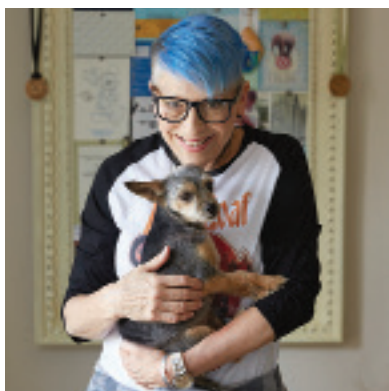


# The Queen of Kind

AT HOME WITH LISA LAMPANELLI



MOST PEOPLE WHO HAVE HEARD OF LISA LAMPANELLI know her as a comedian with a penchant for insults and crude jokes, earning her the moniker “The Queen of Mean.” Watching some of her past routines on YouTube, I wondered, should I prepare myself to be offended? Not a chance, it turns out. After being greeted with a big hug and warm hello, I learned that this dynamic comedian-turned-storyteller doesn’t have a mean bone in her body. And she never did. “I’m a mush,” she tells me with a wide smile. She just happened to build a successful career excelling as a celebrity roaster and telling off-color, un-PC jokes. Nowadays Lampanelli isn’t insulting anyone—instead she’s searching out ways to help others, and if it makes them laugh too, all the better.

“I have always been a storyteller,” says Lampanelli. Her recent off-Broadway play *Stuffed* resonated with audiences, and her latest work—

Lisa Lampanelli’s *Losin’ It*—will have its worldwide debut at the Fairfield Theatre Company on November 3. During the 90-minute show, Lampanelli and her cast of professional actors, storytellers, and other surprise guests describe what they’ve been through and how they maintain sanity while they’re “losing it” over weight and body-image issues. It’s poignant, but also funny. “It’s not that I don’t want to make people laugh anymore—it’s that I want to see if I can help them feel better,” explains Lampanelli. A large portion of the show’s proceeds will benefit the Center for Family Justice, where Lampanelli’s sister, Nancy Lessard of Shelton, is a board member. Lampanelli is a strong supporter of the work they do there providing critical support to people who have been victims of violence and domestic abuse.







**PERSONAL SPACE** Lampanelli's home is filled with photos, cards, letters, and quirky items that remind her of meaningful people, places, and events. Her necklaces display "Peggy" and special sayings. Parker shows off his yoga moves in the master bedroom.



"I am so grateful and lucky to say I have never been hurt or abused," she says. "But you can be damn well sure I want to help in any way I can to help prevent others from being hurt—or help when they are," she says.

It's no surprise that Lampanelli is supporting a local nonprofit like the Center, as she is a die-hard Nutmegger. Born in Trumbull, college and life took her away from her home state, but now she's returned—for good. "My heart is in Connecticut in the form of my family and dearest friends," says Lampanelli. She chose to live in Fairfield because she thinks it's a great town—"there's a theater for performing and music right in town!" she exclaims. Her three-story grey-shingled beach house, flooded with

light and steps from the shore, boasts views of the Sound and the Penfield lighthouse. But you won't catch her swimming or sunbathing. "I love being here, but I am not an outside gal," she chuckles. Her home, cheery and warm in its beachy colors of aqua and sand, tells the story of her life. Shelves and walls with framed bulletin boards are adorned with cards, pictures, tchotchkes, even vintage purses that belonged to her 89-year-old mother Gloria.

Her walls also talk. In the bathroom, there is a wall stencil that reads, "Whenever I Get Sad, I Stop Being Sad and Start Being Awesome." Mantras aside, there are many things that inspire her, and her energy for them is contagious. "Peggy from Mad Men is my spirit ani-

mal," gushes Lampanelli. She even wears a name necklace that spells "Peggy." "People may see it and think Peggy is my long-lost lesbian lover, but she isn't. It's Peggy, the most bad-ass female character ever to appear in a TV series." Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* is also a passion of Lampanelli's, and the musical score sits on her piano. "I was so honored to attend the opening night performance," she says. "One of the best nights of my life."

Twice divorced, Lampanelli is completely content with her status as her pup Parker's constant companion. She credits her eight-year-old rescued Yorkie/Chihuahua mix—who is named for Sarah Jessica Parker "because they weigh about the same," jokes Lampanelli—with changing her whole outlook on life. "I

was living in the city and about to get married, and wasn't even looking for a dog." But she went by a dog adoption event on the Upper West Side, took one look at Parker and knew she had to have him. "It might sound silly but Parker truly opened me up to being really loved and needed, and to slowing down," she explains.

The last few years have heralded so many changes for Lampanelli. Her father became ill and passed away, and she spent more time in Connecticut with her siblings. "Sometimes these life-changing events split families. In our case it made us even closer," she says. Her most widely publicized change was her life-affirming decision to have gastric sleeve surgery, and she subsequently lost over 100 pounds, maintaining that weight loss for more than six years. She says a day doesn't go by that she doesn't think about her weight and her calorie intake. "I obsess about food all the time, and I work with a coach to figure out what to eat, and what not to, and I take a gazillion vitamins a day," she says.

Because she knows she is not alone in her struggles with body image and weight, Lampanelli, along with healing arts practitioner Anna Brooke, have created The Lamp and the Vamp, a company that offers workshops around the country about issues particular to people working on themselves. Their first is a one-day workshop on eating, self-image, and weight called "Love Your Body, Feed Your Soul: From Starving & Stuffed to Fulfilled & Enough," which will debut at the The Liphe Balance Center in Wilton on Saturday, November 10. ■

➤➤ Go to [LisaLampanelli.com](http://LisaLampanelli.com) or follow @LisaLampanelli on Facebook and Instagram to hear more about her upcoming performances.