

00:00 [Introduction Music]

00:12 [McPherson] Welcome to “Practice Outside the Lines” podcast. I’m your host, Heather McPherson, multi-passionate, sexuality entrepreneur. Join me as we learn from the people who are working at the leading edge of sexuality. We’ll listen in to how it all happens, as they share all the secrets to mind-blowing success.

00:36 [McPherson] So, welcome Christine Marie [Mason], six-time founder and CEO. She has a deep interest in women’s wellness and liberation. She founded Rosebud Woman in 2017 after years of research into women’s intimate care needs and formulations and solutions. So, welcome, Christine.

[Mason] Thank you. So good to be here.

01:00 [McPherson] So tell me about “six-time founder.” That sounds like a lot of companies that you’ve launched and have been the CEO of and founder. So, tell me about that.

01:12 [Mason] Well, it sounds like a lot, but when you spread that over thirty years, it’s not that many. It’s like one every five years or something. And that is, by the way, if you’re getting ready to start something, you should imagine yourself committing to it for at least three to five years to get anything really off the ground and running. I got into—I’ve always been a starter. I was in the sixth grade when I did my first newspaper, and I had a business in college. But after graduate school, I already had three little kids, three, two, and one, when I went to business school. And I tried to work in a global consulting environment for a couple years after that, and there was just no accommodation to live from your heart, to combine family, and active work in the world, so I left that position and started my first company then. And that was sold to Nabisco. And then I started another company with a classmate in 1998, that was my first software endeavor, and that was sold to Alcoa. And then I started another one in 2004 and ran that for a few years, and that was sold many years later to DocuSign, a public company. I kept doing these and each time I would learn and grow a little bit more. And then about 2012 I made a very conscious decision as result of other spiritual work, and things like that, that I wasn’t going to do anything that wasn’t focused on health and wellness, on creating more joy and reducing human suffering. This sort of pervasive undercurrent of human suffering that persists across generations. And that a lot of the stuff I started was sort of a cappuccino foam layer to make enterprises marginally more productive, but there were so many deep needs that I could be addressing. So since then, everything I’ve either advised on, consulted on, or started has been in the health and wellness space.

03:05 [McPherson] You were kind of in the big space of selling to big companies. I mean, that's pretty impressive. Nabisco, DocuSign, I mean that sounds like you've had substantial experience in businesses in a variety of different fields. So not just women's wellness.

03:23 [Mason] No, they were all about basically doing services that could—digital services that could be that could be sold online. Things that could scale well. Which fits in with you were telling me earlier that you were helping women navigate to building business in the sexual health space. So, there are some frameworks for acquiring a customer, and the costs of acquiring a customer, and the long-time value of that customer that sort of get to the underlying economics of living your mission. And I think those early businesses were really instructive in that underlying economics component, which really fed into the pricing and structural stuff on Rosebud. And then the second piece is how to lead, and how to build teams that are comprised of people with many different skill sets but a corrobility to navigate together to emotionally navigate, or yeah to lead teams. So, those were very portable skills. And then there was another piece of that is that I was always, or very often, one of the only women in the room in enterprise software and other projects like that. I was living a very masculine life, despite the fact that I was a mom and had kids, and all that stuff. And the gradual awakening to a different kind of leadership, a female or feminine-style leadership was an antidote to those businesses. But yeah, you learn from everything you do, don't you?

04:46 [McPherson] Oh, absolutely, yeah. I kind of joke, like I could say I've started five businesses, but three of them are all tied up in one brand. Cause I did Respark Therapy and Associates, which is a group practice which does sex and couples' therapy, and then I have an arm of it that's like a foundation, Respark Foundation, that provides help for women and individuals who have been sexually harmed. And then like a coaching side of the business, since coaching and therapy can be very separate as well. So, it's definitely not completely different businesses, just because of the way it's set up, structurally it's different and separated in a couple different ways because of that. But yeah, Sexual Health Alliance, the other business I started, provides education for—obviously for healthcare providers and a lot of people know about Sexual Health Alliance. So, I won't get into it too much. Yeah, Practice Outside the Lines, which is this podcast, really kind of my focus is helping women and people start businesses in the field of sexual health and I couldn't think of a better person than you, six-time founder, who's done this over and over again to talk to about this, you know tips and tricks, and how to get started. And I love that you said it's a three-to-five-year commitment. That is so important. Because some people expect to start a business, and in a year or two

later they're like "Ugh, it's not making money, it's not working. I guess I should close." And it's like, no, it's kind of a long-haul.

06:15 [Mason] It is! And this is why it's so important to choose something that you love. Like all the people you're going to meet, every conference you go to, every media outlet you speak to, everything that you do is going to be clustered in whatever segment you pick. So, I love from the perspective of your things that it's all tied together by the content. In sort of looking at it as a business, you parse that a little differently. You'll be like, well so much of what you spend money on and spending your time doing in building a business is aggregating your customer base and finding out who exactly you're talking to. And then as you earn their trust, and can provide them to solve one of their needs, you earn the right to solve one of their needs. Then you can deliver more solutions as you learn more of their needs. So, it could go either way. You could do what you have, which is a core expertise, and then you deliver it through channels to people who are already talking to therapy targeted-clients, or already talking to people who have sexual trauma, or you develop a special knowledge targeted at a specific group, and then you bring more and more services to that group. And that is a very big distinction to make early on in crafting your business model. No matter what field you're in.

07:30 [McPherson] Absolutely. That's some really good advice. You know the second point that you discussed was leading a team. And I can't emphasize that enough. I kind of struggled for a while putting together the right team, that's going to help me grow the business, but also is going to help provide a cohesive unit for, and kind of the consistent message, for the clients and customers that we have. What did you encounter in building a team and leading, especially as a woman but just in general, leading a team of people to work towards this mission of—well for Rosebud wellness, for sexual wellness and intimate care, but for some of the other companies I guess the mission was a little bit different?

08:16 [Mason] Well, I'll start from the conceptual and then go into the specifics. So, what they say as a founder or CEO is that you have two—here are your core jobs: hold the vision, read the market, get the resources, get the team. And so, you're kind of a conductor.

[McPherson] I feel that's really important. So, let's say that again. Hold the vision.

08:37 [Mason] Hold the vision. Like you have to be constantly holding the vision and monitoring the market for changes. So, you're setting the strategy. And anytime other people get negative, you have to be foundationally an optimist, and keep the eye on the

vision. You know, eyes on the prize. And then your job is to get the resources, which could be the money, could be the expertise, and get the team. The people who are sticking around. And when you're doing the team, here's what I've learned. That you figure out what you need to know back of your hand in order to succeed. So, in Rosebud, I needed to know formulation back of my hand, like the best products. I needed to know ecommerce back of my hand. And I needed to know like how to speak at this edge of reverence and dignity to women's sexuality and sensuality to invite a lot more people into the conversation who otherwise would be on the edges. And that had to be reflected in all of our go to market imagery, in our language, and all of that stuff. And so those were the roles I staffed first. And they continue to be the things that drive the business. And then later we added some logistics and things like that. And part of the team pieces—I love to do house projects; you know putz around the house and things? And so, you know how when you paint a room like it's fine, but it's never like when a professional painter paints a room? And there's certain kind of women, certain entrepreneurs who are like "I can do anything, it's all simple!" Bow down to things that are professions. They have an expertise for a reason. They're called professions for a reason. And so—

[McPherson] Stay in your lane.

10:17 [Mason] Stay in! As a leader especially man, you know that everything has subtle things, and having people who are the best at what they do in those seats is really important.

[McPherson] Yeah, so it's hiring the right people that are specific to that task, I guess, or to that industry.

[Mason] Yes, yes.

10:37 [McPherson] So important. So, I saw that you—

[Mason] Although I will say that at the beginning, at the onset of hiring like young—like when people are new—I hire for emotional intelligence before I hire for expertise.

10:48 [McPherson] So, true! Oh my gosh, that's such good advice. Yeah, because you know if they have emotional intelligence, they can pick things up quickly probably, and can get along well with others. Which can make a world of difference when you're leading a team.

[Mason] Yeah, like the worst crime—not the worst crime [both laugh] The hardest thing to deal with as a leader is people who are really defensive. Because they can't—it's not an objective look at the work or the question that's happening in the software, the thing that's happening here. It becomes like an attack on their personhood. And that is never the case. Your personhood is untouchable. You can never do anything wrong—your perfect nature, you're always loved. But your software, your algorithm might be off. We can look at that [laugh]. So, it's this question of like, how identified is the person with the work and how willing are they able to be themselves but then treat the work as sort of an objective output, and always learning. That's kind of what I mean about emotional intelligence.

11:47 [McPherson] Yeah, I kind of add to it that undeniable passion. Like having the passion for the work that's unwavering, because you know I think people can kind of dabble, and so choosing people that this is their thing. Right? This is what they want to do long-term, I think is really important too. I saw you have an MBA. So, you went to business school, obviously they provide you with business plans, marketing, market analysis. Do you feel like that MBA, Master's in Business Administration, prepared you for starting all these businesses?

[Mason] In no way. [Both laugh]

12:24 [McPherson] I a hundred percent agree with you! Cause I have a Bachelor's in Business Marketing and I say that all the time. I had to learn everything myself!

12:34 [Mason] I went to, at the time, the best business school in the country and graduated in '91.

[McPherson] Which school was that? It sounds very impressive!

[Mason] That was Kellogg. And then the year we graduated it topped HBS and Penn.

[McPherson] Wow! Congratulations.

[Mason] But what that becomes, it was more of a filter, like people would take you seriously because you have this credential.

[McPherson] And I'm sure it provides you confidence in actually doing the thing, right?

13:02 [Mason] A certain extent. But the other pieces, they're really teaching you how to embed in a larger organization. Entrepreneurship is a very small portion of business

school curriculum. And it has completely difference metrics. So, I think—and plus that was so long ago. And the world has changed so much. So, I feel like, what is this? Literally almost thirty years ago.

13:28 [McPherson] Yeah, that's a lifetime. I mean, I got my undergraduate degree in the early 2000s and I think to myself, God! Internet was around, but like it's nothing like it is today. You have to learn everything new again, and I feel like that's just how it keeps on going.

13:44 [Mason] That's right. And my friend Lisa, who's in her fifties and she's like all about TikTok right now, and I'm sort of like, you know. But seriously where are people spending their time? And why are they drawn to it? And you have to be super curious about what's next. A lot of my life was around looking at innovation and what's changing in the world, what's two to five years away. Near term innovation, not things that are twenty or thirty years out. And so, yeah always be learning. Don't get too locked in into anything.

14:17 [McPherson] I one hundred percent agree. Yeah, and as someone who, you know really invests in self-education, knowledge business, you know really learning from the experts in the fields, that's something you've done as well. Taking courses, and classes, kind of like learned continuously and specifically self-education in starting these companies.

14:40 [Mason] Yeah, for sure. This particular company came about at a time when I thought I was retired. And I'd been making products at home, for my friends, and I loved that. I kept cooking them up in the kitchen. I have a meditation and retreat center in Hawaii where we were growing herbs, and I learned a lot about plant medicine, about trusting the body and natural health. And in order to really take it from that sort of amateur-ish thing, into a shelf-stable and effective and measurably-effective product, I had to learn everything about formulation, and yeah—

[McPherson] That sounds like a huge amount of work!

15:18 [Mason] Yeah! And so, I got really fortunate because one of my clients in the innovation practice was Estée Lauder, and I was helping them with some technology to move their company forward. And I met a woman who just coincidentally was leaving Estée, who had been in their new product group, and she really held my hand through a lot of that early learning, unstructured, almost like private coaching and identifying organic and USDA organic factories, you know all of that stuff. Helping me find a

chemist who shared our values. So, there was this sense of the right people appearing at the right moment.

15:54 [McPherson] And I know a lot of people call that luck, but like it really is kind of putting yourself in that position. Right? Like really fostering those relationships. A lot of that is you.

16:07 [Mason] Yeah, it is that. But there is synchronicity, like when things what to happen and be born for you. And it's a little bit paying attention to that. Like the designer—everyone loves the branding on Rosebud Woman, but that had nothing to do with me. That was basically me going—I was at dinner at my daughter's house and she's a professor at Parsons School of Design. And her friend, her college roommate was visiting, and she is a cosmetics packaging designer. And I had the formulas, I was working on the brand, and I said I want it to be this reverent, dignified thing. I want the packaging to look like illuminous skin, like just like really radiant, catch the light. Something you could leave on your bedside table. And I said I really want to hire the best person. And she looked at me and she said, "Uh, I did I Fenty. I won all their awards last year. I am that person." And I just looked at the sky, you know in sort of a traditional hands up in the air thing, and was like, well, okay divinity thanks for this! I said, okay, so great! Now we have a branding package designer!

17:15 [McPherson] That's amazing! What an amazing story.

17:17 [Mason] It was really—and I mean it's been like that. This is just—you must feel it in the work you're doing. Like we're on the cusp of this awakening!

17:25 [McPherson] Oh, yes. Yeah, absolutely! I think that like things just seem to fall into place. But I think it's just where we are in the world right now is that people are craving more products, more education, more interest, and developing more knowledge around sexual pleasure and wellness.

17:43 [Mason] Yes. I mean, I think when we started, I knew there was a need. And I kind of knew the magnitude of the need because before we incorporated, I did a big survey. I paid an outside firm to do a survey of three-thousand women on their skincare needs in the vulva, labia and vagina. And just like really understand what they needed. So, I didn't throw away my retirement money for nothing. And then you know I'm in that space, I started researching a name. And I talked about this early in shock, and now shock has worn off, but if you do on Urban Dictionary and you look at euphemism for pussy, you see seven-hundred plus insults, and like ten nice things. And I really was totally shocked, and it hit me then that the way we talk about a woman's most intimate,

creative organs, the source of all human life, is emblematic, or evidence, of how we talk about the feminine in general. And I stated to categorize the slang into like what kind of an insult it was. And it was objectification, it was whoredom, it was dirty or filthy, like all of these words. And then that was like wow, we just hit on our larger mission, which is to totally change that narrative. And make the integration of the pelvic basin into body care a normal part of your day. And I just did a mail bag for this week, I just recorded it, and I got a shipping letter that I sang the respond to, and I got some praise, but I also got one woman who's like "Take me off your list! Your vulgar ads—you're so vulgar. You should be ashamed of yourself for talking about this." And I felt like, oh, honey, you know the fact that you say vulva and vulgar in the same sentence is exactly the problem.

19:34 [McPherson] Exactly. That's the reason why we're doing this.

[Mason] That's why. That's why we exist.

19:39 [McPherson] So that brings up an interesting point, because you know whenever I started Sexual Health Alliance, it was a passion project. And I really wanted to provide education, and I hear you kind of saying that this is kind of your baby, this is kind of a passion project. So, how did you manage that passion and that mission with having it being a sustainable company?

20:00 [Mason] Well, that's a good question. I think in some ways, starting this company was me doing my own sexual healing. You know, which I didn't really know until I was a year and a half into it. And I'm into it, and I'm seeing people's reactions, and I'm watching my shame come up, like what if I am a dirty girl? You know talking about these things. And then—

[McPherson] "What if all that they're saying is true?" Right? What if that's it—yeah.

20:29 [Mason] Yeah, or I know cognitively it's not true, but it's still evoking something in my physical response. And so, as I'm working through the healing of it, and then I'm trying to build the business, I'm seeing how algorithmically I'm blocked. Facebook doesn't like the idea of a naked body, they can't understand a woman, the vagina, being mentioned in anything other than sexual terms. They can't understand it as women's wellness, that women's intimate health is a form of all-body health. So, this block on education, this block on information, I started to really understand the depth of how bad this whole unspoken suppression was. And that, as I built the business, it really was going to be about building the community of women and having an ongoing conversation to have them similarly wake up to this understanding. That the conversation is repressed. Because the conversation is repressed, women don't ask for

what they need. They don't talk to their doctor. There's no adds, so they think they're alone in it. And that, if I continue to focus on education, information, inspiration, make beautiful graphics that teach people about their body, if we keep doing this, that we'll turn on ten thousand additional women to the idea their bodies are whole and complete, and should never be denied. And the side effect has been they tell their friends about the products. But I really focused on just getting the information out there.

22:01 [McPherson] Yeah, that's so smart because, I feel like, obviously as a marketing undergrad, I feel like the visuals and the images are so important. Especially when we're talking about something as personal as intimacy and sexual wellness. You know you touched on it already, but starting a business that's "outside the lines" or taboo, you know it kind of even flows into the way we language things. Like "intimate wellness" instead of "sexual wellness." Tell me about kind of your process coming up with how to describe it so that you could maybe advertise on Facebook or do some of these things.

22:36 [Mason] Yeah, I mean I couldn't say three years ago, or two years ago when we bought or first adds, I couldn't say "vulva." Now somehow that's been whitelisted, or we've been whitelisted so we can say that now. But I had a thing about sexuality verses intimacy because sex and sexuality are traditionally so transactional. That it's about intercourse, or especially intercourse with a man, even when people talk about sex rarely is it same-sex if that's in their mind, particularly if they're male. And so, there's this whole piece about wanting to remove the value and the care of your sexual organs from the idea of sex and intercourse. It's not a lube, you know, that's not what it's for. That it's worth taking care of in and of itself, 365 days a year, for *you*. And out of that space, then you can move into arousal, or interaction, or lubrication with another person. But the first a priori intent is you loving and integrating your body. Self-massage, caring for the skin, repairing scar tissue, dealing with irritation, not putting any poisonous stuff there. All of that stuff is first. And from that movement to self-love, then go to sex. And so that's why I chose "intimate wellness."

24:02 [McPherson] I love that because, you know the language is so important in terms of how we approach it with our own body, but with other women, other self-identified women, out there. And I think that you know describing, even as self-massage versus masturbation, it can you know kind of appeal to perhaps self-identified women that are nervous or worried, or maybe they've never touched themselves. And so, you're kind of promoting body positivity and wellness which is kind of connecting to your own journey into this as well.

24:37 [Mason] Yeah! And just let's talk about self-massage for one minute. Because when I learned—like I've been a yogi for twenty years. Like Ashtanga yogi. And when I

learned about like the pressure—and I've taken quite a bit of massage classes—so I learned about the pressure points in the pelvic basin. And like where there are release and trigger points between the bones of the pelvis and the femur, for example. All of these places where you can get really bound up. And if you understand the way the vaginal tissue, how moisture happens—there's no moisture in that surface layer. The moisture is stored subcutaneously, and so how you get wet is when blood flow comes up underneath that moisture and pushes it to the surface, and it mixes with other emissions, and things like that. So, until you have blood flow going in the whole pelvic basin, not a lot is happening there. So, whether it's doing squats, getting up and shaking your booty, or doing some belly dance moves, getting like the infinity loop, or going in—

[McPherson] Moving your body, yeah.

25:43 [Mason] Yeah, moving the pelvis. And getting in and doing self-massage to manually move the tissues. So mechanically. What we say is start at the hip points, move down the hip points inside and outside of the bones. Go all the way into the inner groin, find those pressure points which you will be able to identify on your because they're a little more sensitive. Outer labia, inner labia, if you want to do the clitoris great, but if you don't, no big deal. Go to the introitus, and leave it on overnight. And that's enough! And on top of that, all that self-massage is creating an oxytocin rush, so you're getting a whole little boost of mood, like la la la. You know because you're getting that blood flow and that sensation of touching. So, absolutely, if you're not comfortable going all the way to masturbation or orgasm, fine. Just touch yourself anyway.

26:33 [McPherson] Yeah, I love that. I love that because it really promotes just being able to touch your body. Right? Really kind of focusing on the whole body instead of just the genitals.

26:46 [Mason] Yeah, and I could, I wish I had these letters handy. I got a letter from a woman who said, "When I did this exercise the first time, I cried my eyes out. I had never touched myself there just to feel good. Just to feel myself." And she had a lot of trauma, sexual trauma, and it's such a big way of moving into like owning and loving this part of you, for you.

27:06 [Intermission Music]

27:11 [McPherson] Today's episode is brought to you by Practice Outside the Lines. Have you heard of our podcast community? It's called Sexcasters, and it's a platform for sexual health providers that want to launch or grow a podcast. Sexcasters is a badass community for all sexual health professionals. So, whether you're dipping your toes in,

or you already have hundreds of episodes, Sexcasters is for you. Join our waitlist now at PracticeOutsidetheLines.com.

[Intermission End]

27:45 [McPherson] You know, I think I noticed on the website a really amazing and wonderful thing that I always wish more companies did, is providing education. And maybe even perhaps education on how to use these products. Is that part of it?

28:01 [Mason] We have some of that. We have—I have a book. I'm co-marketing the products with a book called *The Invitation*, it's an eighty-page manifesto with like ten brief chapters on each of these points. There's a free course called the Body Love course, Body Love Upgrade. Which is an audio recording of the journal that's for free with a whole bunch of exercises that you can do at home. There's a journal that you can take home for a six-to-eight-week practice of daily self-care. And those are just some of the ways we're doing it. I was writing a series called Ask an Expert, that's converted into a pod, but the same idea—who does your body belong to? What's your relationship to pleasure? What do you know about your body? What do you know about navigating all the ages and cycles of your life? What do you know about being sexual at seventy or eighty? What do you know about menopause? You know like basically trying to just say here's a clearing house and also have fun! Have fun! It's not all pathology! Like totally enjoy your body! [Both laugh]

[McPherson] Yes! That's such an important piece of it!

29:08 [Mason] So, all that. I find that I have more fun in my body the more I know about it.

[McPherson] Oh, absolutely. I mean, you know as a sex therapist, sometimes what we're—oftentimes what we're talking about with clients is the more you know your body, the more you understand what feels good, and the more you can communicate with your partner and have more fun. And more pleasurable experiences! So, I think that's a huge part of it.

[Mason] Yeah.

29:34 [McPherson] Knowing your body is key. You know, I think that I may have saw something you wrote about women live on average eighty-one years, so we're with our body parts for you know our entire life. And so, to be able to take care of them, I think there's a lot of education around taking care of our face, and our skin, and obviously

sometimes it's in vain in terms of decreasing wrinkles, and keeping yourself young, but the same goes for all of your parts.

30:03 [Mason] Yeah, I mean, there are some basic—do you want my ten rules of vulva care?

[McPherson] Oh, yes, please! [both laugh] Please, yes!

30:13 [Mason] Oh, let's see if I can find them. [both laugh] But people don't understand that you know dryness is not just related to age. Like vulva dryness is related to if you're taking antidepressants, if you're taking certain kind of blood pressure medication, if you've had cancer, if you have stress, if you've had sexual trauma, all of these happen. And it's not just that it's uncomfortable, you know when you're having sex, which can be terribly painful of course, you know vaginal dystrophy, all that stuff. But it's also that that dryness creates micro tearing which leads to urinary tract infections, it has all kinds of other things. If it's dry you have lower likelihood of healing well from childbirth. And so, we talk a lot about here's some basic things you might not have known: no soap. Don't create a hot box environment. Please don't remove all your pubic hair. Please leave at least some that protects the outer opening. So, I make a list of all those things, and for a lot of people, those are brand new.

[McPherson] Is that part of the ten?

31:12 [Mason] That's part of the ten. I'll give you the whole ten to put in the notes. But I think that's kind of this idea of just the basics of that. And then, talk across the generations. This is just a piece of advice, that I would. There's sort of a taboo of talking to your grandmother about her sexuality. You know, I'm a grandma. I walk around naked. And I love having sex still!

[McPherson] Love that. I love that! We need more people talking about that!

[Mason] Yes! Go talk to your grandmother, and your great-grandmother, about her body—

[McPherson] Oh, I do all time! All the time.

[Mason] —about their sexuality, about what they like, about how it changed with age. Like we used to do that as women. And now we've been running these women circles across the country and there's nothing more fun than when a woman comes and brings

her teenage daughter and her mother. And all three of them are in the room. You put a topic out for conversation and they're discussing it for the first time.

[McPherson] Oh, it's amazing! Yeah.

32:12 [Mason] So, I want more of that. And you'd be surprised that women in their sixties and seventies and eighties, they're like still hot. They still love touch.

[McPherson] Oh yeah! You're not dead! [laughs]

[Mason] There was some popular show that was recent that discussed that. But until then I don't think that was really even brought up. And so up to eighty-one, or ninety-one, or however long you're blessed to live, can you love your embodiment for the entire time?

32:35 [McPherson] Oh yeah, that's something that I often say. Is that you can have great sex into your eighties, nineties, and maybe even beyond! Depending on how well you take care of your body.

[Mason] Yeah, those longevity movement people—

[McPherson] And people kind of open their mouth—their mouth gapes open and they're like "What?!" [laughs]

32:53 [Mason] I love—there's a guy in my circle who did a book called *When I'm a Hundred and Sixty-Four*. He's part of the longevity movement, and he makes the point that you don't get twenty extra years at the end of your life, you get the twenty extra years spread out. An extra five in your adolescence, an extra five in mid-life, and so this idea that it's spread out longer. And you see that happening already. Women are having children so much later in life, almost out of sync of like when your biology wants you to have them. And yet this is a function of having a much longer life span. So, we have a lot to think about in terms of lifespan and enjoyment.

33:34 [McPherson] Oh, yeah. Yeah, you know it's so funny I was just talking to a family member last night and he was telling me that my niece who's gosh, four years old, he's going to live until he's a hundred and thirty! [laughs] That's kind of based on the research—I haven't fact-checked this—based on the research coming out, you know that's to be expected. And so, we are living longer. And so, might as well start taking care of yourself early on and start learning your body, knowing what gives you pleasure, knowing how to self-massage as you say, and yeah, taking care of your skin.

34:26 [Mason] I've been a really big—I think starting with the yoga stuff, the other piece for me has been food. And to really like take charge of eating well. And I wish I'd done that a decade earlier. Now I'm doing the whole majority fruits and vegetables, majority raw, and I can't tell you like the difference in my skin, and my eyes, and my joints, and no inflammation. And I'm doing things with my body that I couldn't do at thirty. Handstands, and backbends, and you know, just like really? But I can't emphasize enough that if you're going to take ownership over your body's health and pleasure, start with the food. Start with the inputs.

34:54 [McPherson] Yeah, that's really good advice. You know, for this company you have, Rosebud Women, you collaborate a lot with other professionals, including OBGYNs. Could you tell me a little bit about that process and how you got that started?

35:08 [Mason] Yeah, I really want to do things that are scientifically valid and effective. There's a lot of misinformation out there around vaginal moisturizers, and things like that. You have men saying "You don't need anything like that," you know, "We don't need to put any—" and I'm like, well, you know scientists—or telling you to put Vaseline down there! Holy cow! You know that's a petroleum product, ladies, don't do that. Petroleum products are banned in the EU for lip care. And labia is the same kind of tissue. No! The lack of conversation around the need has led to misunderstandings around what you should and shouldn't do. Like you clean the outside of your intimate parts, because you don't bacteria to get into the vagina. There's nothing wrong with using a wipe, or a spray or something, or a gentle cleanser. But you don't want to be using soap. And you certainly don't want to be leaving it dirty. And so, this sort of—we get complaints "How can you tell women they're dirty?" like, I'm not telling them they're dirty. I'm telling them to take care of the outside so the vagina stays intact. Not to fix themselves.

[McPherson] Just like the rest of your skin.

36:25 [Mason] Yeah. So, I've kind of lost the thread here, but the whole idea of trying to get doctors, get OBGYNs, who validate the need. Who understand that there are nonprescription ways, non-pathologizing ways to care for the body. Who can provide inputs on new products, and who can help get this message across to their patient base, that a lot of the things that you have internalized around sexuality, the shame, the lack of conversation, are cultural, they're not about you. Sometimes they're religiously-induced shame. And if you can release those, you can solve a lot of the problems you're having in your physical body. Your physical body is manifesting a lot of the false beliefs. And so, the idea that I can have health care practitioners, doulas,

nurse midwives, OBGYNs, a whole variety of people saying, “yes, this is true.” Heal your beliefs, don’t be ashamed, talk to me about everything. Here’s some really plant-based good quality products that you can try that aren’t prescription-based. You know that goes a lot way in both validating it and where else are women talking about these needs? So, taking it out through healthcare channels, taking it out through spa channels, that’s the other place. Like women who are doing waxing, who are in for facials. That’s another place that you can have that intimate conversation. In clean beauty you can have that conversation. But there are a lot of places where, you know if it’s sitting on a shelf without a shelf talker, who’s going to dialogue with the customer? So, I feel like in part, it’s also a necessity as a channel. But I’ve met so many wonderful women through that. Particularly in the perimenopause and menopause space, wow.

38:11 [McPherson] Yeah, I mean, I completely agree with you. There’s so much misinformation out there. And harmful things are being talked about. You know, douching, and cleansing. And you know a lot of OBGYNs and you know medical providers say that the vagina is a self-cleaning oven. But it sounds like what you’re talking about is really the outer lips, and the vulva.

38:35 [Mason] Yeah, I wouldn’t douche. I don’t have to put anything in there. The idea is to keep bacteria out. And frankly, not only bacteria, but other things that will change the chemical makeup in the vagina. So, there are some silicone-based lubricants, for example. They feel fine, but for two or three days after they’re in the body, they actually stop your own moisture from getting out. You know, so they feel good, but they are kind of creating a sheath over your own lubrication. So, I’m hesitant to use those myself. I’ll use a water-based lube. I’ll use a plant oil-based lube that doesn’t have a lot of sugars in it. Like a low one—that’s how the vagina stays healthy. I keep the dirt out, and I don’t put any artificial things in there. And that seems to be working.

39:25 [McPherson] So important. Such good advice. And yeah, collaborating with other medical providers in terms of getting the word out, getting information out, and education out, and all these different channels seems really critical to this type of business as well.

39:42 [Mason] Yeah! And bowing down to their expertise. There’s a woman, Dr. Jessica Drummond who runs this integrated wellness practice, and she’s a pelvic floor specialist. And she talked about all of the, you think it’s an isolated thing, but if the pelvic floor is out of whack, then so many other things in the body are out of whack. So, I love the fact that we are invited into these conversations to learn and then to pass it on to a group of women who would otherwise really never find it. That kind of niche information.

Like I'm doing one now on IUDs. I had no idea the kind of side effects until we started researching it. And that was prompted by a community member.

40:21 [McPherson] Yeah, some people can have really adverse reactions to IUDs. Some people it works really wonderful, but it really just depends on your body makeup and your chemistry, it seems like.

40:30 [Mason] So, the other thing that kind of like—you were talking about healthcare professionals, and you also mentioned that you had this Sexual Health Alliance, and you were doing some work with women who were victims of sexual trauma, I think that's from Respark though?

40:45 [McPherson] Yeah, yeah so Respark Foundation helps with—provides resources and therapy for people who've had sexual trauma, and Sexual Health Alliance provides certifications for sex therapists, educators, and consultants.

40:59 [Mason] Yeah, so this idea, that when you're doing your work, this has been a big part of what we've been about. And tying like our business to being a citizen business. We were like working at the level of the individual change and shifting beliefs, and at the same time trying to work on the level of the social structures and cultural things like domestic violence, sustainability, and women's economic empowerment. And the other things that are large-scale systemic reflections of that internalized repression. You know what I'm saying? I'm trying to articulate it right, but what shows up in our own unwillingness to love all of ourselves, shows up—is reflected in not demanding equity in systems and accepting domestic abuse, other things like that. And so, we try to work both individually on those things, and to support these larger questions. So, I was really heartened to hear that you're doing stuff with people who've been victims of sexual trauma.

42:04 [McPherson] Yeah, I mean it sounds like with the work you're doing too it's kind of that social entrepreneurialism piece as well.

42:11 [Mason] Well, I think—Okay, this is a new topic. But I really want to talk about what it means to be a citizen business. And that, you know we have—like corporations are considered citizens. They talk about corporate social responsibility, or conscious capitalism, or other terms like that. But if you really shift it to being you're a citizen, you have to live in the context of a culture where, you know you have people who need to be educated, roads need to get built, and you want to sustain the commons. Like you really start to think about things differently. So, the idea of being a social business as a separate thing from being a business, is in itself a pointer to the pathology. You know?

It's like democracy attempts to put constraints on business, so that the businesses can grow within the context of long-term best interests of the group. And businesses will leave the country in order to circumvent those laws, like environmental laws, or labor laws, or whatever, and then come back and sell you stuff that they made by circumventing democracy. And bring it back to you at a lower price. That in of itself is wholly unethical in my opinion. And that if you're going to start a business, then you should think about where you live and what you're nested in, and how the people who live there get paid, and how they survive, and how your rivers, and your roads, and everything like that stay healthy. And if we're going to talk about a social business, we've already bought into the idea that businesses aren't inherently citizens. Does that make sense?

43:48 [McPherson] Oh, yeah, I mean, it just kind of reminds me, you're getting into kind of—my husband's an architect and obviously sustainability is a really important part. So, it's kind of touching on you know how we make our businesses more sustainable from an ecological perspective.

[Mason] Yep.

44:08 [McPherson] Yeah. And that's something you do with your products too. But yeah, I think that—I love the way you described it, because it's connecting so many different parts of our world, from infrastructure, to where we live, to who we work with, and who actually makes the things that we're using.

44:27 [Mason] Yes. Here's how we think about what are the dimensions of being a citizen business: inclusivity, is one. Where's the shared voice in our images we put out, in the guests we have on the pod, in body diversity, in race, in neurodiversity. Like, are we inclusive? Are the people in our team inclusive? We then talk about clean inputs. We talk about sustainable making. We talk about economically just making, like are we sharing our equity, does everybody who works on the team have shares in the company, are they being paid a living wage, do they have good pay. You know if you want to do right, there are some dimensions that go beyond like "I have recycled packaging" that are about running your business. And I put price tags to that.

45:18 [McPherson] It's kind of like the greenwashing of architecture. They talk about greenwashing where they just slap on a green roof and then you're good! [laughs] It's kind of like the other, yeah.

45:25 [Mason] Yeah, cleanwashing. And it costs money to do it. So, I started putting price tag to that, and basically said look, it probably costs me fifteen percent more to

make all of those decisions directionally correct than it would otherwise. And I'm talking about fifteen percent to the bottom line. So, that's a significant margin change. But, like that way we can all live well. And who does not get that fifteen percent? Me as the owner. So, if you think about that in a larger sort of stock exchanges and big corporations, if they all took fifteen percent, not dropping to the bottom line, who doesn't get it? Investors in the stock market and the owners of the company. And yet, so many other people in systems begin to thrive, and that's where you get to the question of greed and governance. And I think it's so possible to see a wholesale shift in the way people think about that. Like how beautiful will it be when everybody is getting enough?

46:29 [McPherson] Yeah, I mean I hope that that's what we're all striving towards, right? I hope that you know the new entrepreneurs of this world are a little bit more socially conscious and maybe even looking toward citizen businesses as the model to follow.

46:45 [Mason] Yeah. From our mouths to the world. Yeah! [both laugh] I mean, like I truly believe it's time to. Me relating to my sex, and you relating to sexual health for all women worldwide, and then how we relate to the source of our own life, the planet, how we relate to nature, and then how we relate to how we're connected, and how that relates to whether we do violence, and whether we do harm, or whether we actually see that our connectedness is our power. And then you start running your business differently. So, this has been a gradual change. I wouldn't have said that thirty years ago. I still believed myself to be an isolated meat body, [both laugh] and I don't think that anymore. So, we run this business in a very feminine principle of interconnectivity, with all creatures and beings. And we try to do it as well as we can, and make enough profit to keep the business going, and to grow while doing the best we can to be a good citizen. So, I would encourage anyone who's starting a business, if you're making products, to think of it that way. And if you're doing services, and education, how do you weave in this deep honoring of this given life into the way you run your company.

48:08 [McPherson] Yeah, I think that's such a beautiful way to think about it and to describe it. Because again, the way we set up our businesses is going to determine whether or not they're going to survive for the next thirty years, and who they're impacting too. So, I think that yeah, that's really, really good advice and tips. Is there anything else you would say to maybe a young entrepreneur that wants to get into the field of sex? Or intimate wellness? Just kind of this umbrella field of, you know whether it's education, or therapy, or products, or services. What would you say to them?

48:50 [Mason] I would say, well you might be universally curious in your own life, to pick one spot and do it really well, and try not to be a jack of all trades to everyone. Pick a woman or a kind of woman in your mind, and imagine you were serving her, or a man,

and you're serving him. Picture that person and understand their needs thoroughly. And serve that need completely. And then once you've done that, expand in one direction or the other. But when you try to be everything to everybody, you don't get enough traction, and that's probably the most important thing as an early entrepreneur.

49:28 [McPherson] Yeah, I love that. Cause you know, sometimes in business school, and sometimes in educational courses, they say pick your avatar. Right? What do they do, what do they think? Who are they? What kind of car do they drive? What color hair do they have? You know, and sometimes in private practice, whether you're just a general therapist or a sex therapist, they'll say the same thing. And so that seems like, touching on the idea of pick that woman, pick that man, that non-binary, gender nonconforming person, whoever they might be, and figure out how to serve them to completion. That's the big question, yeah. That's great.

50:09 [Mason] And I would say, wherever there's taboo, there's opportunity.

50:14 [McPherson] Oh, that's a great line to end on. [laugh] "Wherever there's taboo, there's opportunity."

50:21 [Mason] Most taboos stem out of something that is so powerful that it cannot be dealt with head-on. And that could be money, that could be power, that could be violence, that could be drugs, it could be any kind of things that change the state. Mysticism is another big powerful thing that's like got some taboo-y stuff around it. But if that's there, then that thing has so much latent power that people can't go at it directly. And yet it exists in every person. And so, the more you can go straight into that thing and help people navigate it, and provide support, there's just tremendous opportunity there.

51:06 [McPherson] That is amazing. I love the way that you conceptualized that and said it. Yeah, I totally agree, because I think there are a lot of people that shy away from taboo, and they're afraid to talk about it, and they're afraid to go into business about it. Especially this field of sexual health and intimate wellness. Especially this field. Because it's more difficult, it might take more money, it might take more time, because people, you know, want to prove your odds, or they don't want to hear it, or they will put you in the spam and junk category in your email box, right? And I think that that's so important just to remember the mission that, that means there's huge opportunity to create change.

51:44 [Mason] I have one funny thing that you said that about the inbox. For a lot of years I ran TedX in San Francisco, and I wanted to create this new thing that was like a

TedX, Ted for the senses basically. And we made an event called Exquisite, and we couldn't get the domain exquisite, so we got the domain "what is exquisite," and embedded in the middle of that is "sex" [both laugh] and so I got blocked right and left from people's inboxes! And so that I guess was my first clue [laughing].

[McPherson] Uh-huh, yep! It's a hard lesson learned! Especially after you named the company, right? [laughing]

[Mason] I know! It was so sad, anyway. I was like ugh!

[McPherson] Oh, so important though, thanks for sharing that. [Laughing]

52:30 [Mason] Well, this has really been lovely. It was nice to meet you. Congratulations on the new pod, and on all the other amazing things you're doing.

[McPherson] Yeah, well congratulations to you too. Where can people find you?

52:41 [Mason] Rosewoman.com for the products. So, rosebud is the shape of the vulva, and this infinite mystery. And so, all the products are Rosebud Woman, but Rose Woman overall is a platform for waking up and rising into your full power, and includes content products like the Rose Woman pod. So, rosewoman.com, and come visit us and engage with us. We have a Facebook page, and a community that is pretty active. And even if you're not buying products, you can sign up for the newsletter. Cause it's not a lot of pushy stuff. It's really about these inquiry points about how do you find more liberation in your body, how do you question the way society is structured, how do we uplift other women. I did a whole bunch of this last couple of months on like the women who are four-star generals. Did you know that? How many women are four-star generals, like running all of—

[McPherson] Wow that's amazing. I'd love to hear that!

53:38 [Mason] Thirty-eight women CEOs in fortune five hundred companies now, or like did you know that women in policing cause so much less violence and still as effective care. You know, just I like highlighting that also, and not just making it about the soft stuff. But yeah, come over and join us, you know, in the conversation!

[McPherson] Yeah, build the community. Awesome. Well, thank you so much Christine. It was a pleasure talking with you.

[Mason] Thank you, I'll talk to you soon.

[Outro Music]

54:07 [McPherson] Thank you for listening to Practice Outside the Lines podcast. My name is Heather McPherson, certified sex therapist, consultant, and multi-passionate entrepreneur. Did you know that we have a free course on starting or growing your sexual health-focused business? Go to PracticeOutsidetheLines.com to get started. If you loved this podcast, take the next vital step and rate and review it on iTunes or your favorite podcast player. Thanks so much for hanging out with me today.