

#LADYBOSS

LABEL EXECUTIVE LISA ROTH ON OWNING YOUR STORY & TAMING THE CIRCUS IN YOUR HEAD

By Lily Grae

For 20 years, Lisa Roth was a nutritionist, then she dabbled in documentary filmmaking, and now she's the VP and Creative Director for CMH Label Group, where she's also a driving force behind popular brand Rockabye Baby – a collection of albums that are stylistically lullabies, but to the tunes of Metallica, David Bowie, Fleetwood Mac, and countless others that serve up the perfect amount of irony. Over the course of an hour or so, the lullaby aficionado sat down with me and offered up advice on everything from owning the good, bad, and ugly of your story, to making time for wellness, and taking in all the life and lessons that happen in between.

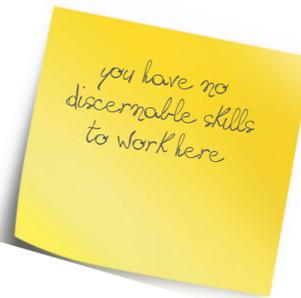
THIS IS MY LIFE. I END UP PLACES.

Our office manager told me that [I had no discernible skills to work here] when I started. At first I was in awe. Like, the balls it takes to say that. I had many emotions; I thought it was funny, I thought it was ballsy, I was hurt, I was embarrassed, I became self-conscious for years here, but I also, in the back of mind, knew that this is my life's story. I end up places. I've had several careers, and I always end up in places that I really am not qualified for. I am always saying that I'm an unexceptional person with an exceptional ability to make people think I can do things. When she said that, there was this quiet smile in the back of my head like, "Yep, here I am again. Isn't it cool?"

ASPIRE TO APPROACH EVERYONE WITH EMPATHY AND COMPASSION.

I'm not a pro at this. I am a hyper-sensitive person, my whole life. I'm sensitive to light, sounds, touch, taste, everything. I pick up vibes a mile away. I've had to learn, with time, to manage that, and be self-protective and not overextend myself. I fail at this daily, but what I aspire to is to approach everyone with empathy and compassion. Everybody has a story, whether their depression, or whatever it is that's annoying you is chemical, or something that happened growing up, or politics...currently. Everybody has a story. You can't assume you know what's going on, and you can't take those things personally because it's not about you. In the moment, that can be very hard, but like so many things in life, I think it's an effort worth cultivating and trying again and again. And when you fail and you get upset, or you get angry, or you do something you're not proud of, acknowledge it, own it, apologize if necessary, get up and try again with the next person. It's a life skill that I don't know anyone completely conquers, unless maybe you're the Dalai Lama. It creates intimacy and vulnerability and all of those things that are important in life.

ALLISON ROTH



"You have no discernable skills to work here" is scrawled across a post-it note taped to the wall in Lisa Roth's office. When I point it out, she jumps up and presents it to me proudly. It's been there since she started with the label 12 years ago.

ON SELF-AWARENESS

I'm painfully self-aware. That's for a number of reasons. I feel everything, and early on, I had to learn how to manage all of the feelings – the sounds, the sights, the stuff, the noise I pick up in a room. I have been in therapy for years off and on. Partially because of how I am built, partially because of things that happened that were traumatic. I recommend therapy for everyone. It's not everyone's cup of tea, but without it, I don't know where I would be. Intuitively, I value self-awareness. To me, that is the bottom line foundation of wellness. That's it. I'm someone who is so smitten with the bottom line, most foundational truth of everything, anything, and everyone. That's where I want to go immediately. It's not always appropriate, but that's where I want to go. I value it because of my own journey.

BE INTERESTED IN PEOPLE

Learning from someone else is something you don't see much of these days. That, to me, those kind of relationships - relating to someone that way is a lost artform, and it's how you learn to live life. What else is the meaning of life?

LIFE IS NOT A YOUTUBE VIDEO. BE AUTHENTIC.

I am completely in love with the idea of owning your story - your entire story - the good, the bad, the ugly, the embarrassing, the vulnerable, the deepest darkest secrets you never want to see the light of day. Owning the story 100 percent, because when you do, you become a fully authentic, integrated person out there - in social media, in the world. It's a law of physics. What you put out there, you attract back. Put that out there, and you'll attract back that kind of energy, those kind of people, those kind of opportunities, that kind of wellness.

You put out a cherry-picked version of yourself - the instagram version of yourself - that's what you're going to get back, and you're going to be tap dancing to get recognition. You're going to be tap dancing so hard in life to get the jobs you want - to attract the life you want. I was on that path, too, long before social media existed, trying to be what you think is admirable, interesting, charismatic, beautiful - it's what you've seen on television, youtube. Life is not a Youtube video. Life is not a reality show. Life is hard, and exhausting and embarrassing and it's a lot of falling down and pain and getting up and having a great evening, and then laughing and then crying and then feeling like shit. It's like, this is life. The more integrated you can be, the more you build your little toolcase for dealing with the ups and downs, the more authentic, stronger, healthier life you'll live.

There were a lot of years of my life - part of the way I was raised, when I grew up, what I grew up around, the messages I got, what I look like - informed how I acted, what I said, what I was aspiring to be, but it was excruciating and exhausting and took a toll on my health, my life, everything. I had to figure it out over many years that it's life draining. It's the opposite of what's valuable. My story is as important as anyone else's - the real story. If in fact you want to have an impact in life, and you want to touch people and connect, you can't do it if you're a pretend person. It won't happen.

STAYING VULNERABLE IS KEY

It's inspiring. I think we've moved away from that. I don't know if we ever were there. I don't think this society has taught people to value their stories - to value the goofy, weak - what we call weak parts of ourselves. I don't think any of that is new. I just think it's taken on a whole new breath because of social media, because of media in general. I also think that the only answer to a lot of things that are happening on a bigger scale, again, whether it's politics or in your own family, the only answer is learning to own that stuff and share it. It's courageous. Those stories touch you and communicate with you in a nonverbal way. That's what's needed right now.

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ON HER PREVIOUS CAREER IN NUTRITION

I wanted to be a ballerina first, but it became apparent that I would never in a million freakin' years be a prima ballerina, so yes nutrition was my first career. My father was a surgeon. He wanted nothing more than for one of his kids to be a doctor. Not one of his kids wanted to be a doctor. His mother was an immigrant from Eastern Europe who came through Ellis Island in the early part of the 1900s. She earned a high school education here in the US. It was the thing she was most proud of her entire life. Her diploma hung on the wall of her house. She was a brilliant woman, and if she would have been born decades later, she would have been a scientist or a doctor. Very curious person. Very aware of the importance of what you eat - nutrition, preventative medicine. She had a correspondence going with every food company that existed. She would write to Land o' Lakes butter and ask, "Why is your butter yellower this year?" She'd write to the cottage cheese company: "Why did you change the containers from glass to plastic?" They would write her back. Those letters still exist. I remember her visiting us. I was a teenager, and I got into a conversation with her about nutrition. I thought, "Wow, that's powerful. That's something I'm interested in." I realized later that if you want to get to the bottom line, foundational issues of anybody, talk to them about their food habits. That's what attracted me to nutrition. That thrilled me. Also, it's practicing preventative medicine. It's the psychology. I had my first client my sophomore year of college. I hadn't even finished. I started to practice right out of college without an RD. I felt very confident about what I knew. I studied physiology. I understood how the body worked. There was always that little voice, though, like, "Lisa, what are you doing? You don't have your diploma yet."

ON MAKING TIME FOR WELLNESS

It boils down to self-acceptance. When you honor yourself, and you have a regard for it, you're going to want to take care of it. I think it requires that. I don't think you have to be perfect at this.

If most of the time you're trying, and most of the time wanting to be healthy and whole and well, it will happen. Sometimes, you're too tired to do the best you can. I don't think people live in their bodies enough. I don't think they sit there and listen to how they're feeling and what their bodies are saying. I think people live next to their bodies - sort of outside of themselves, because it's more comfortable out there, it's safer out there. Sitting here, and listening to your thoughts and taking responsibility for your choices is uncomfortable and sometimes scary. This society, unfortunately, does us a disservice from day one by teaching us that discomfort, fear, pain of any kind - psychic, physical - these are all bad and to be avoided, and if you're experiencing them, you're doing something wrong. You suck at something if you're uncomfortable. It's so the opposite. When you don't take advantage of the difficulties, the exhaustion, when you can't sit with that and examine it, and feel it, and taste it, you miss out on the greatest teachers of life. Every mishap, every setback, every problem, is a graduate school course in life. If you show up and cultivate those tools, learning how to sit - whether you have to read a book, talk to people you trust, have conversations - whatever it is you need to do, you will find every answer you need to guide you in the next right direction in the middle of that muck and ick and difficult stuff. It's all right there. That's where it is. That's where it is! Many people miss out on that.

KNOW WHEN TO TAKE A BREAK

If you're like me, you can keep pushing and pushing and pushing until you harm yourself, or you're facing an emotional breakdown. I don't recommend that. It's getting to a time in your life when you start to question these things and you start to cultivate that self-regard, and you pay attention to what's out there as far as information. I happened to learn about sleep hygiene 12 years ago when I was working in television, and I did a Discovery Network segment on sleep and its importance, and I learned good sleep hygiene, which I practice, and yet, once I've drawn the blackout curtains, turned on the air purifier for white noise, and put the thing over my eyes, I then lie there and watch the circus go on in my head - particularly the monkeys. They are so undisciplined and rude and loud, and I lie there. I'm not perfect at it, but I have part of it down. I keep pursuing the other. My new thing is meditation. I read a lot of studies. I'm very attracted to what I read. You have to want to take care of yourself.