

This is the **DO IT SCARED PODCAST** with Ruth Soukup, **EPISODE NUMBER 36**. On today's episode, we are going to talk with jewelry designer Lisa Leonard about finding the courage to love even when that love is so much messier than we think it should be.

Welcome to the *Do It Scared* podcast. I'm your host, **RUTH SOUKUP**, and each week on the show we will talk about how to face your fears, overcome obstacles, and, most importantly, how to take action and create a life you love.

This episode is brought to you and made possible by the world's very best tool for managing your time and getting your life in order: the Living Well Planner. Created by yours truly, the Living Well Planner is designed to help you organize your time, manage your budget, plan your meals and your to-do list, and crush your goals, all in one place. It literally is the tool that keeps me sane every day, and it can absolutely do the same for you. You can find it online at [livingwellplanner.com](http://livingwellplanner.com), and be sure to use our promo code **DO IT SCARED** to **SAVE \$10** on your order in our special offer just for podcast listeners.

Hey, there, and welcome back to the show. As always, my name is Ruth Soukup, and I am the founder of Living Well Spending Less and the Living Well Planner, as well as the founder of Elite Blog Academy, and the *New York Times*' bestselling author of five, soon-to-be six, books.

In today's episode, we are going to be talking to the amazingly talented Lisa Leonard, founder and creative vision behind her company, Lisa Leonard Designs, and the author of the upcoming book *Brave Love*. Now, I first got to know Lisa and her husband Steven on a trip to the Dominican Republic with Compassion International, and it was on that trip that I got to experience firsthand just how amazing and brilliant and so full of love and compassion that Lisa truly is. Over the years, I have had the pleasure of collaborating and commiserating with her as fellow business owners and creatives, and most recently, we just happened to be in London with our families at the exact same time and somehow made it work to meet for what turned out to be a five-hour lunch. Thankfully, our husbands got along as well as we do.

So, Lisa's new book, *Brave Love*, will be coming out in a few weeks, and I had the honor of getting a sneak peek. You guys, it is so, so, so good. And I'm going to put this shameless plug in here because it literally is one of the best books I've read in a very long time. She's so real, and she shares so openly and honestly about the struggles that she's faced as the mom of a special-needs child, struggles in her marriage, and then, ultimately, her struggles with learning how to love herself. And that's why today I am so excited to invite Lisa here to the *Do It Scared* podcast to share her story as well as share so much wisdom about the bravest love of all:

loving ourselves; because ultimately, that's exactly what this podcast is all about. It's about taking those steps that are going to help us move past those things holding us back so that we can create a life we love. And loving our life starts with loving ourselves. And in the end, courage doesn't mean that we are never afraid; instead, courage is being scared but taking action anyway, despite our fear. It's putting one foot in front of the other even when we're not quite sure where the path is going to lead.

Okay, so just a couple more quick things, homework, before we dive into today's episode. First, if you haven't already, you can download our "Do It Scared" manifesto to remind yourself to start living your own life of courage right now. You can get that manifesto by texting **DOITSCARED** to **44222**, or you can go to our website and get all the show notes for this episode, all the links that we're going to talk about, and get the manifesto by visiting [doitscared.com/episode36](https://doitscared.com/episode36). Once again, you can either text **DOITSCARED**—all one word—to **44222**, or get the show notes and everything else at [doitscared.com/episode36](https://doitscared.com/episode36).

All right, now, without further ado, I couldn't be more excited to introduce you to my friend, the amazing Lisa Leonard.

**RUTH:** Lisa, welcome to the *Do It Scared* podcast. Thank you so much for being on the show. I am so excited to talk to you today.

**LISA:** I'm so excited to be here. Thank you, Ruth.

**RUTH:** You're welcome. Okay, so, I loved your book so much. I'm so excited about it. I'm so excited that you wrote it, first of all. I know it was a hugely long process. And I literally could not put it down as I was reading. I read the whole thing from start to finish in one sitting, and I have so many questions that I want to ask you about the book and about the process and about the whole thing, but first, since you're new to the podcast and new to my audience, can you just start from the beginning of—I guess just introducing yourself, a little bit about who you are, where you've been, how you got to where you are today, just the quick-and-dirty version of that.

**LISA:** Sure, sure! Thank you. Yeah. I'm Lisa Leonard, and I am married to Steve Leonard. We have two boys, David and Mathias. David is 16, our oldest, and he was born with a disability; and then Mathias is 14, and he's a typical kid, and I feel like I get the best of both worlds there. I started a jewelry business about 12 years ago. Just kind of a little hobby at the kitchen table that ended up kind of exploding, and then my husband jumped in to run it for us, and so we built that jewelry business into a few different businesses. And I just wrote a book, like you said, which was a crazy process and so exciting. I'm so glad you loved it. That means a lot to me. So, that's a quick overview.

**RUTH:** Mm. That was very quick. There's a lot, a lot that we can dive in from there.

**LISA:** There is.

**RUTH:** And your jewelry, by the way, is amazing. If you haven't checked out Lisa Leonard jewelry, it's beautiful. She does a lot of hand stamps, sterling silver, right?

**LISA:** Uh-huh.

**RUTH:** And you've expanded into lots of other things, so we'll have to talk about that, too.

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** But let's talk about your book first because in your book, like, this is what I love about you, because we've known each other for quite awhile, and there was so much in the book that, like, I thought I knew, but then just reading about it was just really, really powerful. And you talk about going through a lot of really hard things: having a special-needs son; going through a very serious marriage crisis, where you guys almost fall apart; and then, finally, kind of realizing that it was, like, the love that you needed to find, this brave love, was loving yourself first and then being able to love the people around you. And I guess just to start, I'm so curious how you found the courage to put yourself out there in that way with this book, just to share—I get asked that a lot, too, like, how can you share those hard things about yourself, these really gut-wrenching things? So what inspired you to actually write the book and to share your story?

**LISA:** It's such a good question. I've been writing on my blog for a long time, and it's been such an amazing way of connecting with other women and kind of this vulnerability of showing who I really am and then finding other women meeting me in that place and sharing their stories. And it's been such a beautiful thing. It was so important when the boys were little and I was working from home a lot and just it really helped to fight loneliness and feel connected. So when I was approached about writing a book, I was so excited. And we had kind of just been through our marriage crisis. We were kind of moving out of it, and I thought the timing was really good. And I have talked a lot about David's disability on my blog and sort of my journey of grief and pain with that and falling in love with him and how amazing he is. But, you know, it's crazy because we don't really talk about our marriages as a society. Like, that's sort of off limits. And so I thought, "Wow. This is going to be a really great book." And I think it's just such a great connecting point,

but when I sat down to write, especially about our marriage, I was terrified, like, for weeks—

**RUTH:** I can imagine.

**LISA:** Yeah. I just, I was like, “I don’t know how, I don’t know how to do this. It’s too real. It’s too personal. It’s not just my story because it’s his story, too.” And I shut down for a while. Like, that part was so hard to write about, and we’ll talk about this at some point. But I did do a weeklong retreat, like an intensive retreat, to kind of work through some of that fear and some of the emotion there, which really helped me. But finally I just decided to sit down and I’m just going to write it all out no matter how ugly and dark it is, and then edit from there, and if it’s too much, pull it back a little bit. But it ended up being—like, once I started writing it, it just came together.

**RUTH:** Mm. So, did that change anything for you, then, when you had this moment of, “I’m just going to put it all out there”? Like, it had to have been cathartic in some way of just saying, “This is what it is,” because once you kind of process it in that way, then, were you able to move on in a whole new way?

**LISA:** I think it was cathartic. And, you know, I mean, I felt like I was reliving it because I was really trying to just walk through it step by step and take the reader there with me and feel those feelings again and let it be dark and scary. And so, I mean, it was a very emotional experience, writing it all down. And there’s shame around it, too, because I feel like there’s just some dark things I write about in the book that, just some of my own most personal experiences where just feeling extremely desperately sad and hopeless and some of the things I did in that time. That’s kind of like the really raw, crazy stuff that I was like, “Well, I’m just going to write it down because I’m probably not the only person that’s ever dealt with stuff like this and hope that people can kind of have an open heart and just journey into it with me without judgment.”

**RUTH:** Well, I mean, truly, it’s one of the most courageous things that you could ever do is to put yourself out there in that way. And I think people don’t realize how gut wrenching it is to write any sort of book or to write anything and feel like you’re pouring your heart out on the page. But then when you’re writing that kind of stuff, that level of personal, it’s amazing. And I’m so proud of you, just as your friend, the courage that I know that it took to put yourself out there in that way, and I know also that so many lives are going to be touched and impacted by the fact that you were brave

enough to say, “This is me, and this is real, and this is raw, and here I am, warts and all.” I mean, it’s kind of the whole theme of your book, which is, I think, amazing—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —amazing in itself.

**LISA:** Yeah, I really—thank you. I got to a point where I realized if I don’t tell this story, I’m actually not living out the whole theme of the book, because this is owning all the parts of myself, even the stuff that is so hard and dark and scary. It is part of the healing process and part of just saying, “This is me, and I have made mistakes. I am imperfect, and that’s okay. I can still love me. I can still move forward and be strong.”

**RUTH:** Mm. So, how has it been for your family? I know the book hasn’t quite come out yet, but how’s it been for your husband and for your son, because he’s old enough to really be aware of what’s going on, Mathias.

**LISA:** Yeah. It’s an interesting process because it isn’t just my story, and anything I wrote about our marriage, I had Steve read it all before submitting it to the publisher because it’s so personal. And there’s a couple chapters on Mathias, and I wanted him to read those, and he felt, I think he felt honored and excited and—

**RUTH:** He’s such a great kid.

**LISA:** —really wanting—he is.

**RUTH:** Such a great kid.

**LISA:** So fun.

**RUTH:** Yes.

**LISA:** So fun that our kids got to meet this summer.

**RUTH:** I know. It was awesome. We were—for those of you who are listening, we were actually randomly in London at the same time with our families, Lisa and I, and so we just ended up meeting for lunch with our families. And what was supposed to be a quick lunch was, like, a four- or five-hour lunch, something like that.

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** It was amazing, but it was so fun.

**LISA:** It was so fun. I love that day. It was really fun. So, yeah, I think even with David, he's very aware although it's a different—you know, it's not like he's like, "What did you write in the book, Mom?" because of his disability, but really wanting to give him dignity and honor. And so, just trying to speak about—one thing is just to tell my story and to own my stuff, to not blame—you know, Steve has his marriage story and his stuff that he's worked through, but that's his story to tell, not mine. I don't need to talk about the things that he did. There's plenty for me to talk about the things that I did and my stuff that I needed to work on and heal. So I really tried to talk from that perspective.

**RUTH:** Yeah. Well, you definitely did. I found it very honoring of him. And I love Steve. I've met him multiple times and had the pleasure of spending a week with both of you guys in the Dominican a few years ago also.

**LISA:** You know what's so funny? We've never met in the United States. We've always been international.

**RUTH:** That is so strange.

**LISA:** We just like to meet in other countries.

**RUTH:** I know! I guess so. That is so funny. I never really thought about that, but yeah, you're right. One of these days we've got to get together in the United States.

**LISA:** Yeah. Some time we'll have to do that.

**RUTH:** That's funny. But, yeah, no, I thought you were so honoring of him even despite—like, all the stuff that you could have said. I mean, every marriage—well, there's two people, there's two things that are happening, and two people at fault, but it was definitely about your struggle and your stuff. And I thought that was really—and I know you touched on this a little a few minutes ago, but I think it is such a topic that is so hard for people to talk about even in this day and age is marriage problems. It's easier to just go and get divorced than to talk about, "Oh, we're really struggling in our marriage. We're going to counseling." And people just don't want to be open about that. And I know that's something—my husband and I have gone to counseling, too. I think every marriage struggles, especially when there's businesses involved and a lot of different, big, big things going on. And what do you think, for you guys, what do you think the turning point was to actually make it work and decide to make it work as a couple rather than just throwing in the towel?

**LISA:** Such a good question. Gosh, it is so—just the first part of your question—it is so personal. I hadn't really thought about it until I sat down to write that we really don't talk about the, like,—I think a fascinating podcast would be behind closed doors for people to really open up about their marriages—

**RUTH:** That would be.

**LISA:** —because we just don't talk about marriages, like, the real stuff. And every marriage has it's stuff because people are imperfect, and wherever our crap intersects is going to be a mess, you know?

**RUTH:** Mm-hmm.

**LISA:** But first, I think for me, I'm such a pleaser, and that's a big part of my book is feeling responsible for everyone else's emotions and feeling like if I can make people happy, then they'll love me, and so my job is to make everybody happy and to make myself smaller so they can be bigger. And in my marriage, I was putting up walls so that I think —let's see, how can I say this?—it was like I wanted to make Steve happy, so I had to be less. But then it put up walls because I wasn't being me. I wasn't being my true self and being honest and saying what I really thought, and so it was sort of this facade. And as I got more and more isolated and frustrated and bitter and unhappy—and he was, too. I mean, we were both trying so hard, but kind of going around in circles, just not connecting. And I kept saying, "I'm so unhappy. I can't keep living like this." But I didn't really know how to make change on my side and how to change the things that I needed to change for the health of our marriage. And finally, I mean, I was so desperate—and I talk about this in the book, just those really low, low moments—but I was like, I've thought more about killing myself, although I didn't really—you know, that wasn't really something that I—I wouldn't say I was suicidal, but I thought more about killing myself than I did about divorce. I just felt like we can't divorce. Like, if we got divorced, then that would be walking away from my family and my friends, my faith. Like, that's impossible. And one day I realized, you know, I'm so miserable that I would rather be alone than be in this marriage even if it means I lose my friends, my family, and my faith. Like, I can't keep living like this.

**RUTH:** Wow.

**LISA:** So, I really—Ruth, I really believed that when I told Steve I wanted to separate that I was turning my back on God and my faith. And I felt like God won't love me anymore and I'll be alone, but I'm so unhappy that I don't care. I just cannot keep going. And so Steve and I met with a counselor, and I told him that I wanted to separate, and it's the hardest day of my life for sure,

those moments of telling him. I mean, I just wished I could protect him from that, and I didn't want to cause him pain. Plus I was terrified because it was just me really saying what I really thought, and I was so not in the habit of doing that. So, you know, I said, "I want to separate. I need time to figure out what I want, and I can't keep living like this." And then that night he stayed with our boys and—I'm sorry, that night I stayed with the boys and he went and stayed with a friend, but then the next day he came home and I went and stayed with my sisters for a while. And it was like I really felt for the first time that I saw God, and I felt like I was—God was, like, finally—I feel like I'm going to cry, saying this—finally, you're being you, and I see you.

**RUTH:** Oh, wow.

**LISA:** And He's like, this is the Lisa that I've been wanting to see for so long, and you've been hiding behind this wall.

**RUTH:** Wow.

**LISA:** And I just think that the church means well, you know, and I was raised in very conservative churches, but I think we sometimes put people, especially women, in a box and tell them how to behave. And I think God is really saying, "Just be you, no matter how messy and imperfect. I would rather you be you and make mistakes and do things." He's like, "My grace will cover you." Like, you don't have to be perfect. You can live your life, make mistakes, be brave, be bold, instead of cowering in a corner, being fearful, trying to please everybody.

**RUTH:** Mm. Wow. And so, obviously, you guys got back together, you went back, you found a way to make it work, and was that really the turning point for you was to realize, "I just have to show up and be my true self"?

**LISA:** Yeah, yeah. I think that I kept trying to make change, but I really think I kind of threw a grenade into our marriage, and it had to happen. It was so much change that we had to level our current relationship and then start over and rebuild. And so we were apart for—I was gone for, like, 10 days and then I came home, and he did a week-long retreat and then he came home, and I did a week-long retreat. So we both did some intense personal work.

**RUTH:** Let's talk about the retreat—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —because I was—

**LISA:** Okay.

**RUTH:** —it was like one line in the book, and I was so curious about this retreat that you did. So can you—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —just what was this all about?

**LISA:** So, well, Steve and I had both been in counseling. We'd been doing couples counseling and individual counseling, which I am just such a believer in. Any marriage, I mean, no matter if you're healthy and have it all figured out, we can all grow and be more insightful and listen better. So I'm a huge believer in counseling. But when I threw the grenade into our marriage, we both were just decimated and really we needed to make massive change. And some of it was small, like I stopped working out at my gym, and I stopped going into the office as much. And some things were bigger, just like the way we communicate and having more help with the boys, especially David. So, we each did a week at this retreat center called The Meadows, and it's in Arizona. It's outside of Phoenix. And what it is is it's called a week-long intensive. There were five other women in my group, and we basically, through the course of five days, each of you tells your story, and it kind of focuses on your zero to 17. And we all have trauma from our childhoods. So kind of going back and figuring out, where do these false beliefs come from, why do I feel like I just can't be me, what's holding me back? And, I mean, it's intense, like crazy intense. Just, those five women, I mean, we bared our souls to each other, and these are just strangers, but by the end of the week, they know you better than anyone else in the whole world because you've just taken them through so many memories. And there's a counselor in the group, and so she kind of helps you dissect your childhood and then kind of rebuild and put it back together. So, yeah, it's an amazing experience. I would highly recommend it. If someone is just feeling really stuck, or anyone who wants to do personal work, it's just—

**RUTH:** So this wasn't necessarily, like, a marriage thing. This was specifically for you?

**LISA:** Right. We each did an indiv—

**RUTH:** That's amazing.

**LISA:** Yeah. We each did our own work, mm-hmm.

**RUTH:** Wow.

**LISA:** Yeah. It's called Survivor's I at The Meadows, and it was amazing. So good. I came out a different person.

**RUTH:** Wow. Wow. And then the two of you came back together, and then, how do you keep things good today? Like, you've done this work, but I'm sure there's a lot of ongoing maintenance because marriage doesn't magically get perfect overnight and then stay that way forever, right?

**LISA:** Yeah. It definitely doesn't.

**RUTH:** How do you keep it healthy?

**LISA:** Well, we're still in couples counseling. And I think the biggest thing for me has been clear communication with what I want and don't want. So, we'd been back together for maybe three months, and we went to France that summer. And he got frustrated about something, and I felt so much internal pressure, like, "I can't please you, and I don't know what to do, and I'm just trying to be me, and I'm not trying to upset you," and, oh, it's just like for a pleaser, it's really hard to stop pleasing the other person. And for me it just came down to really saying, "I want you to listen to me. This is what I'm saying." And when we were in France, I said, "I will get on a plane and go home." Like, I won't do this, you know? And so I just really, being loud and clear, that—because at first I was changing the rhythm in our marriage, and before I had been so "easy going." I mean, it's like, easy going/the bitterness that underlies, you know—

**RUTH:** Yeah.

**LISA:** But there's still conflict, but I wasn't really being authentic. And so for me, I had to hold tight to, "I will be me no matter what. I will say what I want no matter what." It's crazy because even small things—it was such a huge adjustment to say—I mean, I can't even think of an example. But, here's an example. So Steve might open up the hall closet and it would just be a disaster, sheets and blankets. And he'd say, "Oh my gosh. This is such a disaster." And before, I would have been like, "I'm sorry. You're right. It's a mess, and it's my fault." And I would make a mental note like, "I've got to clean that up tomorrow." Like, that's my fault. I should be doing a better job with this, you know? And then post, he would open up the closet and say, "This is a mess. Everything is a disaster." And I'd say, "Yeah, it is." Like, "You could clean it up if you want to, but—"

**RUTH:** If it bothers you—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —here’s how to fold a sheet.

**LISA:** Right. And I’m just like, I do plenty. I’m not going to apologize. I am imperfect. Yeah, it’s a total disaster. If we get to it, I’d love to help, but right now, it’s not my priority. And just sort of this unapologetic, I’m not going to make you okay. I’m not going to try to scramble and be this person who needs to perform and prove. And not that he was putting that on me, because actually he loves when I’m just stronger and saying, like, “Yeah, you’re right. It’s a mess, and I hope someone can deal with it at some point.”

**RUTH:** That’s interesting. So—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —he actually responds better to you being stronger, because that had to have been—

**LISA:** Yes.

**RUTH:** —frustrating for him to feel like you’re just going along.

**LISA:** Totally.

**RUTH:** He’s a strong person.

**LISA:** He is.

**RUTH:** You want somebody your equal on the other side.

**LISA:** Yeah. He totally prefers strength, which is so funny because it might not look like it. So, we had these conversations where he’s like, “Babe, just be you. Just tell me what you think.” And then I tell him what he thinks, and he’s like, “What? That’s ridiculous.” So, I’m like, “You said to tell me what you think.” But he’s like, “Well, that doesn’t mean I’m not going to push back.”

**RUTH:** Right, right.

**LISA:** So it’s like he actually wants to have conflict, he wants to fight, he wants—it’s not like, you know, I thought, “Okay, if I can just say what I want, all of a sudden it’s going to be smooth sailing.”

**RUTH:** Yeah.

**LISA:** But we had way more conflict, but it was like, oh, we’re actually—I can fight. I can say what I think, and he can handle it.

**RUTH:** It’s more constructive conflict than this unhealthy stuffing of

everything.

**LISA:** Yep, yep. Exactly.

**RUTH:** Amazing. So good. I love you guys so much. You're just two of my favorite people. You're so much—

**LISA:** Thank you.

**RUTH:** —fun to be around, and it makes me so happy to know not that you went through this whole thing, because I knew you—I first met you before, kind of right before this whole marriage crisis happening.

**LISA:** Mm-hmm, yep.

**RUTH:** And I could see the difference. I could see the difference when I was with you just in London this last—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —summer versus when I spent that week with you guys in the Dominican Republic. Not that I consciously, I think, picked up on it, but as I'm listening to you talk about the dynamics of your relationship, and I think back—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —I can definitely tell the difference. And it's—

**LISA:** That's really cool.

**RUTH:** —it's amazing.

**LISA:** I think we were definitely headed for separation when we were in the Dominican Republic. But even some things on that trip really—I felt like God was speaking to me and saying, like, I love you, Lisa. Like, one day—I talk about this in the book—but we had that experience where we went to the house and we met—

**RUTH:** I was there, yeah.

**LISA:** Yeah. It was so powerful.

**RUTH:** It makes me tear up even just thinking about it. So tell the story so people know what you're talking about.

**LISA:** Okay. So, we were with Compassion International, which is such an incredible organization, and visiting one of the sponsored children, and when we got to the house, his sister, Jasmine, had a

severe disability. And from what I understood, nobody really—that wasn't expected. We weren't going to visit her; it was just to visit the sponsored child. But because Steve and I have a child with a disability, it was so intense to see her—gosh, I'm totally going to get emotional telling this story—to see her, this little girl on a hill in the Dominican Republic, in the middle of nowhere, and she was just tiny and precious and I was like, "I cannot deal with this. I can't hold her. I don't want to touch her. I don't want to look at her. I don't want to talk to her. I can't handle it. It's too intense." So I sat across the room from her, and I just felt like I have to hold her. Like, my arms have to hold her. And so I asked her grandmother, "Can I hold her?" And she said, "Sure, of course." And I just held her in my arms and felt like she's so precious, just so loved by the God of the universe, and who is this little girl in the Dominican Republic, with a disability? Nobody knows who she is, what does she bring to the world that makes her important? Nothing, really, except that she's worthy and loved by God. And so I think just in that moment feeling like, just knowing her value and then God whispering to me, "You, too, Lisa. You are so worthy and so precious." And the next day we were at the country office for Compassion, and a woman came over, named Kathleen, and said, "I heard you visited Jasmine yesterday." And I was like, "Yeah." And she said, "I met her a few months ago, and I've been praying that God would send someone to encourage her grandmother." And it was just so cool to think about God literally moving heaven and earth to take us to—

**RUTH:** To make that happen.

**LISA:** —the Dominican Republic. Yeah. Just crazy.

**RUTH:** I know. It was just—and just being in the perspective of being somebody who was in the room for that moment, it was electric. There was something—I mean, the whole trip was just one powerful moment after another, but in that moment, you could just see so clearly that there was a bigger picture at play.

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** It was just God putting the right people in the right spots at the right time, and I'm getting goose bumps thinking about it even now.

**LISA:** Yeah. It really felt so powerful. I mean, and something that's truly amazing. Not that God took me to the Dominican Republic to encourage Jasmine's grandmother, but that God used Jasmine to show me my worth, and that God would take this little girl in the Dominican Republic, who can't speak, who can't walk, and use her

to tell me a story that is going to change my life. And then to write about it in a book, and hopefully other people will be encouraged by it as well.

**RUTH:** They will be. It's amazing. There's always a bigger purpose at play.

**LISA:** Absolutely.

**RUTH:** Let's bring it down, bring it down.

**LISA:** Dabbing my face.

**RUTH:** Oh my gosh. Okay, so, let's change the subject a little bit and talk about—one of the things that I love about you is that we're just both businesswomen. We connected right away in the Dominican, like, that very first night we were together—

**LISA:** Totally.

**RUTH:** —that we went to dinner, and right away we just got into business talk, and we've had so many great conversations over the years. I've loved that we've had calls and just been able to collaborate on different stuff and commiserate on other things. And so, out of curiosity, what is—because I am one of those believers that there's no mistakes, only lessons—what is one of the hardest lessons that you've had to learn in your business, either a mistake that you made or a time that you were treated poorly by somebody else or just something—

**LISA:** Ooh, yeah.

**RUTH:** —that went wrong, and what happened, and what did it teach you?

**LISA:** Yeah. Ooh, we've made so many mistakes in business, and I have two things come to mind. One is to really listen to my gut because the biggest mistakes that we have made are when I ignore that feeling like this isn't a right, something's wrong, we shouldn't trust this person. But everything seems fine, and everyone's like, no, this person's great, they're totally trustworthy. But I'm like, this nagging feeling like I feel like something's off but pushing it down and moving forward.

**RUTH:** So true.

**LISA:** I mean, there's been numerous times where I'm like—and I've really gotten to the point where I'm like I have to pay attention because the repercussions after are just going to be so painful. So really listening. I think as women we have very strong intuition,

but we are told not to listen to it. Like, no, it's fine; don't worry; you're just overreacting. And I'm pretty much right all the time, Ruth. I'm pretty much always right.

**RUTH:** Your gut. No, I totally—I actually can relate to what you are saying so much because I feel like that is a lesson that has come up for me in my business so many times. Even just in this past year it's come up. Even in the last couple months it's come up.

**LISA:** Mm-hmm.

**RUTH:** And what I have realized is that I—and maybe I don't know if you feel like this, too—I feel like as an entrepreneur, this is completely uncharted territory, all the time. I'm in this online world, I have an online business, but nobody really knows what the rules are, what you're doing, and there's no guidebook for it.

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** So all the time, I feel like I'm just making it up as I go along and that I don't actually know what I'm doing, and I keep thinking somebody's going to find out I don't know what I'm doing.

**LISA:** Totally.

**RUTH:** And then that makes me question my gut, and I find that the times where I've made those biggest mistakes—and I don't know if this is true for you, too—is when I seek outside advice, assuming that somebody else knows better than I do.

**LISA:** Yep.

**RUTH:** And then it turns out to be an abject disaster.

**LISA:** Yeah, especially when it's something core to my business that someone else couldn't know better than me. So, I mean, we've gotten lots of great business advice, but when we've gone away from our values, our brand, my heart, then—

**RUTH:** So true.

**LISA:** —then we've gone astray and had to come back. It's cost us a lot of money, it's cost us relationships, and the second thing that I was thinking is that this really tests the brave love philosophy, but business requires what it requires, and there are times that I've hurt people really badly because the business—like, hiring a friend and it doesn't work out, firing a friend, and then they're no longer my friend because they hate me.

**RUTH:** Yep.

**LISA:** And so, one, I would say be very cautious about hiring friends, but, two, business is business, and I cannot care take people in business because the business wouldn't survive if I did.

**RUTH:** Right.

**LISA:** So there's people—you know, I'm at the grocery store, they turn their cart around and won't look at me, I mean, for good reason because I have hurt them. Like, I've made mistakes. And even not just firing people but even in business I've been distracted or not cared about people the way that I should, like at times being busy with my own life or whatever. And it's just at some point the business is what it is, and it's not a friendship, so—gosh, I hope that doesn't sound really cold and harsh—but—

**RUTH:** No, it doesn't.

**LISA:** —business requires what it requires.

**RUTH:** At least it doesn't to me because I completely understand what you're talking about, and I think maybe that's the problem when you grow a business sort of organically, and it starts on your kitchen table and it grows from this small thing, and then at some point you realize, oh my gosh, this is actually a business, and I have to treat it like a business.

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** I have employees; I have people I'm responsible for; this is no longer a business on my kitchen table.

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** This is not a hobby; this is a thing. And then you have to treat it that way, and it is a hard shift to make internally—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —but it's also a hard shift for the people around you to make to go, "Oh, look at that cute thing that you're doing," to "Oh, now you think you're so great because you've got this amazing thing."

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** And I've certainly had to deal with that in my life, so I completely understand what you're talking about.

**LISA:** Yeah. It's hard.

**RUTH:** But let's talk about a little bit the beginning of your business, because I think that's super inspiring for people because I have so many, so many people in my audience and kind of in my sphere who are wanting to do something, they just don't know what.

**LISA:** Mm-hmm.

**RUTH:** They're wanting to do, figure out something. They don't know if they want to start a blog or if they want to start a business or if they want to go back into the workforce. And how did you get to a point where you turned your creativity into this amazing thing?

**LISA:** Yeah. Well, you know, I made jewelry in high school, and then I was teaching special education when our oldest son David was born, and so I was working with kids with special needs, and then coming home and had a baby with special needs, and I was like, I need something creative because I'm just doing the same thing all day long. And started making jewelry again, but I really wanted to start a business and thought, "Maybe if I can start a little business, at some point I could quit my job." And it was sort of this little dream, but definitely back there—it's in the back of my mind. So I thought about a jewelry business. I thought about starting a wedding-favors business because I had been a wedding coordinator in college, and it seemed like, oh, people design these cute little gifts and then they sell 200 of them at a time, and I thought that could be a good business. So I'd also thought about doing some kind of niche—working with special-needs kids, like becoming CPR certified and a lifeguard and doing swim lessons for kids with special needs. So I definitely had an entrepreneurial kind of—I wanted to do something.

**RUTH:** Mm-hmm.

**LISA:** So, my first piece of advice is just to start, because every little step leads to the next step. And it's funny because even if you think, oh, well, I'll start this, and then, you know, you change directions, and you might end up in a completely different place, but if you never take a step, you're never going to take the next step, you know?

**RUTH:** So true.

**LISA:** So, just started making beaded jewelry, and doing home parties, and I had 15 boutiques from San Diego to Big Sur in California that would carry my jewelry. And people were—I mean, it definitely required a lot of just putting myself out there, and I'd go into—what I did was I would send to the store a necklace, with a note and my business card, and say, "Love to bring in some of my

handmade jewelry and show it to you.” And then I knew when it was delivered, and I would call the very next day and speak to the buyer and say, “Hi, I hope you received the gift I sent you. I’d love to come in and show you more jewelry.” Every single store said yes.

**RUTH:** Wow.

**LISA:** Nobody said no. Yeah.

**RUTH:** But I think, even before that step, you talk about this in the book, too—

**LISA:** Mm-hmm.

**RUTH:** I thought—I loved this when I read this part when you were talking about how it started. You saw some bracelets that you loved—

**LISA:** Uh-huh.

**RUTH:** —in the gift shop, and you were inspired to make some of your own. Like, I could make something really similar. And you had some trial and error with that. So it was just the smallest little thing. I mean, what person hasn’t had that little tiny seed? And then, you were teaching at the time, and you took them to school and put them in a box, with a price tag on them—

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** —which, I think, is such a small thing but also so brave because that was putting yourself out there from the very beginning of this moment of those teachers could have made fun of you—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —they could have said, who do you think you are; these aren’t even cute. I mean, who knows? They might have been talking about you behind your back. Like, all of those things.

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** And yet, you did it, and they bought them, and that was kind of the start of what ended up being this amazing company that you’ve built. And so, I think we don’t always think about that. Like, you don’t have to—and you probably could not have foreseen what you would build and what you and Steven would build together with this Lisa Leonard Designs and all the amazing things that you’re doing, back then when you were doing bracelets on the table.

**LISA:** Right.

**RUTH:** And yet, you didn't need to have that whole plan all figured out. You just kind of had this seed of, I want to do something so I'm going to do this one thing and see what happens. And I love that story. I think it's so inspiring because it just goes to show, like, just start with something—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —right now. Just do something—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —right now, today.

**LISA:** You're so right. I mean, it is terrifying. When you put yourself out there in any small way—and then I think some of those earlier risks are ever scarier than—

**RUTH:** Yeah.

**LISA:** —like, if I introduce a new necklace now online, it's not as scary as when I—

**RUTH:** Put that box on that desk in the teachers' lounge.

**LISA:** Right, right.

**RUTH:** Yeah, totally.

**LISA:** But I do think each brave little step—and you talk about this, do it scared—it's so empowering. And even if we fail—like, I took a bunch of necklaces into a boutique here in San Luis Obispo, and the owner was like, "No, no, yes, no." I mean, she was just super hardcore, like, "I don't like this."

**RUTH:** Yeah.

**LISA:** And I left the store, and I cried, because it was so—

**RUTH:** So hard to get that—it felt like rejection—

**LISA:** Totally.

**RUTH:** —even though she was saying yes to some things.

**LISA:** Totally. Because I think that we want to succeed at everything. Any failure feels like, "Well, I failed, so forget it." But she actually bought a few hundred dollars' worth of jewelry, so was that a

failure or was it a success? It was really hard to hear her honest feedback, but also, she's giving me real feedback. And it doesn't mean that I'm a failure. If I can listen and grow, then it's the most amazing gift a person can give you.

**RUTH:** Right, right. And I think that we look at people who have created something or have a business or have done all these things, and we think, oh my gosh, I could never do that; they must have just known all the right people, or it all fell into place, or they're so much smarter than me, or whatever. And I think we forget that everybody has to start somewhere. Maybe it's not with bracelets on the kitchen table, but a lot of times—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** —it is something similar to that thing. It's just this one little, small thing that can plant the seed and lead to those bigger and bigger and bigger things.

**LISA:** Yeah, it's so true. Each little step. I mean, you can't see what's going to happen in three steps. All you can do is take the first step.

**RUTH:** Yep.

**LISA:** And it's crazy because things just open up. With each step, you have more perspective and more options, and then you meet someone and they introduce you to someone else, or learn something. I mean, every yes leads to more opportunities.

**RUTH:** So true. So, let's talk about what's happening right now in your life. You have the book coming out. What's the date of the book?

**LISA:** It releases January 29.

**RUTH:** January 29, which is very soon. And then in addition to the book, which is huge, what else are you working on that has you fired up?

**LISA:** Mm, let's see. The book has been so all-consuming. I am working on a kids' book as well.

**RUTH:** Ooh.

**LISA:** So I'm super excited about that.

**RUTH:** When does that come out?

**LISA:** That won't come out—I think it comes out, like, in October or November of 2019.

**RUTH:** Okay. Of 2019.

**LISA:** Yeah. So it's actually not that far away, but right now it feels like a lifetime away.

**RUTH:** Yeah.

**LISA:** We have some new jewelry coming out that I'm really excited about. Just really personalized, fun pieces. I'm working on some new leather products, like bags and stuff like that.

**RUTH:** Ooh. That's exciting.

**LISA:** So that's really fun. And then also just really trying to make space to travel and to just be alone, have alone time, and not—I've been surprised, one, at how much space I need just to function, and also, how when I create personal space, everything else seems to get done. Like, I'm not rushing. I'm not busy, busy, trying to check off my to-do list. But at the end of the day, everybody's fed, everybody's got a bed to sleep in, the house is at least decent—

**RUTH:** It's good enough.

**LISA:** —the emails are mostly answered. Yeah, it's good enough, exactly.

**RUTH:** So, for you, alone time is definitely your biggest form of self-care?

**LISA:** For sure, yeah.

**RUTH:** That's for me, too.

**LISA:** Really?

**RUTH:** Yeah. Are you an introvert?

**LISA:** I am more of an introvert.

**RUTH:** That's me, too. And I think that's the difference for me. That just will fill up my tank more than anything else is having space by myself.

**LISA:** Yep.

**RUTH:** I just need it sometimes.

**LISA:** I know. I love it.

**RUTH:** It's the best. So, in order to get that, you've made some other changes in your life of just getting more help in areas that you weren't maybe willing to take help before?

**LISA:** Yeah. I mean, the biggest thing is that we have a nanny now to help with David, and she's incredible. We actually have two girls that alternate. And I for so long felt like if I'm not the one running the bath, then I'm not loving my kids well enough; and if I'm not the one packing their school lunch, then I'm letting them down. And now I'm like, this is crazy. They love these women, and I get lots of quality time with them. I don't have to be the one filling up the bathtub for David to be loved and treasured. I think the other part of that, too, is feeling like, what if I start accepting help, and then I can't do it on my own? Like, if I lose that person and feel like, now I have to do it on my own and I can't, so just don't even accept help, because I have to prove I can do it on my own all the time. And I still have twinges of that sometimes, like, oh—even if we have a day or two where there's no one helping, I'm like, this is hard, but I can totally do it. And Steve and I tag team, and we make space, and I have to cancel things, and it works out. So accepting help is actually really hard, but it's been so, so good.

**RUTH:** Oh, that's amazing. So, my favorite question to ask people—and this is putting you on the spot because I know you didn't see these questions ahead of time—

**LISA:** Okay.

**RUTH:** —but what is the best piece of advice that you've ever received, and why?

**LISA:** Hm. Such a good question. Hm. I'm trying to think who has told me things, because there's definitely advice I've heard but it's sort of this advice that's just out there that people have said over and over, because sometimes I think I couldn't hear it until I was ready to hear it. So maybe not in the moment—

**RUTH:** That's very true. It doesn't have to be a specific person that gave it to you.

**LISA:** Yeah. I think one thing is just to be the mom that I am, unapologetically. And when Mathias was born—so David was 18 months old, and then I had a newborn—I had one day where we were in a new town, and two women came over to visit me. And the first woman said—she saw the book *Baby Wise*, which is about getting your baby on a schedule.

**RUTH:** Oh, I remember that one.

**LISA:** Oh, yeah. It was super popular. And she said, "I hope you're using this book because this is the most amazing book, and you have to get your baby on a schedule as soon as possible." And I was

like, oh, stress. I don't even know my baby; I just met him, like, four days ago. And then the other woman came over a few hours later, and she saw the book, and she said, "I hope you're not using this book because baby's have actually died from being put on a schedule and from starving to death, and so this is the worst book in the world." And I was like—I think in that moment I just realized, you know what, I'm just going to be me. And everyone has their two cents of how to parent, how to be a good mom, and I just need to get to know my babies and listen to them and listen to my heart, and that's going to make me the best mom that I can be.

**RUTH:** So good. Oh, man. That was with your second, right, that you had that—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** I remember that book so well because with my first, I was obsessed with it, right?

**LISA:** Uh-huh.

**RUTH:** Like, I've got to get her on a schedule, we have to do all the things, we've got to do the five S's, and felt like, oh my gosh, I have to—and she was because she's that kind of kid. Like, even now she's so regimented—

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** It needs to be—like, when she was two, she would go find her pacifier and her blankie and crawl into the crib by herself and put herself down for a three-hour nap, every day.

**LISA:** Oh my gosh.

**RUTH:** And I thought I had parenting figured out, right?

**LISA:** Totally.

**RUTH:** I was ready to write my own *Baby Wise* book. And then, that was like God was like, "Oh, I feel like you're a little bit too cocky," because then He gave me my second, Annie, who you met. She fits in no box. She fits in no schedule. She has never been able to fit to a schedule for her entire life.

**LISA:** Yeah.

**RUTH:** And that was—I think within three days, I was like, okay, I get it. Every kid is unique, and you just need to deal with them the way

that they come, and that is all you can do. Just love them exactly for who they are and nothing else.

**LISA:** I always pull new moms aside, if I have a second, and I'm like, "Don't listen to what anybody tells you. Just get to know your baby, and don't listen to anybody else."

**RUTH:** So true. It is so true. Just do and do whatever you can to survive without feeling guilty about it.

**LISA:** Yeah, totally. I think it's very similar to that instinct that we were talking about in listening to your gut, and I really learned to listen more to myself. Like, Steve and I would be watching a movie after the boys were in bed, and I'd have this tug like, go check on the boys. And sometimes I used to ignore it. I'd be like, okay, they're fine; they're fine. I'm like, no; I'm the mom, and I need to listen to that. And so I started listening to myself more and listening to other people less.

**RUTH:** So good. I love that. That's a great way to wrap up. So, final parting thoughts. Anything else you want us to know, and then where can we find you online?

**LISA:** It's so fun to be here. Thank you, Ruth. It's so good to see you. Let's see. I'm so grateful, super excited about the book. I hope that women will read it and resonate with the story and share their story with me, because I love hearing stories. I think each of us has such a fascinating story, and—

**RUTH:** If you're listening, you have got—get this book. It's amazing. As you can tell, Lisa's amazing. Get the book, and they can find it everywhere books are sold, right?

**LISA:** Yep. Brave Love by Lisa Leonard. And our website is lisaleonard.com, and I'm on Instagram under lisaleonard.

**RUTH:** Awesome. And check out her jewelry, also. And we will include the links to everything in our show notes for this episode. The book comes out January 19.

**LISA:** January 29.

**RUTH:** Oh, January 29. Sorry. January 29. And are you doing any—because this episode will be airing before the book comes out, obviously, so are you doing any preorder—

**LISA:** Yes.

**RUTH:** —things if they preorder the book? You want to talk about that?

**LISA:** Yeah. Definitely preorder. Barnes & Noble is giving away a free necklace with a preorder.

**RUTH:** Ooh.

**LISA:** Check out [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com). And we also have some other preorder specials going, so check out [lisaleonard.com](http://lisaleonard.com), and you'll see the preorder specials.

**RUTH:** For all the details.

**LISA:** Yes.

**RUTH:** Awesome. Thank you so much, Lisa. I'm so excited that we got to talk today. I'm so excited for your book, and just thank you for sharing your heart and sharing your story.

**LISA:** Thank you, Ruth.

**RUTH:** Bye.

**LISA:** Bye-bye.

Okay, so, don't forget that if you would like to grab our "Do It Scared" manifesto or get all the show notes for this episode, along with the links to everything we just talked about, you can find it all at [doitscared.com/episode36](http://doitscared.com/episode36). Once again, get all the show notes and the links on our website at [doitscared.com/episode36](http://doitscared.com/episode36).

And then, before we go, I just want to say, as always, that I love hearing from you. So please, if you have any questions about what we talked about today, any comments that you would like to share, any topics that you would like to see addressed here on the *Do It Scared* podcast, please, please feel free to reach out via email by filling out our form at [doitscared.com](http://doitscared.com).

And that about does it for this episode of the *Do It Scared* podcast. Thank you so much for joining me today. And if you liked what you heard, please be sure to leave a review on iTunes, and then, if you're feeling very motivated, share a screenshot of your review at [doitscared.com](http://doitscared.com) for a chance to win one of our "Do It Scared" T-shirts or mugs. And also, be sure to subscribe via iTunes to be notified of upcoming episodes.

And speaking of upcoming episodes, be sure to join me next week as we dive into one of my very favorite topics and talk about how to create resolutions for the new year that you will actually keep. It's going to be another super-practical episode, so have your pen and paper ready to take a ton of notes. I promise you won't want to miss it. I will catch you then.