

Alison Spittle

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There's no pirate in the world where it doesn't still need to happen. Yes. Do you know what I mean? Like I babysat. You know what I mean? It should be a MeToo movement for babies. Yes, yes, there should be a MeToo movement for people. People who work in garden centers. There should be a movement like it's it just hasn't percolated through. Has it? 3s Welcome to Women Are Mad, where we invite women to bring their anger into everyday conversation. I'm Selima Saxton, I'm an actress and writer. I'm Jennifer Cox and I'm a psychotherapist. We notice that anger is the one emotion that women aren't allowed to openly express. Meanwhile, everything around us is making us absolutely furious. We're all feeling it. Let's get together to work out what to do with it. 2s Salma, what's made you mad this week? Um. I thought it was quite interesting how, um. The brilliant Claudia Winkleman has left her. Her great show that I love, actually, on radio two to, um. Um. 1s Uh, I know the age of her kids, so I'm thinking it's lots to do with that. And actually, she has said that, hasn't she? That. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. I think one's leaving home and. Yes. Exactly. Yeah. Um, and it did maybe make me reflect on where we all are as mums and how we're all frantically racing around. It's not just me racing. Yeah. Pinging like a little ping pong ball. Yeah. And and not getting it right. Ever. Yes. Um, but also really interesting that a man, Romesh is taking over. Yes, absolutely. He's got with his brood of children. Yes. That's true. Seemingly not part of his decision making. I mean, we don't know who knows, but it's it is interesting that it is still a father coming in. Yes. Yeah. To take up the reins. I think he just makes me reflect on. 1s Whatever we do, like you and I, have dealt with the younger years of children slightly differently, probably because you were training and things like that, and I was quite I was a stay at home mom, really, wasn't I? Um, but there's no magic bullet, is there? There's no guarantee that one works and the other doesn't. And I think it's that the guilt gets you either way. It does. Yes. Yeah. Even if you volunteered for all the Christmas parties, even if you were there for every Christmas jingle that what is called what I don't I love that it's called a Christmas jingle. Jingle was really making me giggle. Yes, sir. I'm not sure if Jesus is jingle. Yeah, let's not go there. Um, but yeah, even if you were there for every jingle and things can still come up, and it doesn't mean that everybody is safe and sound and straightforward and immaculate forevermore, because you ticked off all the nice things on the list. You just have to do whatever you can. And what you feel is right in your heart. Yeah, and I guess family. And try not to blame oneself for like discrete decisions along the way, which we'll never know. Yes. If they were the, the, um, catalysts for, you know, the situation you're now dealing with or are dealing with in teen hood or 20s or whatever, it's just I think there's so many complexities that go into it. And also, you know, to acknowledge that most of us are just trying our hardest in psychoanalysis. There's a real, um, drive against perfection. And instead you want to always be going for good enough because life isn't perfect. So if you bring up kids to sort of have this really brittle understanding of what's expected of them and what other people will likely provide them with, then they have no equipment, right? Yes. So, uh. 1s Our guest today is extremely funny and disarmingly analytical. She's a comedian and comedy writer who, among other TV appearances, co-wrote and starred in her own sitcom Nowhere Fast and has had several sold out runs at the Edinburgh Festival. Please welcome the very impressive Alison Spittle. Okay, Alison, um, we're just going to launch straight in. Yes. All right. With you? Absolutely, absolutely. Could you tell us what makes you angry? The idea that justice doesn't exist because, like, when I was younger, I did, I think through media and stuff. You kind of. You kind of believe you are. You're led to believe that, uh, or injustice happens. But the more you go through

life, the more you realise it doesn't happen. God, this sounds so, uh, petty, but like, um. And you just. You get angry and angry with yourself for feeling angry, and I just would rather. If we were told from a young age that like sometimes there are people do bad things or shit. Stuff happens. And, um, yeah, that's that's what makes me angry. Give us examples of this horrible realization, the MeToo movement. I would say funny because any time there's like hints where to go, like, oh, someone's gonna get done. And you go through about eight different names before the person, it does get done, you're out and they're blank. But there's so many others like that that that's that's a good example. As a woman navigating comedy, stand up comedy. Is it a world where you think MeToo might still need to? There's no planet in the world where it doesn't still need to happen. Yes. Do you know what I mean? Like I babysat. You know what I mean? It should be a MeToo movement for babies. Yes, yes, there should be a MeToo movement for people. People who work in garden centers. There should be a. But like, it's it just hasn't percolated through. No one's going to have a big scoop on like it's not interesting to read about, right? People who manage garden centers who also touch up their employees. It's not salacious. That's true. Yeah. It's really yeah, it has to have some kind of glamour to get currency, which is incredible. Yeah. And the currency of comedy is that like, oh, but you're being funny. So isn't everything supposed to be funny? You know what I mean? That is the glamour of it, you know? But yeah, I think I think that I think essentially that does make me angry. And that's the thing I go to therapy for. It's that I try to get rid of that anger. Is it clearly, you know, that that's why you're in therapy. Definitely. Yeah. I mean, I'm really interested in this, you know, and I want to ask you a lot more, but it wouldn't mean very would it be probing into very personal areas. I mean, when I did a standup show about last year called wet, and that was what I love about standup, I love it more than any other made him in regards to talk to them and stuff, is that I had my own power to talk about it. I controlled the narrative because like, yeah, we've where I talked about an incident that like, I didn't really hold onto as like sexual harassment before. I was just like, that man's being weird. But now I look back at X as like ten years ago or whatever, you know, I'm older. Oh, that was like wrong. And basically what happened was like, there was this man who told me how powerful he was. The conversation had gone from and what careers he's destroyed, what careers he's helped make. And then he said, this was after a gig. And he said, like, you think he did well. And I said, yes, because I didn't learn at that point to be a humble about stuff, like when I'm excited about stuff. Should you be honest? I mean, you survive. You should show humbleness because people don't like it when you're not humble and therefore there's no point in bringing it on. Like it's like Squid Game. You watch the Squid Game at the moment. I think I've seen it. Yeah. So like as soon as people say that they have a talent at something or they are excited about something, they're gonna like within the next possible time that they're able to your best offer to do a good game and to do well in life, you better stuff. Keep them down. I hope enough of that next year and you'll have a happy life. And he'll probably get to the final Squid Game, you know? Okay, so I'm gonna agree with you about Squid Game. I'm not going to agree with you about life. Really? Yeah. Why not perfect? Because I think as a reformed people pleaser. Yeah, I used to be this. And mute it, shrink it, do it down. Letting you go first. Change the subject to you rather than me. Belittle myself. Joke about myself. Yeah. All in order to be humble. Yeah, I now think if I'm good at something, if I, uh. And really winning at something, I don't have to be arrogant in order to celebrate that and to tell you that I can. I can tell you. How do you do that without being arrogant? Now, I would trust that. The thing about me is I'm a people pleaser, and the thing I don't like in other people is arrogance. Even though in might not even be arrogant. But I have this weird chip on my shoulder about something that I will hold against you. How do you prevent people like me with low self-esteem and issues in their lives, from being an asshole to you, or like preventing, you know, well, I, I can't be sure and I don't. Yeah, yeah, but I know that your feelings are yours and. Yeah. And mine and mine and I will no longer shrink so that I don't get on. Because also, there's not much time on this planet,

is there? For me, it is. That's true. I'm gonna get on. Allison, can we ask a psychotherapist? Because this is so fascinating. I love this because it does feel like this is the tussle the most people are completely crushed by. So do you either listen to the attack, listen to the insecurities and the frailties of other people coming at you as if as if it belongs to you, as if it was and it's true? Or do you decide? No, I'm doing me. And actually, when you just break it down like that, there is nothing arrogant about just doing you and deciding I'm going to live my life. But didn't you just do a bloody brilliant gig going back to that guy and you come off stage? I mean, oh, it's really it had gone really well and it did go really well, but he told me that I was technically very bad at comedy, and if I wanted another gig, I feel I'd have to wrap my lips around the back of his dick to get another gig off. And he's like this. There is like a different I think he was going for a different angle. There is an egging. Yeah. Is that what the thing is? Know what this is like. This is pure sexual harassment. I mean, and you see, I think my problem with it was that like, well, maybe because like on the scale of stuff or like, not the worst thing that's ever happened to me, but the like, use of power, it's a very clear abuse of power. And I know this is what women do all the time, though it's not the worst thing. It could be worse. Look what happened to her over there. Genuinely. Yes, yes. So I just kind of saw mine on a scale of like, uh, well, it could have been worse kind of thing, and I but I did like, once I realized I didn't even, I didn't even put that in like a little box of, like, that's a negative thing. I should stay away from them because I'd continue to work for them. And for a long time after that, because I felt like I was doing something. I love doing stand up comedy and do something that I love, and then to work in environments that I might not feel comfortable in. So I would do that because then I'd be like, well, then you deserve to live. You deserve to thrive at stand up comedy. If you do stuff that you don't feel comfortable with or happy with and stuff. So I continued to work for him, which is weird, isn't? I won't say that's interesting. So you deserve to get the big prize if it's uncomfortable and horrible and messy and gross. Yeah, and if another person had a past that was less sexually harassing or I would resent them. I think I'm angry over that. And I need to get rid of that anger because, like, it's not gonna help me in the long run without the food. You know, I also thought it was interesting how you said you resent other people who haven't had that yet. Yeah. I think it's Catholicism or excuse them. It's like residual alcoholism. And it's a weird thing as well. And everyone does this sort of making their own fairytale or of their journey. It can't be enough that you just want to do comedy. It has to be like a, a story of like, how do you start a comedy? How you continued despite whatever. You know what I mean? Everyone. Everyone makes up their real Hollywood stories. That's a great phrase, the fairy tale or everything. Because I think we can all do that. Can't we fall into the romance or of also of a story of our lives and then justify certain behaviors of people, maybe even in that world, because it's part of that fairy tale. Beverly I mean, that's why a lot of people stay in marriages and we're not happy. Yes. It's because I well, if I get out, if there's not a happy ending that I was told I, I was promised or I deserved, and if I, if I do divorce, then that nullifies every kind of happy memory I've had before or whatever. Even though, like. You know, no matter if if the relationship ends or whatever. And he did have happy times. Those are still happy times. You know, remember. Um, and if you stay with the person and it becomes even worse. I don't know how happy those memories would be anyway. And also, I mean, it's interesting thinking about it like a marriage, because if you think about how many women are stuck in relationships that actually are, probably if you took them to court would be found to be controlling again, coercive, and that she would have very little control over her finances or her social life or whatever it is. You know, there is a lot of really, really borderline criminal behavior going on within households that gets, um, explained away or, oh, I better not, because all humans like that and it's all very minimized. And I think what you're saying in the comedy world is kind of similar, that these relationships are accepted as as normal or par for the course and written off as, yeah, other people might weave them into a hilarious anecdote or something on stage, but actually it's terrible. And

back to what you said at the beginning about justice. I think while we're all going around pretending that this stuff is, well, that's part of the industry and almost like casting couch idea that effectively we're not we're not moving any of this stuff on and things like me to come and go instead of eliciting real change. Yeah, I think I think maybe the other thing is like anger feels especially righteous anger where it's weird, like as well, where you look at something and you go, that person's a bad person. I'm angry, that person and I have a right to be angry. That person does great because he is allowed to feel that feeling. Yeah, he's all about you. Yeah, that's a good point about the righteousness almost giving us like a kind of ego boost or a kind of also the chance to ruminate on stuff like that to me. Well, then to ruminate on situations like if you ruminate on a complicated situation where you used to look at your behavior and think about what you've done, like, I don't look back at that time with that person, the man, hey, I'm on the couch kind of thing. As a I didn't do anything wrong. There's nothing I, you know, I don't I'm very like I feel to myself that I'm blameless in that situation and I like thinking about it the next. I'm like, oh, I don't have any feelings about my behavior and what I should've done this other times where I've fallen over me or others that I didn't, you know, it's definitely my fault as well. Or there's some aspect to me that I don't like about myself that. ^{1s} Comes out the garden, and I don't like ruminating on that. Is that enough to ruminate and think about my own behavior? Which probably means I don't change for the better. But that's that's from my therapist. But that isn't this the point? Like, if you're self-aware enough to know that you've had a part to play and you're thinking about that, this is then the chance that your brain is offering you the opportunity to do something different next time, or even to apologize or make amends or whatever it is. Yeah, I think like a part of me was always very afraid of not being self-aware. I would look at people that weren't self-aware. I thought to myself, I really want to be that person. It's the thing I don't want to be. It's that. But then he becomes self-aware anyway. What good is that? It's horrible. Oh, man, I just tried. Yeah, ^{1s} yeah, I think look, I think also look becoming self-aware also it takes the mask of your self but also the mask of other people, doesn't it? Well, you have to call it a real thing. That's the actual. Yeah. That is dying painful. Yeah. Addison, where did you last get angry with somebody? Oh, uh, the last time I got angry with somebody, I got angry with myself. Um, I last I did a quiz show, and I laughed the last round, and I was angry with myself for missing the question. But then I watched myself on telly, and I was angry of myself for showing my anger or showing my disappointment or just making it weird. Yeah, but why is that weird? To show that anger? ^{1s} Because if maybe because, like, uh, I have been, uh, programmed from a very young age not to show anger in order to protect yourself. You know what I mean? So a lighter question. Yes. Well, has anger driven you to do something incredible? And that could be good or bad. And I like comedy. I think a lot of my career is based on anger. When I. When that thing happened with that man and then a few, a few months later, basically, I stopped working for that man when I felt that he done other stuff to other people, and I was I felt like I was able to be angry with him then because I, I, I find it hard to feel angry on my own behalf. I find it easier to be angry on behalf of other people. And I was kind of afraid of I didn't want anything to happen to anyone else, and I felt very powerless about it, but I felt like I wasn't in a position. To help people. So I tried very hard in trying to make my career bigger in order to feel safe. Oh, and, uh, so that's what I tried to do. And has it helped? I think it's helped. And it's hindered it in a way. And like I definitely think he said, like, uh, I definitely think being a bit mouthy about stuff has not helped me. You know, uh, why? Because people don't. Yeah. Because, like, you know, that person has friends, and they're not gonna think he's capable of doing bad things because he's never been shown that side of him. So it would be confusing to those people. Yeah. So I know, like, sometimes I go into a room and it's just a bit awkward. So they are, you know, they think I'm a bit of a mouthy person or a liar, you know? So it's definitely like, uh, like it's made me determined, but it's also closed some doors, which is fine. He does have to find other doors. But I really like this idea, though. Allison, first of all, I'm sorry that

you've gone into rooms and you felt like that I wasn't ^{1s} feeling. But, um, the idea of making yourself safe. Actually, in the bigger picture. Let's go beyond this, man. I'm using your ambition as. As the kind of big shield is a great, positive, brilliant thought. Yeah, but I just never wanted my name in his mouth. He ever did that to another person to say, like, I destroyed her career. I just didn't want him to feel that he could do that, you know? Yeah. So I think and I think like, that's probably why I continue to do comedy. But it's weird to do something with your life that, like you love doing, but also you want to spite someone. ^{2s} Anna. But I know, but I'm Alison. I'm with you on the that is taking something and using it as rocket fuel. Mhm. Yeah. Whatever that is and how that looks. And I have no doubt that that's gonna need very effective rocket fuel for you know hopefully. But I'd love, I'd love a cleaner greener fuel. You know what I mean I guess let's invite you into our virtual rage room to finish. Um, just to wrap it all up, uh, we're handing you a baseball bat. Yeah. Asking you what would you like to see in this room? To swing it at, uh, number one current news item making. You see, uh, there's a big one. Yeah, I think I think what's making me, Steve is like. It's the same thing about justice. When I. When I was a kid, you'd watch films and you go, everyone would be on the right side of stuff, but like. We're now we're like. Or you'd look at history and you'd go, if I was there, I'd do it differently, but I'm not doing it differently. I'm scrolling and, uh, yeah, I think I think what I'd like to put in there is like, world leaders and war. Yeah. Great. Nice number two aspect of modern life that makes you fume. Um, this is like, no one's fault, but, like, sometimes if I have my heart set on, if I'm in subway and I don't have cranberry sauce, I have to have a word for myself or whatever. Do you know what I mean? If it's on the menu and I have it in my head and then they don't have it on that menu, it's fine. But I do need to have a word with myself for a second. I like that you have a word with yourself. Yeah, because it's not the person. It's not the service industry person's fault. And I don't want to make it weird. Yeah, but this is this is the self-awareness. This is how we stop ourselves from becoming the twats in South. Yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah. So number three, behavior of others, which gets on your wick. Okay. Uh, people that take cocaine at football matches drives me insane. Uh, specific. So this. Oh, this is like, a specific person. ^{2s} But wow, is that I love going to football matches because I love shouting. And I think it's a nice way of getting rid of your anger. Oh, yeah? Yeah. Good. Approve. It's a good. It's a good way. Uh, and I go with my dad. I love my dad. It's not my dad, by the way. Okay, good. I mean, it's just a weird thing, but I remember. Yeah, watching a nil nil game like Millwall versus West Brom. This lad took coke and he was just, like, shouting at people on the way to and from the place. And I'm like, this is not like. Why would you, why would you, why would you take cocaine looking at West Brom, they're not it's not the it's not the thing that that drug should go with. Do you know what I mean? It just feels it feels like a waste. And also just people that are assholes to people, um, in public, on the street, men who make people feel unsafe and they know they do it. And that drives me insane, actually, is the man that just want to scare people. And it's where they're just like talking, you know, not even catcalling, but kind of like stepping outside of the of, of polite norms drives me insane because unconsciously, I think they do it to know the people fear them. Finally, ^{1s} your angriest moments on public transport. Oh, there's been loads. It's been loads, I remember. It's not like a big thing back in the day. It was like I would get street harassment for like wearing outlandish clothes and stuff. And I've always had it. Well, like when I was a kid, I grew up in like a council estate and I was eccentric and my friends protected me. They weren't eccentric, but I was their acceptable eccentric. And if you had a problem, they would they would, uh, but they would also like. Yeah, it would be like a but it was fine because they would express myself. And then I left that place and went to Dublin and I would get like, um, just men commenting at me, like calling me a fat cunt or like just weird stuff, you know, like once I had this lad who was like 15, I'd say he was about 15. I was in my mid 20s and I was sitting outside a cinema waiting for my, my. A boyfriend in time, but he still is my boyfriend. I said at the time, ^{1s} but, um. Uh, I was sitting and he just put his hand. He put his hand on top of my face and left there

for a second, and then walked away because he felt he could do that. Like it was just so weird. So I wrote an article about this is years ago, and I just found the behavior of like, yeah. So back to the public transport thing. I did an article. I felt pretty pumped up from it because people are being quite nice. And I started to defend myself more. And like once these young lads put chewing gum on my hair, uh, on the train and I just, like, went mad at them, just rattled them. Oh, or once I was at a hen party and it was the breakfast after the hen party in a hotel, and it was full of hen and stag parties, and this man came up and slapped his leg on top of the table and started dancing. And I said, Will you please fuck off? And he was like, so shocked that I would say that. And he's like, what the fuck's wrong with you? And I was like, you're dancing on my table. It's breakfast time. I'm trying to eat fruit and fiber. Fuck off. And he did. He fucked off, but he just it was good. I so I get angry, I either go into like. When I know I'm kind of safe, I'll definitely get angry at people on public transport. Yeah, I'm very passive aggressive. But no, you just sound straightforwardly assertive. Assertive? Yes. I grew up in an estate, and like we used to, lads used to hate the girls as much as the lads. Like. It was a very equal society. And, um, like I used to getting fights. There's ladders about six foot and like, I always used to get into verbal roles with them. And then one day he said something about my mom's hair and he was sitting down on a basketball court. So he was about my hicks. He was sat down and I just jumped on him and tried to gouge his eyes out. And we never had a problem after that. Like the kind of like, I know that's not the lesson you need to learn from this podcast. What is the lesson? What is that? What happened then? Yeah. Horrible physical violence can sometimes make people do what you want them to do. Which is alone. Yeah. 3s It's like prison in a way, to make an example and do a horrible thing to someone, so no one will ever mess with you ever again. Yeah, but in another sense, I do think you're a you're a good anger ambassador for this because. Cause hang on, this is going to be a seamless transition. Yes. Because we'll ignore this. Will ignore the senseless physical violence. You are somebody who says it and calls it and speaks out loud, which not all do. 1s That's true. But I think, like, is that a good transition away? 1s Yes. From the violence? Yes. Maybe I should say something different later. Well, we had a confrontation and he never did it again. 3s I think it's I you're somebody that thinks so deeply about all of this really complex societal, systemic stuff. And, you know, that definitely is coming through in your comedy, clearly. But when you're at home ruminating, I, I'm not sure this is the negative. I think this is actually you putting together and working through some things that most of us wrestle with and never resolve and sweep under the carpet because it's too much, it's too big. You're really trying to do something with it and make sense of it, you know? Yeah, maybe gouge someone's eyes out occasionally, but it's all about the journey, isn't it? The eyes with gouged love the way. 2s So I just want to say, I think what she what Allison was saying about self-awareness was brilliant. What did you think? Yeah. I mean, I think it can be really uncomfortable. 1s Um, if you're being quite vulnerable with somebody and acknowledging that you may have made your own mistakes, mucked up, spoken poorly, whatever, and they can't, and they just go, yes, you were full stop and don't acknowledge any part of it themselves. It's so mean. But also like if they're incapable of it because they don't have that awareness, then you're always going to be at loggerheads, aren't you? There's no way that conversation can really connect. And they're living in their joyous bubble, aren't they? They've been there, skipping through the meadows, going. Smells wonderful. Yeah. 1s Meanwhile, the rest of us, tortured and anguished. Yeah, exactly. 1s Thank you for listening and sharing in our anger. 1s And remember, you're not mad to feel mad. 3s Please like and subscribe. It helps other people find the podcast.