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I am rallying all of my energy. I got sick this past weekend, I don't know what it was, and got over it just in time to get my period...

Anyway, Hello, happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day. I hope that you're having a beautiful weekend. So last week, my resource – which was sort of, you know, an anecdote about a person who creeped me out – there were some follow up questions from patrons asking, "but what did you literally say? How did you tell your mutual friends that you didn't like this person? how do you navigate that delicate kind of conversation?"

The tricky thing is, it's gonna depend so much on who you're talking to, what you're talking about, and what the broader landscape of your community and your relationships are. But I do know that a lot of times stuff like this is not modeled for us, we don't see a whole lot of examples out in the open. And definitely popular culture loves to make things more melodramatic and more conflict-heavy. So I'll throw my stories in the mix. This may be in either one part or two parts, depending on how long I talk today, and how editable down this is. Hopefully this can be of service, or a jumping off point for you to find your own reasonable solution.

So there's somebody in our community that we just don't like, for whatever reason. Usually, I like to ask, "Well, why don't I like them? What is the degree to which I don't like them? And then what are the stakes and types of interactions that I would be okay having with them moving forward?" So there's a lot to consider, I will go through a few of these one by one.

Okay, so let's start with the light stuff. let's say it is just a difference of personality, tempo, temperament, you know? that nobody's technically done anything wrong. It's just, it's not, it's not fitting. So what I tend to do in these cases is I always use "I" statements. My reactions are mine, and I'm not placing blame on you, and I'm not expecting you to be a different person than you are.

So for example, there's this person in our Berlin circles, and they have a very loud voice – and this is coming from an American, right? – They have a very loud voice that just fills up the room. And a lot of people experience them as very funny and gregarious, the life of the party, and outgoing. And that is all valid and true, I would say. And also, I experience wanting to shrink, sometimes I feel like the volume or the pitch that's being reached is grating to my senses. There can be this impulse to put that person down. Because "I'm having a negative reaction, that means therefore,

you are doing something wrong". But why shame this person? when clearly this is not a universal experience. People do not react to them the way that I do. So instead, I start asking, Well, what is it in me that is reacting to this personality type this way?

For me, having been raised by a very domineering, overpowering, take-up-all-the energy-and-oxygen-in-the-room person as my primary caregiver, and then going to a cult where I essentially had a dozen more surrogate mother figures with a similar temperament... Even though I can intellectually know this person is not like those people, I still have that bad feeling.

People will say, "are you doing okay?" And I'll say things ranging from, "oh, I've got a headache", or "I'm not really feeling great". Sometimes I will not even bring up the person that I know is bringing this out of me, because at the end of the day, it's majority a Me issue, that I'm reacting to that in that way. I will be more or less specific, depending on who I'm talking to. And depending on how much I trust them. Sometimes I'll say "I'm still working on..." and I'll use that framing, "I'm still working on getting comfort in a space where there are very outgoing, gregarious people. If you see that on my face, that's what's happening". And I go out of my way to make it unmistakable that I'm not putting blame on this person for just existing.

What if I don't like a person because of a behavioral issue in how they have treated me? and I will leapfrog off of the resource of the case study I recently offered. if you haven't seen that story and want to go back and watch it for the full context, you can. But long story short, he made me feel like uncomfortable and he was pushy, and I didn't fuck with that. And so I removed myself from a dinner that everybody was going to. So I reached out to each of our mutual friends. And I thought, "Okay, well, I need to... what is the goal in telling them that I don't like this guy? and I'm not going to this dinner?" Well I don't want the absence of an explanation of why I'm removing myself from the dinner, I don't want the absence of explanation to then open things up to more misunderstanding. because when I just do something out of nowhere, then people will try to fill in those blanks with whatever clues they think they have. And it could create an unintended narrative. But I also don't want to elaborate so much in this format on Instagram messenger, right?

Maybe it's because I used to work in public relations, but I'm very weary of what I put in writing, and very thoughtful and somewhat self protective of how a written piece of communication could be misunderstood, and then misinterpreted, or maybe weaponized against somebody in a way that I don't intend.

Or just, me having a bad day, but there it is permanently in writing on our DM history, like forever. If they scroll up, they want to see my permanent bad day. consider what is better suited to the ephemeral – am I using that word, right?

My god, I'm sick. Yeah, no, ephemeral – Okay. What is better suited to a real time conversation? You know, in person.

So yeah, when I told those friends, "he's been pushy. I don't think I'm gonna go to the [dinner]". Both of them were just like, "yeah, thanks so much for telling me. I'm sorry that was your experience". One of the two friends, she's a bit of a gossip. So I was actually a bit more candid and relaxed, and a little bit looser-lipped with the second friend. where I was just like, "Yeah, you know, he mentioned that the partner he wanted to bring had booked me for a peer support a year ago, and I'll tell you more of the details whenever we hang out. Again, it's not the end of the world, he's not done something terrible to me, just all of it together, I felt a little uncomfortable". I'm paraphrasing, but I remember mentioning to her that aspect of the story. And I chose to not mention that to my first friend, because she's a bit of a gossip.

I'm not immune from that either. If I tell like, "you will not believe what this person did to me today", you know, that gets a little bit of a hit, that gets a little bit of a fix and a high at the other person being like, "Oh my god, you were so wronged. And that was so fucked up".

I even consider that in sharing the case study here. What's my motivation for doing that? Am I wanting all of my patrons to be like, "claps for how you handled that"? I would hope you don't find issue with how I handled it, but ultimately, I landed on the reason I want to share it is because I think this could be useful in other people identifying this elsewhere in their life, which is then why I eventually shared it. See what I mean though? the thought process of our own motivations, and then in what format feels appropriate. I'm not going to go on public Instagram and share this so it can be consumed by everybody. I don't want to take a small point of tension, and grow it and balloon it into something so unnecessary, right? Again, the goal is with this kind of communication: prevention, and being clearly understood, and having my own boundaries respected.

So I've talked about behavioral issues in terms of how someone treats me, but what if it's a behavioral issue in terms of how someone treats others? This can be tricky, right? Because I want to be wary of inserting myself in conflicts where I don't belong. I don't want to call myself the arbiter of who is good and who is bad in my community. I think that turns me into a cop, frankly. If I see, in front of me with my own two eyes, somebody hit my partner then yeah, I'll probably become a bit of a bulldog, because What the fuck? We can be human and want to protect our people. But if I hear that somebody has mistreated my partner or been passive aggressive to them, I'm not now then taking it upon myself to go and run to that person, "how dare you this-n-that" because then now, I'm the problem.

An example of a behavioral issue in how they treat others, I shared – I think it might have even been a year ago already – on Patreon, a resource of supporting a partner through an emotionally abusive relationship. And this was with their sibling.

There was unmistakable, at least from my partner's description of things, and in my opinion, it was unmistakable emotional abuse. Misogynistic and homophobic comments and mocking of my partner. I felt like "well, I don't like this. I don't like this person. I don't like that you're around them. And I don't like the way they treat you." And while that is a valid response, it was a tricky thing to figure out. How do I support you without it even being perceived as me trying to separate you from a family member? I'm not going to tell you to stop knowing your sibling. That's only something you can decide. And to be fair, if it was somebody they were dating or one of their close friends either, it is not my responsibility to tell you when you should or should not know a person.

I can support you to advocate for yourself, I can ask you what's getting in the way of advocating for yourself? What are the drawbacks to you talking back to him? what is the risk and reward? Why do you think you don't say this to their face? Do you not feel safe to say this to their face? You know what I mean? I ask questions, I help them explore and find their own strength and tap into their own strength. If they are wanting me to offer solutions, and then I keep doing it and it keeps not changing, or they keep not using my suggestions, but coming back and dumping on me again and again. Then I wound up slowly saying, like, "I don't know that I can keep hearing about it. I don't know if I'm the right person to keep being your support person with this, because now I'm just starting to get mad at you. I don't know that that's gonna be great for you to have a support person who's responding like that."

So I really want to pursue and maintain, however possible I can, the humility that I won't always be the best person for the job. We are allowed to be messy sometimes and be petty sometimes. I just don't want to involve that in my actual hands on, good faith effort to attempt to conflict resolve. Those are two very different modes of operation.

You know, "I" statements again... I know it sounds simple, or maybe repetitive, but it is my home base of "am I coming at this from a good faith effort to be self reflective?" I'm gonna leave it there today. I will offer more examples next week in part two. I hope that you have a beautiful day and a beautiful rest of your week, and I will talk to you next Sunday. Bye.

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