Helen Lederer - The Divorce Club UPDATE B 300620

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**SPEAKERS**

Sam, Helen

**Sam** 00:12

Welcome to the divorce club hosted by me comedian and divorces Samantha Baines. You might be starting a new chapter due to your divorce. Maybe you have a friend who's going through a divorce or yet just plain curious. I recently got divorced age 32. And it was a bit of a whirlwind doing it so young. Yes, I still believe I'm young. Don't ruin it for me. I felt confused, free and lonely. So I decided to interview some interesting people about their divorce experiences in the hope that it would help me get out a house mainly, and maybe help you too. Don't worry. I am a comedian so it won't be all doom and gloom. Welcome to The Divorce Club. I am joined by comedian, writer, actress and founder of Comedy Women in Print, Helen Lederer. Hello.

**Helen** 01:05

Hello how joyous to be in your pod situation.

**Sam** 01:09

That pod situation. Well, welcome to The Divorce Club,

**Helen** 01:12

Divorce Club, Divorce Club. And what made you some call it The Divorce Club? May I enquire?

**Sam** 01:19

Well, I recently got divorced. So keyword there in the title, but I felt a little bit like as soon as I started to tell people that I got divorced, the people who hadn't been divorced, looked very awkward and avoided the conversation. And the people who had been divorced kind of lit up is the wrong word, but immediately started telling me about their experiences. And it definitely does feel like a bit of a club like Yeah, you've experienced it. You have a certain bond with someone who's telling you about it. So that's why I called it The Divorce Club.

**Helen** 01:53

I think it's good. I think it reminds me of that American film called was it, The Many Wives or the First Wives Club? Oh, yeah. And you Any of those things, but I would suggest as a, as a person who's been around the block a few more times than you, you're young is that it's quite raw at the beginning. So all this quite legitimate, understandable awareness that you're experiencing. I suspect, give yourself five years or less. It will just be another thing like, oh, that time I got my lips tattooed which is bloody stupid thing to do doesn't mean it'll just become a feature as opposed to a identity or more of an identifiable thing.

**Sam** 02:33

Do you have your lips tattooed?

**Helen** 02:34

I do. I've put lipstick on. Unusually, in this lockdown situation. Makeup is such a rarity. But what happened years ago, in fact, I think I had just become separated. So I was in that situation. And I thought, What can I do to myself, and I went to this woman near Liberty's it was and I for an outline of my mouth to be tattooed. I said will it hurt? And she said yes. So I cracked on. May I just tell you it was the most painful thing. Think of all the times you've been chucked. I mean, this is physical pain. And so now in the days I do acting and the makeup girl, sort of tries to take my lipstick off I go, No, no, don't worry. It's a tattoo. So there we are a bit of a tattoo story there.

**Sam** 03:22

Wow. So hang on. So did you have the outline tattooed? Or the whole lip?

**Helen** 03:28

No, God, can you imagine? That's kind of labile oh my god say there's a massive masochism, the outline but what isn't helpful is that it's not that even and of course, as the years have gone by, some of it stayed more than others. But it's still there because some kind beauty people in the days when one would go to have the odd things sorted. They'd say, why don't you get it lasered off, but you've got Oh my god, more pain. Why did I live with it? Sometimes you just have to go I did a thing. One lives with the consequences. So same as marriage, you do a thing, and you just live with the consequences.

**Sam** 04:07

So we're comparing marriage to lip tattoos already. And I'm into it. Yeah. Well, I haven't had my lips tattooed. And how long does the lip tattoo last for? Because my marriage didn't last that long.

**Helen** 04:18

No. How long did your marriage last?

**Sam** 04:20

Like a year and a half, two years.

**Helen** 04:22

That's quite brief. But actually, my marriage was quite brief as well. The lip tattoo has endured the ravages of emotional trauma for the last 20 years, because my daughter is now 29. So what happened was I met the father, romance romance. Eight months later, like we wanted to have a child so we did that. Then I got married when I was six months pregnant. So very similar to you Sam. I think, whole thing was done and dusted, as they say, in 18 months, which is quite rapid. Oh,

**Sam** 04:56

yeah. We're fast Movers.

**Helen** 04:59

Totally.

**Sam** 05:00

So if people are looking for commitment, they should go for a lip tattoo rather than a marriage,

**Helen** 05:05

I think a lip tattoo very good conclusion. Well, you're in there, it endures whether or not it endures. But I often think when you look at marriages of people where they've never neither of the parties have been divorced. I look at them and I go, Wow. You know, I mean, the most people I know, I think are either single or, or have been divorced. So I don't know too many people my age, who met the person at that time when you start thinking about 30s and then it's still there in their 60s. It's unusual thing.

**Sam** 05:41

Okay, so why do you think your marriage and then consequent divorce was so quick?

**Helen** 05:48

Well, I think I was in my 30s when I fell in love, got pregnant got married in that order. And I think that I didn't really know myself that well, or both of us didn't really know each other that well, impossibly, we were quite similar. But I thought he would be I completely misread him. I thought that I could just crack on doing my own stuff. And somebody would like me a lot and look after me, and I felt great, which actually is a very stupid way to look at it. I mean, who's going to do that anyway? I mean, what's in it for anyone else? But I think I just mistook him for someone like I thought my father might be even though he wasn't as old as my father was. And so clearly, that wasn't the setup, when you realise that the other person has needs and career and an identity and foibles just like me. I just, I don't think I've ever understood. Like, it's another person and you have to do stuff. I think we were similarly naive. And that's been kind. That was my kind explanation. There's obviously other stuff. What about you? Are you in that phase where you can do kind explanations or are you Sort of a bit sadder and bitter, not bitter, but sadder.

**Sam** 07:04

I went through an angry phase recently I did a Zumba class online with quite a sexist Zumba instructor. And he made me very angry. And then all this anger came out through this Zumba class of like everything to do with my marriage and everything, which I actually think is very cathartic. And it was all directed at this Zumba teacher, Poor man.

**Helen** 07:25

Did you say cross things to the Zumba teacher direct?

**Sam** 07:29

Well, luckily, it wasn't a two way thing. So I was just watching him as an online recorded video so he couldn't hear what I was saying

**Helen** 07:37

lockdown Okay,

**Sam** 07:42

so I could shout at him Yeah. And in my living room, and he didn't have to know or receive the brunt of the anger.

**Helen** 07:50

What are you angry about?

**Sam** 07:52

I think more just angry that it didn't work and that we couldn't make it work and that now I don't have anyone, and that's not my ex's fault. And it's not my fault, but I can still be angry about it.

**Helen** 08:07

But would you rather be with someone and be unhappy with them? I mean, it's an obvious question, but

**Sam** 08:12

I mean, no, absolutely not. And I'm definitely much happier now. But I think you do go through stages of feelings don't you and there's a initial sort of sad stage. And then I think I have the freedom of like, wow, I'm gonna live my life would be crazy stage before I had the sad stage. And then a bit of the anger stage has come out. So I'm definitely fully in the stages of marriage grief.

**Helen** 08:38

Yes, I understand that. It's quite helpful sometimes to chunk if we use that word, chunk those different feelings down because you can be sad and you can be angry. And then you're also saying another thing, which is, you don't have anyone and they're almost quite separate things. Because you could be lonely with a person if you're not tuned in You're set on course to be with that person. That's, that's like not having someone as well. So, so I think, to be married is not easy. And it's quite it can be very restricting. And do we still believe in the endurance talking about lip tattoo endurance of meeting someone and that love sustaining through all all the kind of challenges and the difficulties because we put, and I think Sam you're similar to me in this way that we put ourselves under a lot of pressure. I mean, you've written a book you've performed, you know, you've drive hard. And didn't you you did the funny women thing, didn't you? This?

**Sam** 09:41

Yeah, I was a funny woman finalist. Yeah, stand up.

**Helen** 09:43

So you're a person who asks a lot of yourself, so maybe kind of to yourself about, you know, not being left with nothing, but having that experience. I mean, would you want that person back?

**Sam** 09:58

No. And I think we both are happier you know, out of it, not just me he is as well. It's a weird one. I think the the idea of failure has always been a difficult thing for me I hate to fail, which is hilarious because I'm a stand up comedian and you fail on a nightly basis.

**Helen** 10:16

Hmm.

**Sam** 10:17

But yeah, the idea of failures has always been a hard one for me. And I was brought up Catholic, which I've mentioned before. And so that kind of guilt that goes along with things not being perfect

**Helen** 10:27

Do you mean when you say failure, you mean you've then got to sort of stand up be counted in your community as somebody who one minute told the world, we're getting married, then you have to tell the world that we're Oh, by the way, when I said that, that was a lie. I'm not married. I mean, is that the way you interpret it? With this sort of strictness? I think you're seeing the world was being quite strict. Yeah. The world isn't as strict as you think it is.

**Sam** 10:54

Yeah, I guess the idea of getting married is standing up in front of people and saying I love this person. I want to spend the rest My life with them. And then two years later to stand up and be like actually that didnt work out again now

**Helen** 11:06

It is quite funny because you just go Yeah, you go Oh, yeah, by the way soz, you know, like the toaster and the kettle do you want it back, you know, it is a kind of it is a public announcement, you know, to invite people to a place and talk about your union. It's quite official, isn't it? Marriage is quite official.

**Sam** 11:27

and so is divorce.

**Helen** 11:30

Yeah, my version of yours, which I get at the time, is it's kind of like you've said, you've invited yourself into a status and other people are then rewarding you with that status of marriage. And then there's a disappointment or there's a shift when people that are Oh, you don't have that status anymore. Whereas if you haven't been married to start with, like I have a lovely just speaking to a lovely friend of mine who's never been married, so she would never have to do that status shift, because I just see her as a really bright, interesting person to get drunk with my favourite criteria. And I don't see her as lacking in any way. But I think it's interesting if both of us uncovering that thing, and my sister at Christmas, the first Christmas after I had become divorced, there was a bit of her having to tell the neighbours. And I suppose that maybe that's what we're all talking about. It's like, we're not what we said we are. And then people will go, Oh, you must have had quarrels? Did you throw things? Ooh, you're human, oo you're weak. But aren't we all like that anyway?

**Sam** 12:35

Yeah, absolutely. And I think I don't know if you found did the neighbours treat you differently when they found out that you were divorced?

**Helen** 12:43

Well I don't think i was invited to the drinks parties in Kent. Well, I suppose it is a reveal. So I'm being more bravado than perhaps is truthful. I mean, one is revealing that you probably been in pain because even Prince Charles said he did say something that I identified with I don't know if he said this, but you know, you don't set out to get divorced when you get married. I mean, that's not an ambition. On the other hand, when I did meet my first husband, it was at a book launch my first book, I haven't written that many. But it was a long time ago. And I knew weirdly, when you walked in the room that I was going to marry him, only because somebody tipped me off that he liked me. And when I was at school on my thumb, if you look at your thumb, you look at the marks on your thumb. Well, I have three marks on my thumb and the girl in my class, I was 10 at the time, said, Oh, you're going to get divorced, because you've got three marks on your thumb. Okay, you following this Sam?

**Sam** 13:38

So does this mean? So you like squinch, stick your thumb up, like up and then squish the top?

**Helen** 13:44

Yeah. And I looked at the lines on it. And there's a broken like, there's three. So I always knew I'm going to get divorced. So when he walked in the room, I thought, I'm going to marry you. And I'm also going to divorce you and I was right. I was right. But then that also might have been a bit like my personality at the time, it was a long time ago. And I kind of jumped into things. It's complicated with relationships, because once somebody thinks they've got you, the interest goes, and I think the sustainability or the magic of a relationship is when you can just about do without the other person. And when that other person knows that you can just about do without them, then it keeps you interested. Yeah. And I think being needy, and showing weakness, which is what love is about is not attractive.

**Sam** 14:39

and that's what marriage is

**Helen** 14:43

you know, who likes needy, so it's quite complex, but I want to know, has your ex got someone else?

**Sam** 14:50

my other half has someone else now. Yeah. Whereas I've just taken a period of time to just get back to me and yeah, been on a few dates. I've had a nice time sexually.

**Helen** 15:01

Oh, well, we see there you go. And I think that is a generalisation. But often men don't tend to be on their own for very long. I think they'll just find someone quite quickly. It's not complicated. And I think it's nice that we, why would you want to do that again? What why would you want to get married again?

**Sam** 15:20

Well you're happily married now? Again,

**Helen** 15:23

I've been yeah, I've been married, but I had 10 years where I couldn't bloody find a boyfriend for love or money Sam. I had a kid, which slightly complicated things. I thought. I yawned a lot when I did go on dates, because I was quite tired. Because he left when she was one. I say that that sounds so mean that I'm really blaming him. I'd say that's a phrase, I have to be fair, I go, you know what, we just couldn't do it. Neither of us could do it. And there's a disappointment. And there was a lot of anger because I hadn't actually understood my part in it. So there's all sorts of joyous therapy ahead. To try and unravel it, but at the end of the day, you do something with the best of intentions. And if you really can't make it work the modern way, young people believe this, I think my daughter would say, of course, you shouldn't have been married. And if you think about other generations, we've had to stay married. Can you imagine what kind of life that would be?

**Sam** 16:22

Yeah, in some ways, we are very lucky that we live in a world where we can get divorced. Yeah. And also, as the woman we can initiate a divorce as well. Obviously, the other party has to agree, but it used to be the case where we were kind of owned. So we are very lucky in that sense. But I want to know more about that. 10 years when you couldn't find a boyfriend. What was what was that like for you? What are you going through, how are you feeling?

**Helen** 16:50

Well. I did want a boyfriend very much. Because I remember being on my own for many years. And you just actually want to cuddle, you know, just like lack of physical contact, especially when you're young and you've got, like even more drives not just sex here, but just the whole thing. That was really hard. And then I couldn't imagine what it would be like to be with someone again, because I had quite a lot of boyfriends. I don't know why for such an insecure person, but I was always busy having lots of boyfriends. And then I had the situation with the marriage then it went to another extreme of like, no boyfriends at all. And I remember the name dropping, asking Dawn French who was in those days a bit of a matchmaker, could you find me someone and I met someone

**Sam** 17:38

I love this idea of Dawn French's like yente.

**Helen** 17:43

was many years ago. I mean, we all live in different worlds now, but I this is true. There was a friend of one of her friends at an event. And I did go out with him for quite a while, but I made her make that happen for me. I was fresher

**Sam** 18:00

So she's a good day Matchmaker

**Helen** 18:02

I chased it. Yeah, I chased it down. And I would do that for someone else. Because it's quite difficult to find single reasonable people I find in this world it's complicated, isn't it? So I did have that boyfriend, but when you have a child, it's, it complicates things again. So I just got used to not being with anyone for a while and just I think just doing other things, just getting on with life writing stuff.

**Sam** 18:28

What did you feel during that time? Were you lonely? Or was this kind of search for a boyfriend kind of consuming you? Do you think?

**Helen** 18:36

Well, I've always wanted a boyfriend from like 13 upwards, so I've been obsessed with boys. I mean, I just like the chase, Sam. I think the Chase is so exciting. And I think actually then getting someone is different. Now which is worse question to you, being chucked, or chucking

**Sam** 18:55

Being chucked because I like being in control,

**Helen** 18:58

right. So So You would find being chucked The worst thing.

**Sam** 19:03

Yeah. Right. What about you?

**Helen** 19:05

Where as I think chucking oh the pain of it the pain of it. You see I almost don't want people to like me that much because it's such a responsibility because then if it doesn't if you don't feel the same then you have them and that's annoying

**Sam** 19:22

Do you think that comes from your kind of comedian performance side of wanting people to like you but also wanting

**Helen** 19:31

them to go away?

**Sam** 19:32

Yeah, when you finish the show everyone goes away.

**Helen** 19:36

Yeah, just go eff off now done it now been nice. I can be nice to anyone for a short period of time. And then I think I need to just lie down alone for a bit. But going back to this human needs sexual needs affectionate need yes, I do remember that time and thinking oh, there's no one to say certain things to and even like a trip to garden centre might sound appealing with someone Oh, look at this plant. So you look at people and you go look, are they discussing plants, they're so fortunate to have each other, but then you know, that can get quite boring as well. So I think all you can do is be the person you are which you're a great person, I don't know you well, but I know you're a good person. And then you know, someone will come into that orbit, they just it honestly happens. And that's how I met the second one through my school friend. We weren't planning on it. And I went to an event down in the country. And I was really rude about all the men because they all looked quite ugly. And then this person came up and I thought, oh, better not be that horrible about him. And I thought I was a bit rude about the bow tie or something. I was actually because I thought I was it. You know, I was just annoyed and sad about my career and I'd already burst tears in the garden with my school friend going I'm going nowhere. I'm never going to get married. Again. Literally, a few hours later, I got off with him. And then six months later I married him.

**Sam** 20:12

Wow,

**Helen** 20:13

So you know, it does happen. It really really does happen. What happened to me?

**Sam** 20:19

You seem to do things very quickly.

**Helen** 20:38

It's like the pregnancy because I thought oh, well I'm one of those people will never have a child. And I really, really wanted one. Then in those days, and then I thought, well, I'd been on a mind and body course in Hampstead where you have a taught to look out I got into the habit of looking at the pavement and not looking at people and not having eye contact. And I think I just come off this mind and body course when I met Chris, and I she just went for it. And normally I never would go for anything because I'm so scared of rejection. You know? Like literally I went for it. Oh my god. Can you imagine

**Sam** 21:55

amazing serendipitous that you'd just finished this course.

**Helen** 21:59

Yeah. It was, it was actually it was and we were both divorced. So it was kind of a situation, although I think there was a little bit of a complication in his life because men are very rarely on their own completely. Trust me. There's always some baggage, but that soon saw that one off. And yeah, but but but being on my own for years and years, was just another part of my life. And it was as important as being with some,

**Sam** 22:28

and what do you think you'd learnt from? I mean, you said you cried at your friend in a garden saying that your career and your love life wasnt going well

**Helen** 22:37

She reminds me of that.

**Sam** 22:39

What do you think you learned from that time where everything was a bit difficult and you're on your own?

**Helen** 22:45

a really good question. I'm really glad you asked me that because I know this sounds a bit, but I knew that the moment I owned the fact that I had no more expectations, I actually said I really knew in my mind that I was going to be on my own. It was about facing facts, just being realistic and actually being okay about that. And I know that sounds very therapy therapy, but I was sad. And it was a really bad time because I wasn't getting the work I wanted and, you know, just wasn't going in the way I thought I wanted it to go, which is hard making, but I accepted it. So what is needed is to totally accept where you're at, then you're leaving the door open for something better to come. If you're hanging on to stuff and kind of deluding yourself it's harder to be open to someone else. I think if you just surrender, that it's not going to happen. something does happen. It's that thing when you stop looking you find it but yeah, looking for someone can put a lot of pressure on you. Not looking is good.

**Sam** 23:47

I've heard that before you know when you stop looking you find someone that is so hard to stop looking. Yeah, I'm not looking anymore but you're still looking out the corner of your eye like who's that.

**Helen** 23:59

No or, or another way is to not expect too much look, because that part of my mind and body courts were saying, you have to look, because I was not looking in an emotional sense, I was very closed down, got into the habit of not being open to people. So you can be open to people but expect very little, that's quite a good trick. Because then if you go, I'm going to go out this person, and I'm assuming it'll just be for those hours, then you can't go wrong and

**Sam** 24:28

can't be disappointed.

**Helen** 24:29

Can't be disappointed because I get, I'm just like you I get disappointed. I do things wrong, and then the rejection, and that that is the huge risk when you're out there with relationships. It's a jungle.

**Sam** 24:40

And so did you do this mind and body course because you wanted to find someone? What was the idea behind it?

**Helen** 24:48

Well, interestingly on the course you had to get into A's and B's a lot. And I think there are a lot of people living abroad. A lot of foreign students quite keen to shack up and you get for two days. It's really intense and remember But there was a musician there. I think he played for some slightly famous band and I got obsessed, obsessed about him wanting to be in his a and b. I was obsessed, and he didn't return the feelings and that was quite bad. But what was good about that was starting to feel stuff again, because I think after a divorce, you sort of shut down your feelings. So this mind body thing was shaken it all up. It was like had a sort of charismatic you had to pay loads, it was a charismatic leader. And after you have a cynicism, it's a good way to sort of you know, mingle with people and and challenge yourself.

**Sam** 25:36

So you try to get with a famous musician on the mind and body course.

**Helen** 25:40

I did and we had a nice drink and everything but nothing happened. And so, luckily, I was being held in the optimism of the mind and body like that, okay? But you have to put it out there and if it doesn't come back, you have to go. That's okay.

**Sam** 25:58

I love that. You This kind of relentless desire from you to get a boyfriend the but it eventually worked. And I think that's an amazing lesson of like, if

**Helen** 26:08

you crack on Yeah, sooner or later, you don't get it right making or you get good at something, it's a muscle, you just don't give up. But don't expect too much. But you do have to make the first move a little bit. I was so frightened of rejection that it kind of happened a lot, because I was expecting it. And I would wear that kind of personality, like, you know, and I think again, the comedy, the comedian, and you and me, you know, why? Why be a comedian if you're normal? I mean, why would you go there. So obviously, we're complicated, but and lacking in self esteem, but also we're quite good fun. And I think people can get quite confused with the fun element because I love a laugh. I do love a drink and I love a laugh more than anything, and then also the other side, but if they can't hack that, then it's not going to work. I think one needs a certain type of person who finds All of that bearable slash interesting. That's desirable.

**Sam** 27:04

Yeah, well, you did find someone who thought all that was desirable still think there. So you're happily married now and your second

**Helen** 27:13

with a huge stonking gap of 10 years, and you know, but we're old nkw, so it's kind of not. But I remember when we first met, we went to a restaurant in Clapham, and neither of us ate and that's always a good sign, because we were actually in love, because so you can't swallow or you can't swallow food. But the thing is, that doesn't that doesn't last, I mean, that can't last. Everything goes through phases. You just kind of evolved. So here we are, yes, we're together. It's great. There's respect and I, you know, I think I'm very fortunate. But I also know it's perfectly okay to be on your own. You know, it is what it is. If you want to be with someone then it would be nice if you are with someone but it's not the end of the world if you're not with someone because you're still an amazing person. You loads, you know, life is so full.

**Sam** 28:03

I love that. You're listening to The Divorce Club with me Samantha Baines interviewing Helen Lederer. So what do you think you brought, anything or any lessons from the first marriage into your second marriage?

**Helen** 28:16

Uh huh. Very different characters. The first marriage we're very similar people. So and this one, the person is not as extrovert is more normal. So no, I think I don't think I really worked out why it hadn't worked for a long time. Going back to your lovely divorce subject. I was cross for a long time, and I resent the fact that for myself, I wasted five years being furious. Five years is a long time to be furious. And I'd do it differently if I knew more, because I try and work on not being angry. Because I don't think I was in touch with my feelings. Anyway. I think I just jumped in thought it will be all right. Because there was that dada or the sparkle. And I think marriage needs more than that, or any relation of friendships. I mean, like, Look, you know, lockdown, and the anxiety and the panic and the paranoia that a lot of us are going through, you know, friendships will endure that but you, you have to recognise These aren't normal times. Someone's going to feel more heightened, you know?

**Sam** 29:23

And and why do you think you were angry for five years? What was blocking you from all the other emotions?

**Helen** 29:29

I think I was angry, very similar to actually take a long time to get around it is, It wasn't what I expected. And I hadn't got what I thought I was going to get. So there is a kind of child's like, Oh, it's not fair. So that is the child thing instead of going but what were my feelings, and also if the other person isn't going to go down the path that you want to explore, or is either incapable or doesn't want to and I never knew which It's very hard to know which people Is it because you don't want to, because you can't. But either way, the result is, if you're not going to go on that path together, the decent thing is to accept that and know that and move on. But um, it just took me a while. I don't think I'm very good in relationships. But then who is? You know, I wouldn't marry me. I'd be a friend of me. I found a great friend. But I don't know for partner living partners on too good. I don't know. I don't know. Maybe Maybe I'm getting hard on myself. It gets easier as you get older to just not ask so much of yourself. You're still young and you want loads of life and you should if you met someone tomorrow, which is highly unlikely and locked down, but if you bet someone, would you be up for it?

**Sam** 30:43

I think so. But I'm not sure.

**Helen** 30:47

Huh, huh. That's good. So keep it. Keep it bumbling. You'll know you'll know when the person engages. Or when you can compromise small or when you're just so lonely. You'll have anything there's that there's nothing wrong with with that, you know, there's many ways to skin a cat, remember?

**Sam** 31:09

Yeah, I think at the beginning of my divorce, I was sort of, I'll have anything cuz I just wanted to like, show, you know, experienced different things. And now I feel like I've got back to normal may now and I'm getting a bit more like, I'm actually happy on my own. And if someone came along, that'd be cool. But right now I'm sort of almost not, it's not that I'm not looking. It's kind of I don't really want anyone.

**Helen** 31:38

Well, you see, it's good to own that. Because if that's the truth for you now, that's really helpful to know. And then you'll do all sorts of lovely, interesting things within that time. I think that leads you to a more truthful connection. The next time a connection is going to be which obviously will I mean, you Can't go through life someone like you, you can't go through life and not get off with people. You can't I mean, you just you're not that type. So obviously you're gonna have more sex, I mean, grand and, and love. Because in one lifetime, we're all capable of falling in love with a lot of people in a lifetime. It's just that some some of us marry the first one, and then it screws it up for the rest and it must you mustn't let it screw up. You have to go. I took a chance to do her best. Maybe I didn't do my best. But what have I learned? Well, I learned I hadn't ever had to be a proper person before I hadn't had to be grown up before. But we did for us. We had a child which we both wanted very much. So there was a very good consequence of our very short relationship. But I think the anger thing I do resent I look back and go our God, how awful to go to bed angry and get up angry when you can't do anything about it. Here's the other thing. You Can't control another person. I always thought I could. And they used to be these angry emails on word processors in those days, remember, and we probably don't use young but, you know, I just thought that I was achieving something by writing very precise emails about what we should be doing in terms of this and that and you just go, Oh, God, all that energy. And the infuriating thing about that person was obviously didn't engage in that way. So, you know, I was the loser in getting het up about things. I think you have to go. The truth is this relationship couldn't go on. And you got to just, you know, move, move, move forward and not write angry emails. You're only hurting yourself, you know what I mean.

**Sam** 33:44

well, I'll just send you this misogynist Zumba teacher and that'll get all your anger out for the day just in one hours.

**Helen** 33:51

Great, but you are in a good place though. On your divorce pod situation aren't you.

**Sam** 33:56

Yes, yeah. I definitely feel happier and and I feel in a good place to start interviewing people about it as well, because I think I needed to give it a little bit. I gave it like a year and a half. a bit of time before delving into it. And actually, it's so interesting talking to so many different people about their experiences.

**Helen** 34:16

What are some of the couple of things that have resonated with you from your chats with others that you thought, Oh, yeah, I feel that

**Sam** 34:23

people have just talked about their worst moment. I don't know if you have a worst moment. But like some of the mundaneness of people's worst moments, that means so much to them. And in that time, and I remember I had one of them, you know, crying on my mum's kitchen floor, and it feels like the world is falling apart. But then hearing you know, the story of how they feel great now, and maybe they found another love or they're, you know, loving life without anyone and I think that comparison of people's worst moments to where they are now. is really good. Yes. I There

**Helen** 35:01

you go. It's part of the human condition because how can you get through a whole life and not have worst moments? And we're fascinated by worst moments as comedians aren't where they obsess us and intrigue us in a weird way. I remember being very lonely and what with my child and watching a thing called Bananas in Pyjamas or something, some Australian children's thing. And I just think that was bad. I was thinking, Is this it? But then, you know, yeah, only because it wasn't. Yeah, because I was doing it on my own. But then interestingly, to know that you can do things on your own, nothing lasts. So the good times don't last is a cliche, but the bad things don't last. So we know that the bad things don't last. They just don't.

**Sam** 35:48

Yeah, and and interesting. I was reading an article the other day, and one of the questions in the article was, was there a moment in your life or an experience that changed you forever and I was thinking About that, and I think one of them was my dad dying. And I think another one of them might have been my divorce. Yeah, just because it's, you know, that new chapter and that getting I think I lost myself a little bit in that relationship at the end. And so did he, and getting back to me the process after that has been really cathartic. And also, I just feel like I know myself and what I want much more now.

**Helen** 36:28

Yes, that makes sense to me. And the frustrating thing when you're in it when you're in that kind of adrenaline, is you want it to go away and you get almost addicted to it and you can't rush it. And that's that's the frustrating thing about being alive is you don't have control over your emotions and bereavement is, you know, one of them you know, you don't expect it but it does happen to most of us and happened to me as well and then you go, oh my god, am I ever going to stop feeling like this, but you do stop feeling about it. And when when you Good sign, when the adrenaline sort of slows down and you can allow yourself to think about that person and not have that charge of anger or sadness or whatever, it means that you're feeling good human being it must have sounded really bad here but means that you're able to have a lot of empathy with other people, you know, it, there's a reason that you can go through all that, learn from it. And then be a better person at what you do like your, your writing your book, and all this kind of stuff can be useful.

**Sam** 37:31

And I think it can feel like a lot of loss. You know, I lost my dad, and then I lost my hearing in one ear. And I wear a hearing aid now and then I lost my husband. Well, I wouldn't really call it lost because it was a conscious decision. But I think it's life sometimes when in the darkest places can feel like a series of losses. But actually, when you come out of it and you look back, you focus less on the loss and more on the kind of journey and where that brought You afterwards.

**Helen** 38:01

Absolutely. And think about this, you couldn't have done anything about the death. I mean, death, people die. So you couldn't have changed that. And the hearing and the husband. Yeah, I mean that you have to go, Well, I'm still here. And who knows how imperfect everything is anyway, you're way you're on now. And it's what you do with it. So you're doing something with it now. And you I bet you you're much more at peace than you were, you know, a few years ago. So we're going in the right direction. We can't stop people dying, particularly Not now. And that's the other thing. So it's, it's not what happens to you. It's how you deal with it. That is the essence of who you are. Yeah, definitely. And do you think I'm really strict.

**Sam** 38:46

I know I like it. I feel like I'm getting a therapy session of other people as well.

**Helen** 38:54

I was a social worker once, remember,

**Sam** 38:55

I love it. So during this time, Where you're kind of splitting up with someone getting divorced looking for someone new. Did you find that your divorce affected other areas of your life like you had a small child to bring up and you're, you know, a working comedian and writer.

**Helen** 39:14

I worried a little bit about status. We talked about that before that, you know, I remember there was a writer guy, I think he wrote one of those writers who wrote for cold feet and I had a crush on him. And I sort of thought, oo I come with baggage, you know, I'd second guessed how other people might view me. Yeah, like you were saying earlier like, Oh, she's done that and she couldn't keep a man or who she's she might be a bit needy or she probably needs sex because she's, there's some weak these all wrong. But I do remember thinking that about myself like, or a Converse way of looking at it is when you are in a relationship. The thing is, it's not a fair comparison because I'm then not looking for anyone else. I just find it's life is less complicated now. Because I can turn up, there is a person so I'm not looking. But I don't need to talk about that person. So one can get on with communicating in a different way. But when you're younger and like, quite rightly like you, you know, you're you're up for connections and fun. I think a newly divorced person has to really wear it, find a way to wear it, so that it isn't a secret. But it doesn't define where you're going. It's just something that it's like, oh, that I went, I had red hair for that year. I just felt that red hair would represent me in a different way and I don't have red hair now kind of thing. You've got to sort of see it more in a circumspect way.

**Sam** 40:38

Yeah, cuz I think a lot of the time other people don't know how to react to you as well. When they find out you've got divorced or they hear that you have got divorced and almost you have to I like that phrase. You have to wear it because it's almost like you need to show them. Yeah, how you feel about it so they know how to react.

**Helen** 40:57

Yeah, and I think a helpful way with that. With the wearing it thing is not to dwell on it too much. But you could offer I think offering a bit of ourselves, you know, revealing a bit of ourselves is really nice, because then that person will feel safe to reveal a bit of their selves. I find it difficult in relationships, when people are very private, and don't say anything about themselves. So if you demonstrate genuinely, that you're okay with it, and bits of it interested you and you got that bit wrong, but so does he or it's not that it's all nicey nicey you can reveal and then it doesn't define you. So I think we have to know that we don't have to have secrets.

**Sam** 41:39

Yeah, definitely. I feel that since my dad died and getting divorced and losing my hearing, and you know, being in therapy for all of those things. I've spoken more about me as a person and the things I feel than ever and actually, it's brought a lot of my friendships that I had already kind of closer because I wasn't pretending that I was fine all the time, like I was in the marriage, but also, you know, even things like on social media or or this podcast, like I am now very open about things. And I do think that that means that people feel that they can share with me or Yeah, you know, sometimes it helps people and that's what I hope about

**Helen** 42:19

I'm very pleased you're doing it. And I think like, with comedy, it has to be authentic. So as long as you're interested in other people, they will be interested in you. It's that dynamic, often in our world has it's fast and it's superficial, and you have to use relationships to get where you need to be. I accept that. But every so often you meet someone you go, Oh, actually, I like that person. Why do I like that person? I think that's much more interesting to seek the people that you like and what makes them likeable. And what you're doing is being genuine. I mean, not banging on, huh? I mean, at least the comedy saves us from banging on, but also there's no shame in I mean, otherwise we talk about life. Aren't we talking about those bits of life that a lot of us have experienced?

**Sam** 43:06

Yeah, absolutely. So I've just got a final few questions.

**Helen** 43:09

Yeah,

**Sam** 43:10

things I'm going through right now that I want to get your advice on. So, engagement ring and wedding ring from the first marriage. Did you have separate rings? And what have you done with them?

**Helen** 43:23

God? Yeah, the first one didn't have a ring. And so that was like a No, no. And I didn't even think of asking to have one. And, oh, Blimey. Oh, we went to buy one year we went through the motions or in a rather self conscious way, because neither of us were really marriage material. We didn't think we were but we were doing it. So we must have been. We bought a ring from a market off Piccadilly and then I had a cleaner and his son, who was a window cleaner nicked it. So the ring has was nicked.

**Sam** 43:56

Was this after you got married?

**Helen** 43:58

Yes, the ring was nicked. And why was I not wearing it? So we must have been divorced? I can't remember if I had a ring under that I have forgotten or I have psychologically forgotten the infrastructure of my ringness at that point.

**Sam** 44:13

And what about Did you have a special wedding outfit or dress and what's happened to that?

**Helen** 44:19

I was six months pregnant, so getting fatter each time as a plump person anyway, so I had a lovely Maroon velvet dress that I had made and it had a bit of hoo ha bit of jewellery going on. It sounds awful, but I've still got it. I've still got it. I've got both of my wedding outfits. Yeah.

**Sam** 44:39

Where do you keep them?

**Helen** 44:40

Just a wardrobe. I'm pretty sure I must have it. God I say that. Do you know, maybe I don't. I can't remember. But I had it for a long time. And it's Maroon velvet. And it's nice, but I was pregnant.

**Sam** 44:52

And why have you kept it? Have you ever worn it since?

**Helen** 44:57

No, never worn it since because people don't Because it's for the do. And the second one I had a green velvet jacket. But my weight goes up and down. I wasn't pregnant the second time. Don't think I wore that again might've worn the skirt. So it obviously wasn't white. So normal people can't go out the Groucho club wearing white net unless it's a particular kind of night. So, yes, that's the answer to those items.

**Sam** 45:25

So you've just kept them for the memories?

**Helen** 45:28

Yes, but I'm a hoarder. Anyway, if you looked at my of I can't get rid of poems I've written aged seven. That's a lie, um ten. But I wouldn't get rid of it. No, I will. I haven't got rid of my current marriage one, but I'm now where I'm going to try and find that Maroon pregnant one. I'm sure I have got it somewhere. Anyway, you've worried me?

**Sam** 45:48

sorry. I didn't mean to worry you.

**Helen** 45:50

It's fine. triggered something where it's like dress anyway. Yeah.

**Sam** 45:54

So do you think if you find it and you've still got it in your wardrobe. Do you think you'll keep it forever? Or will you ever do do anything with it.

**Helen** 46:01

Well I'm no longer angry, I know there's that thing about ripping up people's shirts and stuff. I think I just it just hangs it's it's a thing for a day. So, obviously it is significant and it just hangs in a spot in a wardrobe. And that's it. That's all it's life needs to be. It's as significant or insignificant is that.

**Sam** 46:22

Okay. And what about your divorce certificate? You have it framed? Do you know where it is?

**Helen** 46:30

Do you know it was so long ago? I do. Remember we had solicitors and we spent all this money on solicitors and then there was a pause and gap and then his solicitor died and he didn't even know it died. It was just so ridiculous all that all that time and money talking through a solicitor when the two of us could have just thought except we couldn't talk which is why we would get divorcing, of course. So no, I don't know where the certificate is. It might be in my filing cabinet.

**Sam** 46:55

Have you ever had to use it since?

**Helen** 46:58

No. Why would you use it

**Sam** 47:00

So no because solicitors say you have to keep them because you might need it.

**Helen** 47:03

Oh, I suppose are maybe if you get married again, you might need it. No, I don't know. I don't know. searing questions.

**Sam** 47:12

Did you need it when you got married again?

**Helen** 47:14

No,

**Sam** 47:15

No? Okay.

**Helen** 47:17

Well, actually, maybe we did because we were both divorced. So, yes, the jury's out on that.

**Sam** 47:23

Okay, perfect. And is there anything else you would like to say if there's someone that listening who is you know, thinking of getting divorced and can't quite bring themselves to make that decision or they're getting divorced and they're really struggling? Is there anything that you'd want to share with them?

**Helen** 47:42

I would share with them that I know a lot of those feelings and a lot of people know a lot of those feelings. So therefore, it's, it's not unique, and pain is real, but does lessen in time and Maybe allow yourself to think about it for half an hour or less every day, and be quite disciplined about that and get on with other things. And sooner or later you'll come out of it.

**Sam** 48:10

I think that's great advice. Thank you, Helen. That's been so useful.

**Helen** 48:15

Well, I have to listen to your podcast,

**Sam** 48:17

please do. Just your episode. no one elses

**Helen** 48:20

Of course. Of course. And then maybe people would be interested in knowing about what I this is a charity for me. So it's taken over my life, Comedy Women in Print, particularly now, so people who are unpublished have become published through it. So I've got three winners who are now published by grownup publishers witty women's fiction, and go on the Comedy Women in Print website.

**Sam** 48:48

Amazing

**Helen** 48:48

say a nice thing. Say a nice thing about it on Twitter. That's nice. And then I can say a nice thing about whoever said a nice thing and we carry on doing nice,

**Sam** 48:57

and where can people follow you on Twitter and Instagram

**Helen** 49:01

Yes, I'm I use my name. I don't know if that's odd. I just go @HelenLederer and that tends to get you to a place although, yeah, I would like some new followers. It's time to bring the changes come on new people. too boring just having 10 of the same people. Yeah more please.

**Sam** 49:21

Okay, well there you go fingers crossed they'll follow you.

**Helen** 49:23

Oh god yeah I hope.

**Sam** 49:25

Thank you. That's great you Thanks for listening to The Divorce Club with me Samantha Baines please hit subscribe and do leave us a lovely review. It really does make a difference. You can also tweet us @DivorcePod or send us an email, TheDivorceClubPod@gmail.com. And if you'd like to follow me on social media, I'm @SamanthaBaines on Instagram and Twitter. See you soon.