

Exploring desire through giving & receiving

Guest: Dr Betty Martin

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Jaia Bristow - [00:00:10]

Hello, and welcome back to the Relationship Super Conference. My name is Jaia Bristow, and I'm one of your hosts. And today I am thrilled to be joined by Betty Martin. Welcome, Betty.

Dr Betty Martin

Thank you.

Jaia Bristow

Thank you for joining us.

So, Dr Betty Martin has had her hands on people professionally for over 40 years, first as a chiropractor, and upon retiring from that practice as a certified Surrogate Partner, Sacred Intimate, and Somatic Sex Educator. Her explorations in somatic based therapy and practices informed her creation of the framework, The Wheel of Consent.

So I'm a big fan of The Wheel of Consent, but Betty, can you start by telling us a bit more about what it is for those who are unfamiliar, and how you came about creating it?

Dr Betty Martin

That's a great question. And I always ask, well, how long do we have? It looks like we have about an hour or so.

The Wheel of Consent is a framework. It's a practice, though. And when I say practice, I mean it's something that you come back to again and again. And each time you come back to it, you learn something new about yourself and you have some more fun.

So it's basically a practice for two or more people in which you take turns asking each other what you want. So I would ask you... And it's built around touch, although it can also be done without touch, but it's built around touch. So I would start out asking you, how do you want me to touch you for 3 minutes? And you'd ponder, oh, what is it I want? And then when you decide, you'd ask for that. Oh, will you scratch my head? Will you rub my shoulders? Will you hold my hand? Whatever it is. And then I'm going to pause and say, am I okay giving that? Yeah, I'm okay giving that, or I can give you that, but only if I move around this way so I can sit behind you or whatever, so then we negotiate a little bit there and then do the thing.

And then you say, thank you. I'd say, you're welcome. And then you'd ask me the same question, how do you want me to touch you for 3 minutes? And then I would ponder, what is it that I want? What sounds wonderful? And then we'd go through that again. So that's one question.

[00:02:34]

There's another question which for most people tends to be confusing, but here's the second question. How do you want to touch me for 3 minutes? Well, now, that's a different question. So you ponder, what do I want to do? And you might go into, well, whatever you want is okay with me. That may be true, but that's not the question. The question is how do you want to touch me?

So you might say, well, I'd like to play with your hair, or I'd like to explore your face, or I'd like to feel your legs or whatever it is. And notice that it's for you, it's not for me. So then I would consider. You'd say, well, may I feel your legs? And I'm going to consider, is that okay with me? Yeah, you can feel my legs up to here. Okay. So then we would do that. And then you'd say, thank you, and I'd say, you're welcome. And then switch.

So The Wheel of Consent is a practice of taking turns, receiving and giving a gift. And it's a practice in taking them apart so that I'm either receiving a gift, it's all for me, it's all about what I want and I'm not here to please you. Or giving a gift now it's all about you. It's what you want. It's still within my boundaries because I can say no, I can set a limit, but it's not for me, it's for you. So we're going for what you want and like.

So in taking those apart you find out some things. Number one, you find out that they are different. And that's a big aha for many people. And it enables you to have experiences that you would have no other way when you take them apart. When it's purely for me, it's going to push all the buttons I have about whether I'm worthy and whether it's okay to enjoy something, whether it's okay to ask for it, whether it's okay for you, blah, blah, blah. And I imagine that people can identify with that already. But when it's all for me, there's a way in which it cracks my heart open, and it tends to feel vulnerable, which it is. And lots of different feelings can happen. And it can also feel like, oh, thank God, finally I get a turn. What have I been waiting for? So lots of different feelings can come up.

And then when it's about you, it's a chance for me to notice, OK, get myself out of the way. My own desires, put them on the shelf and go with what I'm okay with. I don't mind. I'm happy to do this for you, and I might enjoy it. That's great. It's not about me. It's about you. So by taking them apart, you have experiences that you don't have when you are trying to weave them together.

Jaia Bristow

I love that.

Dr Betty Martin

It's a practice. It's not something that you want to replace your life with. You don't need to be in these giving or receiving halves all the time, thank goodness. But it's a practice. So you take them apart, you find out what you find out, and then you go back to your regular life.

Jaia Bristow

I think that's a really nice specification about it being a practice, that it's something people can come together and learn about each other and learn about pleasure and learn about giving and receiving, which a lot of people tend to go more one way than the other, so it's practice with both. And then it's something that can be done, how regularly do you recommend?

Dr Betty Martin

I recommend every day, because if you could get 5 minutes of something you really wanted every day, why wouldn't you do that? If I could get a 5 minute head scratch or shoulder rub or foot rub every day, why wouldn't I do that? Of course I would do that. But people don't often do that, and understandably so because it can be a little awkward to ask for what you want.

And also, if you think, oh my gosh, we have to spend this whole hour, I don't have a whole hour. You don't have to spend a whole hour. You can do it 3 minutes, 5 minutes at a time. You can do one question today, one question tomorrow, or I can give to you today, you can give to me tomorrow. That's fine. So people set their own schedules.

Jaia Bristow - [00:07:36]

I like that. And who is it aimed at? Is it mostly sexual partners? Can it be with anyone? Who is it aimed at?

Dr Betty Martin

It's aimed at anyone. You don't have to be lovers to play at all. In fact, I recommend that if you are with a partner that you're also sexual with, that you start out learning to play without any sex or sexual touch involved, because it's hard to learn once you bring sexual arousal into the picture. You're going to go back on your usual get the job done kind of attitude. And so I recommend that if you're learning, even if you are with a sexual partner, that you keep the sex out of it. Play it a few dozen times first. So you can play it with a practice buddy or a neighbor, a friend, it does not have to be a sexual partner at all.

Jaia Bristow

I love that. And so you talk about learning to give and receive and I'm curious, A, how you came up with it? And B, why you feel that it's so important to practice those skills?

Dr Betty Martin

That's a great question. I learned a game called The 3-Minute Game in a workshop many years ago. The game was developed by Harry Faddis, and it was a workshop with the Body Electric School, which I highly recommend. Look them up. And it was called The 3-Minute Game and it was what do you want to do to me for 3 minutes? And what do you want me to do to you for 3 minutes? Well, hell yeah, that was fun.

And then I took it home to use with my clients because I was doing sex coaching at that time. And I narrowed the question a little bit because it just fit better for what I was doing. So I narrowed it to how do you want me to touch you? And how do you want to touch me? But you can play it either way. So that's where I learned it. And it took a few times of playing it before I noticed, oh, wait a minute, this is creating four different experiences, and all of them are different. Either I'm doing or you're doing, and it's either for me or for you but those are two different things. So either I'm doing what you want or I'm doing what I want, and that's quite a different experience.

And either you're doing what you want or you're doing what I want. Again, those are very different experiences for both of us. So then I realized, oh, that's two different things, and they overlap so that draws quadrants, and so I drew out the quadrants. So The Wheel of Consent is a model, a diagram, based on who's doing and who it's for.

And then I noticed, wait a minute, if I'm doing to you what I want and you're allowing me to do that, then who's really giving here? It's not me. It's you. You're giving me the gift of access to you, and that's a genuine gift. And so then I had to think about, well, wait a minute, receiving doesn't mean being done to, it means giving a gift. So if I'm doing to you what I want and you're letting me do that, then I'm receiving the gift even though I'm doing the action.

Then I kind of went, how does that fit? And that's where the quadrants came in. And that made me rethink and redefine what receiving and giving are, which I use in a particular way, which not everybody does and you certainly don't have to, but I use them to refer, not to who is doing but to who it's for. And those are two very different questions.

Jaia Bristow - [00:12:03]

Absolutely.

And why is it important for people to learn both?

Dr Betty Martin

I think they are both inherent human needs. There are times when we need to be the center of someone else's attention for a limited time with agreement. But that feeds something in us to be receiving the attention and the time and the support of somebody else. We need that.

And we also need to be at times giving that kind of attention and support and putting our own desires on the shelf. And I've come to see them as distinct human needs that each of those feeds a different part of us. And I have noticed that for most people, the receiving end is more vulnerable. And again, with receiving, I'm not talking about being done to, I'm talking about receiving the gift that you're giving me. And it tends to be vulnerable. And it's not because you're broken. It's inherently vulnerable to receive a gift because you open your heart, you take it in. And when you open your heart, you can be disappointed, you can be offended, you can be hurt, you can be laughed at, all kinds of things. So it's inherently vulnerable, and it feeds our heart in a way that nothing else can. Nothing else can.

And so when we have our hearts fed that way, then we have more to give to others. And giving to others is also a human need. And you can't meet one need with the other. You can't meet your need to receive gifts by giving more. And a lot of people wish they could. And people say, no, I give by receiving. I mean, I received by giving. I feel good when I give. Yeah, great. So go ahead and then take your turn. And then that's where it's hard.

So I think it's helpful because you learn to tell the difference. And when you can tell the difference, you can tell which one is actually appropriate for the situation you're in. So you stop stealing and sneaking and trying to get someone's attention when you don't ask for it. And when it's not your turn and you start noticing how many places in life am I actually confused about who it's for? I'm going to Aunt Lucy's for dinner, is it for her? Is it for me? And does it matter? Or maybe it's mutual, but it could be that Lucy thinks she's doing it as a favor to me, and I think I'm doing it as a favor to her, and neither of us actually wants it.

And that happens in sex all the time. You'll very often hear one person of the couple say, well, I was doing it for them, and the other person will say, well, I was doing it for you, and neither of them really wanted it. And whenever I tell that story there's a lot of nods in the room and a lot of hands go up, because that's what so often happens.

Jaia Bristow

As soon as you said that I could think of a million examples. And you don't always find out as well. I can think of a million examples where I thought I was doing it for the other person, but I didn't realize they were necessarily doing it for me. And then more recently I had a sexual partner where we talked about it afterwards and realized that we were both doing it for the other person, that neither of us wanted it. And then once we clarified that, that was great because then we checked in with each other and it's like, what do you actually want? What do I actually want? So I think that's super important.

And you've mentioned sexual situations, you've mentioned going for dinner with Aunt Lucy, so I'm curious about which areas of life... Because it sounds like this is just a useful skill in life in general, useful to understand oneself better, to understand the way one relates to other people better, the way other people relate to us better. And then, of course, it also sounds like it's really good for sexual consent as well. So did you initially come up with it thinking more about sex or more about life, or which areas is this useful for?

Dr Betty Martin - [00:17:05]

Well, that's a great question. I learned it because I learned The 3-Minute Game in the context of touch and doing things with each other's bodies, and that's the way I was working with clients. I was thinking it mostly in terms of touch, but it doesn't take much to notice that it applies to a lot of other things, so dinner with Aunt Lucy. It's pretty obvious that it applies to a lot of other situations.

And when you start thinking about the world as a whole and geopolitics, and it applies there. Is my company taking over the oil fields in another company just because we want to and because we can and we didn't ask and they didn't get a chance to say no? Don't get me started on the geopolitics in which the US gets involved, but you can see that it applies in many areas.

And what happens is that as you start playing with it interpersonally, particularly with touch, if you can, because touch is such a fundamental human sensation. As you learn about yourself, you go into the practice, in the container, you learn about yourself, you have some fun and you come out of the practice, and then whatever you learned in the practice, you see how it applies to your life. You'll just see it. You'll start seeing, oh, my gosh, wait a minute. I was going to do this thing, but I don't know who it's for. Am I doing it for them? Am I doing it for me? I think I want to clear that up. I think I want to actually ask, is this something that you would like instead of just assuming that it is? And so you start to notice it in other parts of your life, and that will just happen automatically.

And you start to notice, wait a minute. I really wanted to say no there, but I didn't say no. Why didn't I say no? Maybe I had a freeze response and I couldn't respond fast enough. Or maybe I was just worried that they wouldn't like me, or maybe I was worried about something else or I just didn't have the practice or I just didn't want to make a fuss or I didn't know that it's okay to say no. That happens a lot. I didn't know that it's okay to have some boundaries. That happens a lot. So you start to learn also the skills of asking and negotiating, and wait a minute, I'm not actually okay giving this. And then you notice I'm doing that in that other area of my life as well, not speaking up for myself.

Jaia Bristow

And I think a lot of people will be able to relate to that. And I was just having a conversation with one of my close friends recently about exactly that. But my question, therefore, is, once you've got to the stage of noticing... So that's again why I love that it's a practice, like in the same way as mindfulness practice, it's something you do regularly and you train your mind to focus on certain things. Or going to the gym, it's a practice, one I do not do myself, and then you build up muscles.

So I love the idea that you're not just going to listen to this talk or look at The Wheel of Consent once, and then it's done, but that it's something that you come back to, that you practice regularly with different people or the same person. And then that you notice all these areas in life, whether it's... Because, again, I'm a big believer that the way we are sexually represents the way we are in a lot of other relationships and in life in general, people who struggle to say no in other parts of their life. It's going to translate in different ways.

So once we notice that, once we notice, I really wanted to say no, but I didn't. Or I see how I keep doing this thing, but it's not for me, it's for the other person and I don't even know if the other person wants it, then how do we transition to the next step, to actually saying no in the moment, to actually setting boundaries, to actually asking the person, hey, is this what you actually want? Because I'm getting a vibe that maybe it's not. That you're doing it to be polite to me. And to be quite honest, I'd much rather spend the evening at home watching TV than going out to dinner party right now.

Dr Betty Martin

Exactly. Well, that's a great question. I think we spend our whole lives learning how to be more clear about asking for what we want and saying yes and no. I don't know anybody who doesn't struggle with that, at least sometimes. So if you struggle with it, it's not that you're broken. It's that you're human. And that's the way it seems to be.

[00:22:21]

And as a practice, the asking is built into the practice. So I'm asking you, how do you want me to touch you? And now it's created an opportunity for you to notice, oh, it's about what I want. What do I want? Gosh, I don't know what I want. And it might take you a few minutes to notice what it is that you actually want. You might think, oh, I'd like my back scratched. Oh, I want my ears massaged. Oh, yeah, I want my feet rubbed. Will you rub my feet? So the pause to notice, oh, this is for me, what do I want? Is built in. And also the fact that you have to ask or it doesn't happen. Nothing happens until you ask for it.

That may sound horrible and awfully awkward, and it is kind of awkward. And pretty soon you start to notice, oh, this is a luxury. To ask for what I want is a luxury because not every situation in life doesn't matter what you want. And even the situations where it does matter to be asked what you want and to have someone wait and just be there while you ponder what that is, that's a huge luxury, but it doesn't always feel like a luxury because it's awkward. But the awkwardness passes.

Jaia Bristow

I'm so glad you brought up awkwardness.

Dr Betty Martin

So you get practice. You get practice of saying, will you...? Or may I...? And then it becomes easier outside the practice as well.

I think I interrupted you, what were you saying?

Jaia Bristow

No, I was just thanking you for bringing in the fact that it is awkward. Because I can imagine myself doing it and even though it's something I've done, not actually not through a formal practice, but just practicing in my life, I have gotten much better asking for what I want, saying no, setting boundaries, clarifying. And I think your work has influenced a lot of my social circles and so probably influenced that without doing the formal practice. So I think formal practice is fantastic and I really encourage people listening to give it a go.

But when I imagine it, I imagine myself cringing up and just being like, I don't know, just do whatever. I'm glad that you said it's awkward and that there's space for that awkwardness to be there, and that it's okay to not instantly know. Because I remember when I first joined the very sex positive, kinky scene and everyone had spent tons of time thinking about and communicating around consent, and I hadn't. I hadn't had that knowledge. And so I remember the first time someone just asked me, what do you want? Or what do you like? And I was frozen. I never even thought about it myself before.

I think it's important for people listening. Maybe some people have got some practice doing this kind of thing, and maybe for some people it's totally new and the idea of doing it is terrifying, which is why it's a practice, which is why there's a formal practice where you have someone who is aware and you take turns and there's no pressure to know immediately, and you can set aside some time. And I think that's really important.

Dr Betty Martin

Well said.

As a practice, it helps... If you're doing yoga, for example, as a practice, or going to the gym as a practice or some other thing, you know that when you're in the practice there are certain things that you're not going to do. And certain things then become more available to you to dive into because these other things are off the table.

[00:26:35]

So when you enter the practice of The 3-Minute Game or the playing with The Wheel of Consent, you know that okay, we're only going to do what we agreed to. We're not going to just go off and just go wherever it goes like you might if you were in a sexual encounter. You asked me to scratch your back. I'm going to scratch your back and nothing else. And then the timer is going to go off, and then I'm going to take my hands off of you. Okay, we can both relax now because it's not going to go someplace else. And that's part of, as you said, it's part of what makes it a practice.

And we have a different intention. When we enter this practice our intention is not to have a romp in the hay and get off. Our intention is to, oh, let's see, what can we learn here? What are going to be the aha's? Oh, my gosh, I'm so curious. What's going to happen? What am I going to notice about myself? It might be hard, it might be fun, it might be easy, it might be scary. Who knows what it's going to be. But whatever it is, we're agreeing to be in this learning space together. So that's a different agreement.

And with that agreement, that, oh we're in this learning space together, now we can be patient with each other and we have all the time in the world for me to notice what I want. Because it might take me 10 minutes. That's okay. It takes as long as it takes. It doesn't matter how long it takes, but it might take me a long time because nobody's ever asked me that before. And I don't know what I want. And even if I do know what I want, it's too scary to ask and I don't know how to ask. So just slow down, take your time and be in that learning space, and it will come.

Jaia Bristow

I love that.

And I think there's a few things you said there, one, the open mindedness of not going in with set expectations and like, okay, I'm going to do this practice. I'm going to think ahead of time what I'm going to ask for. But going in with no expectations and open mindedness and not knowing what's going to happen, focusing on the fact that it is a learning space, that means that it's okay to make mistakes, to change your mind, to figure out that you might ask for a foot rub and be like, actually, this is really tickling and not what I want and I'm really uncomfortable and I don't like people touching my feet, because you've never asked for a foot rub before so you don't know how you feel about it.

Or it might be that you do really like foot rubs, but you don't like the way this person is giving you a foot rub or whatever it is. So learning space, to me, invokes the learning, the figuring it out, the it's okay to make mistakes, to try something else. And then the taking your time. I think that's so important for both sides. When I've been asked, it's like, okay, so let me really take my time to figure it out and to sense in and to tune into myself and into my body. And is there an area that has some tension that maybe wants to be released, or maybe there's tension because it doesn't want to be touched and I think that that's where I'm going to ask.

But also for the other person who's just asking, how do you want to be touched? It's holding space. It's giving the time. It's noticing the, maybe awkwardness, or uncomfortableness, or the wanting to get it over and done with, or the needing an answer arising in oneself whilst waiting for the answer of the other person. And what does that teach us? Learning experience means there's a lot to learn and lots to support.

Dr Betty Martin

Yes.

Jaia Bristow

So I think it's fantastic.

Dr Betty Martin - [00:30:32]

It's pretty much guaranteed to challenge you at some point or other. And being able to laugh at yourself helps, too. Like, oh my gosh, this is so awkward. I can't believe it.

Jaia Bristow

It's very healing in many different ways.

Dr Betty Martin

And you'll also have some fun. Oh my gosh, that felt great. Who knew? And you probably wouldn't have had that if you hadn't taken the time to ask.

Jaia Bristow

Absolutely. Having fun is an important foundation to consent. That's why we focus on it so that in all areas of our life that there is more space for joy, for fun, for pleasure.

Dr Betty Martin

Yeah.

Jaia Bristow

And so I'm also thinking about, like you say, it's a practice that can be applied to lots of different areas, but then, I know we've touched upon this a little bit already, but sometimes people start a practice and then feel like, okay, great, I'm going to bring it into all areas of my life. And then they get into a moment and they know the answer, they're ready to say no, or they're ready to make a request, and then they don't because of habit and society and stuff.

Dr Betty Martin

Sure.

Jaia Bristow

And then how to navigate that when it hasn't happened? Because I know people have a tendency to beat themselves up and to give themselves a hard time doesn't help. Or the thing of, oh, well, I'm a failure. I'm never going to try again. Or, oh, it's too late now. I've already just given in. Maybe we can talk about some of the ways people can negotiate boundaries and requests and giving and receiving, even when it's been difficult and that kind of thing.

Dr Betty Martin

Well, first of all, everybody has trouble asking for what they want at times. I'm the queen of this. And just a few weeks ago at a community meeting that I was part of, it was a difficult conversation, and I realized days after that, oh, there was something I wanted there and I didn't ask for it. And the whole thing would have been easier if I had.

Instead, we went through this whole haranguing thing. It was kind of a mess. But, oh, you know what? If I had just said right at the beginning, this is important to me, this is what I hope happens, the whole thing would have been easier. And that's the way it is. You can beat yourself up, and I certainly have beat myself up at times, but oh my gosh, just forgive yourself because none of us have been taught well how to ask for what we want.

[00:33:44]

When we're born that's kind of all we do. We holler and scream until we get our needs met, and hopefully we do. And then we learn gradually not to ask because we get shamed or it doesn't work or there's not enough attention or our needs don't get met, or shame on you for wanting that, or why are you so selfish? Or blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And so we learn to shut that down. And to some extent we learn to shut down even wanting anything at all sometimes.

And so we want something if we even notice it at all, we're ashamed of it because I'm not supposed to want that. I'm supposed to want this, and I'm not supposed to want anything. And if I was really enlightened and I'd be selfless and all this crap. No. As human beings, there's things we want. We don't get everything we want, of course, thank goodness, but it's completely natural to want things and to notice what that is and ask for it and accept a no if it's a no.

Jaia Bristow

Absolutely.

Dr Betty Martin

So I think we all come up with different... We all are raised with different trainings in how to ignore what we want and how to not ask. And so I don't know anybody that that's not true about. So it's not just you, honey. It's not just you.

Jaia Bristow

And I think there's another piece there around cultural conditioning and societal influences. And I know that those of us who are socialized and raised as girls and women, for example, are even more taught to repress our desires, sexual desires. But then people who are socialized and raised as men, for example, are also taught that certain things are okay to want and not other things.

Dr Betty Martin

That's right.

Jaia Bristow

So again, it's like everyone. And then if we go into, I won't go into all the different ways in which different categories of people are thought of, but I think it's important to remember that element. And that's also why this practice can be so uncomfortable, because we're not just asking ourselves, what do I want right now? But we are asking ourselves, is it okay to want what I want right now?

Dr Betty Martin

Yes. And is it okay to speak it? Oh my gosh, that's a big taboo right there.

Jaia Bristow

And then is it okay to receive it as well?

Dr Betty Martin

Yes.

Jaia Bristow - [00:36:28]

We go, okay, I'm okay with what I want. Okay, I'm going to speak it. And then the person's like, all right. And it's like really? The number of times I've had fantasies about something and then the person has been like, yeah, let's make that happen and I'm like, oh, suddenly it's real.

Dr Betty Martin

That is so true.

Jaia Bristow

Another thing I want to focus on, I'm aware of time, but another piece that I think is super important is, you were talking when you first gave the description of the practice, so it's like, tell me a way that you would like to be touched, for example. And then the person might take some time to think about it. And then, for example, I might say, oh, could I get a foot rub? It might turn out that you hate feet. So let's also make sure that we give enough time to that piece of the consent. Just because I have asked for it, that you don't have to give me a foot rub now, and the dynamic that might happen between both. Because I've suddenly been really vulnerable in making a request to you, and then I find out that you hate feet. So, let's talk a bit about that dynamic of making the request.

Dr Betty Martin

That's a great question. I mentioned it when I was going through it earlier, but it deserves some focus here, is that when you ask me for something, will you rub my feet? That pause for me to consider, oh, wait a minute. Is this something that I'm actually okay with?

And it might be, well, I'm okay with that if you leave your socks on. Or it might be that, yeah, I'd be happy to do that. Or it might be that I just can't handle feet. I'm sorry. Please ask for something else. And that might take just as long as noticing what you want. Just noticing, oh, am I actually okay with this? And also, it's a different question than, is this what I want? I may not be thrilled about your feet, but I'm perfectly okay with them. Sure, that's fine with me.

So there's a difference between what you want and what you're willing to do, what you're okay with, what you don't mind terribly much. Because it's for you, it's not about what I want. It's about what you want. And is it okay with me? Yeah, that's okay with me.

But it's really important that we can say no, we can change our mind. I may be working on your feet, and then you decide, oh, you know what? It's not what I want. Or I might decide, you know what? I thought I could do this, but I really can't. Let's do something else. And you know what? I need to move over here and get off my other leg. It doesn't mean that you enter into these 3 minutes and you're obligated to go all the way through. You still get to be a human and communicate and change your mind.

Jaia Bristow

Absolutely. That's all part of the practice, right?

Dr Betty Martin

Yeah.

And you find that when you, as the giver, say I'm giving you a foot rub, when I find that genuine, yes I'm happy to give you this, I relax because I no longer worried about, oh my God am I going to have to give something I don't want to give? And so I relax. And that's the signal to me that, oh, yeah. Okay. Yes. And then it becomes a joy to give. There's a certain satisfaction in giving something that's

meaningful to somebody else. That if I'm tense, then that's probably not a yes. I haven't really found my yes yet.

Jaia Bristow - [00:40:31]

And that's why focusing on it being a gift is so important, I guess. When you think of it as a gift for someone, and again, whichever way it's going, so that it might be a gift like the person wants to touch, to rub my hair, for example, and I'm okay with it, but it might not be really my thing. It's not what I most want right now, but I'm okay with it. If I think of it, as you say, a gift for them, then there's pleasure. The giving and receiving. And I think it's such a beautiful, delicate balance and understanding. And I love that it's reciprocal in this practice as well, that you take turns with each question. It's so important.

Dr Betty Martin

Taking turns, turns out to be a grown up thing to do. Who knew?

Before we close I want to define consent because it's a big word these days, and The Wheel of Consent was named a number of years ago but actually it would probably be more accurate to call it The Wheel of Agreement, but it's too late and it's too long, so it's The Wheel of Consent. Because after I'd been teaching consent for 10 years, I thought, I should really look it up in the dictionary. And I did. And it says essentially that consent means agreeing to go along with what somebody else wants. Either I agree to do this thing that you want me to do, or I agree to let you do this thing that you want to do. It's all based on agreeing with someone else for once. And that's an important skill to have, and it doesn't take into account the other half which is asking for what you want.

So when I talk about consent, I think more in terms of not getting consent or giving consent, I think in terms of arriving at consent together. I use it more to me like an agreement that we come to. Legal definitions are going to be different, and how people use it in the sentence is going to be different.

So if you're getting into an argument about consent, I would recommend that you figure out what you mean by the word before you argue about it. Because technically and legally it just means agreeing to what somebody else wants. So if you get consent from somebody else, it means this is what I want to do. Are you okay with it? And they say, yeah. And that's appropriate in some situations, but it's not really quite enough to have a great sex life with.

Jaia Bristow

I think that's a good clarification.

And then I'm also thinking around boundaries as well. So sometimes it's okay to say no as well.

Dr Betty Martin

Absolutely.

Jaia Bristow

It's ok to ask for what you want. To say no. And I did a whole workshop once, an NVC, nonviolent communication workshop, on receiving and giving no's. It was really amazing. And again noticing the visceral body reactions when saying no and receiving a no. And I think that's something that I'm sure comes up in this practice as well.

Dr Betty Martin

Yeah, absolutely.

Jaia Bristow - [00:44:31]

Well, Betty, thank you so much for your time today. It's been a really great session. How can people find out more about you and your work?

Dr Betty Martin

bettymartin.org

You can download the picture of The Wheel of Consent and a little page on how to play The 3-Minute Game and there's a page with 8 hours of free videos there that take you through the whole thing.

So, bettymartin.org and there's a link there to my book which is *The Art of Receiving and Giving: The Wheel of Consent*. And help yourself to the free videos and there's courses and other stuff there, bettymartin.org.

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. Thank you so much.

Dr Betty Martin

Thank you.