

Ep_84_More_Relational_Safety_Raabsmith

Fri, Feb 28, 2025 06:59:56 27:58

SPEAKERS

Speaker 5, Speaker 2, Speaker 3, Speaker 4, Speaker 1



07:00:00

Pam, hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace,



07:00:02

and I'm Michelle Burkett with hope redefined,



Speaker 1 07:00:05

and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. Welcome back to another episode of hope for wives. Today we are continuing our discussion with Matthew and Joanna rabsmith around relational safety. So we're going to join that conversation where it left off last week,



Speaker 2 07:00:30

Joanna and you were talking about when Matthew started to disconnect at the food hall, and your natural go to is to also essentially kind of compensate like, Whoa. What's going on here, trying to draw them out in hopes that they choose that responsibility for self. I think there's this distortion that we carry sometimes, that thinking that we That's our responsibility, is to overcompensate, right and then, but then you see that becoming a really difficult spiral of always being in a space of overcompensation. So thinking about those who are, you know, just still trying to sort out all of the relational things in the relationship.



Speaker 3 07:01:14

So, yeah, and it's especially hard, and it's one thing when you're in a food hall, it's different when it's recovery, right? And and maybe I know it's not my responsibility, but the threat of my partner not taking responsibility for themselves is so great, I'm willing to overstep and take responsibility for them, right? I think that's the danger in that fight or flight response, because it feels like I'm keeping myself safe by managing my recovery. But long term, that's going to be a disaster, right? I have yet to meet a partner that goes Yes, I feel so safe when I'm dictating

every step of their recovery, right, even if they're doing it, even if they're checking the box, there is no safety being built in that process, and they have to wrestle with the reality of the pain that they might experience if their partner does not choose to take responsibility for themselves. But ultimately, that would be that's the only way to build safety in the relationship, a follow

S

Speaker 4 07:02:18

on question to that, if I may please, in those situations where you know recovery happens at different levels and he may not be there yet. Yeah, would you recommend she continue to voice her request or her hope or empathy? How? What would you recommend in terms of communication and her being able to use her voice in those situations? Yes,

S

Speaker 3 07:02:46

absolutely. So this gets very tricky, and we always recommend both people have a professional that they're working with, because it's hard. It's hard to right, if you look at that honesty level, we talk about awareness, authenticity and assertiveness, right? So we absolutely encourage partners to be assertive, to advocate for themselves and their relationship. How you do that from a regulated, non controlling way is very hard. It just is, right, especially when the other person is being unsafe. And so it takes a lot of that practice of self regulation right, being able to let those things, that assertiveness, that advocacy, come from that place of self regulation, is going to be the key that kind of makes that difference between control, fix it, and healthy assertiveness. But, but it is, it is hard, it's messy. They don't expect it to be perfect, right? And for a lot of partners that I work with, they might be practicing assertiveness for the first time in the relationship, because maybe they shove down their voice for many, many years. And so they're just learning how to do this. And so it's, it's a really tough practice sometimes in the beginning. And so that's what we always encourage, like having someone with you, helping you, having community around you, helping you learn what that looks like in a healthy way,

S

Speaker 4 07:04:10

probably staying focused in the I statements, I feel, or I'm I'm observing that you're not responding to me. I feel sad, unsafe, disconnected. Would you consider

S

Speaker 3 07:04:29

Yep, yeah, and being real clear about the kind of relationship that you are willing to pour into, right? And so I'll sometimes even kind of draw, draw a picture of, like, here's healthy relationship, like, here's this circle. Let's describe the expectations and healthy relationship. You're in the middle going, like, Hey, will you join me here? Like, I'd love for you to join me here in this healthy. Relationship, but this is the boundary. There is a boundary around what that is, and I am not interested in anything outside of that boundary, right? And so being very clear, and the more you choose to live outside of that boundary of this healthy relationship, the more distance we're going to have, right? And that's your choosing, not mine, right? So this consequences of that distance, like, I'm still sitting here waiting for you to join me. You're the

one running away. Let's be very clear about that, right? And so sometimes I'll kind of even, like, draw a diagram or help them kind of learn to understand even how to communicate that to their partner. Sometimes they'll do conjoint sessions and talk about it, right? And go like, Okay, we have to be very clear about what's in bounds, what's out of bounds, and what it means when you're consistently choosing behaviors that break down the safety of the relationship, the relationship is no longer there. There's going to be more and more distance, and that's a natural consequence. That's not one partner building up walls. Joanna,

S

Speaker 2 07:05:57

can you give some examples about things that you've seen individuals live with inside that healthy relationship? I think I oftentimes, I'll meet partners and they don't even know what they're really trying to ask for. They just know what they've got is not working. And I think also they question whether or not what they're hoping for is real, is practical, realistic, even obtainable. So what are some of the things that you see put inside a healthy relationship? It's

S

Speaker 3 07:06:26

so unique how it gets lived out, relationship to relationship. But you know, one of the places we always start is with the intimacy pyramid. We do a lot of psycho education around that, and we do like, okay, most partners coming going, Yes, I want honesty. They don't. They know that, but they don't actually know what an open and transparent relationship looks like, right? And so maybe they've done full disclosure, but they're like, well, it still doesn't feel great, like we don't talk all day. I don't know what he's doing at work. I don't know, right? It might even be like he has a computer. I don't know what he's looking at. He's in the room with the door shut for two hours, right? And so sometimes it's really starting from square one and starting to decide what level of transparency do we want as a couple, and and being able to go, Okay, what level of detail are we sharing about our day? How often are we sharing throughout the day? What level of detail about our emotional experience? And we tend to lean on the side of way more detail, partly because that's what has helped us rebuild safety in our relationship. And when we are doing this from an empowered place of my own choosing, it doesn't become co dependent or a match, right? I think some people think they're going to lose their independence or lose their self if they're over overly transparent and communicative, but we have not found that to be the case when two empowered adults are choosing that they want an open and transparent relationship. This is not anything someone is coercing you to do. You have to choose it. And so sometimes it is going, okay, yeah, whenever we're together and one of us is on our phone or pretty much communicating to the other person what I'm doing on my phone. And again, this goes both ways, because we want a transparent relationship where we both feel secure and there's not anything more disconnecting than a phone in your face when you're in the presence of another person. And that's just reality. That's what research says. I talk about this with all my couples, not just betrayal couples. Sometimes betrayal couples take it personally, and they think it's only because they've been through betrayal, but they need this level of transparency. I'm like, No, this is every relationship. Every relationship needs to have this level of communication and connection. And so once we kind of get the main value, maybe that we want in our relationship, we have to decide how we express that value in our relationship very specifically. And for couples who kids are grown and gone, that may look very different than a couple with three really young kids. And so I think that's why you unique relationships need to talk specifically about what that's going to look like in

S

Speaker 5 07:09:12

their context. Yeah, yeah. I we will sometimes also use a really simple framework. You know, Joanna was earlier talking about these fight or flight responses. Well, if you invert those, you can usually get, I think to the core of what we would say are like healthy relational practices. One would be loving kindness, this idea that I'm going to be caring in the relationship. Another side of loving kindness is actually loving kindness towards myself. So kind of self care. Self Care is actually a relational practice, because if I don't take care of myself, I'm asking the relationship or my partner to so I can love. I can be loving and healthy in our relationship by being caring and loving both towards the other person and towards myself. And then on the other side, it's also. So about, can I be a healthy partner? Am I going to collaborate versus try to compete or fight,

S

Speaker 3 07:10:01

right? Or be compliant? Yeah, a lot of clients who are very compliant and they'll just go along showing up as a fully empowered equal partner in that way, right? So competition or compliance, neither one is going to be

S

Speaker 5 07:10:16

good? Am I going to engage? Am I going to connect? Am I going to drive that ability to work together, versus things like blame, anger, criticism, even shame, right? Shame is that thing that that tells me I'm not good enough for the relationship, which then causes me to pull back from the relationship. And so, you know, but there's also things like Joanna's mentioned control, right? Controlling is the opposite of collaboration, even if it drives production, control will drive disconnection. And so we talk about right, rooting out control and rooting out escape, which is what many of us do when we feel overwhelmed or we feel incapable. And so I think it's good to name those. And I think something from somebody who works with addicts, someone who is a recovering addict himself, one of the things that I think we forget sometimes is how in line people can be on on the core, but but the difficulty in actually making it occur. You know, Joanna and I both agree that rage has no place in our relationship, right? If we're going to draw a relational boundary, rage would exist out of it. I grew up in a family that probably that believed that, but didn't practice it, right? We didn't practice keeping rage outside of our family system. And so when I came into our marriage, I had the belief that rage had no place, but I didn't have the practice of keeping rage out of our life. And so what would be really tempting would be for Joanna to kind of make sure that my rage is always taken care of. So am I fed enough? Am I happy enough? Right? Am I satisfied in my life enough? But all that's going to do is going to make her my parent and me the child in our relationship. And so, because I struggle with rage, and that's not something that Joanna struggled with, because she was in a family system where Rage was kept out of the family, then I'm the one that I had the responsibility to figure that out for myself. How do I learn how to keep rage out of our life? Now what's true is Joanna and I both agreed upon that, but it wasn't until I made the choice to say, I've gotta figure this out. I've got to figure out how to keep rage out. I also had to figure things like, how do I keep dishonesty out of our relationship? How do I keep addiction out of our relationship? But I think that I'm amazed so many couples are actually on board with this. It's just the practice of keeping these out, and that's what determines whether it's safe or not. And I work a

lot with the guys that I that I that I coach, to say, you can, you can want all these things, but if you're not doing something about it, if you are not engaged in a practice to root this out of your life, then you are not moving towards safety. You're moving away from safety, you're moving away from disconnection and safe relationships or building safety can happen as I'm doing this process. So it doesn't mean that it's only safe when this is perfected. It's just that am I active in the process to root these things out that are so relationally destructive,

S

Speaker 3 07:13:35

and we say that reliability piece of safety is when I can consistently do that 90 or 95% of the time. And so there is benchmark number that is going to create that felt sense of safety relationally. And so this needs to be happening, that responsibility of self, 90 to 95% of the time to create that felt sense of safety. There's one, one more key for building that safety, and kind of that inside the relational boundary, there's that like responsibility for myself, that I'm showing up in healthy ways, but I'm also responsible for the relationship, and I think that sometimes gets forgotten. And so there's a lot of maybe couples where the kind of betraying spouse has done a lot of self work is showing up pretty consistently safe, but it still feels really imbalanced, still feels really unhealed in some ways, and it's often because they have not stepped into a place of taking responsibility for the relationship and initiating the care of the relationship that often falls on the side of the partner, and it often falls on the side of females in relationship, in general, in our culture, right? And so it's a wider cultural problem than the. To be addressed, but especially in recovery couples that want to heal. And so one of the pieces that we would put inside of that boundary is that both parties have to be responsible for caring and maintaining a healthy relationship. And that's different than caring for myself as an individual.

S

Speaker 2 07:15:16

I think you hit on such an important thing. This was the aha moment. I think it was doing work with you guys, actually, where I realized that these were not conversations I had in premarital counseling, right? There was this part of courtship that just naturally our values were brought into the light like we had an understanding it was very organic. And so then, when they're in the aftermath of betrayal and recognizing, oh, we have very different definitions of integrity, right? Or maybe we could have said, Yes, we both want to value integrity, but we're not really sure how to do that. Yeah, right, and that's just part of our even our growth and maturity as people in life. But then also, I think this is something that's always been so challenging for couples or women, maybe just in thinking that they're wanting to go back to something, and they don't know how to go back. And the reality is, is that what was there wasn't completely accurate one and two. They have to work on redefining those values. Yes, they have to sit with that term and go, this is important to me, and this is what it looks like. So drawing the circle like you said, Joanna, and all the things you guys just talked about, contributing are so valuable, value like 14 times in that one sentence, but very important, yeah, absolutely. And

S

Speaker 5 07:16:46

it's, it's scary, yeah, and I think it's, it's terrifying to assert your values and know that they may be rejected, right? Those may not be honored by someone else and and they make someone

S

Speaker 3 07:16:56

else that you're intimately connected to you built a life around that's really scary,

S

Speaker 5 07:17:03

and they might not be honored because of that person's unwillingness to do the deeper work that would allow them to share those values with you. I and that's a really, really difficult place to be. I think what what we what we see, is that we see people feeling like, okay, then what I have to do is I have to sacrifice those values. I have to kind of give up on those things. But all that's going to do is create misery, and it's going to create a connection that won't work anyways, because when we're not honoring our core values, we can't really connect at a deeper level, because something inside of us is saying this isn't real, this isn't right. And so it's a it's a really hard journey to get to that place to say this is the boundary, and, and, and I work a lot with my with my guys, to say it. I my experience over and above have been that partners will give a ton of time, a ton of patience to get in the circle right, to kind of come in way more than I think probably the men that I work with would give. On the other side, it's just that that they're not going to compromise anymore. Once they figured out that circle. They're not going to compromise anymore. They're not going to say you can bring this in. And so, and one of the things I try to help my guys distinguish is they're not rejecting you. They're rejecting the thing that you want to bring in with you. And so I will tell them, if you if you want to bring lust and objectification into your relationship, that's what she's saying, No to She's not saying no to you, she's saying no to lust. She's saying no to the dehumanization of women and and I think that's probably something that you also want to say no to, and they'll say yes, I think great, then if you want to say no to it, you have to say no to it in your actions, and that that's when you get invited into the relationship. You don't get to bring in these things and exist in the relationship where they're going to destroy it. And I think that's really hard, because I think most of us, we want to see, well, that means it's a rejection of me, but that's why it's important to do your own work, to recognize, oh, okay, my actions and me, there are two different things, but as long as I continue to do them, they come with me, right? And so if I choose these actions, then I'm bringing them into the relationship, and I'm asking that person to accept both of those. And I have to understand if they say no, thank you, right? I accept you, but I won't take these actions, and we've seen when that happens, many of the men that I work with start to get it. They can start to see it and start to create their own boundaries of saying, and that's really like I said, what our life became was I started to recognize, oh, I need my own boundaries. I need the boundary, the things that are the that are causing right my life to disintegrate. Right, that have been there forever, hurting me. I'm going to now boundary those, and because I've boundary those, that's what allows us to create that connection.

S

Speaker 1 07:20:07

Yeah, yeah, very well said, and you've just defined what creates a relationally safe marriage. Would love for you to share how our listeners can work with you, what your resources are. Do you have anything new going on? Would just love to hear all of that. And of course, we'll put those in the show notes as well.

S

Speaker 5 07:20:32

We've always got something new universe. There's always something in the works. A couple of things we're really excited about right now. Two things we do for couples that we think are cool. We have a group program that we started. It's really kind of a couples group program. Thank you. And it's, it's takes you through the intimacy pyramid. It's a, it's a really kind of week to week program built in a cohort model. So we gather couples who are all experience betrayal. They know, they know what it's like. They actually kind of get each other on day one, and they work through a process of really trying to go from kind of stable to great. We you know, this is for couples who are a little bit, maybe later in recovery, but who are wanting to really work through some of the pieces that maybe didn't get fleshed out the way they wanted to early on, they want to kind of go back and clean it up piece by piece, and really gain some traction. And that's a really cool program that we love. And then we just launched, or we just kind of, I guess, announced, yeah, we just announced we're going to be doing a couples recovery, Couples Retreat next year. So it's not till 2020, 25 you got plenty of time to get your stuff together to join us, but it's going to be in a really, really cool place in it's the Glen Irie castle and retreat center. It's in Colorado Springs, beautiful space right outside the Garden of the Gods. And it's really designed. It's not an intensive. It's It's, this isn't kind of, you know, last ditch Hail Mary effort, but it's really more a gathering of couples who want to get together and celebrate and reflect and refresh and and really kind of get away together and continue to let God and this work kind of shape us and mold us. Yeah, so

S

Speaker 3 07:22:26

much of our work has been online, especially with couples. We want to start building a more of a community of couples who understand each other, who get what this, this experience is like. And so many of our couples online are like, we want to be able to meet each other in person. You guys need to plan something in person. And so that was a big part of our heart in that. And the other side was so many of our couples struggle to connect to marriage resources that aren't recovery based. Maybe there's retreats at their church. You know, we've been through marriage things at our church, and it's hard to sit through sometimes when you're on the other side of recovery and listening to the things that are being taught. And so having a safe place for couples to go and be refreshed and not have to feel like they're on guard for what might be said or taught from this stage, I think was another heart of ours. Yeah,

S

Speaker 1 07:23:19

wonderful. So what is your small group cohort called?

S

Speaker 5 07:23:23

It's called renewing us recovering. And if we'll, we'll put a link in the show notes where people can get to know that program. We also, we'd love to share resources. So we'll be happy to share some free resources with your community and stay connected. We do a weekly newsletter. We, we're, we're always doing something to talk about this process. We really love, we love this work, and we, we know that it doesn't stop. And so it keeps it keeps us kind of trying to stay sharp, but also just being able to connect with couples and give them resources that help them along the way has been a really kind of big gift and blessing. Yeah, wonderful.

S

Speaker 1 07:24:02

Well, thank you. We typically end with a nugget of hope for our listeners, so we would love for you guys to offer hope to our listeners today, I

S

Speaker 5 07:24:17

think, just a reminder that there are safe people and safe relationships out there. It may not be in the relationships that you're a part of right now and that that can be really, really difficult, but they are out there. They exist. There are there are safe friends, there are safe family members, there are safe leaders and pastors, there are safe spouses, and it takes some time to figure out who those people are. It's difficult sometimes to step away when the relationships aren't safe, but they are there. And when you can find a safe person and be a safe person, you're. Self. It creates a really wonderful connection, and it creates a, I think, an opportunity to know yourself even better. And so I just would encourage people, if they're in that place where they're where they're struggling to feel, where is that safety that it is out there, and if you continue to work on yourself, if you continue to really think about who you are as a person and work on that, you will find those safe people and create the kind of relationships that you want.

S

Speaker 3 07:25:25

I think for me, it's been part of my journey, and the journey of so many of the partners I work with is coming to the the understanding that the power, my ability to heal from trauma lies within myself, not in other people or other people's decisions, that I am able to do that no matter what, and so it's so easy, I think, especially in the initial wake aftermath of finding out I've been through A relationship that included betrayal, to feel like I'm broken, I can never be whole again, right? Maybe, unless this person gets it together, or this relationship somehow gets to a certain place, right? But realizing none of that actually matters in terms of my ability to heal the wounds that I've experienced. But I think that that is so freeing and empowering for partners to know and to understand, and like Matthew saying, and I get to do that in a community of people who get me, who understand what I've been through, where I am not alone. And so find finding that kind of self empowerment, finding that community. There's an amazing life ahead of you, no matter where,

S

Speaker 1 07:26:44

yeah, well, thank you both for being here. I mean, I really respect your work. Love the angle you come from, a personal responsibility and finding our core wounding and healing personally, so the relationship can thrive from that. So thank you. Thank you, listeners for joining us today. We hope that you have found nuggets of truth in this conversation, and that you will check out Matthew and Joanna's resources and their in their upcoming small groups. If you have found hope for wives in general to be a bright spot on your recovery journey, we would love for you to consider leaving a five star rating or a positive review over on Apple or wherever you listen to us, and As always, we will see you next week. Bye. You.

