

# Disrupt Yourself Podcast

## EPISODE 274: LINDSEY SHIPLEY

Welcome back to the Disruptor Yourself Podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S Curve of learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. Today's guest came to us in a special way. She sent me an email and told me her story, and it's an amazing one. Lindsey Shipley embarked on a career as a labor and delivery nurse and started her family. Pretty standard stuff, that is, until a life-threatening cancer diagnosis changed everything. In the midst of recovering from multiple cancer treatments, Lindsey says she couldn't sit still. After giving birth to her own child, she observed that the current hospital system wasn't providing new moms with the preparedness and confidence they needed to breastfeed. After four cancer diagnoses and a tumultuous startup life. Lindsey is the proud founder of Lactation Link, which provides breastfeeding consultation for more than 1,000 families per month with a digital twist. Her community of 130,000 followers on Instagram is a testament to how much she's helped families with newborns over the years. I know you'll find her story as inspiring as I did.

**Whitney Johnson:** Tell us about a formative experience, something that really has shaped who you are.

**Lindsey Shipley:** You know, I grew up as the youngest of five girls in my family, no brothers. Some people would say that's a blessing or a curse. Depends on how you're looking at it. Right. And I was the youngest by six and a half years. So, I guess you could call me a caboose or an oopsie. Although my parents have been grilled extensively that that's not the case. So, I really grew up literally looking up to my older sisters, and it was kind of like a legacy to live up to. I loved it. I loved being by my sisters. I loved seeing the things that they were doing, whether they were going to dances or playing sports. You know, I kind of got drug along on several sports outings and things like that. And then as I started, as young as I can remember, I had a basketball in my hand. My dad was a Hoosier. He grew up in Indiana, know he moved out to, to Utah for college. So, he was really an Indiana Hoosier at heart. And he really taught us to play basketball from a young age. And as I started to get older, you know, there was these things that were just done, you know, as a part of the Freeze family. All my sisters ran cross country. We all played basketball at one level or the other. So, it wasn't really like a question or a conversation of like, let's sit down at the table and see what you're going to do. It was just kind of these things that you did. And I also remember like, you know, like cross

country, for instance, starting that it was hard, you know. And I wasn't like a collegiate runner time or anything like that. But I think it taught me to work hard. And I'm also grateful that I had experiences on several different teams to be able to learn how to mesh with different personalities of people.

**Whitney Johnson:** When you said that the thing that came to mind for me was, have you ever seen the film *Fiddler on the Roof*, ever?

**Lindsey Shipley:** I've seen the play, yeah.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. Well, one of the things he talks about is tradition. And there's a song that he says in Anatevka, everybody knows who they are and what's expected of them. And so, when I hear you talk about that, I think, you know, it can be a curse, right? If you've got all these older siblings and there's something expected of you that you don't want. But in your particular case, they modeled for you what growing up looked like and who you wanted to be. And so, they paved the path for you.

**Lindsey Shipley:** It was a positive for me, for sure.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, you did follow in their footsteps, but you made a few footsteps of your own. So, in high school, you received 16 varsity letters. You went on to play basketball in college, you were a Gatorade Player of the Year in your home state. If I were going to predict what you were going to do out of college, I would have been very incorrect. So, what did you choose to do and how did you make that decision?

**Lindsey Shipley:** I remember as a teen and I still have it in my journal that I wrote down that I wanted to either be a surgeon, a lawyer, or a nurse. I remember going to the counselor's I don't know, maybe medical school, maybe nursing school. And I remember them immediately handing me the paperwork for nursing school. So, I don't know if that was more of a female situation or knowing that I was in athletics.

**Whitney Johnson:** Okay, wait, wait. Let's stop. Okay.

**Lindsey Shipley:** You're being polite.

**Whitney Johnson:** You were a female and you wanted to go into the medical profession. They handed you nurse, not doctor.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Sure.

**Whitney Johnson:** Let's just be clear. That is unfortunate.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yeah.

**Whitney Johnson:** Alas, it happened.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Sure.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right, keep going now.

**Lindsey Shipley:** But we're. We're in control of our destiny. I could have pushed back on that. Right. And I think that's just because, looking back now, I think that my personality is probably more in line with a physician-type role now, knowing what I know about what those roles are. But I think looking back with timing and we'll also get into, you know, I've had something come up with my health. I don't have any regrets about this path.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, you feel really good about the decision you made. That does not mean that there's not cultural bias. So, I think that's important to hold both of those together.

**Lindsey Shipley:** 100%. Yeah. Yeah. And maybe we can talk about, you know, the female physician that saved my life later and, and what an amazing impact she's made because she chose to become a doctor. And I think that you know, I think that girls can do anything. You know, and I think that my parents instilled that in us.

**Whitney Johnson:** You decided to become a nurse, but what called you to nursing?

**Lindsey Shipley:** I really loved the fact that I could work wherever I was. You know, I got married my second year of college, so, I really wanted something that if we needed to move for my husband's work or wherever we were together, I'd be able to get a job. My sister had become a nurse and had gone down that path and she was able to do it as she was also playing basketball in college. So, I really thought that that was a fantastic path and was able to talk to her about it. I also love that you could choose the area that you could work in, and if you got bored in one area, you could. So, maybe you could be an O.R. nurse for a little while, then you could do labor and delivery, a NICU, ICU, work in a clinic. There's so many different capacities. And then now I've used my RN in a role that is not necessarily traditional or that I would have ever foreseen, but it does give great flexibility. So, I think that's what led to my ultimate decision of doing that.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, now fast forward, you're, you're working as an RN, you have two young children and then you have a crucible moment. What happened?

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yes. When I was 27 years old, I had an 18-month-old and a newborn baby. And I just went to my eight-week checkup with my doctor. My husband was actually out of town. He was in grad school at the time prepping for a second year. And I went in, and I had had like a little spot that I had mentioned to my physician eight months prior that he kind of had dismissed away, said it was nothing to be concerned about, would go away after delivery. Wasn't going away. So, I had him check it out again. It ended up being cancer. Something I never predicted even when I had him check it out. Having this background as a college athlete, being healthy and active, having really no symptoms that you would think of when you think of cancer. And that kind of started me down this road that that was eight years ago. And there's been a lot that's happened between now and then, but a couple of surgeries off the bat to remove the cancer and the tumor. Do testing and then decide, my physician decided, no, it's necessary to take some lymph nodes as well. So, go in and remove some lymph nodes. Then we have 3 to 4 months of therapy. Not to mention, you know, emotional, and, and I'm also physically recovering from a c-section delivery with my daughter. So, it was definitely a painful moment that has changed me in many, many ways.

**Whitney Johnson:** When you had cancer, what is the best thing that anyone said to you or did for you?

**Lindsey Shipley:** Cancer is a funny, like, weird thing to be a part of because a lot of times people think of it and they're like they're thinking, worst-case scenario, right? And a lot of times it's uncertain. And so, it can be a huge roller coaster. And I personally believe in God, and I believe that he has a unique plan for me. And I think the hardest part about this journey, I think something I'm still learning today is learning to put my trust in Him because we want to control as humans and as people, we want to control. We want to know what's going to happen next. Right? So, the most vulnerable thing is having something that's two inches in front of your face, a cancer diagnosis, and not knowing. You know, not knowing necessarily what's the prognosis? We do more testing. We know a little bit more. We have to have the surgery. There's going to be a recovery. But we don't know. Are we going to have it come back? Are we going to have shortened lifespan? Are we going to live till we're 85? We don't know that. And so, that's kind of been one of the biggest stretching things that I've learned is to have to put more trust in. What I know to be true is that God has a unique plan for me.

**Whitney Johnson:** One of the thoughts that came to me is that this idea of like you said, I don't/haven't ever had any health issues. And so, in my brain, I'm going to live until I'm probably 85 or 90. I just will. And what you're saying is that in that moment you think to yourself, I might only live six more months, and, oh, by the way, I'm actually not in control because yesterday I thought I was going to live for another 50 years and now I'm not. And so, what happened in your brain was this seismic shift.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yeah, and it doesn't happen all at once. It doesn't happen. It's not like, okay, I got my diagnosis today and then tomorrow I'm going to gear up and put on a smiley face, and then the net like it's not linear. I've had cancer come back four times now since that original diagnosis.

**Whitney Johnson:** Four, four times.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yeah. And each time it's come back, it's knocked me down to ground zero. I think I've, I've obviously layered strength and I've layered this experience to be able to tackle it in a different way each time. But like this last time, I went four and a half years disease-free. After some amazing treatment, we had decided to have another baby which was being, getting pregnant with him and carrying that pregnancy. It was a wonderful healing experience for me. After feeling like, gosh, my body's kind of failed me and kind of done this weird thing that I never saw coming. Pregnancy was this amazing healing experience.

**Whitney Johnson:** I think that's really beautiful of that feeling of here you are in your early thirties now, right when this happened and just like my body is dying or it feels like it's dying, and then there's something coming alive in your body.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And it was a reaffirmation to me that God knows my specific needs because when I was initially diagnosed, it sounds weird. My mind immediately went to our future family because I was so young, and we were in just the thick of building our family. And so, for that time it was a lot of pain that I took on and trying to, you know, tackle it and look at it so many different ways. But then and, and thinking I would never have that experience again. Thinking and like almost kind of like that will never happen for me. And that hurts. So, the fact that we got so far out from having any disease and that we felt so good about it. So, you're absolutely right. It was this like affirmation. God knows exactly what I need and, and He blesses me in this unique way. And it was a really beautiful experience for me. And then delivering him and kind of having this I have this video of when he was born and I looked at my husband and I kind of almost I have a smile on my face, but I'm shaking my head like we made it past this forever, like finish line, like we just ran a marathon and gosh, we made it right.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And then two weeks later, I had a routine MRI. I have pictures going in, drinking in the contrast, thumbs up, not worried at all. And I have a recurrence of cancer, not in the original spot, which was in my pelvic area. I had never had anything travel in my body and had a brain lesion pop up. And so, my world was, was really shattered. Our world was shattered.

**Whitney Johnson:** Again.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Again, and it wasn't like, oh, I've done this before. Let me put the armor right on. I know exactly what I'm doing. I'm talking two weeks of crying, 2 to 3 hours a day, wishing, can I go back, you know, waking up in the morning. Okay, that was just a terrible nightmare. Oh, no, that is reality. And then and then thinking like, okay, it's in my brain. Like, what does this mean? Is this like, honestly, it sounds morbid, but is this game over? Like, what is this like? Literally, you're trying to piece it together. And I'm, I'm so lucky because, you know, misfortune and having this rare disease, but very lucky. And I understand it's a privilege to have the access to care that I do, number one. I also have several. I've got a doctor who's a brother-in-law.

**Lindsey Shipley:** I've got a sister who's a nurse practitioner. I've got a lot of tools and assets in accessing health care and being able to call on, on those people to be a part of kind of like my team and my husband always being there and being reassured. He copes a lot differently. He's the steady rock that these things are just not possibilities in his mind. And so, yeah, it's, it's just kind of okay, am I, am I going to take one step forward today? Am I going to take one step forward today? And also noticing like it has to be internal?

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah.

**Lindsey Shipley:** There's this quote that says, "The greatest healers are those who sit with the sick while they heal themselves." Nobody can come, no amount of rah-rah or get on your feet or any of that from an external source. Now, we can support, we can love, we can wrap our arms around, but that person has to walk through the mud and up the hill and get to the other side. And so, that's been a realization for me, not going through it just once, but four times I have to do it. And the greatest help to me, are those that are patient with my timeline and love me no matter what.

**Whitney Johnson:** Thank you for that. I think right now, and I just had an experience in the last couple of days with someone that I am close to where I am so task-oriented and let's do this and let's do this and let's do this and let's do this. And this is a really important reminder, I think, for you to me. But I think anybody who's listening because so many people right now are in some type of pain, is that one of the biggest actions that we can do is to just be there and do nothing while they have the experience. So, you've said you've had four bouts of cancer at this point. Your doctor said to you, don't work and you still worked. So, and this is when a business was born. So, tell us what happened.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yeah, well, so, after I'd had those two surgeries and I had had lymph node removal, my leg had to kind of relearn how to direct that like fluid in your leg, so you don't get swelling. So, that took 3 to 4 months. And when you're working as a nurse, you're on your feet for 12 hours a day. And so, not necessarily don't work at all, but being a floor nurse for 12 hours is probably not a great idea for at least a year. While we get through this occupational therapy, and we see how you're doing. That was really tough. I actually had talked to my hospital about maybe working in the NICU where, where you're sitting a little bit more or in the nursery. It didn't, it just didn't end up working out. And so, of course, me, I can't sit still. Right. Even when you're supposed to sit still and looking back on that, I kind of wonder a little bit about myself because. Maybe I did need a little bit more rest than I gave myself credit for. Maybe it was hard when people said, what do you do? I'm a nurse. Where do you work? Oh, I'm not working right now. I didn't like that. I didn't like saying that even though it was like totally the season for me to rest. So, maybe I learned something about myself looking back.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Being totally honest about it. But I also think I had a passion and, and I was at the beginning of my career, to be honest. I had only been working as a nurse for four years or whatnot, even before I had had my second baby. And I had really kind of started learning more about breastfeeding because my background is in labor and delivery. I started as a young labor and delivery nurse at 22. I got to sit at the bedside of hundreds of deliveries, which are super special moments. You know, every day you go to go into work and clock in is somebody's special day. They're going to remember forever. It's a really cool thing to be a part of, but you've also got a responsibility. You can't have a; you can't have an off day when you're doing that. And so, really, it was by observation that I found it kind of a chasm, a disconnect between the hospital system and what was truly happening in those immediate postpartum periods. And I noticed that women were struggling breastfeeding. I noticed that women were having a hard time knowing how to hold their baby, let alone get them latched to the breast. And this was happening more often than it wasn't happening. So, I kind of went to my charge nurses and the nurses that train me, which by the way, was very lucky.

**Lindsey Shipley:** The nurses who trained me took me in and a lot of them had 20-plus years of experience and really took me in and helped me. And I said you know, when do I take a course to help women learn how to breastfeed? Because I've never done this before, and I want to make sure I know what's really important. So, I want to make sure I'm telling them the right things. And there just wasn't a resource. There was nothing that, that I could take or do. So, it was kind of just like, oh, just follow what we're doing and you'll kind of get it, right. And I noticed that everybody I watched was kind of doing things a little bit differently and kind of the, the recommendations they were giving and whatnot. So, it kind of made me sit back and think and then also noticing that women who needed help, they needed a lot of help during that first 2 hours postpartum. And I also knew the nursing task list was two miles long in the first 2 hours postpartum to get a patient transferred. So, anyway, I became very interested in how do I learn more? I found out about this credential called IBCLC, it's an international board-certified lactation consultant, and I started kind of figuring out how I could earn that credential. And I want to insert and back up is that my mom never breastfed us kids, totally fine. It was the eighties. It was like it just formula. Advertising was everywhere.

**Lindsey Shipley:** But she was so supportive of anything we did. And my next oldest sister, Cami, she was the first one in our family to do that. And she leaned on, on her nurses and her mentors, and she did a fantastic job. So, I mentioned her to say that she was kind of my mentor and that aspect when I went on to have my kids and, and whatnot. Because that's important, you have to have that in place, or most mothers are going to wean without support in that first week postpartum. Right. So, supports are really important and it's really a community failure. It's not a lot of times I think in the discussions it's more of a shameful thing or the failures put on the mom. But it's really a community effort because if we can increase our rates of breastfeeding, we increase public health tremendously. So, anyway, went down this road to get the credential and I found out I had to go and do like a week-

long comprehensive course, and I had a six-month-old, you know, my diagnosis for cancer was six months ago and I had, had foot surgery. So, I've got a boot on my leg, a six-month-old that's breastfeeding, and a conference, the only conference I can do it as in San Diego.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And so, I tell my husband, he goes, you crazy? But, you know, I really, I really was excited about pursuing it. So, I got it done. I sat for the exam, and I had my first class and that first class. So, I think I so, I was like, I'm going to start this business. I'm going to have classes and I'm going to go see people in their homes and, and whatnot. And I started the business, I think, at the end of December 2014, like, and then my first class I put for January 15th and my husband said, how are you going to get ten people to a class like in two weeks? And I said, I don't know, I'll text everybody I know, and I'll stand outside Babies R US if I need to, but I'll get ten people there. And I did. I got ten people there. You know, one was a cousin, and one was a really good friend. But we got ten people there and it was really humble beginnings, a really ugly slide show. You know, I made little, little gifts, handmade gifts. I made the, the cloth tablecloth that was there. But I think what people felt is the passion, right? So, that was the beginning of the business seven years ago in my living room.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yep.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. So, you said that you were told people couldn't make money as a lactation consultant, but you have. So, talk to us about your business model, about what you've grown and built over the past seven years.

**Lindsey Shipley:** So, the reference there is, you know, there's a book called How to Be a Private Practice Lactation Consultant. The first page says if you want to make a living, you know, probably not going to be a great, great way to do that. Right. And I kept reading, I was like, oh, I'm just going to put that over here. Like, I'm not going to give too much weight to that because we're going to figure out that piece later. Right? I guess I just believe that we can have creative solutions to two problems. And I also believe that just because it hasn't been done in this way doesn't mean it can't be. It just means something else is being done right now. Right. So, I started that first class in my living room, like I mentioned, and started doing those two or three times a month. I started an Instagram page. It was super ugly, Whitney, I'm going to be honest. Like, I posted a picture one day and my sweet sister called me. I was like, you got to take a picture down. Like, like the caption looks great, but no, that ain't going to work. And I was like, its evidence based. Like, it's, that's fine, you know? And so, I say that to mention because if you go to the page now, it's very beautiful and we have a great community over there. But yes, I started that, and I learned baptism by fire. But I also noticed that there was a great thirst for this kind of information in a different format, in a modern format.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Right. So, I was sharing it on Instagram, for crying out loud, about breastfeeding. Right. And a lot of women were chiming in with questions. A lot of women were saying, a lot of women were saying, I want to attend your class, but I live in Poland. How can I do that? Right. So, it was, it was not like when I started, like, oh, I'm going to do it online courses, then I'm going to do this and then I'm going to do this. But I heard things that my community was saying, and I decided to like explore those. So, I said, okay, well I'll do a Google Hangout class. So, we did that. It caps at 15 and that was kind of like my market research period. I did that for about nine months. In addition to continuing the in-person classes and I a lot of like frequent questions, I started just baking those into the curriculum, right? If they weren't there and they were coming up, I knew that there were things that people wanted to know. And so, as I get kind of nine months down the road, I have more inquiries of people that can't even make the Google Hangout times. And I decided to do an online course. So, after gathering that information for nine months, setting a deadline maybe two months away to get everything together, to launch the online course, launch the online courses, and the first two weeks made \$3,000 and thought, wow, I've got it made now.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And so, yeah, we launched that. It was exciting. But then like, you know, the sales started slowing, the pace of the sales started slowing. So, I was like, well, why? Like, why is it, you know? And that's when like I went to a conference and was around some marketing people and I heard the term sales funnel and I said, What's a sales funnel? And I got I hired someone I met at that networking conference to set up my first sales funnel. Maybe six months went by and I learned about webinars. And webinars were a great thing for us because it was this is a different sale than like a T-shirt, right? Or a clothing item. Clothing item. You hold up. Do you like it? Do you not like it? Move on. Right. This is more of like we have to raise awareness about the problem, right? Especially in our

society, because it's a lot when you're pregnant, it's a lot about getting that perfect Pinterest nursery. It's about having your baby shower. And there's not a lot of focus on these very real issues that exist in that postpartum time, which is learning to feed your baby, recovering physically and mentally, having support systems in place. Having discussions with your partner about who's going to take on what roles and how are we going to communicate in this new normal, which I think that that should be reversed in priority.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, breastfeeding is a new S Curve of learning. What are one or two tips that you would give people who are listening around that?

**Lindsey Shipley:** So, I think that what we do is we give them a foundation of knowledge before baby ever arrives. Like this is how it works, this is what you need to pay attention to. And really, we try to approach it that less is more, right. A lot of times, especially, you know, we need the best technology. We need magic teas and magic supplements. And we know that none of that is evidence-based. We really know what the research is about. How do you get the best supply and keep it and what's, what's to expect? Like, let's normalize normal. Like, what are you going to expect in that first week, that first 30 days, that first three months about baby's behaviors in regards to feeding but also in regards to sleeping? And just are they going to cry during the day, in the night, and what's normal there? So, we give them a foundation of knowledge before baby ever arrives. So, we call it creating competent families so that there's confidence before you even go into that first feeding. Right. And I. I think it's with any of us. When we go into something not knowing, it's kind of like we're imagining all these scenarios, right? That's why it's important, if you can, to, like, take a tour of the hospital. Who knows what that's like with COVID now? But because you get to visualize it, you get to see it. It's the same with our courses. We show all these examples of real-life families, 30 different families, all shapes, sizes, and colors.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And women tell us that just seeing women breastfeeding demystified the whole experience for me. Right. So, we, we give them that foundation knowledge, and then we also give them a plan A, a plan B, sometimes a plan C, because babies, birth, and breastfeeding are unpredictable. And I think a lot of times families will think like, oh, well, it's just natural, right? You just put baby up there and it does its thing. If it was natural, we wouldn't have three courses and be seven years into a business, right? It is natural, but it doesn't always come naturally. It's a learned behavior between both mom and baby. And so, when I say plan A and plan B, so what if doves don't fly in that first hour after delivery and baby doesn't latch? What do we do then? If you don't have that plan B in place, it can negatively affect kind of like your long-term outcome and also can be pretty panic inducing for parents, right? Like, oh, everybody's looking at me like this is like I'm supposed to be able to do this, like when in reality there's a lot of different factors and variables. And so, we just want to lay it out. So, even if baby doesn't latch right away like, ok, I'm still pretty calm because I know I can simulate my milk production, I can get baby needed calories all while we practice the skill of latching.

**Whitney Johnson:** You sold your business about six months ago. Tell us about how big it, you've built it, and basically where was it when you sold it?

**Lindsey Shipley:** You know, we were having about 1,000 families per month come into the online courses. When I, when I sold it, we kind of came to like a crossroads, right where we were doing one on one consultations and online courses. We weren't doing as much of in-person classes, pandemic-related, everything, right? But we also wanted to add a component of insurance reimbursement, if at all possible. Because there's so much red tape around this specific subject and needing to maybe be in a physician's office or something like that. Side note, physicians may not have very much training with breastfeeding at all, so, you really do need to have a team, right? Or you need to see an IBCLC specifically. So, there had been a lot of conversation and some limited efforts on going down this road of accepting insurance for consults or group classes or things like that, and how, how that would be possible. So, it was kind of like, well, do we take on an investment to do that? Do we kind of reinvest in the business or do we bring on a strategic partner that's really, really strong in this area? And so, kind of had reconnected with a few businesses that were strong in this insurance realm, mainly with breast pump reimbursement. So, hardware, right. It's called a durable medical equipment company and connected with them and talked about what kind of synergy do we have? Where was Lactation Link really strong, where maybe they were lacking, where were they really strong, where we really needed resources. And so, yeah, went down that path and had conversations and ultimately decided that it would be a great synergy with Aeroflow Healthcare, who ships more breast pumps in the United States than any

other company and was really excited about taking a next step and not just providing the hardware, but providing the know-how and the education behind breastfeeding.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And they were really excited about what we had done with building brand awareness with Lactation Link as well as we had 25 IBCLCs on our team, which is the highest credential you can get in breastfeeding. So, yeah, ultimately made that decision to move forward and have Aeroflow acquire our business. Now I'm still running that business line underneath this new parent company. But you know, to speak to your question of how did you make that decision? With difficulty. There was a lot of back and forth. And I think my husband kind of got to the point where I was like, you come to me when you decided because we talked this to death, because I think when you build something and maybe you go several years without really earning a steady or reliable income, and then you get to a place where, okay, yeah, you know, I am earning a salary every month. Like you just have some kind of just emotional tie to that, right. And so, it's really, really hard to think about letting any of those aspects go. But ultimately, I think it was, I think it was the best move. And I think, you know, my hope is that we're going to be able to serve even more and more families and we will start to take steps with this insurance component, which is the best of both worlds. So, that lactation consultants can earn a great income and families can be served at the highest level. So, that I think was my ultimate decision in moving forward.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah. So, one of the things I think that's interesting hearing you talk through this is this idea of when you sell a business. Yes, you're going to have an exit. And yes, you will, you will make some money. But there's a whole identity shift where if you've built a business, it becomes a part of you. And so, it's like selling off a part of yourself.

**Lindsey Shipley:** It's at the core of your identity. Anything that kind of rocks that or tries to chip away at that, you've kind of got a protective wall up because you had to fight for it for so long, right? So, it's not even within your DNA to let that down at all. So, it has definitely been a shift.

**Whitney Johnson:** What have you done to make that shift?

**Lindsey Shipley:** I've tried to be a little bit more patient than what comes natural to me because I like to run at my own pace. I like to focus on the projects that I think are most pressing, and we had to be scrappy, and we had to do that. We couldn't move everything forward at once, just given the resources and the manpower that we had in a startup situation, it's definitely a little bit of a different pace and a different approach. So, I've tried to be patient with that and look internal and be and kind of say Linds, like it's a little bit of a different setting, right? I know you're used to this, but let's, let's sit back to listen and learn a little bit. And let's, let's still move forward. But you do have to take that, that shift. And there have been hard days. There definitely been hard days. It hasn't been all roses. There have been like where I'm just having an internal struggle. Should I have done this or, you know, what's the future going to be? Back to what we talked about at the beginning. We want to control, and we want to know. Right. And it's really hard to be still and to tell ourselves to have patience, take it a step at a time.

**Whitney Johnson:** You're still learning and you're still growing and you're still developing but in unexpected ways of, oh, okay, so, I know how to go this fast. I know how to go 100 miles an hour. But what is going 60 miles an hour looks like and how does that feel and what does that do to my psyche and how do I how does it impact everybody else around me? And so, there's a lot of growth, but it's sort of growth that you're like, well, I'm not sure I really wanted to grow in that way.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Right. Right.

**Whitney Johnson:** Well, in that way, nonetheless.

**Lindsey Shipley:** I think it's a lesson, too, in that is 100 better than 60. If 100 isn't necessarily calculated or strategic, probably not. And I will say about Aeroflow like they're very strategic, they're very data driven, and I can use more skills in that area. And so, it's kind of looking at it through a new lens and being a little bit more deliberate and kind of going back to you were saying the 60 to 100 doesn't mean 100 is always better. It can be in certain instances. So, I think I'm in a learning phase right now for sure. And a patience phase.



**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah. I mean, definitely when you, when you sell your business and it's interesting because like you can sell your business and you jump to a new curve and oftentimes you think about just exiting period. But in this case, you jump to a new curve of being inside of a larger organization and all of that, that entails. I do think it's interesting, we had just not too long ago on the podcast both Apolo Ohno, the speed skater, and Angela Ruggiero, the hockey player, and both talked about these massive identity shifts when they left sport. And I suspect you had a little bit of that when you left basketball, but perhaps not.

**Lindsey Shipley:** No, totally did. Totally did. And with Apollo's episode, which was just like it was honestly like. It was a hard day and I saw that pop up and I listened to it. And I actually sent it to I've got a wellness coach that's been helping me for the last six months and I sent it to her immediately and I said, jaw-dropping, like best podcast I've listened to in a long time. Because it wasn't long, it wasn't an hour and a half, it was 30 minutes, and it packed a punch. You know, him talking about that. What was his term for the change? Of course, hard pivot. Hard pivot. All of us need to, to know how to do that. And all of us need to understand, like, it's not going to happen in a day. And I loved when he said I looked in the mirror and I had to be okay with who I was. And I think all of us have those, those moments where we have to go through those steps. So, I really appreciate that episode.

**Whitney Johnson:** All right. So, let's go back now to the doctor. So, you said you had this story about a doctor that helped save your life.

**Lindsey Shipley:** So, I'm going to mention her name. I'm going to call her out. Dr. Tawnya Bowles. When I was originally diagnosed, we needed to go to a surgical oncologist to help us, like basically tell us the severity and the staging and then get a plan of treatment in place. And I was originally referred to a different physician. She just had one of the worst bedside manners I've ever seen. I was a nurse, so, I wasn't an oncology nurse, but I was a nurse. So, I had a pretty good foundation of medical jargon and things like that. And everything she said scared the heck out of me. Like didn't know what she was talking about. It was just an awful experience in her office crying, you know, all those kinds of things. We go out to schedule surgery, which was needed, and it was kind of like being an auto parts store. Like they were like, okay, well, we don't have anything open for a couple of months. Like it's not going to make a difference anyway. And it was like, no, no, this is cancer. And I'm 27. I wanted it gone yesterday, but it was just like they didn't have a care in the world. So, it was a really jarring, scary experience. Right. And then being able to be referred to Dr. Bowles. My brother-in-law was able to, who are the other surgical oncologists, and he was able to get me an appointment with Dr. Bowles and to go in and to see her. And in the first 5 minutes, tell me what the game plan was. Tell me she was going to take care of it.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Tell me that we were going to do surgery in two days. Wrap her arms around me like, I mean, she was called to do that. She comes to work to impact people's lives so that their families, not just them, but all their families, can have more happiness and prosperity, and longevity. And I can't thank her enough for that. You know, that initial surgery and then the follow-up surgery two weeks later to take out lymph nodes. And then when I had a recurrence a year later, I was feeling strong, Whitney, like I had been like lifting weights. I was in good shape and I just went in for a normal checkup. And the initial tumor, you could see a little spot on the surface. It wasn't big, but you could see a little dark because it's a form of melanoma. It's called mucosal melanoma. So, she goes and she does her check and it's just a head-to-toe exam. And she felt something under the skin. And she said, Hey, I'm not that concerned, but I just want to biopsy it. It ended up being a recurrence. I couldn't see it. On the surface, I'm pretty scrupulous about my body. I didn't notice it. So, if she wouldn't have found that recurrence and treated it immediately with another resection and removing it, we'd be in a different spot. Because honestly, this cancer is typically too far gone before you find it and treat it. So, in that instance of her finding it underneath my, my skin, you know, literally saved my life.

**Whitney Johnson:** Can you speak to the importance of really going into a doctor and advocating for yourself and the importance of sometimes getting a second opinion?

**Lindsey Shipley:** Wow. Yeah. I'm glad you brought that up. Yeah, I mentioned it to my doctor when I was actually 16 weeks pregnant, and it was small, like, and it wasn't in a place that's easily accessible to view. So, I mentioned it and it was just quick dismissal of like, Oh, that's normal, that's fine. It'll go away after delivery. Me being a labor and delivery nurse, trusting. Right. My provider kind of compartmentalized it. Right. And was like, okay, no big deal. My tummy started to grow. Baby came. This thing was still there. You're absolutely right. I could have just been like, oh,

yeah, you said it was nothing. I also believe that my Heavenly Father said this is something that you need to have checked on. Right. And when I went into the doctor, you know, I had made I said, I'm going to bring it up again when I get in there. And when I got in there, he looked at it and he and I and I said, hey, that spot is still there. And he kind of looked at me like, we've already gone over this. And then I think when he truly took the time to examine it, he knew exactly what it was. And it was, it wasn't a good discovery moment. Right. But you're absolutely.

**Whitney Johnson:** What I do in that moment when he realized.

**Lindsey Shipley:** He went absolutely silent.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah. Because he realized he screwed up.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yeah. Yeah. And you know what it's called? The practice of medicine for a reason. Nobody's got it 100% figured out. And so, it is really important when we're talking about our own health that we're our own advocates. I'm in a position I can do that sometimes people aren't. When I go to the hospital, some people struggle to find a ride to their checkups, and that might be unfathomable to us when it's like a cancer diagnosis, but that's reality. So, that's why we have to do so much work like to advocate for ourselves and hopefully at a community and a system-level with health care because it's it is important if small, small things, small things go by. We're dealing with families and we're dealing with kids. And, you know, it's, it's really important, especially, you know, when you're dealing with women who are in childbearing years, they're the ones who are telling their spouse to go to the doctor. Right. That's why married people have a longer lifespan. They're the ones taking their kiddos to the doctor. So, we especially need to care for our women, especially. So, and I think in any instance, whether it's your children or yourself if you've got an inner voice that says, hey, I don't feel good about this. Then you need to take action regardless of what the "experts" tell you or reassure you with.

**Lindsey Shipley:** And getting a second opinion might be in that realm for sure. When I was going through chemo, which was after that first recurrence, I knew I was going to be spending a lot of time in bed. And so, I had a, I had like a wall to the left of my bed that was empty. And I said to my husband, I said, it would be really cool if we put a bunch of stuff on that wall. And so, we went to work to create kind of this inspo board on my wall, and I put quotes up there, I put pictures of my family that love me and support me. I also put pictures of people that have been through really hard things and like come back, come back, like keep moving forward.

**Whitney Johnson:** Like who?

**Lindsey Shipley:** So, I have yeah, I put one up of like Shannon Miller, who's an Olympic gymnast that had a certain type of cancer. And she got pregnant after she had cancer and she added to her family, and she didn't let that stop her. And she continued on her unique journey by listening to her intuition, by getting healthy again, those kinds of things. I put a Boston Marathon bombing victim-survivor that went back to the Boston Marathon the next year and ran a portion of the marathon with their prosthetic leg.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Like, to me, that was so inspiring. Like to go back to a place where unexpected terror had happened to you that physically altered your body. But to come back, it could have happened again. Like, to come back and, and run like that was very inspiring to me. Right. There's a woman named Stephanie Nilsson who, she got in a plane crash with her husband and a large percentage of her body burns all over it. And she, she fought because she, you know, she has five kids and, and she's, you know, fought through all that tremendous pain. Because she's got a family that she loves and that she wants to live for. So, I think it's really important, no matter who we are or what our aspect. Know that others are watching and drawing strength from our experiences. And it's putting a little chip in their bank for them to be stronger in whatever their struggles and challenges are. I've definitely felt that from others and I'm grateful to those who have, who have had the courage to kind of keep moving forward because it's helped me do the same.

**Whitney Johnson:** Where can people find you?

**Lindsey Shipley:** Connect with me on LinkedIn or Instagram. I'm @Lindsey\_Shipley on my personal page. If you're interested in learning more about Lactation Link, go to [lactationlink.com](https://lactationlink.com) or visit us @LactationLink on Instagram. Yeah, I would love to connect with people in a variety of ways.

**Whitney Johnson:** As you were talking and processing and we were having this conversation, what connections did you make?

**Lindsey Shipley:** Yeah, I mean, I think the connection I made is that sometimes we get so caught up in like, I want to accomplish this, I want to be thought of as this. We're all on our own unique path. One person's hard might be somebody else is easy, right? But it doesn't mean it's not hard for us.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Recognizing that The Lord, Heavenly Father, whoever you look to in a spiritual realm, they're in control. They know the end. We don't. So, we have to put more trust and faith in them. And then we can't just sit back. We do have to keep moving forward. We have to put one foot in front of the other and recognize that things are going to be hard. I've learned that hard is good. And really amazing things come from hard. Sometimes when we're in the thick of something, it all looks bad. We can't foresee a way out. We can't even create that checklist because we don't, we don't know where we are and we're surviving. Right. And I think about when I was diagnosed, December 26, 2019, like rediagnosed with this last recurrence, which I never thought it was going to happen. I was four and a half years disease-free. Typically, when you get to five years, the chance of it ever coming back is low, low, low. So, that's where I was. I was in just the depths and didn't know, like, am I ever going to be left unsupervised in my house again? Like, you know, is this going to be kind of it? For me? It was, it was a really hard time.

**Lindsey Shipley:** One thing that my dad likes to say, "it looks bad now, but let's wait and see." Oh, what a difference a year made in my life. There was a lot of pain, a lot of sickness, a lot of hospitalizations in 2020. Aside from the pandemic, I was going through this treatment and recovery from a cancer recurrence. And then even when I was done, you know, there were lingering side effects. There were know my wellness that I had to catch up on feelings of missing out on that special postpartum time with my newborn that I so longed for that can't be ignored that that's a big deal as well. And then coming back around December 26, 2020, and you know. I shared a picture on social media and I said, you know, this is what our family looks like a year later. We're a lot happier. You know, we have more hope for the future. My, my health is restored. We couldn't have predicted this a year ago. So, all we had to do was fight through in any way we knew how. It was not perfect. It was not linear. It probably looked very ugly at times. But a year later, here we are. So, it looks bad now, let's wait and see.

**Whitney Johnson:** Lindsey, thank you so much. This has been a delight.

**Lindsey Shipley:** Thank you so much, Whitney. It's been so fun.

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Three takeaways from my conversation with Lindsey. Number one, we're not always in control. Lindsey stresses multiple times during our conversation with regard to her cancer diagnosis, with regard to building a business, with regard to just about everything in life. Acknowledging, truly acknowledging that there are some factors that are beyond our control can be liberating and empowering, as can focusing on what we can control, which is our response to every situation. She didn't settle for the prognosis of her first doctor. She advocated for herself, and she chose a positive reaction to some awful news.

Number two. Just because it's always been done a certain way does not mean it can't be reinvented. When Lindsey decided to devote herself to being a lactation consultant, the textbook said, good luck making a living. But she felt deep down that there was a real need for this work. And she was right. The business she built is about preparing women all over the world who are at the launch point of a daunting curve. Parenthood. I love what she said about

the importance of having confidence and preparedness when stepping into the unknown. It can mean the difference between making the roadmap and panic. This can apply to any S Curve, regardless of the stakes, but especially for something as important as becoming a new mother.

Number three, if you're proud of your first version, you started too late. This is a riff on something noted by Reid Hoffman, the founder of LinkedIn, and I love it. If Lindsey had waited to learn about lead generation or make her first Instagram post look perfect, she may not have launched her business with the same gusto that made it take off. Instead, she was scrappy. She was willing to stand outside Babies R Us to get ten people into her living room for the first class. And by the way, being proud of the first version also pertains to identity. Relinquishing one S Curve for another, we're not going to know who we are at first. Remember, the price of a new self is the old self, and it's never too early for that. Thank you again to Lindsey Shipley for being our guest. Thank you for listening. Thank you to our producer, Matt Silverman, audio engineer and editor Whitney Jobe, and production assistant Stephanie Brummel.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.