

Everlasting Love

Guest: Mat Boggs

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Meagen Gibson - [00:00:10]

Welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Relationship Super Conference.

Today I'm speaking with Mat Boggs, bestselling author of *Project Everlasting* and founder of the love and relationships division of the Brave Thinking Institute.

As a highly sought after dating coach and relationship expert, Mat's mission is expanding love in the world one heart at a time. And his insightful message of love and practical relationship advice has impacted more than 50 million people worldwide.

Mat, thank you so much for being with us today.

Mat Boggs

All right. Thank you for having me. That was brilliant. I love that.

Meagen Gibson

So, Mat, there's no major in college for being a dating and relationship coach, so how did you get started doing what you're doing?

Mat Boggs

I love that question, because if you think about it, it's often our own pain in our lives that's where we want to help people the most. And for whatever reason, I don't know if you were like this, Meagen, when you were growing up, none of my friends were interested in this, but I can remember being a kid and what I wanted most when people say, "What do you want to be when you grow up?". And I was like, I want to be an astronaut, I want to be a football player but always with that I was like, I want to find the love of my life and I want to be an amazing dad and amazing husband. That was a vision for what I wanted.

And so because it was such a priority for me, I was always on the hunt for the one, I would call it back then. I would call it the one. And I loved romantic movies and romantic comedies and my friends and I would always want to go see movies and I'd be the guy who wants to see the romantic comedy. My friends were like, dude, let's go see Transformers. Let's go see Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. To date myself here.

So I was on that track. I was going through break up after break up after break up. Because as hard as I wanted and as much as I wanted that result for my life, it was eluding me. And the challenge was I had no idea why. And maybe those of you who are listening, you can relate to this. It's like when you feel stuck is one thing, but when you still feel stuck and you know what to do to get out of it, that comes with a greater level of confidence and almost a greater level of freedom. But when you're

stuck and you have no idea why, that's when hopelessness sets in and that's when real discouragement sets in. And that's where I was.

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And my mom came to me one day because I just got through a break up with a woman I wanted to marry. And my heart was shattered in a thousand pieces, and she goes, look, there's this event that I know that really helps people get clarity on what's going on inside for them and I think it would be a good idea for you.

So I attend this event, and it's up in the ranch in Napa Valley, and there's 100 people there, and it is a hardcore personal development event. It's the first one of these that I'd really ever done. I'm in my mid 20s.

On day 4 I'm sitting in a chair and I'm sitting in a row of 50 men, and there's 50 women in front of us, and we all have clipboards, and they all have clipboards as well. And the facilitator says, "All right, you guys, we're going to play a game called the island game. And the island game works like this. You're going to walk down the line, ladies, and you're going to answer this question on each man. If he was the last man on the planet to choose from, would you want to be stranded with him on a deserted island? Yes or no. Just based on his beingness, not whether you're attracted to him or want to be with him romantically. Just on the quality of man who's shown up for you over the last 4 days, do you want to be with this man, yes or no, on a deserted island?"

Meagen Gibson

So this wasn't like sight unseen. They had been relating to you over the last 4 days?

Mat Boggs

They've been relating to us. They've been having meals with us. We've been doing other personal development games. We've been interacting. And so it's based on how we've shown up as men, would they choose us to be... If it was us or nobody? It wasn't like which of the men. It was either, you would either be by yourself or you'd have him with you on a deserted island. So it's like, do you want him to help you survive and have a little bit of talking and companionship?

And so the women are all looking around like, we're not really going to vote on these guys. She goes, "I want you to look each man in the eye and simply say yes or no". Talk about confrontation. The tension in the room raised. The guys were like, what? And she goes, "Here, gentlemen, here's what I want you to do. Just keep track of the number of yes votes, the number of no votes. Draw a line down your paper. Yes on one side, no on the other".

And so the women started going down the line and start saying yes and no, yes and no. And they go down the line. And when they're done voting, the facilitator goes, "All right, gentlemen, I want you to stand up and order yourselves. I want the men who have the most yeses on this end and going descending order to the man who has the most nos on this end".

And so I don't know if you've ever flown Southwest Airlines, and you've got your number and you try to figure out where you are in that line. So when we all figure out where we are in the line, I am second to last with the most no votes. Second to last.

And what was fascinating, two things. Number one, the guy next to me was a total jerk. I didn't like that guy. Nobody liked that guy. And I'm like, I am paired with this guy. Holy moly what a wake up call. How have I been showing up? If someone had asked me where I was going to be on that line, I would have thought not second to last.

Meagen Gibson - [00:05:45]

Like, your self assessment would have been much higher than that.

Mat Boggs

Way higher. Way higher than that. I thought I was fun to be around.

And I think this is really key for all of us. It's hard to see the picture when we're the one in the frame. We all think we show up a certain way in life. We all think we show up a certain way in relationships sometimes. I was in a pattern of saying the problem was out there. The problem was with the girls I was dating or the problem was in how they were showing up. And I was always in the problems out there. I wasn't taking a good, hard look at myself at that point in my life.

And the facilitator was so good. She goes, "Is there any gentleman here who's surprised by where he's standing?". I did not want to be the guy that raised my hand, but I was like, I'm here to grow. That's why I'm here. I knew it. I was like, this is the moment I came for.

And there's a quote by Ken Blanchard that just always rang true for me, and it was "Feedback is the breakfast of champions". So if we're really wanting to grow, are we willing to face what we need to face? Are we willing to receive the feedback? And it doesn't mean just put yourself in front of the firing squad, but it means be willing to be open enough that you can hear another person's perspective and say, is there a thread of truth in this?

What most of us do that's toxic in relationships is when someone presents their point of view, we immediately look for the exceptions, the reasons it's not 100% true. We like to point out, well, this isn't true, and that's not true, and you're not right here. But great relationships are based when people look for, is there a thread of truth in what this person is saying? And let me acknowledge that.

So she said, "Is there anyone here who's surprised by where they're standing?". And so very sheepishly and embarrassed, I raised my hand. I was like, oh my gosh. She goes, "Okay, Mat, thank you for raising your hand. Ladies, is there anyone here who's courageous enough to be willing to give Mat the honest gift of feedback?". And all these hands shot up in the room. I was like, oh my God.

And one by one, they stood up. And what they said is that they felt like they couldn't really connect to me. And I had this facade, I was trying to look good in their eyes. And they didn't really feel like they knew the authentic me. And because they didn't really feel like they knew the authentic me, they couldn't trust me, they couldn't bond with me, they couldn't connect with me.

And as they spoke those words, for me it was the sword of truth. I felt my whole body resonate with that. And as I laid in bed that night and I was contemplating, what is it? Why did I have this looking good program running? It was like, I've got to look good. I've got to be perfect for other people to love and accept me. And it was because the fear that if I showed people my faults, if I showed people the places where I'm not perfect and the place I feel insecure, where I feel scared, then they're not going to accept me.

And the reason was, I was starting to pull back the layers of this and I finally got to the core and I was like, oh my gosh, it's because I am so critical of myself. At that point I was so hard on myself. I wasn't perfect. I was a straight A student, MVP on the athletic team, voted most inspirational. I had to have it all together and look good, because if I didn't, I would condemn myself, I would reject myself, I would criticize myself.

And so that set me on a path where I wanted to discover, number one, how do I love myself in a way that I've never loved myself and accepted myself before? How do I set down that self criticism so I could really open my heart? There was a part of me that intuitively knew that that was a path for me. Opening my heart and discovering what it took to make love last and call that in.

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And so, long story short, on the way home from that event I got an idea to do that self inner work and interview America's greatest marriages. Couples who have been married over 40 years, because everyone in my life had gotten a divorce, couples who have been married over 40 years and were amazingly happy.

And so we put together a trip. I invited my best friend to do it with me. We were two clueless bachelors at the time. And we drove 12,000 miles over 6 months and interviewed over 300 couples and wrote a book about it called *Project Everlasting*, where these folks gave us their secrets for what makes love last. And what I learned from them completely changed my life. Transformed my life.

And serendipitously synchronistically on the very last stop on the book tour, so we wrote the book, book gets published by Simon & Schuster, would come out, and on the last stop on the book tour I actually met my wife. And the way I approached that relationship was night and day from how I would have approached it had I not gone on that journey, learned those principles from these amazing couples. And that led me to the greatest love story I've ever known.

We just celebrated 10 years, actually, this last summer. We're going to be 11 this summer. We have three adorable little kids. And I get to live the dream of being married to the love of my life and having three cute little kids that want to snuggle on Saturday mornings. And now I've dedicated my life to helping increase love in the world, one heart at a time.

Because relationships are a training ground that you don't learn this stuff intuitively. You just don't figure it out. It's either trial or error, and there's going to be a whole lot of error, or you learn from people who have mastered these principles. And that's what I wanted to go do. They bestowed those principles for me, and now I want to share them with everyone who's interested in creating a deep, passionate, amazing relationship in their life.

Meagen Gibson

Wow, what a story. And I also want to ask you just one follow up question about that, which is that we hear the beginning part, obviously, what inspired you to get into this work. And we hear about the rough part of your life for the aha moment, if you will. And then we hear the finish line. And I want to hear about the messy middle. And if that process ever feels like it's finished, incorporating that self love and really getting honest with yourself about why you want what you want, what it means about you and if you could love yourself, even if you didn't get that.

Mat Boggs

I'm glad you asked that, because that's exactly what I was thinking about. What could I bring the listeners, the viewers on the Relationship Super Conference? Which I told you before, I love that title, The Super Conference. Not just The Conference, it's The Super Conference, because I want a super relationship. I said, what can I bring them that would be the messy middle and how to figure out that messy middle?

And so that's why I thought, you know what? Of everything that I've learned, where the rubber meets the road in relationships is in communication. And if you look at the majority of fights, the majority of the friction, the majority of all of that comes down to how we communicate with one another.

My father is a licensed marriage and family therapist, and he has a funny line. He goes, "It's not that people aren't communicating. No, they're communicating. It's what they're communicating is the problem". So how do we take the intense emotions we feel in the moment and have a few communication practices that really empower us and really help us transcend those tough times?

Because what I learned from these couples, and this was a paradigm shift for me, is that you can go through some really tough stuff. You can go through infidelity. You can go through losing a child, you can go through one of you having cancer, you can go through betrayal of all different kinds. And

depending if both people are committed to actually restoring the relationship and share a common vision of what's possible moving forward, you can absolutely bring a relationship to a place where it was better than it was before, more in love than it was before.

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My paradigm was that you could never get back that pristine, original love that you once had. And what I learned from watching couples go through their messy middles and the real deal is that it's absolutely possible, no matter what you're going through, to create a love that's even deeper, stronger, more passionate, and better because of what you've gone through.

So one of those principles is a principle called shovel while the pile is small. Shovel while the pile is small.

Meagen Gibson

I love where this is going. I can't wait.

Mat Boggs

Meaning there's crap that we deal with in relationships. We get our feelings hurt. And by the way, let me just say, all of these principles, whether you're in a romantic relationship or a friendship or a business relationship, these all work. And so that's what I love about them is because they're universal, so you can apply them no matter what relationship you have, a family. So I've done all of these with my family members, my work colleagues.

And shovel while the pile is small means if you are feeling a rattle about something, meaning you got frustrated, irritated, triggered, didn't feel right about the conversation or you acquiesce when you really should have said no or yes, if 24 hours later you're still feeling that rattle, bring it up.

Most people, well, I don't know most, but often the paradigm is, look, if it's not that big of a deal, don't bring it up. You hear even couples say, choose your battles wisely. How do you know if you sweep it under the rug? But the problem is what we do is, what most people do is they say, well, this isn't that big of a deal. My husband said he was going to do the dishes. He didn't do the dishes. I'm not saying that has anything to do with my life at all. This is not a personal example at all.

Meagen Gibson

Just to be clear.

Mat Boggs

Maybe I haven't done the dishes when I said I would a couple of times.

But here's the deal, if in that moment you say, he was supposed to do the dishes, he didn't, and you just let it go, you're like, you know what he worked hard. I'm just going to do them and I'll have his back. But there's a part of you that feels that he broke an agreement. It's not about the dishes, it's about the agreement. But you don't say anything.

And the next time he says, hey, he's going to do something else and he doesn't do it, you're like, I'll have his back, I'm a good partner. We're on the same team. When you're a compassionate human being, you do a really good job justifying why the other person is the way they are. In other words, you can see why they do what they do, and you can feel compassion for them. And you're like, oh, I'll have their back. But after you do that five or six times, then all of a sudden he doesn't do the dishes one more time, and then we explode. And then what we do is something very toxic, is we stack the past.

[00:16:40]

So what I love about this principle is it's got two major benefits in it. Number one is, when you both have an agreement that you're going to shovel while the pile is small, the fact that it's a small pile as opposed to a giant mountain of things means that it's really not that big of a deal. And when you're discussing something that's not that big of a deal, tensions decrease. The energy is minimized. You can work through it way more easily.

On the other hand, when you're trying to untangle a frustration ball that's got woven through it the stacks of 15 previous grievances, way harder to get to the root of what are we talking about here? Yeah, it was just the dishes here, and it's just not getting the kids there, and it was just this and that, but how do you unpack that?

So I'll give you a good example of this. As I was thinking about this, the first one that came to mind was, I was doing a big speaking engagement, and my assistant was going to help me sell books and programs in the back of the room at this big speaking gig. And it was on a Saturday. And she's got little kids, and she's married and whatnot. And so on the Saturday morning, I'm driving over there, I call her up, and I say, "Hey, you know what? It's Saturday, you've got a family, you've got kids. Forget about it. Don't worry about it. I'll do this on my own". And she's like, "Okay". And I was like, "What's going on?". She's like, "Well, I'm on my way over there right now". And it's like 08:00 so she had to get up early and do her thing.

And I'm like, "Okay, well, you can come if you want, or you can have the day". And she's like, "Well, if you're giving me the day, I'll have the day". And so she had the day. And the next day was a workday, no, I guess it was Saturday, so it must have been Monday. She comes in and she goes, "Hey, Mat, can I shovel while the pile is small here?". Love that opening line. When you and your partner can have a shorthand with each other, it really makes the moment easy.

So now I know it's coming. I ready myself. And I'm like, okay, something here rattled her and she's frustrated and so I prepare to receive instead of get defensive. And she goes, "When you called me up"... I thought I was doing something nice for her, giving her the day off. She goes, "You were doing something nice, and when you call me at 8am in the morning on the day of the event, when I've gotten up 2 hours early to do my hair and makeup, got my kids their breakfast, I did a bunch of work the night before so that my family would be ready without me for the majority of the day on Saturday, and then I don't even serve in the way I thought I was going to serve".

She goes, "That doesn't feel good. And I know your intention was good, to give me time off, but you don't realize the impact of the timing of when you did it. If you knew that you didn't want me, would you please give me 48 hours notice so that I don't spend all that time doing something that now isn't applicable?".

And I love that she said that because there's a difference between intention and impact. Sometimes we have the best intention, but the impact doesn't land where we want it. And so I received that and I said, "You got it. Absolutely. I apologize about giving you that last minute notice".

And what's great is when you shovel while the pile is small, it's not as charged, but you also don't stack all these past grievances, which is toxic communication. So that's number one, shovel while the pile is small.

Meagen Gibson

And I love that you set up the container of, not only the shorthand, but that you said that when you heard that language, that you were in a position to receive. Because if we're responding to something instead of reacting to it, like you said, impiling all the past grievances on it, then that reactivity is not there. But if we snap and the reactivity is there and we bring it all in, our partner has no choice but to defend themselves because they are systematically being attacked.

Mat Boggs - [00:20:36]

It's human nature. When we get attacked, we go on defense. It's instinctual. It's very challenging. Many of you who are watching this, this isn't the first relationship course or book you've taken. You know these principles, and yet we get triggered so easily. So to have a, I call it the shot across the bow, to say, hey, I want to shovel while the pile is small with you, is now a good time? And then the person can ready themselves and say, oh, it takes a moment to breathe, to get receptive, and then the conversation can go so much better.

Meagen Gibson

Or even put a pin in it and be like actually, I'm not ready right now, but I will be at this point. Check back with me in 1 hour and I promise I'll give you the attention that you deserve.

Mat Boggs

Yeah, exactly.

And so on the receiving end though, what do you do when you don't respond the way that you want to respond and you're defensive or you're reactive or whatnot? This is the second communication tool. I love this. And this comes from our playground days. I don't know if you grew up playing a game called Four Square. Did you ever play Four Square?

Meagen Gibson

Oh, absolutely.

Mat Boggs

Four Square is the best. And what would we do, playing Four Square, Four Square for those who don't know, is a game on the black top where you have four square, four kids, and you bounce the ball back and forth to each other and you try not to let the ball bounce twice in your square. But if another game's ball comes running through your square, what would you do as a kid? What we used to do is we used to say "Do over". Do you ever remember "Do over"?

Meagen Gibson

I'm trying to remember what we used to do.

Mat Boggs

Yeah, we would do "Do over". In other words, if someone else screwed up your game, you would say, "Okay, do over, do over", you do that point over again.

Meagen Gibson

Or if you're playing tennis on a big court and somebody else's ball comes into your court, you're just like, oh, let's play that point again.

Mat Boggs

There you go. Exactly.

What we often don't give ourselves permission to do in relationships is do a do over. And yet it's one of the most magical things we can do because, especially if both partners agree and say, okay, we're going to have a relationship where we allow do overs. Have you ever said something that you didn't mean? You ever responded in a way that the first time wasn't what you wanted?

[00:22:46]

A couple of years ago I was working on this big project, and it's a Saturday morning and I'm pounding away and working on this thing. I know on Monday I've got to present this big thing and I'm behind and I'm feeling stressed and I'm feeling overwhelmed, and my wife comes in and is like, "Hey, Mat, we're leaving in 30 minutes for my parents' family barbecue". And there could have been a way better way for me to respond but at that moment, in that overwhelm, I was like, "Oh my gosh, you've got to be kidding me".

And just that response, I turned, I looked, and my wife's face dropped and she was like, "I go to so many of your family's things. We go to all these birthdays, we go to all these events and this is the one barbecue we've had in 3 months, and that's how you're going to respond". And I knew that I could have done better. I knew that I had screwed up in that moment. Because the truth of the matter is, I love her family, and I want to hang out with them. They're a blast. And it wasn't about hanging out with them. It was about the stress that I was feeling in that moment.

And so I took a deep breath, and I'm like, "Honey, can I have a do over right now because that was not how I wanted to respond?". And she was like, "Yes, let me see this do over". And I said, "Look, I love your family. I want to hang out with your family. And I'm feeling really behind in this project. What are some ways in which I could get some extra time to work on this project before Monday?". Because normally Sunday is family day. And she was like, "You know what, honey? Let me support you. I've got your back. Tomorrow morning I'll do the kids breakfast, take care of them, wake up early. You get 4 hours in tomorrow morning". I was like, oh my gosh, that's beautiful.

And so I relaxed. We went and had a beautiful time. But imagine without the do over, what happens? Just play that scenario, rewind it. Play it without the do over. So I freak out, and I'm like, "Are you kidding me? All right, I'll be ready. 30 minutes. Fine". And she's angry at me for my reaction.

Meagen Gibson

She resents you. You resent her.

Mat Boggs

Yeah, she resents me. I resent her. We go to the barbecue. Now that our experience of the barbecue is tainted and downgraded, and then my next day's ability to do work now I've got a whole buildup of resentment to work out with her.

So I love these two moves, shovel while the pile is small, and if in the moment you're on the responding end and you don't like how you respond, you don't like what you say, you lash out, you can pause yourself and ask for a do over. And you guys both agree do overs are allowed in our relationship, and then you get a chance to redo it, and the partner doesn't hold you responsible and accountable for the first one and crucify you because of that, they're like, oh, okay, here's how you really want to show up. And give us a chance to make a choice again. Really beautiful practice.

Meagen Gibson

It is and I also just want to point out for anybody watching that this works with just about anyone in any relationship. I do it with my kids all the time because I've got some unconscious programming that gets me, I overreact to things sometimes. And I will just name it, I'll do it. And then I'll be like, wow, I really overreacted there. Can I do that again? And they're like, yeah, sure. It's me admitting that there's some stuff that I'm going to do that's not quite in my control, but I'm going to recognize it quickly and ask for forgiveness and another try.

Mat Boggs

Oh, I love that example, Meagen, with your kids, because it's so important for them to see us as human and not perfect and all of that. It's beautiful. Love that.

Meagen Gibson - [00:26:20]

All right. So what's your next, after the playground where do we go next?

Mat Boggs

So I asked America's greatest marriages, every single couple, I asked, "What's your number one principle for making marriage last and making love last?". And more than anything else what these couples talked about was respect. Respect one another.

They say you can have respect without romantic love, but you can't have true romantic love without respect. And I found that really profound, and I found it really deep, and I found it really confusing. What is respect? How do you build a feeling of respect for somebody? We can name what it's like to be respected, but how do you create respect?

And so I started to really dive deep into this concept, and I've had different iterations of this. And you can build a foundation of respect by following through, keeping your agreements with one another, treating each other with kindness, not hitting below the belt, we call it, or pushing each other's buttons where you know your spouse is sensitive about something, and so you're going to say something to dig into them that degrades the relationship and the respect you have.

And then I ran across some of John Gottman's work when he was talking about respect, and it just clicked. It was so simple, so profound. And if you want to build the respect, because oftentimes there's moments you lose respect in a relationship. Your partner lies about an addiction that they have, or there's cheating going on, or there's a real loss of trust, loss of respect in the relationship. And then you come back to a place where we're going to give this a shot again. You start slowly building up the trust, but you find that the respect is hard to build.

And one of my clients was saying, it was her husband, and she was like, he's not as ambitious as I am. He doesn't work as hard as I am. I make the money, I'm the breadwinner, and I just don't respect him. And how do I respect him more? And so here is the simple, it is deceptively simple and then that can't possibly be that powerful. And it is. And respect is garnered when you focus on appreciation and admiration.

So in other words, what do you appreciate about your partner and what do you admire about them? Because energy flows where our focus goes. We all know that. That when you focus on something, you actually build the energies. People say, these couples that I interviewed would often say that the mistake is thinking that love is an emotion or love is a feeling. He goes, that's baby love right there. That's like teenage love. Love is a decision you make.

And what I love about that is they say a lot of people wait to feel loving, and then they act loving. No, love is the decision to act loving. And then the feelings will follow. You'll actually conjure up these feelings. And so the practice of appreciating and admiring your partner on a daily basis.

And so there's two bookends to this. One is, focus on, in the morning, thinking about three things that you really appreciate about your partner, just to yourself. You're getting ready in the morning and say, wow, I really appreciate the way that they show up for me. Or I really appreciate the great mom or dad that they are. I really appreciate their focus on work and they're really giving it their all. I really appreciate that. Or I really admire the way... My wife is amazing at mechanics, way more than I am. She'll fix the bike. The bell on the kids' bike will break, I'm like, oh, let's buy a new one. And she's like, wait. She takes it apart and she puts it all back together. She crushes me in that. I really admire her mechanical mindset. It's amazing. Washer broke. She fixed the washer.

So when you focus on that in the morning, and then at night as you're laying in bed, do what's called an appreciation practice, where you share three things that you appreciate about your partner in that day. And hey, I really appreciate the way that you played with the kids tonight and laughed with them. Or, hey, I really appreciate the thought that you put into date night last week. It was so good. Or I really

appreciate just the way you hug me in the mornings. It just feels so good, the way you give hugs, and you share that.

[00:30:44]

And what happens is you create this upward spiral of positive energy in the relationship because what you focus on expands. Not only do you see it more, your feelings then build, which then you act more positive and expressive towards your partner, they act more positive and expressive towards you and the whole thing upward spirals.

But we are one thought away from an upward spiral relationship or a downward spiral relationship. As we focus on what you don't like about your partner, how they're not measuring up, how they don't really have the qualities you want. You start second guessing, should I even be in this relationship? That train goes down, down, down. You pull back, your heart closes, you stop being as loving. They feel it, they stop, and the whole thing goes down real fast.

The reason I bring that up is that relationships are a delicate thing. They're precious. They're delicate. They're the most valuable things in our lives. And when we look back when we lay our heads on the pillow for the last time, every one of us will have a day, which will be our very last day, and what matters to people in that moment isn't the number of cars they have, how large their house is, the number of vacation homes and money in the bank account. It's none of that. It's how well did I love in this life? What were the memories like with those that I cared about? How deep were those relationships?

And so this is such a simple yet profound practice to make an investment in what matters most.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And each of the principles that you've outlined, and practices, are great. And also I'm aware of the fact that when things are normalized, when things are smooth, those are easy to grab for us. It's easy to put those into practice and to keep them front of mind.

Oftentimes when a large stressor is induced, maybe it's illness, maybe it's injury, maybe it's infidelity or something like that, we abandon these tools and practices that we rely on. So when there is a conflict, how would you recommend resolving that?

Mat Boggs

So we abandon what's not ingrained in us. We abandon what's not ingrained. In other words, if it's not normalized and habitualized as part of your DNA, your way of being, in moments of crisis we default to habitual behavior.

Wayne Dyer would say it this way, when you squeeze an orange, what comes out? Orange juice. Why? Because that's what was in there in the first place. So in moments in our relationship, infidelity, crisis, whatever, we get squeezed, you know what you've been putting in yourself by what comes out of yourself in that moment.

If you on a daily basis have been training your brain and your nervous system to focus on appreciation and admiration, to focus on respect, that that's a way of being, then that actually becomes what comes out of you in those moments.

Now, that said, we can absolutely be empowered with additional tools. And one of the best tools that has transformed my life, transformed my relationships, I learned from one of my close mentors, his name is Dr. Gay Hendricks, and he wrote a book called *Conscious Loving*. He's written 40 books, actually, but that's one of his more famous books. And he invented something called "The 10-minute sweaty conversation". Have a 10-minute sweaty conversation. And there's five simple steps to this.

[00:34:14]

Number one is you set the intention by saying, hey, I'd love to have a sweaty 10-minute conversation with you. Is now a good time? They say yes. And you say, the reason I'm bringing this up is because I love you and I want to feel even closer to you in our marriage. And so you set the overarching context that helps the person know we're on the same team in this. And then you say, here's what I see. And you name the facts. Here's what I feel. Most people say, well, you made me feel this way, and it turns into blame energy. No, this conversation is all about responsibility. Here's what I see. You promised to do the dishes and they're not done. I feel frustrated.

Most people have a challenge actually expressing how they feel. If you want a simple framework for how you feel, it's "I feel..." and then word. If it's longer than that, it's not a feeling. It's blame, it's all other kinds of stuff. So it's, I feel frustrated, I feel angry, I feel mad, I feel sad, I feel scared. So I feel frustrated. Here's what I see. Here's how I feel. Here's what I would love. What I would love is you either do the dishes when you say you're going to do them or communicate with me and let's create a new plan. Tell me you're not going to do them. We can figure out a better solution to this. And then create a new agreement. Step five is create a new agreement where you let the other person share their side and then they step into a new agreement.

I think it was Dr. Pat Allen who said, the only way we really know we love one another is by the agreements we're willing to make and keep. By the agreements we're willing to make and keep. We all make agreements with each other in partnership. And so what I love about the sweaty 10-minute conversation and these five steps is it's all based on agreements.

And here's how you know whether or not your relationship even has an agreement is, what was the agreement around that particular issue? Was there an agreement for a certain level of chores, or was there agreement about the money that we're going to spend? Was it clear? And if it wasn't, then it's okay. Well, let's just get clear on the agreement.

Meagen Gibson

And I love that it gives the opportunity as well, in that model, for lack of a better term, renegotiation. It's accountability. Like, hey, I know I said I was going to do the dishes before I left. I planned poorly for my time, and I'm not going to have time. Can you back me up this time? And of course, your partner is going to say yes, or they're going to say, actually the dishes will be there for you when you get home or whatever. They may not want to renegotiate, but it comes from a place of love and accountability, as you said, of honoring our agreements even when we are unable to fulfill them. The honoring of the agreement is acknowledging it.

Mat Boggs

Yes. So, for example, my wife and I have an agreement that we have each other's back in front of the kids even if we disagree. Whoever is leading the conversation, the parent backs them up. And if we disagree, we solve that in private, not in front of the kids.

And so the other week my wife was saying that Isabella, one of my oldest, she's 7, wanted her hair down, wanted a certain style. She's kind of wild at school. And I'm all for self expression and giving the kids the choices they can make that aren't catastrophic. Help them learn their choices. And my wife, that particular day was like, no, we're putting your hair up. And here's why. And she wanted her hair up. And I stepped on my own toes here and jumped in and was like, Mommy, let's let her make her choice and blah, blah, blah. I espoused my philosophy and my wife gave me the daggers.

And at the end of the day, regardless of whether I thought my position was aligned with the greater values that we had as parents, I broke an agreement with her that in front of Isabella I disagreed with Mommy's direction in that moment and undermined her. And my wife was like, can I talk to you? We go in the other room and she's like, we have an agreement that blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I was like, you're right, I'm sorry. And Isabella, you're wearing your hair up.

Meagen Gibson - [00:38:23]

Exactly. Turns out up is the right answer.

Mat Boggs

Yes. And then we circled back and we got clear on what are the really big important decisions and what are the decisions we can let the kids make? And she was like it's a good choice. She could let her hair. And so we ended up working it out. But those moments...

Meagen Gibson

But that moment was the moment to back her up, not to work it out.

Mat Boggs

Exactly.

Meagen Gibson

We have a similar agreement in my house around the kids, that if one parent is in the middle of parenting, that the other one will not come from another room and try to join. Because we were all home for a long 2 years and we would do it to each other all the time. One partner would be in one room talking to a child, talking through something hard, and the other parent would come with the intention of helping out, but it would just end up being terrible. And so we were just like, you know what, from now on, just let the partner, unless they ask for help, get all the way to the end. And if you've got feedback, you can offer that later, but stay out of it.

Mat Boggs

And I want to speak to all the single folks right now that don't have kids. And you might be saying, well, do over, so we've got shovel while the piles are small, do over and the appreciation practice, those three. And we talked about the sweaty 10-minute conversation. But these primary practices, the temptation is to think, well, I have to be married or I have to be engaged or I have to be in a long-term committed relationship before I start using those. And my encouragement is no, use them right away. It helps you decide and determine is this a great partner for me by how they're willing to lean into communication learnings and adopt communication skills in the process.

So you're dating for a couple of months and you're like, hey, I learned this cool thing. Would you be willing to implement do overs? And the time to do all this is when things are good, not in the moment you need to implement it. Get the tool established, the agreement made that you're both going to shovel while the piles are small, you're going to allow do overs, and let's do this appreciation practice when everything is great, so that when the moment comes when you do need it and you're being squeezed, it's second hand and you just lean right into it.

But it's a beautiful way to know, hey, is this person someone I want to go the distance with? Is how they communicate? That was one of the things I was so impressed with my wife is our ability to communicate through challenges when we were dating. And I was like, wow, if I want someone to go through some storms with in this life, because the storms are going to hit, you can't get through life without the storms, they're going to hit at one point or another, but they're there to help us grow, that we become better versions of ourselves, I want a woman like this. My wife who can communicate this way, and she showed up that way when we were dating.

So that's my encouragement. Put these on in your date. See how the person responds, see if they're willing to lean into this. That's a great indicator that you've got someone who's a quality partner.

Meagen Gibson - [00:41:33]

Fantastic. I think that's a great place for us to wrap up. Mat, how can people find out more about you and your work?

Mat Boggs

Well, what I wanted to do is to give a gift, because my whole journey really started on, and I really believe the foundation of our ability to give love and relationships comes from our own ability to love ourselves. If we're depleted it's very tough to pour into somebody else. And so there's a practice that really supported me in releasing the inner critic, releasing the person who had to be perfect and look good all the time and really step into way more of my authentic self, and it's a beautiful self love practice.

And so there's a meditation that I created and an e-book with affirmations that when you speak these affirmations it changes your biochemistry, it shifts your energy, it rewires your brain and really helps you anchor into a place of deep self love. It's really profound and it's beautiful.

And so we created a special link called BTI that stands for Brave Thinking Institute. So bti.com/selflove

And it's free. You can go to that page, you can download it and I encourage everyone to do that and begin to practice that, whether you're single, whether you're in a relationship. It helps bring forth our ability to give and receive love in greater ways. So I hope you all enjoy that.

Meagen Gibson

Fantastic. We'll put that link below and people can check it out in their own time.

Thanks again, Mat.

Mat Boggs

All right. Thanks, Meagen.