

Season 5 Episode 3

Avery's Story: A Relationship with a Stranger

Craig Robertson: All right look, I was a big fan of this TV show called *Cheers* that ran from 1982 to 1993, and there was a popular spinoff called *Frazier*. And the fictional main character was a Harvard-educated psychiatrist, who had his own radio show, where people with mental health issues would call in, and Frazier would help solve their problems. His catchphrase was, "I'm listening." Believe it or not, this show was still running after I became an attorney, and I always imagined as I got into doing divorce work that a call-in radio show would be so entertaining.

But fast forward to the popularization of podcasts, and in 2019 when Matt and I were ready to start our own show. So, I'm a "do it yourself" kind of guy. So I bought a hundred-dollar Yeti microphone, and I did a few test runs using the Garageband app on my computer. And I'll be honest, I was quickly overwhelmed at the time, skill, concentration, and energy that it took to create something, and I was just not proud of what I was able to put together. I did not think it represented the professionalism that our clients expect from us. Whether you need a fantastic editor, a partner in production, and a custom sound designer like us, a turnkey solution that integrates with your marketing strategy, reach out to Casey and Blue Sky to see how they can partner with you to bring your podcast idea to life. In the show notes, we have a link to a free guide. If you want to learn more about what they do or you can visit them online at blueskypodcasting.com.

Craig Robertson: Hey everybody, welcome to the podcast. I recorded today's episode over a year ago, and I have been waiting for the right time to share it with you, and I think that time is now. In this show, you'll meet a former client, who by any measure, experienced some unique complications in her marriage, but ultimately, I think you will agree with me. There are universal themes about change and how some people find themselves in a relationship with a stranger. Now, I only heard this recording for the first time a few days ago, and I was very impressed with how articulately and bravely my guest shared her story. Now as we often do, we change some of the personal identifiers of my client and her co-parent, but everything you're about to hear is as real as it is complicated.

I hope you like today's show. I'm super excited to bring it to you right after these words from our sponsor, Adam Black. So hang tight. We'll be right back.

Adam Black: It's a challenging time to be buying or selling a house in Mississippi especially if you're in a life transition like divorce. Home prices are on the rise and so are interest rates. More than ever before having a creative professional who will take a customized approach to your unique lending needs is critically important.

My name is Adam Black, and I'm a senior mortgage specialist with First Commercial Bank. While my team and I handle every facet of residential mortgages, including lot acquisition, construction, purchase, and refinance, I hold the exclusive designation of real estate collaboration specialist with a focus on divorce mortgage management. My team and I help our clients and their attorneys using our specialized knowledge to not only assemble their required financial documentation to walk through the process but to also think through the global impact of their next housing or investment decision giving peace of mind to divorcing real estate owners. For more information, reach out to me at ablack@firstcommercialbk.com.

Craig Robertson: Welcome back to the Robertson and Easterling podcast. We're really glad that you decided to spend this time with us. Our podcast is about people's life stories. Everybody has a story, and as a family law attorney, I have the opportunity to sit with people when they're really at a crossroads in their life journey, and the person that I'm sitting here with today is no different. Her name is Avery, and she is lovely. And today she's going to share her story with us. So Avery, thanks for being here. Tell us your story.

Avery: I grew up in rural Mississippi. I have a very small family. There was only four of us total. My parents were both engineers, so education was a really important part of my family. I went through elementary and high school, very driven, and then I decided to go to college after that.

Craig Robertson: Now when you say Avery that you were driven. What do you mean academically driven or driven in all things that you did?

Avery: I was very academically driven. Even one time my dad said when I was in high school, if you did something bad, I wouldn't even know how to punish you cause you

don't have a life. I mean, school was kind of like my life. I took it very seriously and wanted to do the best that I can because that was kind of how my mom had taught me and encouraged me was a B isn't good enough. You can do better.

Craig Robertson: Well, did school come easy for you, Avery?

Avery: It really didn't, which I think surprises a lot of people. I had to really work really hard, and that started from kindergarten and first grade. I would come home with my books, and my mom was like what are we reading right now, and I would go over the whole day of school at night. So basically I had school twice.

Craig Robertson: What was your high school experience like?

Avery: I had really close friend, which was really nice. The first time I had really, really, great friendship. I again was very driven in school. I was in the band.

Craig Robertson: What instrument did you play?

Avery Clarinet.

Craig Robertson: Would you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert?

Avery: Very introverted -very kind of shy- and I think that comes from my background. My parents are both introverted and very shy. We all three could sit in a room together, no one say a word, and we would be completely happy about that.

Craig Robertson: Everybody's got a book, and the lights are low, and you guys are quietly reading.

Avery: Yeah, that's just how our personalities are growing up I think that was really hard cause you want to get out there and make friends, but it's very difficult when you'd rather just kind of be to yourself. But I have this really great friend -kinda understood that too- and so we're still friends now. I mean, she's always been very close.

I met her in band, and it's a lot of fun doing that in high school. I was very driven, even in my extracurricular activities, went ahead and got awards for being in the band.

Craig Robertson: So do you still play an instrument today?

Avery: Uh, no.

Craig Robertson: You ought to pick up that clarinet. It'll probably be therapeutic for you.

Avery: Yeah, I probably could still play it.

Craig Robertson: I believe you could.

Avery: If I sat down and did it.

Craig Robertson: Well, talk about college. Obviously that's always a big transition for any person is leaving their mom and their dad and their family and heading off to college. So what was your experience like?

Avery: It was terrible.

Craig Robertson: Why was it terrible?

Avery: Again, it was like leaving what I was comfortable with and having to like go outta my comfort zone and meet new people. And my roommate basically hated me the first couple weeks.

Craig Robertson: I can't even imagine that's possible.

Avery: (laughs) She was also interesting as well, just again, personalities were different, but eventually as college went on I met people. I met a really great friend that we ended up becoming roommates cause we both didn't like the roommates we had, and I built some great bonds with people.

Craig Robertson: Did you remain academically driven throughout?

Avery: Very much so. That was always really important to me to do the very best that I could. That in turn, I had to give up a social life. As I got through college when I got more friends, I started having more fun and going to get coffee and different things. But at first, I was just like in my room studying and very dedicated cause I knew that I wanted to go to graduate school and I had what I wanted to do after college so...

Craig Robertson: Well I mean, how does dating fit into that? Avery, obviously, I'm a family law attorney, and I'm in the relationship business, so I'm certainly interested in those early important romantic relationships that you might've have had.

Avery: And I think because I was so academically driven, that I never had a relationship until my senior year of college. It was like my first your first love. You think it's the end all be all.

Craig Robertson: And we've got a fantastic producer at this point, I can envision clarinet music coming up and kind of serenading the listener. We have been

academically driven, and we are studying hours and hours at a time, and then you meet your first love in college. How did that go?

Avery: Thankfully, I had already gotten a lot of my classes done, or I probably wouldn't have done as well in college after that.

Craig Robertson: I'm sure a lot of ladies out there can relate to that.

Avery: It was one of those things; you meet your first love, and it's like you just wanna spend all your time with them. Things moved very fast, as far as, both came from a very conservative religious background. And so marriage was kind of the next step, and so it was just easy to talk about you get married have children.

Craig Robertson: Did you feel like it was the next thing that you were supposed to do, or was it something you were really excited about taking the next step toward?

Avery: At first, I never imagined myself getting married before I finished college -or really until I had a job- was I ever thinking about settling down, and then I met this person, and they were already ready to do all of those things. And I felt probably I was coerced into a lot of it.

Craig Robertson: What do you mean coerced?

Avery: Well, "we can make it work. It'll be okay. We'll have each other."

Craig Robertson: Coerced or talked into, or both.

Avery: Some of it was talked into, and then some of it was more cursed because then it became if we don't get married then I don't stay in this relationship.

Craig Robertson: I can't be with you if you can't make that kind of commitment to me. Right.

Avery: Mm-hmm. Exactly.

Craig Robertson: It's my timing or else..

Avery: Yeah. Yeah.

Craig Robertson: Well, what did you do?

Avery: We were engaged, actually. We got engaged my senior year against my families- they were against it.

Craig Robertson: Why were they against it?

Avery: They felt that I should finish my education, and they felt like he was immature, and it would just not end well. I feel like at the time like I kind of had those concerns. But again, I was in love, and I felt like oh it'll work cause we love each other, so it has to work. But once we graduated college, I realized, and I went on to graduate school and he didn't, and he was just searching for jobs, and I had to move away for graduate school. And that was a big stress on the relationship. I realized it just gonna work. But I ended up continuing the relationship for a little over two years.

Craig Robertson: And so you made your way to graduate school, and I know from conversations that we've had that your graduate school program was very rigorous. Did you step back out socially and romantically, or did you put your head down to study like you were used to doing?

Avery: I definitely just studied all the time, and it was a very stressful time. It was a very lonely too cause I was pretty much studying all the time. I mean, it was my job, which worked out in the end cause I would study during the week, and then the weekend I would go home spend time with my family, and then have a date night. And it worked really for a few years, and then it didn't anymore, and things just kind of got hard. But in school I had met other people, and I had to become friends with a couple other people that. One of 'em introduced me to who would become my husband.

Craig Robertson: Joseph.

Avery: Joseph, yeah.

Craig Robertson: And tell me about your relationship with Joseph.

Avery: We met pretty early in graduate school. He was very smart and initially me and my friend came to him to tutor.

Craig Robertson: Oh, wow.

Avery: Yeah interestingly, and we had study sessions together. It became that he didn't know as much as we didn't know...

Craig Robertson: (laughs) Turns out that he wasn't quite ready to tutor you, but you ended up forming a relationship through that.

Avery: It was like the three of us. We became really close, and then one of the friends, she couldn't go to the next year, so then it just became the two of us that stayed.

Craig Robertson: And so the three became two.

Avery: Three became two. Mm-hmm.

Craig Robertson: What happened then?

Avery: In the summer break, he had broke off his relationship that he was in.

Nothing to do with between us, but more to do with the same kind of issues that we were both having with our significant others- being they didn't understand us not being able to be there all the time and just had different goals at the end of the day. So that second year we were just friends, and we went to class together. We had lunch together. Honestly, it's kinda like that work relationship.

Craig Robertson: How did your relationship progress?

Avery: For that first year, it was just a really close friendship, and it was easy -it wasn't hard- we got close pretty quick. It was easier than a relationship because it didn't matter what that person believed, or how they felt, or because you're friends. I feel like sometimes relationships complicate things because you want it this way they want it that way.

Craig Robertson: Right. The romantic part of a relationship. And so there, what I'm hearing you say is there wasn't a lot of pressure because this is somebody that we were doing graduate school together. It was a working relationship, a platonic relationship, and he was easy. He was smart, he was equally driven -equally academically minded- and the time together was easy.

Avery: Right, we just ended up spending more and more time together, and my fiance at the time just got a job. He was just gone more and ended up ending our relationship pretty suddenly.

Craig Robertson: How long were y'all engaged?

Avery: Two years.

Craig Robertson: So that left you and Joseph, you have this working relationship, but obviously we know that the relationship changed and became romantic. Talk about that.

Avery: So we were just friends, and I never even considered ever being with him. I didn't think that would ever be a thing. Mainly because we did have pretty big differences. My faith was very important to me, and he didn't share that faith. That being one of the biggest ones.

Craig Robertson: Yeah, that's a really big one.

Avery: Yeah, and so I never even thought about it. And then one day he just kind of outta the blue was like have you ever thought that we could be more? And I hadn't up to that point. But then after that, that's all I could think about was the fact that maybe we could be more. It's a great friendship. Good relationships come out of great friendships. We played with it a little bit, and then he would be like I don't wanna hurt you. I feel like this isn't gonna end well. And I would be like, but I really care about you back and forth. And finally he decided, he just couldn't live without me and decided that we could date and try and see what happens.

Craig Robertson: Although you were originally kind of against the idea, once he had broached the subject then you quickly warmed up to the idea that maybe you and Joseph could have a more serious lasting relationship, right?

Avery: Yeah again, like dating was easy. We already had that basis of a friendship, and I realized pretty quickly that I loved him. He was a little more hesitant to tell me that, but he did. He ended up telling me that he loved me too. We continued to be really close, and things were progressing as far as like how close we were becoming. And I knew I was fixing to graduate -and the next thing in life is to get married- and I didn't know if he would.

Craig Robertson: Really?

Avery: He just didn't seem like the one to really settle down quickly. He was worried that I would come to resent him later on because of the religious differences. I'm open to talking about that and going against my gut feeling of this is a big issue that I probably should address. But I really loved him, and thought we could make it work. He would be like well we could if we had kids. We would just raise them in church, and then let them come to their own conclusion.

Craig Robertson: So what I've heard you say so far, Avery, is that you had some serious red flags, but you sort of ignored those because you love this person. And because you were coming to the end of your graduate school program, and you thought that maybe the next logical step in life would be to settle down and get married and start thinking about the future with a partner.

Avery: It wasn't just that I loved him; it was that he was one of the best people I'd ever met. He would put others' needs above his own. He was there for me, when I needed him most. He served people, and I found that very attractive and a partner and everyone loved him.

Craig Robertson: Including your family?

Avery: Yeah including my family -even despite the red flag , which was surprising to me- they loved him. They were encouraging of our relationship.

Craig Robertson: And so obviously you guys got married and decided to make a life together. Talk about your life together.

Avery: So marriage, I liked that role. I liked being a wife. I feel like just in any marriage those first few months you're trying to adjust being together, and I think you have your own ideals of what marriage is, but once we got through those little hiccups. I felt like I was really happy. I didn't have any regrets. We made it work. We had very demanding jobs. We wouldn't see each other a ton, but when we did, we really made it work, and we went to vacations. It was wonderful.

Craig Robertson: And when did things change?

Avery: When I came pregnant, I noticed a difference in him. And looking back throughout our years of marriage, every now and then, I would find things that would concern me that were suggestive of possibly something was going on thatn he wasn't telling me about.

Craig Robertson: You started to find little clues, little bread crumbs of information, that led you to believe that something was going on with Joseph that you didn't know about or didn't completely understand.

Avery: And I would confront him about 'em when I found them. And he always had a great excuse, I was naive. I didn't know a lot about worldly things I was brought up to like call it. I believed him. I loved him and, so I trusted him.

Craig Robertson: And when did your life change?

Avery: So when I was about three months pregnant, he handed me a letter.

Kelly Englemann: Hi, I'm Kelly Engelman a family nurse practitioner and functional medicine provider. I founded Enhanced Wellness Living Mississippi's leading functional wellness clinic with the understanding that one's healthcare plans must be congruent with their beliefs and values. At Enhanced Wellness Living, treatment is focused on you, as a whole, rather than just looking at your symptoms or what particular disease state you have.

My team and I partner with you to understand the root cause of your symptoms, and educate you on creating a lifestyle of wellness, energy, vitality, and longevity. Combining my food first approach to healing with inspiration, education, integrity, empathy, and balance. We empower you to take ownership of your health for your life.

Enhanced Wellness Living is proud to offer a variety of lifestyle and regenerative treatment options including: sexual wellness programs. Take control of your health. Live life well with Enhanced Wellness Living.

Bill Blair: Hey guys, this is Bill Blair with Rocks and Rivers. We are an adventure-based coaching organization. Brandon Henry and I sitting across from me here, man, we just took a group of guys to Sand Rock, Alabama. Dude, tell 'em about that.

Brandon Henry: Yeah. Incredible. Seeing a group of guys, 15 guys, be able to get up on the rocks, engage life in a new way that is beyond anything they could have imagined, be able to sit around a council fire, share where they were in life, being able to come up with their next steps were what they wanted outta life.

Uh, big living Bill, big living.

Bill Blair: It was definitely big living. The only time those guys were quiet, dude is when they had food in their mouth, and boy, they ate good.

Brandon Henry: For sure.

Bill Blair: It was incredible. Hey, if anybody's out there, and you're wondering what your next step is. I'd encourage you to go to rocksanddrivers.com/coachingadventures and check out one of our four adventures sign up. We'd love to see you there.

Mandalin: We hope you are enjoying this episode of the Robertson and Easterling podcast. I'm Mandalin, I'm part of the legal team of Robertson and Easterling. If you think you need to speak to one of our attorneys, you can request a consultation from our website or simply call the office. Getting legal

help is not only the best way to take control of your future. It will give you the clarity needed to feel better. You owe it to yourself, and more importantly to your children to take initiative. Be brave. And now please sit back and enjoy the second half of our show.

Craig Robertson: We are here with Avery, and she's telling you her story. Avery is from small town Mississippi, like some of you who might be listening right now, and she was very driven, very driven academically. Both of her parents were engineers, and school was very important. She was a clarinet player, who made friendships in the band and went off to college and continued to excel in college.

And she found love and thought that that person was the one, but her family discouraged that as she was continuing to pursue her academic career. That relationship ended. And so, she connected with her study partner Joseph, they were great friends, and eventually Joseph suggested that maybe they could be more, even though Avery and Joseph had very different worldviews specifically around faith and religion. They decided to make a life together, and they got married. And they have very, very busy careers. Life took them in two different directions, but Avery was very happy and satisfied with the connection that they had together. She described things that took place and happened that didn't seem to quite add up, but it was explained away, and she was okay with it.

One day she was handed a letter, while she was a few months pregnant, and that changed everything. Avery, tell us about the letter.

Avery: So it started out with just how much he loved me and how much I meant to him, and that just no matter what happens he will always love me. And then it goes on to say, he was having second guessing his gender identity. And that he felt he was a woman and had always been since he was six years old.

Craig Robertson: Avery, what did that feel like when you were reading these words on the page?

Avery: I was devastated because it was my whole idea of our relationship, and the future was just had crashed and burned in front of my eyes. Because I knew I wasn't attracted to a woman, I just wasn't.

Craig Robertson: And so, what did you say after you read the letter?

Avery: I was devastated, and I said you ruined everything. And throughout the letter there was concerns about this stress of coming out to me had on him to the point he had a plan of how he was going to end his life. And that also concerned me cause I was three months pregnant, and just the thought of having to do this by myself because he wasn't gonna be there anymore.

Craig Robertson: Wow. Because that statement has so much depth to it because not only was he struggling with his mental health, he was expressing to you that he felt like he was identifying as a woman. And again, you're a heterosexual person, and the idea of being with a woman was not something you could conceptualize.

Avery: Right. In the letter, he thought I would be accepting of this, and that we could stay married and continue to have children together. It was a lot. It was 14 pages typed. And it was just a lot. Just all at one time.

Craig Robertson: So what happened after you read the letter and talked to Joseph in the moment? What happened after that?

Avery: I was really upset, and he immediately was thinking, I should have just ended my life. I need to go to the hospital, and so I drove him to the hospital where he ended up getting admitted for suicidal ideation.

Craig Robertson: At what point did you feel comfortable sharing this revelation to your family?

Avery: Immediately when I got home, I called my mom, and I told her because I needed to vent.

Craig Robertson: Wow. Of course. And so here you are several months pregnant. Your husband has come out to you as being transgender, although expressing that he wanted to keep your marriage together, and that you guys could work around that. And when you told him that you couldn't be with a woman, he became suicidal, and you guys had the wherewithal to get him to the hospital. And you immediately reached out to your mom for comfort and to tell her what was happening in your life.

Avery: Yeah cause it was a rough pregnancy in the sense that I was really ill, especially those first four months and so, I needed help to just survive, and I didn't know how. I was in this house all by myself, and I was scared, and I had to go to work the next day. I just didn't know how I was gonna do it.

Craig Robertson: Well, how did you do it?

Avery: After talking to my mom who handled it a lot better than I thought, while she was calm over the phone helped me like okay just take it one day at a time. Just go to bed, go to work, and then we'll come stay with you until we can figure out the next plan.

Craig Robertson: And that's really good advice because maybe someone who's listening to our voice right now is in a situation that is overwhelming and more than they can handle. And obviously Avery having a demanding career, being pregnant, having a partner who's struggling with their mental health, and struggling with their gender identity. That's more than one person can bear. But you can put one foot in front of the other, and do the thing that's right in front of you and live in the present. And it sounds like that's the way that you were able to kind of move through those difficult days.

Avery: Yes. Until they came. They helped me. Then eventually he got discharged from the hospital, and I knew I needed space, and so someone had offered for him to stay with them. And so he stayed with them a few days, while I was trying to sort out what to do next.

Craig Robertson: What did he express to you about his intention with regard to being a husband and a father?

Avery: So in the letter and in conversation afterwards, he explained that he knew that this was hard for me, and so he was willing to continue to be the man that I needed and be a father to our child. And so at that sense, he would have this identity as a woman, but still present male to me.

Craig Robertson: How did you reconcile those thoughts with your feelings about not being able to be with a woman and continue in a relationship with these types of complexities?

Avery: I loved him a lot, and I was concerned, and I was worried about him. I didn't want him to end his life, and it was also very stressful the thought of getting a divorce at that time in my life. I couldn't process it. And so I said, maybe we can make this work. Maybe I can compromise and let him live his double life as long as he was still a man to me. And so there was a couple times, I let him dress up- thinking that if he does this behind closed doors or does this- he'll get it out of his system. And still be willing to be a man for me.

Craig Robertson: Right, You thought that maybe this is something that you guys could keep private, and that he would be a husband and not only to you, but present as a husband in community, and that would be a father to your unborn child, and that it maybe you was something that you guys could share privately, but that it would help him with these feelings that he expressed to you he was struggling with.

Avery: And it quickly became he changed, and it became evidence to me that he wasn't going to be able to do that. And there have been times where he was present to me "well, I wanna start hormone therapy," and I wasn't comfortable knowing he would change. He wouldn't look the same, and every time I would bring something like that up that I couldn't stay. He would act like he was gonna try to end his life again.

Craig Robertson: And so in that sense, you felt somewhat manipulated because you loved him, and you cared about his life and his mental health. But at the same time, you were struggling with the idea that your husband was a transgender woman.

Avery: And it was hard because, I had to keep all this private. No one knew. My family felt that maybe he had had a mental breakdown, and he would just decided he was going to be husband and father, and that was it. But no one knew the struggle that I was having at the time of knowing this information, and knowing that I probably I'm not gonna be able to stay in this relationship, but not knowing how to get out of it.

Craig Robertson: Well, how did you deal with it? You're in this demanding job, you're pregnant, and you're having this relational crisis. What did you do?

Avery: So I started going to a counselor, and that helped a lot being able to talk about it with someone else. And through our talking about it, I realized that I couldn't stay in the relationship, but the stress of having to do in the relationship and go through like the divorce process would be too stressful on the pregnancy. And I didn't want something to happen to my unborn child. And so after talking with the counselor, I felt like just to put all this on the back burner until after the child was born.

Craig Robertson: Right. So you almost had to compartmentalize your life to protect your unborn child. It was just more than you could handle taking on the possibility of a divorce and the relational breakdown. So as any great mom would do, you simply chose to care for your body and care for your child, and to kind of shelve the discussions about the relationship.

Avery: Right and I had mentioned this to my husband that, "Hey, this is really stressful on the pregnancy. Why don't we just wait till after she's born to deal with these things and to start hormone therapy and transition?"

Craig Robertson: -and when you say transition for the listener who's not familiar with transgender individuals- you mean transition from man to woman through hormone therapy through dressing congruently with gender identity to coming out to the world. And of course this was all inconsistent with what you had originally thought that life might be like being married to a transgender person.

Avery: It was really hard for me because I felt I had to stay in the relationship for a few reasons. One being that I was worried about him hurting himself, and then another reason was I didn't want my child to not have a family. And then just growing up, I mean divorce was just not something you did and so the embarrassment of failing my marriage -failing was a lot to process too.

Craig Robertson: Avery that's a very relatable statement. I think because a lot of people feel that same way. Marriage is for life, and you made a commitment, and this was a bump in the road. Now it was a big bump in the road, but it's something that you struggled with possibly overcoming, and you had always been good at things. You made great grades. You excelled in the things that you tried to do, but this was something that wasn't working.

Avery: -and I think there was many times where I thought about leaving, but I was scared to be alone. I was scared to be a single mom.

Craig Robertson: Well moving forward, thankfully your child was born healthy, and you and Joseph were still together at that point. When did you make the decision that you just had to step out of the marriage?

Avery: After my child was born, your emotions are all over the place. You're not sleeping, it's very stressful, and we would just have like these discussions at night where he felt unloved. He felt like I wasn't loving him and wasn't letting him be who he was, and he couldn't talk to me anymore.

And I was also like I'm scared, and I wanted a husband. And you just can't be a husband. Eventually, I just got to the point where I couldn't take it anymore. And I realized that I couldn't live that kind of life for my child. I didn't want my child to see me distressed and this upset, and that I owed it to my child to end this relationship.

Craig Robertson: Avery as we're getting ready to end our time together, I think you've given our listeners so much to think about, but talk a little bit about -once you said out loud- we need to get a divorce, we need to move toward divorce, talk about life from there.

Avery: So he went on and completely transitioned, changed his name to Josie, and now publicly is a woman. And that's hard in itself for me for everyone to see my life like exposed that way. I feel like publicly have to go through the divorce is hard, and it's also hard being a single mom and having a demanding job. But thankfully I have a wonderful and supportive family who has been there for me and friends have come and helped.

And honestly in a way, I'm very blessed, and my child is very healthy and thriving. I think there'll always be that complication with having to co-parent with someone you really don't know. I knew Joseph, and I knew what Joseph wanted me to see, but I don't know Josie. And I don't know who they are. And so I think, it'll be an experience just as time goes on trying to weave around the complications that are going to pop up especially just raising my child, and where there are questions: what am I going to say?

Craig Robertson: Well Avery, I don't know what you're gonna say, but I will say to you and to anybody who can hear my voice right now that you are very brave, and that you are loved. And despite the difficult circumstances, I can tell your love for not only your child, but for Joseph and the grief associated with the loss of the relationship. And I want our listeners to know that everybody's journey is unique, and everybody's challenges are unique. And maybe you're not married to a transgender person, but there is still that feeling that you don't know that person anymore. And I think that's universal. And we of course are works in progress, and we're all changing, and we're all in transition in a sense. But Avery, you dealt with it in a way that many people can't fully comprehend. So thank you for your vulnerability. Thank you for being here. And thank you for sharing your story.

Avery: Thanks for having me.

Matt Easterling: You've been listening to the Robertson and Easterling podcast. Thanks for tuning in.

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Matt Easterling: Have a great rest of your day. And remember, there's nothing wrong with arming yourself with information. On behalf of the Robertson & Easterling family and all of our sponsors, thanks for spending time with us.

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