

Interviewee: Lauren Grover
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Lauren Grover was born in 1984, in Worcester, Massachusetts, and grew up in Holden, Massachusetts. At the time of the interview, she had been married for five years and had two children. In 2003 she attended Assumption College to pursue a major in Psychology and a minor in Social Rehabilitation Services. During her time at Assumption she volunteered at the Reach Out Center, which helped her to choose which career path she wanted to pursue. Lauren also did internships during the summer, which allowed her to learn important lessons that she could apply to her career. These internships also led to a job right out of college in one of the agencies where she had interned. After attending Assumption she went to Boston College and earned her Master of Social Work. Lauren is a mental health and substance abuse clinician. Every day she helps people solve difficult situations in their lives, giving them the ability to be their own therapists so they can solve their life problems on their own, without needing her services. Because she is her own boss, she is able to be flexible with her working hours to make time to be a mother and a wife while having a successful career that she enjoys.

LB: So, what is your full name, including both maiden name and married name, if applicable?

LG: My name is LG Grover, that's my married name. My maiden name is LG Sutherland.

LB: When were you born?

LG: When? [] 1984.

LB: Have you ever married? Well yeah, you have married.

LG: Yes. [laughs]

LB: What is the name of your husband?

LG: I've been married for almost five years, and I'm married to Brian Grover.

LB: Do you have any children?

LG: I do. I have a three and a half year old, and a one year old.

LB: What cultures and ethnicities do you identify with?

LG: My parents were, they're both Scottish, and my mom was part Greek, and my dad is French Canadian. So probably a mixture of those.

LB: Were they born in the US?

LG: Yes, they were all born in the US, yeah.

LB: Do you know anything more about your parents maybe? Like, can you tell me a little more?

LG: Yeah, so my mom, actually, my mom grew up in Clinton, Mass, and my dad was born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and they both came to Assumption [College], they met here at Assumption and then moved to Worcester, and then shortly after that moved to Holden [Massachusetts] where they raised their three kids.

LB: Alright, so everyone goes to Assumption.

LG: Everyone went to Assumption! [laughs]

LB: So where have you lived during your life? Did you grow up in Worcester?

LG: So I grew up in Holden, I was born in Worcester, grew up in Holden, and then moved for a short period after Assumption, I moved to Brighton and went to school in Boston, I went to BC [Boston College]. And then after that, I moved to Hudson Mass.

LB: Ok, and the neighborhoods you lived in, what were they like?

LG: So Holden, it was a good neighborhood. Like we had a lot of neighbors, young kids, we'd ride our bikes in the summer, and eat our lunch outside, have picnics and stuff. Pretty non diverse, I would say, in Holden. Then living in Brighton, was a little different, because it was a little more city-ish, and now I'm kind of back in the suburbs in Hudson.

LB: Ok. And so when you went to Assumption, did you live on campus?

LG: I did, yeah.

LB: When did you arrive?

LG: 2003, I was a freshman. I lived in Des [Desautels Hall], and then I lived in the LLC [Living Learning Center].

LB: Did you have to do the video?

LG: There was no video, there was a project. We did like oral presentations. We had to get kids to come to them. And then lived there, then I lived in North for two years.

LB: So you said you live in Hudson now. Do any family members live in your area now?

LG: No. My parents were in Holden, until, maybe 2010, 2011, then my dad got a job in Florida, so they moved down there. So my parents are both in Florida now. And my sister lives in New York City, and my brother lives in Providence. So we're kind of all spread out.

LB: So your only connection to Worcester is going to college at Assumption, right?

LG: Assumption, yep. And now I work in Worcester. I opened up a private therapy practice in Worcester.

LB: A what?

LG: A mental health therapy. I'm right down by—right across from the DCU Center.

LB: What challenges do you think this city still faces? Like what would you change about the city?

LG: I mean, I think in the last few years, there have been so many new businesses owned by young entrepreneurs, which I think is awesome. I haven't really been living in the city, so it's hard for me to say what I would improve. I think I see a lot of different issues in therapy, mainly like a lot of drug addiction, but I can't really speak at what the city is doing about it, it's hard for me to say.

LB: Have you seen any major changes in Worcester over time?

LG: I mean, just like I said, there seems to be a real big boom in, like young entrepreneurs opening some new businesses, definitely a lot of new restaurants, which is awesome. And probably good for you guys and I think that's a big thing, too.

LB: So what distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?

LG: Hmm, that's a hard question. I mean, I think what's cool about Worcester is that there are so many colleges and universities, that it's a mix of a lot of young people, but then there's also people who have just been here for years, and who seem to know everybody and everything about Worcester. So I think that mixture is really nice for the city. And I do think that makes it unique. I think it being a pretty big city, but also, like I said, you feel connected to people, and it

seems like people from Worcester, there's always some connection that people have to each other.

LB: What do you think women's experiences have been, generally.

LG: I have no idea, haha, skip.

LB: Alright, let me pause and see if this is working.

LB: Ok, alright. So, you attended school at Assumption. What high school did you go to?

LG: I went to Wachusett Regional High School, in Holden.

LB: When you attended Wachusett and Assumption, did you pursue any educational or vocational training or programs?

LG: So I was a major in psychology at Assumption, with a minor in what they called at the time, social rehab services, and they've changed it since then. Then after that I went to Boston College and got a master's in social work.

LB: What were your challenges in education?

LG: Challenges in education... I think trying to find my niche was a challenge for me, I wasn't really sure where I fit in, and I don't think I really figured that out until I went to grad school. I remembered doing internships and looking at people and saying, "Would I really want your job?" And then I finally found someone whose job I did want, and I kind of just went from there.

LB: Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

LG: Wow. I think I had a number of options, specifically with the type of degree I had, like a social work degree is so versatile, you can do so many things. You can use it on a broad scale, or sort of meeting with people on an individual level. So, I think I always wanted to be in a sort of clinical setting, I think having sort of a liberal arts education behind that, I think I a lot of options open to me.

LB: What support networks and mentoring have been most important to you?

LG: So, the fact that I always had my parents for support, and my siblings, and the fact that my parents went to Assumption, I think I got to know people, and they had a lot of connections that sort of helped me in different experiences, and gain different experiences. And definitely in grad school, we relied on our classmates as support networks.

LB: OK. And, your first job?

LG: My first job was at the town newspaper. It's called *The Landmark*. It's for the Wachusett region. I used to file advertisements. Then after that, I worked at a bagel shop in Holden.

LB: Alright, um, what other jobs have you had?

LG: So, it was *The Landmark*, it was The Bagel Inn, and after that, I worked at AAA. I was a member service counselor. So I did that in the summers while I was at Assumption. And then once I went into grad school, I started doing a lot of different sorts of community work. So I worked at an adolescent detox in Worcester, that was my first job out of grad school. That was pretty eye-opening for me. Then I did, sort of wrap around service work as a social worker. And now I have a private practice, so I do mental health therapy with individuals and couples.

LB: How did you come to do this work? Was it the internships?

LG: Yeah, it was the internships. We had to do internships for psychology, and I think that I sort of looked at people who were mentoring me, and said, "OK, I like their role, what do I have to do to get in that place?" And so, the first couple were social workers, so that's when I kind of really decided to get a degree. And then from there, I really kept connections at my internships, and my first job out of grad school was at the same agency where I did my internship at Assumption. So even a few years went by, and I still have those connections, which is great.

LB: What has this work meant to you?

LG: It means a lot. I think it's a chance for me—first of all, I think it's an opportunity for me to use my skills and my knowledge from my years of schooling, but I get to connect with people on an individual level on a daily basis, and really have the honor of [their] telling me their struggles, working through that with them, and giving them the skills to be their own therapist in the future so they don't need to come back. It's also really important to me to have work/life balance, because I do have two little kids, and the work I do gives me the ability to be home with them when I need to, and work when I want to.

LB: So, you talked about your kids. What are your primary responsibilities in terms of childcare and housework.

LG: So, I'm pretty much responsible for the day to day operations, I would say. You know, like getting them to school. Well, they don't go to school, they go to daycare. Picking them up, my husband picks them up one night a week so I can work a late night. But you know, getting them to doctors' appointments, getting them to dentists' appointments, and gymnastics and all that kind of stuff. I would say we split the housework 50/ 50. My husband does the laundry, which is amazing. But it is important for me to have that flexibility with work, because I work three days a week, and I'm with them two days so I can be a part of their itty bitty childhood.

LB: Have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles and interests in your life?

LG: Yeah, I think it's hard, especially before kids, there was a real emphasis on the career and schooling, and you put a lot of focus on that. And now with kids and being a wife, you really need to find a balance of being a mom, being a social worker, and being a wife. And I think, some weeks I'm a better wife than others, some weeks I'm a better mom, some weeks I'm a better therapist. And it's sort of about trying to give all your attention to all those things, and I think that's why I try to keep that in focus.

LB: Alright, so what do you think are the pros and cons of the path you've chosen?

LG: I think the pros are that there's a real diversity of what you can do with a social worker degree, so I do always feel like there's a lot of options open to me. The specific path that I'm on now, opening up a private practice, allows me to be my own boss and I can dictate my own schedule and have some flexibility around the kids. Cons, I think if I were to do it again, I would go to a different school, so I would have less student loans. I think that's a challenge for a lot of people, specifically in the human service field because we don't make millions of dollars. I don't know if I have many regrets about it.

LB: So you said you don't have any regrets about the choices you've made. So you'd say you're happy with the choice you've made in your life?

LG: I am. Are we talking about career, or personal choices?

LB: Choices in your career.

LG: Career, ok. I think I made some pretty solid choices. I think I still have room to add different services, or do something else, or teach a class. And as my kids get older, and schooling changes, I can deal with that, which is really nice.

LB: So you already mentioned you're not politically active. Have you been involved in community or volunteer work?

LG: A little bit. At my time at Assumption, I did some stuff at the Reach Out Center And I think that in my career, there have been plenty of opportunities to volunteer and go above and beyond for people. I don't do anything that's structured at this point, I would say.

LB: So what led you to join the Reach Out Center?

LG: I think I was looking to meet people and contribute, and I think Assumption has a huge emphasis on contributing to the community and being an active part. I was looking for that, so I think that's what really drove me.

LB: What was the Reach Out Center's main goal, do you think?

LG: They get so many things, but what I remember them doing was volunteering at Seven Hills Charter school and going to the after school program and helping kids with their homework, and I think they did a great job working with the kids of the Worcester community. We had some events for them. I remember an Easter egg hunt, something like that.

LB: Was there any major accomplishments that the Reach Out Center did while you were there?

LG: I don't remember any giant milestones, but I remember, sort of the small events, and contributing on sort of a weekly basis.

LB: OK, so has religion played a role in your life?

LG: So I was raised Catholic, and I did participate somewhat in religious services on campus. But I'm at sort of an interesting place where I'm sort of thinking about religion and what it means for me and what, sort of, how I want to raise my kids. That's been sort of the driving force for why I've been thinking about it, sort of how I want them to experience religion.

LB: Ok, have there been any health issues, or how have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

LG: I think two major—I mean my—I can't really think of much. I mean I think we're all sort of starting to put an emphasis on our health and our habits because we know it impacts our interactions with them and how they're gonna be, so I think that's going to change. But other than that, we've been pretty lucky.

LB: What have been your experiences in accessing quality affordable healthcare?

LG: I've been lucky enough to get it through work or my husband's work. But it's interesting to see the other side of it, in what I do for a career, where I see people not being able to access certain treatments, because some of them don't have treatment, or they do have the health care, but they can't be kept at a facility long enough to get the treatment they need because their insurance won't cover it. So I've been lucky, where I sit, but I do see clients impacted by it.

LB: So besides your own, and obviously, your children's, whose health are you responsible for?

LG: I'd say somewhat my husband's because he's in charge of cooking the meals, but he can be on his own with that. For a while when my parents were in Florida, my grandfather was pretty sick, so I would sort of help triage, or go to different doctor's appointments if I could. But I wouldn't say that I had even 50% of the responsibility, I'd say, it would have been more like 15 or 20 and just like checking in on them. My grandmother is still alive, she lives in Clinton, so checking in on them when my parents can't. But I think being in charge of a 1 year old and a 3

year old is enough.

LB: So, how do you get through tough times, or what thoughts keep you going?

LG: Again, I think that because of my career, I've seen people in really bad situations, so I think it doesn't feel super great to compare yourself to someone else, but that does sort of give you perspective. I think I also have a really good, supportive family that helps kind of push you forward and offer support in any way they can, including my husband. And I always try to remind myself that whatever is happening in the moment won't last forever, there will be an end to it, and that can help pull you through to the other side.

LB: How do you define success in your life? Has the definition ever changed over time?

LG: I think so, yeah. I think success used to just be about me, my grades in high school, or my athletic talent. Now I think success is more about the health and happiness of my family and definitely less emphasis on me and more on everyone around me. I think that's a big change.

LB: Based on your life experiences, what advice would you give to women of future generations?

LG: One thing I say, and I say this always to college age students, is to take any opportunities you have, even if you think you can't do it, and just say yes and figure it out later. I think we often doubt our abilities, and we're often hesitant to do something that's offered to us like an internship or a project. I think just doing something and figuring it out along the way is a good way to grow. So it's seizing opportunities and getting as much experience as possible in those areas. For some people, college is the best years of their lives, for some people, it's not. And I think that just reminding yourself that life isn't over after college isn't going to last forever can help change your perspective.

LB: Now that we are working to tell the fuller history of women than has been recorded in the past, what should we include?

LG: I think it's important to talk about how roles are shifting between the genders, and thinking about what responsibilities each other has, and also thinking about people who might be in a same sex marriage, and what the roles and responsibilities are there. I also think diving deeper into women who have the different roles of mother, wife, partner, somebody who's a part of the workforce, and that work/ life balance and how they balance it all is important.

LB: And that's it!

LG: That's it!