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Exclusive video: What if partners communicate differently?

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Hello, and Happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day and a beautiful weekend. So today's topic is brought to you by a fellow patron. As always, you can send me topic requests on the Patreon message platform, no matter what tier you are. And if I think it's broad enough that it could apply to a lot of people, and I haven't really touched on it yet, then I'm happy to add it to the queue.

So today, let's talk about when you and someone you're close to have radically different approaches to communication, especially in saying your wants, your needs, or resolving conflicts. what if you're very different? What do we do? I'll share some questions that come to mind for me, maybe that'll be helpful for you. As always, not everything will resonate. So please only take what lands and feels like it suits your situation.

So first and foremost, what is our typical way of operating? different people will bring out different moods in us. But do we have a common pattern over time that tends to repeat itself? What do we know about ourselves? that can be a helpful starting point. So like, do we know, we are typically a blunt and direct communicator? or maybe we know that it takes a lot out of us to bring up something we want or need. And so that's just something, even if we are working on changing that, that's where we currently are today.

Number two, if we have a specific person in mind, can we get a baseline for them? maybe they grew up around a lot of volatile conflict, and so they might err a bit more on the passive side. Or maybe they are currently working on their anger. And even though they want to change that, they know about themselves that they can be quick to have their first response be a bit sharper, harsher, or aggressive. Can we really take stock? because if we are in problem solving mode, especially if we're doing this in a collaborative dialogue with someone, then we just need to know what all of the pieces are on the board before we can start moving them around.

This is usually the time when I suss out, if something feels off, if something feels volatile, abusive, I don't like this pattern that I'm looking at. Or maybe I don't even want to try to work on fixing this pattern, because I just don't feel safe in it. This can be not just valuable in setting the tone for resolving whatever we want to resolve, but it can also kind of tell me if I even want to put work into it at all. If at any point it kind

of dawns on you that you are in this alone, and you're actually with an opponent and not a collaborator, then that's really good information. Don't ignore that.

Okay, so we've sort of taken the temperature – what do I usually do? What do they usually do? How are those similar? How are those different? I think the similarities and differences aren't automatically a good or bad thing. A similarity being like, “Oh, we both tend to be pretty straightforward, direct communicators”, that could be very harmonious that you both pretty efficiently and quickly blaze through a conflict. and in a matter of minutes, boom, done, you move on with your day. However, if both people tend to be passive, and there tends to be a lot of conflict avoidance with both parties, then those similarities could maybe erode things and conflict can build and build and build and build until it's totally overwhelming. So, again, we are not casting judgment on any of this. It's just Are there any similarities when the two of us get together? Or the three of the four, you know, when everybody involved combines? What tends to happen?

Are there differences? if I have a difference with a person that I'm a direct communicator, and they're very avoidant, maybe that creates this pattern where I'm chasing them, and always bringing stuff up. And I'm frustrated that I'm always the one being direct, and nothing really gets discussed, unless I'm doing all of the heavy lifting. those differences could, in and of themselves, create conflict about how we have conflict, you know what I mean? But sometimes differences can be helpful in going in the direction we want to go.

There was a long stretch of time where I was very harsh and sharp, my gauge of what honesty was, was really steeped in a lot of being mean. And I didn't really differentiate those two things until maybe my mid 20s. And so when I started getting close with a person in one of my first really close polyamorous relationships, they were a very gentle communicator. And when I would come out the gate with a hammer, they would say like, “do you really need a hammer for the situation?” There's all these other tools in the toolbox that might be appropriate, right? I'm very grateful for differences sometimes, because if we are only around people who do the same thing as us, then, one: we might just get stuck in that habit always. But two: we might be almost inaccessible to other people. people that I was not as close with, when they tried to tell me in the past that I was too harsh, I just didn't have a relationship with them anymore. And so when we are malleable and adaptable, and when we can expand our toolbox to have a wide range of options to suit a situation, then we're that much more likely to be able to maintain one to one connections. but also to keep building community and solidarity and networks of care, you know? not have such rigidity, all or nothing, “you're either with me or you're not” approach.

In that, we do want to ask, is anyone involved neurodivergent? And if yes, what do those traits usually look like? Especially if someone doesn't pick up on social cues as much, or "what does that minute change in your facial expression mean? I can't really interpret that." etc. For ADHD a trait could be that it impacts their focus or their attention span. And if I'm in conflict with somebody who has ADHD, and they suddenly start changing the subject, that is very different than if I'm in conflict with someone who doesn't have ADHD, and they change the subject. You know what I mean? We want to be able to interpret them in the right context.

Similarly, does anybody involved have a mental illness? And if yes, is that currently being treated or not? And what are the common traits? symptoms? How does that show up for that person? We factor it in, but we don't weaponize it in either direction. So for example, I have depression and bipolar II. if I'm in a bit more of an elevated higher energy swing, in a bipolar place, and I start yelling at someone, or what if I were to throw things at someone? – I've not done that. But like – No. we do not weaponize our own mental illness as an excuse for shitty behavior. And the same goes in the other direction, we do want to factor in that a person has a mental illness, but not blame the conflict entirely on that, as a way to shoot a person down, ignore the person, neglect the person, or villainize the person and say "it's all your fault because of your mental illness". I also see that as not operating in good faith, I also see that as manipulation. And just fucked up unacceptable behavior. So we want to know all of these things, and share all of these things, if we trust each other to not use these things as weapons.

And it could be, in taking stock of all this, that we have compassion, and it still won't work for us, at least in this current form of a relationship. My pain points might be set off by how your brain works. And that's fair, nobody's doing anything wrong. In either of those cases. It just means it could be an incompatibility. How do we then want to know them, based on that information?

It's also really important: are there external factors at work here? This could be, are we facing money pressure? Are we having burnout at work? And so we just have a lower capacity or a lower tolerance for anything else because we're so exhausted? It could be that a family member is very sick or dying, and so we are quicker to feel grief, or maybe more hypersensitive to the idea that we might be abandoned, or we might lose someone else, because this is tender right now. So what is the broader, external context for what's happening?

And as well, this goes for anyone in a marginalized position, right? Like, if a white dude is dating a Black woman, and he starts criticizing how she's getting angry, for example, that's going to be... loaded. And so what might be a broader cultural

context? as well, stereotypes that we want to avoid playing into? that could hit a really old wound and maybe make that person feel fundamentally unsafe with us if we aren't mindful about it. So, we can do our best to see the person in front of us and how they might be impacted by those things, so that we don't make it worse.

We also want to get a sense of: are there any cultural upbringing differences that would impact our ability to be on the same page? And this can come down to like, raising a voice in one home can mean a very different thing than raising a voice in another home. I knew someone who was British, an only child, raised in a home that was a lot more quiet. And the communication tended towards more passive or passive aggressive. And so raising a voice, and having volume in that home was a big deal. It was almost violent, because it took a lot for anyone in that home to get to that decibel level, right? And they fell in love with someone who grew up in, I think, Guatemala, and had a few siblings, and there was a lot of music and there was a lot of people in the home. And so the baseline talking level got higher, because you're trying to talk over your siblings. And quiet in that household was a problem. “Oh, God, if you can hear a pin drop, that means somebody's mad”. There were complete opposite reactions to volume in a shared space, complete inverse. And they needed to know that about each other, so that they didn't misinterpret, “when you're speaking loudly, it doesn't mean you're mad”, or “when you're not speaking, it doesn't mean you're mad”.

Little things like that make a big difference. They can even sometimes make or break a relationship. so if we can really be frank and earnest with the people we love about what they mean when they do a thing, because it could be dramatically different than what we would mean if we did that thing. that can go a long way in finding harmony and understanding each other.

I think in tandem with that, a helpful question is: what conditions make you feel safe? What conditions make you feel relaxed, heard, validated? You know, that could be literally, if I need to approach you with a conflict, something that you did upset me, Is there a time of day that is easier for you to receive that? Is there a tone of voice, like if I were to raise my voice, does that make it harder for you to hear me? It's not that we want to police ourselves, or police each other and be really nitpicky. Like “you can only be honest to me in this one precise way”, please don't misunderstand me, I don't mean that. But if we can know, the kinds of conditions, like “when there is plenty of room in the evening to have this conversation go for 20 minutes or three hours, then I feel a little bit more relaxed”, okay, that's good to know. Or, “if I'm approaching, and I'm leading with validation of you, you're safe, I'm not going anywhere, I was frustrated by something. I would like space to talk to you about that”, if entering the conversation with some sort of, you know, validating statement like

that makes you feel safer, and makes it easier for us to have conflict, then good. We want to know that. So, genuinely, what are the conditions, that – either in a single conflict or a prolonged living space, working space, general rhythm of the relationship, of how often you're texting or dating, what kinds of dates you go on – What are all of the specific things that make us feel relaxed, that help us feel at ease? So in that way, again, we're collaborating on creating an environment where it's safe to say anything.

All of that might lead into the question of: “do you have the same shared goal?” When we're coming together, figuring out how to understand each other better and hear each other better, do we want the relationship to take the same shape as each other? what are the expectations of the other side of this work that we're doing? That question is a really big one. Are we building the same thing?

If the answer is ultimately Yes, then we go into, “Alright, so based on everything we know about ourselves and each other, then what are some things we can try in the next conflict that might bridge the gap a bit more? What do we want to improve on? How do we define improvement? What do we define as an effectively resolved conflict? How do I avoid upsetting you when a similar situation arises, and vice versa? What can we try next time?” and that can at least, for me, make it a lot more manageable. we don't have one conversation, figure out how to proceed and then that's the game plan forever. we're always in conversation with our own actions. We are always trying, experiencing, reacting, collecting information, reporting that back to a person, and so are they. new information will present itself all the time, and we want to stay malleable. We want to stay flexible, and receive new updates and factor those in.

So if we approach resolving a thing with, “let's try this next”, that can feel a lot less stressful, a lot less intimidating, because we're not saying “this will definitely fix the thing”. maybe we don't like it and it still leaves the door open for us to say, “actually, I don't want to do that anymore”. Or “actually, that didn't work for me.” we want to not feel locked into something that we have uncertainty about. Does that make sense? I don't want to get too in the weeds or broad or vague. But I also don't want to limit this ending thought with a single specific anecdote, I think it could be very broad in how its applied.

I am really, really grateful for this space, this Patreon space. Making free videos for Instagram, for TikTok, can be very taxing and very stressful. I avoid it a lot of times and I'm still figuring out a good rhythm for that. But consistency in this space has been a lot more attainable for me because yeah, everybody who comes here is generally coming in good faith. And, you know, when there is pushback, there tends

to be a lot of respect in it. And so it makes me feel more relaxed, to mess up and be wrong or be incomplete or be imperfect. Because I know that this is an environment where I won't be condemned or attacked, or the assumption that I'm operating in bad faith. That, I think, is kind of a perfect summary of what I've been saying this whole video. we feel safer to be messy and be wrong, if we know that the people around us also want the same thing we want, and have our best interests in mind. and vice versa. We assume good intent. And then it makes it a lot easier just to be a person together.

So I'm grateful for you. I hope that this might be helpful in some way. And I hope that you have a beautiful rest of your week. I'll talk to you later. Bye

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