

## EP105

**Elaine Lou Cartas:** First, I want to share that I am safe and our house is intact, yet the fires that's been happening here in LA has been emotional for me. Born and raised here in California, I lived in the city. And that Altadena Pasadena border that's been showing in the news for six years, we just moved a little over a year ago to buy our home in the valley.

And it was a community, Cafe de Leches, where I got my coffee, it's gone. Altadena Country Club is where I did my client retreats and met up with clients. It's burned. I have friends who lost their homes and these aren't just like a first or second degree of separation. By the way, they, were, they are personal friends I would have dinners with.

And thankfully, yes, they are healthy and safe. And right now, as I'm recording this, I just finished a therapy session that wasn't intentionally scheduled because of what collectively happened. It just ironically was happened. I meet with my therapist every other week and it was so needed. And we talked a lot about protecting my peace and honoring my needs.

And she was sharing with me that's been a lot of the sessions that she's been doing with her other clients. So my intention of this podcast episode, it's different from others. Honestly, I'm selfishly doing this episode to process things, share what I'm doing to protect myself. And I know a lot of you will find this helpful because majority of you that listen to my podcast is from LA.

And I knew I was going to be of disservice if I was just going to go back to business. And even if you are not from LA, I know this will benefit you because unfortunately, as humans, I'll go through a moment of crisis, whether it's collective, like this past decade. Okay. Can we talk about 2020? What the hell?

Okay, started 2020 with COVID, COVID dying, and the wildfires back in 2020. By the way, I was close to that when I was living in Pasadena too. And then here we are, middle of the decade, 2025, like wildfires. And I know it's collective, but as humans, we also go through individual moments of crisis, whether it's personal, family, career, romantic, whatever it is.

And I was intentionally going to drop a different episode this week. It was going to be on 2025 marketing trends. It just, it didn't feel right. I actually was talking to Monica, my marketing, she was like, Hey, it doesn't feel right. I think I should talk about what's happening right now. And in the middle of my podcast, manager or editor who was editing that podcast, Hey, I know you're in the middle of editing this, but this does not feel good to have this come out.

We need to talk about what's been happening. So in this episode, look, I will share, I know there are plenty of resources out there on how to donate, whether it is to a nonprofit, to our firefighters, to specific families of specific backgrounds or to volunteer. I know there's plenty to look for. What I want to focus on in this episode, because of my experience being trauma informed certified is focused on your wellbeing.

And today I'm recording this on Monday, January 13th. This episode comes out Thursday. So we've had what six days of the fire fires. And thankfully at this time, Palisades fires is contained at 14 percent all today in Pasadena contained. By 33 percent also, I will say even though I'm not close to any of the fires right now.

You're gonna hear me coughing a little bit The air quality isn't that great? I'm double fisting and what I mean by double fisting I have A big ass water and I also have like honey and tea next to me shout out to throat coat But i've been drinking also lemon and honey all the past week. I will start I am Disgusted by people saying stuff about LA and California.

I have a proud Californian born and raised. I have, I feel like the story of what the American dream is. My dad and grandparents immigrated to be grapevine workers from the Philippines to Porterville, California. If you've never heard of that town, it is a small town in central California. My mom was eight months pregnant with me when she immigrated here.

Because my parents wanted better opportunities for both me and my two younger brothers, we moved to Los Angeles to a neighborhood called Glossal Park. And we lived there till 1998. I remember sleeping in our two bedroom, one bath home. it was six of us. My grandma was living with us, too. I went to sleep, lullabies, listening to gunshots in the background because of the gangs.

It was so bad. Hearing cars. Getting broken into my dad's truck got broken into our windows in our home was barred up and the next to us is a sweet community It was my two aunts and then my cousins living with us very typical back then with immigrant families I missed that I know but that's like a different conversation But isn't it ironic we live in this American culture to be independent do things on your own yet Childcare is so expensive.

I know it ranges from anywhere to three to 5k or even 8k a month. Yet whatever parents had it right living next to each other, having our aunties and grandparents take care of our kids. I think my mom was saying how I had 20 babysitters and it wasn't like. They paid them. It was this community where we were supporting one another and sure there was a payment, but it's Hey, here's a box of grapes or I'm going to cook for you.

And the grade school we went to, even though we were living at Glaston Park, which is close to Highland Park and Eagle Rock, we went to grade school at Betty Placencia Magnet Elementary. I know, long name. And. My class, the kids I went to school with all of them adults now, obviously it was like this many United Nations.

Let me tell you, I felt like we were ahead of our time. I'm Filipino in my class. I was surrounded by such diversity. I had friends who are first gen immigrants from all over the world, China, Thailand, Nigeria, Jamaica, Germany, and Mexico. And it was just. Really beautiful. I've just been so proud to be from LA.

And then we moved to the Inland Empire in Montclair, and then I went to school at UC Irvine. But when I was in my twenties and I was working in campaigns and fundraising, I moved back to LA, lived in Silver Lake. I've lived in Noho arts district. Pasadena is its own city, but we lived in Pasadena and now we're in the Valley in LA.

And I just, I love the city. I grew up here. So in this episode, I just want to share my history of my love for this city because I am from here. I'm not the person that like left the Midwest and come here, but ironically I actually did leave LA to go to the Midwest. I lived in Iowa, Indiana, Montana, New Mexico, Massachusetts, working on campaigns and really great like Midwestern cultures.

I will say, when I talk to my nieces and nephews. I always share with them the importance of leaving, not leaving leave forever, but just having the experience of getting out of where you grew up to experience the world differently, doesn't have to be a different country, could be a different state, but when you do, you open your mind to different ways of living.

And when I was outside of LA, I always missed LA because of the diversity. I always felt like a. Sore thumb. Is that what it's called? Like I just stood out and in LA, you get to learn about these different cultures, whether it's the food, the different accents. I don't know. I'm just proud of the city, but let's go back to what I was focused on this episode.

I know I'm just rambling, but I promise I have an intention here as I share how I protected my piece and prioritize my needs and what you could do for yourself too. I want to remind you two things. Number one, I am not a licensed therapist, but I highly recommend connecting with a therapist. And the great news is if you are looking for a pro bono support with what's happening, I have a link, a Google sheet.

It's not mine. I found an online of therapists who are willing to do sessions per bono. So check that out in my show notes. And then second, this is my unique experience of. What I went through, not necessarily specific to LA fires, but just when I'm in that fight or flight, that moment of crisis, that moment of trauma, how I've changed, evolve, become self aware, what I do to self regulate.

So know that this is my unique experience. I don't want you to assume you have to feel or experience it like me, but I hope my intention is it gives you a reflection point of how do you experience things. And what has helped me to protect my peace, prioritize my needs is learning to understand why I am the way I am.

And not putting blame to it. To give you context, I was the first born in this country, right? The eldest for my brothers. And I played harmonizer, like a lot of oldest daughter, oldest child, when you are born in from immigrants, right? I played harmonizer between my parents and brothers. I learned at a young age to manage other people's and emotions.

Now I am not blaming my family structure. I'm not blaming my parents or upbringing. I'm very grateful for what my parents have provided the best they can do as immigrants. But this awareness has been after years of therapy and. Because I've constantly been in this place of managing other people's needs and emotions, my family, I also did it in my personal life, my personal relationships, my romantic relationships before even catching myself even now, and I found it hard throughout Thanks at this time, like in my, up until my twenties on how to listen to my voice and my needs.

It really wasn't until I was 26 when I did EMDR therapy where I had huge strides in healing. See how I used to be when there was a moment of crisis, let's say in a family context or even personal, I was like an event manager conductor. I would just manage and tell people what to do. Okay. So this is the problem.

This is what we're going to do. And I would plan things. I was like Monica and friends, but like crazier. And.

And it was very controlling. Oh, I feel gross even saying that and admitting it. But Hey, like self awareness is the first step, right? Second step is taking act aligned action to it. And when going back to even the fires breaking out, there was one close to us, the Kenneth fire, which was five miles away.

I got the alert at watch duty. I just got a pedicure and I was driving back. I was freaking out. But there was no alert to evacuate, but because if you're like the oldest daughter, oldest child, you're probably like me, you like lining ahead, right? So you come from a place of intuition and preparing, unfortunately for the worst.

So I just started packing. I canceled my client calls for the afternoon cause I knew I wasn't even going to be present for them. you read what was needed. So I started taking photos and videos of the home inside. It was just interesting, because I noticed for me I was the one preparing and, planning, but it wasn't so much the other person.

And, I was realizing, oh, I am dealing with this differently than someone else. Yet I had to learn to, how can I honor my voice? So it was interesting for me to communicate to my partner. I said, call me, Hey, how I deal with moments of stress. And I said it in this tone too, which by the way is such a huge improvement to 10 or 15 years ago.

So like calmly making sure I was breathing, how I deal with moments of stress is I have to do things to prepare. So that's why I canceled the calls. I need to start packing. What do you need? And ironically, when I had that statement, that's when the false alarm of, we had to evacuate happened and then we're like panic mode and had to pack.

And 30 minutes later, we got an alert. Hey, sorry, that evacuation was false. But during that 30 minutes, it felt so long. Cause I was like planning Mark, all my parents, Hey, we're going to be evacuating. I'm packing right now. it was, interesting. Cause I felt like me having the conversation, me being mindful of it and conscious.

saying sentences like how, I deal with moments of stress is I have to do things to prepare. What do you need? By the way, write that down, whoever you're write down that statement. If you ever are in a place of Oh, I'm in a moment of crisis. I'm in the moment of fight or flight or stress.

And a lot of us in LA were, I was in a mental, emotional gymnastics because old me wanted to yell. I caught myself wanting to be in fight mode and I had to like coach, myself, be like, okay, Lane, breathe, speak calmly. And it was just interesting having that reflection with my therapist. And I will give a shout out to my cousin because I knew, I had to tell my parents if I did really have to evacuate.

I didn't have to, thankfully, and I told my cousin, hey, if I do have to evacuate, can you just, communicate with my parents and my, And our aunts and uncles, because look, honestly, managing Boomer Filipino aunts and uncles is a whole lot. And I knew my goal was, let me get out to evacuate safely if I need to.

Like I said, the good news, I didn't have to, but shout out to my cousin, where she was able to support me if I needed that. And I did want to reflect too, it was interesting because during this time, when the fires did break out, the only time I contacted my parents was, hey, we might need to evacuate, and then I eventually told them 30 minutes later when we got the text that we don't need to anymore.

That was the only time I spoke to them. And then when things finally calmed down, for me, I can't say that for everybody, because I know people in different parts of LA, they also had to evacuate, like in Brentwood. I finally called my parents Sunday, and they just asked how I was, and I said good. It was just really stressful last week, because I had to be on my phone.

And my mom calmly said, I know, that's why I didn't call or text you. I knew if he needed me, he would call me. And my dad always listens to our conversations. And he replied, see, your mom is learning. And we were laughing. We were FaceTiming. And I was just like, it was just, it was beautiful. That moment having that conversation with my parents, because before, oh my God, my parents would call me, text me all the time.

and I share that because as I was reflecting this. situation, my therapist, I was like, wow, what a long way of how I've been able to communicate my needs, my boundaries to my parents. And it was just so healthy and even healthy in how I communicated my needs of wanting to pack, wanting to take pictures, not having to force my partner to do it, but okay, this is what I'm going to do and express.

This is what I need at this moment. now mind you, I'm not perfect. I think I remembered it was like New Year's Eve and we were doing karaoke, like just friends of that. Just friends. And we were supposed to, this was at one of my friend's homes and we were supposed to watch like the ball drop in New York, but we didn't get it on time.

And I like start going, Oh my God, okay, when you do this. And then I caught myself like, wait, hold on oldest daughter syndrome came out. I'm really sorry. I'm gonna work on that. And then one of my friends took out her phone and then we watched the ball drop on her iPhone as opposed to the TV. So I share that because we're human.

We're not perfect. but at least we are aware. And I know I share my story in this moment of crisis and how I set boundaries. So I want to go back to you because I've been talking about me, the whole time. So my question to you is knowing that other people respond to triggers Fight or flight crisis differently than you.

How can you calmly communicate what you need to another person, whether a family member, a loved one, a partner, a child, and how can you acknowledge that this other person is different from what you would do?

I can't answer that question, but I just want you to think about that. don't assume that your way is the only way and the right way because I'll say I have thought that.

Many times I will continue to think that I'm not saying I'm right, but I catch myself like wait Is this the on the way I can't think of it that way and if you need further support like Eileen I don't know how to answer that. I really don't know how to honor my voice I have been managing other people's emotions, but I don't know what I need Then I put a link in my show notes of therapists who are providing pro bono services If you are affected by the LA fires You can look at that in my show notes, and if you want to look for one.

I used psychology today to find one for myself, and you can use the different filters as well.

So I realized I flipped it. The first part of this podcast was about prioritizing my needs. Now the second part is protecting my peace. And what I mean by that is, yes, I shared What I went through with the crisis and mind you this is what my therapist shared with me at the end of my session Because we're still unfortunately going through the fires is I'm still processing it.

I'm she gave me the homework assignment of journaling What comes up that might bug me about when I was in that fight or flight mode So I'm just gonna keep that awareness in the next two weeks because it's still pretty fresh I'm not saying I have Healed, keeping that awareness, protecting your peace.

Let me tell you, I am hating social media. I hate, and I mentioned this earlier, I hate how it's politicized. People hating on LA, our state, the lack of fact checking, people saying it's a DEI problem, more people making decisions on opinions and emotions. And when I was talking to my therapist, she was like, you don't need to consume it.

Ironically, before these fires happened, one of my resolutions for this year was to be less on my phone and social media. But obviously when a crisis happens, I had to be. It was interesting because I saw comments online, to help you. Just don't consume news. it's easy to say when you're not personally affected by what may be happening in the world.

And I had to be glued to the news to make sure there was no fire close to me, so I'm safe. Cause survival is first, and that my friends, family, and loved ones were safe. Now that it's almost over, not quite yet, cause there's high winds till Wednesday. And this podcast episode is dropping Thursday, and it won't be over.

Technically it won't be really over until rain comes. I am reminded that now that we're not, or at least for me, I will say for me, and it's a privilege for me to say this, is that now that I am personally not in a high crisis, I can choose. What to consume. So right now I only have the watch duty app being able to alert me for the fires because the winds are about to pick up to 70 miles per hour, which is insane.

And I want to remind you

what you can consume. I understand if there's a crisis, whether it's this fire or something personal happening to you, you have to be on your phone then by all means do that, but you don't have to 24 seven. And you can control what you consume. And right now, I want to limit it. Am I saying turn off or delete social media?

Not necessarily, although I do want to. I'm thinking about it. But I can go back to what I was doing originally. And I say this once again, because it's a privilege for me. Because I didn't lose a home. I can go back to what I was doing before, which is Not constantly doom scrolling on my phone. And it's interesting because when this

year started and I tested putting my phone in the corner of my office, and as I'm working between breaks, it was like a drug, like, where's my phone?

it's insane how addicted we are to our phones. I know as more research comes out on how mentally unhealthy our phones and social media is, we will see lessening of what

we will see lessening of, us being on our phones and social media. similar to cigarettes, but that's for our next episode when I talk about 2025 marketing trends, but it was interesting. I, caught myself in wanting to be in an engagement, not engagement, but like a conversation of someone saying something online, which I disagreed with because it was not fact checked and it was emotional and I realized, wait, I don't need to put my energy in this.

And I did this because I was in a class doing Muay Thai and one of my friends was like, have you heard the crazy conspiracy theories? All the fliers were like, I don't want to talk about it. I care more about my friends being okay. Like just even setting the boundaries for it. And I want to remind you, you could do it too.

posts, you could mute it for you use Instagram. Like you, you don't need to consume all of that. I don't want to now. I know I was babbling a lot about my experience, what I've done, what I am doing, I can't say it's done yet, but I've been doing to protect my peace. Prioritize my needs. And I just want to sum up three things.

I hope you received one, learn to vocalize your needs, even if it makes the other person uncomfortable. You are not responsible for managing someone else's emotions. Number two, if you need further support to honor your needs, definitely suggest therapy. In my show notes, I provided a link for pro bono services.

If you do not have the funds and you're affected by the LA fires. And if you have funds. How I found my therapist is through psychologytoday.com, using filters, and I highly suggest EMDR therapy. That really helps me process things from my past so that when I get triggered, like having a difficult conversation, like I've shared with you, I've learned to be calm, state what I need, and learn to not be attached to other people's responses.

Choose and limit what you consume. Right now, at this present moment, Monday night, January 13th, there's supposed to be high winds to Lincet, which I've said I know multiple times in this episode. And what I'm limiting my phone to is making sure my watch app duty is on, just in case something does happen.

That's Gonna be my consumption, and keeping my phone away so I don't doom scroll on social media. honor your voice, you know what you need. I hope this episode provides, I don't know, I don't know what to, I'm trying to find this cute way to wrap it up, but it's not coming to mind. when you're not quite sure what you need, be courageous enough to listen to your silence. Because universe, God, Beyonce, whoever, whatever higher power you believe in, they don't speak to us like loud, booming voices that comes in like little quiet voices. So be brave enough to listen to your voice.