



## Conscious Life presents

### The Stigma of Single Living

Guest - Meghan Keane

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#### [00:00:09] Meagen Gibson

Welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, your conference co-host. Today I'm speaking with Meghan Keane, the author of *Party of One: Be Your Own Best Partner*.

She's also the founder and supervising editor for NPR's Life Kit, which brings listeners advice and actionable information about personal finances, health, parenting, relationships, and more. Meghan, thank you so much for being with us today.

#### **Meghan Keane**

Thanks for having me.

#### **Meagen Gibson**

So, Meghan, when I was reading your book, I was struck by how many of the frameworks and tools that you mentioned in a book that's critically examining coupling and marriage are the same that we use to talk about recovery from trauma, which is why I wanted to speak with you so much. So I'd love it if you could begin by telling us what your inspiration was for writing this book.

#### **Meghan Keane**

Sure. So I had what... a lot of people will jokingly say chronic singleness, right? I did not really find a lot of boyfriends or dating. I was dating, but nothing was really taking off and it felt like I was looking around and all my peers were graduating into adulthood, right? By not just having one partner, but several partners under their belt.

It felt like I had this resume with no work experience on it. And everyone else had 17 jobs ahead of me. So I was feeling pretty left out and I knew it was an amazing thing to be single. My mom has been widowed for years. My aunt's never married, who I'm very close with.

**[00:01:37]**

And, of course I was single. I had this great, wonderful life. Good job. I have great friends, hobbies, and I'm generally pretty happy. But I was still feeling really bothered by what it meant to be single, and I was just wanting to connect my head and my heart in that way.

And I went through two transformative breakups in my late 20s once I finally... Even the word "finally" feels weird. But once I got into these relationships and I got into those... Both of them, thinking, "Wow, okay, don't mess this up. This is very fragile. If this goes away, you'll be cast out again into singlehood."

I was treating it like an exile. And as a result, I wasn't asking really smart, good questions about our relationship. I wasn't kicking the tires. I wasn't asking about values or if we were actually compatible.

So I was putting so much of my self-worth on the line when it came to dating and relationships. And once those ended, I thought, "God, I have to feel better about myself and what it means to be single, because I want to have a great life and enjoy what's in front of me."

And I just had started to see that it makes a lot of sense to invest in the longest relationship that you'll ever have, which is yourself.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Oh, I'm so glad that you said that. Because I was literally going to quote you back to you later about that exact line. It's a really powerful one.

And speaking of power, so much of what you said, which I can deeply relate to, is that the disempowerment of feeling, don't screw this up!

### **Meghan Keane**

Yeah. Again, I've never been married, but it's so relatable where you think, well, this is what I've been told to have... What I want to have. And I am making maybe some compromises or thinking this is good enough and then, yeah, you're silencing yourself in a lot of ways, right?

And you're not letting yourself also be your full person, and self around this person, and that can't last very long. It's going to feel bad after a while. So I'm glad that you were able to feel more grounded going into your next marriage, your current marriage.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. Of course. You get a little bit more power back. My husband would laugh if he heard that. But part of the way that we feel like this and why we feel like this, it's not all on us. It's not... We're conditioned. And you talk a lot about that in the book.

And I would love it if you talked a little bit more about the conditioning to value marriage and coupling, which leads to so much stigma around being single. And so how does that social conditioning impact individuals when they choose to remain single or are not single by choice?

**[00:04:23] Meghan Keane**

Yeah. So there's this great term that I came across from philosopher, Elizabeth Brake. She's at Rice University. It's called amatonormativity, and that is a word that essentially describes exactly what we're talking about.

How the most prized version of love and partnership is a, often heterosexual, monogamous marriage. And as a result, it stigmatizes and devalues all the other connections and love and intimacy in our lives.

And you see it in very big structural policy ways. You see it in who our tax code favors. You see it in housing and health care. But then you also see it on the very, close to home social level, like we're talking about.

When people ask really invasive questions of singles about their dating life and, "Well, why haven't you met someone? Oh, don't worry, you'll meet someone." And there's this lack of privacy that is assumed of singles' lives. Can you imagine asking someone, "So how's your marriage going?"

Right, like that would... And maybe we should start to. Who knows? But once you turn it back on itself, it does seem very silly and invasive. And so this amatonormativity seeps into all these different aspects of our lives.

I'm 35, I'm a millennial. I thought I was above all that. I had seen all the Disney princess movies. I loved all the songs and enjoyed them for what they were.

But I thought, "I don't want to be a princess. I don't want to be rescued." This brand of feminism which I'm proud to uphold. But I also didn't realize or give these negative messaging enough credit that they were still seeping into my brain.

That even if like, yes, I'm going to be a strong, independent woman. I'm okay with being single in certain junctures that... Being relegated to a pull-out couch when we're going on a group vacation, and expected to pay the same rate as everyone in king size beds with their partners and private bathrooms, that hurts.

So it also brings up this idea of singlism, another term that I came across when researching the book by researcher Bella DePaulo, who's made a whole amazing career of researching what it means to be single. And singlism is just that. It's the act of discrimination and marginalization of singles.

Like I said, it's things like the tax code. But it's also things like expecting someone who is single with no kids to work late. Whereas the married colleague with kids gets to leave to pick up kids at daycare.

It's assuming that you'll pay more because that's how the math works out to some people on a group vacation. So it also, I find, shows up in these really tiny ways, too, where you don't...

**[00:07:18]**

Sometimes married people don't always think, "Oh, I need to make time one-on-one with that single friend, or celebrate that promotion for them that they were really looking forward to in a big, meaningful way."

I love buying my single friends birthday gifts, celebrating them. And so combating singleism, and pushing back against amatonormativity is really on the shoulders of everybody.

And it all really boils down to is treating single people like full people, not only focusing on their dating lives, right? Asking them about their passions. Letting them invite friends to a wedding that you're having. Instead of a traditional plus one. So it happens in all these little ways that it just takes a little self-awareness. But once you start to see it, you can start to combat it.

### **Meagen Gibson**

One of my favorite things in the book is that you give people responses around, like, if people are invading your privacy or interrogating you about your relationship status, you give them all of these responses.

So I would love not only for you to give us the great examples you gave us of how we're all conditioned to favor coupling, but also how do people respond when people have just overstepped their boundaries of privacy and interest even?

### **Meghan Keane**

Sure. I mean, there's a spectrum of polite and short to sassy, I would say, depending how you're feeling that day. We're always remembering that a short sentence is more than enough.

I think for me, I thought I always had to answer every single question that was ever asked of me. And that is not true.

If someone is saying, "Well, tell me about your dating life, what's going on? Do you have any horror stories?"

You can just be like, "I'm not really interested in talking about that right now."

And then, "I hear that you got a promotion (or something)." You can change the subject really quickly. So that's short and polite.

The sassy is, of course, something like, "Well, how's your dating life? How's your marriage? What's going on there?" Or simply just like, "We're not talking about that or that's not a priority for me right now."

That's a big one. And often too, people don't even just ask about, "Hey, how's your dating life?" They want to prescribe you fixes as if...

**[00:09:38] - Meghan Gibson**

As if you asked them.

**Meghan Keane**

Yeah. Didn't ask. First of all, and second of all, I feel like those comments are really just reflections of an insecurity they have about their life or a compromise they've made. So one I wrote about in the book and I got a lot was like, "You're too intimidating." A therapist told me this one time. No longer my therapist.

**Meagen Gibson**

Literally I was like, aghast.

**Meghan Keane**

Yeah, pretty wild. And what I hear when people say, "You're too intimidating," it's like, "Why don't you be less of yourself? Why haven't you decided to compromise, and be more demure or more diluted?"

And I'm just not interested in that. Or, "You're too picky."

It's like, "Well, did you settle? Did you compromise in a way that you don't feel comfortable with then?"

So I think it's easy to think about how these questions that are lobbed at single people are ways to think about, "Okay, well, what's wrong with me? I have to solve this."

But maybe... And this is what Sara Eckel, another writer who's written about singleness, told me. She was like, "What if you start to think about it as reasons that are positive, that you're still... That you're single, right? That you are picky. That you aren't settling for someone who's going to treat you like garbage, or someone who's just going to annoy you, day in and day out."

So I think once you get under the root of people's questions about this stuff, it deflates it. And then you can not have it feel like an attack and more just be like, okay, here's the invisible wall coming up between us.

And here's my quick, template response of, like, "I'm actually not going to talk about that right now. Or, you know what? Actually I took up embroidery recently. Can I talk to you about that?" I don't know, just like coming up with something to deflect and move on.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. Yeah. And I love the ones, especially when you were, like, redirecting at them like, "How's your marriage?"

**[00:11:40] Meghan Keane**

Yeah, I think that stops people in their tracks.

**Meagen Gibson**

You just give them back their discomfort. You're like, "Why on earth would you ask me about that?" Unless... If I bring it up, then if I say, "Oh, gosh, I just had this terrible date."

Now we're engaged in a conversation if you're interested in tossing that back and forth. But to just corner me at a potluck and ask me, or tell me what my problem is and why I haven't... I could just see it.

**Meghan Keane**

I've also heard people say online how great it is, especially at work, when someone is acting totally irrationally at you and instead of giving a big speech back at them... Just be like, "What would make you think that? Just asking a really simple question like, "Why would you ask someone that?"

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Meghan Keane**

That's pretty powerful too.

**Meagen Gibson**

And you talked about reframing all these things as positives, like, "Yeah, I am picky. And yeah, I do have high standards. And yes, I really do love the things I do, and the way I spend my time and won't compromise that."

And you talk about the happiness set point in the book. So is that part of what the framing of the happiness set point is, and what that has to do with your values and having those centered in your life?

**Meghan Keane**

Yeah. So the happiness set point is this idea in psychology that you have a more or less baseline of your happiness. Things will obviously greatly impact it or diminish it. Obviously basic needs, making sure you feel safe.

But we have this idea that achieving a goal, or getting a big award or, in some cases, like in the realm of my book, getting married is going to drastically change your happiness set point that somehow it's going to go off the charts now.

And the reality is, and what the research shows, is when you do achieve or get to that next stage of something that you've been desiring, there is a momentary spike in happiness. That's true.

**[00:13:33]**

But then it often almost always goes back to that median base point. And what is good to remember is that things like outcomes, goals like that... You can have them in your mind as something you would like or desire, but they are not ultimately going to increase your happiness to this nth degree.

The things that actually help your happiness set point are things like making sure you have a lot... You have friends and connections, right? That you have a good support system, that you're being mindful, that you're treating yourself well with self-compassion. A lot less sexy things, right? Like general maintenance of life.

I think that's just a good reminder, because then you can start to think, okay, well, maybe I can get off this hedonic treadmill, and not run quite as fast and chase after this thing. And just focus on me and what makes me feel good. And if a partner comes, that's great. If they don't, I still have a great life. And my happiness set point is still feeling really great.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, absolutely. We have talked a lot about loneliness in a lot of our conferences, and there's plenty of evidence to support that loneliness is actually bad for us. But you make an important distinction in the book that lonely and alone are not the same. And so why is that distinction important?

### **Meghan Keane**

Yes, so lonely is the state of being dissatisfied with being alone. And alone just means you are quite literally alone. Like I'm in a room alone right now. I mean, I have a sweet dog, but I'm not dissatisfied with being alone right now. I'm in conversation with you. I'm engaging, and I think that's a helpful distinction.

And it's a distinction, too, that's made by the US Surgeon General. This is something that is in a large memo that he put out about loneliness, that chronic loneliness is a killer. It is very deadly and leads to a lot of illness and upsetting things.

But he recommends in the memo that... In the advisory memo that being... Some adaptive loneliness is okay and sometimes even helpful. So that's a really important distinction because then you start to see where the shame comes in and how you can redirect it.

Because I think the thing that really can get in people's heads about feeling lonely is that they then layer on, "God, I feel bad for being lonely. I am alone. No one loves me." These really harmful negative messages.

And the thing that I thought was super interesting, that blew my mind a few years ago was this researcher who's since passed. But he was at the University of Chicago. His name was John Cacioppo, and he found in his research that loneliness is not something that we should feel necessarily shame about.

**[00:16:36]**

It's really more in his estimation, like a biological signal. It's akin to thirst or hunger that it's telling you, "Hey, you need something. Go seek it out."

You wouldn't feel bad about needing a glass of water because you're thirsty, right? You wouldn't feel shame about that. And so in my estimation, it's like, well, why would you feel bad? If you're feeling lonely, that's a signal of your body saying, "Hey, seek out social connection." And I think that just helps remove the stigma of loneliness.

Then helps you redirect to getting you what you need. And then the other, flip side of that is I know plenty of people who love their alone time and feel like it is... It is really restorative. It's called solitude. It's actually very regenerative and good for regulating emotions. Small, even small bouts, are really helpful.

And it's interesting because I feel like I see a lot of this research about Americans are now living more on their own, etc. And that's leading to this loneliness epidemic. I think that is all true.

But I'm like, okay, but is every single person in that single home, actually really that lonely? I bet you a lot of those are, honestly, single women who have a really rich life and they just need some downtime.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yes.

**Meghan Keane**

So I think it's just getting more specific about loneliness. I think that, and seeing where you can... Listen to it as a signal and then redirect to what you need.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. And you even said... You said, "Loneliness is a neutral signal, not a moral failing."

**Meghan Keane**

And it's not a moral failing. Yeah, yeah.

**Meagen Gibson**

I really appreciated that turn of phrase. Yeah.

**Meghan Keane**

I feel like a lot of my work as a journalist, a service journalist at NPR, and this book is about reminding people like, take the pressure off yourself. The pressure has been put on you, but it has nothing to do with your worth.



**[00:18:27]**

And it would just make the world a little easier if we all just toned it all down. I just think it would help people live with more ease. That's always what I'm seeking.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, and when we focus on that signal, if we give too much meaning or assign too much attention to that signal, we're in rumination territory, right? And we're... You say we're missing out on the company of ourselves, which, like I literally... I felt so heartbroken because you're right. We are great company to be around, and we can touch back into that.

### **Meghan Keane**

Completely. Yeah, I know it is... The unfortunate part of loneliness is that it does get you into this spiral where you have the rumination, like you're saying. And then John Cacioppo, this researcher has written about how then you become little...

You have more blinders on when you're feeling lonely, and you're not actually as receptive to accepting other people's help that are reaching out, which is such a... It's such an unfortunate design of how this works.

But again, if you know the design, you can push against it. And that's why I wrote about solitude styles, because I know not everyone necessarily enjoys alone time, but I think... Putting a box around it, putting a name around it is maybe a way for people to think, "Oh, I do actually do all these things by myself and enjoy doing these things by myself."

And so maybe you're not up to the level of wanting to go to a dinner by yourself. But you love going to the movies, and you don't have to talk to anybody. I love going to the movies by myself. I think it's amazing.

Like cooking by yourself. Things that we... Or doing errands. There's research that shows that people have no problem doing those types of activities because there's not a social stigma wrapped around it that they're...

So what I'm trying to tell people is you already do things by yourself and enjoy your own company. It has to happen at some point. And so if you're struggling with that, I have a variety of different solitude styles, I call them.

Maybe like investing in a creative project. Really working with something with your hands, like gardening, like embroidery, cooking. Or using your alone time to still connect with others. And what I mean by that is things like prepping meals for someone who you know is going through a hard time. Writing letters, making birthday cards.

I love Loving-Kindness meditations. I feel like those... I write in the book, I feel like they're like paper planes, almost, to connect with others even though you're still technically alone.

**[00:20:59]**

So it's not a... Be in the woods by yourself for weeks on end prescription. I'm saying you're pretty great. Why not find those times and dedicate your solitude to an activity or something that feels really nourishing, and then you'll build up that muscle for enjoying that alone time.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. And I love the loneliness styles, because one of the things you talk about is... I felt like you called me out and everybody else out.

You were like, listen, "You feel lonely. So you reach out to your friend and then you vent to your friend. And basically now you're just co-ruminating."

And I was like, "Ouch! Why you gotta call us out like that?"

**Meghan Keane**

Yeah, that's in the literature. And I was also called out by it. Or what I do is then I scroll on my phone to see who I haven't texted yet about that problem. And so I just start the rumination all over again. Co-rumination with another friend.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, I already used the social currency on that friend. So now I can do it again. I'll get that connective dopamine hit by telling the story to someone fresh. Yeah, I've been guilty.

But we're mindfully processing together. What's the difference in intention when we want to reach out... We're trying to connect with somebody. And what makes it a more mindful... Transaction is the wrong word. Connection.

**Meghan Keane**

Yeah, interaction. When you are... If it's specifically about when you're feeling bad and you want to vent, for instance. So venting, as you said, is also known as co-rumination. And the idea is that, we also call it letting off steam.

And when you're letting off steam, there's often not a lot of room for then having perspective-taking or problem-solving. You're just like, "I just need to get this off my chest." It's like letting out and that's fine.

But what psychologist and neuroscientist Ethan Kross has talked to me about in this book, and his book *Chatter* as well, is that that's fine. But then what is really helpful for you to help calm the mental chatter as a result of you talking about this thing, is that you want to transition to being more perspective-taking. Maybe problem-solving? Basically, widening your focus about the problem.

**[00:23:25]**

I know that's hard. So one thing I recommend in the book is if a friend is coming to me and they're venting. And I can tell they'll be like, "Can I just talk to you about something?" Once they've done the initial venting, I say, "Do you want advice or do you need validation right now?"

Sometimes they do say advice, sometimes they don't need validation. I've been there. The advice part, I sometimes... I don't say, "Well, you should do this or do that."

I like to remind them things like, "Hey, I know you've been through something similar. You talked to me about this about three months ago, and you got through it and that's in the past now. So I know you can get through this again."

You know, giving them sneaky validation within the advice of like, "Hey, how do you think you're going to think about this in a year? I know it feels big right now. Let's honor that. But in a short time... In not so long of a time, it will be in the rearview mirror."

And I've been that person who's... Especially when I'm on the phone with my mom. I'll be like, "Yeah, I know you're right." I don't actually want to hear... I don't actually want to hear it, but I know she's technically right.

But the reason that's important is that, one, Ethan Kross talks about how you run the risk of burning out your friends sometimes with coming to them with the same exact story and problem.

And again, not that you have to problem solve everything by the end of a venting session. But if you're not able to change your perspective or see the bigger picture, it is going to get exhausting for everyone involved.

And then two, there is good research done by Ethan Kross about how taking a bigger, wider perspective actually helps you emotionally cope with what you are experiencing.

He did a study about how he asked people to imagine a frustrating problem, and then imagine... He had one group tell it from their perspective, and then another group being like, imagine you're a fly on the wall, seeing this problem play out.

And the people who were imagining themselves as a fly on the wall were able to cope better. And I know it's hard to get perspective sometimes, but it is. It is the path to having the pressure come down and then moving on.

And something that I've learned about rumination is that you don't have to think harder to solve a problem. Sometimes you do just need a break to feel better, because otherwise you're just exhausting your cognitive resources and you're putting stress on your body.

So sometimes... That was a revelation for me because I thought... I'm a journalist. I'm a writer. I'm the daughter of a social worker. We love talking. Let's just talk this out. And sometimes you need to just take a break and then come back to it.

**[00:26:01] Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. Do you find it true that... Sometimes I think about this co-rumination cycle as what I'm trying to do is borrow somebody else's safety.

And I've heard... I've talked to the psychologist Darryl Tonemah who talks about borrowing safety. But that's a decision that the person that's regulated that can see somebody who's dysregulated makes. I'm going to lend some safety to this other person.

Whereas when we're co-ruminating often we don't ask. Like, "Hey, I really need to talk through something. Do you have time?" We just call and we're like, "You're not going to believe this."

And so what we're trying to do is borrow some regulation from somebody else, and get some safety from somebody else around a situation that they're not involved in. But what we end up doing is just burning out our friends, like you said.

**Meghan Keane**

Yeah, and look, I've also been that friend where I call someone up, like, "Can you believe this?" And we returned to the same issue several times. But then every time I get more perspective... Excuse me. The perspective-shifting taken from a friend, it is like a little needle to the balloon where it's deflating the problem a little bit more. So it's just repetition. It's getting in the reps of practicing it.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. I was trying to break this habit, I think probably about two years ago now. And I did an experiment for a month where every time I broke out into tears, I would record myself, on video or take a photo. Not to post and shame myself on social media. I recorded it. And then I would go back after the month and I would try to remember what had me so upset.

**Meghan Keane**

And you know what? Okay, that's very intense. I don't know if I could do it. It sounds very cognitive behavioral therapy tracking, which is great. I do that with my journals, though, I realize... I look back at old journals every now and then, and I think about things like, wow, I was so upset about something and I do not remember what was the actual... I would be like.

Sometimes I'm like, even writing it. I see myself write, like three years ago in great detail. I'm like, who is this person again? Even if I say their name, I'm like, I don't remember this. So yeah, I think it is... It is good to remember like that.

That's a tracking device of noticing how often you're doing it, and remembering that... It's not to say that you should never cry or never be upset. It's just a reminder that this is going to pass, likely. If this is something that is... You're supported and you have the right tools, those emotions do pass.

### **[00:28:25] Meagen Gibson**

That was the thing for me. That was the discerning takeaway I got was like nine times out of ten, I was in a state experience that was uncomfortable for me, and I was looking for some company.

The one time, though, it was a big thing... This was where I should have called in my support people and my friend, right? It helped in that discernment.

Before I let you go, one more thing I want to talk to you about is just cultivating friendships. And you talk about, if you're craving deeper community, create deeper rituals. And what does that mean to you?

### **Meghan Keane**

Yes. So I think what a lot of single people look to married people and sometimes maybe get jealous or, maybe envious of, is that there are a lot of built-in rituals to a married life.

You have an engagement party, you have a wedding, you maybe have kids, then you have baby showers and you have kids' birthday parties. And now it's Halloween. You take the kids trick-or-treating. There's all this built-in ritual to having a married life that is...

There's no script for a single life for ritual. But I think that's really exciting, actually. It means that you can build a lot of ritual into your life. And ritual... It's just a simple way of marking an occasion of being like, this is why we're gathering or we're doing something with attention, and isn't that wonderful? And as a result, people feel included in a community and it just creates these stronger bonds.

So it could be as simple as, like New Year's. I always like to get some girlfriends together. We love tarot and we do a reading for the year coming ahead. That just feels really special.

I know for some people, it's like... I have a friend who does a monthly game night where we always learn different card games. He's trying to have us learn bridge and build up to bridge. And so we've played euchre, hearts, spades.

But, he just has a ton of people over. He makes a ton of food and we just play cards. And it's just a nice, reliable thing to look forward to. And so, yeah, ritual is just a way of saying, "Hey, come in. Let's meet and enjoy each other's company."

And I think it's also nice too for people when they're trying... In search of more community, because it's easy to be like, "Hey, I have this monthly card night. You should come over."

It's a really low stakes invitation. Another thing I write about in the book is this idea of being the starter. People are waiting for invitations. People... Or they don't... As soon as they get an invitation, they're like, "Wow, that would be really fun."

And even if they can't do it, they feel very flattered and included. So I just encourage people to make those asks and it doesn't have to be big like, "Let's go out to this new fancy dinner or whatever."

**[00:31:16]**

It could be, "Hey, you mentioned that you wanted to see that movie. I'm probably going to go tomorrow. Would you want to come?"

And so I think being really creative too, about rituals can be fun. You can go real all out. You can do friend anniversary trips. You can go to a movie festival. I obviously like movies. I keep bringing up movies.

You can have a craft night. There's just things that... It doesn't have to be around big events in your life. It can be. That's great. Or you can do counter-programming, right? You can do things like, "Hey, I got my MBA. I have a registry now." That's maybe not a ritual, but you can mark that occasion.

So yes, you can go really big, but you can also make them smaller. I think about friends where it'll be like, I see this person every Friday morning for coffee. And we just take a walk around the neighborhood or something. It can be a lot more casual. So I think seeing that spectrum of what ritual can look like just adds up to a really rich life.

### **Meagen Gibson**

I do love the idea of the consistently... Even though it's low pressure. It doesn't have to be a big thing. I love how so many of the things that you named had an activity, because it's so much easier to buy in from... I'm just thinking about it like if somebody said, "Come over, I'm having a dinner party."

I'm like, "Urgh, who's going to be there? What are we going to talk about?" But if you know, what kind of a trap am I walking into?

But if somebody comes over and asks me to play euchre, I'm in because I'm from the Midwest. I grew up playing euchre, but I've totally forgotten it. And no one... I live in the South now. No one here plays it. And so that would... I would be like, "I'm in. Let's play Kings in the Corner. Let's... Are we working up to Mahjong? I'm in."

But there's an activity there. And I don't have to like it. But I know we're all going to be focused on something that isn't me.

### **Meghan Keane**

Even if you're not a game person. Something, an activity I think is really easy way to bring people in on low stakes. Because so much of friendship these days is just recounting what you've done the past few months since the last time you saw that person.

And sometimes that's nice. Sometimes it's nice to catch up. But it's not building memories necessarily. Not building new memories. And I think that's the... As you age, people, I think, really long for their early 20s when... And they...

**[00:33:35]**

That's why I think people tell a lot of stories about high school or college because they're like, "And then we got into this, and then this happened." Those were really memory-based, or memory-building friendships.

Whereas sometimes in adulthood it can be like, "Here's what happened the last three months." So I think building an activity can just bring that sense of play in again.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, absolutely. And play is so important. We all deserve it. Yeah.

**Meghan Keane**

Absolutely.

**Meagen Gibson**

Meghan Keane, thank you so much for being with us. This has been fantastic.

**Meghan Keane**

Oh, my absolute pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**Meagen Gibson**

How can people find out more about you and get the book?

**Meghan Keane**

Sure. Yeah. So the book *Party of One: Be Your Own Best Life Partner* available wherever you get your books. But you can find out more if you'd like at [meghanykeane.com](http://meghanykeane.com). That's K-E-A-N-E or on Instagram @damekeane. Again K-E-A-N-E.

**Meagen Gibson**

Fantastic. Thanks again.

**Meghan Keane**

Thank you.