

284: The Real Reason Relationships Fail (with Abby Medcalf)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jen Riday

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You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 284. We're talking about the real reason relationships fail. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday. This podcast is for women who want to feel more vibrant, happy, aligned, and alive. You'll gain the emotional, physical, and spiritual tools you need to get your sparkle back and ensure that depression, anxiety, and struggle don't rule your life. Welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women Podcast.

Well, hello there. I'm sitting in my office in Madison, Wisconsin enjoying the peace and quiet, no kids for a moment, just spending some time with you. So happy to be here with you. We have a guest today, Abby Medcalf who is going to tell us the real reason relationships fail. And I've had a number of relationship guests on the show over the years. But I love, I love Abby's thoughts on this, they're unique and it's cool.

So, I'm not going to share anything more. But listen for the idea of A, B and C. And I'll give you a hint, that with our partners we can cocreate a C, a version C that we've never dreamed of. So, listen to find out what I'm talking about.

Now, before we dive in I want to share a review of the week and it's from Sparky to Shine. I love that username. She wrote, "I really love Jen Riday's podcast, Vibrant Happy Women. She has so much information to help women live their most vibrant, happy and authentic lives. She is so encouraging and inspiring to women. She inspires me to seek out my best life and be the best person I can be. Thank you, Jen." I kind of love these reviews because who doesn't want words of affirmation right there on their podcast page? I like it, thank you. Thank you, Sparky to Shine.

For the rest of you if you want to give me some words of affirmation go for it, you can do that at jenriday.com/review. I would love to hear from you.

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Alright, well our guest today is Abby Medcalf and she is a psychologist, a podcast host and relationship maven as she calls herself. And you're going to love her. She has some great ideas about changing your relationship in unique ways. So, listen to this, see what you think and I'll see you on the other side.

Jen: Hey everyone, I'm with Abby Medcalf today. She is a relationship maven, psychologist, podcast host and TEDx speaker who has helped thousands of people think differently so they can create connection, ease and joy in their relationships. Abby is the author of the number one Amazon bestselling book, *Be Happily Married Even if your Partner Won't do a Thing*. And the host of the top rated *Relationships May Be Easy* podcast. Abby, I'm so excited to talk about this today, welcome.

Abby: Oh, thank you so much. I'm very happy to be here.

Jen: So essentially you're going to tell us the real reason that relationships fail. Take it away because we want to know.

Abby: Oh, yeah. So, I've been doing this, the whole counselling world for about 35 years. And I've been in businesses. And I've been just individually in my office with individuals and couples. So, I've sort of run the gamut. And I will tell you the thing that everyone, everyone pretty much comes in with when they're having struggles in their relationship is they tell me, I ask, "What are your goals? What do you want to do?" They say, "We want to communicate better. The problem in our relationship is communication."

And pretty much I think everybody kind of comes in with that and anyone listening probably thinks that. And what I have discovered is that, yes,

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communication is a problem but it's actually something under that that's the real issue. And that's why the communication tools that you've been given don't work. And that thing underneath the number one problem really is competition. We compete in our partnerships. It's your turn to put away the dishes. I took Sophie to baseball on Monday so it's your turn to take Jack to piano on Thursday.

You spent money on this, I'm going to now spend money on this. You went out with your friends on Friday, I get to go out with my friends on Saturday. There is this incredible way that we consistently and we learned it from our parents, it's everywhere. This sort of 50/50 thing, my better half, my other half. We use this language constantly. And what happens of course is that we set ourselves up. You're keeping score and you only keep score in games. And it's in competition that you keep score.

And so, your partner might come to you and say, "Hey, I'm feeling neglected." And you might go, "Neglected. I've been doing this, this, this and this." And you know how you give that? I shouldn't say you. You know how I have in the past given that long list of what I did? How could you possibly feel that way when I've done all these things? And we again are watching what our partners do and then comparing it to what we do. And we do it in friendships too by the way. We do it kind of everywhere.

Jen: Yes, we do, yeah.

Abby: We do. We do. But in our love relationships it seems to show up the worst. And that way of thinking again sets us up for somebody to win and someone to lose. And if I don't want you to win, if I want to win that means you have to lose. And that is a very bad proposition in any type of relationship. You are in a fear based pattern now, a fear, fear based emotions, worry, anxiety, resentment, frustration, overwhelm. We're in all of those. And that's not helping any relationship.

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Jen: Yeah, for sure. So, what is the antidote? I mean obviously you need to think. You're right though and I just want to add here. Every sitcom, every stereotype builds this idea that it is competitive or that it needs to be 50/50.

Abby: Yeah. It's again it's so part of our culture we don't even think about it. And that's the problem. I mean if you even think of divorce, you sue for divorce. You're suing someone, that's what that is. It's terrible. So, now, so in a relationship especially you have to realize that you are one – the answer is that you are always one shared resource. And when you are pulling from the other person you are literally pulling from yourself.

So, when you're draining that battery, and so what happens a lot again in love relationships is we look to the other person to – we say things like, "You have to pull your weight. You have to do your fair share. And you have to take this thing off my plate." And I literally am screaming from the sidelines, "It's the same plate. You have the same plate." You are literally moving around the mashed potatoes. You are not – your partner can't take anything off your plate because it's the same plate. But that's what we do.

Something new comes into the family and we look to our partner, "Okay, what am I going to do? What are you going to do? How are we going to do it?" And there's a few things here. But I'll start with, the first thing you can do is add and subtract, so one or the other. So, the first thing you can do is either add resources. So, I will tell you when my kids, so me and their dad both worked. We're not home. The kids have to get places in the middle of the afternoon let's say. I hired people to drive my children. We have a big university right near where we live and so it was great.

It was very easy actually to find, you do a little background check, you do your thing but you can find people to drive your kids around in the middle of the day. Instead of always looking to your partner, "Well, you can do this, then I'll come do this, and then you'll do this." You say, "Let's just add

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things. Let's add someone to walk the dog. Let's add someone to pick up the dog poop from the backyard that we're always fighting about. Let's, if we have a cleaning person, maybe let's have somebody, have that person also do the laundry."

Think of adding a resource when something new comes in. We are all, already have very full plates. Come on. So, when something gets added to your life, whatever that is, now, I have to take on the auction at my kid's school. Or I volunteered for this. Or I want to go to the gym. Or I want, whatever it is that you start to add whether it's a healthy thing or not, whatever, it doesn't matter. It's already full. It's already full. So, if you keep looking to your partner to take up that slack, that's a problem. Or if you keep looking to yourself to take up all that slack, that's a problem.

There's a limit so your first thing is to look at can I add a resource to take care of this from outside the family, from outside myself, from outside the couple, can I add a resource of some kind to do it? Or if I feel like it's me that has to do this thing, can I think of something else that I could a resource to take care of? Can I take something else off my plate somewhere else?

And the other thing you can think of doing is subtracting. Does little Sophie really have to be in piano, take an instrument, and speak a language, and be in two sports? Is that really necessary? For even our family, well, you have a 100 kids, so you really know.

Jen: That's right.

Abby: To me anything over two is a 100. So, at some point you have to really decide that your mental health and that your children's mental health is more important than anything else. And it's interesting. There's a Monitoring the Future study that comes out every year. I'm sure you've

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heard of it and seen it. And pretty much every year the number one complaint that teenagers have, and even younger kids about their parents is that they feel rushed by them.

Jen: Wow. Yeah. I am curious if that will have changed after the pandemic. I suspect it will.

Abby: I know. I do too, exactly. I'm really looking forward to seeing what that is. Maybe they didn't even do it, they're like, "Forget it. Let's not even touch it this year." And there is that feeling, that rushed feeling because I'm waking up the very last second before the alarm goes off. And then I'm rushing and yelling to the kids in the other room. There's just all this, I want to let them sleep till the last second too. And it's just so rushed.

And then I'm getting them, because they have to go to baseball, then they have to do this, then they have to do, then they have to take a language, then they have to go to their tutor. It's like, do you have to? Does all that stuff have to happen? At least does it have to happen now? And again, looking at the rest of your life, maybe you just moved. Maybe you got a new job or your partner did. These are not times to be adding all the things. So maybe just wait a little bit. Timing is important also.

So, when you're looking at your life and you want to get rid of this competition, we have to look again. If there's less to compete about we're going to be in better shape. Or if we have more things helping us, more resources, we're going to be in better shape. But no matter what, to get out of that idea, I had a couple not long ago I was working with. And the husband got a promotion that he was very excited about. He'd been waiting a long time for it, really working hard for it. And it was going to necessitate him traveling a lot to Europe.

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And whether that's going to happen right this minute or not, I don't know. But that's what it's going to be. And he was waiting to tell her in the couples session. So, we were all on Zoom together.

Jen: Oh, wow. Danger.

Abby: Well, he was excited though. He was actually thinking he was sharing this great news, this win. He's been talking about this for so long. He's been so excited. She's been encouraging him too. But we get on the call and he goes, "Oh my God, I've got great news. I got the promotion." Now he's going to be the whatever director of Europe or something, whatever his title was going to be. And her first response was, "Great. Now I'll have to work full-time and take care of the kids full-time."

Jen: Ooh, ouch, yeah.

Abby: Yeah. and so, I mean there's all kinds of stuff about not being happy for a partner's wins. But that's why people are unhappy for their partner's wins, because they see it as a loss to them. That's the reason you go there. And that's the competition. And that's the keeping score.

Jen: Yeah, that makes sense. So, we have to all just be a 100% responsible for our own schedules, our own downtime, our own ability to have free time and relaxation and not dump it on our spouse. So, taking that responsibility then you really can't blame anymore if you say, "I'm a 100% responsible for what my life looks like." It doesn't matter what he's doing. Yeah.

Abby: I tell people, I remind people all the time. You cocreate every relationship you're in. So, whatever's happening you've cocreated it. So, if you'd like to cocreate something else then I want you to do that. And I will

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say too, I want you to take a 100% responsibility and I want you to go to your partner with it too. Hey, I want to add working out. I really believe this will be helpful to me. How can we, so it's not a me problem or you problem because we're a team. We're a team. How can we create that? Let's brainstorm together, let's think about it.

Because once again we can't just add it. Whatever our partners add to their plates, this happens a lot. I'll have a couple that'll start couples therapy. And I always say to them in the beginning, "Do not add anything else. This is it right here, this is going to take." Because here's the mistake people make. I'm going to go off tangent. I'll come back. The mistake folks make which is big is that they think about how much time they have in their day but not how much mind they have in their day.

Jen: Interesting, yeah.

Abby: Because we've all been there. You've got, let's say you think I'm going to start working out at night. And you're thinking I get home at five or now you're already home. I'm going to do this, I have time, I don't go to bed till 11, I've got all these hours. And then you find yourself vegging out in front of the TV, or whatever, or playing games on your phone, or getting sucked into social media for two hours. Even though you have time left in your day you don't feel like you can do anything with those evening hours because there's no bandwidth left. There's no mind left in your day.

And so, when couples come in for couples therapy I say to them, because they'll say, "Yeah, well, no, we worked out this hour to be with you." And I'm like, "You have to start thinking differently, you're taking on, you're putting on your plate this new thing." So, it's not about – there's not 24 hours in a day, get rid of that. It's how much is here. And you really have to – willpower is an exhaustible resource. And as you know, [inaudible], you know, our willpower exhausts over the course of the day. So, you wake up

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with the most you're going to have and then over the course of the day it gets less and less.

And the willpower is how you make decisions, and how you find your motivation. Willpower drives that bus, so until something becomes a habit. Once it becomes a habit it doesn't drain our willpower. But, and this is what nobody tells you, creating a new habit does drain willpower because it's new and you have to garner. So, once I have it as a habit it's going to enhance my life. We know this. Once I start working out all the time and it's a habit it's going to really enhance my life. It's going to add to my willpower, I'm going to feel more energy. I'm going to be healthier.

But until that happens it's a drain on my willpower so it's going to be hard and that's why everyone quits after a very short period of time. I myself have signed up for the Y, and I've been swimming going this is costing me 400 bucks, this backstroke because I come twice a year. I pay all this money, I pay my monthly membership but I don't show up. And so, when I finally started working out consistently and I have my clients do this, for example, I did not touch my food. The thing I added was only working out. And so, I didn't try to change my food. I didn't try to do everything at once.

And I took some things off my plate to add this. And we know it takes an average of about three months to create a new habit, Phillippa Lally, University College London says it takes an average of 66 days, so I always tell people three months because you don't where your average is. And so, for three months you get extra help at home or you pay for, again, maybe a cleaning person that you didn't have before. Maybe they come twice a week for a while, anything so that you have more bandwidth to do this new thing.

So, you have to think of that and just think of it for three months. You don't have to do it forever but do it for a little while until you really get this in.

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Once this is in then you can take on another new habit. So, if you're doing couples therapy, if you want to work out, whatever it is that you want to do, do one thing. And again, think of that three month period and think of adding resources or subtracting, or something you don't have to do anymore. And again, if you have a partner, talk to that person about how, again a we issue, how do we approach this so that it can be a win for the family?

Jen: Yeah, that makes sense with the time management and with the busyness. What about communication styles when there's a problem and a difference of opinion about how to solve it?

Abby: Yeah. So, the thing I talk to couples a lot about is we see ourselves on a straight line. And so, I'm at point A and you're at point B, and there's this line in between us. And we are trying to solve a problem along that line. So, let's say, let's take something, I just worked with a couple who was trying to decide a private school or not for their kid. And one person said, "I think." It was the husband wanted private school and the wife wanted public school. So, this is where they were.

And they were trying on the line to figure out here's what I think, here's what you think. And they were on that line trying to figure out what the answer was. And as you might imagine, that doesn't usually show up well because – and by the way, in a negotiation, when people negotiate, this is from the research, both sides think they gave up more than the other person or other side. Isn't that interesting? So, I don't want couples to negotiate ever.

And I tell them to think of it like a triangle so that you're both at the base of a triangle on point A and B. But you really both go into point C. You're going to something you haven't thought of before. You're going to a

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solution that is beyond where the two of you are. Do you know what I'm saying?

Jen: Yeah.

Abby: So, it's something else. So, it's not private school or not, start throwing in everything. What else could it be? Home school. You do that. What else could be an option for what we're talking about? Maybe boarding school, maybe I don't know, maybe studying abroad. There's a million things to think of in this. So, let's start really problem solving for something else, something kind of beyond where that is. And then the other thing I say to do, so that's kind of one strategy, this sort of triangle.

And the other thing I want people to remember is that a lot of times we think we sort of know what we want. We already have the answer in our heads of here's how I want to solve the problem and I think it's right. And so, I go to my partner but I sort of already have my idea of what the answer is, what the solution is. And then I'm trying to kind of drag them to where I am. And that's again along that line, that kind of negotiation. I'm trying to sort of pull them to where I am.

And instead, I tell people, I'm like, "Go where they are. Go meet them where they are. Listen like you're wrong. Be really curious. What is it that they're really thinking. Ask those open ended questions. Go meet them where they are and then together walk forward." Again, probably not to where you are but to somewhere else, probably that point C in the triangle. So going back to meet the person. And it's a very different way to be curious, to listen like you're wrong, to really be curious though.

What is it that this person, here's this person I love, I say I love, why I've devoted all this time and energy to who really does think differently than me. What is that different thinking? How could I understand it in another

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way? And there is an energy that happens when we really think someone's listening to us. You know how it is.

If you really think someone's just trying to drive you to their agenda it feels very different than when you really believe they're trying to understand you and come up with a solution with you. Because that's when people get really open, they stop being defensive, resistant in some way. And what I remind people of constantly is our conscious brains process information at a rate of 50 bits per second. While our unconscious or subconscious brains are processing information at a rate of 11 million bits per second.

Jen: Wow.

Abby: I know. So, your partner doesn't hear what you say. They hear what you mean. So, if you really are like I'm asking these questions but really you're not, you're just trying to get them where you want them to go. That 11 million bits, they pick up on it. They know. And everyone has experienced this, anyone listening right now has experienced this when they've been – I don't know, maybe they're at work. And someone is talking all the right stuff to them but they think they're full of it.

They're listening going, "This person is full of it. I don't believe a word they're saying", even though all the words are correct, the right words. That's that 11 million bits. That's what that is.

Jen: Yeah. I love that, it's huge.

Abby: Yeah. It's huge. It really changed the game when I started approaching it from that level. And let me tell you what happens. So, someone will come in my office, this is common or now via Zoom. They'll speak to me, I'm thinking of somebody in particular. And her husband

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wouldn't come into the couples. And so, she's coming. She's reading my book. She's like, "Alright, we can do this on my own." And I gave her a great tool. She gets inspired. She's like, "Yes, this sounds great."

But she's like, "I'm going to go try this with my husband." But on the way home or later that day, whatever, the doubt starts seeping in. Things like we've tried couples therapy five times, nothing ever worked. Or we've made changes before but then we go back to old patterns. Or really nothing's going to change unless he changes. All the doubt. All the stuff starts seeping in.

So now here I am I'm the wife and I'm home and I'm trying this new tool that Abby gave me. But inside I'm thinking I'm doubting, this isn't really going to work, it's such a little thing. It's not going to be this thing. And so, let's say my husband, so he sees that I'm using the new tool. He sees something else is happening. I'm talking differently or I'm using different language. But he's picking up on the 11 million bits. He's picking up on the doubt, on the resentment, on the worry, on the anxiety. And so, he's thinking, well, she's acting nice now but let's see how long this is going to last.

So, he doesn't change a thing. He doesn't do anything, he's kind of waiting her out. Sure, enough a week or two goes by and nothing is changing. And she gives up, she goes back to the way she was doing things. And she comes to my office and says, "That didn't work." And I'm like, "No, it can work but you have to get in alignment."

Jen: Yes, law of attraction really, yeah.

Abby: Exactly. I know you've done a previous, in which I've listened to, podcast on that. This manifesting as law of attraction. And what I like to tell people, there's science behind that law of attraction right here. It's this 50

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versus 11 million bits. There's also one other piece to that. Actually, I'll jump there right now. But there's another thing going on in your brain which I don't know if I've heard on your podcast before but called your reticular activating system, or your RAS for short. I feel like I've heard it on there before.

And as people know, it's a filter between your conscious and your subconscious mind. So basically, anything you think consciously, the RAS hears that and sends it as an instruction or an order to your subconscious to look for that thing you're consciously thinking about. And the easiest example of this is if you've ever bought a new car, you see the new car everywhere. Or if you even thought of a new car suddenly there's grey Nissan Pathfinders everywhere you look.

And every time I was pregnant, I'm not sure, I don't know if you experienced this, I saw pregnant women everywhere. I thought there was a population explosion. And but now I rarely see pregnant women. I don't notice them in the same way. And again, that's the RAS. So, if I'm thinking my partner's always criticizing me, my RAS takes that as the order or instruction, look for my partner criticizing me and I will find it everywhere. It'll show up like that car everywhere.

And the worst part of the RAS is that it will filter out anything that doesn't match. So, when my partner's appreciative, when they say thank you, when they're kind it'll be like Teflon. And again, that's part of the law of attraction too. There's real science and real stuff behind what happens because we start to see something everywhere and get this 'evidence' of it. And you really – it's not real, it's skewed when you see negative things over and over, it's really skewed.

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So, when you can really come back to this alignment, to this 50 versus 11 million bits and really get yourself in that state of being where you believe. It's like no, this is going to work. This is going to work.

Jen: Yeah, or we're a team, we can be happy, we can have a great marriage or we do have a great marriage, even better, yeah.

Abby: Yes, even better. And one of the ways by the way that you can really make sure you get there, get to that point C is by setting intention. And I talk about setting intention of all the tools I give clients over 35 years. I will tell you that this is probably one of the biggest gamechangers they have. And setting intention is simply that. So, if you're going to have let's say a conversation with your partner about let's say the school thing like I just said. What I tell couples to do is that, "Alright, let's set a time, let's really sit and brainstorm this."

But at the beginning of that meeting to sit down together and go, "Okay, it's my intention to really listen well, to be so curious to everything you're saying, to be really open to this process and to bring, and I'm excited to have it. I'm excited that we're working like this, it feels really good." And each of you sort of sets your intention, how you want that meeting to go or how you want that conversation to go. And it changes the game because again it aligns that 11 million bits. Now you're really aligning, you're going towards something.

And you already have your point C almost because you're really, in our point C is that we're collaborative, we listen, we are open to one another. It is an amazing place to be. And again, I do this at business meetings. When I'm sitting in a business meeting I will often go around and say to people, "I want to hear your intention for what you want to bring to the meeting right now." I did it before I came on the podcast today. I set an intention. And you asked me, I love that, set that intention. So, I do that everywhere.

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And you can just do it quietly too, maybe before, a biggie to me is before you see your partner at some point in the day, you've been apart, maybe you've both been at work or whatever. Before, when you hear that garage door open or the car pull in the driveway or whatever that is. Stop what you're doing and set an intention for how you want to connect now, how you want to greet one another, how you want to sort of be together now. And instead of the, you walk in the door, you don't stop what you're doing. "How you doing? How's your day?" "Fine. How's yours?" "Good."

When there's no connection, there's no nothing and I do the same thing with my children at the end of the school day. It's not, "How was school?" "Fine." "What did you learn?" "Nothing." None of those throwaway questions. And instead, really connecting, really full attention, full energy, full everything right in the moment, it changes the game.

Jen: Yeah, that's really neat. I like that. Intention is really, you're almost creating a mini visualization as well, focusing your brain on we want this result, come on, let's go. And then the brain's like got it, 11,000 bits.

Abby: Yeah, let's get to this. Yeah, 11 million bits, yeah. It's really, because the other piece of this is something that I call calibration. I'll have someone say to me, "Well, I was in a good mood and then my husband came home in a bad mood and so it really ruined the evening." And my thing is why are you calibrating to him? Why don't you have him calibrate to you? Why aren't you the dominant vibration? Why isn't that happy feeling the dominant vibration? And you can do that, I promise.

And people know what that feels like if you've ever been to a concert, like a big concert or something. And the person on stage is maybe calling something out and everyone's singing along or answering, or whatever that is. You're calibrating. You feel that energy in the room. You are calibrating to that. Or if you've been to a sporting event and you're cheering for the

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team. You're calibrating to other people. So even if you went to that concert or to the sporting event in a bad mood, it's very easy to get in a good mood because of that energy. You're just like I'm in it.

Well, it's the same everywhere. This idea that we always have to calibrate to the lowest common denominator is not the thing. And I tell people all the time, "Be the dominant vibration in a room."

Jen: Yeah, that's cool.

Abby: Make that you, be that, yeah. And there's no reason it can't be. We just assume this other thing that if someone's in a bad mood or someone's complaining. Then I feel like I'm, you know, it brought me down, that conversation really brought me down. It's, no, bring it up. Be that person to shift the focus.

Jen: Yeah, that's cool. It sounds easy when you compare it to the concert. Well, here's a question. A lot of people say, "I can't really be close to my spouse because he has hurt me too much." What about that, how do you heal that with your method?

Abby: Yeah. Well, again it's focusing on the hurt and not on what you want. So, here's the kind of the good news. When you know what you don't want, you know what you do want. So again, instead of focusing in a smaller way it might be instead of focusing on their nagging, focus on what you do want. Focus on appreciation, on love, on the things. And the only reason I have found that people are still hurt by past things is because they're happening now.

Jen: Oh yeah, that's interesting.

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Abby: So, I've worked with couples where a partner cheated or something happened. But now currently they're in a different place. And so, I'll even have couples come to me because they were cheating in the past or something. And I don't focus on the cheating at all. I focus on getting them strong here. We work on their bond now and what happens over time in therapy, we almost never get to the cheating incident. They don't care anymore.

Jen: Yeah, it stays in the past, yeah.

Abby: It's not that they don't care anymore, that's too strong. But it stays in the past, thank you, yes, it stays in the past. You don't forget about it but you find a new way to be in the present, that really works. And one of the mistakes people make a lot I think in couples therapy and other kinds of things is that I say to folks, "You have to connect to correct." So, this idea of going to couples therapy and complaining about the things you're upset about when you have all this disconnection, nothing's going to happen, it just, it doesn't, or it's going to take years.

And I see people in therapy for years and years which makes me sad. But if you work on the connection first or if you work on what's strong, where do we work? What is working? And build from that.

Jen: Yeah, that's good.

Abby: Then you can tackle the harder things, then you can do that. And by the way that's true everywhere. So, if your partner is doing something you don't like just in a small way, you don't want to bring that up when you're fighting or in a bad place. You want to bring it up actually when you're connected and feeling good. But most people go, "I don't want to bring it up. We're doing well, I don't want to rock the boat. I don't want to say something then because I don't want to ruin this good time we're having."

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And I'm saying, "Why do you think that has to happen?" Again, if you're a team and you're collaborating and you're doing this from love, and you're in a loving place to ask, to say, "Hey, can I talk to you about something?" By the way asking permission first, dynamite, from the research, really helps because it puts a different part of our brain. And then wait for the answer, don't just barrel in, wait for them to say, "Okay."

And just set that intention again. "I'm going to talk about something with you and really want us to come up with a solution together. I love you. I feel like maybe I can see this differently, maybe you can see this differently. I want us to brainstorm a solution to this." And then say what the thing is.

So, I just had a couple do this with – at night he, so every night she'd make dinner and stuff. And then he would clean up the kitchen before bedtime because she really hated walking down to the kitchen in the morning with, you know what I mean? To make breakfast and do the next stage with the kids and everything when the kitchen was a mess. And he would clean the kitchen maybe 70% of the time at night. It was happening but not consistently. And of course, you really remember times it doesn't because you're so disappointed.

And then she would blow up at him, "You don't keep your word to me. You promise and then you don't do it. And you don't love me. You don't appreciate me. You don't respect me or you would do this thing." So, by the way, problem one is that we put a definition on something. You're defining what that means. It did not, her husband loved her very much. This did not mean he didn't love, or respect, or appreciate her. He was also feeling overwhelmed obviously or wouldn't want to upset her. He doesn't want to upset her, he loves her, he doesn't want to upset her.

But was also feeling overwhelmed and was in a little denial about it and was avoiding this thing he didn't want to do and avoiding talking about it.

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So that was a problem. But again, and she would usually blow up and this whole thing would happen. And they had come into a session using this tool and she was so excited because she said, "It worked, oh my gosh." She sort of went upstairs instead and crawled back into bed with him.

And just said, "I'm so sad right now. The kitchen's not done. I don't want to blame you. I don't want to go there. I love you. I want us to figure this out. What can we do? Talk to me." And he said, he goes, there was a project he hadn't finished, he hadn't time managed well. He knew she usually got upset about that. You know what I mean? And so, he didn't tell her. And he's like, "I didn't tell you something." And she said, "I don't want to get upset about that either. What do we need to do to figure this out? What do we need to do to figure this out?"

And she used the tools and it was really funny because she said, "We ended up having sex. I couldn't believe it." So, it was really funny.

Jen: A morning delight, yeah.

Abby: A morning delight, and of course that positively reinforced for him. I was laughing, I go, "Oh good, now he's never going to do the dishes at night because he's going to think you're going to come upstairs." So, we were cracking up all together. But he said, he goes, "It just was amazing." He said, "And I feel so motivated to figure this out now." They came up with some good ideas. And he did, he saw her pain, he saw her love, he felt it. And there was a different thing going on.

It just was a whole different dynamic going on around solving this problem that had been coming up over and over. And it's not going to get solved perfectly by the way, and I counselled them both. I said, "Alright, you're going to do this thing. It's still going to not happen a 100% of the time. Because nothing does, nothing happens a 100% of the time. So how do we

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set up expectations? How do we really look at this and keep problem solving it?”

Because as you also know life changes especially with kids, or it doesn't even matter, kids or not, life changes. Jobs change, life changes, we get older, we get cranky or whatever. So whatever solutions we had before might not keep working. And so, we often have to reassess and go, “Alright, now what? We used to do that, now what do we want to do?”

Jen: Yeah. Well, this is great, I love these tips. They're very unique too. Well, if people want to learn more about what you're doing, follow you, where should they go?

Abby: My website's the best place. It's abbymedcalf.com, it's A-B-B-Y-M-E-D.com. And everything is there. There's a lot of free resources. You can also buy the book and do things like that. And the podcast is there. There's a blog every week. There's all kinds of goodies on the website and all my social media links. So, everything lives there.

Jen: Okay, great. Well, thank you so much for sharing your wisdom today it was awesome.

Abby: Thank you for having me, it was wonderful.

I told you that was unique, a great episode. Well, my challenge to you today is to create that version C, to trust that there is a version C out there of your relationship. What could it look like? It might not be your vision, it might not be your spouse's vision, it could be totally different. Get

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yourselves on the same team, know that you're on the same team and create that synergy to find that version C of your relationship.

By the way I know personally that this law of attraction stuff works in your relationship. When you think the thought, he's a jerk, or you think the thought, this is never going to be better, that energy is pervasive around you, when people interact with you, especially your partner. But when you think new thoughts like I'm open to trying to be friends. I'm open to having a better sex life. I'm open to spending more time together. I'm open to the possibilities of a passionate, heart centered, soul fulfilling relationship. That one gives me the juice.

I would imagine my husband would feel a totally different energy around me. Well, in fact I have experimented with some of these phrases. It's fascinating. He does come and be around me more often when I'm thinking good thoughts. Go figure. I've found him kind of just hanging out wanting to talk. I've found him doing kind things like bringing me breakfast in bed. What is happening? I'll tell you what's happening.

I've been working on my thoughts and attracting more of what I want instead of playing that mental blame game that I have often played, feeling like a victim because my husband is on the autism spectrum or because he is not empathetic. It's way better to take that responsibility and think, hey, we've totally got this. We're creating something amazing. You can try it too. Try it out. Email me any old time at support@jenriday.com and tell me how it goes. Maybe I'll read your thoughts on the air anonymously of course.

Alright my friends, I love you. You've got this. I will see you again next week. Until then take care.

If you enjoy this podcast, you have to check out the Vibrant Happy Women Club. It's my monthly group coaching program where we take all this

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