me give a little context to this and Dr. Kimmery can chime in if she likes too.

We were out at dinner one evening and I said things that I should not have said. I admit it, I am not perfect here. I am just a human being. And I apologized relatively quickly for saying it and Dr. Kimmery was processing what I was saying. And while she was processing what I was saying and how to give a response, I was in my own mind telling myself certain things. And so this is where when we're talking about the way to process and think about things. So I already knew I was in the dog house. And I'm going to call the title of this podcast, In the Dog House.

Because I was so deep in the dog house, I was like I'm in the back tunnel of the dog house. I'm not even near the door where I can kind of wag my tail and get out. I was like, "Oh dear." And so it didn't necessarily go well and we got home because we were out at a restaurant, we got home and I was just mad by this time because I had been telling myself certain things. So there's where your thoughts are really important. And I was pissed up and upset.

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I knew that I had done wrong and I did apologize for it but at the same time, I knew that it was going to take some time to get back to the equilibrium in our relationship. And so I decided, you know what, this is how thinking can really mess you up. Now I'm laughing about it but at the time I was like, you know what, I'm in the dog house, I'm not getting out of here, I'm just going to stay here. It wasn't Dr. Kimmerly was keeping me in the dog house, I made a decision that I was just going to stay in the dog house.

I'm like, I'm in here, I did wrong but fucking, hey, I'm not getting out of this dog house because I'm going to be right back here again at some point in time. Let me just stay in the dog house. No, this dog made no kind of sense but at the time it made some really good sense which is you know what, this is a lot of work. And if I just stay in the dog house and chew on my dog house bone I wouldn't be even right now talking about it weeks later, it just sounds ridiculous.

But at the time I was like, "Hey, that's a great idea. I'm in the dog house I'm just going to stay here in this motherfucking dog house. I'm going to enjoy myself. I'm going to get me a bone. I'm going to get me a bowl of water and whatever other treats I need. I'm going to get a nice rug. I'm going to stay in this dog house. I'm done. I'm done. I'm staying in this dog house. I'm going to be happy."

Kimmerly: Oh, my goodness.

Sonia: And so I'm not the type of person that won't talk to somebody, that's not who I am. But when I'm very upset and angry, I also don't want to say something that's going to cause more harm than good. And actually, I want to talk to you Dr. Kimmerly about the way different people fight before we get into the concept of fair fighting. There are some people, and I've been in different relationships and I know you have been where they're going for the jugular vein, right?

Kimmerly: Yeah.

Sonia: They get every damn thing that has ever happened or things that you didn't even know had happened is that they bring out. And their goal is

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to, I don't know, mortally or fatally wound you so that they can win the argument but do they really win?

Kimberly: I mean there's no winning, that's the whole point. The goal is not to win an argument because when one person is trying to win an argument the other person is trying to win an argument. Then there's a power struggle and the argument is perpetual. You may stop talking but the argument is still there and there's still that tension and all that stuff. And so often people think the goal is to win. There is no win. There's no point in trying to do that because it continues to sever the connection you have in your relationship and it makes no sense.

Sonia: Yeah. So maybe somebody has 'won the argument' but what does your relationship look like? And so that thing is in the ICU on life support or maybe not even. Maybe the other person's like, "Fine, you want to win, go ahead and win. And I don't even care no more." So yeah, so, you definitely, need to be aware of that and yeah, so there are different things that come out and I've been with different people. I actually, was in a relationship with one person that when they fought they fought really nasty. And I hadn't experienced that before.

And honestly, the relationship was good in so many ways but the fighting was like, "No, I'm not here for this type of fighting and this is not what I'm willing to put up with after I've had discussions with this person as to how I would like to engage in discussions when we don't agree about something and how that actually, turned out." And so even though there is so much of that relationship that was great, yeah, I actually ended the relationship because of the very fact that they needed to win and go for the jugular. And I was like, "No."

No, in fact, they went for the carotid, the fastest way to kill a person. Things I had never seen or heard before. I was like, "Yeah. No, not what I want at all." So yeah, so when you think you might have won an argument really be aware of what damage may be occurring here. Yeah. And then there are people that have anger issues. And when they're having arguments they're

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not even in control. Maybe they're in control physically and they're not hitting anybody but emotionally they're just yelling and screaming.

And maybe it's triggered something from the past, they don't exactly know what's going on. But at the same time if they're not in control and they're just kind of a raging type of person that's not how to be in an argument either. So going back to being in the dog house. Luckily we both had come from a perspective that we're going to be respectful and we're going to sort this out.

So while I was there in my mind saying, "I'm just going to stay in this dog house, why get out? It's not that bad of a place to be." That made no kind of sense but at the time I was like, "This is an excellent idea." So what were your thoughts during that time?

Kimmy: Well, let me say this. At dinner when you said the thing that was hard, I paused because I didn't want to react. And that's something that I've learned over time because I come from a very conflict high, very volatile family where if you made a mistake it was the end of the world literally and you heard about it. And everybody in the family heard about it and it was like the walk of shame type of thing, every time you showed up at a family event.

And so I had made a commitment to myself that I'd never be in a relationship where I would lose control or allow anyone else to speak to me in those types of ways as well. And so the great thing is that we have cultivated a culture of respect in our relationship. And that's something that I really do appreciate. And so when I was silent at dinner I wasn't silent because I didn't want to talk. I was silent because I wanted to say things in a way that was still respectful but also express my feelings about what had happened.

And so it's interesting because the interpretations of the silence look different. And so from what you described to me your interpretation of the silence was that I just left emotionally. And you literally are...

Sonia: You're going to go there, okay?

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Kimmery: Yeah, I am. I am going to go there because this is a part of this. You literally left me at the table because in your mind I had left you first and I didn't. And so one of the things that's really important is when we're having trouble communicating about what's going on is to really ask questions. Are you here? Or what's going on in your mind right now? Because I know that you felt some type of way about hurting me. And I appreciate that you felt some type of way about that because I know that's not something that you ever want to do.

We just have to make sure that we communicate and understand what each person is doing and processing in their mind. And so yeah, so, I think that that's something that we all have to contend with. How do we want our relationship to be with our partner? What do we want our communication to look like because it's not going to always be sunshine and rainbows and all that kind of stuff? We're going to have conflict, that's real life. When you have two people coming together they have differences in ways of thinking about things and the ways that they respond to things.

And so you have to know how you're going to handle that ahead of time and what types of ways, that you're going to continue the process of reconciliation. And so that was my idea.

Sonia: Can I interject something here?

Kimmery: Yeah.

Sonia: Because I think it's important, I think you brought up something which is we all have our triggers as well. The things that happened in our childhood or in our family background. I have abandonment stuff. So when somebody, well, now I have a better understanding of processing. But my thing was, and it was the silence before either I was beat or I was yelled at or something like that. And so my mind is time to get the fuck out of here while you still can, while you're still alive. So yeah, it triggers different things in different people.

So you're coming from your background and because of that, you're like I'm going to thoughtfully make decisions how I want to say something. I'm

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coming from my background which is there's silence before the tsunami comes, either violence or verbal abuse. And so that background is kind of better to get out of there. My whole thing in my childhood was to go into small spaces and to hide type of thing. So I essentially did that. I was like, "Time to go to the car." So I went to my small dark space that is my safe place.

So I think when we're talking about relationships that we also need to understand what our partner has dealt with in the past. And how they may interpret what actions or what we're saying or not saying. So yeah, I think that that's good that we kind of explained to each other, "Hey, this is kind of how it would go down in my family of origin", if something happened, right?

Kimmery: Yeah, for sure. And things can escalate very quickly when emotions are involved and people are feeling offended and they're being triggered. Because honestly a lot of times people experience a trigger and they come out fighting and not necessarily the way we are talking about. Just kind of, I'm not going to be pushed into a corner. I might have hurt you but here's x, y, z type of thing and a, b and c. And the way that this presents it is very hurtful. And sometimes a person's history is used against them.

So the person may know that their partner doesn't respond well to criticism or being yelled at or called names and so they do it anyway to prevent any type of conflict from ensuing. And they also can try and do that so that they can get the 'upper hand' in the communication aspect of things which could cause the partner in any other situations that come up to not say anything to avoid. Because they don't want to deal with the way that their partner's going to respond to things.

And what kind of relationship is that where there's no freedom to talk about what has happened, no freedom to express your feelings and no freedom to really be communicative? Because think about this, if you can't talk to somebody about how you felt about a situation, it's very likely you're not going to really talk to them at all because you can't selectively decide what

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you're going to feel and what you're not going to feel. You shut down emotion, you shut them all down.

Sonia: So how do or how does a couple or more than two in a relationship, how do they do this work to fight fairly? I mean what does that look like?

Kimmery: Yeah. So there is this book called *Fighting for Your Marriage* and it's by Markman, Stanley and Blumberg. And they have some real ground rules for literally fighting fair. And they have these different patterns that they talk about for relationships that can harm their relationships. And so with the fair fighting rules, I'll just name a few of them.

One is if you have a conflict that you need to discuss further if your partner is one who takes time to think and they need some time to process and internalize what happened. You set a time that is convenient for both of you to sit down and have that conversation. You make sure that you're alone, there are no people around. And so if we were in the restaurant and started a yelling match in the restaurant, it would have been embarrassing for both of us because we live in this community. And we are recognizable in this community in some ways.

Sonia: Lesbians, Black, you know those Black lesbians, yeah.

Kimmery: The one with the grey hair and the one with the short hair. Yeah, we're recognizable in this community. And so that would have been embarrassing for both of us and out of character for both of us for one. And then not great at all. And then you explain your feelings without accusing people or blaming anyone. And so when we did have the conflict I did say, "I felt this when you said that and it really is hard for me to believe that that is what you would say about that. And it was hurtful to me that you would say that about that."

And so I didn't accuse you of, "You're wrong for that shit." I didn't do that. I just spoke plainly what I was feeling about what had been said. And so you do that and I only said it once. You only express your feelings one time unless the person asks for clarification. I didn't need to keep repeating that over and over and over again beating you over the head with it. I just

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needed to state it and let it be. And so one thing too is to try and be open to the other person's feelings. I mean that's one of the most important things. And treat the person as you want them to treat you.

I was gentle and fair in my approach, at least that's from my assessment. What do you think about that, Dr. Wright?

Sonia: Yeah, I was fine with your assessment of everything and how the conversation went and everything like that. I was just like, "You know, this relationship stuff is a lot of work." And I didn't get my ass back in trouble [crosstalk], that's who I am. I'll stay here. I'm like, "You know what."

Kimmery: Yeah. And the thing is, is the situation, you both, you can't fight to win. That's one of the rules I have. You literally cannot fight to win and no hitting below the belt. You don't use people's pain to hurt them in a moment of vulnerability. That's just not right.

Sonia: Yeah. And I'm not that type of person. So actually when we 'fight' and half the time doesn't even look like fighting because we just rationally talk it through pretty logically like, "Oh, okay, alright."

Kimmery: Yeah. And I've got some feelings about that and I'm going to sit over here and think about those feelings and I'm going to be back.

Sonia: Yeah, that's usually how it goes. I'll usually just say, "Okay, I've got something going on so give me a little while and then I'll come back and talk."

Kimmery: Yeah. And that comes with time. And people are like, "You don't do that." Yes, we do. And that's why we can have such a good relationship and we have a lot of fun because we trust each other even when things aren't going great. And that's a part of it, it's all connected. You can't have conflict without having peace and joy. And the way that you do conflict will contribute largely to your peace and joy and the way that you experience that too.

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And a thing that people don't understand, I can't generalize but I think one of the things that people struggle with is that they don't have to finish the conversation. If it gets too difficult, if it gets too hard, take a break. Step away from it but agree to a time when you can come back to it. Don't just let it sit but take a break, it's okay to do that. You don't have to argue all night and try to figure out something.

Sonia: Yeah, if you need assistance from a counsellor or something like that because it's just an issue that you two have been going back or more, have been going back and forth on for a long time. Then go get some counselling, therapy, some marriage guidance if you need it, or relationship guidance, in whatever way you need that to be. You don't necessarily have to solve it all because you may not have all the tools, right?

Kimmery: Right. And I mean that's something that, and I'm just going to put it out here. You can scold me later if you want but that's something that you and I have done when we've hit places where it's not necessarily an impasse but it's hard for us to explain where we've been and what we need. And we have our individual people that we've worked with and we just commence on them and have them help explain what we can't explain.

Sonia: Yeah. I think because we've both come from a very traumatic childhood and past, it's going to impact things in future. Even if we've spent years processing and getting through it and getting to a place where we're pretty healthy emotionally and physically. But there are still sometimes where things get triggered or sometimes where it shows up and it can very much impact the relationships, the here-and-now relationships.

And so when those times come it's good to have a third person and can be like, "Hey, when this happens it's triggering this for them and this is why they may not be able to articulate or say what's happening at this moment. But these are certain insights to be aware of." So yes, definitely.

Kimmery: Yeah. And one thing that plays really into this is attachment styles. And you can read up on those and have a bigger understanding of what those are as well. And that's something, that's really important as well

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because the main attachment style and the way that people, their style of relating is based on the way that they developed attachment as a child to their primary caregivers. And so that's something to really, really look out for. And people don't understand either that after our fight she went to bed. She came home and went to bed.

I gave her some space. I didn't go in right away. It was kind of late still. So it was bedtime. But I gave her some space and let her do what she do because I know her. And she needed that time to just fall asleep and not have to worry about me being there. And so I went to bed after a while and then the next morning she got up early because she had to do some work. And I woke up and got some coffee because I needed to have coffee before I could function and really be able to think. And I got my coffee and I went downstairs to where she was working.

Sonia: But before you did that you had a thought process that went on.

Kimmery: What did I think? What did I say?

Sonia: Well, I think you were like, "Okay." I think in your mind you do it so quickly but this is what I'm thinking that you thought and you can tell me differently which is, "What do you want this overall outcome to be? What are the important aspects here? And what do we want? Do we want our relationship to be healthy? Do we want to be communicating back at our baseline?"

So what needs to happen in this conversation where I can still get my point across but at the same time make sure there's a safe environment so that she feels comfortable enough getting back to where we normally are?

Kimmery: That is very true, yeah. My thought was different. It was that wrapped up in a different way. I said, "Let me get my coffee and go down here and talk to her because I'm good. I said what I needed to say. She apologized. I just needed my time to process through that. So I'm okay. So let me go down and see what I need to do to make sure she feels that she's okay and being respected."

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Sonia: And I'm downstairs going like, "I'm still in this dog house and I am fine here. This dog house is good." But as you talk about it, it reminds me of my attachment style. My attachment style is if anything went down with conflict to get the heck out of there and stay away. And in terms of attachment style, I should say, more of the avoidant attachment style. I focus on logic and stay away from emotion and stay away from my primary care provider when they were not in the best mood.

But that attachment style came out again even though I'm 50-something years old. It's like, got to stay safe. But it looks different. The action is still the same but now I'm like, "I'm in that dog house. I think I'll just stay here." And I'm laughing at myself. I'm chewing on my annoyance bone.

Kimmery: And the crazy thing about it is, is that if we had talked she would know that it was over. I was good.

Sonia: Right. But you're not the type of person that usually needs a lot of downtime to process in the moment. So because of our attachment styles, you're usually wanting to talk relatively quickly about it. The fact that you did not want to talk for a while and there was silence, that's what's like, something's very different here. And I knew I was wrong and I did apologize. But it was like wrong, wrong. And I was like, "This is wrong, wrong." That level of my wrongness and so that pushed me and that triggered survival type of things and that pushed me in my place.

Kimmery: And another thing too to talk about this is, using our example is reconciliation doesn't look like going back down and bashing somebody over the head with the same thing. I didn't come down and say, "Now, remember what you said yesterday." No, I went down and I said, "I love you."

Sonia: I was like, "Damn it. I was having fun in this dog house over here. Why have you got to be so nice about this?"

Kimmery: Because I love you and that's the thing. And that's what you come back to. It's what you come back to is the love and is the respect. If you love your partner and you know them, you know what they need. They

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need to know that they still are loved and accepted and cared for even after they've made a mistake. That's what you make sure they understand and that's a part of what these rules are. And I don't like the word 'rules' but they're just ways of handling.

Sonia: A guideline, a suggestion.

Kimmery: Guidelines, yeah, and suggestions too because sometimes they don't work for everybody but I think that is really important to validate where everybody is and understand that, yeah, I can see how this would trigger some of your trauma that you've experienced because I know you. And being willing to listen to your pain because it caused you pain to cause me pain. And so being willing to listen to that is something that was important for me too because I knew that that was also going to come. And so we just have to be ready to handle conflict as respectful people.

Sonia: Yeah. I think also I have a belief that it's not the end of anything. It's just about a miscommunication and for the most part if you're able to talk about the situation in a respectful way with love being the primary focus. And creating a safe space for vulnerability to be able to thrive then you kind of get back to baseline.

Kimmery: That is exactly right and it's just as you said, if it comes to a point where you aren't able to get back to baseline the way that you need to you should seek out help. And be willing to say together, "Hey, this isn't working. Let's do what we need to do because I want us to stay together and be in a healthy and loving partnership." And so yeah, I mean I feel like we handled that pretty well.

Sonia: Yeah, I think we did, it brought us closer together.

Kimmery: It actually did, yeah.

Sonia: Yeah. So I think conflict doesn't necessarily have to pull you two apart, two or more. But at the same time, it can actually be the catalyst to bring you closer because you have a better understanding of boundaries, what's acceptable and what's not acceptable. And you also were like, "We

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were able to come back out of this. We're okay and we've got some pretty good skillsets there." And we're able to say what needs to be said in a respectful manner. So I would have to say love and respect are definitely and it's okay to take time and space.

Maybe tell the person that you need the time and space but those are kind of key ingredients. So as we are getting to Valentine's Day I think that the gift that Dr. Sonia and Dr. Kimmerly would like to give you is the fair fighting aspect of things and how over this next year of the Valentine's love you also get to discuss what is on your mind and have disagreements and know that it's okay.

And in some ways that that is even a better gift than a box of chocolates or a nice dinner date on Valentine's Day, it's the security of knowing that you're loved and you're in a relationship where you can respectfully disagree with each other and have conversation and it can be okay.

Kimmerly: Yes, definitely. And can I add one more thing?

Sonia: Of course.

Kimmerly: So another thing that I think would be important as well and I've said a lot of important things because I know I preface everything with that because they are important. But another thing I think to be considerate of too is letting the little things build up, not saying something because, well, that's fine. It's a little bit of an annoyance but everything's fine and then the thing happens again. And then the thing happens again. And then the thing that pushes you over the edge is something that really is very small.

But because you haven't offloaded those small things, that makes one large thing and causes things to spill over and can explode. And so just being willing to have those conversations about the little things and not necessarily meaning you've got to nitpick or anything like that. Yeah, you pick and choose but I think it's important that if it's something that is bothering you, that's annoying you and that could potentially lead to a bigger conflict it is something you need to talk about.

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If there's more than one person involved in the relationship even if there are just two but if there are more than two people involved in a relationship, it's going to be important for you to have couples meetings or relationship meetings or partner meetings. Then this is especially true if you have partners who are not as open about how they're feeling and what's going on.

Sonia: Yeah. And it doesn't even need to be romantic partners. If you've got siblings and you all need to sit down and talk about things. If you have parents and whatever it is, you need to talk to three children because they're driving you crazy. But I'm smiling when you say don't let these little annoyances pile up because I always know when a little annoyance is going on with you because you say, "It's fine." It's like someone saying, "It's fucking not fine." It's fine has come out.

Kimmery: It's fine.

Sonia: But the other person in the relationship may not know that there's a problem. And so then we're blindsided and then you're saying eight different things. We're like, "What? What? I didn't know. I didn't like that." Don't come up feeling on my titties while I'm trying to watch the dishes, it would drive me insane. I don't know who would do something like that but anyway. End this now before I end up back in the dog house. But needless to say, I did want to say to end the whole thing of this argument, I did want to stay in the dog house.

The argument itself by this time was over and I appreciated all that you had to say. But I was determined to stay in the dog house but then she came downstairs and talked to me. And it was just such a safe place to be vulnerable and to really express how I was feeling as well in the overall situation. I mean I had said some things that were not accurate to say but it actually was good in that it revealed some other things about our overall relationship that we needed to talk through. And so it actually ended up bringing us closer together.

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So that's how that argument went down and so I finally decided, okay, I guess I'll come out of the dog house now. I really liked that dog house but alright, I did come out of the dog house, I have not been back in a little while. But I might just go visit the dog house every once in a while just when I'm in the mood for that. I'm going to the dog house now.

Kimmery: Makes no sense.

Sonia: I know, that's so much better the whole thing. It makes no kind of sense, I'm like damn, there it is, welcome to your life and your marriage. Alright, Diamonds, you got a sneak peek into when Dr. Sonia's in the dog house and just relationship conflict just in general and how you could possibly handle that. Have a wonderful Valentine's Day, and we will be talking to you again soon. Alright, Dr. Sonia and Dr. Kimmery out.

Kimmery: Bye.

Hey Diamonds, do you want to reignite the passion that's gone missing from your life? Do you want to want to want it again? You know I'm on a mission to end the emotional pain and isolation that women experience associated with sexual difficulties. And many of you also know that I was once in that place where I was experiencing little to no sexual intimacy in my life. And I kept thinking that there was something that was wrong with me, that I wasn't enough, I wasn't attractive enough, I wasn't good enough, I wasn't smart enough to fix this problem.

And I was worried all the time that my relationship was too far gone because of this lack of intimacy. Well, you know what? I was right about one thing, the relationship didn't last. But even though the relationship didn't last, I committed to doing the work that I needed to do to own my sexuality. And now I have this amazing sex life and it's everything that I wanted it to be. And I'm also committed to helping my Diamonds by teaching them the same strategies that I figured out in order to revitalize the intimacy in their life.

So, if you want to stop feeling broken, if you want to stop feeling shame and guilt about sexuality, if you want to feel more comfortable with your

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sexuality and tap into that pleasure then I'm here for you, Diamonds. First of all, know that there's nothing that's gone wrong with you. You're not broken. And you know what? You can solve your intimacy issues. You can let go of that shame and guilt, and you can tap into that passionate person that's just waiting to come out. Let's get on a strategy call together and let's discuss how we can work together and how I can help you.

And know that a strategy call, it's 100% a safe place, there is no judgment. We'll talk about your intimacy situation, which is what's going on right now. We're also going to talk about your intimacy goals, what you would like your intimacy to look like in the future. And then we'll talk about how we could possibly work together to come up with a personalized strategy plan for you so you can get the results that you need. So, Diamonds, I'm here for you, don't wait another minute. Book that consultation call with me today and I can't wait to talk to you.

You can get that consultation call by going to soniawrightmd.as.me. And the link is also in the show notes. Okay, have a great day. I can't wait to talk to you. Take care.