

HOW DR. LAURA BERMAN UNCOVERED RADIO

Uncovered Radio is a daily call-in relationship advice program, broadcast 9 p.m.-midnight on AC and Hot AC stations all over the country. The host is Dr. Laura Berman, a sex and relationship educator and therapist. She's also a *New York Times* best-selling author and assistant clinical professor of OB/GYN and psychiatry at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago.

After a stint on SiriusXM's Oprah Radio, Berman's *Uncovered Radio* debuted March 31, 2014 on Connoisseur Media's Star 99.9 in Bridgeport, CT. Connoisseur serves as the creative consultant to *Uncovered Radio*, and Compass Media Networks manages the production and syndication of the show. Connoisseur CEO Jeff Warshaw says, "Two years ago, we saw a need to offer our listeners unique and relatable relationship content. Dr. Berman is not only a friend and partner, she is a tremendous communicator and entertainer."

The show is listener-driven, focusing on relationship challenges facing women 18 to 49, and the questions on the show can get pretty personal. Any questions about sex are handled off the air via podcasts and/or appointment calls to keep the show broadcast-friendly. Compass Media Networks CEO Peter Kosann says, "One of the top topics that our research showed that women care about is relationships. Thus, we were looking for a host who could speak to this need and also do a compelling and entertaining show, in a contemporary way."

We asked Berman why she loves radio, about some of her best calls, and what advice she would give young broadcasters getting into the business.



RI: How and why did you get into radio?

Berman: I got into radio mostly by accident. I didn't intend to. I didn't even know it would be as fun as it was, when I was asked by Harpo to do a show on Oprah Radio, which I did for three years, five days a week. I was amazed by not only how much fun it was, but also how intimate it felt, because I had done a lot of TV until then and didn't realize that radio really feels more personal. It feels more one-on-one. It feels more connected. It feels more friendly. In many ways, it feels more authentic. I loved that about it.

When that show ended, I wanted to continue doing radio. I remember talking to my agent about it and my agent saying, "Well, no. Because you're not conservative. You're too out there, too liberal in many of your views. The only talk radio shows that are out there are ones that are super conservative. So you can't do radio." And so I just kind of let that go, but I always missed it. And then I was approached by Compass Media to do this show, *Uncovered Radio*.

RI: What do you like most about doing radio?

Berman: I love the spontaneity of it. I love how easy it is, for me in particular. My husband loves it because I get a lot of my talking

out of my system, because, as you can probably guess, I love to talk. And it is so personal. I really feel the connection with each person I talk to and all the people listening. I really feel them in a way that I don't feel when I'm doing television. It is so much more of an intimate medium.

I love the idea of reaching lots of people. I also love the idea of helping so many people on such a large scale, because I absolutely know that every caller I talk to about their issues, there are thousands and thousands of people in that moment, listening, with exactly the same, or at least a similar issue, that are getting help too.

And I am offering help to people who don't typically have access to it. They are either living in communities where they don't have access or can't afford therapy or are part of cultures or communities where therapy is considered poo-poo, weird, or useless. But they need the help, and they know they need the help. I get calls from all ages, all genders, a lot of men who have such heartfelt questions. To be able to give them some guidance, direction, and perspective feels like an amazing gift for me. It feels like I am really making a difference in their lives, especially when I hear back from them months later and they implemented the

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advice I had given, or someone will call and say something they heard on the show really changed the way they looked at things and it was really meaningful to them. That is just like heart-swelling yumminess for me.

RI: Why do you believe your format works on the radio?

Berman: Because it's interesting, it's compelling, it can be quick-paced. But it's also, in many ways, anonymous. So you don't have to worry about being seen. You can change your name if you want to. You can change the details of your life if you want to. It is so much easier to call someone up on the radio and ask for help than to walk into someone's office or to go and tell your friends about it.

I also think the fact that everyone is listening makes a huge difference, because, first of all, we all love to be voyeurs. We all love to kind of be a fly on the wall and see or hear the train wreck or hear the crazy questions. There are also so many people that would never call up and ask the question themselves, but they're dying to know. And then they hear someone else ask it and they get the answer that way. Or there's a question they didn't even know they wanted to know, and when they hear the answer, they realize, "Wow. I really needed to hear that."

The other great thing, honestly, has been just how smooth this has been, the launching of *Uncovered Radio*. In particular, the affiliates — I so appreciate the fact that my radio stations really had the courage to try something new. And I and my team wake up every day to do this show to support our affiliates and their local listeners. When someone calls and says they're from Billings or from Hartford or from Kentucky — wherever they are in the country, I envision them there. I think about our affiliate listening in and I'm cheering them on. I feel like we're in this together.

RI: Tell us one of the most interesting calls you've received during a show.

Berman: I receive so many interesting calls,

from all walks of life. I love it when the young kids and teenagers call. "How do I ask a girl to prom?" or "How do I deal with my friends not speaking to me?" to elderly people who are wondering how to find love again and get back out there, or people asking how to get comfortable with their 80-year-old dad dating again.

I also love to have really interesting guests on the show. There are two that stand out. One is Robert Ohotto, who's a really famous intuitive psychic. Together, I think we've helped about 50 callers with their relationship issues, and people love it when he comes on because he's so powerful and he has such psychic, intuitive abilities. That's always a lot of fun.

Another recent guest was Anita Moojani, who wrote a book, *Dying to Be Me*. She had a really famous near-death experience and



wrote a beautiful book about it. She basically died and came back and talked about what happens when you die. The listeners had an amazing response to that. Both of those are actually on my podcast that I do every week as well, that is called *Too Risqué for Radio*.

RI: Is there one example that stands out over all the others where you know you really helped a radio listener?

Berman: I remember this guy calling who had never been in therapy, but he was struggling with his wife and their relationship after she had a baby and she was giving all the attention to the baby, and he was feeling really frustrated with all of it.

And I gave him some advice and told him how to connect with her again and how to be there for her, and how to reach out to her in a way that would really land. No one had ever taught him that before in his life, and

he didn't have a model growing up. When he called me back three months later, he told me that the advice had absolutely changed his whole relationship and that it was so much better than he ever imagined it could be, and he was feeling things for his wife and with his wife and accessing an emotional intimacy that he never knew was available to him. That just really warmed my heart.

The other day, I had a caller, a young woman in her 20s, saying her boyfriend had some questionable texts that seemed a little too flirty from another guy. It turned out her boyfriend was there with her, so I asked to speak with him. I said, "Listen, you're not going to get any judgment here. Just tell me the truth. Do you have feelings for this guy? What's really going on?" And on the show, he came out to me and his girlfriend and everyone else as gay. It took so much bravery for him, and his voice was almost shaking. I, too, was shocked that he did it, but I was so proud of him that he took that moment. I felt so proud of the show that he felt safe enough and encouraged enough to really be honest with himself and with his girlfriend and with the world. And that was a really powerful moment.

RI: Any advice for anybody thinking about getting into the radio business, on the talk radio side?

Berman: Honestly, it's a combination of luck, being in the right place at the right time, and having a message, having an agenda, feeling passionate about that message and agenda. For me, I know without a doubt, the reason I'm on this planet is to help people love and be loved better. That is what gets me out of bed every morning. That is what lights up my professional life and even my personal life.

And I have no problem being totally myself. I think when all of that combines with being in the right place at the right time and really believing in yourself and your message, then everything is possible. ●

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