Mel Robbins Keypoints — Friendship, Boundaries & Difficult People

Mel Robbins Keypoints

Episodes in this pack: 30

This One Skill Makes Every Relationship Better

Date: 2026-10-17 · Duration: 0:42:16
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSR5xBplRz8

KEYPOINTS

• Empathy is a practised skill, not a feeling of pity

Mel separates empathy from sympathy and pity. Feeling sorry for someone can land as condescending, while empathy is something you do. The people you love being around are the ones who make you feel seen and heard, which echoes Maya Angelou's line that people remember how you made them feel.

• Empathy means understanding, not mind-reading

The definition that changed Mel's thinking came from psychologist Dr. Stuart Ablon of Harvard Medical School, founder of the Think Kids programme at Mass General. Asked what empathy is, he answered with one word: understanding. It means grasping what someone feels, their perspective and what they're dealing with before you judge, jump in to fix, give an opinion or make up your mind. Mel admits she used to think it meant stepping into someone's shoes and guessing. She now says that's the mistake.

• Reciprocity is why empathy makes people like you

Making someone feel understood triggers the law of reciprocity. They want to give the feeling back, the same instinct that makes you hold a door after someone held one for you.

• Mirror neurons wire you for emotional connection

Mel's plain-language version: you well up when a movie character cries because watching emotion triggers a similar reaction in you, a 'neural bridge' to other people. The same wiring can push you to panic and over-fix when someone you love struggles. This is her simplified framing, not a detailed neuroscience claim.

• You get about nine chances a day to practise empathy

Mel cites University of Toronto researchers, published in Psychological Science, who found that on average people have at least nine everyday opportunities to act in a way that makes others feel understood and cared for. Most of these are small and right in front of you: a coworker who seems off, a kid who's upset, a friend with good news.

• Way 1, don't guess, ask

Guessing produces stories like 'I guess you don't care.' Asking ('You don't seem like yourself, is everything okay?' 'Tell me more about that') reveals what's really going on. You don't have to care about the thing as much as they do. You care about them, so it matters to you that it matters to them. Once you've asked, the job is to listen and understand, not to plan what you'll say next.

• Way 2, go first, because thinking about someone doesn't count

Taken from her Let Them Theory book: when someone comes to mind, reach out instead of talking yourself out of it ('I only have five minutes before the grocery store, I don't want to bother them'). The other person never knows you thought of them. Good intentions that never turn into action give no connection.

• Pebbling, sending small 'this reminded me of you' signals

Adam Grant explained the term on the show. Some penguins court mates by presenting smooth, shiny pebbles, and the modern version is a meme, link, reel or article picked because it fits the person. Grant says it isn't spamming. It's a 'memory flex' that shows you remember their taste. He notes multiple studies showing that a small pebble a week or a month after meeting someone, or to a dormant tie you haven't spoken to in years, is received far more warmly than people expect.

• Way 3, paper plates: show up without asking what they need

From therapist KC Davis: when someone is struggling, don't ask 'What do you need?' because that puts the burden on them. Just drop off paper plates, plastic cups and utensils, since the last thing an overwhelmed person needs is a sink of dishes. More broadly, if hands are full, hold the door. If a coworker is buried, take something off their list. If your kid didn't make the team, sit with them and ask how they're doing before you coach or console.

• Way 4, keep waving, because connection is built from tiny gestures

Mel's closing principle is that connection doesn't come from big gestures you keep waiting to make. It comes from small, repeated ones like a wave, a text or a remembered date. Empathy also covers good moments: noticing someone's big news or remembering their job interview day makes them feel celebrated, not just supported in hard times.

EXAMPLES

• Stanford's 'empathy perception gap' (5,000+ students)

Researchers surveyed more than 5,000 undergraduates. Students guessed about 87% of peers would help someone having a hard time, but 96% said they themselves would. People underestimate how warm others are. When students learned the real figure, they started reaching out more. Mel uses this to argue that your fear that a gesture will land awkwardly is usually wrong.

• The producer and the slipping editor

An editor on Mel's team suddenly started showing up late, with sloppy work and missed deliveries. Instead of assuming he didn't care, the producer asked if everything was okay. The editor had been caring for his sick mother and driving her to appointments while holding down a fast-paced full-time job. Asking turned a performance problem into a situation they could work around.

• Mel's fourth-grade son

When her son was struggling in fourth grade and they were learning he had dyslexia, dysgraphia, executive-function issues and ADHD, Mel jumped into fix-it mode, sure she knew what he needed. Looking back, she says he wasn't a problem to be solved. She wishes she'd asked, 'What's the hardest part for you? What do you think all the adults are missing?'

• Judge Frank Caprio's first day on the bench

In an interview months before he died at 88, Caprio described his first day as a municipal judge. A woman with a boot on her car owed a couple hundred dollars in tickets and said she had no money and four kids. Wanting to look tough, he refused to remove the boot. His father, watching from the courtroom, asked how he could do that: without a car she couldn't feed her kids or

get them to school. Caprio said this set the tone for 30 years of weighing each person's situation. His book's lesson was that being a judge is more about the person in front of you than the law.

• Roman, the four-year-old who kept waving

In a Steve Hartman story for CBS News, a lonely four-year-old named Roman in Concord, North Carolina waved at passers-by. A senior neighbour, Wade, started crossing the street to visit. More neighbours joined, and Roman ended up with a group of adopted grandparents from neighbours who hadn't known each other.

• The $5 grocery-store flowers and the sick weekend

Mel's husband brings home the cheapest bouquet in a mason jar, a pebble showing he thought of her on an errand. When she was very sick while 14 of his college friends were staying, they just took care of everything, so she never had to ask.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Script for someone who seems off

Try 'You don't seem like yourself. What's going on?' or 'Can you help me understand what's hardest?' Then stop and listen. Don't rehearse advice while they talk.

• Act within five minutes of thinking of someone

When a person pops into your head, send the text, meme or voice note right then. Short is fine. Remembering their humour or their big day is the point.

• Offer specific help instead of 'let me know'

Pick a concrete, low-burden gesture like food, paper goods, a task off their plate or a ride, and just do it. Asking an overwhelmed person to come up with a request adds to their load.

The Let Them Theory: How to Handle Difficult People & Take Back Your Peace and Power

Date: 2026-09-21 · Duration: 0:45:21
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brVzDv0Ze-o

KEYPOINTS

- **The goal isn't to make a difficult person easy; it's to stop making your own life harder because they're difficult.**
  Mel says it's the question she's been asked most since Let Them took off: how to apply it to people you love but find frustrating. Her answer: 'Let Them' isn't abandonment. It's moving your energy away from their choices and toward what you control, meaning your responses, conditions and conversations. Both people contribute to any dynamic, so changing your half changes it.
- **The framework is Me, We, Them: three places to look in every difficult relationship.**
  Me: create space for yourself, starting with what's going well and then naming what's hard. We: decide what you want from the relationship and have one clear conversation about it. Them: let them choose, then respond to what they actually do. Mel calls it a dance. Using Let Them and Let Me 'changes the music.'
- **Mistake #1: expecting someone else to change.**
  You can't want something for someone more than they want it for themselves. People change when they're willing to do the work. Pressure and judgment usually push the other way. 'When you change what you do, absolutely everything changes.'
- **The 'we' conversation is a three-sentence script, then silence.**
  Mel credits therapist Terry Real, a past guest: 'This is what happened. This is the story I'm telling myself. This is what I need from you.' Then ask 'Am I understanding this correctly?' and stop talking. That's the hard part. You aren't diagnosing them or acting as their counselor. You're saying how the relationship affects you and making room for their side, which might surprise you.
- **Let Them has a safety limit: it applies when someone is capable and informed.**
  It doesn't mean abandoning someone, especially if they can't make safe decisions. But if an adult understands the consequences, can decide for themselves, and still refuses help, 'give them the dignity of their own experience' and take your life back. Your job isn't to make them happy or healthy.
- **Mistake #2: letting their behavior control your behavior.**
  Dad raises his voice, now you're shouting. Your sister sends one passive-aggressive text and your day is shot. Mel says the same thing happens with people from years ago: their behavior controlled you then, and if you're still shrinking yourself, it's still controlling you now. 'They don't control you. You control you.'
- **Sometimes the 'we' step is empty, and that's the point.**
  If the relationship is already over, as with a cruel former friend, there's no conversation to have. Cross 'we' off the list and put no more energy there. The work becomes 'let me' (act the way the confident version of you would) and 'let them' (let them be jealous, judge or misunderstand you).
- **With a controlling third party, change the conditions instead of trying to change the person.**
  You probably won't change a controlling stepparent. So change the setting: shorter visits, a hotel, a neutral meeting place, leaving when the yelling starts. Recognizing you have these choices is the boundary.
- **Mistake #3: thinking they 'should.' Ask whether they 'could.'**
  'Should' turns small things into stories about character ('you don't care'). 'Could' asks whether they're capable, and whether you've even asked. Each person is shaped by a past and present you can't see, even after 30 years of marriage, as with Mel's husband Chris. Assume they're a jerk and you'll bring it up like one. If they keep not doing what you asked, they either can't or won't, and those call for different responses.

EXAMPLES

- **Teresa and her 68-year-old mother**
  Teresa, a school administrator, also manages the health of her mother, who has diabetes and liver disease. Her mom lets healthy meals go to waste, cancels appointments Teresa took time off for, and gets infections. Teresa: 'I love my mom, but I don't want to be around her.' Mel's script ends with 'what help are you willing to accept?' If the answer is none ('I just want to eat burritos'), Teresa can say it's her mom's body and choice, she's stepping back, and 'if you ever change your mind, just ask.'
- **Terry's 27-year-old son with 'no ambition'**
  Both sons, 30 and 27, moved home after breakups, and the younger one works a dead-end job. Mel's 'me' reframe: he came home because he feels safe, and he's working in this economy. His parents' judgment is part of what isn't going well. The 'we' step is apologizing for the judgment ('you're on your own timeline'). Then let him figure it out. He has '50, 60, or 70 years' left.
- **Serena and a jealous 17-year friendship**
  Serena's friend of 17 years turned 'jealous, cruel' when Serena grew. Three years later, Serena still shrinks how she dresses and posts. Mel: the friend made you small then, but you're doing it now. Act like the proud version of you would.
- **The stepmother with rules on the back door**
  A family friend visiting her dad finds rules on the back of the front door: don't touch the thermostat, fold the towels just right. It's all correction and no connection. Mel: get a hotel or meet at a restaurant, leave by day three ('fish and family both start to stink after 3 days'), and ask Dad alone, 'Do you want a relationship with me?'
- **Seven water glasses**
  A listener counted seven empty glasses around her boyfriend's tiny apartment. 'He should know I'm not the maid' quickly became 'he doesn't care.' Mel's version: 'When I got home there were seven glasses… and the story I told myself is…'
- **Mel's own 'they should' realization**
  For years Mel was frustrated that someone 'should' treat her better. Talking with her therapist, she realized the person wasn't capable of it because they were struggling with a mental illness. She says making room for that truth (whether the cause is

addiction, mental illness or caregiving overload) changed how she responded.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Terry Real's script**
  Use it word for word, then ask 'Am I understanding this correctly?' and stop talking.
- **The three questions for any relationship**
  Me: what's going well and what's hard? (Get support. Don't carry it alone.) We: what do I want, and what will I say? Them: what are they choosing, and how will I respond?
- **Condition changes you control**
  Shorter stays, a hotel instead of the guest room, a restaurant instead of the house, leaving the moment yelling starts. None of these require the other person to change.
- **Should vs. could check**
  Before bringing something up, ask: have I actually asked? Are they capable? What past or present pressures might I not see?

Stop Wasting Your Time: How to Deal With People Who Won’t Change & What to Do Instead

Guest: Dr. Dolly Chugh
Date: 2026-08-27 · Duration: 1:04:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5OjMuyqdJQ

KEYPOINTS

- **Two mental 'bodyguards' explain why knowing isn't doing**
  NYU Stern professor and behavioral scientist Dr. Dolly Chugh says two protective systems keep us stuck. The first guards our energy by putting most of life on autopilot. The second guards our identity or ego. Change threatens both, which is why you can fully understand what to do and still not do it, and why the people you love resist too.
- **Your mind runs 11 million 'little t' thoughts per finger snap**
  Chugh cites research suggesting that in a single snap we process about 11 million unconscious 'little t' thoughts, such as posture, temperature and how our clothes feel, compared with about 40 conscious 'big T' thoughts. Knowing something lives in those few big-T thoughts, while habits and reflexes live in the millions. That gap is why insight alone rarely changes behavior.
- **We protect our identity fiercely**
  She cites a study suggesting people value affirmation of the identities they care about more than their favorite food, time with a friend or even their favorite sex act. When feedback threatens how we see ourselves, the identity bodyguard pushes back, often by getting defensive.
- **You can't learn from a mistake you're still defending**
  Her biggest-mistake answer: we slip into proving ourselves instead of improving ourselves. Mel admits to 'a million examples' of defending why something was too hard. Real growth starts when you stop arguing for the mistake.
- **Be 'goodish' rather than good**
  'Good person' is a fixed state: you either are or you aren't, so every slip-up becomes a threat. A 'goodish' person is always trying to get better, which makes goodish 'actually better than good.' The idea leaves room for bad days and cuts the exhausting nightly self-judgment Mel describes: the text you regret, the party outfit, the 10 undone things.
- **Change requires unlearning, and unlearning feels like friction**
  Using a color-word Stroop test, Chugh shows Mel how two effortless skills, reading and naming colors, become hard when they conflict. Changing a habit is like being asked to 'unlearn reading.' The resistance you feel getting off the couch is the same friction others feel when you ask them to change. We want grace for our own learning curves but accountability for everyone else's.
- **You can model, invite and reward change, but you can't make anyone change**
  Model it by making your own effort visible. Invite it by giving grace to clumsy first attempts. If a partner trying not to snap at the kids tells an awkward story that drags on, don't say 'this isn't helping.' Reward it by saying sincerely what you noticed: 'I saw our daughter light up.'
- **Pull works better than push, but it takes longer**
  Push means directing, telling and forcing. It has its place, but we overuse it. Pull creates the conditions where people want to change on their own: you ask questions or act as a sounding board so they build their own plan and keep their sense of 'I am the boss of me.' It takes longer, but if it works, it lasts.
- **Feedback in adjectives invites argument; feedback on behavior gets change**
  'Not polished enough' could mean typos, animations, tone or clothes, so people argue with it. Instead, name the behavior: one slide says the client is in 'hospitality' and another says 'food and beverage,' which looks like the deck wasn't proofread. Specific, observable feedback is harder to dispute and easier to act on.
- **Rescuing can be about our pain, not theirs**
  Chugh's definition of hell is watching someone you love suffer and being helpless. Much of what passes for support, such as money or a place to live, is really us easing that feeling. That 'soft cushion' can stop someone from hitting the edge of their experience and facing the consequences of patterns they haven't unlearned yet. Mel calls this a central growth area of her life with adult children.

EXAMPLES

- **Gandhi and the sugar**
  In a fable Chugh tells while noting it may not be true, a family travels hundreds of miles to ask Gandhi to tell their son to stop eating only sugar. He asks them to come back in two weeks, then simply says, 'You must stop eating sugar.' Asked why he waited, he says that two weeks earlier he was still eating sugar himself. The first step in helping someone change is modelling it.
- **The 'standoffish' neighbor**
  Chugh took an audio-only work call on a walk with an AirPod in, didn't notice a neighbor waving, and later heard she was described as standoffish. Because being seen as warm is central to her identity, it bothered her 'a lot.' Someone else might not care, which shows how differently identity threats land.
- **The Sparkle Boys bunk room**
  Mel's 21-year-old son, Oakley, and his high-school friends run a window-washing and odd-jobs business, now in its fourth year and employing about 15 kids, and they use the family's Vermont bunk room. After Mel was away for 8 days, she came home to a mess and stuck to behavior and feelings ('after being gone for 8 days… walking in here doesn't feel good'). They answered, 'We can do better.'
- **Not reacting to the grade**
  Chugh and her husband tried not to react to their kids' grades. They asked only: do you understand what you did, do you understand what you got wrong, did you try your best? That later became her two end-of-day questions.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **The WAIT rule: 'Why Am I Talking?'**

  Before giving advice, check whether they asked. Talking at someone about their problem takes away their agency. If a friend complains about their partner of eight years but never acts on your advice, stop giving it.

- **Heard, hugged, helped or high-fived?**

  Ask what someone needs. Heard means they need to vent, hugged means they need to feel loved, helped means they want advice. Chugh adds high-fived, for when people, especially women, want someone to notice how hard they're trying. She says this works better in families than at work.

- **The 1–10 rule for disagreements**

  Ask how important this is to each of you on a scale of 1 to 10. Often the real 10 isn't the jacket on the floor but feeling heard or not being expected to clean up. For the other person, the 10 might be autonomy or exhaustion. Chugh and her husband have a rule: if both rate it 1–7, the higher number wins and they move on. An 8, 9 or 10 from either of them is worth discussing.

- **Two questions to end every day**

  'What did I learn?' and 'Did I try my best?' Judge growth, not success. Chugh's final ask is to be a lifelong learner and a lifelong unlearner.

The Manipulation Expert: 4 Hidden Signs You’re Dealing With a Toxic Person

Guest: Dr. Leanne ten Brinke
Date: 2026-07-20 · Duration: 1:03:20
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybrv66DM9Dw

KEYPOINTS

• Most people are good, but one poisonous person can cause most of your stress

Dr. Leanne ten Brinke, a forensic psychology professor who runs the Truth and Trust Lab at the University of British Columbia and author of Poisonous People, says about 10% of people endorse the self-report statements used to measure dark traits. That means nine in ten are honest, kind and helpful. The rest (the manipulative sister-in-law, the credit-stealing boss, the callous mother-in-law) divide people, erode norms of polite conduct and turn cooperation into competition. Mel calls them 'the one person causing 90% of the stress.'

• Personality is consistent, so watch how they treat everyone else

A personality is a consistent way of thinking, feeling and behaving, so people take it everywhere. Someone may build a beautiful future with you while being callous and dominating with everyone else. Ten Brinke warns that if you're the exception, eventually 'you're going to become part of the rule'.

• The four dark traits share manipulation at the core

The 'dark tetrad' is psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism and sadism. Ten Brinke defines manipulation as a willingness to use other people for your own ends, pulling their strings and changing their perspective. Each trait runs on a continuum rather than being a yes-or-no label.

• Psychopathy: callous, manipulative, impulsive, antisocial

Following Dr. Robert Hare's model, impulsivity means responding to risk differently, often mooching off others instead of planning a career or family. Antisocial means breaking rules, whether laws, workplace conduct or social norms of fairness and politeness. The everyday high end isn't a horror-movie killer. It's someone who lies a lot and is superficially charming, whose conversation makes little sense when you think about it later, and who doesn't care. A lack of guilt and remorse is central, and grudges are common.

• Machiavellianism: amoral, strategic pursuit of status

Machiavellians want status, control, fame or money. They'll flatter to get ahead and are just as willing to spread rumours or lie. Unlike impulsive psychopaths, they plan, filing away something embarrassing you said to use later when they need to turn the screws. At work they subtly push people out and manage up. In families they create divisions and may become the drama-stirring favourite.

• Narcissism: entitlement plus exploitation, in two flavours

Grandiose narcissists have egos that can't be deflated and get furious at failures like a missed job, promotion or raise. Vulnerable narcissists have easily shattered egos, depend on ego boosts from others, and are hurt most by rejection. Ten Brinke uses a broken-mirror image: what you see isn't what you get.

• Sadism: an appetite for cruelty

Sadism centres on enjoying other people's pain. Ten Brinke once coded descriptions of sexual homicides for gratuitous violence as an undergraduate, but she stresses there are everyday versions too, such as relishing very violent sports or cruel videos online.

• No. 1 sign of manipulation: they're different with you than with everyone else

If someone wants your time, money or influence and acts like a different person around you, you're probably not seeing who they really are. Love bombing (constant texts, flowers, 'they want the same things I do') is a classic early version. Charm switches on when they need something and disappears once they've got it.

• Gaslighting is abuse, not disagreement

The word is overused for ordinary confusion or different interpretations. Real gaslighting tries to make you distrust your own mind, memories and reactions by creating a surreal environment. Because brains are 'prediction machines', constant feedback that your predictions are wrong is destabilising and breeds dependence and isolation. Research is relatively thin, but people high in dark traits endorse these tactics in romantic relationships.

• Don't expect change, so be strategic instead

Mel cites Dr. Ramani Durvasula: the real source of pain is the hope that the person will change if you bake more cupcakes, lower your voice or stay ten more years. Ten Brinke agrees. Research, mostly with incarcerated men, shows that sustained therapy can bring harm reduction, not a personality 180. Her advice is to pause, assess, then either avoid them or engage strategically, thinking about what motivates them.

EXAMPLES

• Paulhus's week-one vs week-seven study

Delroy Paulhus at UBC had students rate group-mates over a term. In week one, the most narcissistic were seen as agreeable, well-adjusted and competent. By week seven, the same people were rated arrogant, hostile braggarts who overestimated their abilities. The early sheen of confidence wears off.

• Spotting psychopathy in 5 seconds

Scott Lilienfeld and colleagues showed untrained viewers 5–10-second clips of incarcerated men in psychopathy-assessment interviews, along with a short definition. Their ratings correlated reasonably with trained psychologists who had full interviews and case files. The bad news, ten Brinke notes, is that charm still fools us in real life.

• Keltner's sorority gossip study

Ten Brinke's postdoc adviser Dacher Keltner measured Machiavellian traits in a sorority and asked who got talked about. The most gossiped-about women were well known but not well liked. They were highly Machiavellian and seen as holding status they didn't deserve. Gossip can be a warning system.

- **The chess-piece and puppet visuals**
  Ten Brinke illustrates Machiavellianism as someone knocking you off a chessboard, and sadism as a figure working a puppet on strings, saying she might add little knives.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Talk to others about the person**
  Ten Brinke says comparing notes is helpful. If many people quietly feel someone's status is unearned, or if you're treated as the exception, take the pattern seriously.
- **Be wary of early dazzle**
  Big confidence, instant chemistry and flattery are the same traits that cause problems later. Give it time and watch consistency.
- **Reality-check gaslighting**
  If you're starting to need someone else to interpret events for you, that dependence is the red flag. Reconnect with people who can confirm what you experienced.
- **Drop the fantasy**
  Decide how to deal with the person as they are now, with clear limits and less exposure, instead of waiting for them to change.

It's Not Just You: The Reality of Adult Friendship in 2026

Guest: Kasley Killam
Date: 2026-05-07 · Duration: 1:17:23
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZYOy58RTl8

KEYPOINTS

• Social health is a third pillar alongside physical and mental health

Social scientist Kasley Killam, who has studied connection for about 15 years and holds a master's from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, says decades of research across thousands of studies point the same way: connection predicts a longer, healthier life. She notes that the World Health Organization recently said social health matters as much as physical and mental health, and she wants it to become as mainstream a topic as mental health is now.

• Loneliness is common, so it's nothing to be ashamed of

She cites a study in which one in six Americans said they were isolated or lonely most or all of the time. Her first message to lonely listeners is that it's a widespread condition, not a personal failing, and that it can be changed with small, specific habits.

• We spend dramatically less time with friends than we used to

Per Killam, young people today spend nearly 1,000 fewer hours a year with friends than 20 years ago. Mel works out that's about 25 forty-hour work weeks. She adds that 67% of Americans never take part in any club or group, and 72% see the people they care about only two, one or zero times a month.

• Disconnection is a physical stressor

Killam explains that feeling isolated registers in the body as stress, releasing cortisol, which can increase inflammation and over time make you more susceptible to illness. Connection does the opposite. This is her framing of the research, not individual medical advice.

• 'Protecting your peace' can tip into isolation

Healthy relationships are sometimes difficult, and human connection is messy. If you cut out everyone who causes any friction, you can end up with no one. She suggests reframing 'protecting your peace' so it allows for normal friction.

• Most cancelled plans are excuses, not needs

Mel polled her audience and 73% admitted cancelling on friends or colleagues because they'd rather stay home alone. They sorted listeners' reasons into 'excuse' and 'need' jars, and the excuse jar filled up. Some reasons are both: 'I never get asked questions back' is an excuse to skip, but it also signals a real need for new friends. Social anxiety is valid and normal, but if you always use it as a reason to stay in, you won't meet anyone.

• People like you more than you think

In one study, strangers chatted and then rated how much they liked their partner and how much they thought their partner liked them. People consistently underestimated how much they were liked, while outside observers judged it correctly. In another set of studies, people underestimated how much a friend would appreciate a quick check-in. Killam treats this as reason enough to push past insecurity and reach out.

• Connection doesn't have to take much time to matter

77% of Americans work more than 40 hours a week. Her fix is 'go for connection first': when a meeting ends five minutes early or you're waiting in line, text a friend instead of scrolling. She says research shows a short text, a 10-minute phone call or five minutes of expressing gratitude can reduce loneliness.

• We've optimized for convenience over connection

Nobody looks up anymore, so organic meetings are rarer. The reliable way to make new friends is to join a local group you care about, so you see the same people regularly, then take action when you click with someone.

• Curiosity is the most underrated way to deepen a friendship

Ask questions and genuinely listen rather than waiting for your turn to talk. Opening up more yourself also helps.

EXAMPLES

• The hugs-and-cold-virus study

Researchers asked people every day for two weeks how supported they felt and how many hugs they'd had, then exposed them to a cold virus. People who felt more supported and got more hugs were less likely to get sick and had fewer symptoms if they did.

• Mel's 45-minute drive dilemma

Mel describes a day-long gathering of seven couples she's known for 30 years (four couples were at her wedding). After a big work week, 48 hours out, she could already feel herself wanting to stay on the couch in sweatpants scrolling short videos for five hours. Her point: everyone knows they feel better after seeing friends, yet 'I'm tired' is the easiest excuse.

• The 5-minute 'thinking of you' text

Killam's suggested script: 'I only have 5 minutes, but I was thinking about you and just wanted to say hi. How was your day?' Small moments like this keep a relationship alive day to day.

• An intergenerational conversation event

She paired 15 young people with 15 older people and gave them prompts such as 'Tell me your life story in 4 minutes' and 'What's a challenge you're going through right now?' She uses it to show how structured, curious questions quickly create depth.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 5-3-1 formula for social health

Interact with five different people each week, keep at least three close relationships, and spend one hour a day connecting. The hour adds up across people and doesn't have to be deep: a minute with the barista, five with colleagues, 20 with your partner. Whether an hour sounds like a lot or a little tells you about your own preferences. Include people who differ from you in beliefs and background.

- **The four friendship styles**

  Butterfly: thrives on frequent, casual connection; easy small talk, great party guest. Wallflower: selective, infrequent connection, observant and empathetic. Firefly: enjoys lots of solitude, but skips small talk for deep conversations when together. Evergreen: wants a lot of deep connection all the time. Knowing your style explains why socializing drains you or comes easily.

- **Excuse-or-need check before cancelling**

  Before bailing, ask whether the reason is a real need (illness, genuine exhaustion) or an excuse. Feeling anxious is normal, but it isn't by itself a reason to stay home.

- **Your connection helps others too**

  Her closing: every conversation, smile at a neighbor or coffee with a coworker benefits both people, so caring for your social health changes your life and the world.

How to Deal with Difficult People & Not Get Stressed Out

Date: 2025-11-17 · Duration: 1:08:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtVPoYq7Rso

KEYPOINTS

• Most difficult people aren't people you want gone; you just wish you got along.
Mel pushes back on the social-media habit of 'cutting out toxic people.' The hard relationships in most lives are with a parent, sibling, in-law or friend you love but find exhausting, someone who is like 'hugging a porcupine.' Some people would rather stay angry, play the victim or complain than connect, and the Let Them Theory is about dealing with that reality without being dragged into it.

• Most adults are 8-year-olds in big bodies.
This line from Mel's therapist, Ann, changed how she sees it, and it appears in chapter 7 of The Let Them Theory. It explains why a mom pouts instead of saying what's wrong, why a friend gives the silent treatment, why a boyfriend sends passive-aggressive texts, and why a sister blows up then acts like nothing happened an hour later. Ann's suggestion: when someone triggers you, picture the second-grade version of them in the room.

• Emotional flooding is a survival response, not a choice to be awful.
Mel explains, drawing on experts from the show, that even small triggers can flip an adult of 25, 50 or 80 from rational to amygdala-hijacked, with adrenaline and cortisol flooding the body almost instantly. Emotions are also contagious: someone's tone, energy or body language can put you on edge before you notice. It's a reason to expect reactions, not to excuse every behavior.

• Hunger, fatigue, stress and alcohol make everyone more reactive.
When you or anyone else is hungry, tired, stressed, under the influence, lonely, angry or hurt, emotions run hotter. Mel says every time she has said something she regretted, stress, alcohol or hunger was involved. Knowing that helps her manage her own reactions at gatherings.

• Venting doesn't reduce anger; it rehearses it.
Mel cites a 2024 Ohio State meta-analysis of 154 anger studies that found no evidence venting reduces anger, and it often makes people angrier. Every rant ('My dad's always like this,' 'My brother never helps') is a mental rep: 'your brain is memorizing your outrage,' locking the anger into your nervous system so you walk back in more reactive.

• An emotional surge lasts about 90 seconds if you don't feed it.
Citing Harvard-trained neuroscientist Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, Mel describes emotions as a chemical surge that rises and falls in roughly 90 seconds. Snapping, ranting or taking the bait keeps re-feeding it. The practice is to pause, breathe and not give the moment more power than it deserves.

• Decide why you're going before you walk in.
Ask yourself, 'Why am I here?' If the answer is 'I just want to be with my family,' you've 'won the lottery': you don't need to fix, control or manage anyone. Your only job is to go with the flow, be kind and flexible, and say thank you. Mel also reminds you that hosts mostly want their effort appreciated, while guests often arrive full of expectations about food, sleeping arrangements or how things 'should' be done.

• Let them: people change only when they're ready.
Let them be negative, bring their baggage, complain about the world or ignore the people right in front of them. If someone is self-centered, narcissistic or always the victim, they've always been that way, so expect it. Then you don't have to walk in braced for conflict. Mel says waiting to love someone 'when' they change isn't love; it's judgment.

• Let me: two boundaries are all you need, time and topics.
Time means deciding how long you'll stay: one night, two days or three, and whether you'll book a hotel. Topics means choosing what you won't discuss (work, money, dating, politics) so you don't get pulled into draining debates or silence yourself. If someone crosses the line, don't defend yourself; just redirect.

• Holidays aren't the time for unresolved business.
Everyone is tired, overwhelmed and in chaotic houses, so old wounds surface easily. Mel's blunt advice: if your family is so bad you have to 'armor up' with big boundary declarations to survive it, don't go.

EXAMPLES

• 'So, have you met anybody yet?'
A single person at a holiday gathering gets this from an aunt. It hits a nerve: you feel exposed and judged, snap or withdraw, reach for a second glass of red wine, vent later and lie awake thinking 'this is why I never should have come.' Mel's alternative is to let her ask, pause and let the 90 seconds pass.

• 'You haven't been here in a year'
Team members described arriving at grandparents' or parents' homes and hearing a complaint about past visits mid-hug. You can feel yourself triggered in seconds. Knowing your reason for coming lets you 'let your grandma be your grandma.'

• The sibling's partner you can't stand
When you vent about your sister's boyfriend, she feels the judgment even if no one says it, believes the family is against her person and clings to him harder. Venting about them pushes her away.

• Mom trashing Dad after the divorce
Mel's suggested words for this listener: 'Mom, I don't want to hear about Dad. I'm not available to talk about it, so let's talk about something else.' If it continues: 'I don't want to get into that today. Let's talk about your garden.'

• The Robbins three-day rule
Mel's family jokes that they're great for about 3 days, then everyone is stressed and blowups start, so three days is their time boundary.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Before the gathering**
  Write down why you're going, how long you'll stay and two topics you won't discuss.
- **In the moment**
  Picture their 8-year-old self, think 'let them,' then 'let me pause, let me breathe.' Wait out the 90 seconds before you speak.
- **Instead of venting**
  Skip the bedroom rant to your partner. Take a walk or change the subject so you aren't rehearsing the anger.

4 Things You Aren’t Responsible For: How to Let Them & Take Your Power Back

Date: 2025-09-18 · Duration: 0:56:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1orPqt6Wr0

KEYPOINTS

- **There are four things you are not responsible for, and each one has its own 'Let Them' phrase**
  Mel names four places people take on responsibility that was never theirs: others' happiness (let them be unhappy), rescuing people (let them learn from life), making people understand your choices (let them misunderstand you), and proving your worth (let them underestimate you). Underneath all four: the one thing you can never control is other people.
- **Making everyone happy is a recipe for feeling worse yourself**
  You will never put your own happiness first until you can let others be unhappy or disappointed. Mel separates the healthy desire to make people happy from the imagined full-time job of keeping everyone happy, which is the part that wears you down.
- **Check why you're saying yes: do it because it makes you happy, not to stop someone being disappointed**
  Doing nice things is fine if being that kind of person makes you feel good. Doing them to prevent someone's disappointment means you're managing their expectations and ignoring yours, a 'double whammy of negativity' that breeds resentment, like blaming parents for guilt trips you've made yourself responsible for.
- **Rescuing people tends to backfire, and it costs you too**
  Mel says the experts she interviewed agree that solving someone's problems for them usually makes things worse. You can advise, pay and throw 'a dozen lifelines,' but people change only when they're ready to do the work. Rescuing also creates problems for you, and you matter too.
- **Helping takes two people; when they won't take part, it turns into enabling**
  If someone isn't accepting your help, or isn't meeting the terms you gave money or support on, you're doing all the work and they've stopped participating. That's when Mel says 'let them struggle.' She frames it as loving: 'I believe you can change, and when you're ready, I'll be right there.'
- **Let people face real-world consequences**
  Reading from the chapter 'The More You Rescue, the More They Sink' (p. 231), Mel quotes Harvard psychiatrist Dr. Robert Waldinger: 'Don't shield them from the consequences of what they choose.' The passage mentions a night in jail or losing a job or license in addiction cases. It's Mel's framework, not a plan for any specific situation.
- **Avoidance is a normal habit, so don't remove every hard thing from someone's path**
  The same applies to homesickness, anxiety and self-doubt. A Harvard clinical psychologist told Mel that avoidance is a very common coping habit; people move away from hard conversations and changes, and clearing obstacles for them can keep that going.
- **You can't make people understand you, so stop over-explaining**
  Everyone filters you through their own experiences and biases, so explaining '10 different ways' rarely works. 'Save your energy for living your life, not defending it.' Her pairs: 'Let them be confused and let me be clear,' 'Let them have their opinions and let me have my boundaries,' 'Let them talk. Let me live.'
- **Self-worth comes from liking yourself, not from being liked**
  Wanting people to understand your choices differs from needing them to validate your worth. Your job is showing up with integrity, consistency and effort because you deserve to be proud of how you live. 'The secret isn't getting more applause. It's caring less about who's clapping.'
- **Giving up responsibility for other people is freeing, not uncaring**
  Mel calls it 'not a condemnation. It's a liberation.' Taking power back means owning your life, demanding more of yourself because time is ticking, and spending nothing on what was never yours to manage; she admits she wasted decades on these four.

EXAMPLES

- **Carnegie Mellon study of 'over-givers' (Vicki Helgeson)**
  Led by psychology professor Vicki Helgeson, it tracked college students for 10 days. Those who constantly cared for everyone but never asked for help ended up drained, stressed and emotionally worse off; the more they managed others' emotions, the worse they felt.
- **The unicycle on a New England highway**
  On a rural two-lane, 45 mph road by a river, Mel passed someone riding a unicycle along the highway. She had no idea why and didn't need to. Others will view your choices the same way, and their confusion isn't yours to fix.
- **Nicholas Epley's research on how badly people understand each other**
  Per Mel, a study in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that even when people genuinely try to see your viewpoint, their own perspective gets in the way, so you can explain 'until you're blue in the face.'
- **Moving away, quitting to start a business, getting sober**
  When friends ask why you're leaving town: 'I'm moving because I'm moving.' Parents fret about security and benefits when you quit to launch a business. Mel predicts doubters will brag about your business in two years and your sober lifestyle will inspire friends in three.
- **Two studies on motivation and self-worth**
  Christopher Cerasoli's team reviewed 108 motivation studies (tens of thousands of people, in Motivation and Emotion): internal motivation raised performance and quality; cash, praise or approval dimmed it. Dr. Kristin Neff's work (Self and Identity) linked self-worth tied to external validation with emotional instability.
- **Babysitting your sister's untrained dog, again**
  Mel's examples of habitual yeses: the extra shift, watching your sister's untrained dog yet again. Say yes if it makes you

happy; doing it out of obligation is 'the worst reason to do something.'

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask: 'What is the problem I'm trying to solve, and is it mine?'**
  Use it when someone you love is struggling; most problems aren't yours, and crossing that line often makes things worse.
- **Pair each 'let them' with a 'let me'**
  Name what you're releasing, then what you'll do: 'Let them be disappointed, and let me make decisions that make me feel good about myself.'
- **Support from the sidelines with an open door**
  Say it out loud: I believe you can change and I'll be there when you accept help, but I won't solve this for you. Get professional guidance for addiction or mental health crises.
- **Source: The Let Them Theory book**
  Mel reads pages 79 ('Let Them Think Bad Thoughts About You'), 226 and 231, and credits clinical psychologist Dr. Nicole LePera for the point that not everyone is ready, or able, to get better.

It’s Not You: The Real Reason Adult Friendship Is So Hard & 3 Ways to Make It Easier

Guest: Danielle Bayard Jackson
Date: 2025-04-24 · Duration: 1:28:54
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIiGtwPLSvI

KEYPOINTS

• Women's friendships tend to be deeper and more intense than men's

Friendship coach Danielle Bayard Jackson, author of Fighting for Our Friendships, says research shows women experience more platonic intimacy in same-sex friendships. They tend to pair off one-on-one, which brings depth and accountability, while men gather in larger groups of casual friends where they can stay more anonymous. Women talk more about health and family; men more about sports and current events. Women integrate friends like siblings; men, like cousins.

• Three affinities hold women's friendships together: symmetry, support and secrecy

Across anthropology, sociology and psychology, Jackson kept seeing the same three priorities. Symmetry is feeling equal and alike ("me too," "same"). Support is having each other's back, which research names as the top thing women want from same-sex friends. Secrecy means a shared "vault" of mutual self-disclosure. When tension appears, she suggests tracing it back to which of the three has shifted.

• No friendship is so close you don't have to say what you need

Many women believe a real friend should just know, and that having to ask detracts from closeness. Jackson calls that unfair, since we don't expect mind-reading anywhere else. Unspoken needs lead to withdrawal: calling less, initiating less, "silently stacking offenses," until the other person is cut off without knowing why.

• Sharing is the glue, and sharing less is the first sign of strain

If a friend tells someone else first about a promotion, pregnancy or health scare, it makes you question how close you are. Jackson notes some people were raised not to share their business and respects that, but challenges them to consider how close they feel to people if they never disclose.

• Women's friendships are deeper but end faster

Research she cites finds girls have more former friendships than boys, and women's friendships dissolve at a faster rate. Jackson rejects the "girls are petty" explanation: when someone helps raise your kids and advises your career, there's more surface for friction. Someone you check in with quarterly rarely falls out with you.

• Friendship breakups can hurt longer than romantic ones

Romantic relationships come with an expectation they might end; friendships rarely do. Some theories suggest women's friendships become part of self-concept, so losing one makes you question whether you're still funny or lovable. Mel shares a college friend she split with over 30 years ago, matching tattoos and all, whom she still thinks about because the ending holds a version of herself she regrets being.

• Envy and jealousy are normal; what you do with them matters

Jackson distinguishes envy (two people: you have something I want) from jealousy (three: I fear losing you to someone else). Envy can reveal your own desires. Instead of avoiding the friend or making passive-aggressive remarks, coach yourself: her having isn't you lacking, and timing differs. For tender situations like infertility, it's fine to set a kind boundary such as skipping a baby shower but sending a gift.

• Women set higher expectations and register more "wrongs"

Mel reads from Jackson's book: a review of 36 studies found women wanted more from close relationships than men, especially reciprocity and self-disclosure, and so identify more relational violations. One study tracking college dorms found most roommate reassignment requests came from women.

• Controlling friends are often driven by anxiety

Jackson sees anxious attachment under possessiveness, like the friend who tracks your location and texts when you're out with someone else. To someone who recognizes it in herself: build multiple friendships so one person isn't your everything, and ask what you're afraid of if you loosen your grip.

• Half of friends turn over every seven years

Research she cites finds people replace about half their friends every seven years. Jackson hopes it eases shame both about friendships ending and about making new friends at 42, and means we should keep inviting new people in. She adds that research finds 40% of adults don't have a best friend.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's middle-school slow dances

Mel says she hated her best friends when boys picked them to dance and not her. She cites research that girls' confidence drops sharply between 12 and 14, with a 46% drop by 14, and that 60% of girls that age aren't confident they can make new friends. Jackson mentions Dr. Hannah Bradshaw's work: girls who spend time with boys often say they went there because girls mistreated them.

• A friend who named her limit

A friend whose child was in a serious mental-health crisis told Mel she was happy for her but was stepping back from their friend group because seeing other kids hit milestones was too painful. Mel felt closer to her for saying it instead of faking a smile.

• The bridal party problem

Jackson calls choosing bridesmaids the only time besides MySpace's "Top 8" that women publicly rank friends, and it can reveal that someone isn't as close as she thought. Brides should explain the logistics — a small party, a sister's expectations, cost — to reassure friends, or skip the bridal party.

• Teen friendships predict adult love

Jackson cites a study finding the top predictor of success in adult romantic relationships is how well you did with same-sex friends in adolescence, likely because that's where you first learn to communicate and negotiate.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Say the disappointment, then watch the response**
  "I was bummed you didn't come last night." Weigh how severe and frequent letdowns are, but focus on whether the friend regrets it and tries to repair. Mel reframes a friend's disappointment as a green flag: it means they wanted you there.
- **Know the warning signs**
  You don't like who you are around her, you leave depleted, your goals feel delayed by the friendship, or trust feels unrecoverable. Sometimes it's not a toxic person, just a dynamic that doesn't work.
- **Frame boundaries as invitations, not accusations**
  Instead of "you text too much," try "I love our weekend calls; Saturdays or Sundays?" Playfulness lowers the threat.
- **Name transitions and new closeness out loud**
  "I love how happy he makes you, and I miss us — can we FaceTime Fridays?" With new friends, say "I'm loving getting to know you."
- **If a teen is iced out, help her find her people**
  Keep showing up kindly, and approach the one group member she trusts most. People who take pleasure in pushing her out aren't her people.

6 Sneaky Ways People Are Disrespecting You & What to Do About It

Date: 2025-03-17 · Duration: 1:08:00
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrXsUHP-v9s

KEYPOINTS

• With obvious rudeness, decide whether it's worth your energy

Mel says overt disrespect, like yelling at a waiter or a boss taking stress out on everyone, is easy to spot. Your real choice is whether to police it. She links the recent rise in snappy, impatient behavior to people living with chronic stress in constant fight-or-flight, but stresses that this explains the behavior without excusing it.

• 'Let them' means recognizing the behavior, not permitting it

By the time you say 'let them,' the person has already been rude. You aren't allowing anything. You're naming it to yourself, declining to parent another adult, and reminding yourself you can leave the store, the table or the conversation. In the 'let me' half, you can be kind, stay calm and protect your peace.

• Subtle disrespect #1: talking over you

'If someone talks over you, they have no interest in listening to what you have to say.' Mel says it happens to women more than men, at work and at family dinners. Her response draws on coach Harrison Monarth's advice, quoted in Harvard Business Review: keep talking, slow down, then use their name ('Mike, I'm going to finish my point, and I'll be glad to get your feedback after'). When you finish, invite them in: 'Mike, what did you want to say?' Everyone else gets uncomfortable as the interrupter gets louder, while you stay calm and keep the floor.

• #2: dismissing your feelings

Lines like 'you're so sensitive,' 'you're overreacting,' 'why is everything an issue' and 'people have bigger problems' tell you the person doesn't care how you feel. What counts is the impact, not what they intended. Mel admits that as a parent she has been 'the Bigfoot stepping on people's feelings' by rushing her kids to feel better, and now tries to say things like 'I can see this is hard for you, how can I support you?'

• Repeated invalidation takes a real toll

Mel cites research on emotional invalidation, from a study she attributes to a researcher at Walden University: having your emotions repeatedly brushed aside is linked to more stress, anxiety and even depression, and it wears down confidence and resilience. Over time you start asking 'Am I the problem?' and shut down. Her answer is to validate yourself, using lines from trial lawyer Jefferson Fisher: 'I feel how I feel' and 'Let me decide how I feel.'

• #3: always running late

'Someone who's never on time doesn't value your time,' and if they won't, you have to. A former chronic late-comer herself, Mel says long explanations about traffic make it worse, because they suggest your circumstances matter more than other people's time. Her fix if you're the late one: walk in, say 'Thank you for your patience,' and sit down. Her standard now is to be five minutes early.

• #4: the silent treatment about what they need

Mel says psychologists describe the classic silent treatment as a form of emotional abuse. She focuses on a subtler version: staying quiet about what you want, then punishing the other person for not reading your mind. Friendship expert Danielle Bayard Jackson notes that we project our needs onto people we're close to. Mel's rule is that you have no right to be mad at someone for something you never asked for, whether it's at work, about hosting Thanksgiving, or about wanting flowers.

• #5: condescension

'Never look up to someone who talks down to you.' Watch for 'actually, that's a good idea,' 'I guess that's one way to do it,' 'are you wearing that?' and 'you can't take a joke.' Once is easy to let slide. A steady pattern chips away at your confidence, and people keep doing it because they get away with it.

• #6: backhanded compliments

A real compliment makes you feel good, so anything that leaves you feeling bad isn't one. Examples: 'You're a runner, really?', 'You're really well spoken,' 'You look so tired,' 'How is someone as amazing as you still single?' Mel cites a Harvard Business School study, 'Backhanded Compliments: How Negative Comparisons Undermine Flattery,' which found people use them to raise their own status while trying to stay likable, and that observers end up seeing them as insincere and calculating.

EXAMPLES

• The dog carrier on Mel's flight

Mel's seatmate struggled to fit a dog carrier under the seat, huffed at a flight attendant who was trying to help, and snapped 'absolutely not' when he offered to hang her coat. Stuck beside her for two hours, Mel chose not to engage, took the behavior as information about her, and was extra kind to the flight attendant.

• A teammate's father in a nursing home

A colleague's father, recovering from a stroke, was nasty to his caregivers. Instead of apologizing over and over, she pulled the nurse aside and said, 'He's a tough old bastard. You and I are in this together. I really appreciate you staying calm.'

• Chris confronts 'Mel time'

Years ago, Mel's husband told her that her chronic lateness was unacceptable and told him he wasn't a priority. He asked her to warn him as soon as she knew she'd be late, and not to book a 7:00 reservation if she couldn't arrive before 7:15. Being called out for disrespect, not disorganization, motivated her to work out how much time she really needs. It's a lot more than three minutes to shower, blow-dry and get dressed.

• Golf versus a Sunday on the couch

A friend of Mel's wanted to spend Sunday cuddled up watching movies, but told her boyfriend 'okay' when he asked to play golf. She stewed while he was gone ('it should have been nine holes, not 18') and was furious when he got home. Mel's fix is to say it out loud: 'I'd love for you to stay on the couch with me today.'

OTHER RELEVANT

• Lines that stop condescension

Pause, say 'let them' to yourself, then quietly ask, 'Are you trying to be condescending?' and let it sit. Or use Jefferson Fisher's 'Can you repeat that?' Mel says people rarely repeat the dig. Then keep your distance.

• Responses to a backhanded compliment

Let a few seconds of silence pass, then ask 'Compared to what?', 'What did you actually mean?' or 'Are you trying to make me feel bad?' Focus on how the comment affected you, not what they intended.

• If you're the one waiting

Let them be late and control your own part. Tell them directly how it affects you, and don't hold everything up for them: if they miss the ferry, the movie or the first act, go on without them.

• With someone who sulks

Let them go silent or sulk. Then decide whether to address it at all. Remember that managing another adult's emotions isn't your job, and limit the time and energy you give to someone who acts like an eight-year-old.

How To Handle Difficult People & Take Back Your Peace and Power

Guest: Jefferson Fisher
Date: 2025-02-27 · Duration: 0:50:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhBp6GZzH6k

KEYPOINTS

- **See difficult behaviour as a bid for connection**
  Trial lawyer Jefferson Fisher, author of 'The Next Conversation: Argue Less, Talk More', says people are usually difficult because of a fear, an insecurity or a need to feel heard. If you walk in convinced someone is difficult, you've made the conversation difficult before it starts. Set smaller goals: understand them, be understood, and listen to the end of their sentences.
- **You don't have to swing at every pitch**
  From cross-examination he learned that just because someone throws a zinger doesn't mean you have to respond. Nobody can make you say something you don't want to say. The less you say, the more powerful you sound.
- **Meet extremes with slow, specific questions**
  When someone says 'You never listen to me,' repeat the extreme back: 'I want to make sure I understand. I never listen to you?' Then peel another layer: 'Is it that you feel I never listen, or that I objectively never listen?' When someone gets louder, go slower and lower your voice. Their brain hears the contrast, and they tend to come down.
- **Ask 'Is this something we have to agree on?'**
  Most of the biggest fights start over small things, like which laundry detergent to buy in the grocery aisle. Usually the answer is no. If it is something you have to agree on, follow up with 'Do we have to agree on it right now?' That protects your timing too: when someone asks for 'five minutes' that really means 48, it's fine to say not now and suggest tomorrow or next week.
- **Phrases that lower defensiveness**
  Tell them what you learned ('I learned this matters to you'), that they've been helpful ('That's helpful to know'), or what you agree on ('I agree this is worth talking about'). Hearing the word 'agree' calms people even if you don't agree with their content. Others he uses: 'I could have done better' and 'Maybe you're right.'
- **Make belittlers repeat themselves**
  A put-down like 'So you're still single?' is fishing for a reaction. Say 'I need you to say that again,' or ask about intent: 'Did you say that to embarrass me?' The spotlight flips onto them, the fun is gone and they usually backtrack.
- **Answer disrespect with silence, then a standard**
  Wait about 10 seconds, long enough to be a little awkward, then say something like 'That's below my standard for a response.' It makes clear you won't engage at their level.
- **Gaslighting: 'I remember things differently. Period.'**
  Say it as often as needed, with no explanation or justification. Fisher compares gaslighters to a laser pointer leading a cat around. You beat it by standing still, especially when they replay a whole timeline tweaked in their favour.
- **With narcissistic patterns, refuse the game of 'praise or provoke'**
  If you're not praising them, they'll provoke you, and they enjoy your anger as much as your praise. Add distance: there's no clock on texts, so reply the next day or when you're calm. Stay boring and neutral with 'Noted', 'Got it' or 'Good to know.' A long paragraph just gives them one word to twist.
- **Regulate yourself first: breathe and drop your shoulders**
  When you feel threatened you hold your breath and tense up, and that's when you get loud. Take a 'conversational breath' and let it be your first word. 'Silence can never be misquoted,' and you don't have to attend every argument you're invited to.
- **Be the wet blanket, and never give them an enemy**
  With a relative who loves throwing out provocative opinions, don't take the bait. Try 'I think differently about that' or 'I don't know enough about that.' Opposing lawyers have told Fisher he was hard to fight because he never gave them an enemy. He calls it staying 'in the pocket', a drummer's term for keeping steady rhythm without calling attention to yourself.

EXAMPLES

- **The angry deposition witness**
  A hostile witness softened when Fisher asked, 'Setting the case aside, what are you struggling with today?' The man had just moved his mother into assisted living and was caring for her alone. Fisher's lesson: the person you see is often not the person you're talking to.
- **'I could have done better'**
  A woman emailed that she'd used the phrase in a fight, and her husband immediately replied, 'I could have done better too.' He had never said that in their 18 years of marriage.
- **'You just weren't supposed to be there'**
  A father told Fisher this reframe helped his autistic son stop feeling crushed about not being invited to things, and to put his time into friends who wanted him around.
- **Mel's 'Is that new?'**
  Mel realised that asking her daughter in Los Angeles 'Is that new?' about her outfits (it was thrifted) was really an accusation about money. 'Are you trying to insinuate something?' would be a fair response.
- **Papa at Walmart**
  When his grandfather was rude to store staff, Fisher made a point of being warm to them. Later he set a firm boundary: if you talk to people that way, I can't come with you. Papa changed. They also just stopped going to Walmart.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Taking things personally is optional weight**

Fisher tells himself 'Put it down, Jefferson.' He says how often you take things personally reflects how much grace you give others. A colleague passing without saying hello was probably just preoccupied.

• 'Did you mean for that to sound harsh?'

Use 'Did you mean...?' on a rude email or a curt one-word text. He uses it with his own dad. With people who write badly but talk pleasantly, just call them.

• Swap 'agree to disagree' for permission

Say 'It's okay to disagree with me, and I want to know if you do,' or 'I tend to have a different approach.' Debate the problem, not the person.

• Be a safe space for the grumpy people you love

If your kids learn you won't accept their bad moods, they'll stop coming to you when they're in trouble.

• His closing formula

Speak with control (breath, volume, body), with confidence (an assertive voice and no empty apologies like 'I hate to bother you'), and to connect: say what you mean, and deliver the bad news or the compliment.

Why Making Friends as an Adult Feels Impossible & What to Do About It

Date: 2025-02-10 · Duration: 1:12:31
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f26GCEUCNXk

KEYPOINTS

• Childhood built friendship for you

Mel says school, buses, town sports, playdates, team dinners, then college dorms or the military kept you with people your own age on the same schedule and milestones. Friendship was a group sport: if your group was invited, so were you. That trained everyone to expect friendship to just happen, which is why nobody sees the change coming.

• The 'Great Scattering' hits in your 20s, and again later

After graduation everyone scatters to different cities and timelines, and the group chat goes quiet. Mel says it repeats in your 30s as friends couple up and move to the suburbs, in your 40s and 50s with divorce, job changes or loss, and even in old age. Her father said he and her mom weren't thinking about a retirement community because 'our friends are dying.' Adult friendship becomes an individual sport, and if you don't realize that, you cling, take it personally or 'break up' with people.

• Three pillars: proximity, timing and energy

Mel's framework holds that all three must be present for a friendship to form and stay close. When one fades, the friendship changes. She says the change is about the pillar, not about you.

• Proximity matters more than you think

Mel cites an MIT finding that physical proximity, meaning how often your paths cross, is the strongest predictor of friendship. She mentions a state police academy study where cadets befriended those next to them alphabetically because they lined up and sat that way, and similar findings for chemists at neighboring lab benches. Moving, changing jobs or changing routines all shift proximity.

• Friendship takes time: roughly 50, 90 and 200 hours

Mel cites University of Kansas research suggesting about 50 hours together to become casual friends, about 90 to become friends, and about 200 to become close friends. As a kid you logged that weekly. As an adult, she notes, American time-use data shows most of ages 21 to 60 is spent at work. She frames the figures as 'just research', but they're why she says to give a new place a year.

• Timing explains why coworkers rarely become best friends

Work gives you proximity, but colleagues are in different life chapters: single, married, raising kids, grandparents, healthy or not. Mel says friendship came easiest when her kids were small, because school drop-offs and Saturday soccer gave her proximity and shared timing with other parents. Those groups scattered when the kids reached high school.

• Energy is the pillar you control, so don't force it

Chemistry either clicks or it doesn't. It can be off simply because you're different types, one of you doesn't drink while the other parties, or one goes deep and the other stays on the surface. Mel admits that in her 20s to 40s she pushed harder when energy was off and became, in her words, 'a walking red flag': clingy, insecure and passive-aggressive. Shifting energy is often a sign that both of you are growing.

• Friendships stretch like rubber bands rather than ending

Senior producer Yuna's analogy: with all three pillars present, the band is at rest. A move, a wedding, a baby, grad school or one person getting sober stretches it, but it stays intact and can snap back at a reunion, wedding or chance meeting. What breaks it is yanking: guilt trips, resentment and making the other person wrong. Mel calls 'best friends for life' a modern idea that sets people up to fail.

• 'Let them' needs 'let me'

Mel reads from The Let Them Theory: if they cancel, get busy, fall in love, move or stop calling, let them. But listener Charlotte said using 'let them' left her with hardly any friends. Mel's answer is that saying only 'let them' will make you lonely. The second half, 'let me', means making the effort, making the plans, checking in without expectation, and deciding how much energy to put into people who don't reciprocate.

• Don't keep score on texts or invites

Mel argues that being able to reach someone directly is a privilege, not a debt. When a friend got passive-aggressive after she didn't text back during a hard stretch with work and family, she replied that texting all day wasn't a priority but she cared about him, and that resolved it. To listener Seema, who hosts but isn't invited back, she says to host because you love hosting, not to trap friends into returning the favor.

EXAMPLES

• A year of sulking at age 52

After 26 years outside Boston, Mel moved to a Vermont town of about 3,000 people and spent roughly a year crying, watching Boston friends online, and reading alone in her favorite coffee shop. She had forgotten her own advice to her daughter Sawyer, who called crying almost daily as a Boston College freshman: give it a year.

• 32 contacts in the coffee shop

Mel started introducing herself and saving each name in a phone contact for the coffee shop, with a note like 'tall, beard, glasses, Kevin', so she could greet people by name the next day. She now has 32 entries. A Wednesday walking group came out of it. One morning she nearly skipped coffee with them for lack of time, went anyway, and says those 23 minutes changed her day.

• Chris's ski-touring crew

Mel's husband joined a golf league and a local ski race team. Chatting on the lift, he found fellow Telemark skiers and now meets a group of 30 to 40 who skin up the mountain with their dogs several mornings a week. An activity recreates proximity, shared timing and matching energy, much like a childhood team.

• Maxine keeps inviting

Mel's friend Maxine constantly throws parties and keeps inviting Mel and Chris even though they're almost always away or picking up a kid from the airport. Mel credits her with exactly the flexible approach she's describing.

• Reconnecting after 30 years

Mel recently started a group chat with her college freshman roommate Bernadine and another college friend. After more than 30 years of little contact, she says it felt like no time had passed.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Go first, every day

Compliment people ('I love your socks'), learn names at the dog park or mail room, and go places alone and talk to the person beside you. Mel cites Harvard's Dr. Robert Waldinger, a past guest, on research showing these small 'weak tie' interactions ease loneliness. She thinks they're among the strongest ties of all.

• Join or start an activity

CrossFit, yoga, a painting class or a library book club draws people with similar energy. Mel mentions research suggesting art classes are especially good for connection for older adults.

• Keep distant friendships going cheaply

Each morning, following a habit from her friend Brendon Burchard, she sends one text or voice memo to someone she's thinking about. Don't write 'let's get together' unless you'll suggest a date. Share concert plans with 15 friends so whoever wants to can join. Use drives or six minutes in a grocery line to call someone.

• When life is falling apart

For listener Colleen, who is jobless, divorcing, broke and embarrassed to host, Mel suggests going through your camera roll and old photos and texting someone who has been through the same thing to ask for advice. Free library and school events help too. People can't help if you stay stoic and isolated.

The One Tool to Transform Your Relationships: The Let Them Theory

Guest: Sawyer Robbins
Date: 2024-12-23 · Duration: 1:36:01
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4h9-LIkvzA

KEYPOINTS

• Many close relationships have an 'invisible distance'

Mel describes a gap that builds between people who love each other, through passive-aggressive comments, small hurts you try to let go, and old resentments, like 'death by a thousand cuts.' From the outside, she and her oldest daughter Sawyer, 25, looked close. They texted, saw each other and took trips together. But underneath, Sawyer felt she wasn't a priority, and Mel felt Sawyer would never let her in.

• Sawyer's side: her mom was gone, and when home, talking about work

In Sawyer's middle and high school years, Mel was on the road up to about 200 days a year. Sawyer grew closer to her dad, Kendall and Oakley. She felt Mel's attention went to work or to Kendall's singing career, and she felt jealous for lacking a 'natural talent' that connected her to her mom and sister. Strangers kept introducing her as 'Kendall's sister' or 'Mel Robbins's daughter,' sometimes asking her for Mel's email. She started blaming Mel for the fans who were taking her mom away.

• Mel owns it without excuses

Mel explains she was consumed by fear over the family's debt and spent nearly a decade chasing income. She calls it her responsibility as the parent to make a child feel seen and prioritized, and to be calm rather than taking her stress out on the family. She also notes a common pattern: the oldest child often becomes responsible and stoic, so parents worry about them less, and she says that's still the parent's job to notice.

• Once you've decided someone doesn't care, everything confirms it

Shopping trips and showing up to games didn't get through, because Sawyer had already decided her mom didn't care, and her 'force field' reinterpreted everything. Sawyer admits she liked being mad at Mel, because anger, tears or a crisis were the only times she got her mom's full attention, phone down. Mel says resentment can become a substitute for the love you actually want.

• The Let Them Theory has two steps, and Sawyer created the second

'Let them' means you stop trying to control other people and let them be who they are. 'Let me' means turning to what you control: what you think, say and do, and how you handle your emotions. Mel defines responsibility as 'the ability to respond.' She credits the second step entirely to Sawyer's research.

• Drop the rope in the tug-of-war

Mel's image is two people pulling up to every conversation with a U-Haul full of baggage, each grabbing a rope and pulling. The fastest way to end it is to drop the rope. Expect the other person to push back, for example with 'Is this therapy-speak?', because they don't know the new dynamic yet. Sawyer says that when she started tugging and Mel let go, she'd 'fall down' and realize her mom just wasn't playing anymore. 'It takes two.'

• You don't need the other person's participation to shift the dynamic

Mel says your own calmer, more mature behavior changes the dynamic, and people only change when they decide to. She's careful to add that 'Let them' doesn't change things on its own. It creates the space for change, and over time the other person shows how far they can meet you.

• Step into their shoes

Using a tool she calls 'frame of reference,' learned from her friend Lisa Bilyeu, Mel suggests asking 'I wonder what it was like for them?' instead of 'I don't understand why they're like this.' She tells a parent upset that their kids were angry about their vote to ask why the kids might feel that way. She quotes Dr. Ablon: 'people do well when they can.'

• Two things can be true at once

If family members are disappointed you're skipping a holiday, Mel says that means they love you. It doesn't mean you have to change your plans. Someone can be disappointed in you and still love you, and two people can be wired completely differently and still have room for each other.

EXAMPLES

• The 27-hour research project

After backpacking solo through seven countries in Asia for four months, Sawyer came home broke to Vermont and cried daily, while insisting she'd never work for her mom. Mel offered her about $40 an hour to analyze the comments on her viral Let Them post and podcast episode, which Mel says became the sixth most-shared episode on Apple Podcasts that year. Mel expected a few pages in two weeks. Within 27 hours, Sawyer delivered a 36-page color-coded analysis with a two-page summary.

• The 10% Sawyer warned about

Sawyer told Mel she couldn't write the book yet. About 90% of comments were glowing, but around 10% said things like 'I'm saying let them and I'm lonely,' or 'I'm the only one in my family who makes the effort.' A book that made people lonely needed a second part, and that became 'let me.' Mel says that holding the report, she finally understood how Sawyer's 'supercomputer' brain works and why she's so hard on herself.

• Eleven manuscripts in eight months

Sawyer insisted on being a part-time contractor, which Mel praises as a healthy boundary. They scrapped and rewrote the book from scratch 11 times and finished in eight months instead of the usual two years. A typical day ran from morning work to midday hanger to an afternoon blowup, tears, a hug, and a glass of wine either way. They said 'let them' to each other constantly.

• Box jumpers and box steppers

Mel calls Sawyer and Chris 'box steppers' who move logically from A to B to C, and herself a 'box jumper' who can see the destination but can't map the route. Much of their friction came from each wishing the other thought the same way. As project manager, Sawyer learned to say 'let her blow it up, it's her name on the cover.'

- **Mel's mother at 19**
  Mel says her relationship with her own mom changed once she pictured her at 19 in Kansas City with a newborn, working nights at the IRS while Mel's dad started medical school, far from family.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask what you actually want**
  If your story is 'my sister doesn't care' or 'I'm invisible in my family,' Mel's question is whether this is how you want it to stay. If not, you're the only person who can start changing it.
- **Use 'Let me' to choose between stepping in and giving space**
  When Sawyer seems intense or closed off, Mel says 'let them,' then decides whether to move toward her or give space. She tries to respect her as an adult going through her own challenges instead of mothering or smothering her.
- **Look for the side of someone you've never seen**
  Mel would never have discovered Sawyer's gifts for research, digital marketing and project management without working together. She encourages listeners to remember that the people they think they know best may have whole sides they've never seen.

Focus on Yourself: 3 Signs You’re Giving Too Much & What to Do About It Right Now

Guest: Dr. Pooja Lakshmin
Date: 2024-10-17 · Duration: 1:12:02
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXQCn4_u4ZA

KEYPOINTS

• Real self-care is about agency, not bubble baths

Psychiatrist Dr. Pooja Lakshmin, author of Real Self-Care, says the wellness industry has given us 'methods and tools but not principles or perspective.' Many of her patients have the meditation app and yoga membership but feel burned out and blame themselves. She points to structural pressures: no federally mandated paid parental leave, half of American workers unable to take a paid sick day, widespread childcare deserts, and parents of two paying about 10% of income for childcare. A juice cleanse won't fix that. She defines agency as the ability to solve problems and take meaningful action even within constraints.

• Self-care began as a word about choice

Lakshmin traces two roots to the 1950s and '60s: Audre Lorde's social-justice framing of self-care as self-preservation, and psychiatry's use of the term for the small choices patients on locked units could still make, such as what to wear, eat or do for exercise. Both point back to agency.

• It's not about the thing; it's the inner work before it

Picture two people in the same yoga class. One is consumed by guilt about homework and cupcakes, compares herself with the woman in a headstand, and doesn't know why she's there. The other negotiated weekend time with her partner (yoga Saturday, his run Sunday) and knows what yoga gives her. Lakshmin's line: 'Your yoga class is only as powerful as the boundaries you've set beforehand.' Real self-care is a verb, not a noun.

• A boundary is a pause, with three options: yes, no or negotiate

On her first day running a women's mental health clinic at George Washington University in 2016, Lakshmin's mentor advised her not to answer her office phone. Let it go to voicemail, decide, then respond. Insurance paperwork can wait until day's end; a patient who might crash her car without her ADHD medication gets an immediate refill. Saying no always has a cost and isn't available to everyone, but anyone can pause.

• Five questions to gauge your boundaries

Do I feel motivated, or overwhelmed or apathetic? Are particular people or situations constantly draining me? Do I set aside regular time to rest, or always grit my teeth and push through? Do I ask for help, and can I receive it? Am I making time for what matters to me, not my kids, my partner or society? Lakshmin says nearly everyone answers poorly at times, and naming it is powerful.

• Expect 'little-b' burnout and catch it early

Treating burnout as a catastrophe breeds denial until you land in the hospital, lose a job or crash a car. Lakshmin suggests accepting that we all burn out and noticing small burnout sooner. Type A, perfectionist people cycle through it more often; she recalibrates about every six months, and says it gets easier each time. Burnout and weak boundaries feed each other, partly through a cynical sense that nothing you do matters.

• Three warning signs you lack boundaries

First, you're constantly angry and irritable while believing you're selfless, like the mom who stays up wrapping gifts on Christmas Eve and is a terror the next morning. Second, you expect gratitude for things nobody asked for and resent not getting it. Third, you feel like you're managing your life instead of living it, and fantasize about escaping to a retreat, a beach or, in her case, a vegetable farm.

• Start with tiny, low-stakes boundaries; family is advanced

Family boundaries are hardest because of decades of history. Begin with remedial steps, such as sitting down to eat lunch away from your computer. One healthcare-worker patient went eight-hour shifts without food or water, so the first boundary was drinking water at the nurses' station every hour. Small wins build confidence and let you gauge how your boss and coworkers react before risking more.

• Guilt is a passing sushi plate, not a moral compass

Lakshmin believes guilt is largely internalized from a culture that values productivity, status and, for women, caretaking. Her acceptance and commitment therapy tool: your mind is a sushi chef and thoughts are plates on a conveyor belt. You don't have to grab the ones you dislike (hers is shrimp with the head on); let them pass. The goal is tolerating guilt, which softens to a whisper with practice. Selfishness is usually black-and-white thinking; aim to include your preference in perhaps one in ten decisions.

EXAMPLES

• Mel's 9 p.m. bedtime was 'faux self-care'

Under Lakshmin's questioning, Mel explained that missing her bedtime leads to scrolling or another episode and a chaotic morning without her walk. Lakshmin called the clock time the superficial part. Mel realized the real issue was taking time back from work: with a book manuscript due, she was still working when her husband was ready for bed and hadn't relaxed at all.

• Letting go of the laundry

Mel stopped doing her son Oakley's laundry. He washes it but leaves it in piles, and she had to resist folding it. Lakshmin says changing a pattern brings up your own feelings as well as theirs. You must give up control and accept that things take longer done their way.

• 'My name is Pooja'

On a toxic surgical rotation, Lakshmin's team only called her 'med student.' Unable to leave, she corrected them every time, a small act of agency. Mel recalled her hated big-firm job in Boston, where she left her jacket on her chair during lunch and turned her desk so no one could see her screen.

- **The sibling who won't help with Dad**
  For a reader caring for her father alone, Lakshmin advises grieving the unfairness, assessing whether siblings actually have capacity, and finding help elsewhere if they don't, such as neighbors or a former babysitter. Mel adds that siblings who don't share the burden shouldn't get a seat at the decision table.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Block 20 minutes today to scan next week**
  Notice where you feel dread, boredom or energy. For each dread, ask why: a rude coworker, or a standing 4:30 meeting during daycare pickup. Then act, for example by emailing the team to ask whether the meeting can move.
- **Know your rubber balls from your glass balls**
  Borrowing Nora Roberts's image, accept that some balls will drop. For example, Lakshmin questions whether three kids really need three schools 30 minutes apart.
- **Think trampoline net, not brick wall**
  Lakshmin pushes back on Mel's 'force field' image. Healthy boundaries flex, can firm up when needed, and aim for give and take, not cutting people off.

The Best Way to Deal With Narcissists Without Arguing | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2024-10-10 · Duration: 0:46:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C57vhohpnPA

KEYPOINTS

• An inflated ego is one ingredient, not the whole soup

Dr. Ramani's analogy: a carrot is an ingredient in soup, not soup. Narcissism is a whole constellation — variable empathy, entitlement, arrogance, grandiosity, need for admiration, envy, need for control. Some big-ego people are 'teddy bearish' and genuinely warm. The dividing line Mel recalls from their earlier talk: annoying versus harmful. She also warns that online 'diagnosing' is rampant, and that clicking one video on narcissism means the algorithm serves you more.

• Boundaries with a narcissist are 'hugging a porcupine'

Announcing a boundary ('don't talk about this') simply tells a narcissistic person where to poke, and you can't win the power struggle that follows. Her alternative is an internal boundary: you know certain topics, events or behaviors are coming, so you plan around them and remove yourself instead of negotiating. Confronting them directly is walking into 'the tiger's cage'.

• Teen narcissism is a story best told backwards

Adolescents separate from parents and are often mean at home but lovely with peers — what therapists call 'soiling the nest', which makes leaving easier for everyone. Dr. Ramani: show her a narcissistic 35-year-old and she'll show you a horrible teenager, but a horrible teenager won't necessarily become a narcissistic adult, since the frontal lobes aren't set until about 25–27. Her advice: set the limits you need, 'white knuckle' it, and revisit in about eight years.

• How to tell normal teen selfishness from something more

Check how the teen treats peers, teachers and other adults. If friendships are reciprocal and other parents say your kid is great, it's adolescent nonsense aimed at you. If they're mistreating people across the board and struggling in school, narcissism is more likely — and so are other risks such as substance use, so watch their safety and mental health.

• Narcissistic love is romantic, transactional and performative

Asked whether a narcissist can find true love, she says probably not by any healthy definition. They're drawn to passionate, 'flash in the pan' romance and status, not long-term companionate love with mutuality and standing by someone through illness or a partner's success. She half-jokingly wishes for an 'informed consent' form on love definitions by the third date, and says therapists know: the more a couple gushes on social media, the more likely it's a train wreck.

• Your ex hasn't changed for the new partner

Dr. Ramani reads the 'true love' question as the fear of the person left behind: will they be better for someone new? She recalls watching an acquaintance's on-off narcissistic partner meet a 'soulmate' within months and get engaged in about two, while the left-behind partner struggled. Her reassurance: it's performative, with no depth.

• Psychopathy is colder and more dangerous than narcissism

Even a malignant narcissist isn't a psychopath, she says. Psychopathic people are cold, callous, calculating, superficially charming, lack remorse and can run elaborate grifts and double lives; narcissists have more insecurity and a more chaotic interior. Drawing a new partner under control within a month fits psychopathy, she notes, citing the 'Dirty John' case as a reminder that such people can be dangerous.

• Know your 'true north' — the one fight you'll take

Her default is disengage, disengage. Your true north is the exception you'll fight or work around for — a grandchild's birthday, protecting a child, or confronting racism. With a narcissistic adult son using grandchildren as leverage, she says parents must radically accept that he's 'the portal' to the kids, decide which events matter most, and grieve the access they lose.

EXAMPLES

• The mom who lowered her guard in custody court

Dr. Ramani once coached a mother who wanted to play the 'mother lioness'. Instead, at a hearing, she calmly said alternate weekends would suit her fine — she wanted to reconnect with friends and get back into hiking and climbing. Her ex suddenly balked at giving her that time, and she ended up with roughly 80/20 custody rather than 50/50.

• Leaving a raging husband with a scared seven-year-old

Dr. Ramani won't give a clear-cut answer: family court often awards 50% to a parent who asks, leaving the child alone with the person they fear, while staying lets some parents run interference. Before deciding, get the child into therapy while only one signature is needed, and see a divorce attorney with your tax returns to learn your state's custody and money rules. She knows people who filed the day after a child's 18th birthday, and calls ongoing court battles 'post-separation abuse'.

• Mel's three-night limit

Mel has an unspoken rule with one person in her life: visits max out at three nights, because by day four they get prickly. She'd never announce it. Likewise, when politics comes up with someone who dominates, she gets up from the table rather than declaring a no-politics rule.

• The reservation that seats an incomplete party

If someone always arrives 25 minutes late, book a restaurant that seats you before everyone arrives. When they complain you started without them, the facts speak: you said 7. Dr. Ramani says that isn't enabling — it's the boundary you can actually control.

• The daughter whose father charmed a new woman in a month

A listener described her father as narcissistic with psychopathic traits and said a wealthier, never-married woman fell for him within a month. Dr. Ramani says the new partner is probably being love-bombed and may already have been told the daughter is jealous. If it's safe, the daughter can share documentation once; if she isn't believed, it's no longer her problem.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **If your adult child's new partner seems narcissistic, don't say so**

  Saying 'I'm worried they're a narcissist' to a child in love is the biggest mistake. Borrow cult expert Dr. Janja Lalich's 'breaking the shelf': gently remind them of their pre-relationship self — the surfing, the old friends, the writing. After a bad interaction, ask 'Hey, are you okay?' rather than 'That wasn't okay.'

- **Protect your finances from a narcissistic adult child**

  Dr. Ramani says it's not unusual for such children to prey on older parents — getting onto a house note or power of attorney. Work with a good attorney on anything you plan to hand down.

- **Caring for a narcissistic aging parent**

  Approach it like a nurse with an abusive patient: expect yelling and no gratitude, have therapy, support and meaningful pursuits elsewhere, and do it to stay true to your own compassion — 'do it for yourself'.

- **Before reopening contact after estrangement, reread your 'ick list'**

  Write down every harm — a ruined wedding, a refused loan, insults about your children's weight — because 'euphoric recall' fades the pain over time. Ask what you're hoping for and whether you can withstand being hurt again; she sometimes role-plays it with clients first.

Don’t Argue or Fight With a Narcissist… Do This Instead (#1 Narcissism Expert)

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2024-05-18 · Duration: 1:29:38
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IewDusCWdCM

KEYPOINTS

• The story of narcissism is usually told by the hunter, not the lion

Clinical psychologist Dr. Ramani Durvasula, author of It's Not You and host of Navigating Narcissism, says most content obsesses over spotting narcissists and why they act as they do, which keeps survivors focused on them. Her proverb, 'the tale of the hunt is always told by the hunter, never the lion,' describes a gradual, quiet takeover in which a strong, autonomous person ends up living in someone else's psychological service and no longer knows who they are.

• Becoming 'better' only makes you better supply

Trying to be a better daughter, partner or employee won't change a narcissistic person; it makes you a more convenient source of supply who anticipates their needs and keeps your own quiet. Adult children of narcissistic parents are often still bringing the four-year-old's finger-painted picture, now in the form of jobs, houses and grandchildren, and it's never enough.

• A narcissistic parent builds an 'accommodation muscle'

Children can't divorce a parent, so they reshape themselves (quieter, tidier, better grades, even the parent's therapist) to get basic attachment needs met. Dr. Ramani rejects the idea that these adults are more attracted to narcissists, since narcissists charm everyone. Instead, they're more likely to get stuck, because devaluation feels like a familiar game of earning love.

• Signs of narcissistic emotional abuse

Her short list includes self-blame, self-doubt, confusion, anxiety, helplessness, powerlessness, sleep and concentration problems, neglecting self-care, feeling selfish for doing anything for yourself, hypervigilance, constantly changing yourself to please others, loneliness, isolation and feeling 'weird.' Survivors also report losing faith or trust in the world.

• Step one is radical acceptance: they won't change

Radical acceptance means recognizing the behavior and dynamic won't change, not approving of it, and accepting that it will still hurt. Hope is the biggest barrier to healing because it ties up the psychological resources you need for yourself. Her distinction: anyone can change; a narcissistic person won't. Mel says this reframe changed a decades-long relationship in her life.

• Step two is grief, and it's monumental

Giving up hope means losing a narrative, an imagined future and a sense of belonging, and you don't get a second childhood or another parent. That's why Dr. Ramani builds 'scaffolding' around clients before removing hope. Two things make it worse: no closure, since there is no deathbed apology, and no justice, as families rally around the narcissist and exes remarry quickly. She cites Judith Herman's work on how injustice impedes healing from trauma.

• Rumination without a solution becomes depression

Rumination normally serves to find a solution, an idea dating back to Darwin. With narcissistic abuse there is none, so people hit the same wall, which fuels powerlessness and looks like depression. She recommends telling the story repeatedly in therapy, since each retelling puts another piece down, rather than wearing out friends.

• Dismantle hope with evidence

Euphoric recall makes survivors cherry-pick the good, like the trip to Miami or laughing at a TV show. Her 'ick list' means writing down every hurtful incident, with help from people who watched the relationship, until the pattern can't be unseen. For clients who insist it'll be different, she uses 'going into the tiger's cage': let them try the confrontation or share the good news, then analyze what happened. She estimates it's a kitten maybe one time in a thousand.

• Take a 12-month cleanse after leaving

No dating, sex, apps or flirty texts for a year, or for the length of the relationship if it lasted under a year, even after 30 or 40 years. The goal is rebuilding a self, from pizza toppings and thermostat settings to how you handle sadness, and getting through a first round of anniversaries and holidays alone. She says clients who followed it emerged with discernment, the core skill for avoiding the next one.

• Narcissistic families assign roles

The golden child is the best source of supply; the scapegoat absorbs the venom and carries lasting wounds; the rescuer cleans up before the parent's car arrives; the peacekeeper translates ('Mom didn't mean that'); the invisible child is forgotten, sometimes not even picked up from school (Mel laughs that this is her husband); and the truth-seer spots patterns early and often lands in the parent's crosshairs. The roles persist even after the narcissist dies.

EXAMPLES

• 60 cups of tea

With one client who kept expecting things to be different, Dr. Ramani bet a cup of tea on predicting what the narcissistic person would do. She collected about 60 cups and lost only once. The client later said Dr. Ramani's certainty, with a coaster already out for the tea, convinced her it was a pattern rather than mind-reading.

• Mel's friend a decade after divorce

Ten years after her husband moved a much younger girlfriend into the family home and lifelong friends sided with him, Mel's friend still couldn't let go and ruminated about a hypothetical wedding for her daughter, who isn't even engaged. Dr. Ramani's view: she has fully accepted who he is; it's the injustice that keeps her stuck.

• Narcissist bingo

One client playing narcissist bingo at family events marks off each invalidation or gaslight and has to stop herself from yelling 'bingo' after five. Dr. Ramani admits she bets herself a Dairy Queen on the way home.

• The 400-pound backpack

Dr. Ramani, a survivor herself, says it's like everyone else ran a marathon on flat ground while you were sent uphill with a 400-pound backpack, and you still finished. She says she still struggles to value herself and calls her voice a gift that previous

generations of women in her family never got.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Prepare and release around family contact**
  Before each visit, remind yourself it will be no different and they'll make it about them. Afterward, leave no meeting booked right after; nap, shower or walk. Keep revisiting why you still have contact; any reason is fine except 'this time will be different.'
- **Don't gaslight or proselytize to your kids**
  When co-parenting, it isn't your job to convince children the other parent is a narcissist. If an adult child says it, resist 'finally!'; they're testing the waters and still feel loyal. Ask how they feel and how you can help instead of fixing. Expect them to be anxious, and know some kids get lured with money or love-bombing.
- **Let anger work for you**
  Dr. Ramani calls anger a mobilizing emotion and a stage of grief, distinct from narcissistic rage. Many survivors also carry complicated anger and guilt toward the non-narcissistic parent who didn't protect them.
- **Build grief rituals for yourself**
  Deaths come with rituals like sitting shiva or the Tibetan 49 days; this loss doesn't, so deliberately make time to mourn. Stop asking 'why was I so stupid'; nobody taught you this, and everyone around you said 'they didn't mean it' while the narcissist said you were too sensitive.

5 Things Only Fake Friends Do & How to Let Go of What No Longer Serves You with Trent Shelton

Guest: Trent Shelton
Date: 2024-02-29 · Duration: 1:21:36
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajBK8Grwp0M

KEYPOINTS

- **Your circle is the biggest barrier to peace.**
  Former NFL player Trent Shelton says that whenever he had the wrong environment around him, in football or afterwards, it drained him, and the right people lifted him up. His first test: you never have to question anything that's real. If you keep wondering whether someone is truly for you, you probably have your answer.
- **When the benefit ends, the loyalty often stops.**
  Shelton asks who would still be around if friendship were all you had to offer. Once he started saying no (no dinner on him, no club, not paying), the energy shifted, and people began whispering that he had changed. His view is that if 'no' changes the relationship, it wasn't real in the first place. A friendship that only runs one way needs to come to a dead end. Sometimes that means loving someone from a distance rather than cutting them off.
- **Don't let history keep you in misery.**
  Knowing someone since elementary school, or for five or ten years, doesn't mean they belong in your future. Mel adds that as you grow, people's roles shift. When she stopped complaining about her life and partying less, friendships built around those habits changed.
- **Type 1 to avoid: someone who wants your life.**
  Shelton distinguishes healthy admiration ('I want a marriage like that') from envy, which he calls jealousy left unchecked. The problem starts when someone feels they deserve your blessings without knowing what you sacrificed for them. He calls this 'counting people's blessings', like counting someone else's pocket. Such people may plant doubts about your partner or set you up to lose your position. His father told him to hang around only people with as much to lose as he had.
- **Type 2: someone of bad character.**
  Opportunities may steer clear of you because of who you're seen with. Shelton's rule: don't be friends with anyone you wouldn't trade places with, in character, mindset or life. To judge character, watch how someone treats people who can't do anything for them. Mel adds that she thinks a group sinks to its lowest common denominator rather than averaging out.
- **Type 3: a gossip.**
  If someone talks to you about other friends, assume they talk about you too. Shelton trusts people to be who they are: he expects a gossip to gossip and a liar to lie, so he doesn't hand them anything private. The mistake, he says, is trusting people for who we want them to be.
- **Type 4: someone who is friends with your enemies.**
  Shelton respects open enemies because at least he knows where they stand. The harder cases are 'frenemies'. Pay attention to their energy when you share good news. Do they turn the conversation to themselves, add doubt and fear, or say 'I'm proud of you' but never show up to support you? Sometimes, he says, your best support comes from strangers rather than familiar faces.
- **People who can't be happy for you usually aren't happy themselves.**
  Shelton admits that after being cut from the NFL he was 'a hater' who blamed everyone, even his parents for not making him faster, and picked apart Peyton Manning on TV. 'Have you ever met a happy hater?' he asks. Mel admits she felt similar envy during her financial struggles with Chris, when she thought none of her friends were struggling. Hurt people try to ease their pain by passing it on.
- **Be loyal to your principles, not to people.**
  Shelton says if he were loyal to people he would say yes when he meant no. Instead, he lets his principles decide, presenting 'facts over feelings'. Peace is his number one principle: however big the opportunity, if his peace says no, he doesn't do it. He says every time he has ignored his principles he has regretted it. He would rather be seen as cold-hearted than live broken-hearted from being misused again and again.
- **Be loyal to your own pace.**
  Runners who try to keep up with someone else's pace burn out. Shelton says many people let scarcity, comparison or panic set their pace. He lets confidence set his, which lets him say no to a big opportunity and yes to a small one. That, he says, is how he has stayed consistent for 15 years.

EXAMPLES

- **The high school friends who turned on him**
  Shelton's friend group all dreamed of playing Division I football. When he was the one who made it and started getting recognition, some of them spread rumours, and one went after his girlfriend behind his back. He decided that if his success made someone bitter, they weren't for him, because a true friend is happier for you than you are for yourself. Mel compares it to the friend who gets married or has kids first.
- **His son Tristan as the turning point**
  What changed Shelton was realising he didn't want his son to follow the path he was on. He started with 'rehab time': going to the gym, because he could control that, and reading his first personal development book. He jokes that until then Lil Wayne had been his only development book.
- **Rescheduling the interview for an eighth-grade game**
  Shelton postponed this recording because it clashed with Tristan's game. 'I can create other moments, but I can't get this moment back,' he says, especially after losing so many people in his life. Mel praises it as living by your principles.
- **Mel's coffee break mid-marathon**

Mel jokes that she ran the New York City and Houston marathons with friends, finished in about six hours, and once left the course for an iced coffee and a clean bathroom at Starbucks. Shelton says that's being loyal to your pace.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Send 'the invitation'**

Unclear communication sets unfair expectations. Tell friends plainly where you're going, what you'll no longer do, what you need and what you'll give. Like a birthday invitation, you can't control who shows up, but you didn't leave anyone behind; they chose to stay.

- **Write three to five guiding principles**

Ask what you want to feel and give, what standards you want to live by, and what your best self looks like, such as peace, integrity or honesty. When a decision comes up, let your principles answer it.

- **Build trust and 'soul momentum'**

Shelton recommends trusting your internal sense of direction over things simply lining up externally, and quitting comparison. Mel says small acts of defiance, like getting out of bed, eating real food or going to the gym when you don't want to, are proof that you believe something bigger is meant for you.

- **Know, and demand, your worth**

Cut whatever is pulling your worth's strings, whether that's opinions, comparison or followers. Shelton suggests repeating, 'I'm worth it, I've been worth it, I will forever be worth it.' Start with self-forgiveness, and find people who reflect your worth, even if that means a run club or community group.

Signs You’re Dealing With a Narcissist (New Research From World-Leading Expert Dr. Ramani)

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2024-02-15 · Duration: 1:26:52
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4ff9NOPocA

KEYPOINTS

• Treat narcissism as a personality style, not a diagnosis you can hand out

Dr. Ramani argues the 'disorder' label muddies the conversation: only a clinician who has assessed someone can diagnose narcissistic personality disorder, and the people in question rarely see one. Calling it a maladaptive personality style lets you name the pattern without needing a diagnosis. She compares an ordinary personality to firm Jell-O with a little give, and a narcissistic one to cement.

• The core traits sit on top of chronic shame

She lists variable empathy, entitlement, grandiosity, arrogance, selfishness, a need for validation and admiration, a need for control, being driven by power and dominance, envy, and living in fantasy. All of it is armor around deep insecurity and a 'cauldron of shame.' That is why narcissistic people react so hard to criticism, frustration or disappointment: each one threatens the perfect self-image they have built.

• Their empathy is variable and transactional, not missing

Narcissistic people are not psychopaths. They learn that empathy wins connection and 'supply', so they switch it on when their star is rising and use it as a tactic, sometimes as a weapon. Her example: a spouse who is all support on Wednesday after a great day at work, then on Friday snaps 'why are you telling me your problems?' That flip-flop is the narcissistic relationship.

• Entitlement is what separates vanity from narcissism

She puts narcissism on a spectrum. At the mild end are the 'Instagram narcissists': selfies, look-at-my-dinner, annoying and emotionally shallow, but not necessarily harmful. She cites 2017 research on the phenomenology of narcissism that found entitlement is the one pillar present in every form. A vain person who still waits their turn and treats a server kindly is not, in her view, a narcissist. An entitled person needs to be more special than you.

• You can explain the behavior and still call it unacceptable

Her 'multiple truths' idea: he really did miss the promotion, and the way he's treating you is still not okay. She warns that psychology often slides from 'we can explain it' to 'so it's fine'. She also pushes back on couples therapy's assumption that both people share the blame. When one person uses the other as a 'pacifier and punching bag', she would give the target maybe 5% for being in the room.

• Two developmental paths: adversity and overindulgence

One path is early neglect, invalidation or abuse, though most children with that history do not become narcissistic. The second, drawn from Eddie Brummelman's group in Amsterdam, is being taught you are more special than other kids, or being the 'performing pony' who is loved for soccer or grades rather than for who they are. For parents, she says the heavy lifting runs from birth to about age 13.

• Social media fuels the vulnerable narcissist most

Citing Keith Campbell (University of Georgia), co-author of 'The Narcissism Epidemic', she says grandiose narcissism has stayed fairly stable, while vulnerable narcissism (victimhood, failure to launch, angry trolling) has 'gone off like a wildfire'. Social media is the match. It only ignites people who are already 'gasoline'.

• Shame drives the rage, and they aim it selectively

She describes rising shame as 'psychological diarrhea': an overwhelming urgency where rage or grandiosity is the bathroom they run to, echoing Kohut's view of shame and rage at the core. Yet they rarely scream in shareholder meetings. They pick 'low-value targets' they see as disposable, which shows they can control it.

• The DIMMER pattern turns down your light

Her acronym covers dismissive, invalidating, manipulative (including gaslighting), minimizing, entitled and rageful behavior. To survive the relationship you end up giving in and living in their service. She compares herself to a cup of water: she's fond of it while it holds what she needs, then throws it away. They hate abandonment, though, because it means losing control, and they punish people who leave.

• Real change in close relationships is very unlikely

Asked whether narcissists change, she says they may learn manners, punctuality or a little anger control with less important people, but she has not seen them become present, empathic and self-aware. They are less likely to start therapy and, she says, about 60% more likely to drop out of it. Change requires touching your own vulnerability, and that is exactly what the pattern defends against.

EXAMPLES

• The $1,500 Versace toddler

Checking into a hotel for her mom's 75th birthday, Mel watched a father yell at staff while the mother tapped on her phone and their three-year-old sat in a stroller in a Versace sweatsuit and Golden Goose glitter sneakers, scrolling a phone. Dr. Ramani said that modeled entitlement plus social media plus unattuned parents is 'the person who is going to love bomb and destroy someone's life in about 25 years.'

• 1 in 5, and worse in some industries

Studies of the clinical disorder show rates of roughly 1–6%. Pressed for a 'spitball' figure for the personality style, she guesses 20%, enough narcissism to cause problems in relationships. She expects it to be higher in big cities and much higher in finance, law, politics, media, athletics and celebrity.

• The client whose partner improved when he out-earned her

A successful woman's partner, a 'textbook malignant narcissist', cut her down and cheated constantly. When his career took

off and he made more money, he felt more secure in the power balance and 'behaved a little better'. She uses the story to show that every narcissistic relationship is asymmetric and built around power. Her line: 'You're in love, they're in power.'

• The client who stayed for the prenup

A former client ended therapy, saying 'you see the truth of my relationship and I'm not leaving', citing a restrictive prenup and the fear of a one-bedroom apartment. Years later the client emailed that nothing had changed and the marriage had damaged their child's mental health. About 50% of people stay in these relationships, and she says she doesn't judge them for it.

• Love bombing at the cocktail party and on the first date

Narcissists 'case the joint' like a burglar and rush over 'like heat-seeking missiles' when a famous person arrives. In dating, love bombing sounds like 'good morning my queen', soulmate talk and the 48-hour date. With vulnerable narcissists it can be pity-seeking that hooks rescuers, and parents can do it too, with pizza and Disneyland.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Use the 'would you accept this for Mary?' test

Borrowing from Kristin Neff's self-compassion work, she asks survivors who blame themselves whether they would sign off on the same treatment if it happened to a friend. When they say no, they work backward from there to calling it unacceptable.

• Ride out love bombing like a Maui vacation, then apply the rule of three

She says no one can make themselves walk away from something that feels that good. So enjoy the trip, but remember it's a vacation and you go home. Watch how they handle disappointment: a lost reservation, lost bags, a wait for a table. Her supervisor's rule was that the first time is an event, the second is a coincidence and the third is a pattern. Catch yourself making excuses like 'we did just have an overnight flight.'

• If it feels like too much, it is too much

She warns that romance-heavy cultures and curated dating profiles favor narcissists. A healthy relationship is with a whole, ordinary person, not a fairy tale. Expect second rounds of love bombing after you catch shady texts or disappearances. They are meant to steady the ship.

Outsmart a Narcissist: A Proven 4-Step Plan to Take Your Power Back | Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Rebecca Zung
Date: 2023-11-20 · Duration: 1:39:34
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz_1hI7SOT4

KEYPOINTS

• A narcissist isn't someone who thinks too highly of themselves, but someone who feels no inner value

Zung, a top-ranked family law attorney who spent about 20 years litigating high-net-worth divorces and wrote SLAY the Bully, approaches narcissism as a litigator, not a clinician. In her definition, narcissists pull all their sense of worth from outside: image, prestigious friends, houses, cars, and putting other people down. Because it is fear- and scarcity-based, it is never enough.

• She describes three common types: grandiose, covert and malignant

Grandiose narcissists are the in-your-face, bragging 'garden variety' and the easiest to spot. Covert ones are the stealthiest: often seen as kind humanitarians, clergy, doctors or lawyers who play the victim, agree to things and don't follow through, take credit, and deliver small jabs that sound harmless when you repeat them. Malignant ones will ruin your life with false accusations, stalking or threats. People can be a mix.

• Her explanation of the origin: repeated childhood trauma stalls emotional development

In Zung's account, chronic stress in childhood floods the brain with cortisol and adrenaline and arrests development in the limbic, emotional system, while the prefrontal, thinking brain keeps maturing. The result is someone sharp in thought but emotionally immature, who can 'spin on a dime.' Mel, drawing on Dr. Ramani Durvasula, stresses that narcissists are made, not born, and that seeing the hurt child underneath shrinks them and gives you back your power.

• 'Narcissistic blindness' explains the 'I never said that'

A trigger, which can be an eye roll or a tone ('they hear tones like dogs hear whistles'), sends them into survival mode and black-and-white 'splitting.' In that state, she says, they may retaliate even at their own expense, have little memory of what they did, and be blind to the damage. Mel came to see family blow-ups that were later denied as possibly not even remembered, though Zung notes some people do act intentionally.

• They run on 'narcissistic supply', which comes in diamond and coal tiers

Diamond-level supply is image: celebrities, money, a new partner, the judge, their employer, the label on their clothes. They'll protect it at any cost, 'even at the cost of their children.' Coal-level supply is degrading, controlling and manipulating people: backhanded comments like 'that dress is very becoming for your figure.' Mel singles out triangulation, bonding by trashing others, as the sign she now sees everywhere.

• The cycle runs from love bombing to devaluing to discarding

Love bombing means mirroring you, '50 emails a day', soulmate talk, and pushing for marriage, bank access or a business partnership fast, often swooping in as a saviour after a death or crisis. Devaluing brings lies, unpaid loans, stories that don't hold up, and 'why are you so needy', alternating with promises. Discard means a smear campaign and the mask coming off. Mel likened it to the abuse cycle she learned about on a domestic violence hotline.

• Intermittent rewards create a trauma bond

Zung cites Stanford's Robert Sapolsky: monkeys rewarded unpredictably showed dopamine surges she likens to cocaine. Mel compares it to a slot machine. Unpredictable affection is why smart, accomplished people get hooked and keep chasing the next round of love bombing.

• The biggest myth is that narcissists just want to win

They also want to keep jerking you around for coal-level supply, so they keep moving the goalposts. Unless you threaten a more important source of supply, she says, it never ends. That is why their divorces drag on for years. One client told her, 'I'd rather pay you than her.'

• Her four-part SLAY framework

Strategy: set a specific, positive vision, not just 'peace'. Leverage: threaten diamond supply, or 'fluff for favour, vomit later' by feeding their ego to get what you want, and keep documentation of their contradictory texts and emails. Anticipate: know which type you're facing and expect baiting and 'flying monkeys'. You: stand in your power and mindset. 'Do you want to be right that you can't win, or actually win?'

EXAMPLES

• The $2 million apology

After 12 hours of mediation, a 'big flaming narcissist' husband was set to pay about $2 million in alimony over several years. The wife offered to waive all of it if he sincerely apologised in private. He refused at first because he wanted to keep her on a string. Zung pushed him into it, and the alimony was waived.

• Seeding the smear six months ahead

A covert narcissist might tell neighbours 'I'm so concerned about Johnny's drinking' for months before filing, then ask them to testify in a custody fight, even if Johnny has no drinking problem. At work it looks like 'accidentally' leaving you off an email chain for a key client meeting.

• The anniversary gaslight

'I'm going away with my friends on our anniversary weekend.' 'We never discussed that.' 'We had a whole conversation, you agreed, don't you remember?' She traces the term to the play and film Gaslight, in which a husband dims the lamps and denies it.

• Glinda's line

Zung casts the narcissist as the Wizard of Oz, a big projected head hiding a feeble, frightened man. Your goal is to be Glinda, who tells the Wicked Witch, 'Go away, you have no power here.'

• Mel's own two shifts

With a narcissistic person she won't cut out of her life, Mel pictures them as an eight-year-old mid-tantrum, then pauses to ask what she wants: a yes, a no, silence, or consciously giving some supply to get her goal.

OTHER RELEVANT

• First boundary: don't run, and stop accepting disrespect

Zung's first steps are don't run, make a U-turn, break free. Never explain, justify or over-share. Let the words go past you like dodgeballs hitting the wall. Remember they attached to you because you have value. If you feel physically unsafe, leave the space.

• Phrases that defuse

'I agree that that's your opinion.' 'Your triggers are not my responsibility.' 'I understand that's how you feel; your approach isn't working for me.' 'Let's discuss this when you're less emotional.' 'I can see that you're upset.'

• Make the vision concrete

Instead of 'I don't want a panic attack when I see my ex', try 'I want to sit next to them at the school show, celebrate our daughter, and go out for pizza afterwards.' With a parent, define how often you'll see them and what you'll talk about.

• Keep receipts, even outside court

Record what they say and do, even in recurring family fights like who hosts the holidays. It builds leverage and keeps you sane when they deny things. Negotiate contracts, issues and terms, never your self-worth.

The Surprising Link Between People Pleasing & Your Health: MD’s Recommendation on How to Say “No”

Guest: Dr. Neha Sangwan
Date: 2023-11-16 · Duration: 0:54:06
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbmwWvZEdZw

KEYPOINTS

• A 'yes person' has lost their inner anchor

Internal medicine physician Dr. Neha Sangwan describes people-pleasing as becoming driftwood in the ocean: you go wherever the wind pushes you and lose track of how you make decisions. The goal is not an anchor that stops you from moving. It's a sailboat with a rudder, which feels the wind but charts its own course. When it's time to decide, she says, let your own heart be slightly louder than other people's voices.

• Her definition: giving up what matters to you so you can belong

People-pleasing, in Sangwan's words, is the moment you give up what matters to you to appease someone, avoid conflict or keep a relationship intact. She frames it as a spectrum, not a label. She wants to keep caring what her partner and the people around her want, but she had to learn to sit in someone else's discomfort in order to stay true to herself.

• People-pleasing is a coping strategy for feeling safe

Sangwan calls it a behavior we use to feel safe and belong, often formed in childhood by scanning the room and adjusting to get love or keep the peace. She mentions Gabor Maté's idea that we sometimes choose attachment over authenticity. A coach once challenged her for blaming her parents for her engineering and medical careers: she was the one who applied and did the 36-hour shifts. That made her see she was chasing being seen, valued and never sent away again.

• The real root is not being able to tolerate discomfort

Most of us were never taught how to handle disappointment or unease in the body. When that feeling rises, we do anything to make it stop, including saying yes when we mean no. Mel's takeaway is that before boundaries can work, you have to build the ability to ride out that wave. Being aware of the discomfort is what gives you a choice.

• Avoiding conflict feels easier now and costs more later

Shoes in the house, dirty dishes in the sink, hosting the holidays again, 'I'll take the pager': skipping the conversation gives you what Sangwan calls 'the short-term high' and leaves you with 'the long-term yuck.' An ignored conflict doesn't go away. It grows and moves somewhere else, until you're asking whether everyone thinks you're a magic fairy who does everything.

• Resentment means your boundaries have been crossed

Sangwan treats resentment as a sign that boundaries were trampled, often ones you never actually stated. She cites the saying that resentment is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. Notice where it shows up in your body, like a sinking stomach or weak knees. Mel finds it helpful to treat resentment as a sign of a broken system or outdated communication pattern instead of a personal attack. Sangwan's follow-up question: have you said this out loud to anyone, or only vented at home?

• Me-we-world: look at all three parts of a conflict

Trained as an engineer, Sangwan looks for root causes. In any conflict, ask what your part is, what the other person's part is, and what role the environment plays. With aging parents, if you always rush over right now while a sibling says 'in an hour,' look at your own urgency and the role you've long played in the family, and not just at their lack of help.

• Stress causes or worsens most illness, in her view

From her patients, Sangwan concluded that stress causes or exacerbates more than 80% of all illness. She believes not communicating with yourself and others makes people physically sick. When she urged colleagues to ask patients about the roots of their stress, they told her not to ask a question she didn't know what to do with. She says medications for anxiety, depression or sleep help when someone is near the edge, but used alone they send people 'back in the ring for round two' without new insight.

• Survey results from Mel's audience

When Mel's team surveyed listeners, 70% said they often say yes when they mean no, mostly at work and with friends. 82% said they feel constantly stressed, irritated, tired and impatient, and linked it to conflict they were avoiding. The most common reason given was 'I hate confrontation.'

EXAMPLES

• Sent to Africa at three months old

Sangwan's parents emigrated from India in 1965 and settled in Grand Blanc, Michigan. When her grandfather was posted by the UN to Africa, her grandmother took baby Neha with her. Two years later, back with her parents, she cried for over a month, called her dad 'hey you' before promoting him to 'Uncle,' and then learned to read everyone's wishes. Overhearing that her dad had wanted a son who'd be an engineer and her mom had wanted to be a doctor, she became both.

• The smashed plate in the yellow kitchen

At about seven, standing behind a plant, she watched her father slam a plate onto the table during an argument. Decades later she recognized the rule she had made in that moment: don't make Dad mad, and get out whenever voices rise.

• June 17, 2004: the alpha pager

At 31, exhausted on her last day of a five-on, five-off hospital rotation with 18 patients, she said yes to also covering the 'alpha pager' for all incoming transfers. Five hours later she had seen two patients. A nurse asked if she was okay, because she had requested IV potassium for room 636 four times in five minutes. She asked a psychiatrist colleague for a consult 'now.' An hour later he told her she was a severe people-pleaser, taking on an understaffed, bullying environment by herself.

• Mel's husband Chris and the attic crib

Mel had never thought of Chris as a people-pleaser. She realized he felt like the forgotten child: his mother recently recalled, in tears, putting him in a crib in an unfinished attic so they wouldn't hear him. For Mel, it explained a lifetime of putting himself

last.

• Patients' notes after five questions

After Sangwan's discharge questions, patients wrote back that they needed half their lifelong migraine medication, a third of their anxiety medication, or had slept through the night without back pain for the first time in five years. Separately, Mel cites a large review (97 reviews, over 1,000 trials, more than 125,000 participants) concluding that exercise was about 1.5 times more effective than medication or therapy for most people's depression and anxiety.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 'awareness prescription': five questions

1) Why this? Why did this part of your body break down? 2) Why now, and what message weren't you getting? 3) In hindsight, which clues and patterns now make sense? 4) What else in your life needs healing? 5) If you spoke from the heart, what would you say? Sangwan says whatever answer comes to you is the right one.

• Saying no at work without fear

If your boss asks you to work the weekend, name it and ask for clarity: 'I'll need to see about child care. Is this ongoing? Help me understand what's changing about the role.' Sangwan frames it not as fear of being fired but as figuring out whether the role still fits.

• Notice your body when resentment hits

Before reacting, ask how the feeling shows up physically. Then ask whether you ever actually stated the boundary or just assumed people should know it.

6 Ways to Use My “Let Them” Theory to Improve Any Relationship | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-11-13 · Duration: 0:58:27
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJIEzxxpHpw

KEYPOINTS

• 'Let them' redirects your energy away from what you can't control

When someone does something you don't like, such as skipping brunch plans, avoiding commitment, or watching ahead in your shared series, Mel says to quietly say 'let them.' Her core claim: the more you try to control something, the more out of control you feel. She stresses it isn't about letting people walk all over you. It's about taking back the time and energy you spend on other people's choices.

• Unhooking lets you respond effectively instead of emotionally

When the garbage collectors skipped her house, Mel didn't take it personally. She let them forget, then let herself call and ask them to come back. Once you're not offended, you can get what you want without the drama.

• Recovering peacemakers will feel discomfort, so let it pass

Caller Daniel stepped out of refereeing his family's conflicts but still felt uneasy. Mel says peacemaking was how he soothed his own discomfort. The growth is noticing the urge, breathing for about 90 seconds, and reminding yourself these adults can work it out or see a therapist. She had a similar habit of trying to keep her mom happy, and found her mom wasn't nearly as unhappy as she'd assumed.

• Be available for problem-solving, not gossip

Mel calls gossip a form of bonding through complaining that keeps families stuck. Her suggested script: you're happy to hear what happened and help find a solution, but you've committed to not gossiping about each other. When one person stops taking part, the person stirring drama has no partner, which leaves room for others to show up differently.

• Critics are often reacting to their own fears or lost dreams

Caller Jennifer left a 21-year teaching career to write a novel, with her wife's support. Her mother-in-law called it 'crazy' to Jennifer's 11-year-old son, who defended her, and has kept her distance for months. Mel offers two kind readings: worry about money coming out sideways, or a dream she never dared to chase being stirred up. Neither excuses the comment, but both make it less personal.

• The bigger issue may be silencing yourself to keep the peace

Jennifer admitted she isn't herself around her mother-in-law after 20 years. Mel says she had been fighting herself to avoid friction. The fix is to let the mother-in-law have her reactions while Jennifer shows up as herself, says when she doesn't feel supported, and asks her spouse for support.

• The four things you're responsible for

Mel's summary: expressing your needs, expressing your feelings, showing up as yourself, and doing what you need to build a better life. Other people are responsible for their own emotional reactions, feelings and boundaries.

• Expect pushback when you stop over-functioning

When you stop being someone's emotional caretaker, they will often throw a tantrum or lay on guilt, because it worked for years. Let them. Mel repeats her exceptions: you don't let a drunk friend drive, you take someone with suicidal thoughts to the ER, and you don't ignore discrimination or real danger.

• Rescuing can rob people of facing what they need to face

Caller Liz's parents fell into financial crisis because of her father's gambling. After weeks of chest tightness, she wrote each parent a letter urging them to get help and felt immediate relief. Mel told her she isn't responsible for his addiction or for rescuing her mother. She sees addiction as masking a deeper issue, and says bailing someone out can stop them from facing it. Liz can still support and guide, just not fix.

• You can't make someone adopt the theory

Caller Eva's husband stews about not being invited to lunch by coworkers or family. Mel says you can only appeal to someone's best self: tell them you're worried about the pattern, share the episode, then stop engaging and simply say 'let them' when it comes up again. The stories we tell ourselves are usually more painful than what actually happened.

EXAMPLES

• Tacos in the rain at Oakley's junior prom

At the pre-prom photo party, Mel was fuming about the corsage, underdressed parents, kids driving instead of taking a bus, and dinner at a taco stand in the pouring rain. Her daughter Kendall touched her arm and said, 'Mom, it's Oakley's prom, not yours… let them.' Mel says she felt the frustration leave and her focus shift back to herself.

• Aaron, the lifelong fixer

Caller Aaron grew up in an abusive home where the job was keeping Mom happy. After surviving cancer, Aaron wondered who they'd be if they stopped taking 1 a.m. calls and solving everyone's problems, and has started telling friends they're 'not up for the boyfriend conversation anymore.' Mel says telling a friend stuck in a pattern the truth is real friendship, and a lost holiday invite is a small price.

• Mimi, living with an abusive ex

Mimi, newly separated but sharing a house with her ex and her special-needs child, said he escalated as 'let them' stopped working on him, especially after she launched her business. Mel pushed back hard. Staying is a choice Mimi has to own, and the behavior will likely escalate. Asking family to let her move in for six months, or finding a roommate, isn't being a burden. Here, 'let me' means solving the problem and getting out.

• Eva's script for her husband

Mel's suggested wording: 'I'm concerned about you… I'm seeing this pattern where you're focused on all the places you're

not invited… you deserve more.' Then share the episode, and stop feeding the conversation.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Pair every 'let them' with 'let me'**
  Let them have their opinion, mood or tantrum. Then decide what you'll do: say how you feel, make a request, set a boundary, or simply get on with your own plans.
- **Sit with the 90-second wave**
  When the urge to fix, referee or people-please hits, name it, breathe and let it rise and fall instead of jumping in.
- **Know when the theory doesn't apply**
  In cases of danger, abuse, self-harm or discrimination, step in or get yourself out. 'Let them' is for unhooking from things you can't control, not for tolerating harm.

Answering Your Questions on Friendship, Therapy, Boundaries, And More | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-09-25 · Duration: 0:37:24
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRB93MwkfVk

KEYPOINTS

• A friendship has run its course when you've given more than you've received for a sustained stretch

Mel's answer to listener Jeannie separates a season from a pattern. If a friend is dealing with postpartum depression, a divorce, a breakup or an illness, being the strong one is part of friendship. It's a problem when you're always the one making plans, checking in and reaching out, nothing big is going on for them, and none of it comes back.

• Many friendships depend on a shared container

College, a job, a neighbourhood, your kids' friendships or a relationship status can hold a friendship together. Mel told her daughter that when the container disappears, the ties often go with it. She calls that normal, a sign your energy belongs elsewhere, and rejects the idea that every friend has to be lifelong.

• Pulling back reveals what the relationship really was

Pulling back doesn't have to mean ghosting. It can mean reaching out every two weeks instead of weekly, not answering texts instantly, and not feeling obliged to invite them to your party. If the connection disappears once you stop chasing, Mel says you were in a relationship with potential. The same applies to romance, and she'd rather you discover it yourself than have the rug pulled out.

• Update what you think friendship requires

People are busy and move far more than earlier generations did. Mel says some of her favourite people live far away, rarely text, and didn't raise kids alongside her, yet she'd get on a plane if they called. You probably have more friends than you think, so stop pouring energy into people who don't return it.

• To stop overthinking, ask what someone you respect would do

Mel's tool for Natasha is to pick a mentor, a decisive friend, Mel herself or 'the Rock' and ask what they'd do, borrowing their confidence. If the answer makes you bristle, that's fear, so count 5-4-3-2-1 and act.

• Negotiate pay with proof of your impact, not market comparisons

Asked by Neely how a woman should negotiate with a male boss, Mel says most people do the wrong homework: comparing their title's salary in their area. Bosses care more about what you've contributed to the bottom line and the problems you've solved. If you track those all year, you may prove you're worth more than the salary survey says.

• Everyone needs therapy in their life, so describe it as a resource

Telling someone they 'need therapy' sounds like 'you're messed up.' Mel describes it as an intentional conversation about your life with a trained, objective person whose feelings you don't have to manage, a luxury like a school counsellor. Pitch it around goals: feeling more confident, handling work, defusing family situations.

• You can't force someone into help, but you can state a boundary

Do the work (find the therapist, even make the appointment), say you're worried and can't handle this alone, then let them choose. If they refuse, say what you'll do: for example, that you won't stay if they won't address depression or addiction. Mel calls that clear communication, not manipulation. Badgering instead builds resentment that leaks out as fighting, snapping and lost intimacy, and she says most relationships die from resentment.

• A boundary can include a timeline

People don't change direction overnight, so you needn't walk out after 17 years of marriage. Mel suggests saying you're worried and giving them, say, three months to deal with it.

• Midlife is an opportunity, not a crisis

Mel, then 54, says she prefers her 50s to her 40s. After the comparison-heavy 20s and status-chasing 30s, you have wisdom, a bigger network, failures to learn from and technology to use. If you're unhappy halfway through the road trip, let that push you to act.

EXAMPLES

• Chris's seven years of depression and the medication boundary

Mel's husband Chris struggled with major depression for about seven years. He kept healthy habits (daily meditation, walks in the woods, journaling, therapy) but resisted a diagnosis and saw medication as weakness. Mel worried that heavy meditation was isolating him, citing research then suggesting too much can worsen depression. After two years of watching him decline, she told him to take the medication their psychopharmacologist and marriage counsellor recommended for a year or the marriage wouldn't work. He did, came off it after a year, and their therapist said it got him out of the spiral so therapy could work.

• Mel didn't feel she 'won'

She says the boundary freed her from resentment and from wanting to control Chris, and made her feel safe.

• Betsy's husband and his hearing aids

Mel's playful ideas: plan a fun outing, like her parents' casino trips in central Michigan (her dad now wears hearing aids), and stop at a hearing appointment on the way home; or spend a day mouthing words silently. Her real point is compassion. At almost 55, failing eyesight makes her feel frail, and for men of that generation, hearing loss can feel like the final leg of life, made worse by pride, fear or being first among their friends.

• Mel's childhood dream

She wanted to be a doctor like her father and cure cancer, until a freshman biology or chemistry class ended that. Looking back, it was admiration for him; she was drawn to performing. She studied American history and film, earned a women's studies certificate, and volunteered on a domestic violence hotline.

• Word vomit as vulnerability

To Sean, who spills everything when trying to open up, Mel says, as a fellow word-vomiter, that trying to control vulnerability misses the point. The word vomit is his vulnerability.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Audit a one-sided friendship**
  Ask whether this is a hard season for them or a lasting pattern, check in honestly, then cut your effort by half and see who shows up.
- **Keep a running wins file before salary talks**
  Record problems solved and results tied to revenue or savings as they happen, so the ask rests on your value to this employer.
- **Reframe the therapy ask**
  Lead with what it could help them gain, do the legwork, then state your limit and accept their choice, unless it's your own child, where you have more say.
- **Look for the fear beneath stubbornness**
  When a partner resists something obvious, ask whether it makes them feel weak or old. The surface fight often hides something you could connect over.

Where Did All My Friends Go? A Simple Guide to Finding Your People | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-07-10 · Duration: 0:56:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drgexn10QPE

KEYPOINTS

• Adult life can feel like summer camp, if you build it

About a year after moving to a tiny town, Mel says she woke up feeling like she lived in "adult summer camp": friends texting at 5:30 a.m., spontaneous plans, people she loves walking into the same coffee shop. A year earlier she was crying in her new house and lonely. Her point is that this kind of community is within your power to create, and it takes about a year of steady effort.

• The lie: "I have no friends"

Mel's friend Gretchen called mid-recording and said Mel had friends and was loved a year ago; she just didn't feel it. Producer Amy admits she recently said "I need to find my friend group" to a room of her friends. Mel's view is that we confuse how often we see someone with whether they're a friend. Your old friends are still there, and they probably think you're the one who left.

• Every friendship has a bond and a friendship

Amy's framework: the bond is the outside force that brings you together, like work, school, a team, a yoga studio, family or living nearby. The friendship is the caring, interest and outreach you add on top. When the bond disappears because of a move, divorce, new job, graduation, breakup or remote work, keeping the friendship alive is on you. Mel believes the past few years wiped out many people's in-person bonds.

• "On purpose" friends

An on-purpose friend is someone you deliberately chose and made a friendship with, rather than someone you're close to only because of the softball team or the office. Amy says these friends bring vitality because they're there for you, not for the organization. Mel, Amy and Jesse became on-purpose friends by taking a work bond much further.

• In adulthood you have to create the bump-ins

When you're young, friendships are arranged for you through classes, teams, dorm hallways and seeing the same people over and over. As an adult, especially with remote work keeping people at home, you have to create those chances deliberately. Mel puts it like planting: if you want flowers, you have to put seeds in the ground.

• Your town has four kinds of coffee shops

(1) The chain: efficient and transactional, with mobile orders and drive-throughs, and people come in and leave fast. Mel says it's a bad place to form bonds. (2) The first-responder, old-timers' spot with the best donuts and drip coffee: intimidating when you're new, but its regulars prove that a daily ritual can create a bond. (3) The bustling local spot where moms stop after school drop-off and staff know your usual. (4) The high-end spot from the travel guide with a huge espresso machine and pricey pastries.

• The coffee shop works like a Sorting Hat

None of the four is better. Each attracts people with certain interests. To find yours, ask which one you'd choose if you had two hours to kill. Then go there several mornings a week, plus one weekend hour, until you start seeing the same faces, getting to know the staff and saying hello.

• Make it your standing meeting place

Whenever you meet someone, suggest coffee at your spot, for example 9 a.m. on Saturday, because that's where you always meet friends. That routine becomes your bond and your institution. People start bringing their friends, and the group grows. Amy sums it up as "friendship is a verb."

• Make group chats fun

Mel copied friends she finds hilarious and fills every group chat with memes and ugly selfies, like "I'm coming in my pajamas," along with a photo. That playful energy is what recreates the spontaneous, bumping-into-each-other feeling of camp or college.

EXAMPLES

• "I'll probably just leave it all dirt"

Amy's favorite story: when Mel moved into her new house, Amy tried to cheer her up by asking what flowers she'd plant. Sad and lonely, Mel said she'd probably just leave it all dirt. A year later, workers were outside planting peonies, hydrangeas and hostas, which became Mel's symbol for planting friendship seeds.

• Mel didn't know her favorite spot existed

Mel lived in town for a year before Jesse told her about the type-four coffee shop. When she walked in, she thought she was in Brooklyn. It became her regular place. On the morning of the episode, after Pilates, she walked in to find David, then Amy, then another friend arriving for a meeting.

• The selfie fix

For her first six months using this approach, Mel would swap numbers with someone and then get a text weeks later asking to meet at the bakery, with no idea who it was. She has ADHD and sometimes deleted the thread. Now she jokes that she'll forget what they look like as soon as she leaves, and asks to take a selfie together so her text makes sense.

• The 5:06 a.m. text thread

On a Friday, Mel's friend David started a group thread at 5:06 a.m. with a video of mist in the valley. He and Amy traded weekend plans and asked what time Amy would pull that day's card. Then came "Mel get in here." Mel woke up to it, joined in, and felt the summer-camp feeling she had once thought she'd never have again.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Openers that work

In line, ask what the best pastry or muffin is. Compliment something specific like nails, earrings or braids; people light up. Say

you're new and ask what people do around here, or admit you've become a bit of a hermit lately and ask what's on this weekend. Mel even says outright that she needs friends, and most people laugh and say they feel the same way.

• The answers you get depend on the shop

At a chain, people will likely shrug and hurry off. At the old-timers' spot you might hear about a tractor pull or a fire-department fundraiser. At the local shop it might be an art fair or a library event. At the high-end spot it might be mushroom foraging or an author talk. That's why the place you choose shapes which invitations you get.

• Do the things you already do, together

Amy's mother-in-law used to fold laundry with her girlfriends. You can cook dinner with another family, exercise together, or trade chores. Amy loves weeding, and Amy and Mel once painted Mel's house side by side. Mel says these plain moments build friendship better than fancy outings.

• It works in cities too, and long-time residents can still be lonely

Your neighborhood, gym, office and kids' school each have all four kinds of shop nearby. It's normal to feel lonely in a town you've lived in for 20 or 30 years. Suggest a walking group or a Saturday meet-up, get the person's number right then, and text them on the spot.

The ONE Trick You Need to Master to Live a Peaceful and Fulfilled Life | The Let Them Theory

Date: 2023-05-29 · Duration: 0:53:59
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4z5C8G32AY

KEYPOINTS

• The core idea: stop forcing people to match your expectations
Mel recorded a quick selfie video about the "Let Them Theory" that drew over 14 million views and about 9,800 comments in a week. If friends don't invite you to brunch, if the person you're attracted to doesn't want commitment, or your kids don't want to come along, let them. People are showing you who they are, and then you get to choose what you do next.

• Drop the oars
Mel borrows a metaphor from Dr. Amy Johnson: trying to control people is like paddling a boat upstream. It builds resistance and frustration and makes you feel less in control. Take your hands off the oars and the boat turns and floats with the current, which brings peace and ease.

• Control is often anxiety in disguise
Mel says overbearing parents, including many immigrant parents she hears from, usually push out of fear and uncertainty, and because they think micromanaging is love. In fact, it suffocates. Focusing on others also tricks you into feeling in control. You can guilt, shame, compliment or love people, but you can't control them. The only person you can control is yourself.

• Controlling can hide a deeper feeling
Afterward, Mel realized her prom meltdown wasn't about tacos. She told Chris she was sad: she missed knowing all the kids and parents from four proms with her daughters back home. Controlling and obsessing are often triggered by how things "should" be and by discomfort with uncertainty.

• Three times not to "let them"
Don't let someone do something dangerous, like driving after drinking, or discriminate against you. Don't let others decide things you need to ask for or advocate for, like your salary; she cites a 2023 Pew survey in which 60% of respondents said they didn't negotiate pay at their last job. And don't let people keep crossing boundaries you've clearly stated.

• Use 1: Detachment
Use it to detach from mental and emotional struggle over what others do: friends seated together at a wedding while you're at table 11 with distant relatives, an airline boarding back to front, or a friend who took a trip without you. Mel calls it a form of radical acceptance, and says it takes practice. It's not for fixable moments, like a friend leaving flip-flops on the beach.

• Use 2: Let people fail and take responsibility
Every rescue robs someone of a chance to grow and makes them weaker and more dependent. If they forget their lunch or a job-application deadline, let them. With addiction, Mel says people don't get sober until they're ready, so forcing rehab tends to fail. For people-pleasers: let your kids do their own laundry, let your brother host the holidays, let coworkers handle their own work and birthday cupcakes.

• Use 3: Let people be who they are, and who they're not
Many of us are in a relationship with someone's potential rather than the real person. Constant griping about their drinking, ambition, hair, family or sex life keeps you busy and stops you from facing reality. When you let someone be themselves, you see who they really are and can choose what you need. Mel used to be irritated that Chris processes slowly; now she sees she needs someone with his feet on the ground.

• Jealousy is an attempt to control, and it backfires
Being jealous of a partner's time with their kids from a previous marriage, golf with friends, or same-sex friendships is a bid for more love that ends up giving you less. Letting them enjoy what makes them happy is an act of love, and Mel says it tends to bring more love back.

EXAMPLES

• Prom night at the taco shop
At pre-prom photos in Vermont, a torrential downpour started. About 20 kids in tuxes and gowns, with no dinner reservation, decided to go to a tiny taco spot with maybe six tables. Mel jumped in, worrying about dresses and rain, until her daughter said, "Mom, it's his prom, not your prom. Let them." Mel realized it might be the most memorable part of the night.

• Why her parents hadn't visited Vermont
Years after the family moved in March 2020, Mel's parents still hadn't visited. Instead of staying hurt, she asked her mom, who said she didn't like the state. As a small child, her mom was left with her grandmother while her parents took an older sister to Vermont for an eye surgery. The grandmother died next to her, and her parents asked why she hadn't saved her. Given space, her parents were due to visit within a month.

• Chris's brother said no
When Chris's business was failing, with bounced checks and a lien on the house, he asked his brother for a loan. His brother refused, saying that if the business failed, so be it, but he couldn't bail him out. Mel calls it one of the most important things anyone did for Chris, because it made him responsible for his own rescue.

• The school that said don't bring the lunch
Oakley's fifth-grade school for language-based learning differences like dyslexia told parents not to bring forgotten lunches. Kids wouldn't go hungry, and the sting of forgetting is what teaches them to build their own systems.

• Letting Kendall be annoyed
Her daughter Kendall warned that if they only got 15 minutes to sort Mel's closet, she'd have an attitude. Mel simply let her be frustrated instead of starting the usual emotional tug-of-war of calming, explaining and fixing, and found it liberating.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Ask: what am I afraid of, and is it true?**

  Often the fear is absurd, like ruined prom shoes or overhead bin space. Sometimes it's valid, like fearing a loved one with addiction will die. Even then, you don't know whether it's true, so it can't justify constant control.

- **Ask: whose business am I in?**

  Micromanaging a teen, stewing over a seating chart or resenting a missed award puts you in someone else's business. Get back into your own: what can you do about it? When Mel felt left out, she admitted she hadn't thrown a party or planned a women's weekend in five years.

- **Let people have their feelings and opinions**

  If a drifting friend says you've changed or that they don't feel important anymore, listen, witness and validate. You don't have to control what they think. Equally, if someone is hurt that they weren't invited, Mel says it isn't your job to make sure everyone's feelings are okay.

Feeling Used? 5 Ways to Take Your Power Back | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-04-06 · Duration: 1:20:56
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ0wXDFtk3w

KEYPOINTS

• Being used isn't the same as people being used to things

Mel's first takeaway separates deliberate use, like coasting at a job for the paycheck, raiding a roommate's food, or someone saying "this is more" when they only want sex, from a setup everyone has simply grown comfortable with. In the second case, nobody else has a reason to change it. It works for them; it just stopped working for you.

• They aren't going to grow up on their own

Asked "when are they going to grow up?", Mel's answer is never, because they're comfortable. If you want the situation to change, you have to be the adult and lead it, especially when it's your house and your happiness at stake.

• Learned helplessness keeps people stuck

Mel explains learned helplessness, a term from 1960s psychology research: after enough setbacks or pain, people stop trying and just cope. The opposite is realistic optimism, the belief that your own actions and attitude can make a difference. Living with people who feel nothing they do matters breeds complacency and fear, and shared trauma deepens it.

• Spell out SMART goals, because the path isn't obvious to them

SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely, an approach Mel says three researchers proposed in 1981. Don't assume your expectations are obvious. Define them precisely: who shops on Tuesdays, who cooks, who does the dishes, who shovels snow and takes out the trash, and that beds get made each morning.

• Then cheer every box they check

When they make the bed, spend an hour job-hunting or check in for ten minutes about work, say thank you and "I appreciate you," like a coach cheering players. You can also be honest about your feelings: you love them, you feel frustrated and a bit used, you believe there's more for them, and if they can't meet the request, maybe you can't keep living together.

• "Get a job" is too vague after two years

In a role-play, Brooke asked her boyfriend to find work. He said he'd been applying online, and the conversation drifted. Mel's point is that a request needs a structured box to check. Since Brooke believes therapy is what he needs, ask for that specifically: once a week for three months, which she offers to pay for.

• It's a choice, not an ultimatum

Option one is to accept the gift of weekly therapy and share what comes up. Option two is to start healing somewhere else, with someone else. He gets to choose, and a deadline is fine, like an answer by breakfast tomorrow. You must be willing to let him walk out the door. Then judge by what he does, not what he says.

• When being loved matters more than loving yourself, the dynamic is toxic

Brooke identifies as anxious and her boyfriend as avoidant. She keeps trying to be "so great" so he'll finally notice and love her. Mel links this to a mother Brooke describes as emotionally unavailable and says Brooke is chasing someone who can't give what he doesn't have. She says it isn't really a choice: old patterns and a belief that she isn't worthy are driving it, which calls for self-compassion, not shame.

• You're only used if you allow it

Mel closes by saying that if you stay in something you know doesn't work, you're participating. People aren't in our lives for us to grip on to, and we aren't meant to be everyone's caretaker. Resenting silently and fighting aren't healthy. Clear communication about what you need, and what choice the other person has, is.

EXAMPLES

• Crystal, the breadwinner sibling

Crystal has supported two adult siblings for years. One has been unemployed for over three years, and the other was just put on a performance improvement plan. Their mother lived with them until she died four years ago, and they stayed together after an abusive father for "safety in numbers." Mel suggests a family improvement plan and notes that many people put on a PIP feel ashamed and quietly give up.

• Brooke and Adam

Brooke has been with Adam about three years. He served eight years for an armed robbery committed when he was young, lost a job after showing up late, and hasn't worked in almost two years. He's smart and fluent in sign language because his mother is deaf, but he gets defensive and distant when work comes up. During a short breakup, he pursued a woman ten years younger, then came back.

• Mel's perspective from criminal defense

Mel was once a Legal Aid criminal defense attorney. She describes re-entry after prison as jarring, isolating and full of discrimination, with some state laws restricting work. She says losing the structure of prison life and then a job can make someone spiral, which is why this is harder than an ordinary job loss.

• Chris and the non-negotiables

When Mel's husband Chris left the restaurant business with a drinking problem, she told him he had to get sober and see a therapist. Later, when a doctor recommended antidepressants and he worried it made him weak, she said it wouldn't work unless he tried them for a year. He took a week to decide.

• Mama Bear Brooke

Brooke's son is eight and also named Oakley, and she lit up when Mel brought him into the role-play. Mel calls ages 8 to 14 pivotal for learning about relationships and self-respect. Either outcome is a win for him: he sees his mom support someone into healing, or refuse to tolerate a broken dynamic. Brooke's late best friend Molly, who died of an overdose, always told her she deserved better.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Visualize the future you two years out**

  Mel had Brooke picture herself two years from now having put herself first. Brooke saw herself waking earlier, being more present with her son and friends, doing better in her career, and not spending whole days in bed binge-watching. Mel's point is that she's already alone and isolated, so being alone shouldn't scare her.

- **Write three bullet-point reasons before the talk**

  Brooke's three reasons: I'm my son's mom and won't have this dynamic around him; I love you and won't watch you spiral, and your healing starts today, with my support or elsewhere; I deserve someone who grows with me. The only measurable proof is weekly therapy.

- **Expect the feelings anyway**

  Expect to feel uncomfortable or cry when the moment comes, so the emotions don't throw you. When fear says "I can't," Mel suggests asking what a confident person you admire would say, and letting a bigger reason, like your child, carry you through.

Steps You Need to Protect Your ENERGY and Create a Positive Life | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-04-03 · Duration: 0:42:33
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bdcjq9OoPts

KEYPOINTS

• Other people's bad moods splash onto you like a wet dog shaking

Mel's image: your dog rolls in mud or a rotting fish on the beach, runs over and shakes, and it all lands on you. An all-caps text, a panicky email or a stranger's tirade works the same way. Listener Veronica asked how to hear colleagues' panicked, angry emails without her fine day turning into panic and anger too — Mel's answer is that you have to actively protect your energy.

• The people you vent at usually aren't responsible for the problem

Whether it's a hotel clerk or a coworker absorbing someone's stress about Q4 numbers and a difficult client, Mel says the person on the receiving end almost never caused the thing that's broken. She sees no reason not to ask for help politely, and notes that bullying works often enough — people who are mean at the front desk sometimes get the better room — which is exactly why it drains everyone.

• First tool: breathe 4-7-8

Breathe in for four seconds, hold for seven, and exhale for eight. Mel says she doesn't remember who developed it, but has read that the long exhale is the key part because breathing out longer than you breathed in signals your nervous system that it's okay to relax. She uses it when she doesn't have the energy to confront someone.

• Second tool: put them in a snow globe

Picture the person having their tantrum inside a snow globe, with all the shaken-up glitter as their negative energy. It stays in there with them, gives you objectivity, and frankly lets you laugh rather than absorb it. Mel says she'd used it just the night before recording.

• A tantrum means someone can't tolerate their own emotions

Mel distinguishes two kinds of 'jerks': the entitled ones who are rude to waiters and clerks because that's how they've always treated people, and the emotionally immature ones who are under pressure and explode because they lack a mature way to handle stress. Either way, the eruption is about their inability to hold negative feelings, not about you.

• Moods are biologically contagious — bad ones more so

Mel explains that connection releases oxytocin while being around a hostile person triggers cortisol, the stress hormone, which is why we describe such people as 'toxic'. She cites a study by scientists at Oxford and Birmingham universities finding that bad moods spread more readily than good ones, and describes mirror neurons that read faces and tone in fractions of a second — the reason you tear up at a sad film, and why a sustained, toothy smile usually gets one back within five seconds.

• Managers shape mental health as much as partners do

Mel cites a Workforce Institute at UKG study of 3,400 people in 10 countries: 69% said their manager had the greatest impact on their mental health — on par with their spouse or partner, and more than their doctor or therapist. That's why listener Kay's toxic workplace matters, and why she can act.

• You can call out rude behavior directly

Walk down the hall or call: 'Is something going on with you? This isn't like you, and the tone of that email felt demeaning.' Or: 'I'm happy to help, but only if you speak to me respectfully.' Mel's kids used to tell her, 'Don't take work out on me — I don't work with you.' If it's consistent, document it and go to HR.

• Gossip harms the gossiper too

Mel says engaging in gossip — dishing, listening or retelling how you were wronged — spikes adrenaline and cortisol and puts you in fight-or-flight, which research links to feeling helpless, angry and anxious. She cites Georgia Tech research that about one in seven of the roughly 112 emails a corporate worker sends daily is gossip, and a UC Riverside study finding men engage in tear-down gossip as much as women.

EXAMPLES

• The high-ponytail guest in Los Angeles

Around 9:15 p.m., a woman marched up to the hotel desk, slapped her hands down mid-check-in and berated an exhausted young clerk (Mel guessed about 24, a hospitality intern in an ill-fitting blazer) because her balcony door didn't close. Mel, tired from a cross-country flight, chose not to confront her and instead breathed and pictured the snow globe.

• The airport barista

With 20 minutes until boarding, Mel sent Chris — who likes arriving early while she prefers boarding last — ahead to the gate. When she politely asked whether 'the drink for Mel' was almost done, the overwhelmed barista erupted. Mel pictured her in a snow globe, said 'No problem, totally understand', left and didn't let it bother her.

• Melting the ice at CNN

As one of five paid legal analysts, Mel found colleagues on their phones, one-upping each other about which shows they were booked on. She began complimenting them coming off set, forwarding research on breaking cases, and tweeting praise when they appeared on air. Within five days the ice melted; she names Paul Callan, Joey Jackson and Danny as close friends, and two years later a CNN staffer asked how the group had built such camaraderie. Her answer: 'We just started cheering for one another.'

• Ed Mylett's father

Mel's friend Ed Mylett told her a stranger helped his father get help for alcoholism, and that without that person Ed wouldn't be here — her proof that one act of kindness can change a life.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Shower curmudgeons with compliments

The law of reciprocity — like rushing to hold the second mall door after someone holds the first — works on grumpy colleagues in competitive places like law firms and banks. Compliment their work (or nails, without being creepy) and over time they start returning it.

• Only talk about people who are present

Mel's rule for quitting gossip, which she says she used to do a lot. Seeking advice or expressing concern about someone has a different intent. When others gossip, say 'I make it a rule not to talk about people who aren't present' or 'Aren't there other things to talk about?' — or simply walk away.

• People who gossip with you will gossip about you

Mel describes gossip as a way of bonding through triangulation, which she says narcissists use in particular. Seeing that changes how you view those relationships, and not gossiping draws people who won't trash you.

• Blow bubbles: spread energy on purpose

Tell someone daily that you appreciate them. Mel texts a friend whose father is in hospice every morning, saying she's sending a hug and needs no reply. She thanks grocery-store workers, leaves notes for hotel housekeepers and hugs her son Oakley extra tight when he walks in.

Start Putting Yourself First: Tools to Say No Without Guilt or Drama | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2023-02-27 · Duration: 0:55:18
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVPhdG_w3u0

KEYPOINTS

• Everyone people-pleases; it's only a problem when it's your default

Mel notes 'people pleaser' isn't a medical diagnosis. It's a casual name for a coping strategy everyone uses to keep the peace, fit in and feel loved. You'll always need to please some people: your boss, your family, the DMV clerk, the friend throwing the big party in Cabo. It becomes a problem when you're so focused on others that you've neglected your needs, silenced your voice and lost track of who you are.

• The guilt won't go away at first, and that's healthy

Janet was raised to believe a good woman always comes second: last to shower, last to eat. She wanted to take care of herself without feeling guilty. Mel's 'bad news' is that you can't remove the guilt when you start putting yourself first. She reframes it: guilt shows you care, and it's a sign you're breaking an old habit, not evidence you're doing something wrong.

• The people who love you will be annoyed, and still love you

Your putting them first has been convenient for the people around you, so expect irritation or disappointment when that changes. Mel's recurring principle is that two things can be true: you can put yourself first and disappoint someone, and they can still love you. You can also feel guilty and still put yourself first.

• People-pleasing is really about avoiding your own discomfort

Mel's biggest wake-up call is that people-pleasing isn't about other people. It's about not being able to tolerate the tension between what you want and how someone else might feel. She cites research from Dr. Juan Dominguez at Monash University in Melbourne showing that this kind of conflict activates the prefrontal cortex and anterior insula, which is linked to feeling emotions in the body. The resulting distress, which she calls cognitive dissonance, pushes you to make the situation go away by caving.

• When you change, the suppressed tension shows up between you and others

Courtney, who built boundaries in therapy, heard relatives call her 'rude, unkind, inflexible.' Mel's explanation is that people-pleasing works, which is why we do it. When you stop, the discomfort you used to absorb lands in the relationship, and others experience it as rejection. Expect that, and give them room to react.

• It goes both ways: make room for their disappointment

If you want others to accept your reasons, you have to accept their sadness, confusion and snarky comments. Mel says a dig is often hurt that hasn't been processed in a healthy way. Her parents set the example when they declined to come for Christmas. They acknowledged she was disappointed, kept their rule against holiday travel, and invited her to visit them instead. She calls that loving someone the way they need to be loved.

• Stop asking people who don't live your life to approve it

Anna's disciplined lifestyle set her apart from her friends. Mel says you don't need to drop those friends, but they can't understand a life they don't live. She turns to peers like Jay Shetty, Jenna Kutcher and Trent Shelton for career advice, not her family, and wouldn't ask a 28-year-old fitness fanatic about menopause. Find people doing what you're doing, through masterminds, classes or events, and stop seeking validation from people you wouldn't trade lives with.

• You can't be your authentic self until you know who that is

Nella, a singer-songwriter in Ireland, asked how to stop masking. Mel's provocative question was whether she even knows who her authentic self is. For many people, she says, conformity is 'the air you breathe' because of religion, culture or family. She also says people-pleasing at its core is believing that who you really are isn't good enough.

EXAMPLES

• The 'felted aircraft carrier'

Mel's father, a billiards fan who hustled pool in his student days and collects antiques from Brunswick in Muskegon, gave her and Chris an 1800s Brunswick pool table from an old Vikings Lodge. It sat in his basement for over a decade, then filled their new playroom with no space for anything else. Over the years it became a Lego table, a laundry table and finally a desk under plywood, where Mel laid out The 5 Second Rule. For years she couldn't bring herself to take it apart for fear of disappointing a dad who visited four or five days a year.

• The phone call

Mel's stomach churned and she talked about nothing until she counted 5-4-3-2-1. Her dad kept steering toward how much her brother loved his table and suggested the living room. She felt 'like the world's worst daughter' as his heart sank, and she says it didn't feel like a victory. Her parents teased her for years. When she later built her Vermont home, she put a barn on it partly to give the table a place.

• The Ireland divorce story

A woman Mel interviewed for The High 5 Habit delayed a divorce she wanted for seven years, held back by the Catholic Church, her mother, her priest and 'what the whole country might think.'

• Leaving Amy at the Vegas steakhouse

On day 15 of a 16-day trip, at 9:30 p.m. before a morning speech, Mel had finished her filet while her friend Amy had about 20 minutes of slow, happy eating to go. Mel felt the old pull to stay so she wouldn't seem rude. Instead she asked, 'Would it be okay if I head upstairs?' Amy says on the episode she felt relieved, because she didn't want to be watched eating. She stayed another 25 minutes and enjoyed it.

OTHER RELEVANT

• The 'switch' tool: turn your automatic yes into a pause

Instead of saying 'sure' on the spot, say 'let me check my calendar' or 'I'll get back to you.' That gives the discomfort time to

settle. You can then decline by email or text 20 minutes later if saying no in person feels too hard. Mel says the switch is based on research.

- **The screenwriter exercise**

  Write a character description and a day in the life of the real you, minus the country, religion, family pressure and stories you've absorbed. Include when you'd wake up, where you'd live, your work, your friends, your habits, and who you'd laugh with.

- **Ask kindly and expect the wave of discomfort**

  Mel says how you say it matters as much as what you say. Notice the wave of discomfort, ride it, and act on what serves you. She points out that every yes to someone else is a no to something you need.

3 Things You Need to Accept About Other People | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-12-12 · Duration: 0:59:09
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24aTvL9p5wM

KEYPOINTS

- **Truth one: if they wanted to, they would, and that applies to you too**
  Mel's first rule is to judge where someone stands by their actions, not their words, because 'talk is cheap' and we all do what we feel like doing. She says it applies to whether people show up, reach out, make an effort or build healthy habits. She stresses that it also applies to you: there are people waiting on you to change. Remembering that, she says, builds humility and compassion.
- **Add a caveat: if they could, they would**
  Some people can't change yet. They may not recognize a trauma pattern, may be fighting depression, or may lack the support, resources or knowledge you had. Mel admits she didn't understand 'little t' trauma until her mid-40s. She used to think trauma meant combat or violent crime, not emotional abuse, distant parents, poverty or discrimination at home.
- **'Should' is a signal that you've slipped into judgment**
  Responding to listener Lisa, who wanted to scream 'just be better' at people who wallow, Mel calls 'I did it, so you should too' toxic positivity. 'If I did it, you can too' is inspiration; 'should' carries judgment. Her test is to ask whether you want them to change because you care and see potential, or because you feel superior. Understanding and tolerance are acts of love.
- **Truth two: you can't make someone change**
  'You can make them dinner, you can make them laugh,' but not change. Mel says she has wasted years trying manipulation, bribery (down to a box of Legos), motivation and inspiration. Your choices are to stop trying, or to change how you show up so you either support them or make up for the gap. The energy you spend being frustrated is energy you could put into your own life.
- **Truth three: stop being mad that people aren't who you want them to be**
  Mel says she will never be a detail-oriented 'Susie Q with the calendar'; her genius is creativity and connection. She and Chris have made 26 years work by being '99%' compassionate and supportive, with occasional '1%' blowups. Accepting who someone is doesn't excuse them, she adds. She still owes it to others to get the support she needs.
- **Your changes don't inspire people, they confront them**
  Relationships run on energy and overlapping patterns, such as shared interests, work, kids or neighborhoods. When you change, patterns shift. Start a side business and Saturday poker nights fade. Mel says becoming a loud cheerleader ('let's all go keto!') can come across as superiority, and people who feel confronted often find it easier to attack you than to look in the mirror.
- **My-side bias makes lectures backfire**
  Mel describes my-side bias as a cognitive blind spot no amount of intelligence or education fixes: once we pick a side, whether an ice cream flavor, a candidate or 'nothing wrong with a glass of wine,' we argue for it. She points to University of Toronto psychologist Dr. Keith Stanovich as a leading researcher on it. She cites research that only 3% of people change when change feels forced on them, versus 37% when they believe the idea is theirs.
- **Loving someone means loving where they are and where they aren't**
  Mel says that when you're trying to change someone, you're judging them, not loving them. Anyone you worry about, over weight, drinking, money or marriage, is almost certainly already worried, so your worry adds shame and pushes them away. Accepting people as they are 'opens the door,' and people walk toward acceptance.

EXAMPLES

- **The missed puppy vaccinations**
  Mel took their puppy Homie for shots at 12 weeks, then missed two follow-ups while launching the podcast. He was eight weeks behind just before puppy class. Chris, who 'never gets upset,' slammed the folder down and said, 'Don't give me this ADHD [stuff].' Mel told him she wants to do better but can't right now: she has no assistant, is terrible with calendars and is 'dropping balls left and right.'
- **The 15-year-old system: 'go to Chris'**
  Since Chris couldn't make her change, about 15 years ago they made him the point person for the calendar, checks and the kids' annual wellness checks, which Mel admits she remembers the day they're due. After the vet fight she screenshotted a holiday-party invite straight to him.
- **The friend who couldn't stop talking about her ex**
  Six months after an ugly divorce was finalized, Mel told a friend she had suggested therapists and books, none of which the friend used. She said she was no longer available to hear about the ex but would support any move toward change. Mel says the friend will likely be mortified and go quiet for a while. She didn't ask the friend to change; she changed what she is available for.
- **'Nobody cares what's in your glass but you'**
  When Chris quit drinking after leaving the struggling restaurant business, Mel kept offering him wine by day three: 'It's basically juice.' He told her that if his seltzer made her think about her own glass, she had some thinking to do. Because he never lectured, any change became her idea. Now his 5:45 a.m. routine, with a gallon jug of water and a workout with the dogs, has her wondering about getting up earlier, without him saying a word.
- **Dan and the 'Mr. Know-It-All' label**
  Listener Dan's wife told him to stop acting like a selfish Mr. Know-It-All after his personal growth. Mel says to apologize if his enthusiasm made her feel less than, invite her in without lecturing, and ask questions like 'Why does this bother you?' Mel notes her own change was slow, from nearly bankrupt and on the verge of divorce in 2008 to who she is 14 years later.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Use the six-month rule for wallowers**
  People get six months to wallow about a divorce, weight gain, a lost job or anything else. After that, set a boundary: you're not

available to be a sounding board for staying stuck. Mel frames it as 'I love you too much to be part of you staying stuck.'

- **Say 'not around me' instead of 'don't do that'**

  A friend was upset that her boyfriend did cocaine with his friends. Mel told her not to try to change him but to set the boundary 'don't do it around me.' It states your values without a demand, and Mel thinks it makes the other person question their own choices.

- **Drop the rope**

  If a relationship feels like constant tug-of-war, Mel suggests letting go. The struggle often disappears when you stop pulling, and constant effort may be a sign the relationship no longer works for you.

- **Make your change their idea, not your lecture**

  Given the 3% versus 37% figures Mel cites, invite people in and let them see what your change does for you, as Chris did. Then focus on protecting your own energy and peace.

The Hidden Signs Someone's In a Narcissistic Relationship | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2022-11-03 · Duration: 1:08:48
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRGxKdNlSDs

KEYPOINTS

• A narcissistic childhood can make chaos feel like love

Growing up with a narcissistic caregiver normalises the behaviour and teaches you not to voice your needs, which suits a partner who won't meet them anyway. The good-day, bad-day uncertainty of childhood ("Who's coming home today?") gets confused with love. Ramani has seen many survivors meet a kind, generous partner and decide they were "bored." Her advice: if someone doesn't trigger you, they might be a keeper.

• Everyone is vulnerable, some more than others

Narcissistic people come across as charming, charismatic, curious and confident, so nobody is immune. Higher-risk groups include children of narcissistic parents, people with trauma histories, people going through transitions such as a rebound, a new city, a new job or a loss, and people rushing because of a biological clock. Surprisingly, people from very happy families are also vulnerable, because they can't believe this behaviour exists and think love will fix red flags. "There ain't no loving anyone through a red flag."

• Red flags often show up late, are faint, or get explained away

The charm can last six weeks, three months or longer. Watch for snappiness at mild feedback, entitlement and how they treat waiters, contempt for others, and attempts to cut you off from the friend who sees through them. One woman on Ramani's own podcast saw no red flags for six years of marriage. More often the flags were there but people didn't recognise them, justified them or blamed themselves, so she tells people to stop calling themselves idiots.

• The trauma bond runs on justification

As children, people excuse a parent's behaviour ("Dad had a bad day at work, I have to be good") and take on the blame. As adults, they excuse partners: tough childhood, stressful job, they only want what's best. Those justifications keep the toxic dynamic going. Because a trauma bond is felt in the body, people often feel physically sick at the thought of leaving. "There's no talking your way out of a trauma bond."

• Love bombing isn't always Paris and roses

Beyond grand gestures, it can look like whatever counts as lavish on the person's budget, constant good-morning and goodnight texts, requests for photos of where you are, deep oversharing early on, a "first date that lasted two weeks," or moving in after a month. What defines it is intensity and speed, which she calls an "intense indoctrination" that keeps you too dazzled to notice red flags.

• Gaslighting means denying reality, then making you feel impaired

A lie alone isn't gaslighting. Her example: they moved the checkbook, deny it, then say your memory has been slipping, you've been stressed, and maybe you should talk to someone. The silent treatment, denial and "can't you take a joke?" have a similar effect. Narcissistic rage, the table-flip moment, comes from thin-skinned sensitivity and is usually followed by downplaying or a pseudo-apology.

• Narcissists can make small changes, but they won't transform

From clinical work, she says motivated clients can gain a little accountability: catching their rage, rolling their eyes less, huffing at the airport line instead of screaming at the gate agent. "They can sprint through some stuff, but they're never going to be marathoners." Narcissism develops in childhood, isn't fully conscious, and still isn't excused: multiple things can be true at once.

• It's not your fault, and guilt is a learned response

Her central message: you are not responsible for someone else's reactions, and they could choose to say, "I need a minute." Survivors were taught that disappointing someone is wrong, which is where reflexive apologising and self-gaslighting ("Don't listen to me") come from. About 50% of people in narcissistic marriages stay, and she doesn't pressure them to leave. Some wait until their youngest turns 18.

• Narcissistic bosses rarely change, and most people eventually leave

Document everything, avoid one-on-one meetings, and save emails, voicemails and texts, because workplace bullying generally isn't illegal. Mel recalls partners screaming in hallways at her Boston law firm and being tolerated because they brought in money, which Ramani calls the "golden goose phenomenon." She links this kind of workplace stress to physical health problems and sleepless rumination, and warns about the moral injury of staying part of the machine.

• Healing is grief, not a straight line

Survivors mourn lost childhoods, dreams and years. She won't promise you'll never think about it again. Instead, she compares it to an old injury that still twinges when you step wrong, and warns that overly sunny timelines can make people ashamed that they aren't healing "right." Even so, many survivors go on to do remarkable things.

EXAMPLES

• Ramani walks away from charisma

After years of charming, grandiose people in media and academia breaking promises, sometimes to her real financial harm, she reacts to charisma like Pavlov's dog: she excuses herself "to the restroom" at parties. She admits it can make her seem closed off, and credits her team for calling out nonsense. Mel describes her own recent betrayals in business and life and her pattern of fawning over charismatic, rebellious people, which Ramani identifies as a trauma response.

• A client who chose to stop hurting people

After empathy and mentalisation work, one client realised he would never want to listen to others' feelings for hours. He divorced his wife, ended things with his mistress, and now lives alone. Ramani saw his decision as a kind of empathy, because it

freed his wife, who now has her own work to do.

• 75 texts in one night

A young woman in Mel's family had an ex flood her phone and Snapchat with about 75 messages in an evening. Ramani called it abuse: don't respond, save everything. Mel's husband Chris replied that they would involve law enforcement, and it stopped, though Ramani notes that police thresholds are frustratingly high.

• Survivors' acts of reclamation

One woman graduated from college at 75 after 50 years of being called a fool. Another baked her ex's favourite cake and gave it to homeless people in her neighbourhood. Others threw a party on the ex's birthday or retrained as therapists and coaches.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Helping a friend: find the back door

Don't criticise the partner, because that makes your friend defend them. Ask open-ended questions such as "How are you feeling about it?" and reflect what they value: "You love having your own place. How do you feel about moving in?"

• Grey rock, yellow rock, and don't go DEEP

Grey rock means flat, minimal answers to avoid the bait; expect them to escalate at first. Yellow rock, developed by Tina Swithin for high-conflict co-parenting, adds warmth and neutral small talk such as weather or road closures, which is less unsettling for kids. When they bait you, don't Defend, Explain, Engage or Personalise. Example: "I RSVP'd a month ago. I'm leaving at 7." No apology.

• Say the multiple truths out loud

To break the cognitive dissonance, name it: "I'm married to a deeply insecure person who rages. We have kids. I don't want to divorce. I'll work on me." Expect to feel sad. That sadness is clarity.

• Practise tiny acts of rebellion and keep your dreams private

Use the 18 minutes before they get home to exercise, take one step a day toward a goal, or finish an online degree. Never share your aspirations with a narcissistic person, because they'll mock or sabotage them. Small wins rebuild your sense of what you can do.

LIES About Adult FRIENDSHIP And The TRUTH You Need To Hear | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Date: 2022-10-31 · Duration: 1:02:25
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxw8vzgswGA

KEYPOINTS

• Adult friendship is hard partly because of five lies we tell ourselves

Mel recorded this while trying to build a new circle after moving from Boston, where she lived 26 years, to a small town in southern Vermont. Her most viral post ever, with 140,000 likes and 10,000+ comments, read: "Making new friends as an adult is hard because the people I'd get along with best also don't want to leave their house." She argues five lies keep us lonely and stop us from doing the simple things that build friendships.

• Lie 1: everyone else's life is a huge party

Scrolling other people's curated vacations and bachelorette trips sends you into what Mel calls "the toilet of comparison," invalidating your own life and killing any motivation to reach out. The truth: if you want your life to be a party, create it. Normal people aren't drinking margaritas in Ibiza; influencers are.

• You don't need a big group, just a "4 a.m. friend"

Mel points to the research idea of a "4 a.m. friend": someone who'd pick up if you called at 4 a.m. simply because you were lonely, not in an emergency. If one person comes to mind, you're doing okay. She shares that she's extroverted at work but introverted in her personal life, and it's fine to prefer a small circle.

• Lie 2: people don't like me

Mel admits her default assumption is that people are mad at her, and she adds emojis to texts to soften them. She attributes it to childhood wiring and an insecure attachment style. Believing it leaves your motivation to put yourself out there at "negative 27." She cites "liking gap" research from psychologists at Cornell, Harvard and Yale: people consistently underestimate how much others like them.

• Not asking for support can make friends feel left out

Because of the liking gap, Mel hesitated to ask friends with podcasts for help launching her show, fearing she'd be a burden. Her lesson: when you don't ask, friends may assume your life is a party they weren't invited to. Her alternative is to walk into work or a party assuming people like you.

• Lie 3: best friends are forever

The pressure to keep every best friend for life makes you hold on out of obligation, breeding resentment and leaving no room for new people. Mel's reframe: BFF means "best friends are flexible." Friendships rise and fall in intensity based on shared energy, goals and life patterns, not just history. Marriage, kids, sobriety or a new passion can shift who you're closest to without ending anything.

• Lie 4: you have to be everybody's friend

Trying to be liked by everyone turns you into a people-pleaser. Mel quotes the line that you can be the ripest, juiciest peach, but some people don't like peaches. Stop disguising yourself as a plum; the more you show up as yourself, the more likely you are to find people who like peaches.

• Lie 5: I'm too busy or too tired

Mel describes being addicted to busyness to cover loneliness, and worries that after COVID, staying home became the default. She says getting out the door after a day of Zoom calls takes "activation energy" — a term she tentatively credits to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. She cites the Harvard study that followed men for decades, which she says concluded the people around you bring life's greatest meaning.

EXAMPLES

• "When's the last time we invited anybody?"

When Mel's kids hit high school, the built-in sports-parent social circle fractured while her career took her on the road. She saw friends posting from a country club and other gatherings, and complained to her husband Chris that they never got invited. He asked when they'd last invited anyone over.

• Brendon Burchard's text

After her podcast launched with half a million downloads in a week, Mel's friend Brendon Burchard texted to ask whether he'd done something wrong, since mutual friends had promoted the launch and she hadn't asked him. She hadn't because he was launching his own podcast network and she didn't want to burden him.

• The Dynamite Dahlia Dames

On a 4.5-mile loop near her house, Mel kept stopping at a mysterious acre of tulips, ranunculus and dahlias. A contractor's truck led her to the grower, Annette, whom she messaged on Instagram. Annette, working full time, was worried about digging out her dahlia bulbs, so Mel rallied women and 13 showed up one Saturday. Annette later texted that building her vision had been a hard, lonely path, and a group chat was born.

• A video message from Glo Atanmo

Mel plays an unprompted video from author and podcaster Glo Atanmo, who read her a devotional passage about making mistakes as proof you're trying and fully alive, then said no need to reply. Mel shares it as the kind of random message that instantly makes you feel connected.

OTHER RELEVANT

• Sort friends by reason, season or lifetime

Reason friends — coworkers, neighbors, team parents — are there for a stretch. Season friends span a chapter, like college or young-mom years. Lifetime friends are your 4 a.m. people. Don't force someone into the wrong category, and sometimes the kindest move is to graciously let them go.

- **Budget the hours friendship takes**

  Mel cites a University of Kansas study: students become acquaintances in about 43 hours and go from casual to good friends in about 57, while adults need about 94 hours to become casual friends and 164 to become good ones. After school stops grouping you with peers, you have to create that time.

- **Text one friend every day**

  Make it a morning habit to send an unexpected message or a quick selfie video from your walk. Mel says we underestimate how much hearing from us means, and cites research covered in The New York Times that an unexpected text from a friend creates an immediate sense of connection and strengthens the friendship.

- **Follow your curiosity to people**

  Mel's dahlia story started with an interest, not a networking plan. Lean toward what you love and see who's there.

Are You Dealing with a Narcissist? Here’s How to Spot Them | The Mel Robbins Podcast

Guest: Dr. Ramani Durvasula
Date: 2022-10-20 · Duration: 1:17:04
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gS7uV6Bj0s

KEYPOINTS

• You can't change the weather in Chicago

Dr. Ramani's opening takeaway is that people pour themselves into getting a narcissistic person to change, or into being 'better' so they'll act differently. That's like trying to make Chicago warm in February. Her advice is to bundle up. She describes her work as GPS for what you're dealing with, not 'you're bad, I'm good,' but 'this may not be good for me.'

• Narcissism is a personality style, not a diagnosis

Calling someone narcissistic is like calling them stubborn or agreeable: you're naming a maladaptive, antagonistic personality style. Narcissistic personality disorder is the diagnosis, which she says affects roughly 1–4% of people and is rarely documented, since these people seldom see a clinician and insurance won't pay to treat something that doesn't change. It's her own view that the diagnosis serves little purpose. Unlike most disorders, it harms others more than the person, who is often happy, successful and even doing well in dating while life goes their way.

• Healthy personalities flex; narcissistic ones don't

Dr. Ramani is introverted. Her best day that week was one where she spoke to no one, yet she can 'stretch' to lecture. Everyone returns to baseline under stress. The narcissistic person struggles to stretch or change because the style is built to keep them safe and satisfied with little regard for others. Agreeableness (warm, empathic, flexible, ethical) is its counterweight.

• The core traits, with deep insecurity underneath

Low or inconsistent empathy, entitlement, arrogance, constant need for validation and admiration, need for control, and poor emotional regulation with rage when frustrated. Also thin skin, pretentiousness, superficiality and grandiose fantasy ('my perfect love story'). Underneath is unprocessed shame that people will see 'they ain't all that,' so even a joke at their expense triggers lashing out. They're driven by power, dominance, control and safety.

• Narcissists are made, not born

If it were purely genetic it would show up in many siblings, yet one sister can be kind and another narcissistic. Her likely explanation is a possible temperamental vulnerability, such as a demanding, hard-to-soothe baby, met with constant invalidation ('can't you be more like your sister?'), no secure attachment, and trauma, chaos or neglect. Most kids from hard childhoods don't become narcissistic. They more often become anxious adults who undervalue themselves. 'A story we can tell backwards but never forwards.'

• The five warning signs

1) Reactivity to any feedback: suggest rewriting a paragraph and they throw the paper back. 2) Oppositionality: asked to wear a mask during the pandemic or not park in a reserved spot, they refuse. 3) Performative, transactional 'thank-you-card empathy' that tunes out once you go deeper. 4) Egocentricity: your first trip abroad becomes their travelogue about Rome hotels. 5) Contempt and putting others down ('that's just the baseline Tesla'). She adds 5A, gaslighting ('you're so sensitive, have you seen a shrink?'), and 5B, entitlement such as refusing to wait in line.

• Never call out a narcissist

A 'gotcha, I see you' moment invites rage, a smear campaign and being labeled the ungrateful one, or the narcissist. If you see it, change your behavior instead: stop being their supply and stop taking the bait. When a parent opens with 'haven't heard from you in a long time,' answer 'no, you haven't.' 'They're playing tennis; you need to play solitaire.'

• When you must attend, choose guilt or realistic expectations

Either sit with the guilt of saying no, or go with realistic expectations. Make it 'personal bingo' and reward yourself, say with a scoop of ice cream, for every five invalidations. Decide by your True North, what's healthy for you, whether that's a camping trip over Thanksgiving or a deadline the Monday after. Guilt is for doing something wrong. Not doing what someone wants isn't wrong, though children of narcissists were trained to believe it is.

EXAMPLES

• The child as an extension of the parent

Narcissistic parents expect a child to have no needs of their own: eat, play the sport and excel the way the parent wants, and shame them about weight or for choosing violin over sports. Drawing on psychoanalyst Daniel Shaw's 'loss of intersubjectivity,' she describes a parent who says 'this is my birthday, what is happening here?' to a sad child. The child learns shame for having needs.

• The tea maker

She doesn't think about her tea maker until she wants tea. A narcissistic person thinks about people the same way. Meanwhile you ruminate about them constantly, while they think about you only when they need something or you're in their way.

• Family roles

The golden child is anointed. The scapegoat is criticized, may be denied the tuition a sibling gets, and can come out with something like complex trauma. The helper acts like a personal assistant, and the fixer plays court jester to stop fights. The truth teller sees through it and often gets scapegoated. The brainwashed child insists 'she gave up everything for us.' Two narcissistic parents can attract each other and stage the white-shirt social media family.

• An overindulged path, too

She cites Eddie Brummelman's research at the University of Amsterdam. Children told they are more special than other children were already showing entitlement. The issue isn't 'you're special' but 'more special than others.' Kids need secure attachment (Bowlby and Ainsworth's work), practice with disappointment (she doesn't let her daughter win Chutes and Ladders) and modeled empathy, not cutting lines at airports and theme parks.

OTHER RELEVANT

- **Am I a narcissist?**

Everyone has ungraceful moments. What matters is how quickly and authentically you make amends. The narcissistic apology is 'I'm sorry you feel that way.' When she hears it, she gives a Mona Lisa smile, says 'I gotta jump' and ends the conversation.

- **Authenticity costs something**

Being authentic means being unpopular and often having smaller social networks after 'clearing away the dead branches.' Empathy doesn't mean being someone's emotional punching bag. You can step away gracefully. Discomfort is pain, too: 'Why are you willing to tolerate pain' at the gym 'and not here?'

- **Where to go deeper**

Her YouTube channel, DoctorRamani; her podcast Navigating Narcissism (iHeart), with survivor stories including a woman from The Tinder Swindler; and a moderated subscription community for survivors.