

Ep #154: The Power of Community: A Conversation ACWSI Alumni



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sonia Wright

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You are listening to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast* episode 154.

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, everybody. I'm so excited to be here. Today's podcast episode is just so magnificent. That's the word that I have for this, the women on this call are amazing. And of course I'm being joined by Lisa Hatlestad, Coach Lisa, amazing woman. So, hey, Lisa, how are you doing?

Lisa: Hey. I am great. I have been really excited to do this particular episode. I so enjoyed our conversation from, I think it was last week so this just feels like the perfect continuation of it.

Sonia: Exactly. And I'm so excited about this continuation too. So we're going to have a good time. So this continuation has additional amazing women in it that can continue this with us.

Lisa: Oh, my gosh.

Sonia: I'm a pain in the ass.

Lisa: Setting a tone here, Sonia. You're so funny.

Sonia: But okay, let's set it out, what we're going to be talking about. We are talking to women who have completed, coaches, they're all coaches or doctors or in the healthcare field. In some type of area where they will be interacting with women and get to talk about women's sexuality with them. So they all came and took our course, the Advanced Certification in Women's Sexual Intimacy which we fondly call ACWSI, not that it rhymes with pussy or anything like that.

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But ACWSI is where all these women have come together, and I must say that they're just amazing. Each one of them, in their own way, has impressed me so much and I consider an honor, and I believe that Lisa does as well, but I don't like to speak for other people. But in terms of that we can help and impact in some way and they take the information that we have put together in this course and then bring it out into the world as well.

And so my heart is so full of gratitude and I just love these women that are on this call. And so we just wanted to have them come and talk to you so you have a better understanding of what ACWSI is about and if this might be something that you're interested as well. And just what were the thoughts and ideas and feelings and just the whole experience. Lisa, what would you like to add to that?

Lisa: I mean everything you said and it was an honor because all of the women that were in this first round of ACWSI were accomplished, distinguished coaches and practitioners already and there never was a feeling like Sonia and I are up here. They literally contributed to the entire experience of the course, which is what we so wanted. And to see that coming together and just feel the alchemy of it and the wisdom of it and the impact that everybody had on one another.

And just getting more comfortable talking about women's sexual intimacy, it was probably, I know I've said this before, I'll say it again, it was probably one of the best experiences of my life as a coach and as an instructor too. So, so grateful to the women that are on with us today for that.

Sonia: 100%. So let's get started. I'm going to ask the women to introduce themselves and tell us a little bit of what they do in the world. And then we're going to start talking about their experience with ACWSI. Alright, we'll start with Julie.

Julie: Hi. I am Julie Hanks. I am an OBS advanced certified weight loss coach and life coach and I work for Corinne Crabtree. And as I worked one-on-one with clients and on group calls with members, something that came

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up all the time was bodies, how women saw their bodies and sexuality associated with their weight loss. And so I came to you to tie that all together so that I could serve women in the sex and relationship part of our business.

Sonia: So good. We were so excited when you reached out and said that you wanted to be part of ACWSI. We're like, "This is so good. It's going to impact so many women." So definitely we're excited that you joined us and became part of our program and part of our family. I'd have to say that it really feels like a family. ACWSI feels like a family, once you become a member, you never get to leave. Alright, who would like to go next?

Jacqueline. Okay, I'll go. My name is Jacqueline Arnold. I am a licensed minister and I own a business called *Restoration Retreats*, where I bring women in and work with women who hurt. I have older women on panels who talk to younger women and they have the opportunity to ask the older women questions and get answers with things that they are experiencing, that we don't talk about.

Sonia: I love this so much, the intergenerational aspect of things and the wisdom that's passed down from woman to woman. And I love the fact that your background and that you recognize the importance as women's sexuality and how that has to be part of the conversation as well. So thank you for coming and being part of ACWSI. Alright, and Josette.

Josette: So I'm Josette Mills. I'm a midlife fulfillment coach. And one of the things that I show up in the world for these days, [inaudible] but no longer is available for that. And ACWSI has been one of the key pillars that allowed me to move that little glacier out of the way and dive in with serving women around any conversations that arrange and to rearrange themselves from menopause, midlife as its entirety, and have the ability to create midlife freedom, fulfillment, fun, all the things that would allow them to know that now is the time. Yeah.

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Sonia: Now is the time, so good, thank you, Josette, thank you. And Dr. Sarah.

Sarah: Hi. I'm Sarah Smith. I'm a family physician and from the medical background, we have knowledge and I work with many women. And I share vulnerable moments with women as they have their exams, but it doesn't leave a lot of room to actually have conversations. And so I wanted to take my medical background and then be able to also grow as a coach and a physician. I mean the tools I learned in this class are going to help in both aspects. But as coaching I have more time face-to-face with people. And I like to make that connection and use all the tools to tie it together.

Sonia: So good. Thank you. I just love that and obviously because I'm a doctor as well, but I think that is something that's important that we have the medical and the health provider and have that conversation because so often we're on this quick, quick, quick thing. All these things we have to check. And we don't get to spend some time talking about women's sexuality. And we are usually not trained in women's sexuality. And so even if we have the time, we're like, "I don't know what exactly to say."

So it's so good that we have healthcare providers as well because it's something that's definitely needed. Okay, Lisa. I'll let you take over.

Lisa: Yeah, absolutely. So I think most of you spoke to this next question a little bit in your introduction. So I'm just going to open the mic to anybody that wants to share. Just why was this course important to you when you saw it advertised? Some of you, I know, came to webinars that Sonia and I did, why did you enroll?

Julie: I personally enrolled. I had done a sex and relationship certification prior to this. And what was lacking was all the focus on midlife, women like me, women that look like me, women that's had the things that I had, women that were faced with the challenges I had, that was sorely lacking. It was very focused on young, very young women and I think the midlife

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focus or information about menopause, the mindset of a midlife woman really just drew me to this on every level.

Lisa: Yeah. Thank you, Julie. And I see a lot of heads nodding as you're talking, unfortunately we're really starting to understand the power, the transformational power of midlife in women's lives. And yet I don't think enough can be learned or said or taught about sexuality in midlife. And so I'm so glad that that was something that really appealed to you, Julie and your experience. Thank you.

Josette: So, similar to Julie, which I didn't know till just now, this is great. I had took a coaching certification in regards to sexology coaching back about a decade ago. And I saw it one as just where it says advanced and then I saw it as a refresher. But the other thing is that it drew me because it was live, where I can just have some access to people, community, other women that will bring forth all of those concerns that I would normally have to write a note down because I'm just watching a video.

And then the leaders that was at the realm, it was like this is a no brainer decision, literally there's no question about value, there's no question about what I'm going to learn. All of that was off the table. It was just me figuring out where it was going in the calendar and that I was showing up no matter what, that's it.

Lisa: Thank you, Josette. I mean, I feel like the community of this class took on a life of its own. I don't know if Dr. Sonia and I talked about community that much, I think we may have, but it just became apparent from the get-go, how important that was and I think it became a component of the actual course so thank you for speaking to that. And I see Jacqueline is wanting to share as well.

Jacqueline: I thought it was important for me having attended OYSN with Dr. Sonia, but midlife is great, but what happens in your golden years when you become the queen and you're no longer the princess? And a lot of women in my age group still have questions and still need responses and

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knowledge because in our generation we weren't taught things about our sexuality. And it's important even in our golden years that we still become women who appreciate who we are as women.

Lisa: You just said everything there and thank you for that. As somebody in midlife, it's so funny how our reference point will just stop with where we are. And Jacqueline, I think every single student was appreciated. But I think that your perspective and your, not just willingness but actually just powerful speaking to the experience of those years was another valuable, invaluable part of the course. Thank you.

Sarah: I also thought we had this group of amazing women who all had different backgrounds and everyone was so willing to share personal experiences, but also we shared some of the experiences that clients had brought to us. So it was just, it was a multiplier effect because you had personal experiences that brought it all together and just made it the special thing that it is, lifelong connections with people and friendships.

Lisa: Absolutely. Thank you for that, Sarah. Yeah. This is so good.

Julie: Would it be okay to add one more thing? Because Sarah just sparked something. Sarah, you sparked something inside of me that I really wanted to say. And the thing that stood out to me about this program as well was the diversity piece. It was phenomenal that this program is not focused on the penis owner. This program is focused on the vulva owner, or if you identify as a vulva owner.

And every other thing that I've done in the past is very penis owner centric and that's great, there's no bashing of that here, but it was so welcoming in a different way. And just the diversity of people and backgrounds and ages and race and faith. I was completely inspired by hearing all the different perspectives. So thanks, Sarah, for bringing that up because I really appreciated that here.

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Lisa: Yeah, and Julie, as a large, bodied vulva owner who's also in midlife, I love that you're speaking to the diversity, both you and Sarah did because it is so important. This is the point, sexuality isn't just for young people, it's not just for couples, it's not just for cisgendered, heteronormative people. It's so important. Thank you.

Sonia: Yeah, I think that that's definitely one of the most important things that we wanted to get across in this program is that your sexuality, it's available to everyone. You don't have to be a certain size, shape, color, whatever in order to access your sexuality, you have it, it's an innate part of yourself. We haven't necessarily as women been given that permission.

And so much is in... when you have a community you can talk to other people and you say, "Wow, okay, this is their experience. This, I get to formulate my experience. I get to say it's okay for me to be sexual. I no longer have to adhere to labels that other people have put on me and somebody looking at me might think a certain set of things around me and my sexuality, but I get to erase all that and I get to create it for myself.

And I think that that's one of the most important aspects of this, that we wanted to create a place where everybody was welcome. And we also wanted to create a place where you got to be you, you got to be authentically you. You didn't have to wear masks and you were just allowed to tap into your pleasure, tap into your sexuality and help other people that you work with do the same thing.

Lisa: Alright, so next question. What has been your biggest transformation or biggest takeaway or biggest shift, I can't remember which one of you said it, I think it might have been Josette, moving that glacier. And our glaciers all vary in size too, but I know toward the end of ACWSI, almost every student shared with us, transformation. And I'd just love to hear, what do you think was your most significant transformation? And please just feel free to go ahead and speak.

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Josette: So for me, I felt because I don't know, this is two questions I'm answering, but just bear with me for a minute. So I know when I saw one of the questions before was, what was your favorite part? And so I struggle with, dang it's so many. But the biggest takeaway for me and the most transformation happened during the intensive because it was those moments that it was no more fighting for my excuses. I had to answer those questions. I had to answer and explore those tough questions.

And having that experience, I feel like it provided such a growth spurt that the rest was just a bonus and that was just in the first week. And then more so is when I look at, I'll be like [inaudible], in that short a time, just the comfort, the lightness that I feel in I'm looking at myself, the way that I show up for clients and don't get that frog in my throat when it's time to ask those questions that I normally would avoid and try to negate the conversation in another way. All of those things, it's not tangible, but it's so quantifiable in a way that is like a priceless gem, literally, yeah.

Lisa: Yeah. Thank you, Josette. And yes, please feel free also to share your favorite part. We'll just combine the questions a little bit.

Josette: And so with that, is the four, I think was week four because I know I had did it in OSYN but revisiting it and it was about the anatomy because I was like, "Wow, there's an intimate part of me that other people have saw more than I have saw myself, that's so sad."

Lisa: Yes, exactly. And I think just listening, all of my friends, when they're talking about their sexual anatomy, they either say vagina or words that are similar, the JJ or whatever and I get it, it's all cute and stuff. But really understanding your own anatomy. And I think that there is power in knowing the correct terms for it and getting some of those myths straightened out too around our anatomy, [crosstalk].

Josette: And that part when, you know the memes you always see? I was this years old when I found out, yeah, one of those.

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Lisa: Yeah, exactly.

Sonia: Yeah. And it always impresses upon me that we have been taught as women that we are walking around with a vagina and nothing else. It's like, I don't know, a clear slate around the vagina, and we only need to focus on the vagina. And all of our pleasure, the majority of it is actually in our vulva. And it makes complete sense because you don't want to have all the nerve endings in the vagina if you're pushing out a baby through that vagina, you'd never do it again. You'd be like, "That hurts." I mean it hurts bad enough.

But that hurts so much. If you had 10,000 nerve endings in your vagina, forget it. But why is it that we just completely erase the vulva? We completely erase it like it does not even exist or it's just a holder or a cup holder for the vagina or something like that. We need to change our concepts around this and that's what Own Your Sexuality Now and ACWSI are about.

And I love also how you mentioned the intensive because for us we recognize that we're not just going to train healthcare providers and coaches to go out there and do this work. We're going to spend the time looking at you personally, what's going on in your life, what's going on with your sexuality? How do you think and feel about your sexuality because your biases or whatever is happening around you and your own sexuality are so going to impact the work you do with your clients.

So let's clean up anything if it needs to be cleaned up and let's get you to this place where you recognize how amazing you are and you have all the tools that you need at arm's length right here, right now. So this, yeah, definitely the intensive is the first part. And we recognize how much the intensive made an impact on women that we're actually going to take that out and then offer it for any woman that wants to. So we'll be doing that into the fall and into next year just doing a weekend. And Josette has got her thumbs up.

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Just because women do need to get an intensive where they can just sit and talk about this over a weekend and really do the work that they need to do for themselves and give themselves that gift. So thank you so much. And we're still continuing with the question in terms of the biggest transformation and your favorite part.

Julie: Josette, you and I are so similar because for me the intensive was hugely impactful, the work on unconscious bias. And once I realized how much I was bringing into my own sexuality and just the baggage of that, and then it blew open the doors of what would be possible for my clients to be bringing with them. And there has been nothing in any of the certifications exactly, or trainings that I've done that have covered that in the way that this covered it.

And literally you cannot unlearn certain things that you learn in life. And I can't unlearn that moment. And I have taken it with me every day. I have done research on it. I have been profoundly impacted by that part of this coursework. And then also Dr. Kimmery's, the trauma informed coursework. I also was very moved by that and it really has helped me settle in, not be afraid of someone that has trauma, myself included.

I really had blown that word up into a bunch of things that it doesn't have to mean for me, and it doesn't have to mean for someone else and learning that people get to define trauma for themselves. And that whole course I thought was really just hugely impactful on my coaching career as a whole and how I approach a client. That consent piece, I can't tell you how many times I now check in with a client about consent mid-session. They're talking about something that they are emotional about checking in.

I never had seen it presented in the way that Dr. Kimmery did and I was blown away by it and very impacted in how I approach my coaching. So the whole thing was brilliant but those were two really, really impactful pieces for me.

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Lisa: Thanks for speaking to that, Julie. We're so lucky to have Dr. Kimmery on board. I agree, her class was brilliant and the work that she put out because I do think like you said, the chance of triggering trauma in somebody often stops us from even opening the doors to a particular conversation. And yeah, as coaches, we don't have to know how to treat trauma, but we need to know how to recognize signs and how to recognize when we're being triggered. And also get really comfortable helping clients make a decision that supports their mental health with, if they need some therapy or something else.

So I'm so glad that you brought that up because it's a huge, I keep wanting to say stopgap, but it can really be a blockade for some coaches and other practitioners, our fear of that. And we just need to get real about it and learn as much as we want and admit that we don't have to know everything to help our clients have a safe, supportive experience.

Jacqueline: I think I'm going to ask probably three questions at one time. It was so important for me with body image because women have difficulty accepting who they are and loving themselves because of what society has said that we should look like or our shape, whatever. And so that was extremely important to me and it produced a freedom within me to be able to speak with other women and help them begin to love themselves. I was talking to someone about my problem with my stomach, which helped the person I was talking to think about the importance of her own self.

And that how she should love her stomach and what her stomach had done for her and producing children and sustaining her through life. I learned all of that through this course. I've been able to help people who have gone through trauma from this course. And let's not even talk about the vagina because I didn't know myself, I'm a queen, I had some little nickname.

And so now I get to talk to women and say, "Well, let's talk about what the real name is for your body and did you know that that's internally, how about your vulva?" And then you can see lights going off, so you can't ask

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me to just give you one part that's been good because it's our course. It was mind boggling. It was informative. It's changed who I am as a woman.

Lisa: Thank you, Jacqueline. And we would never ask you to answer just one question because you speak so eloquently and we know that you're going to do it and we love it. Thank you.

Sarah: I think the one thing that stood out to me is, it was a safe space. From the very beginning, it was come as you are able, there was no right or wrong answers. There was, if you have to leave midway through, there was just permission to be ourselves. And then there was gentle nudging to continue to develop and share experiences. And so I think just that permission. You guys set the tone as instructors, you really cared about us.

This wasn't about just running people through a program. It was very individualized. They checked in on us and asked us, "What are you needing? Do you have any additional questions about this?" There's opportunities to have individual sessions with Dr. Kimmerly and the just over-delivery is what I noticed.

And I think it is hard to pick a favorite topic because I like all the topics and I enjoy talking to people about sexuality, but I also realized that everyone else doesn't just want to talk about it. So it was just a good way to get other people's experiences and instead of just throwing everything out there, just learning to sit back and listen and see where people are.

Lisa: Thank you.

Jacqueline: I think another thing that was important is this course, also Sarah cared about us and what was going on in our lives and it wasn't you can't miss this class because you had the opportunity to go back and look at the recording and then catch up. So when you got to the next class, then you knew what was going on but life happens and sometimes you can't be there for every session. So I really like that part.

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Josette: And just to piggyback on Jacqueline and Sarah, do you know that there was an am and a pm session? What? I was like, "Wait, or." It's no, and, yeah, that part.

Lisa: Thank you for that. Yeah, we had some students, different ones at different times that came to both sessions. And we made the recordings, the replays of both sessions available too. And depending on who was in one class, a lot of times the second class had a very different discussion line. And I think that only enriched the entire experience. I love working with Dr. Sonia. I have known her for a long time but she's been very verbal about just wanting to do things differently.

And I love hearing your experiences because I think as women, professionals, who help other people, we can take a pretty pragmatic, practical look at our experiences and say, "I understand why they run this way and is there something different?" You know what I mean? And I think that getting to do this in the classroom of ACWSI, we want a different experience that supports women on every level, not just the show up academic level, because we're going to do everything we can to make sure that you get the learning that you paid for and that you came.

But we also wanted to do everything we could to make sure that you're honored as a human being with a real life.

Julie: [Crosstalk] question sessions. Nobody's mentioned that yet. I love that. I didn't come to every one because I didn't need it every time or couldn't. But when I did, holy moly, the conversation was amazing. Some of those were some of my biggest learning too, just having the two of you answering questions or giving a case example and asking for support. I thought that was amazing.

Lisa: We loved doing it too.

Julie: Yes, yes and yes.

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Sonia: I think that that is part of the core. When we chose to create this course, we wanted it to be something that would work with a woman's life, not something where this is the box, this is the course and you fit yourself into this box. I don't really care what's going on with your life. Because too many times as women, we have not been able to show up with our whole lives. We've had to show up, and I remember in medical school I couldn't tell people I was a mother. This is back in the 90s, early 2000s, if I was up all night with my baby, that was my tough luck. You're stupid enough to get pregnant.

This was a planned pregnancy but you could not show up in your whole life. You had to show up and fit into the box the way that somebody else wanted you to be. And I was like, "Damn if my program is going to be anything like that." It's going to be a place where women can come up and say like, "Yeah, I'm juggling this and this is what I have to deal with." And we are going to be like, "We are here for you. How can we help you?"

Because there's ways you can definitely learn this material, you can make a difference in a woman's life or another person's life. If you have the opportunity. But if you have to fit your life into a little box and you can only come at this time, this is the only time, and if you have other commitments, that's not my problem, you need to show up. How many women have to say to themselves, "I can't meet these requirements so I don't have the opportunity. I won't be able to come?"

How many women, how many people are we missing out on the opportunity of helping others because we say it has to be a certain way? And it's just not going to be like that with ACWSI, whatever we can do to make it such that you can come and be there in whatever way you need to show up. Because we recognize things are happening with people in their lives. So part of what we do with ACWSI is to be there for our coaches and support you in whatever way that we can.

Lisa: Absolutely. Moment of silence because there just aren't, I personally don't know of many spaces where you get to do that. And I do find that, of

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course, we all want to show up for ourselves. But I think as a student, it's nice to know that we're trusted too, in the way that it works best with our lives. When we're giving opportunity for everybody to make something work in their lives, they make it work. But yeah, otherwise, I feel like everything else I want to say is just a reiteration of what Dr. Sonia already said.

Sonia: Say it. I love to hear you talk. Yeah, she's so smart.

Lisa: I'm not smart, I'm just really mouthy about things. But I mean I think we just really have to think about ways, we can't be women professionals working with other women to bring out the best in women and still trying to make it look like it has to look a certain way. It is this respectful in my personal opinion, but I see some people nodding, to our very essence as human women in the world. So yeah, okay, I'm off my soapbox now.

Sonia: And I'm going to get on my soapbox. I'm sorry. We are such a group of women that has something to say here. But I'm also going to say how we show up and how we made this program is how we would love women to show up in the bedroom and in their life around sexuality as well. And so reflecting in so many different aspects. If you get to show up in your life the way you are, you get to show up in the bedroom the way you are and demand that somebody recognize this is what my life and the structure of my life looks like.

This is what my sexuality and the structure of my body and my life and what I want looks like and it is okay and I'm going to demand what I need.

Lisa: I love that you brought those two things together, yeah, snaps to you.

Josette: Yeah. And there's no right or wrong way of doing things. And I think that is we're trained as women you do this, you do this and you do this and just having that permission and to draw on other people's experiences and differences.

Jacqueline: I think with this course, as I sit and look at you all and the beauty, you can just see the light on each one of your faces of how you've

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enjoyed this course. But the opportunity to come back together, I will tell you I've missed you all. And I don't know an instructor in any course that has ever brought the people back together in the class and talk about what they've learned and how they can help someone else. And I'm so grateful for that. So kudos to both of you. Thank you.

Lisa: Thank you, Jacqueline. And kudos to all of you that want to keep coming back. And I mean I think this is really good to say in this particular show as well as just to all of you as alumni, it's really important. And I know I've talked about this before. It's important to us to continue providing community experience for those people, for ACWSI alumni is what I'm talking about. We need each other.

We live in this culture where we're supposed to be hyper independent and yet that's literally not possible and it's not how any of us are wired and we're better together. And so ACWSI will always focus on continuing opportunities to come together. I don't think our class would have been what it was without each of you contributing what you wanted to share, it just would not have been. That's something that we want to foster.

Not only are all of you going out in the world and incorporating the work you did in ACWSI into your personal work with your patients or your clients. Your shining, if that's what you want to call it, continues to contribute to the shining of every other ACWSI coach and every other woman. Okay, here's what I want to hear. What was the hardest part? What did you feel squeamish about or feel concerned about diving into as a topic or what made you most uncomfortable to talk about in class or study or learn about in yourself?

Josette: Releasing that I had to know everything was my hardest part. And just creating a space to know that it didn't matter if they were talking about BDSM or polyamorous or whatever the things are that come up. I still can help them go through the process.

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I don't need the 999,000 scenarios that may come and then feel okay, now I can open the door to explore that conversation. And when you all highlighted that and was just like, "What if that's not true that you need to know all of those 999 things?" And it was like, yeah, and releasing that perfection stance is what I would call it was, I don't know, it was the best weight that I ever lost.

Lisa: Thank you for that, Josette. I think the thinking that we need to know everything. Our clients know their lives and they know what they're doing. And I think sometimes when we come at it, where I need to know or I know everything, then the client gets put outside of the box and doesn't get to tell us their own experience. And so I think it was just so important to give every practitioner just the relief of knowing that I don't have to be an expert on a particular way of having intimacy or anything else in order to do some amazing work with my clients and not avoid the subject.

Josette: Yeah, it's that detour is what usually, I was like, "Yeah, we're not having that conversation." Where now the other part of it was that I had other peers that I can refer them to if it was something that they could go deeper or needed diving into. It was an opportunity to create a referral base for those that have things that want to go deeper and wide, if it's not my specialty. It was just so many moments of exploration that just made it easier to then say, "I can help you."

Julie: For me, the hardest part was work on myself that now is really impacting my coaching. But it was taking responsibility for my own sexuality. I had sort of lost track of the fact that my choices in my partnership were mine. It's really easy when things happen, to blame other people or life or this or that. But if I want to have a satisfying sex and intimate relationship, it's my responsibility for me, by me.

And whatever else happens with other people is a bonus, but ultimately I think I had gotten a little bit stuck in this happened, this is why kind of mindset. And in reality I was the one missing out. So the work I did on myself and taking ownership early on in the intensive, taking ownership of

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my own pleasure, being honest with myself about who was the person who was holding me back has really, again, kind of just opened the door to a different mindset with my clients as well.

Lisa: So, good, Julie. Yeah, and I think what I consider being spiritually and emotionally mature is understanding that this happened and this is why. And then also being able to look at that and without dismissing any of it, also see that I still have options. That's always where our power comes from. And when we do, I think it takes a lot of courage for any of us to look at our lives and see the places we're blocking ourselves from pleasure and even the right of responsibility. We all want autonomy and yet it requires a level of courage and willingness to create that for ourselves, because we're really the only ones who can, so brava.

Sonia: So actually I'm going to answer the question, which is what was the hardest part of all this? The hardest part for me was, can I do this? Can I create? It's one thing to coach around sex and sexuality? It's another thing to train other people to coach around sex and sexuality and not to do it in a way where I'm like, "You have to do it my way." The only way to coach is the way that Dr. Sonia coaches. That's not what I wanted to do because that squashing the individuality and the unique characteristics of that person.

And so how can I get the information out there and allow people to process it in whatever way and to take the skills that they would like to? How can I become that type of person? I know that I can coach because I've done it for years. But sometimes you can be a great coach, but not necessarily a great trainer. And so I was like, "Is this something that I can do?" And also if you have a dream because, Lisa, we started talking about this what, in December or something? Yeah, and between December and then we started at the end of March.

So was three months from a concept in our minds to bringing it into fruition into reality. And there's so many things that we had to go through to get it to this place, not the least of which is my own mindset and having to turn

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that around and say, “Okay, I don’t know if I can do it, but I’m going to get the best person I know to help train coaches.” So I was already in a good place working with Lisa. But also just making that transition into being a person that’s going to train and certify people in addition to do the coaching. So I think that was the hardest part for me.

Lisa: Yeah. And I mean it was no problem for me to believe that, yes, you could do this. And we actually started talking about this training almost a year ago. And I think we spent quite a few months like, “We’re going to do this. Oh, God, can we? We’re going to do this. Oh, God, can we?” And then when we realized it’s, hey, when we talked about doing this, now we just need to trust. We need to use our skill and use what we know and trust and that’s when we put it together from January.

And I think it launched in March, right at the end of March. But behind the scenes we have done a lot of thinking. I think it was just kind of getting our feet under ourselves and going, “We’re really doing this. Oh my gosh, we’re really doing this.”

Sonia: Yeah. And it was the end of January when we started the planning of it all. And then, yeah, it was launched in March and we had our first class on March 31st and our next one is going to be September 29th so we’re boom, boom.

Lisa: Which leads me to the last question, and if anybody else wants to speak to the previous question I’ll reiterate it too. But the last question is just asking what would you say about your experience? That’s kind of what we’ve been talking about here. But if someone is listening, if a physician or a physician’s assistant or a coach or a therapist is listening, wondering, knowing that, gosh, I might want to open myself to getting more confident and more comfortable with talking to women about sexual intimacy in these really weird real, I was going to say really weird ways.

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In what's a really real way, what would you say to them? And then please also feel free to share any experience about something that made you squeamish or that was difficult for you in class.

Julie: I would say women in the world need you. We all need this kind of support. And there are so many women out there that won't ask for what they need, don't know what they need, don't know what they don't know. And if you interact with women in your business when it comes to their health and wellbeing, when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing, this is for you. This is for every woman.

Lisa: Thank you, Julie. I could not agree more. I think that women want to help women. But I think sometimes if we are kind of edgy around addressing it or we think we need to know everything or we think we don't have enough, we don't know enough or something, we'll never bring it up. And that in itself isn't a problem but if we don't bring it up or if we're not open to it, then our clients too don't know.

And if you really, if all of you students look at the ripple effect of you just putting your foot in the door and saying, "I want to do this and I'm not sure how it's going to turn out, but this is important to me," And how that has culminated, kind of embedded itself through your practice and knowing that you're impacting women in this expanded way that is so, so needed. Yeah, thank you so much, Julie.

Sarah: A thing that I would say as a physician and I have young children at home, there's no right time to do this work. Honestly, I missed probably at least a third of the classes, if not more, and a lot of the extra things that were offered, but I still gained so much. And I have, we have this library of the sessions, the recordings that is going to be with me. And I have people that I can ask and it's just the community of it.

So it doesn't really matter, whatever you put in and whatever you're able to do, what you gain from that, it just continues to expand because that was the biggest thing. I was like, "I don't know if I have time to do this." But just

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getting that permission at the beginning, “You don’t have to come to everything.” So I fit it in when I was able to. Sometimes I was eating lunch and making my lunch on video whilst we were having the discussions because that was my only time during the day was I also had to eat.

But just yeah, so if you’re thinking about it, there’s a reason you’re thinking about it, there’s some calling or push or pull in your life that as I would echo, Julie, women need this.

Lisa: Yeah, and I agree. If you’re feeling a pull toward it, that’s just an inner voice telling you. And I think as women, we just recognize how we all need this. I need it. I need somebody to talk to about intimacy concerns, everybody does. And Sarah, another thing that you said that I just want to spotlight here is not only is the community and ongoing togetherness and ongoing education important to us. But just you have colleagues within ACWSI to ask questions to.

And also Dr. Sonia and I are committed to being there for ACWSI alumni to answer questions. This isn’t just something that you come into and you finish the work and you get your little certificate and we’re like, “See you, good luck in the world.” Because we are always all learning and growing and questions come up. I ask Sonia things. Sonia asks me things about different things. And this is the way it is so the support is there. It’s going to be there.

Josette: So two things, the thing that I would, it’s not like a stop the scroll thing that you ignore. You stop the scroll because something caught your attention. And I feel that in the way that it stops the scroll, stop for a minute and ask yourself, what do you need? Because it stopped and it caught your attention for a reason. And I feel like those loud whispers that show up in a way that is no longer satisfying your friend circle and your family circle and you still go and you hide and you stay silent, suffering still.

It's having the ability to know that those circles are exhausted, but there's options for you to have the safe space. There's option for you to explore it

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and no longer stay with those loud whispers because it's loud because it still needs your attention. And the other thing is that providing that release to all of those things that are still sitting dormant in your mind and in your body.

It's that continuous thank you every time you show up to a session and get supported by not only the instructors with their marvelous selves but the magical others that are in the room. Who now become your extended family because you don't have to position certain conversations. And you don't pause so much when you want to say what you really want to say. You're able to just find that flow, those frogs in your throat, they just dissipate.

And the ease that it comes through, you're going to start surprising yourself like, wait, I just said that. I just did that, oh, my God. And it's not discounting anything that mama ever said that grandma ever said because if we be real, grandma said, "Don't get in cars with strangers but let me see your Lyft and Uber app." So we're not diminishing what she said or what they said, but we also can be available for what we need now. And ACWSI is one of those you need now things, not only for yourself but also for your clients. And even if you don't have clients, you need it for you.

Lisa: Boom. And for anybody listening to this and not seeing the video I am just Josette's conviction and just I'm having a hard time not tearing up but thank you. That was mic drop. Thank you. Jacqueline, anything to add?

Jacqueline: Yeah, I was, as I was sitting here thinking I was trying to jot some things down. This is also important for people who are in ministry because women have so many questions and they have been afraid to talk. And well, they feel like there's no space, so this opportunity not only if you're a doctor or a psychologist or whatever field you're in is really important for people in ministry because we're there to help. We're there to show love.

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This course helped me to break down biases that I had. Thank goodness that I now have the opportunity to just listen and have no judgment just whatever. So thank goodness for ACWSI. I'm very grateful.

Lisa: I want to say, Jacqueline, thank goodness for you, because twice in this call you have broadened the spectrum of who we can be talking to. And I think that's so important. We need continual reminders of who else, who else, who else can this work apply to? Who else could it help? So for being here and being a possibility opener and a spectrum broadener, if that's what you want to call it, so deeply appreciated. And I agree, anybody working with vulva owners I, in my opinion, why dance around conversations?

Why avoid the thing, if it scares you, that's understandable. We're not shaming anybody for being timid about it or scared or hesitant or anything. But if something scares you, one thing I loved about ACWSI is there was always the opportunity to look at ourselves first and do the work in the most compassionate, supported way possible for ourselves. And that to me was, for everything we taught, I think it was the work that you all put into your own experience first that made it feel, I don't know if the word is empowering. But that made it feel so significant to what you could do for your clients and your patients and the people that you talk to and speak to.

Sonia: Yeah, I think that that is so important. If we don't do the work upon ourselves, we all have our inner critic and especially our inner critic when it comes to sexuality. There's things that we have been taught, maybe seeds, thoughts that have been planted in our head from the time we were a baby, 10, just really young in life. And if we do not look at those things and address ourselves with compassion and decide what thoughts do we want to keep, what thoughts are ready to go, then we're not going to be able to work with whoever our clients are with compassion.

It has to start with us first. It has to start with self-love first. So that is another core component of this course is you get to be kind to yourself. You don't need to judge yourself. You get to look at your sexuality without

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berating yourself or judging or saying it needs to be a certain way. You get to release those rules that you have for yourself, and then you can show and help your clients release their thoughts as well.

Lisa: I was thinking one more thing while you were talking, Sonia. What I was thinking about, some of the most significant work for me as an instructor because I was also doing the work for myself as a practitioner was having boundaries. And I think that that got seated in right from the start too in the intensive because I think that sometimes we don't realize that us practitioners who work with other people in one capacity or another, we do get to have boundaries ourselves.

I think that sometimes it can be really scary working around a topic if we don't have a sense of where am I on this? What do I think about it? Do I have my own consent to go there, so to speak? And knowing that we can set boundaries that feel right to us, our boundaries can always change. We can always change our mind.

But it just reminded me about one big objection I think there is to intimacy coaching is the fear that I'm going to end up talking about something to my client or to my patient or somebody else that I don't want to talk about. That does not have to ever be the case. And I think getting to explore what our boundaries were and really opening up the class so that everybody could speak to their own, with no shame, no, well, I don't think you should have a boundary around that. No, there was none of that because our boundaries are personal.

Sonia: Well, I want to wrap up this call because I do want to be there for the boundary of time, your time and commitment that you have put into doing this podcast and to be with us. So thank you so much for everyone that's been here. If there's a last point or anything that you'd like to get across, and of course we'd like to be able to highlight you as well. I'll talk about highlight, Lisa. We should mention that we have a page.

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Lisa: Yeah. So we have a page, it's a directory of ACWSI coaches, so coaches and other practitioners such as the brilliant women today who have gone through the ACWSI course and gotten their ACWSI certification. Now, some of the women today, they've all gone through the course. Some of them are still working on their certification project, the final thing.

But we are going to have a page that shows you where to find them, how to check out their work, how to get hold of them because you as a listener, if you are wanting somebody, a one-to-one intimacy coach or just somebody to work through with some intimacy issues with. We want you to have the resources to be able to do that. So that's going to be up, actually it's already published. I think we just need to get it all linked up and we are so excited and proud to just be adding these women one by one as they certify and then more into the future.

Sonia: Yeah. We're growing the ACWSI family and that's just a wonderful thing. Okay, yeah, I think this has been a wonderful conversation. Thank you so much for coming on the podcast and talking to all my Diamonds about ACWSI. So they have a better sense of what goes on inside and what the training's about and to get an idea if it might be something for them. Alright, thank you all of you so much for being here. Thank you, Lisa. I would not be able to do this without you. Thank you all.

Lisa: Bye bye, everyone.

Hello, hello, hello, Diamonds, have you heard the amazing news? Dr. Sonia, that would be me and my amazing team has started a sex coaching and life coaching monthly membership program called The Lit Clit Club. The Lit Clit Club was made just for you. It's a safe place where women can come to create the lives that they want, the lives that you want. It's a place where you get to talk openly about your sexual concerns and be heard. There's no judgment, no reprimand, no labels, just acceptance, knowledge and freedom.

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It's a place where you get to ask all the questions that you ever wanted to ask about sex and about life too. You get to dream big and create your life your way inside and outside the bedroom. You know I love the concept of creating the life that you want inside and outside the bedroom, that soul bursting life that you deserve. So come to the club for the sexual intimacy coaching and stay for the empowerment and the freedom.

Do you have questions about libido, menopause? Lord help us, menopause is no joke. Sexual health, relationships, sexual orientation, pleasure equality and orgasms, religion and intimacy? I am not finished with this list yet. Maybe you have questions about toys, maybe about non-monogamy. Perhaps you're interested in BDSM, maybe self-love, self-pleasure. Maybe you have questions about self-orientation. Maybe you need to work on healing from trauma.

Maybe body image is something that you want to focus more on and definitely embodiment. Perhaps creating the life of your dreams or journeying to your authentic self. Maybe you just want to stop people pleasing. Whatever questions you have and concerns you have, we have the answers and the coaching that you need. In all actuality, you have the answers inside of you. And the coaching will help bring that out. And you know what? You get to choose how you want to be coached.

You can be coached by video, by audio only or you can use the questions and answers session, it's whatever works for you. You get to sit back and relax and get the help that you need and your cameras are off. And every month we have a new workshop in addition to our regular coaching sessions. So click on the link below in the show notes and find out more about The Lit Clit Club. We can't wait to see you there in the club, come join us. Things are just starting to heat up. Alright, Dr. Sonia out. Love you all, Diamonds.