

1 INSIGHT

with RICH LITVIN



Episode 7: “A life changing phone call”

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Rich: Welcome to 1 Insight. My name is Rich Litvin. I grew up in London and I now live in LA, and this is a podcast for extraordinary top performers. You see, I've coached some of the most successful and talented people on the planet. I see what most people cannot see, and I dare to say what most people wouldn't dare to say. What I know about success is that on the other side of it, it can actually be lonely. You can feel like more of an impostor the more successful you become, and when you're the most interesting person in the room, you're actually in the wrong room. I coach around insight. Life looks one way, something happens, the world looks different, and your entire world changes. It can happen in an instant. This podcast is called 1 Insight because a single insight can change everything.

Rich: Today I'm coaching Luisa. She's a member of 4PC. She's a consultant, understands business at the highest levels, and she wants to work with me on this idea of doing something fun and big and using her genius. But I tell her a story about the day I got a phone call that changed my life. A phone call, that within two minutes I put the phone down, I knew I was committed to something that I had no idea how to make happen, but I was in no matter what. I tell her this story and we find a way to turn our conversation into that conversation, into that phone call for her. She leaves this session with a sense of mission, with a way to give back, that has her on fire. And she's full of gratitude. Very emotional. You hear her sniffing and crying a lot at the end because she's full of emotion. She's found a mission, where nothing will stop her. Enjoy.

Rich: Hey, Luisa.

Luisa: Hi, Rich.

Rich: Thank you for saying yes. How should we play today?

Luisa: So this has been a really big week. Over the last couple of weeks I thought about what would be a really powerful, transformational way to play, and a couple of big things have come up and I've moved through them. So today how I want to play is I want ... I'm looking down at my notes ... I want to create something fun and big using my genius. And the context behind that is I can go fast when I want to and be madly courageous. It's how I've been. Always. When there's that clarity that isn't because it's out there, like I know how it's going to be, but I'm like, "This is exactly what I need to do." There's no logic. It goes past all of that. I just go. And it's always been so powerful and epic, and I want my next epic. I want to go after something deeply fulfilling and powerful and just soar with it. I'm ready and I feel it.

Rich: I like it. I feel it too in this moment, you feel full of energy.

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: So I know that one. I got a call five years ago from someone who said, "Rich, you don't know me, but I know you're in the association of transformational leaders. Someone told me to reach out to you. I don't know if this would be of interest to you, Rich, but I'm taking a group of coaches and leaders to Liberia, in West Africa, for eight days. We're going to train 400 local teachers." Excuse me. "We're going to go to a school for young girls who've been prostitutes, forced into prostitution, and have been taken off the streets, to take care of them. We're going to take clean water filtration systems to a village that's never ever had clean water." He didn't have to finish talking. I knew I was in.

Rich: I was a teacher for 15 years. I have a passion for education. I taught in Liberia, in Botswana, in Southern Africa for two years. When I was younger, I traveled a lot in Africa. I mean, it ticked every box for me, except we had just had our second son and it was the wrong time to be going. But it didn't matter because when you are committed to something, you will do whatever it takes. And I went and did what it took to enroll my wife in saying, "Yep, I support you in going," when we just had a little baby.

Rich: Then I told my mother about this, and I don't know how mothers know this, but she knew immediately that there was an Ebola crisis that hadn't even begun yet, but somehow there was little, she just knew that it was super dangerous to be going to Liberia at that time. And then I started to enroll coaches to come with us and it was really, really hard because everybody said, "I'd love to come. It sounds amazing. Except, oh, I can't do that timing. Or something's not right right now. Got to look after the kids."

Rich: I kept getting nos. I had more nos than I had in a long time. But I was committed and I did whatever it took. When I discovered that there were four of us leading this group, three of the others who were leaders were struggling to get people to enroll, people to come and join us, I just took over and helped them to enroll. It happened because I was committed. So I share that story because I know from the inside out the power of commitment. I loved hearing your words, madly courageous, but you haven't yet got a phone call with someone saying, "Hey, there's this thing," and you're like, "Oh my God, I'm going to do whatever it takes to make that happen." Right?

Luisa: Right. Yet.

Rich: Well, we're going to create that right now.

Luisa: Oh, okay.

Rich: Okay. So what comes up when I shared my story, is there something that comes to mind about, "Oh my God, this is what I want to create."

Luisa: Bringing the water, the teaching ... Bringing possibility at that level to groups of people that likely didn't see it coming. They're the unknown unknowns, that you went to that part of the world, that you enrolled others, that your commitment was so steadfast that you went, "Oh, you can't? I'm so committed to this that I'm going to help you get there, and together we're going to go across the world and bring something that doesn't exist, that people go ... It's not even in their wildest dreams." It might've not been anything anybody was ever dreaming of, or wanting or wishing, and you created that. The idea of creating something from nothing, and dramatically and forever changing someone's life like that, really landed.

Rich: Yeah. So I know that when you grew up, you lived in a community where life was a certain way. You had to fit into this box and if you didn't, it was very, very painful. You had no choice but to be, because of the way you were raised, that you had to fit into the, within these lines.

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: I'm wondering whether some of that, the way that you were told life had to be, and then you broke out of that and you said, "I will not be defined by this way of being," you broke out of that and created your own life on your own terms, whether it's for young girls like you, back then, who are trapped by this is where you're supposed to be in life and have no idea there's any other possibility. Am I right?

Luisa: That warms my heart, that thought. And it moves me.

Rich: Yeah.

Luisa: My mind wants to wrap around its head around how, but I'm really wanting to stay with how that landed in my heart. Because I don't think ... To quote Brene Brown, "I don't think we're meant to do it alone." And at least my journey has been, I have to do it alone because nobody in, who I know or who I know I don't know, could be there for me, so I have to do it alone. I've got to be alone. And we don't have to. There's something about not being alone. And behind that, the power of, "I've been there," when you can connect with somebody. Because I been there, I've been where you are, and you just look them in the eye, that moves them beyond words.

Rich: Yeah. Yeah. Feel your heart in this moment.

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: Going it alone, I founded 4PC actually, you know, you're a member of our community of leaders, based on an old African proverb. "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: The second thing you said is you've been there. So there's a place where, for young girls who are trapped by religion, culture, society, the way it's supposed to be, there's a way that you talking to them will resonate because, "Oh, she gets me." And what may be the hardest part about this is the only way they'll know that you get them is if you are willing to share your story.

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: So I very consciously didn't share the story just now because I wasn't sure how much is okay for you to share. So I know people are listening to this, I did it in a very discreet way. If you want to touch the hearts of those girls and move them to get past their story and create a new one, you'll have to be willing to share yours.

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: And I'm checking [inaudible 00:11:45] because that might be too much.

Luisa: No, I think I've been wanting to share it for a long time.

Rich: Tell me your story, Luisa.

Luisa: I was born in 1980. No, I'm just kidding. I was born in Colombia, and at three my mom and I came to the US, California specifically. Then my mom moved to Florida, where she married my father. I was about five. Very religious. That was around the time that we stepped into religion and my parents were all in. I grew up in ... I remember falling asleep on the church benches. I lived and breathed church. We'd go two, three, four times a week. My dad would leave church, would leave the house two hours before

church to pick up members of the congregation. I mean, church was all I knew. I didn't play sports. I didn't really even have friends outside of church. Pentecostal is the religion. So I always stuck out like a sore thumb.

Luisa: Anyway, I had long hair. I had this bird's nest on my head. You do this tease thing with your hair that everybody in church did, that I still don't, to this day, understand. All I knew was church. The religion and God and the congregation, and respecting God and His wishes. And that's what I grew up. It's all I knew. At 17, our pastor, at the time we were living in California then, back in California, my whole family, and the pastor spoke, God spoke to the pastor and he shared to the congregation that I was to marry a gentleman in the church who was 36. We dated for a year.

Rich: How old were you?

Luisa: I was 17 when we started dating. I spent the better part of that year ... I mean, I didn't love him. I was just, I knew that it was God's wishes and all I had was my relationship with God, and what I knew was you do what God says and what your parents say. I spent about a year praying to God going, "I need you to ..." I remember these exact words, "Plant the seeds of love in my heart for this man. If You want me to marry him, I want You to plant those seeds. I want to do Your will." And nothing happened. I didn't love him.

Luisa: So two weeks before our wedding ... Everything was done. The cake, everything. I'd been talking to my parents and I was like, "I don't love him." I shared with them this journey that I had been on for the last year, on and off, and as usual it was, "Well that's God's wishes." And you do what your parents say, and your parents do what God says, so that was all that there was to be done. One day they went to church and I had gone into the Penny Saver and looked for an ad at a ... Right near Cal State Fullerton there was a girl renting a room. I said, "How much?" I had a job and I had a car and I said, "I'm out." The only choice I felt I had at the time was to leave my home.

Luisa: So my parents, at the time, I had a little brother and sister, they all left to church and when they came home I was gone. I put my stuff in two trash bags and left. I didn't know the first thing about living, about surviving, about what I was going to do in the world. And it was scary, but there was no turning back because although I didn't know what love was, I knew what love wasn't. And I wanted out. I wanted a life on my terms, a life without permission for everything to be, how to talk, when to talk, when not to talk, what to say, how to do my hair, to not cover my knees, what socks I should wear. I was like, "I'm out." It was a really rough few years to find myself because I had never known myself. I stepped into the world at 18 with a job and a car, not knowing the first thing about living or standing on my own two feet.

Luisa: And I've never looked back. I've taken leaps since then, but living life my way, being true to and discovering what I need, what I want, what my heart's calling me for, has never ever led me astray. And if I'm being honest, that voice was with me all along. I just, I never listened.

Rich: How are you doing in this moment now you shared that story?

Luisa: My heart's racing a little bit. I feel a little, a tiny, tiny little bit shaky, but like a shaky still. It felt really good and edgy to say it.

Rich: Yeah. What do you think will be the impact of sharing that story with young girls who feel trapped and constrained and need permission for everything in this moment?

Luisa: Yeah. You don't need to be somebody to be somebody. You don't need as much permission as you think you do and you've got this. You can and you will. I'm not telling you anything you don't already know.

Rich: If you, at 14, 15, 16, had read that book, that story, heard this interview, what might that have done for you?

Luisa: Gosh, that's a good question. It takes me down door number two for my life, which I don't usually do. I mean, if I hadn't been held back by the fear and the what if, the fear of rejection, the fear of being cast out, the fear of not being able to figure it out, to not be able to find my way, if I would have known that I can, that I will, that I'm stronger than I think I am, I would have started to fall in love with myself and accept myself. And maybe I'd still be in the church. Maybe I wouldn't be. Who knows where it could have gone?

Luisa: But to love ourselves when we're young and we're still trying to figure it out, and to know that we're worthy, that we're good enough, and that whatever it is that we think we want, it's okay to want it, changes everything. I mean, I don't know where the trajectory could have been, but I would have gone for more, created more, lived more, inspired more, held back less.

Rich: So tell me in this moment, I shared a story with you where I got a phone call out of the blue and I knew I was in, what if this was that phone call right now?

Luisa: My brain's going, "The call for what? For you to take people to Liberia? For you to write a book?" And it's like, "Who cares how?"

Rich: So here's who's calling. It's all the young girls who were trapped by a life, that they don't know there's any other possibility on the other side of it. They're the ones calling you right now. They don't know what they're calling you for. They're just saying, "Hey, we need help."

Luisa: Yeah.

Rich: You don't need to know what the answer is. You just need to know if I'm going to say yes to those young girls right now or not.

Luisa: It's a hell yes. It's a solid 10.

Rich: Yeah. And that's it. We're there. I'll say something next, not because I want to get into the how-to, but there's a couple of thoughts that come with this, but I feel that I feel you in this moment. I see you in high schools. I see you talking to young girls. I see you in women's shelters talking to daughters with their mothers about possibilities that they couldn't see because the way that they were raised, the blinkers were on. I see you connecting with young girls, young women, and giving them possibilities that they didn't know even existed. That's what I see.

Luisa: Thank you for the mirror. Yeah. Yeah.

Rich: The how-to will come later. I mean, I've got a vision of a book or talk, something like that. But it's all you would need to do is reach out to one shelter, one school and say, "I've got a story I'd love to share. This was what my life used to be like. This was the courageous act that I took, and here's how I've created my life ever since. If you have young girls who might benefit from that story, let me know."

Luisa: I'm so tempted to write, but I know that you're writing it right to my psyche, so I'm staying still.

Rich: Well, and this is recorded so you've got [crosstalk 00:24:15]-

Luisa: Oh, yeah. There's that.

Rich: ... podcast. Yeah, so what we've done in this podcast, it would be easy to try and turn this into a plan now. The book, what are the chapter titles? Is it a TED Talk? Who are you going to reach out? I didn't need that. When I got that phone call about going to Liberia, I was in and I did what it took to make it happen. From enrolling my wife, to enrolling other coaches, to doing the fundraising. All of these things were not possible, but I did them because I had a commitment. I was in the power of commitment.

Rich: If this is a mission that moves you, you'll move others. So you have to be willing to tell this story in a way that it just let, you let yourself be moved. Allowing yourself to be moved will move others on this journey, and all sorts of interesting things will happen. [inaudible 00:25:12] 4PC together. We have this amazing community that will support you along this journey. But for now, we're there.

Luisa: Thank you, Rich.

Rich: Thank you [inaudible 00:25:27].

Luisa: Thank you. Thank you for being you.

Rich: Yeah.

Luisa: I can't ... Yes, I can because I'm about to. I'll never fully be able to put into words the gratitude for the impact you've had in my life. It's so wonderful to be in your community

and to serve your community, and to be around you and be on the receiving end of your genius. I'll probably be saying that for years and years and years to come. I'm so deeply grateful.

Rich:

For most of human history it wasn't called coaching, it was called leadership. And it's what I love to do. To coach people, to lead people, and to mess with people's thinking. If you'd like more of this, or if you'd like to learn more about our community of extraordinary top performers, go to richlitvin.com/1insight.