

Tenacity Wins

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Dr. Maribel Lopez:

... it is stronger the desire in me to achieve what I need to achieve than that fear that, Oh, well, no. I rather stay in this little cocoon in this corner and not speak to anybody. I think when you want something, you have to fight for it, fight for your dreams. No one else is going to do it for you.

Lisa Bragg:

Dr. Maribel Lopez fought for her dream to achieve a doctoral degree. And now her mission is to inspire and promote economic and independent development in Latin communities through education and activism. I'm Lisa Bragg, and this is Bold(h)er, stories of and for women who stand out. Brought to you by BMO for Women. Maribel, you're an academic, you're an entrepreneur, you're a philanthropist, you're a mom and a grandmother and much, much more. And to an outsider, you might look like you've led a charmed life with all of your accomplishments, but your childhood was filled with adversities that you've had to fight hard to overcome. Can you tell me a bit about your experiences growing up?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Growing up, I had a really, really rough childhood, a really traumatic childhood if you will. Lived in poverty, a child of divorced parents, surrounded by negativity and domestic violence and substance abuse. And it was just not a really good, healthy environment for a child to grow up in. And on top of it all, I'm survivor. At that time, my uncle was sexually abusing me and also raping me. So I grew up very unstable and sad and angry at times. So in my teens, I just didn't want to live anymore. I just didn't want to be here.

Lisa Bragg:

That is a lot to unpack. You have since been on your own healing journey, which has helped you to be here talking to us today. Journaling and writing has been a big part of that journey. Tell me about that. When did you start doing it?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

I must have been, it was between the ages of 14 and 15. And I think I learned this through Oprah. I think Oprah was starting her programming. Because I sit down and I think a lot about, I don't have a lot of childhood memories for obvious reasons. And I call that a "protection of my being." [laughs] But I do remember seeing this and that Oprah was like really present in my life at that time. And I must've learned it there because she journalled a lot. And I remember her sharing on one of her programming that her uncle has sexually abused her, and in fact that's when I really, really knew that something really wrong had happened to me. Until then I thought I'm doing what I'm supposed to do, in a nutshell.

And it was about writing. Just write your thoughts and write your dreams. And today I stress that to my students, I stress that to individuals that I talk to in trainings. I do a lot of childcare provider trainings, early childhood trainings to childcare providers. And I stress write, write it down, write your thoughts, write what you want. Tomorrow, three days from now, you're going to come in to read your writings and say, huh, maybe I don't want that that much anymore, but I do want this. Or you can make sense of your writing.

I also like reading so I've read books about writing as a form of healing. I published a journal. I created a journal called *Eternally Grateful*. I want to share and impart with individuals who helped me heal, in my life and how powerful words and writing is. And so I did. I created a list with 10 items on that list, 10 things I wanted to accomplish in my life. They were my dreams. And believe it or not, my doctoral degree was number one. And I mean, from one to 10, I did that. And I wrote in one of them and when I really, really felt really empowered and really like, I can do this. And it meant the world to me was I wanted to buy a new refrigerator. And then my- new. Not used, not hand-me-down. I got nothing wrong with that, but I just did not want that. I wanted to buy a refrigerator and fill it up with food because I remember as a child, that was one of the things that we lacked. And so for me, it was huge. So I did. Something as simple as a refrigerator.

My dream school, the school that I wanted to go to, the school that I wanted, the university that I wanted, my dream school was not Stanford, was not UCLA, was not all of these elite schools. By the way, they're amazing and they're right. However, I wanted it to go to UIC, University of Illinois, Chicago, because I used to see it all the time, drive by. And to me, it was a dream, a dream to go to University of Chicago. And when I walked in through those doors- I have pictures. This is a podcast, but if it was a video, you would see the pictures because I was so elated and happy to be there. And the fact that I achieved that dream.

Lisa Bragg:

That's amazing because you really do have to see it to be it.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Definitely, definitely. And those things remind me, they remind me that things are achieved, they are achievable if you set your mind to it, if you stay. I believe in having a positive mind and attitude. In our Spanish cultures, I'm going to speak of my own Puerto Rican culture. My grandmother used to say, I'll say it in Spanish and then I'll try to translate. *Todo en la vida tiene solución, pero no la muerte*. Like everything in life has solution, but not death. And meaning once you're gone, you're gone. So you better do what you want to do now because you're gone and everything has a solution. And that's how I live. I am a solution-focused person. Sometimes it can be seen as a negative thing, but not me. To me it has worked. It works for me. And when I focus on what I need, and in fact, that's one of the quotes that my students quoted me on, focus on what you can do, not on what you can't do. That's how I live my life.

Lisa Bragg:

How did that solution's mindset help you throughout your journey?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Listen, I'm going to give you an example. I am not what stats show you today that part of that 2 percent richest people of America, of United States of America. I am not. I was a teenage mom with children, I think by the age of 23 or 25 I already had four. And so I had to go to school and learn how to navigate the university and learn how to look for what I wanted and ask the questions. And so for me, I needed to focus on how do I get myself where I need to get to. I couldn't concentrate on money because if I focused on money, if I focused on money, then I would have been at where I have no money. I'm never going to go to school. I'm never going to achieve my higher education goals. And so I didn't focus on money. I focused on what I needed to do to take me closer to my goal.

So I have to focus on what I could do, not what was not in front of me. And then also coupled with that I love school and I love to learn and I love that environment. It wasn't easy by all means. I had all the tutors you can think of. I took advantage of all the programming at the school. This I share with my students all the time. Get involved, be part of the different clubs and programs at the school. Apply for scholarships and grants and everything that's out there. It's only going to help you in the long run. Today you're not going to see it, but you're going to see it tomorrow. And so definitely that's what I decided to do. I just follow my dreams. I didn't look at what I didn't have. I saw what I could have.

Lisa Bragg:

Because this doesn't happen necessarily today. You're planting the seeds for today for the long term. How can you help your students and people you mentor also to be solutions-oriented people? When we're such an instant gratification society, how do you help them to do that?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Yeah, it's really difficult to do. You are absolutely right. They want everything now. They don't want to go through... And I don't want to generalize, not everyone. However, it's really difficult to grasp that today when in today's society, you can just- oats in one minute, right? One-minute oats. And so, I share my story. I definitely try to share with students how important it is and individuals that I encounter how important is to stay connected. You need to weigh your options. You need to look around, you need to read, stay focused. What is it that you personally want to accomplish and do- you personally?

Once you know that, once you know that, for example, in my case, I wanted to obtain my doctorate degree. So I did my research and I started asking questions and I started meeting individuals who've done it before me. And I started asking the questions that, Lisa, I'm going to keep it real. I would say, "I'm going to ask you something that you may think it's not even, why are you asking me that kind of thing important? And for me, I need to hear it. I need to know it. Tell me what the textbooks or what individuals are not sharing?"

So I think that with students, that's how we have to do it. Or individuals that are trying to achieve a goal or dream is that they need to walk with fear. Remember, it's not like you're not afraid. I am also afraid. I'm afraid of speaking in public. I'm sweating right now as I speak to you. It's been difficult, but I walk with it because it is stronger the desire in me to achieve what I need to achieve than that fear that, Oh, well, no, no. I rather stay in this little cocoon in this corner and not speak to anybody.

I think when you want something, you have to fight for it. That's another one of my quotes for my students is fight for your dreams. No one else is going to do it for you. And you have to fight for them. You have to move everything aside that may be a distraction. You have to fight for yourself sometimes to get up and do the things that you don't want to do or go against sometimes against the time. You only have so many hours in the day to do what you have to do. Well then guess what? Time management. What are you doing at eight o'clock, at nine o'clock, at 10 o'clock? You just set some time on the side to just sit down and be with yourself, present, that you eat lunch, breakfast. Did you eat breakfast, lunch and dinner?

If not, if you don't need to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, did you take a minute? Because everybody is different. So did you take a minute for yourself to listen to what your body's telling you right now? It's tired today. Don't spread yourself thin. I mean, these are all different factors that do assist in your planning, in drawing out, in mapping out step-by-step what you need to do to get to your dreams and your goals. They're achievable. I don't have a doubt in my mind, but what are you doing in the process? What are you doing in the meantime to achieve goals?

Lisa Bragg:

You've had a varied career. You've done so many different things. Maybe unpack a little bit about what else you've done because you are an entrepreneur for a little while too. Tell us about that.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Definitely, I am. I was working for a radio station when it sold, it closed and I just decided not to stay there. And my mom said, "Open up your own daycare." And I said, "Mom, I'm a mother of four. I do not want to take care of other people's babies." And she was like, "But it's not babysitting. It is owning your own business. And you're going to get to go to school." Ding, ding, ding. Remember that? I love school. And so I said, "I get to go to school. Yeah." And so I did. I participated in this pilot program or this program this community organization was doing in Logan Square area in Chicago. And what they did was to survey in the area to see what was the need in the area. And voilà, childcare was number one. And so they had some allocated funds to start training individuals in the community who wanted to open up their own daycare, who wanted to obtain their own licenses in childcare.

And so I applied, I received it. I was one of the first to graduate, first to open, first to write my business plan. And even the business schooling in the area decided to use my business plan as a model for other students in their programming. And I was in business with my

childcare license for 14 years. And I am eternally grateful for that opportunity because the fact that I was able to have my own daycare, I was able to hire individuals to help me run the daycare. So then it was more doable for me to go to school. So having support in your life and mentors is invaluable.

Lisa Bragg:

And when did you close it?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

When I graduated with my master's degree and I started researching for the doctoral program that I was going to enter, and I knew that the doctoral program was going to require my 100 percent attention. And so that's when I closed. And I'm glad because I was able to raise my children. My mom and I co-founded a nonprofit organization that is still running today. And we train Latina women on a monthly basis in early childhood education to continue to maintain their licenses as part of their requirement, and they need continuing education in early childhood education in order to maintain the licenses. And so, yeah, 20 years later, here we are.

Lisa Bragg:

You're pretty unique in your story and in your situation. There's no role model for you right there. When going to school, were you the only person who was a mother of four and who was from Puerto Rico? Or were there many people that you could look around and say, okay, they're like me?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Believe it or not my story is not so unique, Lisa, it is not. When I get to speak, when I get to go around and speak in women's conferences or churches or organizations and I share my story at times, I have women that come up to me and say, "You're telling my story." And that's the shocker to me, that's really the shocker to me because we believe that my story is so unique, right? And I'm like you, I used to think that. That's why I hid. I was ashamed to bring myself out and share my story. I felt shame and obviously shame that did not belong to me because nothing that happened to me, I brought to myself, right. I was just a child and those were the circumstances that I was born in.

Whenever you think you're alone through a situation and there was you alone going through something and you look around. And this is why I'm not afraid, Lisa. It took me a long time. It took me a long time to speak to you today without, I can't say that I totally don't have tears in my eyes. I do have them in the back of my throat, but it's a difficult thing to do. But every time I do it, Lisa, I'm reminded, I am reminded that it's needed. And I think more and more and more women need me to hear this.

And one of my goals and one of my personal goals is that in sharing my story, someone can say, "Hah, I wanted to learn more how she did it so that I can do it too, so that I can pursue my dreams." So it's not such a cookie cutter to say, "if she did it, I can do it" because

everyone is at a different place in their life's journey. And so I don't judge anyone. If by sharing my story, that's going to empower somebody or that's going to help somebody make it to the next level, wherever there are in life's journey, then so be it. This is why I do it.

Lisa Bragg:

And you talked about, you've talked about before, be yourself, be yourself. That's the number one thing that you've said as a piece of advice. Tell me a little bit more about that. How you help young women, especially young Latina women to be themselves.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Yeah. That's one thing I share with my students all the time. Like when you allow yourself to be yourself and to walk in the arena of this is my life. It's empowering. When I was doing my research, Lisa, when my colleague and I were conducting the research and we were writing, we actually presented it in a theatrical format. So we took playwriting classes and we wrote a play with the transcripts of the research. We brought it on stage, 36 cast and crew. I mean, it was incredible. I'm so grateful for that.

And when we would share the writings, the transcript of the play, specifically males would say, "wow, this is really hard. This is rough to put on stage." Yeah, and? You know what? This is rough for you to see, and this is rough for you to hear, but these women lived it. They lived sexual abuse, rape. They lived domestic violence, substance abuse. They lived migrating to a state where they were not accepted. So they felt that we're not from here or from there. They lived the bullying and being ridiculed. It's hard for you to see, it's hard for you to hear, but they lived it. When you allow yourself to be yourself, it's empowering. And no one has to like it. It's the reality.

Lisa Bragg:

Because there are pressures, pressures from different agendas to hide, to keep things inside that doesn't make somebody feel comfortable. That's not their experience. They didn't see that. They didn't hear that.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

The one thing that I try to tell my students, I understand. I was there. I was there. I was that child that couldn't concentrate on the schoolwork because I had to concentrate on not only am I going to eat today or am I going to get raped today? And so I get it. I get it. I lived that. I had a student who her father did not allow her to be in school. So she hid to come to class, to come to college. I had a student who called me at 11:00 PM at night. "Dr. Lopez, I will not be able to turn in my paper. I want to thank you for all you've done. You inspire me as a Latina woman with a doctorate degree. I want to be just like you. I want to continue, but it's going to have to be next semester because my husband just broke my laptop and threw me and my four-year-old daughter out of the house."

And so these are the stories I hear. And so that's why we have to share who we are, really, truly who we are, because this way it gives permission to others to do the same. And I'm happy to report that student came back and I saw her walk across the stage. She graduated.

Lisa Bragg:

How do we support each other to share these stories and to make sure that it's amplified instead of hidden in the dark? How do we help shine a spotlight on it like you're doing?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

I think staying connected. I think the one thing that's really important is for us to stay connected, we try to isolate. And that's part of my trait, by the way, that's part of my personality because so much hiding and secrecy while growing up, I try to hide myself a lot while growing up and that hurts you. You need to stay connected, you need to continue to seek. Yeah. That's I think is very, very important.

Lisa Bragg:

And we're talking to each other during COVID times. So do you worry that women and girls, maybe even some of your students are losing ground in this time where they aren't able to get out to go to your classes or to go to their jobs and things like that, or do you worry for your students at this time?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

I do. We do. And as a collective, and with my bilingual program at Loyola University, we're strategizing in conducting meetings with the students and trying to figure out, what are their needs on a personal level, as soon as they contact me. Yeah. Just listening to them, what's going on, what are their immediate needs? How can we continue to provide them with resources to help them move forward, empower them to move forward. I like to always remind students and everyone, individuals alike, that think about a time where things were rough and think about a time where you thought you wouldn't make it. And you did. Here you are today. And so I think, it goes back to that quote, different times, different measures or something like that.

I mean, you just have to make do, do what you can, move forward. Again, focus on what you can do. Practice healthy precautions and safety precautions, and just continue to move forward. This is adversity and through adversity, we find out how strong and how powerful we really are. I think it was Frida Kahlo who said, "We really don't know how strong we are until all we have to be is strong." And so I believe that wholeheartedly. And I share that with my students. I tell them not to lose perspective. That's one thing I tell my students all the time is don't lose perspective.

Yes, education is important, but your life, your life is number one. Talk about solution, focus, okay, I'm going to eat healthy. I'm going to sleep well. I'm going to maintain a positive attitude. I'm going to do what I have to do step by step. I mean, this semester, I need to turn in this paper. And then when is the next paper due? And time management and just stay

focused, and do one thing at a time. Your grandmother wants to speak to you. Then you know what, you drop that and speak to your grandmother for a moment. Don't lose perspective. That's your grandmother. That's a familial relationship. And so I'm a grandmother, so I'm biased. But I mean with my grandchildren, I'm like, "Oh, I haven't spoken to my grandchildren. This could wait a minute." Tomorrow's gone. Remember time is time. Time is something we can not get back. And so I value every moment. I value time.

Lisa Bragg:

In one of our chats, you called yourself the number one advocate of students of all ages. What do you wish we would all learn? Is there anything that you'd wish if you had a magic wand or you could put it out into the world that we would all learn?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Yes. Yes. Students of all ages alike need to be listened to. Not just hear them, but just listen, be quiet. And this is coming from someone who my daughters say, 'Mom, you're always preaching.' That's what they say. "Mom, you're always preaching. Mom, we heard this all over." The students see my daughters and they tell them all the time, "Your mom, we love your mom dah, dah, dah." And they're like, "Yeah, because you don't live with her 24/7. She's preaching to you 24/7." And they appreciate that by the way, even though they complain, they themselves will tell you, they appreciate that.

Lisa Bragg:

It's their job to complain.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

And they'll tell you, one of my daughters, she said, "Mom, one day I was sitting at this party. And you had said to me to be careful and mindful about some things that happen at parties and stand your ground and say no to some things and and say yes to some other things." And she said, "You were in my head, mom. I left and I never looked back." And she appreciates that. And so, one of the things that I like to share with individuals about students and children and all ages is that, listen to what they're not telling you. There's a reason why they're upset. There's a reason why at times they just didn't get the material. There's a reason why they're not motivated to go to school or motivated in life in general. I can't tell you how many students, young ladies, I speak to that were thinking of ending their life.

I came down from speaking at an event and one of the ladies came up to me and I can see, this may sound really strong, Lisa, but I read in her face. You can see it in her affect like death. I mean, she just did not want to live. And so you can tell in her affect in the way that she was looking, her body, everything. She was carrying a small book bag on her. And in actuality, she had heard in the radio I was coming through and she decided to attend. But on that day she had decided she was going to end her life. And thank God we were able to help her out and find her resources and so forth.

But they're not being listened to. Students, they feel alone. Some professors are like, "Hey, yo, this is your work. Do it. And that's all. I don't want to hear excuses. I don't care. Your grandmother died. I don't care. You have a flat tire." But believe me, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying all students will not create some type of story to get out of doing a paper. But you know your students, if you know your students, if you get to hear them, if you get to know them, if you get to study them, if you get to spend some time. I spend time with my students. You get to spend some time with them, you get to know them and you know who's lying and who's not. But in reality, who goes to school to just throw it all away? No, there are reasons, there are drivers behind everything behind our actions.

Lisa Bragg:

And so let's talk a little bit more about your foundation. So you wanted to start a foundation. Who is the foundation in benefit of?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Students, all students alike going to college or trade school. And the reason why I'm saying that is I can't tell you how many students I've spoken to that have shared, you know what? It's not a degree I'm looking for. It's a career I'm looking for. And so I've always dreamed of doing culinary school. I've always dreamt of being a hairstylist, a makeup artist. I've always dreamed of playing soccer, whatever the case. And so well, then you follow your dreams, but you do what you need to get. You need to learn those skills. You need to learn from the best. You need to attend some type of trade school. You need to go to conferences. You need to learn those skills in order for you to perfect them. And you need to learn from the best.

And so this is why for students to apply to the Dr. Lopez Scholarship Foundation for funds to go to school, they can either be entering or be part of a college, a university, higher ed, or a trade school. And not only that, right now, we just launched it. We launched it last year, October of 2019. Three students have already been awarded scholarships through a scholarship donation we provided to the brand new MSW Bilingual program at Loyola University. Three students were awarded those funds and this year, we're doing a fundraiser event so that it can fund the students moving for 2020/2021. And we already have 16 applicants, I believe in line. So it's brand new. We're still working all of the different programmings. I'm glad and happy to report that the scholarship part of the foundation is functioning well. Thank God, and moving forward.

And right now I'm establishing and really honing in on all of the different parts of the mentorship program because I would love to connect students. Our ideal mentorship program will connect students to professionals. For example, let's say a student wants to have a podcast one day. Well, maybe Lisa will be part of the mentorship program, and then we can connect you to a student who would then may shadow Lisa one day and see, this is really what you're looking for or to ask you the questions that otherwise they're not going to learn, unless it's from the actual professional conducting and doing the work.

Lisa Bragg:

Absolutely. Sign me up for sure.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

That's what helped me, Lisa. People that took time out to just, I wanted to ask the questions that otherwise I wouldn't get answered.

Lisa Bragg:

So September to October marks Hispanic Heritage Month in the US and that recognizes the contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans. I understand that it's been celebrated for more than 50 years, but I want to know what you want for the future. What should change? Looking through your lens, especially with young women or women in general, Latina women, what should the next five years focus on?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

I would love to see more and more, and this is I'm speaking out of experience from the young Latina women that I've worked with and I've mentored, boost their confidence in who they are, be proud of their heritage. So I want to see young Latinas walk with their head up high, confident in who they are and in their roots. When I researched my, I went back to my genealogy because remember I had a shattered identity. I wanted to know more who I was and my cultural strengths and traits. And why should I be proud to be a Puerto Rican, afrocaribe, Christian feminist woman? Like, why should I be proud of that? And I did, I went back to my genealogy and the women in the tribe were the leaders, there were strong, people follow them. They spoke and people listened.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

And so to me, that definitely empowered me. I want Latina women to feel proud of being mothers and being professionals and being mothers alike. I was a mom and I was a professional and I am. Well, I'm a mom and a professional at the same time and always have been. Once I started with my own daycare and started going to school and I celebrate that. I went against the status quo and I went against what society and individuals thought and the messages that I received. A woman or a Latina woman should be, should look like, should and shouldn't have. If this was a video, you would see me. I wear red glasses with bright red lipstick. Yes, because to me red means strong. Red means vibrant. Red is energy. To me, red is also the blood of Christ and that's the Christian woman in me.

And so I want to impart in and I want to see in young Latinas moving forward them be proud of who they are. My daughters are a mix of not only Hispanic, but Taíno, and also Native American, and not only that Spaniard, afrocaribe and so then when I look at them and I say, "When you introduce yourself, be proud and introduce to individuals who you are." And they are, my daughters are so proud to be the Latinas that they are. And that's what I want to see. I want to see more and more young Latinas walk with their head up high and celebrating their strengths.

One thing about sometimes you hear is a negative thing like, Oh, here comes those Latino people with their children. Amen. We have children. We're blessed. Be proud of that. I mean, that's a stereotype, but you get me? That we are a culture, we're a familial culture. Personalismo is one of our strengths, familismo is one of our strengths. And so that's where we need to draw from that. I love the fact that I get to see my family every week. You don't know how many students I speak to that don't have families or don't have one person to be eating with them on a Sunday or on any given day of the week.

And so those are the things that we need to celebrate what we have. Celebrate our strengths. So that's what I would say. You don't need to be "smart" to be in college. You do not. You need to be smart enough to know what's good for you and do good and move forward in life. That I share with my young Latinas. That's what you want, then you pursue it. When someone, maybe you, Lisa, have to read a textbook, a chapter, once? I have to read it 10 times, I don't care. That's who I am. And that's what I have to do. That's what I'm going to do. And that was the card that was dealt to me, I'm going to play it well. Do you follow me? And so that's what I want to share with my young girls, with my Latina women.

Lisa Bragg:

That's so inspiring and so beautiful because that authenticity, the true stories of somebody being able to see it and be it and know that you're out there and you've accomplished so much, all of your dreams. And that's where we have to see it to be it. And that our earlier call you said, many working moms feel the guilt of not being home to make chocolate chip cookies. And you know what, kids can get, survive on cookies from the store or no cookies. We don't have to have cookies.

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Yeah. It was interesting. And I know that's a funny story because I remember when my kids were younger, they're like, "Mom, you're not like my friend's mom. When they get home, there's fresh baked chocolate chip cookies." And they were like, you always just like, we ate pizza a lot of the times because I would buy pizza, Lisa, so that we could do homework together. Instead of me spending time in the kitchen, cooking without my children and then I didn't have time to do my own homework. Then what I would do is I will order a lot of pizzas. I ordered a lot of pizzas, I bought a lot of cake and donuts and we sat on the table and they did their homework and we ate pizza and did homework together.

And so now it's interesting. They say, "Mom, we're so glad you did not make those chocolate chip cookies. With all that pizza, we were too big." See, when you think you're doing something wrong, think again. There is a reason for why you're doing what you're doing. And my kids, they thank me today. They're so proud of me. And that makes me proud. They're always saying, "Mom, we're so glad you are our mom. And that you are the way that you are. That you went to school and bettered yourself." Because then that's also what they want to do for their lives. And that's what was what they do for themselves. But yeah.

Lisa Bragg:

Of course, amazing. Before we wrap up, on Bold(h)er we always ask our guests these three questions. What's the boldest thing you've ever done?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Okay. So I'm not a really a lover of airplanes, probably why I haven't made it to Hawaii, by the way, because I heard it's like 16 hours. That's probably what I need to face that fear, but guess what? My mission drives me. And so I started doing missionary work with my husband and I've been to Peru and I've been to Canada and I've also been to Guatemala and the boldest was Guatemala. For some things that I had heard about different parts and things that were happening there, I was really afraid to just go to Guatemala. And I went and it has been my favourite place thus far. And I've been to a few like including Jamaica. Guatemala has been my favourite place. And I spoke in front of 400 women. So that was the boldest I've done.

Lisa Bragg:

Awesome. So when do you wish you were bolder?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

I want to dive into the ocean with all that gear. I've gone into the ocean to hand fish, like with my hands. No, I didn't catch a fish, they're too slippery, but the person that was with me did. But I would love to know really scuba dive and be there for a long time. I would love to do that someday.

Lisa Bragg:

That's pretty bold. Yeah. What would you tell your 12-year-old self?

Dr. Maribel Lopez:

Now you're going to make me cry, Lisa. I would tell her that everything is going to be all right. Just to hang in there and continue to believe, continue to dream because everything will be all right.

Lisa Bragg:

You've been listening to Bold(h)er, brought to you by BMO for Women. Our guest today was Dr. Maribel Lopez, the founder of Latina Child Care Providers in Action. She's also an author, professor and motivational speaker. I'm Lisa Bragg. If you'd like the show, please subscribe, share, and review. Thank you to our production team at MediaFace, including our producer, Sarah Senior. Thanks for listening.