

'The Ex and The Why' Producer SallyAnn Salsano Says Everyone Has Been in "Some Kind of Screwed Up Relationship"



Interview by [Lori](#)

[Bizzoco](#). Written by Liz Kim.

Nothing has changed the history of television programming quite like reality shows, and one woman who has dominated in this area is SallyAnn Salsano. Her creative instincts and love for TV led her to create 495 Productions (named after the expressway where she grew up in Long Island), which was responsible for the pop-culture phenomenon *Jersey Shore*. Her

repertoire, which stretches back to 1998, goes far beyond guidos and spray tans though. She's also produced hit shows for ABC, VH1, Paramount, and FOX, to name a few.

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Despite all of her years in the business, she's still surprised at which shows make it big. "Personally, I miss strict dating shows like *Change of Heart* and competition-elimination shows," she shares. "I think all shows just go through phases and everything has its day, but it's on a rotation. People always ask us what's next in terms of reality television, and I tell them that it's not up to the producer or the network; it's up to the audience."

With that thought in mind, MTV is broadcasting a different kind of dating show *The Ex and The Why*, premiering tonight. It answers the question: *What if you could revisit the person who broke your heart and gain some closure?* The twist is that the exes have no idea why they're there. "There are those scenes when the exes' jaws are on the ground, and they are in shock and disbelief." Whatever the subject, Salsano says that the secret to a reality show's success is ultimately its relatability and *The Ex and The Why* touches on a subject sure to make anybody who has ever had a break-up take notice.

Salsano feels that the need for closure is unique to the younger generation. In some cases, the couples on the show have been separated for years, and yet, one of them still can't move on. "We've all been dumped or have dumped somebody, but for whatever reason, teenagers and people in their early 20s always want to know why." She credits this to how easy it is to "stalk" your ex on Facebook and other social media. "They need answers," she says. "I'm 40, so if it's not working for me, I don't need closure. The closure is, 'I kind of don't want to be with you anymore!'"

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The producer adds that many of the people who seek out their exes have reinvented themselves in hopes that the changes will allow them a second chance at love. Some just want to see if they could be together again, and unfortunately, some walk away knowing that their exes have no interest in making a relationship work. It's these very real moments that keep viewers glued to the screen. "I feel that, when you decide to produce a show, it has to be about something you've done or you've dealt with. I feel like we all get caught up in relationship shows because everyone is in or has been in some kind of screwed up relationship, and that's just normal."

This desire to alter one's image or lifestyle after a breakup is common, Salsano says. "I've been in relationships where, once it was over, I think, 'You know what? It might have been me.' I have my own hangups, my own stuff going on, and now, I feel like if he saw me, he would think differently about me."

Some of the people on *The Ex* and *The Why* who want to get back together admit that they've cheated in the past and confess to other mistakes. "But they want to show how much they've changed, that they're not the person they once were, and that they want another chance. Some of the exes are too scarred to want to try again, but others are moved that this person is admitting to their mistakes on television and professing their love to the world."

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Salsano says she tends to keep her past in the past. "I keep in touch with one of my exes, and it was one of those cases where we were really young and it didn't work," she explains. "Do I have a desire to go back and make it work? No. Are we completely friends now? Yes."

Although she is currently in a happy relationship, she says

that her boyfriend isn't somebody who she could have seen herself with. The trick to making a relationship work is to find somebody during the right phase in your life. "I am not home a lot when I'm filming, so I needed to find someone who only knows me in that way," she says. "In previous relationships, I was making the transition from being on the road once in awhile to being home once in a while. It was tough. The guy I'm dating now understands this. He has his things going on, and I have my things."

No matter how understanding you are of each other's schedules, quality time is still key. "We make each other a priority and make sure we see each other, and if that means I have to fly across the country to have dinner, I do that."

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After working on so many reality shows and watching a lot of relationships crash and burn, it's easy for Salsano to be jaded and doubtful about love. But she still believes in putting yourself out there and taking a risk. "Don't hold back," she encourages. "If you're looking for love and you want to know what could've happened, well, you have to ask! You can't sit in your house and talk to your friends about it because they can only listen for so long. And you can only stalk someone on Facebook for so long. At some point, you have to get up the guts to go out there and make it happen."

Be sure to tune in tonight to The Ex and The Why on MTV at 6/5c. You can keep up with Salsano's many projects on Twitter @sallyannsalsano!