Mel Robbins Keypoints — Love, Dating & Sex

Mel Robbins Keypoints

Episodes in this pack: 23

The Most Important Divorce Advice You Will Ever Hear (From #1 Divorce Lawyer)

Guest: James Sexton
Date: 2026-09-24 · Duration: 1:26:39
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmNRPx7kvQ

KEYPOINTS

• The pain is unavoidable, but the damage is optional

Sexton's framing is that divorce isn't weather that just happens to you. It's a process with many levers you control. Handled well, it costs less money, does less harm to the children and to you, and makes working with your lawyer easier. Friends, family and community form the 'fourth leg of the table' alongside you, your spouse and the lawyer.

• Ask whether your marriage is broken or just neglected

Many marriages aren't broken but have been left unattended so long they look like 'roommates running a daycare center'. The two problems need different skills. The early warning signs are flatness rather than anger ('anger still implies priority'), conversations limited to logistics, no real questions asked of each other, and contemptuous 'What?' or 'All right, whatever' replies. He calls that 'the smoke, not the fire'.

• Five situations where divorce is necessary

(1) Abuse of any kind, physical, emotional or financial, including threats around the children: 'you can't be loved if you're not safe.' (2) The 'false self', meaning 'one person and one costume'. (3) 'Stolen reality', where someone authors your life without consent, such as a liquidated 401(k), a second family or a three-year affair. (4) The 'unrepentant repeat', where cheating or using the 'nuclear codes' (weaponized intimacy) comes with apologies they've become fluent in. (5) The 'shrinking marriage', which demands you become smaller and quieter. Leaving these, he says, isn't a failure at love but a defense of it.

• Divorce moves through six stages

Pre-contemplative (unhappy but not connecting it to the marriage); contemplative (a '3 a.m. private trial with no defense counsel'); decision (now it's about timing, logistics and fear); taking steps (the private becomes public); the thick of it (Whitman's 'hour of lead'); and getting out. 'The paperwork gets done faster than your nervous system': grief often begins only when the papers are signed.

• Before blaming the marriage, look back 18 months

Grief from losing a parent, a child leaving for college, a pet dying or a job change can resurface about 18 months later 'in a different costume'. The spouse becomes the easy target because it's hard to be mad at fate or God.

• Confide in the right people, and not your kids

Avoid social media, the group chat and your children at any age, whether 8, 15 or 40. Instead see a challenging individual therapist (if you love therapy 100% of the time, 'you're doing it wrong'), one discreet friend with no stake, and a lawyer purely for information, which is protected by attorney-client privilege. Then possibly your spouse. 'Counsel' asks what outcome you want; 'take him for everything' is entertainment.

• Announce a decision; don't ask for a divorce

His suggested 13 words: 'I have given this a lot of thought. Our marriage needs to end.' Then stop talking, and own your part: 'I can't be the person you deserve… I apologize. I never meant to hurt you.' Tell your spouse before the children, and only tell the kids once you can answer their logistical questions, like where each parent will live and where the dog goes.

• Staying 'for the kids' is a choice about what they learn

Children remember what your marriage looked like, not whether you stayed. His father warned him not to smoke while smoking, and he started in high school. The test: would you want your daughter or son to have this marriage? High conflict harms kids whether parents stay together or divorce; that's about how you handle it, not divorce itself.

• You are restructuring a family you will co-own forever

'A divorce ends a marriage. It doesn't end a family.' He tells clients with toddlers that what happens at the negotiating table shapes their child's wedding 20+ years later. Write down your goals, give them to a trusted person, and have them read them back when you lose sight of them.

• Hire a skilled litigator to make court less likely

He advises against lawyers who sell 'friendly divorce' because they're afraid of court and fold when they hear 'Please call your first witness.' Two skilled litigators know each other's arguments and settle. Good lawyers try to steer you toward therapists and mediators and use a 'scalpel', not a 'chainsaw'.

• Get a therapist before a dating app

Rebounds skip the repair. He notes second and third marriages divorce at higher rates, especially when the new partner was an affair partner: 'a man who leaves his wife for his mistress just creates a job opening.' Treat divorce as one punctuation mark on your 'Wikipedia page', not the whole story. Stop chasing who you were before.

EXAMPLES

• Sexton's own divorce began with a question

He asked his wife, 'Are you happy?' She asked back if he really wanted to do this now. They agreed they loved each other but 'if sheer power of will could make two people love each other, we would love each other forever.' He says blindness is often willful: 'Don't look in that drawer' is the only drawer worth looking in.

• January 2nd rush

Divorce lawyers and gyms both fill up after the 'holiday ceasefire' and after kids go back to school, when strain from holidays, debt and family visits peaks.

• The 'you're my favorite person' payoff

Mel credits Sexton's four words from his first appearance with improving her 30-year marriage to Chris. The best end-of-life

line for a marriage, he says, is 'You helped me become the most authentic version of myself, and you're my favorite person.'

- **The joint announcement**

  He suggests both ex-spouses post the same message at the same time, saying the marriage ended, asking for privacy, saying 'there are no teams' and asking friends to treat both with respect as future co-grandparents. This heads off the social fracturing Mel has seen friends suffer.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The 48-hour plan**

  Get the kids 'out of the blast radius', for example at their grandparents'. Don't share a bed or house that night; offer options (you take a hotel, or they do). Beforehand, copy key financial documents, secure logins and some access to money for counsel, and ideally consult a lawyer first.

- **Know your financial snapshot even in a happy marriage**

  Know roughly where assets are, how much is retirement versus liquid, the financial planner's name and the life insurance carrier, since a spouse could also die.

- **Schedule your grief**

  'Unscheduled grief deletes your whole day.' Set a time, such as Sundays at 1:00, to cry and play sad albums.

- **Supporting someone through divorce**

  Offer a menu of options, such as crying together or making them laugh, and say the choice can change. Admit words fall short and say 'I love you.' Ask to do something concrete like mowing their lawn, taking the kids out or cooking dinner, framed as a favor to you.

- **The 10-minute test**

  Try talking with your spouse for 10 minutes about anything but jobs, kids or the house. Crickets are a signal to have the awkward conversation now, before therapists, mediators or lawyers are needed. Question default habits too, like why you stopped going to the Saturday farmers market.

30 Years of Marriage: 3 Things About Relationships I Wish Someone Told Me Sooner

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2026-08-24 · Duration: 1:05:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J5VcQIlAck

KEYPOINTS

• Lesson 1: 'You're my favorite person'
On their 30th wedding anniversary, Mel and her husband Chris Robbins, parents of three kids aged 27, 26 and 21, share three lessons they wish they'd known at the start. The first is four words Mel heard from divorce attorney James Sexton on the show: 'you're my favorite person.' She calls it both the reason relationships end, when you stop feeling it, and the lifeline back to the person you fell in love with.

• Ask two questions, not one
First: is this person my favorite person? Mel says that if they have fundamentally never been, you're in the wrong relationship. Second, and this is 'where the rubber meets the road': am I treating them like my favorite person? During hard years Mel could say 'of course he is, I just hate my life right now' while treating Chris like the person she blamed.

• Stress turns your favorite person into the person you blame
Early on, nothing had tested them, and everyone is everyone's favorite 'until it hits the fan.' Things shifted in their 20s in New York. Mel was a public defender at Legal Aid, Chris changed careers and launched a business that struggled, and they talked about moving into the basement of his parents' retirement home. Chris says that was when he began hating himself and 'stopped listening' to Mel because he was so focused on what he thought he should be achieving.

• The 'roommate' phase: great logistics, no connection
For roughly a decade, they did logistics brilliantly: kids, dogs, groceries, holidays. But 'you're my favorite person' stopped being the central organizing principle. Chris says it set in once two or three kids had arrived. Mel says small moments compound into 'massive distance and disconnection' that nobody intends.

• Lesson 2: you married the 8-year-old
You didn't marry the adult in front of you. You married the 8-year-old version of them. Chris retreats into his head and doesn't ask for what he needs because, as the youngest in a busy family, his needs went unheard. Mel vents, gets flooded and then apologizes. Seeing the child behind the behavior softens you instead of letting the world's hardness come into the relationship. They have worked with a therapist for five years.

• 'Normal marital hatred' is part of a real relationship
Mel plays a clip of couples therapist Terry Real, who says your partner is 'exquisitely designed to stick the burning spear right into your eyeball.' That crisis isn't a bad relationship. It's a real one. Partners land you right in the childhood wound you hoped they'd heal, what Real calls 'unfinished business.' The choice is whether to repeat the same pattern or wake up and do something different.

• Softening beats hardening, attacking or retreating
Mel's lesson: you can't solve problems you won't talk about, and you'll never process feelings you keep burying. Hardening won't improve anything. When you see hurtful behavior as wounds and accumulated small moments rather than intent, 'that's where you can go to work' together.

• A quiet partner is still feeling deeply
Chris, who shuts down when Mel gets flooded, says a partner who is quiet on the surface still feels 'deep, deep, deep emotion.' Her venting and his withdrawal fed each other: she felt more alone, and he shut down more.

• Lesson 3: simple intimacy holds a marriage together
In their good chapters, there are always small, regular points of connection during the week. Chris says he didn't grow up with much touch, and it took him 30–40 years to realize that Mel simply holding his hand or touching his shoulder is 'the greatest thing in the world' for him. Knowing what you need is part of the work.

• Don't isolate the relationship
A relationship cut off from friends and community starts to feel like 'me against you' or 'us against the world.' For their 30th, instead of a party, they prioritized seeing friends, including people who were in their wedding.

EXAMPLES

• Chris's hidden Post-it notes
For years Chris has hidden notes in Mel's wallet and belongings ('Me again. Just thinking about how much I love you') without telling her. Mel says the notes don't erase debt or the kids' struggles, but in that moment she feels like his favorite person and he becomes hers. It's free, and anyone can start today.

• What Chris wishes he'd done in the driveway
For years he could have paused in the driveway, taken a breath and reminded himself that Mel is his favorite person, life is hard, she is probably as scared and stressed as he is, and they would get through it together. 'You can be tired and still be kind.' He admits he wishes he had done it, not that he did.

• The weekly calendar meeting
One of Mel's 'resentful accommodations' is feeling it's all up to her. In a weekly calendar check-in, each asks, 'What do you need this week?' When Mel had a huge week, Chris offered to take all the dinners, something she would never have asked for.

• The rocking-chair vision
On their second date, Chris told Mel he wanted to marry her because he pictured them very old in two rocking chairs on an old porch. Thirty years in, they joke about aiming for a 75th anniversary, which would make them 102.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Four connection rituals**
  A weekly calendar meeting. Short walks two or three mornings a week. A couple of shared meals, ideally cooked together, with 'high and low of the day' (or rose, thorn, bud). Simple touch, plus hidden notes.
- **Name it a moment, not the marriage**
  Mel's coping line in hard periods: 'This is just a moment. This is not the whole marriage. We will get through this.'
- **How to know it's your person**
  Ask whether you could spend 30 years with them and whether they're willing to lean in and grow with you. For Mel and Chris, a shared interest in growth was clear from day one. With the right person, you feel like yourself and share a vision.
- **When a partner shuts down**
  Treat shutdown as emotion, not indifference. Notice your own flooding and soften rather than escalating. Mel describes her cycle of venting, being 'a jerk' and apologizing as one that leaves both partners lonelier.

The Best Relationship Advice That Everyone Needs to Hear (From the World's #1 Love Researchers)

Guest: Drs. John & Julie Gottman
Date: 2026-06-18 · Duration: 1:24:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNzswsEIJ-E

KEYPOINTS

• It's not whether you fight but how you fight

Drs. John and Julie Schwartz Gottman have studied thousands of couples over 50-plus years. John started the work with his friend Bob Levenson 54 years ago, when, he says, neither had a clue what made relationships work. Their central finding is that conflict is normal in every relationship. Lasting couples are the ones whose conflict becomes calmer, gentler, more constructive and more compassionate. The aim of a fight is to understand your partner's world, not to tear them down.

• The first three minutes predict the relationship's future

With 15 minutes of a couple discussing a conflict, John and Levenson could predict with almost 90% accuracy whether the couple would divorce and how happy they'd be if they stayed. A lab member kept cutting three minutes off the data, and the prediction stayed accurate down to the first three. Couples headed for divorce or unhappiness open the conversation very differently from the 'masters of relationship'.

• The masters' rule: when your partner is upset, the world stops and you listen

If John had to boil 54 years down to one thing, this is it. When Julie says the 'four terrifying words', 'we need to talk', he slowly takes a 3x5 notebook from his back pocket, opens it and says 'Okay baby, talk to me. What's on your mind? What's on your heart?' He writes down what she says, and the more defensive he feels, the more notes he takes. The notebook slows him down so he doesn't react with something he'll regret.

• Flooding hijacks your thinking

Partners can look calm while one heart rate is over 100 beats per minute. That's fight or flight, and Julie says blood leaves the prefrontal cortex, so you can't think or listen clearly. Flooded people tend to repeat themselves louder, thinking it will be more persuasive. John's joke: '63 times later. Have I listened?'

• Horseman 1, criticism: blaming a problem on their character

'You're so selfish, lazy, inconsiderate.' In their role-play of a disaster fight, John attacked Julie as obsessive and needing therapy. She called him a slob. Both talked over each other, went straight to persuading, got louder, and nobody listened. John mimed the 'halo' of the partner who is always innocent.

• Horseman 2, contempt: the single best predictor of breakup

Contempt is criticism from superiority: sneering, disgust, scorn, mockery, sometimes sarcasm. Julie says the number of times a listener hears contempt in 15 minutes of conflict predicts how many infectious illnesses they'll have over the next four years. John calls it 'sulfuric acid for the immune system'.

• Horseman 3, defensiveness: counterattack or whine

Everyone gets defensive unless they have 'an ego of a rock'. It shows up as counterattack or whining ('I did too clean the kitchen!'). The repair they model is to name it: 'I'm really feeling defensive right now. I don't want to be, but the way you're describing me feels like a put-down.'

• Horseman 4, stonewalling is panic, not indifference

Stonewalling is shutting down for long minutes or hours. Physiology showed heart rates rising to 140–150 about 10 seconds before a person stonewalled. Julie says she had never seen stonewalling as someone panicked and overwhelmed. Levenson's startle studies, using a blank gun fired behind people, found women felt fear while men felt rage and a desire to get even, which keeps them physiologically aroused for longer.

• Take a real break of 20 minutes to 24 hours, and don't rehearse

A break needs at least 20–30 minutes and at most 24 hours. Don't replay the fight or plan comebacks, or you'll stay flooded. Read, watch TV, play with the puppy or go for a run. Say when you'll return ('Let's come back in half an hour when I'm calmer') so your partner doesn't feel rejected or think the issue will be dropped.

• Turning toward bids is the everyday glue

Graduate student Janice Driver coded small bids for attention in the lab. Each response was turning toward, turning away (ignoring) or turning against (irritable). Couples who had divorced six years later had turned toward only 33% of the time, while couples still married had turned toward 86% of the time. After a partner turns away, the chance of a new bid is just 22%.

EXAMPLES

• The 'love lab' apartment

The Gottmans had 130 newlywed couples spend 24 hours in an apartment with cameras rolling and no instructions, just eating, cleaning and watching TV together. They say observations there predicted with 94% accuracy who would still be together in six years.

• Busy couples: 35 minutes a week of talk

A UCLA Sloan Center study of dual-career couples with young children found they spent less than 10% of an evening in the same room and talked about 35 minutes a week, mostly about errands. Mel says that was her and Chris when their three kids were little. Their fix was a Sunday-night calendar meeting that made them a team, and Chris still leaves her little notes.

• Their 27-year kayak ritual

Every year for 27 years the Gottmans have gone to the same bed and breakfast for two weeks of kayaking and hiking, asking: What sucked about last year? What did you love about it? What do you want next year to be like? Julie says rituals can be small too: how you say good morning and good night, lazy weekend mornings, date nights.

• Raising lost attraction in a role-play

Julie prefaced it with 'I adore you... but', then spoke about her own experience: as he gained weight her libido dropped, and she missed feeling the muscles in his back. John took notes ('lose weight, get more sex') and agreed. The model is to lead with love, describe your feelings and say what you miss.

• The scratched red couch

Julie once treated a flooded client, about 4'10", whose 6'5" husband had cheated. After the session there were scratch marks on Julie's red leather couch, a picture of how intense flooding can be.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Start conflicts softly

In the positive role-play, the partner opened with 'What's going on, honey?' and responded with empathy ('That sounds like a terrible feeling'). Describe your feeling and need, not their flaw.

• Build your own notebook move

Find a physical way to slow yourself when you feel defensive, such as taking notes, asking a question or pausing, so listening comes first.

• Count your bids

Ask yourself whether you're turning away when they want to show you something or hold your hand. Aim for turning toward far more often than not.

• Schedule a weekly sync

A 10-minute Sunday logistics check-in can turn chores and calendars from a source of conflict into teamwork.

The Most Eye-Opening Conversation on Marriage & Love You Will Ever Hear (From #1 Divorce Lawyer)

Guest: James Sexton
Date: 2026-03-05 · Duration: 1:32:13
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaKQa9TuSmQ

KEYPOINTS

• Disconnection is the root cause of divorce, and it builds up in small steps.
Divorce attorney James Sexton, with 25 years in matrimonial law, says the things people blame (cheating, money, fights) are mostly symptoms. 'No single raindrop was responsible for the flood. But the flood's nothing but little raindrops.' Most marriages don't end with one catastrophe. They end with a thousand small, unnoticed choices.

• 'Falling feels like flying for a little while.'
Once couples feel they've 'locked down' their person, they coast and put their energy into kids, work and the world. By the time they notice the marriage isn't a good place, it's often 'real far gone.' He notes that marriage fails something like 50–70% of the time, and that asking someone 'why?' when they announce an engagement would be considered rude.

• Ten minutes a week of upkeep can keep many couples out of his office.
Ask your partner: 'Tell me three things I did this week that made you feel loved.' He says the answers will surprise you, because little things matter. If you can both agree to listen without getting defensive, follow up with: 'Where did I miss the mark? What three things made you feel less loved or less seen?' Keep it light too, for instance '…three things that made you want to have sex with me?'

• Infidelity plays some role in about 85% of his divorces, usually driven by wanting to feel seen.
His clients who've had affairs often say they never stopped loving their spouse, but their spouse no longer found them attractive or interesting, and the affair partner did. Humans need to be interesting and interested, to feel loved and to have physical connection. Constant criticism, even 'constructive criticism,' from your favorite person pushes them away. 'What's right in this connection is very often the cure for what's feeling wrong in it.'

• Social media is 'an infidelity generating machine.'
In his book How to Stay in Love, he argues that nothing before it, not swingers' clubs, chat rooms, workplace temptation or Ashley Madison, has bred infidelity the way Facebook, Instagram and YouTube do. If you're even vaguely unhappy in your marriage, he says, stay off social media. Most of what's there is 'unhappiness masked as happiness.'

• Affairs have 'last clear chances' to steer away.
Looking back on affairs, he sees many moments when someone could have said early, 'I feel like my eye is wandering. I don't want it to.' Naming it to your partner treats the marriage like what it is.

• Marriage is a job, and he means that romantically.
It has roles and responsibilities, you chose it over other options, and you can quit, so be good at it, since happiness is the pay. The spiral down works by tit-for-tat ('why should I, she doesn't'), and it reverses the same way, through small actions. Start by leaving a note: 'It was really fun hanging out with you last night,' 'I married the prettiest girl in the world,' or a thank-you.

• Small disconnections add up, and the phone is the big one.
Scrolling while your spouse talks says, 'You're not as important as this.' Responding with 'No, finish what you're doing on the phone' sounds accusatory. Meet each other halfway on physical connection too: if one of you doesn't like holding sweaty hands, put an arm around them instead.

• Learn to fight before you're in a fight.
'The worst time to learn how to fight is when you're in a fight.' Agree in advance on a 'safe word,' something unrelated like 'How about them Mets?', that means 'this isn't productive, we're stopping and will continue later,' with a promise that you really will come back to it.

• Ask for what you need, even though it feels vulnerable.
Two hard questions: if you can't name 10 things you love about your spouse, go to therapy and ask why you're married to them. And if you fear they won't reciprocate, 'what's scarier is we just won't even try.' He says aging has made it easier for him to say 'I need help.' Give yourself and your partner grace. He says he only understands himself about 75% of the time.

EXAMPLES

• His friendly divorce
Sexton can list 10 things he loves about his ex-wife, and she could do the same for him. 'She found the lid for her pot.' He says we need to normalize prenups, civil divorce and cooperative co-parenting, and that the loudest divorce stories come from people who were deeply wounded.

• The $100 million question
Would you take $100 million for your last 30 days with one of your kids? No, because short time makes it more precious. 'That's love.' Speaking as both a divorce lawyer and a 20-year hospice volunteer, he says we're losing everything all the time, and that's what makes it precious.

• The letter from his mom
He wrote a letter to someone he had unresolved pain with, then wrote the reply he needed. His 'letter back from my mom' said, 'I wasn't mad at you. I've been sick for a really long time.' She never said it herself, but writing it showed him he already knew. 'The wisdom you find on mountaintops is the wisdom you brought up there.'

• Marriage as a lottery ticket
'You're probably not going to win. But if you win, what you win is so fantastic. Why wouldn't you buy a ticket?' His point is that a great marriage is worth fighting for and protecting.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Weekly 10-minute check-in script**
  Three things that made you feel loved, three where I missed the mark, and one playful question. Agree up front that you'll both listen without getting defensive.
- **Agree on a fight 'eject' phrase**
  Choose something silly and neutral, agree on it while calm, and promise to come back to the conversation within an agreed time.
- **Two-letter exercise**
  Write to the person you're struggling with, then write their reply saying what you need to hear. Read it aloud, even alone. You don't have to send it.
- **Daily micro-connections**
  Leave a note, put your phone down when they talk, touch them in a way they like, and offer appreciation instead of 'constructive' criticism.

Dating Expert: Why Dating Today Is Nearly Impossible & How to Find True Love

Guest: Logan Ury
Date: 2026-02-16 · Duration: 0:58:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7SNC9fIF8c

KEYPOINTS

• Separate what's hard about dating itself from what's hard about the apps.
Behavioral scientist Logan Ury, formerly director of relationship science at Hinge (Mel notes Hinge didn't pay for the episode), says people lump together the psychological work of dating (putting yourself out there, taking risks, getting rejected) and frustrations with the technology. Blaming the apps for everything lets you skip the part you control. She also warns that 'I live in the worst city for dating' tends to become self-fulfilling.

• Some things matter less for long-term success than people think.
Looks: we adapt to them over time ('behind every hot person is somebody who's sick of having sex with them'). Money: it makes life easier but is a poor reason to pick a partner. Shared hobbies: fine as long as you give each other room for your own. Similar personalities: two of you would be 'way too much.' A partner who balances you is better.

• Other things matter more than people think.
Emotional stability: can they pause between stimulus and response? Kindness: how do they treat someone they don't need anything from? Loyalty: do they help friends move, and do they have friends from across their life? A growth mindset, so they'll tackle rough patches with you. Fighting well: not never fighting, but fighting as a team. Her favorite: what side of you do they bring out?

• Rate the date by how you felt, not by their résumé.
She calls it switching from an evaluative mindset ('Are they good enough for me? Do they make enough money?') to an experiential one ('How do I feel around them?'). Her post-date questions are below. They weed out people who look good on paper but make you feel bad about yourself.

• The spark is overrated. Look for the slow burn.
Ury cites research that only about 11% of couples experience love at first sight. A slow-burn person may be less charming at first but would make a great long-term partner, and they're often overlooked. If you like someone a bit more each date, invest the time.

• Dating apps tend to be crowded with anxious and avoidant people, who keep finding each other.
She estimates the population is about 50% secure, 25% anxious and 25% avoidant, but many secure people are already partnered. The anxious dater chases and tries to prove their worth. The avoidant fears being smothered and pulls away. Together they create the 'anxious-avoidant loop.' Ury says she used to be an anxiously attached dater herself.

• Date the person, not the potential.
'People will show you who they are if you let them.' Chasing someone's potential, or acting as their mentor, leads you to excuse unacceptable behavior. A situationship isn't bad if both people genuinely agree on what it is. It becomes harmful when one person wants exclusivity and doesn't say so.

• Don't ghost. Send a copy-paste rejection.
She says ghosting is a major driver of dating burnout, and that 85% of people would rather be rejected than ghosted. Keep a note on your phone: 'Hey [name], it was great meeting you, but I don't think we're a romantic match.' Add 'I wish you well' if you like. Getting a clear no lets the other person move on.

• Ask the 'What are we?' question instead of hoping.
Her script: 'What are we? I'd be interested in deleting Hinge. Would you?' If you're on the same page, delete your apps. If not, now you know. Mel adds that many people complain about a lack of commitment without ever asking for it, because they're afraid of the answer.

• Your profile is your billboard, and matching is only the start.
Ask friends whether your profile really represents you, and use the limited space to show several sides of yourself, what you're looking for, and what dating you would be like. She also says to choose quality over quantity: many people collect matches they never message past a couple of exchanges, then ask where their partner is. 'He very well could be in your matches.'

EXAMPLES

• The anime-only profile
A client's profile talked only about anime. Ury told him, 'The person in front of me is a beautiful, vibrant, three-dimensional person,' and asked him to show the rest of himself.

• The perfect-on-paper doctor
Clients describe dates who are 'everything I wanted on paper' (Persian, a doctor, the right school, parents would be obsessed) but who make them feel worried and unable to be themselves. Her checklist would weed out exactly that person.

• Sophia, 21: hooked on the chase
A Boston college student spent four years in situationships and now wants to settle down, but loses interest when men get serious. Ury's prescription is the post-date questions, to reconnect with what she actually wants and how dates make her feel.

• Ury's own story
She met her husband because he started talking to her at a bar, which she uses as proof that people around you in line or out and about still count, even if you're on the apps.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Post-date questions
What side of me did they bring out? How did my body feel: stiff, relaxed, in between? Energized or drained? Is there

something about them I'm curious about? Did they make me laugh? Did I feel heard? Did I feel attractive around them? Captivated, bored, or in between?

- **Rejection text template**
  'Hey [name], it was great meeting you, but I don't think we're a romantic match. I wish you well.' Save it in your notes app.
- **DTR opener**
  'What are we? I'd be interested in deleting the apps. Would you?' Treat the answer as information, not a verdict on your worth.
- **Her book**
  How to Not Die Alone covers the research on choosing partners and dating habits.

Your Guide to Better Romance, Sex, & Love From the #1 Sex Professor

Guest: Dr. Nicole McNichols
Date: 2026-02-12 · Duration: 1:37:47
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qi45Jl46Py8

KEYPOINTS

• Sex is a health habit, not a treat

Dr. Nicole McNichols, a University of Washington professor whose human-sexuality course is the most popular on campus, notes that our language ('get lucky,' 'save room for dessert') frames sex as optional. She says satisfying, consensual, connected sex is linked to better cardiovascular health and protection against brain degeneration, and some studies tie it to longevity. These are associations she cites from research. She also says prioritizing pleasure builds 'ego resilience,' an upward cycle where you turn outward, seek more support and think more creatively.

• Sexual likes are learned, so sex can get better

From her book You Could Be Having Better Sex: we aren't born knowing what we'll enjoy, just as we aren't born knowing what foods we'll like. People with a 'sexual growth mindset' believe sex can improve through communication and experimentation. People who think 'married sex never changes' struggle. She says that mindset predicts satisfaction far more than any innate skill.

• Only 18% of women orgasm from penetration alone

The rest need clitoral stimulation, either alongside penetration or on its own. When she shows this in class, women stop thinking they're broken and men stop thinking they're failing. Not knowing it, she says, fuels widespread faking. More than 50% of women say they've faked an orgasm.

• Drop the 'penetration script' that creates the orgasm gap

The default script of kissing, touching, maybe oral, then penetration, his orgasm and done puts penetration on a pedestal. She says queer couples report more equal and higher orgasm rates because they don't start from 'sex equals penetration.' Most women who orgasm during intercourse do so about 10–15 minutes in, versus about five minutes for men. With masturbation, both sexes take four to five minutes, because people know what they're doing.

• The clitoris wasn't fully mapped until 2005

Its only known purpose is pleasure, with no role in reproduction, so medicine largely ignored it. Urologist Dr. Helen O'Connell used MRI to map its full internal structure in 2005, and it took about a decade to reach mainstream literature. It develops from the same tissue as the head of the penis. Most of it is internal, which is why 'vaginal' orgasms still involve the clitoris, stimulated from inside (the 'clitourethrovaginal complex' rather than a magic G-spot).

• Faking orgasms shuts down the communication that makes sex good

Good sex depends on feedback, not innate talent. She suggests phrases like 'guide me,' 'show me what you want,' 'is this feeling good?' and 'should I do more of this?', plus small shifts in position and sounds. After 20 or 30 years of faking, coming clean feels monumental, which is why it's better to stop early.

• Micro-novelty keeps long-term sex alive

Research she cites finds couples who add some novelty about once a month (12 times a year) report more sexual satisfaction. Novelty doesn't have to mean whips and paddles. Small, low-stakes changes count.

• A fantasy isn't necessarily a wish

Threesomes are the most popular fantasy in America, she says, but many who imagine them don't want one. Taboo settings like public places or an airplane bathroom are common. She also rejects the myth that people into kink were abused as children. Studies interviewing them found most weren't, and the draw is often novelty.

• Sexuality can be fluid

Bisexuality usually isn't a phase on the way to gay or straight. Women more often move toward identifying as bisexual. She says 23% of Gen Z identify as LGBTQIA+, and about 80% of that group identify as bisexual.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 'what's wrong with it?' moment

Some years ago Chris told Mel one of his goals was to improve their sex life. Her first reaction was defensive: 'What am I not doing? Now I have to do more?' McNichols says many couples hear that kind of invitation as rejection, when 'the poor guy is just trying to connect.'

• Karen, 56: 'It hurts now'

A listener with dryness and burning feared intimacy. McNichols said it sounds like menopause and recommended talking to a doctor about hormone therapy and estrogen creams to rebuild the tissue, plus generous lube: 'the wetter the better.'

• Maya, 41, single and 'rusty'

About a quarter of 40-year-olds are single, she says, and the average age of marriage is 31. Her class data shows only slight gender differences in enjoying casual sex. Newly single older women often do well because they feel more confident asking for what brings them pleasure. She warns against telling yourself that going along with drinking and casual sex will lead to something meaningful.

• Two exhausted parents, zero privacy

Her answer: closing the door for 30 minutes shows kids that mom and dad have a relationship of their own, and the kids 'will be better off for it.' The partner who does less at home can help by noticing and appreciating the load. Feeling seen turns on desire.

• The double-sided sleep mask

An example of micro-novelty from the conversation: a sleep mask on the nightstand that means 'sleep' on one side and is a playful signal on the other.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Touch without an agenda**
  When one partner wants to kiss and cuddle without it 'leading' anywhere, she says to build regular non-sexual touch. Your phone shouldn't be the last thing you touch at night.
- **Sexual mindfulness for body-image anxiety**
  Airbrushed and AI-generated bodies activate the brain regions that need to quiet for pleasure. During sex, keep bringing attention back to your breath, the sensations in your body and your partner's cues. Expect your mind to wander, as in meditation.
- **For partners worried about size**
  Penis size 'does not matter at all' for the ability to pleasure someone, she says. Communication and clitoral stimulation matter far more.

Married, Dating, or Single: The Best Relationship Advice You Will Ever Receive

Guest: Terry Real
Date: 2026-01-12 · Duration: 1:29:46
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDIHSLf9qzw

KEYPOINTS

• We expect more from relationships than ever, without the skills to deliver it

Terry Real, a family therapist for 40 years and founder of Relational Life Therapy, says people now want to be 'lifelong lovers,' with intimacy and great sex in their 70s and 80s. They're trying to do it in a patriarchal, individualistic culture that doesn't cherish relationships. He'd like relationship skills taught in elementary school. Getting the love you want 'literally means being a pioneer.'

• Ask for what you want instead of criticizing what's wrong

His 'relationship technology' starts simple. Tell the truth. Teach your partner what you want ('I'd rather you do it this way, honey'). When they start doing it, reward them, even if it's a 'half-ass job.' Complaining about how miserable they've made you is 'about the worst way' to motivate someone. You wouldn't train a dog by only punishing it.

• Real intimacy means moving past traditional gender roles

Real describes two forms of control. 'One-up' control ('sit down, shut up, do what I tell you') is more traditionally male. Control from the 'one-down' (codependency, enabling, managing your partner) is more traditionally female. Men need to move into vulnerability, and women need to move out of 'resentful accommodation': going along with things while seething.

• Every relationship is harmony, disharmony and repair, and most skip repair

Disharmony is normal, though our culture treats a good relationship as all harmony, so we feel bitterly disappointed and aim it at our partner. Most couples cycle between harmony and disharmony with no repair, because repair takes skills nobody taught them. He adds that 'we all marry our unfinished business,' which is why relationships can heal us.

• The key question is which part of you is talking

Real's most important clinical question isn't what the stressors or patterns are. It's whether he's talking to your 'wise adult' or your 'adaptive child,' the strategies you built as a kid. The prefrontal cortex isn't fully developed until about 26, and when you're triggered, the younger part takes the wheel.

• First skill: relational mindfulness

Most of us tolerate the hurt of a rupture for about 10 seconds before falling into our automatic reaction, which doesn't work. When flooded, take a break: walk around the block or take 10 breaths. Agree in advance that either of you can say 'I'm flooded, see you in 20 minutes,' and let your partner go. 'Don't corner an animal.'

• Going one-up feels good and wrecks your marriage

When hurt, we jump from shame and helplessness into righteous anger ('What kind of person does that?'). Real calls it 'devilish' because grandiosity feels better than the wound. Quoting Gabor Maté: 'you don't see the wound, you see the scar.' Remedy: if you're one-up, yield and get vulnerable. If you're one-down, find courage and speak up. Aim for 'democracy,' a 'we.'

• Reparent yourself instead of demanding your partner do it

We marry people hoping they'll give us what we missed as kids, then fight when they don't. Real's 'new news': they won't. Speak to your inner child directly, as in 'Chris may be abandoning you right now, but I'm not. I got you, kid.' Maturity, he says, is dealing with your inner children instead of making your partner deal with them.

• Nagging can be a defense against closeness

To a listener who has become 'the critic' after 11 years, he asks who the complainer was in her family growing up. Picking at a partner can feel safer than receiving love, because closeness can itself be trauma-triggering. Once the behavior changes, you have to let the good in.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's resentful accommodation

During the Robbins family's financial crisis, Chris 'cratered,' feeling he'd failed as a provider and lost people money. As he collapsed, Mel grew more resentful, believing it was all on her to save them. She now says every big fight in her 29-year marriage traces to feeling 'alone and that it's all on me,' like 'clockwork.'

• The dead flowers

Mel's test case: coming home after 10 days away to dead flowers in dirty water on the kitchen island. Instead of 'You son of a...', Real coaches her to say 'I don't feel cared about' and to name loneliness and helplessness before anger. 'Take the feeling that comes first and put it last.'

• The forgotten pumpernickel

A client who grew up lying to escape his controlling military father kept lying to his wife. Real had him put his inner '8-year-old' behind him: 'You're not five anymore and your wife isn't your dad.' Sent for 12 groceries, the man came back with 11, and every nerve said to claim the store was out. Instead he took a breath and admitted, 'I forgot the goddamn pumpernickel.' The couple returned two weeks later hand in hand.

• 'Oh, that's Harry'

An older woman in a long, happy marriage told Real the first 15 were hell because she kept trying to change her husband. One day she looked at him and thought, 'Oh, that's Harry,' and they've been fine ever since.

• Chris, his mom and Mel's anger

One of Mel's biggest marital fights was over Chris confiding their struggles to his mother. Mel felt betrayed, as if she were now married to 'her son.' Real agrees you don't want your in-laws hearing your partner vent about you.

OTHER RELEVANT

• His four-step feedback script

'This is what happened. This is what I told myself. This is how I felt. This is what I want.' In step three, lead with the vulnerable

feeling and put anger last.

- **When you blow it anyway**

  Real says even he and his wife Belinda sometimes both lose their wise adults. Expect the wheels to come off. Then get back to your adult self, make amends, apologize and 'own your stuff.'

- **Train your friends to support the relationship**

  Venting to friends who cheer your righteous anger makes you 'more of a fighter.' Tell them 'I love him, I want this to work,' and choose friends who'll ask 'have you thought you might...?'

- **Helping a depressed partner**

  Real, who wrote one of the first books on male depression in the 1990s, says waiting for him to 'call the doctor' rarely works. Offer to make the call, drive together, or suggest couples therapy: 'We need help.'

Your Guide to Better Sex, Intimacy, & Love From a World-Leading Sex Therapist

Guest: Vanessa Marin
Date: 2025-03-20 · Duration: 1:17:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoPJEzhtypc

KEYPOINTS

• Disconnection in bed usually reflects disconnection out of bed

Vanessa Marin, a licensed psychotherapist and sex therapist for over 20 years and married to her husband Xander for 17, says a big mistake is treating sex as something separate that happens behind closed doors at night. How connected you feel all day drives desire. Couples who feel like 'roommates' or 'ships passing in the night' should treat a sex slump as a prompt to look at the whole relationship. Mel, married 28 years, says logistics have made her life with Chris feel transactional.

• Sex gives energy back

Marin acknowledges real exhaustion but says sex with a partner you feel close to creates energy, time and teamwork, while disconnection makes every task drag. Her example: at 5 p.m. one hectic day, Xander said, 'You are more important to me than anything on this stupid list.' They had sex, then 'killed' the to-do list together.

• There are two desire types, and most women are 'responsive'

Spontaneous desire starts in the mind and the body follows, which is the version shown in movies. Marin cites research that about 85% of women have responsive desire, where physical arousal comes first and mental desire follows. Responsive people often think they have low or no desire because sex doesn't pop into their heads. A classic sign is thinking mid-sex, 'This is fun, why don't I want it more?' Two responsive partners can end up in a standoff, each waiting for the other to start.

• Bedtime is the worst time for sex, so plan it earlier

By the time teeth are brushed you're exhausted and calculating how many hours of sleep you'll get. Marin suggests sex before TV, or between dinner and clean-up, and Mel decides late morning suits them. She reframes scheduling: early dates were already planned sex ('dinner, then my place'). She prefers terms like 'intentional intimacy' to 'scheduling sex,' which puts people off.

• Use a transition ritual between work and intimacy

Going from the day's chaos straight to 'be sexy' is too abrupt. Empty nesters Mel and Chris both work from home and have drifted from cooking together into cereal and frozen pizza. Marin says cooking together, or any short ritual, signals 'it's our time now.' She suggests defining emotional intimacy concretely: what could your partner do on a Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. to make you feel 10% closer?

• Share the work of initiating, as you would parenting

Mel, the primary breadwinner who manages a large team, admits she wants one area of life where she isn't in charge. She suspects Chris, a men's-retreat founder and death doula, feels the same. Marin compares one partner owning initiation to one partner doing all the parenting. Your sex life is your responsibility, and many women were taught their job is to put the brakes on sex.

• The 'bristle response' comes from touch that always means sex

Marin's term describes recoiling when your partner touches you, usually because lingering hugs or a hand on the thigh have become indirect bids for sex. The fix is more non-sexual touch plus asking directly with words for a while, so touch can just be touch. She suggests sharing the episode to open the conversation.

• Ask 'are you open to…' instead of 'do you want to…'

Marin says to expect not to be in the mood when your partner initiates, since you're two people on different timelines. Xander now asks, 'Are you open to being intimate?' or 'Are you open to me trying to turn you on?' That shifts the question from instant desire to whether you're willing to make space. Mel adapts it to 'Are you open to connecting later today?'

• Pleasure has to matter as much as desire

You won't crave sex you don't enjoy. Marin says typical heterosexual sex centers male pleasure and his timeline, and intercourse averages about five minutes. She notes the clitoris has an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 nerve endings, compared with relatively few in the vagina, and offers a blunt analogy: expecting orgasm from intercourse alone is like expecting a man to climax from his testicles being touched. Female orgasm is no more mysterious than male orgasm.

EXAMPLES

• Chris's three video questions

He asked whether physical or emotional connection matters more to Mel, how to help her switch off her 'working mind' at night, and whether there's anything she's afraid to tell him. Mel braced to be called 'all talk, no follow-through': he's asleep at 8:30, she comes to bed at 9:30, he's up at 5:15. Marin pointed out both were privately worried about the same things.

• Marin's nightly make-out rule

Realizing they had stopped kissing the way they used to, she and Xander made out every night, from 10 seconds to a couple of minutes, with at least 'a little tongue contact.' For the first month, sex afterward was off-limits so kissing could exist for its own sake. If you worry it will turn into pressure, she suggests doing it outside the bedroom.

• Have sex before date night

After a big meal, drinks and a tight outfit, most people want pajamas, not sex. Doing it first means more energy and a 'sexy little secret' while you're out. Mel vows to rock Chris's world.

• 'Connected' and 'playful'

Marin suggests asking, 'Right after great sex, what do you want to feel?' Mel guessed Chris would say 'connected and seen.' He said 'connected' and 'playful,' which surprised her. Marin also loves playful and says her best times with Xander involve laughing at awkward moments. Mel's own words: connected, safe and 'blissed out.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Three under-a-minute daily habits

Gratitude, which Marin says research shows is the top predictor of marital satisfaction. A six-second kiss or a 20- to 30-second hug, which she says is the time needed to release oxytocin. And real eye contact, because feeling unseen by a long-term partner is 'the greatest tragedy.'

• Name a dry spell instead of ignoring it

There's no fixed definition, but people tend to feel that three to six months counts, and some therapists use one year for a sexless relationship. Silence leaves your partner wondering whether you've stopped caring. Try: 'Life's been full, I miss you, let's find time for us.' Marin's three nevers: faking orgasm, mocking a partner for initiating, and taking erection difficulties personally.

• If past trauma is in the room

Marin cites research that one in three or four women experience sexual trauma, which can linger even when you feel safe with a partner. Tell your partner it isn't about them. Partners can let the survivor lead, ask 'Does this feel good?', pause when the person seems to tune out, and build a trigger list alongside a 'joy list.' She recommends personal therapy as well.

The Best Relationship Advice No One Ever Told You

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2025-02-13 · Duration: 0:44:11
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Kycn43KNOE

KEYPOINTS

• Mel and Chris answer listener relationship questions after 30 years together
The couple, who have three adult children, take questions on growth gaps, family pressure, drifting apart, alone time, parenting disagreements, losing yourself and unmet expectations. They disagree on air more than once, and at one point Mel says she just had 'a huge epiphany after 30 years.'

• You can't make your partner happy or force them to grow
To Rachel, who is growing while her partner isn't, Mel says you can make someone coffee or a reservation, but not make them happy or change them. Drawing on The Let Them Theory, she says people only change when they feel like it, and pressure creates resistance rather than change. Your job is to invest in your own growth and bring that back to the relationship.

• Commitment and compatibility aren't the same, and the couple disagree on this
Mel separates staying committed from later asking whether you're compatible with someone who won't grow. Chris pushes back: if your example doesn't rub off and your partner isn't inspired to grow, that already points to incompatibility. Mel's reply: first, have you actually talked about how their lack of growth affects you emotionally?

• Your growth can feel threatening to your partner
When one person changes, it forces the other to look at their own behavior, which is confronting. Shame or pressure will push a partner away. But influence works: Mel says watching Chris get up 90 minutes before her or walk the dogs makes her think she should too.

• The deal-breaker test: can you stop complaining?
If your partner never changes (keeps drinking, never addresses depression, never speaks kindly), can you keep choosing them as they are? If you can't end the complaining, it's a deal breaker. Per The Let Them Theory, real deal breakers make you give up your dreams or values; most frustrations are just different priorities.

• 'A house divided cannot stand'
When family or social pressure gets to a couple, Mel says the problem is cracks within, not pressure from outside. Agree together on your values, traditions and parenting style, and expect parents to take differences as a rejection of how they did it. Let them be a little bothered; there's room for old traditions and your own.

• Schedule protected time, not just date nights
For Sarah, drifting after kids and a move, the advice is a weekly slot for something familiar or new. Mel and Chris spent a couple of years in weekly couples therapy and say the best part was a 40-minute daytime block every week with no phones, kids or pets. After 26 years outside Boston, they moved to a small Vermont town and made a point of exploring somewhere new weekly. They're also talking about returning to a dance class they loved 25 years ago.

• Claim your alone time out loud and collaborate on when
Chris takes two to three hours early each morning for workouts, being outside or the office, and told Mel what it gives him and not to interrupt. He also plans occasional solo overnight hikes by asking when it would work. The rule: never expect your partner to read your mind about needs.

• Losing yourself in marriage is 'a you problem'
Mel tells Lauren that if you feel you're losing your identity, make bettering yourself your purpose for six months: health, sleep, creativity, friends, a class. Otherwise you'll resent your marriage for a purpose it can't supply. Chris adds that you still need to communicate. Don't just vanish for 72 holes of golf; explain you've lost yourself and ask whether taking a Saturday works.

• Unmet expectations are usually uncommunicated expectations
Mel admits that every time she's been disappointed in Chris, she hadn't said clearly what she wanted and why. Contempt like 'what kind of person doesn't know that?' is 'death by a thousand cuts.' Chris's view: it's far easier if she just gives him a list than resents him for not guessing.

EXAMPLES

• 'No one cares what's in your glass but you'
A couple of years ago Chris quietly quit drinking without asking Mel to. About four days in, she offered him wine while cooking, joked 'it's kind of just juice,' and said she felt weird drinking alone. He told her to stop asking, and that if she was self-conscious about her glass she should look in the mirror and ask why. Mel says it changed her life and that she now sees herself as having undermined his change.

• Oakley and the car
Their son Oakley, a college freshman without a car, floated having one next semester; Mel said 'great.' Chris, overhearing, thought it was a bad idea. Mel realized she's decisive because uncertainty scares her ('ready, fire, aim') while Chris taps the brakes, and kids exploit that crack.

• Three years of kids in the bedroom
When two of their kids developed acute anxiety somewhere between fourth and sixth grade, they'd come to Mel's side and she'd lift the covers. After talking it through, the couple compromised: a bed on their floor, no getting in theirs. Mel stresses this isn't parenting advice and to consult an expert; the point is they agreed.

• The birthday party and the Uber
Mel once resented Chris for not throwing her a birthday party she never asked for. Later, Chris suggested an Uber to pick up a kid flying home from college. For Mel, a curbside pickup, or waiting inside, is a show of love. Chris grew up in London and outside New York City with a traveling dad, where taxis were normal.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Say 'maybe' when kids ask and you haven't talked

Mel's new tool: instead of yes or no, say maybe until you and your partner have had Chris's 'three-minute discussion' about why one of you is a yes and the other a no. Understanding the deeper reason also tells you whose view should carry more weight.

• If your partner is growing and you aren't

Chris's message: don't throw up your arms and assume you can't catch up. There's always a good time to start. Couples are encouraged to listen together, since people change more readily when the conclusion feels like their own.

• Co-create rather than convert

The goal isn't to turn each other into each other but to understand where each comes from and decide together. Mel quotes a line she heard: second marriages are amazing, especially with the same person. Every day is a chance to start over.

The Only Dating Advice You'll Ever Need

Guest: Logan Ury
Date: 2024-12-09 · Duration: 1:20:15
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=166lDfHQtZA

KEYPOINTS

• You're born knowing how to love, not how to date

Logan Ury is a Harvard-trained behavioral scientist, author of How to Not Die Alone and Director of Relationship Science at Hinge. She came to this view while filming a show about daters over 55. Dating is a skill you can improve. 'You don't wake up on your 50th birthday and know how to make a delicious French meal.' Mel says up front the episode isn't sponsored by Hinge.

• Don't blame the apps for what has always been hard

Stanford sociologist Michael J. Rosenfeld's research shows online has been the number one way couples meet since 2017. Ury argues the pains that have always come with dating get pinned on technology: liking someone who doesn't like you back, not hearing back (ghosting before it had a name), and fear of rejection. Sex and the City showed New Yorkers struggling with dating long before the apps.

• Your filters are the bouncer at your club

Setting a 'six feet or taller' filter without much thought removes about 86% of men, and then people wonder why the club is empty. Men do the same with harsh age cutoffs. Someone you'd click with across a bar might never show up at all. Removing every filter would be chaotic. Instead, she suggests stretching your age range a little in both directions, widening geography and letting go of the other screens.

• Too picky and too passive both cause burnout

Most of her clients are too picky, but some are overwhelmed by incoming likes and never comment or reach out. She compares that to wanting a dream job but only answering LinkedIn messages. Getting in the driver's seat, by pursuing people and talking to them in real life, cuts burnout. A Hinge finding she cites: 56% of people aren't pursuing someone they're interested in because of fear of rejection.

• Date like a scientist

Treat 'my type' as a hypothesis to test. A client insisted on a '5'6" skinny redhead,' and she told him he was wrong and to experiment. When clients say 'he's not really my type,' she hears 'ding ding ding,' because the type hasn't been working. Her own husband is her opposite in personality and interests, but they share a sense of humor and she admires him. For people tempted to go back to an ex, she asks: are you doing the safe thing?

• Forget the spark; look for the slow burn

Her book chapter is bluntly titled 'F*** the Spark.' She names three myths. First, that a spark can't grow: she says only 11% of couples felt love at first sight. Second, that a spark is a good sign: some people, like her friend Archie, are just 'sparky' with everyone. Third, that a spark means the relationship is viable: she interviewed divorced couples who clung to a romantic origin story. Mel adds that sparks often signal a familiar, dysfunctional pattern.

• Three toxic dating tendencies

Romanticizers have unrealistic expectations of relationships and want a rom-com meet-cute. Maximizers have unrealistic expectations of a partner and want a 'Frankenstein' of someone's looks, someone else's ambition and another person's family. Hesitaters have unrealistic expectations of themselves and wait until they've lost 10 pounds or landed a better job.

• Each tendency has a fix

Romanticizers: if you're married 50 years, the day you met is 0.55% of the relationship. She also cites psychologist Renae Franiuk's research on shifting from a 'soulmate' mindset to a 'work it out' mindset. Maximizers, often tech CEOs used to having recruiters fill job descriptions, should become satisficers with high but fixed standards. Hesitaters should start before they're ready, because no one is ever 100% ready.

• Separate pet peeves from dealbreakers

A woman who said she was 'open to anyone' then ruled out mouth-breathers. Ury never tells people to settle, but to 'double down on the things that matter' and compromise on the small annoyances.

EXAMPLES

• 10% of men get 90% of the attention

Ury describes app attention concentrating on a small slice of profiles, with women's interest focused on a few men. Mel, mother of two daughters in their 20s and a 19-year-old son, says she hears the frustration from both sides.

• Gen Z believes in soulmates more

Hinge found Gen Z was 39% more likely than Millennials to believe in a soulmate, which Ury calls an idealistic generation looking for its own rom-com.

• 'Why do you think I'm single?'

Before a first session, clients must ask friends and family this question. The common answers are 'too picky,' 'not putting yourself out there' and 'unrealistic expectations.' The hardest feedback is 'you keep choosing people who aren't good for you,' a sign of ignoring red flags.

• The 'undateable' email

Her email asking 'what makes you undateable?' drew her biggest response ever: an STI, a partner's suicide, never having been in a relationship, too many relationships. A disabled veteran on her show was turning down athletic women because he couldn't jog with them. Her advice is to prepare a short narrative ('this happened, it was hard, here's what I did') so fear of the topic doesn't keep you from dating.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build a profile like successful daters

Based on people who met someone and deleted the app: start with a clear headshot (no filters, no sunglasses, no one else in it), then a photo doing something you love, then a full-body shot. Use prompt answers to tell stories that show vulnerability and silliness.

- **Use the events decision matrix**

  Draw a 2x2 grid that rates events on how likely you are to meet someone and how much you'll enjoy it. Browse Facebook, Meetup and museum listings, then prioritize events that score high on both. At a Red Sox game, chat in the beer line. Getting in any line and talking about the line is a reliable icebreaker.

- **Start in medias res**

  Skip 'press play' small talk about siblings and majors. Open with something you're thinking about, like a podcast idea you heard on the way, so the date becomes an experience instead of an information exchange.

- **Hesitaters need a deadline**

  She won't book another session until a client has gone on three dates. Set a deadline, buy a cute outfit, choose fun first-date ideas and get a friend to hold you accountable.

To Anyone Going Through a Breakup: How to Heal a Broken Heart & Move On

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2024-12-05 · Duration: 1:21:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcJVygChaxA

KEYPOINTS

• Don't tell a heartbroken person to love themselves

Mel and her daughter Sawyer start by setting aside the usual advice. 'Love yourself' fails because right after a breakup you feel rejected, unwanted and even disgusting. 'Distract yourself,' 'get back out there' and 'push through it, girlfriend' fail too, because you think about the person all day anyway. Sawyer's request to the people around her was simple: let me be sad.

• Processing and moving forward are two different jobs

Sawyer's key distinction is that sobbing on the floor is processing, not a tool for moving through the breakup. Mel says ordinary advice runs the two together. This episode treats them separately: first understand what your body is going through, then use specific actions to build a life without the person.

• Your nervous system misses them too

Mel shares what her therapist, Anne Davin, told her: it hurts so much because the person is intertwined with your nervous system. You can still hear their voice, you want to share good news with them, and you picture them in the car beside you. Davin compares it to a death, except the person is still alive. Mel says this shows you're not 'some weak weirdo.' You're unlearning a life you built together.

• No contact for 30 days

Davin's rule: no texts, no calls, and no photos, videos or voice memos. She says their voice is especially charged and reactivates old patterns, setting you back. Mel quietly hid every photo of the couple from the family's digital picture frame. Sawyer had about 25 impulses a day to reach out and almost forwarded every funny video before remembering she couldn't.

• Urges to reach out are withdrawal, not a sign

Wanting to text them, send a meme or message their parents is habit and nervous-system signaling, Mel says, not 'a sign from God that this is your person.' She suggests pairing 'let them' with 'let me': let me keep my promise, send the meme to my sister instead, and drive down a different road than theirs.

• Give it about three months

Mel cites research that grieving a breakup takes about three months before you start to feel better. She says that by the 11-week mark, 71% of people report feeling better. She offers it as a mile marker, not a deadline, and calls the sadness a mentally healthy response. Sawyer's recovery was a 'rolling hill,' with good days followed by sobbing on the gym floor.

• Closure has to come from you

Sawyer doesn't believe in closure. Her call on day 30 didn't give her any, though hearing an 'official no' helped her move on. Mel says people look for closure because they don't realize they're grieving, and they hope one conversation will reset their nervous system. That work happens inside you.

• Let go of the future you imagined

Sawyer accepted the breakup, but not that he wouldn't be at the end of the aisle or the father of her children. She pictured running into him in New York years later with her hair blown out. She says that fantasy and the sadness kept her anchored and felt 'like crack.' Mel compares it to divorced friends whose anger keeps them emotionally married.

• Replaying only the good memories

Sawyer says that after a breakup you keep replaying the best moments until the relationship looks 'like a Barbie movie,' and you block out the disagreements and the reasons it ended. Mel says refusing to accept reality is what keeps you trapped.

EXAMPLES

• Sawyer's breakup, seven months later

Mel and Sawyer were writing the breakup section of The Let Them Theory, including lines like 'let them get fit and hot,' the very morning Sawyer was dumped by her boyfriend of two years. She spent days in pajamas and had panic attacks while Mel held her. That summer her plans were canceled, and she poured herself into work until she crashed.

• Five years of on-again, off-again

After her first major breakup, Sawyer reached out right away and they got back together, which set a pattern of coming in and out of each other's lives for five years. She says the 30-day rule and the nervous-system explanation would have helped them both move on much sooner.

• Gabrielle, 25: 'what if' comparisons

Mel says dating while asking 'what if' turns it into a 'throuple,' like bringing your critical mother on the date. Ask 'what if this works out' instead, date to find yourself, and use an 80/20 rule. The 80% that matters: is this person kind, do they make you laugh, do they prioritize you, do you share the same goals? The fears are the 20% that doesn't.

• Yuna, 29, and Tim, 27

Yuna forced herself to date after a past breakup and cried mid-date. Mel says she may still be holding a reunion fantasy, and notes she met her husband in line at a bar a month after swearing off dating. Tim posts and dresses for his ex. Mel tells him he's in a jail cell he holds the key to, and to restart with 30 days of no contact and unfollowing.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Clear out reminders and refresh your bedroom

Box up their photos, clothes and trinkets, pause the shared playlists, and ask a roommate or parent to do it if you can't. Paint a wall, move the bed or buy new sheets. The bedroom is often 'ground zero' for the sadness, so this marks a new chapter.

• Ask for help and fill your calendar

Tell roommates, siblings and coworkers what happened and ask them to check in on you and invite you out for three months.

Search for local events and plan things you look forward to. If you're the supporter, show up in person, drop off a meal or drive them to class, Mel suggests reaching out around seven weeks in, not just right after the breakup.

• Pick a challenge and ask Sawyer's question

Pick a challenge you never had time for, like a triathlon, guitar or a trip. Then ask: if the love of your life were 75 days away, how would you spend your nights and weekends? Mel adds that, by the figure she cites, only 11% of relationships start with a spark. To her, love is consideration and admiration, which grow over time.

5 Signs Of An Incompatible Relationship & 3 Signs You've Found "The One"

Date: 2024-12-02 · Duration: 1:14:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtQg09GLXVc

KEYPOINTS

- **Doubting your partner is normal; something feeling off is different**
  Mel says everyone eventually asks 'am I with the right person?', whether married 50 years or newly dating, and dating apps make 'is there someone better?' constant. That passing doubt differs from a persistent sense that this is a good person but not good for you. Since your partner shapes your health, happiness, goals and stress, she treats the question seriously.
- **If you're frustrated more than half the time, it's not working**
  Mel's test: a relationship that works brings out the best in you. Warning signs include feeling insecure, compromising your values, constantly explaining yourself, griping to friends or a therapist but never to your partner, and dreading their name on your phone. Ask whether you feel safe, supported, respected and like a priority.
- **Compatibility means attraction, desire to make it work and wanting the same things**
  Plenty of couples are attracted and committed, even living together, but don't fit. A great person can be wrong for you. When something feels off, the key is whether you lean toward each other to work on it. Mel, married 28 years to Chris, says things have felt off countless times.
- **Mistake one: chasing potential**
  Mel's core principle is that people only change when they feel like it. If you're in love with who they could become, you're in a relationship with a fantasy. Accept who they are, then decide what you'll do.
- **Mistake two: misaligned values you hope will convert**
  Expecting someone to eventually want kids, share your religion or join your two-year travel dream rarely works. If you give up a dream such as medical school to stay, resentment follows, and Mel says the responsibility for that trade is yours, not theirs.
- **Mistake three: dumping the 80% for the missing 20%**
  People leave partners who are kind, loyal, respectful, growth-minded and fun because the nice-to-haves are missing: height, flowers, skiing, being outgoing at parties. Then they date people who have only the 20%. Looks, fitness and jobs change anyway. Mel suggests a 'boring' plateau may simply mean safe and stable.
- **Pressure creates resistance**
  Citing psychiatrist Dr. K of HealthyGamer, Mel explains that people are wired to feel in control of their own choices. 'Nice day for a walk' prompts 'thanks, Captain Obvious.' Gifting sneakers and sending workouts usually turns into a standoff. You can't change someone, but you can influence them.
- **The ABC Loop: apologize and ask, back off, celebrate and model**
  First, ask yourself 'why does this bother me?' five times. You may find fear for their health, or worry about how it looks for you. Then apologize sincerely for nagging and ask open-ended questions ('How do you feel about your health? How can I show up differently?'), which can surface the person's own inner tension. Back off and watch behavior for three months. Model the change in a way that looks fun and easy, and praise any progress without 'I told you so.'
- **69% of couples' conflicts never resolve**
  Mel cites Drs. John and Julie Gottman's research that most recurring relationship problems are unresolvable. Hers: ADHD-related messiness and lateness that drive Chris crazy, and his slow, question-heavy processing. What matters is whether you can discuss them, accept each other and lean in, through chapters when either of you earned more, less or nothing.
- **D and E: decide if it's a deal breaker, then end the complaining or the relationship**
  After three months without change, ask whether you can stop complaining. If you can't, it matters too much to you. Then either accept and love them as they are, or leave. Staying while resenting them is your choice. Mel says most issues turn out to be acceptable.

EXAMPLES

- **The coworker's lunch walk**
  A colleague walks outside every lunch, never inviting you, and returns smiling while you eat at your keyboard. Within weeks you go too, and credit yourself. Mel cites neuroscience research that behavior spreads when people feel the idea is theirs.
- **Asking about kids without pressure**
  Apologize for the snark and the baby-shower texts, then ask how it feels when you raise the topic, and whether they picture kids or grandkids around them late in life. A friend of Mel's spent a decade in her 30s with someone who stayed 'open to it,' then ended things when she pushed.
- **Talk in the car**
  Mel holds hard conversations with her adult kids while driving. No one can leave, there's no drinking, you both face forward, and you're less likely to be triggered by their expressions.
- **The partner who stopped exercising**
  Mel describes the familiar curve. First come invitations to walks, a training session and new sneakers. Then jealousy of couples jogging along the Charles River. Finally, resentment at the sight of a partner on the couch with chips. Each step adds pressure and deepens the standoff.
- **Chris's depression**
  Mel recalls wanting Chris to use his tools during his depression, her example of wanting the best for someone while your pressure backfires.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Fight for the truth, not the relationship**

The truth can't kill anything real. If you're afraid to say what feels off, Mel calls that a red flag that you can't be yourself in this relationship.

- **The right decision often feels wrong**

Grief, guilt and a pit in your stomach are healthy responses to ending something, not proof you're wrong. Ask whether you want seven more years or seven decades feeling like this, and whether you'd want someone to stay with you out of pity.

- **Ask how you'd show up if the right love were around the corner**

It may not take a different person. One of you may need to show up differently and stand for something bigger than the friction.

How To Create Better Relationships: 6 Surprising Lessons From 30 Years Of Marriage

Guest: Chris Robbins
Date: 2024-10-28 · Duration: 1:18:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfNw_w62uBo

KEYPOINTS

• Lesson one (Mel): get in the boat

Mel and her husband Chris each prepared three lessons separately, without telling the other. Mel's first came from her father, Bob, on his 56th anniversary with her mother, Marsha: marriage is like sailing; when it's stormy 'you put on a life jacket and a safety harness and you go,' because 'we started out the journey together, we want to finish it together.' Mel admits she has too often been 'in a raft with a bunch of friends' complaining about Chris instead of being in the boat with him.

• Couples quietly quit before they break up

Mel's warning is that when things get rocky or boring, people drift into coexisting like roommates without noticing they've stopped trying. No advice works if you're not committed to making it work. Chris adds a check: picture yourself at 85 on a porch rocking next to this person, and if you've drifted, ask why you got in the boat in the first place.

• Lesson one (Chris): have your partner in mind

Chris's lesson was about flowers. During a hard stretch, he thought a clean house, a cooked dinner and ready kids were enough. Mel said 'you can't even buy me flowers,' which made him realize that despite knowing how much she loves them, it had never occurred to him to buy or cut some for her. It's not about the flowers but whether, in a busy week, your partner thought about you.

• Separate boats lead to the 'me' stage

Mel cites a model from her therapist: a 'me' stage, a 'we' stage and a deeply connected stage where you hold the other person in mind. With Mel on the road 150 days a year giving keynotes and Chris as stay-at-home dad, both felt unseen, rowing hard in separate boats. They spent years fighting about dishes and dogs and 'who's on first' while ignoring whether each had the other in mind.

• Lesson two (Mel): love the person, not the potential

Mel says the biggest relief in their marriage is that Chris doesn't pressure her to change: he gets up an hour and a half earlier and closes the curtains so she can sleep, doesn't shame her for not skiing or golfing, and tolerates her being messy, loud and late. That acceptance makes her want to be better. She once resented his introversion and wished he were the life of the party; he jokes he is, 'just on a little quieter note.'

• Acceptance isn't tolerating bad behavior

Mel distinguishes asking a partner to learn skills, such as cooking, picking up or putting the toilet seat down, from pressuring them to change their fundamental nature. She says unconditional love doesn't mean unconditional tolerance: if someone is abusive or disrespectful, explaining it away means you're chasing potential and not seeing who they actually are.

• Lesson two (Chris): talk about the roles you think you're playing

At their wedding, friends called Mel the tornado and Chris the rock. Mel heard 'rock' as the foundation; Chris heard boring and later equated being a good rock with earning money, so when he didn't, he felt like a failure. About ten years ago they deliberately split roles, with Mel on career and money and Chris on family, which he calls the best decision they made.

• Money creates a silent power dynamic

They've always had one joint account; Mel says separate pots breed resentment and force no conversations. But whoever earned more seemed to have more power, and when Mel became the breadwinner she caught herself adopting a 'chauvinistic' mindset that she got to make the call. She argues primary caregiving has massive economic value that should be credited. Chris reframes it: for him it was never about power but about contribution.

• Lesson three (Mel): assume good intent

Remind yourself of the goodness that made you choose this person; if a dish is left in the sink, assume he was busy and meant to come back to it. Mel calls it a skill that leaves no room for resentment. When behavior genuinely needs to change, though, explain its impact rather than labeling the person.

• Lesson three (Chris): ten seconds of eye contact

Even when they were aligned on logistics, Chris felt they were ships passing. Starting that year, he stops Mel in the kitchen, puts his hands on her shoulders and looks into her eyes for 10-15 seconds. Mel likens it to what psychologists call refueling, a child running back to a caregiver on the playground before heading back to the swings.

EXAMPLES

• The financial collapse of 2007-2008

Chris's restaurant, started with best friends partly so he could be home more than his own traveling father, struggled when the financial crisis hit. They had jointly taken a home equity line, maxed out credit cards and liquidated a 401(k) and the kids' college savings. Checks bounced and they couldn't pay for town soccer. The restaurant hadn't paid Chris in six months when he left.

• Passed out from bourbon

Mel says both were drinking heavily then; their oldest, Sawyer, now 25, remembers coming downstairs to find them asleep in living room chairs after drinking. Chris was in 'freeze' while Mel channeled anger into earning, from a weekend radio show to a 5-day-a-week show in Orlando and odd jobs.

• The cardboard boxes 'middle finger'

Mel stacks unpacked boxes by the door instead of flattening them. After repeated fights, Chris sat her down and said every stacked box felt like her giving him the middle finger, a sign he was the maid and his requests didn't matter. Because he explained the impact without calling her a slob, the boxes took on a new meaning and she changed.

- **Mel's fly-fishing lie**
  On their first conversation, realizing Chris was a serious outdoorsman, Mel claimed she fly-fished, though she'd never held a fly rod; she grew up fishing and cleaning salmon, but not that. She used it to show her old habit of reshaping herself to match whomever she dated.
- **Where the role swap led Chris**
  Mel notes Chris would never have chosen it, but becoming the primary parent led him to a master's in spiritual psychology, starting a men's retreat and becoming a death doula. Both daughters, she says, want someone just like Dad.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Name your 'flowers'**
  Tell your partner one small, specific thing that shows they had you in mind; Mel's request is grabbing a cheap bunch of tulips at the grocery store. Ask what theirs is. Chris now picks up dog poop daily so the dogs aren't only Mel's job.
- **Put money conversations in the same category**
  If the power dynamic around money bothers you, raise it as a direct request. Mel says unspoken resentment about it built for years because 'when you don't talk about something, your emotions start doing the talking for you.'
- **Describe the impact, not the flaw**
  When a petty habit keeps causing fights, explain how it makes you feel, like disrespected or like the maid. Mel says nearly every small argument is really about not feeling considered or respected.
- **Try the shoulders-and-eyes greeting tonight**
  Hold your partner at arm's length by the shoulders, look them in the eye and smile, then end with a kiss, a hug or 'I love you.' It's different from a passing hug that one person ends early.

“The Secret of a Happy Relationship…” the Best Advice That I Have Received

Guest: Matthew Hussey
Date: 2024-08-08 · Duration: 1:00:49
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLKZz6vA0QQ

KEYPOINTS

• Over time we start treating a partner's wonderful qualities as normal

Hussey says one of the biggest relationship mistakes is that what is special about a partner, the things that make life easier, more joyful and supported, starts to feel like what anyone would do. People often find out otherwise only when they date someone else. He compares it to frequent upgrades: someone who always flies in a fancy seat stops noticing it, while a first-timer stays up trying the hand cream.

• We assume we know everything about our partner, and stop asking

What a partner tells us reflects the questions we ask, and many couples stopped asking ten years ago. You may know who they were then, not now. Quoting Proust, that real discovery is 'seeing with new eyes' rather than seeking new landscapes, he notes that an affair is a search for a new landscape. The alternative is to see your partner as an enigma again.

• Stay fresh for yourself so you can be fresh for your partner

When we stop growing, by reading, taking up new activities or meeting ideas that challenge us, we bring a stale version of ourselves to dinner. Hussey says that after 17 years of coaching he could coast, but he would go stale, so he keeps reading and talking to people. Mel, at 55, took this as the key point: whether single or partnered, start with what you bring to the table.

• Insecurity sends us looking for partners who make us look good

When we feel we aren't enough, we look for superficial markers of impressiveness, like looks, height, money, status or Instagram appeal, the way unpopular kids at school avoided being seen with other unpopular kids. When you feel enough, you focus on how someone makes you feel: seen, at home, having a great time.

• A partner is a hotel room, not your home

His analogy: you can enjoy a lovely hotel without thinking it's your value. Your home is the self you come back to each night: resilience, wisdom, generosity, connection. People who lose a dazzling partner often feel they've lost their worth because they confused the two. Mel adds that after 28 years with Chris, the right person 'very quickly just starts to feel like home.'

• The right person has to be both right and ready

Answering Carmen, back home after two happy years working in Europe for a partner who wouldn't move, he says different visions for the present or future are a compatibility issue, however good the relationship. 'Right person, wrong time' is science fiction. He asks for compassion for the partner who never chose this dream, and for honesty about whether you'll resent the compromise. If you choose Plan B, make it the new Plan A, or resentment follows.

• Ask whether a habit costs you a real need or just isn't how you'd do it

For video games, weekend golf or a night owl paired with a morning person, the test is whether it denies you something crucial, like quality time, or whether you're annoyed they aren't like you. If it's a need, say so: you respect their hobby, here is what you aren't getting, and then ask what they need.

• Meet deal-breakers with compassion first, then honesty about your needs

With a partner who has let themselves go, or struggles with drinking or anger, he starts from the fact that changing it is as hard for them as your hardest thing is for you. Then ask whether, taken to its extreme, it's compatible with loving yourself. Name the impact, including a 'delayed heartbreak' if their health suffers, and offer support or therapy rather than silently judging or venting to friends.

• When you outgrow a partner, the issue isn't the books or seminars

For Heather, who resents dragging a partner along on her growth, he says not reading the same books or doing self-development work is irrelevant on its own. Someone raised on a farm may have learned just as much. What matters is whether they can apologise and become aware of destructive behaviour through conversation. If your concerns are met with disinterest, judgment or contempt, you don't have a teammate.

• Your story about being single can become your biggest enemy

Loneliness, he says, is like chronic emotional pain. What makes it unbearable is the story you attach: that you're undesirable, always the person before the person they marry, that the good ones are taken. Get happy enough on your own that you can say no to the wrong people quickly, because you'll find the right one faster that way.

EXAMPLES

• The woman who couldn't get over a man for 30 years

A caller in her 70s on morning TV said she couldn't get over a man she'd dated on and off. He had stopped calling 30 years earlier. Hussey uses it, along with Titanic's century-old Rose pining for a five-day romance, to show how retelling a story gives it importance it never deserved.

• Mel's cardboard box pyramid

Mel, who says she has bad ADHD, stacked delivery boxes by the door instead of flattening them, and fights with Chris went nowhere. When he explained that the stack made him feel like her maid, she understood his unmet need for acts of service and changed. She now calls herself the best box flattener on the planet.

• The ski trip Mel skipped

Chris went skiing for a week with their son while Mel stayed home alone happily. It didn't cost the marriage anything because their needs for connection were being met in other ways, which is Hussey's distinction in practice.

• Dating is Chutes and Ladders, not Monopoly

Effort reliably pays off with weight, sales or savings, but you could date every day for a year and not find love. You climb to date five, get ghosted, and slide back down with less time and more self-doubt. He quotes Mitch Albom: if you don't like the culture, be brave enough to create your own.

• The IKEA voice note

Instead of replying to a 'you up?' text in kind, send a voice note: you're at IKEA with your sister buying furniture you're dreading assembling. Your voice reaches a different sense and creates intimacy even if they're talking to three other people.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Build a 'portfolio' for meeting people

Apps are one investment, not the only one. Find opportunity-generating friends. Join a running club with 50 people rather than running alone. Switch gym classes, or try a different church one weekend. New communities bring 10, 20 or 30 new options, plus invitations to parties where someone's sibling is single.

• Model first, then mirror

Lead with the energy you want, like a good-morning message, but keep a standard: if you're always the one initiating, back off. Hussey's long-standing rule, which he admits is flawed, is to invest based on how much they invest, not how much you like them.

• Name inconsistency calmly

If someone vanishes for two weeks and then asks for a Saturday movie, don't play it cool. Say you value consistency and assumed you weren't on the same page. Be warm in how you raise it and ruthless with your energy if nothing changes: 'this train is leaving.'

• Go slow to go fast

Don't rush into something precarious just to have news at Thanksgiving. Watch how dating apps and Instagram pull you into dopamine loops instead of real connection.

The Most Important Sex Advice No One Ever Told You: Revamp Your Sex Life in 10 Minutes

Guest: Dr. Rena Malik
Date: 2024-06-13 · Duration: 1:18:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUPkME8y7zc

KEYPOINTS

• Sexual health is health, not a side topic

Dr. Rena Malik, a urologist and pelvic surgeon, defines sexual health as psychological, emotional and physical well-being tied to giving and receiving pleasure. Problems in the bedroom often create shame, and they can also be an early signal of other disease. Men with erectile dysfunction are more likely to have heart disease, and ED often shows up before the heart problems do. She notes there's no equivalent data for women yet, though she suspects the pattern is similar.

• Treat sex as adult play, not a performance

Movies show couples tearing off clothes and climaxing within seconds. Malik says real sex is awkward, noisy, sometimes funny and sometimes mediocre, and all of that is normal. Long-term couples tend to fall into a script that works and then gets boring. Thinking of sex as the one time adults get to play makes room to try new things.

• There is no frequency benchmark you have to hit

On average Americans have sex about 52 times a year. That's roughly 80 times a year for 20-year-olds and about 20 for 60-year-olds. Researchers often define a sexless marriage as fewer than 10 times a year. Malik's point is that the only measure that counts is whether both partners are satisfied.

• Penetrative sex is shorter than people think, and women need more time

In stopwatch studies of couples around the world, intercourse averaged about 5.3 to 5.7 minutes, with a range from 0.1 to 53 minutes. Men guess it lasts about 8 minutes, think it should last about 16, and women say they want about 25. Women's average time to orgasm with a partner is about 12 to 14 minutes, falling to about 8 with masturbation.

• Arousal is a physical process that takes time

The vagina is normally about 3–3.5 cm wide and 8–9 cm long, and it can roughly double in both during arousal. The labia minora and clitoris engorge, and the cervix lifts out of the way. For some women this can take up to 25 minutes, which is why Malik calls foreplay part of sex rather than a warm-up. Lubrication doesn't always match arousal: bodies can lubricate without desire, or be aroused but dry because of genetics or menopause.

• Most women need clitoral stimulation, and the G-spot is a zone, not a button

About 85% of women need some clitoral stimulation to orgasm. The clitoris develops from the same embryonic tissue as the penis, with matching erectile bodies. It's the only organ that exists purely for pleasure, and recent biopsy work puts its nerve endings above 10,000, up from the old estimate of 8,000. The G-spot is an area about 2–3 cm inside on the front wall, near the Skene's glands (the 'female prostate').

• Squirting and female ejaculation are different, and neither is a must

Female ejaculation is a small amount of thicker, whitish fluid from the Skene's glands that contains PSA. Squirting is a larger gush from the urethra. Tests show it's very dilute, close to urine but not urine, with some PSA mixed in. Malik says it seems linked to how aroused a woman is, but it doesn't matter whether you do it.

• Menopause changes sexual and urinary health, and it's treatable

When estrogen drops, lubrication falls, the labia and tissue around the urethra shrink, and the vagina loses protective lactobacilli, so its pH rises. That raises the risk of infections and recurrent UTIs. Malik, a certified menopause practitioner, says vaginal estrogen can prevent and even resolve recurrent UTIs.

• Pain during sex is never something you should just put up with

Being told to have a glass of wine and relax is bad advice. Pain often comes from rushing before the body is ready. It can also point to pelvic floor dysfunction, endometriosis or another medical issue. If slowing down and using lubricant doesn't fix it, see a doctor. If your doctor never asks about pleasure or orgasm, Malik says to find one who will.

• Desire often comes after you start

In long-term relationships, desire is often responsive rather than spontaneous. You may not be in the mood when touching starts, then warm up. Malik compares it to the gym: you don't always want to go, but you're glad once you're there. Both partners should initiate. If one person always initiates and keeps hearing no, ask whether it's the timing or the approach.

EXAMPLES

• The ejaculation and prostate cancer study

Malik describes a study that followed about 40,000 men for nearly 20 years. Men who ejaculated 21 or more times a month were about a third less likely to develop prostate cancer than men who ejaculated 4–7 times a month, even after adjusting for smoking, diet and health. Frequent ejaculation probably also reflects better health, relationships and comfort, which a study can't fully control for.

• Morning testosterone and 'sex before dinner'

Testosterone, the hormone of desire, peaks between about 7 and 10 a.m., more so in men. Mel and Chris text each other times like '2 o'clock' to make sex something to look forward to. Malik's date-night tip is to have sex first, before the heavy meal, the drinks and the drive-home argument.

• The 10,000 nerve endings and the research gap

Mel cited roughly half a million papers on the penis against about 2,000 on the clitoris. The updated nerve count only arrived in the last few years.

• ED medications and their real risks

PDE5 inhibitors help about 60–70% of men by keeping blood flow going longer. Sildenafil (Viagra) is taken about an hour

before sex and works for up to about four hours. Tadalafil (Cialis) lasts about 36 hours. Malik says erections lasting over four hours are extremely rare when the drugs are taken as prescribed. When men come in with ED, she screens for high cholesterol and pre-diabetes and often finds them.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Have the sex talk side by side, outside the bedroom**

  Talk on a walk or in the car so you aren't staring at each other. Expect several awkward conversations, not one. Keep it positive with lines like 'I'd really like it if you tried this, it turns me on' instead of 'I hate when you do that.'

- **Get a baseline with a mirror**

  Look up vulvar anatomy and then look at your own: the clitoris and hood, the urethra and the vaginal canal, which should look pink and healthy. Knowing your normal lets you spot skin conditions or changes later.

- **Watch for mental health, medication and porn effects**

  About 30–60% of people with depression or anxiety have some sexual dysfunction, and SSRIs in particular often cause sexual side effects. Porn seen at a young age sets fake expectations about time, volume and how people react, so Malik says kids need to be told it isn't real. For people who feel shut down, she points to sensate focus: touch each other's bodies without touching genitals, then build from there.

- **Boost testosterone the low-tech way**

  Signs of low testosterone include low libido, ED, brain fog, low mood, fatigue and trouble building muscle. Hormones alone explain only about 3% of ED. Malik's three natural levers are more than 7 hours of good sleep (with no late caffeine, alcohol or screens, and treated sleep apnea), lower-body resistance training like squats and deadlifts, and a Mediterranean-style diet with healthy fats. She says low-fat diets can hurt testosterone, since it's made from cholesterol.

The Brutal Truth About Relationships You Need to Hear

Guest: Matthew Hussey
Date: 2024-05-27 · Duration: 0:45:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cf4ANNIRjdk

KEYPOINTS

• Four levels of a relationship: admiration, mutual attraction, commitment, compatibility

Dating coach Matthew Hussey's framework starts with admiration: finding someone attractive or impressive, often from afar, with nothing mutual. Next comes mutual attraction, or shared chemistry. Then commitment, where both people say yes to each other. Finally compatibility, meaning whether it actually works day to day. Mel's takeaway is that if you don't know which level you're at, no wonder the relationship isn't working.

• Level two is the most dangerous

Mutual attraction feels like the holy grail because many people rarely experience it, so it seems worth doing anything for. Hussey points out that connection and sexual chemistry aren't actually rare. A common story he hears is "We can talk about anything... but they're not ready for a relationship." That's level two, not three, and there's a world of difference.

• Chemistry is a plot of land; a relationship needs two builders

Great chemistry is like an amazing plot of land where you can picture what might be built. Commitment means two builders creating a castle together, with secret rooms only the two of you know. If the other builder is AWOL and just wants an experience, you're building alone. Level two is an experience; level three is a relationship.

• Over-giving doesn't earn commitment

Many people hope that if they make themselves indispensable, the other person will see their value and give back. Instead, Hussey says, the other person learns there's no cost to receiving, so your giving is taken for granted. Months or years later you ask "What is this?" and hear "I don't know." He says every great relationship is formed through hard conversations, and those can be elegant rather than aggressive.

• Level two can last for years inside a long relationship

Level two isn't just month-three limbo. It covers any partner who can't give the level of commitment you need, such as a partner of three years who won't decide on marriage or children, or someone you live with who doesn't want to marry. Hussey says nobody cares about your time as much as you do, and expecting them to is a recipe for wasting your life.

• The hardest conversation is the one with yourself

We avoid talking to our partner because we haven't first admitted to ourselves what matters most and what we're prepared to lose. To change, Hussey says, make change necessary. That might mean a 35- or 37-year-old finally getting honest about how much having children matters to them. Without that clarity, any script you use is just a tactic, not a standard.

• The "one-day wager" rarely pays off

Staking your time and energy on someone eventually becoming what you need is a dangerous assumption. People can change, but through hard conversations and visible, continuing progress. Hussey quotes Goethe: consider how hard it is to change yourself, and you'll see how foolish it is to think you can change someone else. He uses his own lifelong struggle with food as proof of how hard change is even when you're motivated.

• Love isn't enough without compatibility

Level four asks whether your fundamental needs are met, as opposed to "luxury items." Mel says incompatibility shows up as constant friction: battles over restaurants and Saturday plans, irritation, walking on eggshells. With a compatible partner, fights pass quickly. She says she has big ADHD energy and is hard-driving, while her husband Chris is easygoing, and she knew he was the one because she could be exactly who she is.

• Self-love is a job, not a feeling

Of 8 billion people, you're the only one charged with taking care of this one human. Seen that way, comparison and self-judgment make no sense; you don't need to like yourself to love yourself. Ask why you'd let anyone who keeps you in limbo or confused about your worth near the person you're responsible for. He says he revisits this monthly, sometimes weekly.

EXAMPLES

• The script for moving from level two to three

In a role-play with Mel, Hussey says something like: "I'm investing a lot of time, energy and intimacy that I wouldn't be giving if I were still seeing other people, and I wanted to know if you're in the same place. If not, that's totally okay, but I'd need to re-evaluate how much I give." When Mel, playing his date, said she'd just left a long relationship, he wished her well and stepped back without resentment.

• Why the script works

Mel noticed he said he enjoyed the time together rather than "I really like you," so he wasn't fishing for reassurance. He talked about his energy rather than demanding monogamy or a commitment. The subtext is "I know what I have to offer is incredible." Own the time and intimacy you chose to give, and don't make the other person a villain or yourself a loser.

• Audrey's text

After meeting his now-wife Audrey in London, Hussey went back to Los Angeles and gradually faded from calls to sparse texts. Weeks later he texted that he missed her. She replied: "I hope you're well. To be honest, when I get a message like this from you I'm not really sure what to say. We haven't really felt that close for a while now. (Rightly or wrongly, this comes across like a bid for attention.)" She stayed warm, named the gap between his words and actions, refused to mirror him, and added humility with "rightly or wrongly."

• The woman who missed her window

At one of Hussey's retreats, a woman collapsed on the floor, inconsolable. For ten years her husband said he wasn't sure about children, and she kept putting off the conversation with him and with herself. She missed her biological window, and then he left anyway. Hussey describes years of grief in people he's seen go through this.

- **The friend who always dated dancers**

A married friend of Hussey's had always dated dancers, but his wife is "the least coordinated person I've ever met." His response: he dances maybe twice a year, while she's an amazing partner, mother and best friend every day. It shows the difference between preferences and fundamental needs.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Know when it's time for the talk**

If you're giving more than you're comfortable with, unsure where you stand, or checking whether they're active on Hinge, have the conversation you've been avoiding. Mel says it's not their fault they don't want commitment; it's on you if you keep showing up for something that isn't good for you.

- **Watch for love-bombing after you call it out**

Some people respond to a boundary with a charm offensive: calling, flying out, gushing. That's still level two until the commitment conversation actually happens. And there's no such thing as "deep level two."

- **Let standards create attraction**

Living by clear standards is itself attractive. Before you ask whether someone will change, ask whether you've actually told them, whether there's been progress, and whether it's continuing. If you're only venting to friends, you aren't there yet.

Why Do I Love the Way That I Love: The 4 Attachment Styles Explained

Guest: Thais Gibson
Date: 2023-12-18 · Duration: 1:15:14
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIkspM20BeY

KEYPOINTS

• An attachment style is your subconscious rulebook for love

Thais Gibson, author of Learning Love and founder of the Personal Development School, defines attachment style as the subconscious set of rules you have for love and connection: your beliefs, needs, expectations, communication and boundaries. You're not born with one. It's conditioned, mostly between ages zero and two, through 'repetition plus emotion,' and she says it can be reconditioned.

• Children take everything personally, and those meanings spread

A child with a critical parent can't think 'my parent communicates poorly.' They conclude 'I'm not good enough' or 'I'm bad.' Gibson says those beliefs then shape how you see yourself at work, in friendships and with money, which is why Mel ties this episode to New Year's goals.

• Willpower can't overpower the subconscious

Gibson says the subconscious drives roughly 95% to 97% of beliefs, thoughts, emotions and actions, and the conscious mind can't simply override it. That explains why you can intend to skip the wine or not snap at your partner and fall back into the old pattern anyway, like 'putting the gas and the brakes on at the same time.' She compares the conscious mind to the tip of an iceberg, with the subconscious just below the surface and still reachable.

• Secure: needs met consistently in childhood

When a crying child's parents reliably came to figure out what was wrong, the child learned it's safe to express needs and rely on people, and that they're loved for who they are. Gibson says secure adults trust, communicate, resolve things quickly and have by far the best relationship success. Research puts secure attachment around 51%, but Gibson doubts it because the figure is self-reported, and many clients who call themselves secure clearly aren't.

• Anxious preoccupied: warm but inconsistent care

A common example is loving parents working 12-hour days while the child stays at daycare or with cooler grandparents. The core wounds are fearing abandonment, being alone, being excluded, being rejected and not being good enough. These adults may panic when a partner pulls away and 'hold on so tight the sand slips through their fingers.' They need reassurance, validation, consistency and closeness. Gibson calls them the sweetest people, but notes that by abandoning themselves to please others, they keep the old wound alive.

• Dismissive avoidant: emotional neglect leads to hyper-independence

The neglect can be obvious, like no food or structure, or subtle, like 'toughen up' and nobody asking how school went. The core wounds are 'I am defective,' shame, feeling trapped or weak when relying on others, and not belonging. These adults can be charming early on but pull away like a turtle into its shell when things get real. They often soothe with binge-watching, food or video games, and are quietly very sensitive to criticism.

• Fearful avoidant: chaos at home leads to push-pull

Growing up with unpredictable love, like an alcoholic parent who is affectionate one day and angry the next, a bitter divorce or a narcissistic parent, creates a struggle with trust and constant hypervigilance. Gibson says this style carries the most core wounds, mixing anxious fears with avoidant ones. These adults are often high achievers who show up brilliantly in a crisis. Unlike anxious types, they can't hold needs in forever and eventually erupt.

• Insecure styles reenact their wounds against themselves

Gibson says what keeps childhood wounds alive 30 years later is that you replay them in your relationship with yourself every day. Anxious people abandon their own needs, take on coworkers' work and fall behind, and let career, money and personal growth slide in favor of relationships.

• Why affirmations fall short, in her view

Gibson says the subconscious doesn't process language: tell someone not to picture a pink elephant and they will. It responds to emotion and imagery. Her three ingredients for reprogramming are repetition, emotion and imagery, and the more of each, the faster it works.

EXAMPLES

• Mel realizes she may be fearful avoidant

Mel came in assuming she was anxious preoccupied. When Gibson described chaotic homes, including narcissistic behavior, Mel said 'ding ding ding' and wondered whether she's actually fearful avoidant. On hearing that anxious and dismissive people often pair up, she joked that Gibson had just summed up three years of marriage therapy with Chris.

• Kendall, the 'human blankie'

Mel believes her daughter Kendall is anxiously attached. When anything feels uncertain, one call becomes a second and a third. Mel also wonders whether daycare for her two daughters contributed. Gibson says repeated calls and texts, or checking someone's location when they don't answer, are classic signs of anxious attachment.

• Gibson's lesson as a fearful avoidant wife

Early in her marriage, Gibson noticed she still expected her husband to just know her needs. She held them in, then became critical or cutting. Her healing involved communicating needs proactively and considering herself as much as everyone else.

• Shay's turnaround

A listener named Shay said therapy and antidepressants hadn't helped her feel less emotionally stunted. Learning about core wounds from Gibson finally explained why old pain kept showing up in her daily life, and she says it changed her life.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **In the moment, find the need behind the urge**

  Before sending a 15th text, ask what you actually want from the person: encouragement, certainty, reassurance. Then give it to yourself. Write three wins, journal about why you'll be okay, or create a schedule for certainty. Gibson says it feels mechanical at first, starts feeling comfortable around day 7, and by day 21 many anxious clients say they enjoy time alone.

- **The 21-day core-wound exercise**

  Locate your style. Name the wound that bothers you most (abandonment for anxious, betrayal for fearful avoidant, 'I am defective' for dismissive avoidant). If unsure, ask what worst case you fear when triggered. State the opposite, like 'I am good enough.' In a relaxed state, recall 10 memories that prove it, such as walking across the stage at graduation, and feel and see each one. Repeat daily for 21 days.

- **Notice how a partner shifts you**

  Gibson says fearful avoidants have both anxious and avoidant sides, so dating someone more avoidant pushes them toward the anxious side, and vice versa. Anxious and dismissive types often end up together. Seeing that pattern helps you tell your wounds apart from your partner's behavior.

“I Can’t Stop Stalking My Ex Online. How Do I Stop?” How To Move On For Good | Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-10-23 · Duration: 0:36:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQTCphkl3oA

KEYPOINTS

• Treat checking an ex's social media like an addiction: block them everywhere

Listener Patty admitted she still checks her ex's feeds seven years after the split. Mel's blunt answer: you're chasing a dopamine hit from curiosity, then stalking, then feeling bad, the same build-up-and-crash loop as drinking or gambling. Because you can't trust yourself, take away access. A quick search on air confirmed that once you block someone you can't see their profile, so block them on every platform.

• Recruit friends to protect the boundary

Mel says to tell friends you've blocked your ex and ask them not to show you posts or bring the person up. Her core line: when your past is in your present, you can't create a different future, and seven years of watching is why Patty doesn't have the future she wants.

• The biggest mental health gains often come from the neck down

Asked what she'd adopted from 100 episodes, Mel says experts repeatedly point to physical habits and nervous-system care. Hers: get straight out of bed, make it, get outside into bright light to reset her circadian rhythm, and walk without listening to anything.

• Mel sees signs and synchronicities as evidence of a greater force

Asked whether she believes in God, Mel says she believes in a higher power she can't define, in a good force connecting everyone, and in signs (a song, a squirrel crossing the road, unexpected connections) that suggest you're on the right path. Her team calls this 'the portal is open.' It takes courage to believe you're meant for something and the clarity to notice these signs.

• Mel's view of death: being born into another world

She stresses she doesn't know, but compares it to a baby in the womb, warm and safe with food on tap, with no concept of the world it's about to be born into. She thinks death may be the same. Raised Methodist, she views Jesus as a historical figure and believes the ability to connect with something deeper lies inside each person.

• Pushy parents of your kids' friends are usually acting from insecurity

In late elementary and middle school, friend packs splinter, and one parent often lobbies to get their child invited to the three-person sleepover. Mel argues this pushes a child where they're not wanted, and that you'd be better off helping your kid meet people who are better friends. With the parent, be direct: you won't arrange your kids' friendships, and no one is obligated to invite everyone.

• After a baby, lead with affection and conversation, not sex

To Skip, who feels neglected after his wife gave birth, Mel says intimacy doesn't require penetration. Birth is a major physical event, and new mothers may fear pain, torn stitches or another pregnancy, and may feel unsexy or have the baby blues. Once she's healed, try a bath together or foot rubs, say you miss her, and ask how you can be close in ways that don't hurt or worry her.

• Promoting your business is an act of service

To Amarie, embarrassed to market her business, Mel says hiding it out of fear of what friends think is selfish, because people who need you can't find you. If describing your work honestly sounds like bragging, that means you're that good.

• Consuming personal-development content isn't doing the work

For someone doing 'all the work' and still feeling unworthy, Mel suggests it may have become entertainment, as it once was for her. Real work means changing habits, examining childhood patterns behind unworthiness, and caring for your nervous system with things like cold exposure and vagus nerve toning. Worth, like love, is created internally and won't come from a job or a partner.

EXAMPLES

• Lessons Mel adopted from guests

From Dr. Russell Kennedy: anxiety as an 'alarm' that rings when the younger you feels alone, soothed by telling yourself it will be okay. From Dr. Mindy Pelz: fasting 12 to 16 hours a day for 21 days, then taking seven days off, which she ties to being a woman. From Dana K. White: instead of piles and baskets, carry each stray item straight to where it belongs, and own less.

• Kendall, a tuna sandwich and the Newport Folk Festival

Mel's daughter Kendall, an aspiring touring singer-songwriter, froze backstage at the Newport Folk Festival for six hours feeling like an impostor, then decided to lead with humour. She befriended a man named Phil over a 'sloppy tuna salad sandwich' without realising he was a highly respected keyboardist and producer. Watching his warm-up, she silently wished he'd play Bonnie Raitt's "I Can't Make You Love Me," and he switched to it. He said he hadn't played it in a warm-up in a decade. They performed it together the next night, leading other bands to ask her for sessions.

• How Mel learned she was dyslexic

The way many adults do: one of her kids was diagnosed, it looked familiar, and her own neuropsych evaluation confirmed it.

• The 'hip replacement' comparison

Mel asks whether you'd want to test a partner's new titanium hip the moment the anaesthetic wore off, to show why rushing sex after childbirth lands badly. She notes it differs whether it's been six weeks or six months with a breastfeeding baby in the bed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Write a day in the life of the worthy you

On paper, describe when that version of you wakes up, whether they exercise, journal or check their phone, and what projects, spiritual practice, friends and hobbies they have. Then do those things even while you feel unworthy. Mel calls this behavioural activation, and says the actions become proof that feeds itself.

- **Do a social media audit for anyone you're stuck on**

  If seeing someone's posts keeps you in an emotional loop, remove access first and process feelings second. Willpower alone won't beat that cycle.

- **Let older kids own their friendships**

  Once kids have phones and make their own plans, step back. The bigger deal you make of an exclusion, the worse they'll feel.

How to Have the Best Sex of Your Life: Even if You Are Tired, Single… or Not in the Mood

Guest: Dr. Emily Morse
Date: 2023-10-19 · Duration: 1:30:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqPgnUvgJB0

KEYPOINTS

• Great sex doesn't happen automatically; believing it should is the core myth

Dr. Emily Morse, who has hosted Sex With Emily for almost 18 years and holds a PhD in human sexuality, says couples expect the new-relationship energy of the early days to last on its own, then quietly suffer through disappointing sex because they don't know how to ask for something different. Her mission is making sex as normal to talk about as finances or who walks the dog.

• Stress, trauma and shame are the three 'pleasure thieves'

When listeners sent questions, the recurring blockers were shame, overthinking and not being able to ask. Dr. Emily groups them as stress, trauma and shame. On stress she is blunt: you can't live with spiked cortisol and also feel arousal; anxiety and desire cancel each other out, so sex can't be siloed from overall physical and mental health.

• Desire can be spontaneous or responsive, and neither is broken

Her shorthand is that penis owners tend to be 'frying pans' and vulva owners 'slow cookers.' Many women aren't instantly aroused when a partner is, feel broken, acquiesce anyway, and end up in roughly seven minutes of sex built around the partner's orgasm. She says it typically takes vulva owners 20 to 40 minutes to orgasm with a partner, so foreplay is a requirement, not a nice extra.

• Most women don't orgasm from penetration alone

Dr. Emily says only about 20% of vulva owners orgasm through penetration; the most sensitive tissue is external. She also notes the clitoral network is now described as having around 12,000 nerve endings, up from the 8,000 she quoted for 20 years, which she contrasts with about 4,000 in a circumcised penis. She blames the gap on women's bodies being understudied and on sex education, noting only about 17 US states require it to be medically accurate.

• Solo sex is the foundation, not a substitute

She calls masturbation solo sex and the 'most primary relationship': it builds the owner's manual you later share with a partner. Waiting for a partner hands away your power, because you are responsible for your own pleasure. It also counters shame and the negative body talk that keeps people from being present in bed. She herself didn't orgasm until getting a vibrator in her mid-20s.

• Use the three T's for awkward conversations: timing, turf, tone

Timing: talk when both of you are relaxed, not mid-conflict. Turf: outside the bedroom, which stays for sleep and sex; a walk or car ride works because there's intimacy without eye contact. Tone: curious, compassionate and framed as 'this is about us.' She warns it may not go well at first; after decades of silence a partner often hears criticism, so keep returning to wanting more pleasure together.

• Sexual intelligence rests on five pillars

Embodiment (am I present or thinking about an unsent email?), health (exercise, food, and medications such as SSRIs, blood pressure drugs and the birth control pill that can affect arousal and orgasm, plus unprocessed big-T or little-t trauma), collaboration with a partner, self-acceptance of your body as it is now, and self-knowledge of what turns you on and off. She says it's a lifelong practice, not something you check off.

• Breath and the senses pull you out of your head

Her in-the-moment tool is a five-count inhale with a Kegel squeeze, then a slow release, repeated until grounded; she notes many people hold their breath or breathe shallowly during sex. A discreet alternative is cycling through the five senses, since you can't be in the past or future while noticing what you see, feel and smell.

• Low libido can be worked with like exercise

Dr. Emily says it's okay not to feel desire, and she hears this from women in their 20s as well as in perimenopause and menopause. Mel's summary of her approach: set yourself up for intimacy without waiting to feel like it. Scheduling sex at a realistic time removes the nightly guilt of the higher- and lower-desire partner dance.

• Orgasm doesn't have to be the goal

She defines hot sex as consensual, mutually pleasurable, communicative and safe. Centering connection, touch and intimacy instead of 'is it going to happen?' often makes orgasm more likely. She also suggests mining your 'sexual DNA,' the circumstances of your most memorable experiences, and noticing core desires, such as feeling cherished or adored, which can trace back to childhood needs.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's eye-mask problem

Mel describes planning a great night in the morning, then finding Chris asleep within five minutes, eye mask and retainer on, while she is too tired. She also admits waiting until she hears his truck leave the driveway before using a vibrator, and a hard 'no' about being watched, which Dr. Emily calls extremely common.

• 3,500 questions in 24 hours

Mel asked her audience what they wanted from a new chapter of their sex life and received 3,500 questions within a day, ranging from wanting to feel good about a post-baby body to feeling 'touched out, talked out and outdone.'

• The compliment sandwich script

Open with something you loved ('I really liked how we slowly made out last time'), add the request ('foreplay and touch are a big part of my arousal'), close positively ('I think we'd both have more pleasure'), ask how they feel, then listen without getting defensive.

- **Rapid-fire listener cases**

  A woman raised Catholic: practice mindful solo sex, returning to bodily sensations. A divorcee after 30 years of marriage: say yes to every social invitation to practice connecting. Someone a year sober: go slow, tell partners it's a new chapter, and make stopping okay. Someone who can't handle intense pleasure: practice letting the feeling move through you alone first.

- **Pain and trauma signals**

  Dr. Emily lists dissociation, numbness, avoidance, flashbacks and pain, including vaginismus and vulvodynia, as possible signs of unresolved trauma, though not always caused by it. She says 85% of women will have pain during sex at some point, recommends a pelvic floor physical therapist, and is a fan of EMDR therapy for trauma.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Name a dry spell out loud**

  Dr. Emily says there are 'no sex police' and months without sex are common, but couples rarely acknowledge it. Mel and Chris went several months without sex during financial stress. Saying 'we're not having sex, it makes me sad, I want to reconnect' is the start of a new chapter.

- **Try the yes/no/maybe list**

  Dr. Emily offers a free list of about 80 activities, from kissing and cuddling to dirty talk and toys, that partners mark yes, no or maybe. Shared yeses become a starting menu; Mel plans to bring it to date night.

- **Flip the script on shame**

  If casual sex or pleasure brings up shame, write down the exact messages ('I'll go to hell'), question whether they're true, imagine the opposite, and surround yourself with sex-positive voices.

- **Her five bottom-line tips**

  Communicate ('communication is lubrication'), practice solo sex, try one new thing, prioritize sex with phone-free date nights that skip kids and work talk, and work on limiting beliefs. She adds a sixth: take the focus off orgasm.

If You Got Your Heart Broken, You Need To Hear This! | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-05-04 · Duration: 0:45:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qq3k1_jzxwo

KEYPOINTS

• The right decision and fear of the right decision feel different

Mel calls this the episode's biggest truth. Listener Katrina, who was dumped by her boyfriend of five years days before her 25th birthday and during her last year of law school, asked whether to leave Indianapolis. Mel told her it would be a short session because "you know the decision." The decision that's true for you is often the one that scares you most.

• Life-changing decisions aren't made in your analytical brain

Katrina thinks like a lawyer, but Mel says big decisions are felt in your heart and gut. Use your heart to know what's true, then use your analytical mind to plan when and how.

• Run toward something, not just away

Asked why she wanted to move, setting her ex aside, Katrina said it was 60% feeling called somewhere else and 40% needing to get away from memories of him on every hiking trail. She had wanted to move even before the breakup. Mel says framing a change as moving toward something gives you control of the story, and adds that you can always come back.

• How someone makes you feel outweighs how you feel about them

Mel's second truth is to give the most weight to how a person or place makes you feel. Katrina's ex made her feel rejected and disrespected. Indianapolis now makes her feel small, stuck and like she has stopped growing. That's the information to decide on.

• If someone doesn't want you, they aren't your person

Katrina said her ex was everything she wanted "except the fact that he didn't want me." Mel calls that the single most important quality. She sees hoping he'll return as handing him your self-worth, as if winning him back would prove you're enough. The only person you need to be worthy of is yourself.

• There are always signs, and owning them strengthens your intuition

Pressed by Mel, Katrina listed them: he cheated two years in. Weeks before the breakup, after a fight when some Mormon friends visited, he looked at her differently. He was distant over the Fourth of July weekend, after the guys in their friend group had all broken up with their girlfriends two weeks earlier. Mel says admitting the signs you ignored isn't weakness; it trains you to trust your instincts next time.

• Separate what ended from how it ended

Mel argues Katrina couldn't let go because of the injustice of how it happened: no warning and no honest conversation. As a person of principle, she deserved better. Getting angry about the disrespect, instead of agonising over whether to move, gave her back her power.

• If you hold yourself back, own it

Katrina felt guilty leaving her parents. Mel: they're adults who can fly or FaceTime, and they want you happy. You don't get to bet on yourself and then blame your parents. Most of the time you haven't even asked whether they'd be disappointed. People can be sad you live far away and still support you, as Mel's own parents do.

• You'll regret what you didn't do

Mel lists her own regrets: cheating on past boyfriends, how she treated friends, wasted opportunities in college and law school before she understood her childhood trauma. Still, she says the bigger regrets are the moves, degrees, trips and fresh starts we were too afraid to try.

EXAMPLES

• A new story about the ex

Mel rewrote Katrina's narrative: he wasn't everything she wanted. He cheated, was forgiven, then froze her out under pressure from his religious community and ended things in a cowardly way. The lesson: "I want an actual man" who talks about feelings and has hard conversations, and "I was dating a child and making excuses for him." Katrina said she would keep that story in her back pocket.

• Rehearsing the run-in

Sensing that Katrina would bump into her ex soon, Mel role-played him. After a couple of tries, Katrina delivered: "I want to thank you for ending what we had. I recently made the decision to move, and I wouldn't have if we'd stayed together. The way it was done was not acceptable, and I hope you do better for the women in your future." She said it felt "empowering and honest."

• Katrina's growth since the breakup

After three to four numb months, she built friendships, started hobbies that required patience and confidence, and dropped her plan to avoid men until the July bar exam, using the 5 Second Rule to start conversations. She had meant to email Mel for six months and finally sent it after counting 5-4-3-2-1.

• Mel's college roommate

Mel had a falling out with her college roommate about 33 years ago, which she says was mostly her doing. She used to dread running into her. Using what researchers call A/B planning, she decided in advance she would greet her with a big hug. Owning her part and changing her behaviour gave her closure without needing the other person.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the expand-or-contract test

Close your eyes and picture each option. The aligned choice feels expansive, as if something opens up, even if it's scary. If you feel yourself shrink or your energy drop, that's a no.

- **Let go of the doorknob**
  Closure means releasing the small hope, the self-blame and the rumination, then walking toward something new. Another person's behaviour is all the information you need. If it's not love, it's a lesson.
- **Ask for support instead of assuming disappointment**
  Script: "I need to do this for my growth. The only thing holding me back is fear that you'll be upset. Can I have your support? I can always come back." They may or may not give it, but you'll know.

The Truth About Love: How to Find It, Keep It, and Let It Go With Jay Shetty | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Jay Shetty
Date: 2023-02-02 · Duration: 1:11:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qN06K97RR9o

KEYPOINTS

• Love has three parts: like, respect and commit

Jay Shetty's working definition of love is liking someone's personality, respecting their values, and being committed to helping them achieve their goals. Physical attraction is a given he takes for granted, not something he dismisses. He encourages couples and individuals to write their own definitions and rules. He also notes research that young people experience love mainly as a feeling, and that a more mature prefrontal cortex lets reasoning and self-control shape it.

• 'Liking' means wanting to spend 200 hours with someone

Shetty cites research that a casual friend takes about 40 hours together, a good friend about 100, and a great or best friend about 200 quality hours. So the test of liking someone's personality is whether you're curious and excited enough to want 200 hours with them.

• Respect their values; don't demand they share them

Most relationships, Shetty argues, fall apart because one person tries to mold the other into valuing what they value as much as they do. That's unrealistic. His wife Radhi's top value is family, and his is purpose and service. During the recording she was in London with her grandmother, who had been in the hospital for two weeks. Neither made the other feel guilty, and he'd fly back the moment she needed him.

• Support their goals, not the potential you see in them

Saying 'they could be so much more' is about you, not love. When everyone told Radhi, a vegan chef and food scientist, to open a restaurant, she felt pressure until they sat down and asked whether she actually wanted that. Her answer: maybe someday, not now. His key question: are you helping them to the next step in their journey, or in yours?

• Rule one: learn to be alone, and treat solitude as strength

Citing the theologian Paul Tillich, Shetty notes that we talk constantly about loneliness, the weakness of being alone, but rarely about solitude, its strength. Use time alone to learn what you like. If you wait for someone else to prove you're lovable, you become unlovable the moment they change their mind. People who pour energy into lists of partner qualities often lose themselves in a partner's likes and dislikes within a few years.

• Entering a relationship out of fear of being alone backfires

Shetty says research shows three outcomes: you settle for less than you deserve, you become dependent and mold yourself to someone you see as out of your league, and you're afraid to leave because anything seems better than being alone.

• Parents' 'gifts and gaps' become your map for love

If parents showed up for every recital, you may look for someone endlessly present. If they criticized you or compared you to a sibling, you may hope a partner fills that gap. That's why people keep dating the same type. Shetty's monk lesson: whatever you want from someone else, give it to yourself first, whether compliments, understanding or validation.

• Four phases of love, and the 'contract' behind 'I love you'

The phases are attraction, dreams, disappointments and adapting, and trust. 'I love you' can mean 'forever' to one person and 'tonight' to another, yet we rarely check whether our contracts match. Early sparks, he notes, are excitement mixed with stress ('do they think I'm hot?'). As stress fades into comfort, people mistakenly think the spark has died.

• Watch for the halo effect and the context effect

With the halo effect, we assign people qualities they haven't shown: attractive means trustworthy, smart means organized at home, one kind moment means kind always. With the context effect, studies suggest holding a warm drink on a date raises warm feelings, and weddings or romantic movies make people think 'this could be the one.' He also asks whether they respond at your pace or you're forcing it.

• Partnership vs. ownership: the four C's

Unresolved hurt shows up as comparison, criticism, complaining and control. 'No one in the history of comparison has ever changed because they were compared.' Control often looks like care, such as telling you what to wear or which friends are good influences. Ask whether it's for your growth or their convenience. Shetty admits he judged some of Radhi's longtime friends early on and realized it wasn't his place.

EXAMPLES

• 'She's out of your league'

At 11, bullied for being overweight and Indian, Shetty came to class late to find everyone had told the girl every boy liked that he alone had a crush on her. For a week, girls lined up behind the goal where he played goalkeeper and shouted 'she's out of your league.' As a teen he showed exaggerated passion just to hear he was the best. With an aloof father, the monks became his first male role models, and since monks don't validate you, he learned to validate himself.

• Meeting Radhi at the temple

Six months before leaving to become a monk, Shetty showed a visitor around his temple. She asked him to meet her daughter; he introduced the daughter to his sister instead. The two women became close friends, and after the monastery his sister acted as wingwoman. He later learned Radhi's mother had prayed that day for someone like him. Six months into dating, he snapped back into old habits.

• 'Love me for this'

Fresh out of the monastery with 25,000 in debt and rejections from 40 companies, he tutored economics to pay for dates. As his career took off he kept holding up milestones for Radhi's approval, but she never loved him more for views or downloads. She praised how he handled challenges and criticism. That showed him she loved his essence, and it's why he calls a partner your

'guru': someone who reflects the truth back without judging.

- **Mel's realization about Chris**

  Listening to Shetty, Mel realized she'd been subconsciously steering Chris away from growing the men's retreat he'd run for six years, afraid it would make him too busy for family. She had never asked him what his goal was.

- **The escape room test**

  Early on, Shetty took Radhi to an escape room. He discovered he becomes intense and obnoxious about time ('we've got 55 minutes left!'), while she, a lateral thinker, pushed random things and opened the trap door. 'If your relationship starts like an interview, it will end like a rejection.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Reflect after every experience**

  After a project, an outing or time with a group, ask: Did I like it? What did or didn't I like? Was it discomfort or truly bad? You'd never return to a bad restaurant, but people keep going back to the same person.

- **Try the younger-self meditation, in a safe space**

  Picture yourself at 13, embrace that child, say what you needed to hear ('you are enough'), and ask what wisdom they have for you. Shetty warns it can be emotional, so follow it with journaling or a talk. Mel's 13-year-old self asked her to say it every day.

- **Slow down and see them in new settings**

  You can't control the hormones, but you can control the pace. See them weekly rather than daily, meet their friends, and take a class neither of you knows.

How To Know If Your Relationship Is Over & 6 Pieces Of Advice To Make It Work | Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-01-30 · Duration: 1:00:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9OIlAHm-3Q

KEYPOINTS

• Don't stay 'for the kids'; stay for yourself, or not at all

Answering a listener named Jennifer, who felt the cultural pendulum had swung from 'stay for the kids' to 'leave to be happy', Mel calls staying for the kids the world's worst advice. Kids know when you're miserable and learn a dysfunctional model. A valid reason to stay is your own values: keeping the family intact, and the friendships, community and history you've built together.

• The exit door is usually the easy out, and the answers are usually in the mirror

She worries that people now cut others off quickly and call them toxic. Her clear exceptions: leave if the relationship is abusive, if your partner is narcissistic, or if you're miserable after genuinely trying everything. But bailing to avoid the work carries the habit into your next relationship. She says she doesn't know anyone who truly worked to repair a marriage or friendship and regretted it, but knows many who regret not trying.

• Whatever you'd do after a divorce, do it now

After a split, people get in the best shape of their lives and become more vibrant to attract someone better. Mel asks why not do that now, for yourself. She adds that anyone new comes with 28 years you haven't seen, plus hidden trauma and history, whereas you know at least part of your current partner's story.

• Relationships only work if both people work on them

You can't fix a marriage from one side by fixing yourself. If your partner refuses, therapy alone will change you, but she calls that an 'enduring' marriage, and the person doing the work often grows right out of it. Eventually you may need to say that certain things are non-negotiable if you're going to stay.

• 'Transactional but emotionally sequestered' is how couples become roommates

Their therapist, Dr. Cooper, told Mel and Chris they were excellent at the logistics, like cooking, calendars, parenting and projects, but had lost emotional connection over five to eight years. Mel admits that her resentment over Chris's failing business made her turn on him when he needed her most, a 'quiet quitting' of the marriage.

• Step one: decide to make it better, and treat the marriage like a garden

Wishing it were better is what you're already doing. Committing means scheduling the work. A marriage is a container where you both grow or wither, and small irritations are weeds that are five feet tall after a few days of rain. Talk about them, ask for what you need, and don't harbour resentment. Mel calls their every-other-week virtual therapy better than any date night.

• Step two: get genuinely interested again, and celebrate their wins

Assume there's a lot you don't know about your partner. Mel cites UCLA research finding that how you react to a partner's good news matters more to the bond than how you respond to bad news. Enthusiasm gives a lift, while downplaying it 'leaves a lasting chill.' She now cheers Chris on through his men's retreat, his master's in spiritual psychology and his death doula training.

• Step three: plan fun, because it rarely happens spontaneously

Mel told Chris in therapy that life had become too serious. Fun has to be planned, as it was when you were dating: movies, hikes, dance lessons, concerts, roller coasters, skinny dipping, dinner parties.

• Steps four to six: swap roles, ask for what you need, assume good intent

Mel's anxious habit of planning everything left Chris no room to lead and left her feeling everything was up to her. Ask out loud instead of quietly punishing, and ask what your partner needs. Assume they didn't mean the tone. If you can't even admit your partner is a good person at their core, she says that's your answer.

EXAMPLES

• 'Is Chris okay?'

After a barbecue, a close friend called Mel to say 'the light behind his eyes is gone' and that their usual magnetic connection was missing. Mel later learned Chris was struggling with depression. It came just before they started therapy in 2020.

• 'The Monument'

In therapy Mel learned how isolated Chris had been as a latchkey kid with much older brothers: nobody showed up to his games and he was teased when he asked for things. His family nicknamed him 'the Monument' because he barely spoke for two years. It turned her annoyance at his quietness into a wish to support him.

• Morning sex revealed on national TV

On her daytime talk show, Chris said he prefers being intimate in the morning, which Mel hadn't known after 22 years of marriage.

• The 'trip leader' and the Vegas ring

Their 25th anniversary passed uncelebrated because things were so bad. For their 26th, Mel let Chris plan. He booked a getaway less than an hour away in southern Vermont and gave her new vows and a ring she'd tried on as a lark in Las Vegas, which he'd had a jeweller recreate. It was the first jewellery he'd chosen since her engagement ring.

• Dead flowers on the counter

Returning from week-long speaking trips, Mel would find the flowers she'd bought herself dead in the vase, which felt like nobody had thought of her. Once she asked Chris for $3 grocery-store tulips, he started bringing flowers every time he shopped.

• Muir Woods with 30 minutes to spare

With 90 minutes before a California business meeting, they detoured to Muir Woods at 4:15 p.m. under a looming rain cloud and had the redwoods to themselves. It felt like a Hobbit movie and reminded them to do more of that.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Talk to your partner, not about them**
  Spend at least twice as much time talking with your spouse as you spend complaining to friends or family, and never vent about your partner to your kids. They aren't your therapist.
- **No money for therapy? Use free tools**
  Try free online courses or a book or workbook you go through together. Individual therapy is valuable, but it's work on yourself, not on the marriage.
- **Support separate pursuits**
  A partner who doesn't want to join your dude ranch trip or your Kilimanjaro climb isn't the problem. Mel broke her leg and tailbone being bucked off a horse on a dude ranch trip for her dad's 70th. Have your own friends and hobbies. The real problem is a partner who refuses to address issues in the relationship.

4 Attachment Styles You Need To Know To Create Healthy Relationships | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Marisa Franco
Date: 2022-11-17 · Duration: 1:12:50
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNmYDYdgYQo

KEYPOINTS

• Attachment style is the set of assumptions you bring into every relationship

Dr. Franco, a psychologist at the University of Maryland and author of Platonic, explains that your style shapes how you give and receive love in friendships, families and at work, not just in romance. Your interpretation of events, filtered through that lens, often matters more than what actually happened. It's a spectrum: nobody is fully secure, anxious or avoidant.

• Secure people assume they're lovable and balance their needs with yours

They give and receive love comfortably, raise conflict level-headedly and are vulnerable in a reciprocal way: they share, wait for you to share, then go deeper, and pull back if you don't respond. They accept your boundaries without pushing or withdrawing. They talk about exes with nuance ('it didn't work for this reason, but I liked them for that') rather than calling them evil.

• Anxious attachment centres on fear of abandonment

Anxiously attached people see rejection where there is none, like a tired friend or a slow reply. She cites research that their amygdala is more reactive. They over-accommodate and self-sacrifice until they blow up, struggle with boundaries, over-apologise, give in order to be liked, and invalidate their own feelings, so they need others to soothe them. They tend to misremember events as more negative than they were and have the highest rates of mental health issues.

• Avoidant attachment is a defence against a need for connection that feels unsafe

Avoidant people believe closeness leads to harm, so they initiate less, ghost more, minimise problems, stonewall and struggle to apologise. Underneath, she says, is deep shame and a core belief of 'I'm a failure, I'm deficient', so criticism hits hard. They often have a 'phantom ex', a relationship they miss only after leaving it once the urge for space fades.

• Disorganised attachment flips between craving and fearing closeness

It usually follows extreme early experiences such as abuse. People with this style swing between anxious and avoidant behaviour, may escalate in anger or read negative intent into neutral actions, and can feel frozen about whether to move closer or pull away.

• Your style can differ from one relationship to the next

A very anxious partner can make you feel avoidant, and a distant one can make you anxious. Franco also draws on internal family systems: younger selves, like a bullied sixth-grader, can take over in the moment, but everyone has a highest, adult self that is securely attached. Women skew slightly anxious and men slightly avoidant.

• Anxious people often mistake being triggered for being in love

Hurt and excitement are both high-arousal states, so an inconsistent, hot-and-cold partner can feel thrilling. A secure person just leaves. The anxious person tries to earn the love and is put off when someone gives it freely. Franco says that when she was more anxious, she'd lose interest as soon as someone wanted her back.

• Falling in love can mask attachment styles for about a year

The chemical cocktail of early love can make an avoidant partner comfortable with intimacy, until perhaps a year in, often after moving in together, when they suddenly feel suffocated and say their partner expects too much.

• Secure and insecure people express anger differently

She draws on John Bowlby's 'anger of hope' versus 'anger of despair'. A girl left alone in hospital asked her mother 'where was you?', which is vulnerable anger aimed at repair. A boy named Reggie said of a returning caregiver, 'my very own Marianne, but I hate her', which is anger aimed at destroying. Anxious adults bottle up, then blow up, character-assassinate or collapse into self-blame. Avoidant adults go quiet, withdraw, and later call you too sensitive.

• Insecure attachment carries physical as well as emotional costs

Both anxious and avoidant people are more likely than secure people to have mental health problems, with avoidant people falling between secure and anxious. She links avoidant emotional suppression to unexplained migraines, gut problems, ulcers and chronic pain, and says your ability to connect even predicts how long you live.

EXAMPLES

• Mel and Chris: anxious meets avoidant

Mel realised they had been discussing attachment in weekly couples therapy for two years: she's anxious and her husband is avoidant. She hadn't understood the shame behind his quietness, and says he now recognises he was numbing his emotions with a daily weed and alcohol habit.

• The kitchen-door metaphor for receiving love

At 54, Mel said that only in the previous two months had she noticed she pours out love but stonewalls receiving it. She now pictures swinging kitchen doors to catch herself putting up a wall against small gestures: a stranger's smile, a heart-shaped leaf, her pet greeting her.

• A secure way to raise a one-sided friendship

Franco's script: 'I love you, I want to be close to you, I've noticed I've been the one reaching out and that's been hurting me, and I want our friendship to continue, so I figured I'd bring this up.' It's direct without being confrontational.

• How avoidant people sound versus secure people

Insecure people apply one template to everyone, for example 'all my relationships are fragile' (anxious) or 'nobody can be trusted' (avoidant). Secure people give the benefit of the doubt while keeping boundaries, saying things like 'I had to love that person from afar.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Become your own secure figure**

  When a strong emotion hits, tell yourself 'it's okay that you feel this way, I'm right here with you,' and ask what you need. Pause instead of reflexively clinging or pulling away, notice where the feeling sits in your body, and build tolerance for it. Franco has even sung love songs to herself.

- **For avoidant people: name body sensations, then feelings**

  Notice tingling, pressure in your chest or a lump in your throat, then use a feelings wheel to put a word to it, the way you'd learn a language. Try any form of self-expression, like journaling, art, singing or even origami. Therapy focused on attachment helps.

- **Communicate space instead of ghosting**

  If you're avoidant, say 'I'm overwhelmed and need about a week, then we'll talk.' If you love someone avoidant, get some needs met in other relationships, move at their pace, lead with what they do well, ask calmly for one addition, and acknowledge their improvements.

- **Spend time with secure people and savour acceptance daily**

  Look for people who share appropriately, respond to your needs, show empathy and calm your nervous system; over time they rewrite your template. Each day, write down one moment you felt accepted, like a friend's voice note, a comment, or someone bringing cinnamon rolls, and stay with it until you feel it.