

Ep #98: Genuine Healing vs. Performative Recovery



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With Your Host

Sandy Linda

[The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy](#)
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How long should transformation take? And what if you're not bouncing back fast enough? Let's talk about why real change doesn't happen overnight, and why that's okay. Stay tuned.

Welcome to *The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy*. Hosted by Master Certified Life Coach and fellow trailblazer, Sandy Linda, this is your space to discover how life's biggest challenges can ignite profound transformation—where grief becomes growth, setbacks become stepping stones, and your unique story lights the way for others. If you're ready to turn life's challenges into opportunities for leadership, legacy, and forward momentum, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Hello, creative humans and fellow trailblazers. I hope your summer has had some wonderful moments, even if it isn't perfect. Last week, I had one of those moments when a friend persuaded me to brunch at a new spot. Honestly, I almost said no, but I went.

I found myself at a table with women who rebuilt after heartbreak. Some after losing loved ones through divorce or death, some after failed careers, and others who had broken friendships. And here all they are, making their storms into superpower. It hit me. We choose how we show up, even when the world feels messy or overwhelming. Sometimes, it starts with saying yes to brunch.

Today, I am addressing a question from Lisa, one of our email subscribers and loyal listeners, that will resonate with many of you. Lisa writes, "I want to thank you, Sandy. Your podcast is helping me through this grieving process. But I'm curious about your reinvention journey. What's the difference between healthy reinvention and just staying busy to avoid grieving? How do I know if I'm actually healing or just performing recovery?"

Thank you for this incredible question, Lisa. You touched on something many of us struggle with, especially as ambitious women who take action when life gets difficult. Today, I'm exploring the difference between genuine healing, which is healthy reinvention, and just putting on a fantastic show, which is performative recovery. I dig into why our strengths as high achievers get things done can

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actually backfire during grief. And I am going to share some hard-won wisdom about what real invention looks like when you are piecing your life back together.

Whether you are rebuilding after loss or feeling pressure to move on, know there's no finish line on anyone else's timeline. Let's unpack this together because you are not alone.

Thank you for trusting me with this question, Lisa. Honestly, you're asking something I wish someone had explained to me when I was stuck in my grief but couldn't seem to understand it. Let me take you back to when I thought I was winning at recovery, but I was losing myself.

Within two and a half years, I lost both my parents and my sister. And I didn't even know the term cumulative grief was a thing, which means multiple losses. I just knew I was living it day after day. Here's what I did, and maybe you'll recognize yourself in this story. I acted like life was wonderful. I threw myself into work, took on extra projects, and kept myself so busy that I barely had time to breathe, let alone feel.

On the outside, everyone thought I was handling everything beautifully. But inside, I was piling achievement after achievement over a pain I refused to look at. I didn't want to disappoint anyone. I didn't want my friends to worry or my team at work to think I couldn't handle it. Honestly, I thought if I just kept going, just kept succeeding, the pain would eventually have to let go.

But underneath, I felt empty and lonely than ever, even as everyone praised how strong I was. I got great at reading the room and performing the version of myself people expected, but it cost me. I ignored my own needs so hard for so long, my body finally put up the stop sign. A health scare I couldn't push past. That's when I realized I had not truly let myself grieve, and all that pretending was actually blocking any chance at real healing.

Here's what I learned the hard way. Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is a rebuilt life. After loss, building your new life is slow, messy work. Anyone who promises a quick transformation is selling you something. What matters most is

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what's real to you right now, not what you're supposed to value or how quickly you should move on, but what actually matters in this moment.

Lisa asked how to tell the difference between healthy reinvention and just staying busy to avoid grieving. So what's the real difference? For me, it came down to four key areas: What was driving my actions, how deep the changes went, how I felt over time, and most of all, my relationship with myself.

Let's simplify it. Imagine your house after a storm. You can hang up pretty new curtains, paint over the cracks, or you can get down and fix the foundation. Both might look okay from the outside, but only one holds up long-term. Let's walk through these together so you can spot what's really happening in your own life.

Number one: What drives you? Your motivation. Healthy reinvention is when you're moving toward life, not running away from pain. It's powered by real hope for your future, not the fear of sitting still. For me, this started when I faced the truth that some things just don't last forever, including the people we love. That truth didn't crush me; it became fuel to create something new and meaningful.

On the other hand, performative recovery is driven by fear and external pressures. It's all about appearances. It's when you're telling yourself, "I need to look okay," or "Everyone expects me to be over it." For me, it was pressure to look strong at work, to never miss a deadline, and to keep that reputation of, "She's always bouncing back."

Number two: How deep does the change go? With healthy reinvention, the changes go all the way to your core: your values, your mindset, your habits. I had to rethink my idea of success. I stopped steamrolling through hard conversations and learned to really listen to myself and others. My leadership changed because I truly started caring about what mattered, not just what looked good on paper.

Performative recovery focuses on surface level. It's like slapping a fresh coat of paint over a wall that's cracking. You might learn new coping skills, dive into new activities, but you're not dealing with your loss. You are just covering it up. The pain is still there, waiting for a quiet moment to sneak back in.

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Number three: What happens over time? Here's the thing: Healthy reinvention sticks. You start to grow in ways you feel for the long-term impact. Your relationships become more honest because you're finally honest with yourself. I lost a few old friendships along the way, but it opened room for deeper, more genuine connections, just like my day at a brunch at a new restaurant spot that my friend invited me. And my energy, my sense of hope grew over time instead of draining out.

But when you're just performing recovery, you often return to old patterns. You might feel alone, even around friends, because nobody knows what's going on beneath your surface. Your self-worth becomes dependent on maintaining the performance, which gets heavier and more exhausting to keep up.

And the last key feature, number four: your relationship with yourself. At the heart of it, healthy reinvention means finally becoming your own friend. You accept where you are, treat yourself kindly, and trust yourself again, especially when things get hard. You don't need outside approval to feel okay. You learn to be your own best friend instead of your harshest critic. That, to me, is real power.

Performative recovery feeds self-doubt. You need constant likes or validations from others because you can't trust your own judgment yet. The more you perform, the more you lose touch with what you need and want. You become dependent on external approval to feel okay about yourself.

Let's pause for a real check-in. Take a breath, because I know I unpacked a lot. Ask yourself honestly, am I running towards something I truly want, or am I just running from the pain? There's no right or wrong answer, just honesty. Sometimes the bravest thing you can do is admit you're tired of pretending.

Here's my personal guide. After a busy day or finishing a big project, notice how you feel. Are you fuller, more like yourself, or do you feel drained and hollow? Healthy reinvention leaves you with more hope and a stronger sense of who you are. Performative recovery leaves you depleted and unsure.

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This brings us full circle to Lisa's question: How do you know if you're healing or just performing recovery for the world? I hope this breakdown helps you recognize the difference so you can honor your own pace and needs instead of faking a smile when your heart needs proper care.

Here's what I hope you take away. Healing isn't a performance and has no timeline. The heart of reinvention is in your why and how honest you will be with yourself moving forward. You get to write your own story. It's okay if others don't get it or think you're moving too slow. Take as long as you need, rebuild a life that feels real, not just one that looks impressive.

If no one else has said it, I'm saying it now: You may rest, let go of what doesn't serve you, and you are allowed to reinvent your life at your own pace. If you needed permission, let this be it.

I would love to hear your story. If anything I shared today may you take the initiative to email me. What's one thing you realized you might do for show, which is performative recovery, and one small step you could take for yourself this week, which is healthy reinvention? Your honesty might help another listener, a friend, or a teacher or your boss, your leader.

If you find today's episode helpful, share it with a friend or leave a review. It helps more women find this space and feel less alone. As I end today, you're not broken or behind. You are where you need to be for your reinvention, even if it looks messy. Keep building your legacy, one honest, imperfect, beautiful moment at a time. Take care, everyone, and have a great week. Bye.

Thanks for joining us on *The Reinvention Lab*. If today's episode inspired you, don't forget to follow and share it with someone who's ready to turn their challenges into opportunities. Want to take your journey to the next level? Visit sandy linda.com/program and apply for coaching today. Together, we'll turn your story into a legacy. Until next time, keep moving forward with purpose, passion, and power.