

Speaker 1: Couple One: Young Love.

Speaker 2: I guess in a nutshell she has put her life completely on pause while mine stills moves forward. And again she has to do that as a necessary sacrifice to make this work.

Speaker 3: The first couple that we meet is in its formation stage. It is a young couple in their mid-20s. They have been together since college.

[00:00:30]

Speaker 4: I always say it's really strange that we went to Iowa to school to find the other Mexican kid.

Speaker 3: For the last two years they live a long distance relationship where she lives in Mexico and he in Texas.

Speaker 4: I'm the one who travels and if he can get a secure job in the U.S., then that's what we're gonna do.

Speaker 2: That's my end of the bargain for now. When she's a citizen, things could balance out. But I feel like it's a lot.

[00:01:00]

Speaker 3: Circumstances of life are propelling them into a writ of commitment that they may have not followed if they both were in the same place.

Speaker 2: There's this fear for both of us that immigration laws might be changed. I would want to give you the privilege of being a citizen and being established here. So it makes us act now because things might change legally and we don't want that to affect us.

[00:01:30]

Speaker 3: And so they grapple with a decision to get married and immigrate and to become a citizen and all kinds of things that sometimes seem to pit immigration against romance.

Speaker 4: It's just so businesslike. Okay, this is what we have to do, okay we have to go sign this paper and we have get married. Okay, great and where is the romance in that?

[00:02:00]

Speaker 3: Every love story takes place at a particular time in place in history and geographically and you are living that.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: But at the same time you also have an opportunity to decide what you want to do with the external forces. So that it doesn't just feel like a big hand is hovering over you and forcing you to do things. Or do you feel that you have no say?
[00:02:30]

Speaker 2: I think that part of the hand that's moving is that she's older and I feel like that she is getting closer to the point of wanting a more stable life and wanting a sort of greater commitment. So there's that hand hovering over at least me personally. But there's also the external forces of the political context. And I feel like I need to start delivering on a certain maturity level and a certain mindset in order to keep this relationship going and moving forward.
[00:03:00]

Speaker 3: All right we have a lot to talk about. [inaudible 00:03:13] But who's in the family?

Speaker 2: My mom, my dad and I have two brothers that are younger, I'm the oldest.

Speaker 3: And you carry the traditional rule of the eldest in the family? Do you translate papers for them, do you sign for them? Are you also, not only the first born but also the first American?
[00:03:30]

Speaker 2: Yeah, I gave my mom citizenship. My parents met once before they got married. They talked for three months over the phone and then I'm the oldest. I was born here, I gave my mom citizenship.

Speaker 3: So you've done this already once?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: For a woman.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: That matters a great deal to you.

[00:04:00]

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah. But now that you made me think of it, it was actually a very big moment because my parents have a very traditional marriage. My mom, she's here because he's here. She never really worked. And I mean that in a respectful way, of course she worked, she raised three boys, which is a very hard job. But she never had a professional career. So over the last few years my parents have had a lot of fights, relationship fights, a lot of relationship issues. And I've been thrown in the middle of it, where my dad comes to me, "Your mom did this, your mom did that." My mom comes to me, "Your dad did this, your dad did that." And they only confide in me because I'm the oldest.
[00:04:30]

And I've exerted a lot of energy trying to help them out. And she's very dependent on him. So I think that giving me [crosstalk 00:04:43]

Speaker 3: And on you.

Speaker 2: And on me, yes. So it's very important to me that I was able to give her the ability to feel independent as she expressed it because now she can go out and get a job if she wanted to leave him. She doesn't have to worry about his money, 'cause she can go out and do her own thing.
[00:05:00]

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (affirmative). [crosstalk 00:05:03] Does she know how deeply you feel that?

Speaker 2: I think so. I've told her.

Speaker 3: You have?

Speaker 2: Yeah. And as painful as it was, it felt good. 'Cause I didn't like to see her trapped.

Speaker 3: Take this in, it's okay.

Speaker 2: I just love my mom. I don't understand relationships as well as you do.

[00:05:30]

Speaker 3: Oh God, I think you understood relationships from the cradle on. If you acted the way you did and if you feel the depth of feelings about them and her and the power structure and her being trapped and wanting to at least give her the agency to be able to leave if she wants, etc., etc. You have understood some major pieces about relationships without any degree, it's called life.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

[00:06:00]

Speaker 3: As an American born, at the age of 21, a child can give citizenship to the parent. For this young man to give his mother citizenship was equivalent of setting her free. Of allowing her the rights to decide on her professional life and on her very unhappy marriage. In the aftermath of her becoming an American citizen, his mother is able to start a business of her own. Which she now runs with her husband and that in itself has created a major improvement in their relationship but also massive shift in the power structure of their relationship. She is no longer economically dependent on her husband and she no longer needs to be as emotionally dependent therefore on her son.
[00:06:30]

[00:07:00] So you have already had to feel very responsible for a woman and her life choices. This is take two of a similar story. You've had to decide which man you were gonna

[00:07:30] be that wasn't gonna be like your dad. And you took tremendous strength and pride in helping your mother be free, not be tied and dependent and without any options. And helping her to know that she was not alone and that somebody saw what was going on for her.

Speaker 2: She thanked me for it.

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And you get along with her? 'Cause that would be crucial.

[00:08:00]

Speaker 4: Yes, I get along with both his parents and his siblings as well also.

Speaker 2: They love her.

Speaker 4: She and I see each other often, just the two of us. We'll go get coffee or I'll help her out with some of the business things. So I think she enjoys ... 'Cause it's all men. So I think she enjoys having someone to talk-

Speaker 3: [crosstalk 00:08:21] Woman to enter the system.

Speaker 4: Yes.

Speaker 3: Oh my God.

Speaker 4: So I think she really likes hanging out and just talking to someone.

[00:08:30]

Speaker 3: But I have a question to you.

Speaker 2: Sure.

Speaker 3: 'Cause you have been a responsible son. In many ways you have been what they call in my jargon, a parentified child. It's sometimes the child who had to become a parent.

Speaker 2: I felt like that.

Speaker 3: And to take on the role of the parent and responsibility of the parent in a family. And when you think about ... You feel like it's more responsibility.

Speaker 2: A lot.

[00:09:00]

Speaker 3: And part of you says, "Will I ever have a chance to play in life?" Is there ever a period where I don't have to be responsible.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I do feel like that.

Speaker 3: You do, right?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Do you know that? This has nothing to do with her if she loves you or doesn't love you, you understand that?

Speaker 4: [inaudible 00:09:14]

Speaker 2: No, it doesn't it just ... I started out in my job that I'm now when I was 23 and I went out to get this job because I knew that, what I felt like my end of the deal was to make sure that as long as she can't work to the extent that I can, that there needs to be a roof over our heads and there needs to be food and there needs to be a car. I was happy to do that, obviously. That's my end of the bargain for now, right, because this is temporary. When she's a citizen, things can balance out. But I feel like, it's a lot. I've had to work very, very hard. And I feel like I'm 35 years old sometimes, I feel like I have kids.

[00:10:00]

Speaker 3: Do you feel she gets that or do you feel that at this point, each of you is in touch with what is hard for you?

Speaker 2: I think we're each in touch with what is hard for each other.

Speaker 3: And you compete for who has the hardest.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Yes, bingo.

Speaker 4: That's the problem.

Speaker 2: Bingo.

Speaker 3: And who wins in this impossible competition of the title of greater victim or who sacrifices more or who has given up more of their youth?

Speaker 2: I think no ones won [crosstalk 00:10:26]

Speaker 4: No, yeah.

[00:10:30]

Speaker 2: I know she has told me that I don't sacrifice as much as she does. And that's been very hurtful. 'Cause I haven't told her that her sacrifice is not important, I know it is. Even just traveling here to New York and taking a flight, I tell myself I can't be doing this twice a month and she does. I wouldn't be able to, so I understand. But I think she doesn't think I understand and that's very hard.

Speaker 3: And how come?

[00:11:00]

Speaker 4: I think that I know he understands logically, he's an intelligent person so he understands what I'm saying. What I mean is, if you understood then you would change some behaviors of yours.

Speaker 3: Like what?

Speaker 4: So for example, then there are times when he will work like he said many, many hours. And then he comes home and he talks more about work and then he wants to go to bed. And for me, it gets a little frustrating because he has work to go to, he has other things to do outside of our lives and then he comes home and he's too tired to connect with me. And I'm just ... I'm here because of you.

Speaker 3: I get it.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: What is your life like in Mexico?

[00:12:00]

Speaker 4: It's actually pretty great. When I'm in Mexico I'm with my parents and my sister who still lives at home. And I work from home so I work at my computer-

Speaker 3: So you work from home in what sense?

Speaker 4: I work helping women, mostly women, start their own businesses and put their businesses online.

Speaker 3: So you have a career.

Speaker 4: Yeah, I do work.

Speaker 3: And you can do it from anywhere.

Speaker 4: Correct.

Speaker 3: It's not like you have put that part, okay. I wasn't clear on that.

[00:12:30]

Speaker 4: So the reason why I started doing that work was because-

Speaker 3: It travels with you.

Speaker 4: Yeah, exactly. But because of the travel, it's not like I can establish myself anywhere. It's not like I can have employees and grow and everything like that. So it's a balance, definitely.

Speaker 3: When did the pressure start to mount, how many years were you together in the U.S. versus apart?

Speaker 2: It's almost two years.

Speaker 4: Yeah, it's almost two years.

[00:13:00]

Speaker 3: And at this time, when you don't see each other and you get into arguments, you think it's because you don't get to be enough together but then when we are together, you end up having arguments as well and then you wonder what the hell are we gonna do?

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: So there's less and less joy and there's more and more friction. You say, "I do everything I can." And you say, "Obviously you don't." And then you break down and you say you have no idea, I'm killing myself at my job, I'm doing the old thing that men have always done. I try to take care of you the best way I can and she still comes in and says, "But that's not the way I really need you to."

[00:13:30]

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: And then you say, what more can I give you than my entire life being dictated by our circumstances. But then when you come together, you don't get to actually experience the closeness because you're constantly arguing about the lack of closeness.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

[00:14:00]

Speaker 3: All right. What are we gonna do?

Speaker 2: I don't know.

Speaker 3: Because as is, it's gonna wear you down.

Speaker 4: Definitely.

Speaker 3: I don't which one of you is gonna snap first and just say I can't do it this.

Speaker 2: I already did. About a month and a half ago, at my job, I had gotten a really big promotion back in November. I felt like, and I told her this, she didn't like that I got promoted. First of all, we're very jealous people of each other, that's not a secret. Because one of the first things that she asked me when I got promoted was, "So now there's gonna be women messaging you, you're gonna give them your number." And I immediately thought, "We're gonna have problems." The way that she expressed it was, she felt like I loved my job more than I love her. In my mind they were two different things.

Speaker 3: That description that she had before-

Speaker 2: Which one?

[00:15:00]

Speaker 3: He gives everything to work and when he comes home he talks more about work and then he checks out. And on occasion, I'm left feeling rather lonely. Fair?

Speaker 2: Fair.

Speaker 3: Okay, that's what we're talking about. It's not, you love more, it's that when you are as absorbed as you are and this idea that you love your job more than you love me, this is off. Don't-

Speaker 4: Yeah, I know. That's not what I meant.

[00:15:30]

Speaker 3: Okay. How do I find a way to love what I do, to be completely invested in it, etc. But, when she visits, I change some things so that I have something left inside of me to also give some energy to us. Otherwise, I put everything in work and I bring the leftovers home.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

[00:16:00]

Speaker 3:

And now when I come home, all I really want to do is chill. I put my feet up and not have to make any effort and not have to talk and then again she says, "What am I here for? You're completely exhausted, it doesn't seem to make a difference if I come or if I don't come." I'm imagining a narrative like this?

Speaker 4: Yes, of course.

Speaker 3: Hot or cold?

Speaker 2: Very hot.

Speaker 4: It's very hot.

Speaker 3: Fine, fix it. What would you add to it?

Speaker 4: 'Cause I think that he-

Speaker 3: That doesn't mean any of this is true.

Speaker 4: But that's what I feel.

Speaker 3: Right.

[00:16:30]

Speaker 4: So I think that when I'm asking you questions about are people gonna be texting you, etcetera. I know it's easier to think, "Oh maybe she's jealous." Rather than think, "She's thinking, this is gonna take up even more of time and more of my attention. If now I have to be answering the phone when I'm not at work as well."

Speaker 3: Can there be both?

Speaker 4: Yeah, but I think it's ... We have tried to work on the jealousy stuff and I feel like when it comes to the work, that's not what's in my mind. I'm just more concerned about-

Speaker 3: What is the jealousy?

Speaker 4: I think that it's ... It was hard because it's always been ... I was older than he was when we met, I'm still older than he is but-

Speaker 3: That won't change!

Speaker 4: Yeah, that's never gonna change. But I think that I met him and I knew of him and I knew who he was. I knew stuff about him before we actually got together that

always stayed in the back of my mind. He's handsome, he was popular, people liked him and-

Speaker 3: And what was it like when he picked you?

Speaker 4: I honestly didn't take it seriously. I did not take it seriously because people, like my friends, used to tell him that you have no chance.

[00:18:00]

Speaker 2: She was smart, she was popular, intelligent, pretty, amazing personality. I never felt like I was good enough for her, so I was always told that I didn't have an opportunity with her.

Speaker 4: So for me it didn't make sense that why is this player, why would he be interested in someone like me who's not doing-

Speaker 3: And the answer was? How have you answered it? Now that you know.

Speaker 4: Why he was interested?

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Why you?

Speaker 4: I mean at first I thought that it was a game.

[00:18:30]

Speaker 3: Reaching beyond his-

Speaker 4: Yeah, like, "I'm gonna try and get this girl." That his friends were telling him it's impossible, she's never gonna pay attention to you. And so I thought he was just seeing what was that. And at first, because we get along so well, it was an instant connection for us because it was like, you understand me in a way that a lot of people wouldn't because you understand my culture, you understand my language, you understand a lot of things about me that people here at college don't. So for us it was always super easy to get along.

[00:19:00]

Speaker 3: Did you present yourself in a more American way in college?

Speaker 2: Me?

Speaker 4: No, I think we were just ... Because at college, he's Latino but I was international. So it's a different ... We're different types of students. So I was the only student from Mexico technically, the only international student from Mexico but there were other students who have Latino heritage or Latino but are actually American. And because he has an American citizenship, he's not considered [crosstalk 00:19:45].

[00:19:30]

Speaker 2: She was actually disappointed when she looked me up-

Speaker 4: I did-

Speaker 2: And saw I was from Texas.

Speaker 4: Yeah, the first time I saw him, he was working at a-

Speaker 2: A café.

[00:20:00]

Speaker 4: A store, like a café on campus and I saw him and I was like, " That guy's Mexican. I'm so excited. He's cute, he's Mexican." And we have this database where you can look people up. So I saw his tag and I saw his name and I looked it up and it comes up that he's from Texas. I was like, "Oh, no."

Speaker 3: Why, why? What is the meaning of this?

Speaker 2: I don't know if this is right word but there's the whole, real Mexican and fake Mexican. Because there's a lot of people that grow up here in the states and they're Mexican but they don't really understand life and culture over there.

[00:20:30]

Speaker 4: You connect differently. It's not to discount their identities because I know there are a lot of people now who are in this gray area where in the U.S. they're not American but in Mexico, nobody considers them Mexican.

Speaker 2: So they're searching for their identity. I think that's the difference, does that make sense?

Speaker 3: Yes, of course it does.

Speaker 2: That's why we connected because even though she was a little bit disappointed I was from Texas, when we talked, she realized that I lived there and that in fact I did have that identity-

Speaker 4: And he speaks Spanish and that it's ... So I was like, "Oh."

[00:21:00]

Speaker 3: While they talk about who is the true Mexican, I realize that for that part of their relationship I am not needed. That is actually where they are complicitous with each other. And of course, the background story of she was the unattainable girl and he was the player who was going to pursue her, that remains very central to the origins of their relationship. And at the same time, at this point one of the key conundrums that they grapple with exists rather outside of that context, that story adds coloring to it but it is not essential. The dynamic by which in a couple people

[00:21:30]

[00:22:00] compete for who should listen to who and who deserves the empathy of who, in which one people says, "I feel something." And the other person says, "But I'm doing so much already." That actually is a dynamic that transcends color, origins and background stories.

I have a question for you.

Speaker 2: Sure.

Speaker 3: [00:22:30] When she tells you that she feels something, whatever, she says, "I would love more attention." Or, "I feel a little bit like after spending the whole alone here and I'd love to talk when you come home." Or, "This is hard for me." Do you immediately feel pressure?

Speaker 2: I don't know if pressure is the right word.

Speaker 3: What would be the right word?

Speaker 2: Motivation.

Speaker 3: Yeah, like you have to do something.

Speaker 2: Like I want to do something.

Speaker 3: Like you want to do something and you have to fix it.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

[00:23:00] Speaker 3: Right. Partly, because this kind of competence, instrumental competence fixing things, I think is a little bit part of the way that boys are socialized. And partly because that's been your role in the family. If your mother has a feeling, you need to do something about it.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: And if you can't do anything about it, then you want her to understand you.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

[00:23:30] Speaker 3: And it instantly becomes whose sacrifice or whose burdens are bigger. Rather than just simply taking her in your arms and just saying, "Thanks for reminding me." Or, "You know what, let me take a quick break and I'll get some energy for us." Or, "I know it's been a tough day." Or, "I know that some days it must be lonely for you."

[00:24:00] And that's about probably all she needs. She doesn't need you to fix it. She doesn't need you to become defensive about why it is that you have nothing left to give because you work so hard because you're making sure that you can provide for her and your whole family and that you're 23 and that you live like you're 40.

It fact, she doesn't need the whole saga. First of all she knows it, she appreciates it. But all she needs is just someone who says, "I know where you're at." And that means you have to do very little fixing.

[00:24:30] This dynamic where one person expresses a feeling and the other person experiences that as a burden upon which they need to act in order to fix it so that the feeling goes away is a very common dynamic in relationships. It is often a man who takes the role of the instrumental fixer. When I say you have to do very little, it

[00:25:00] is not that they there was not much to do, but the doing isn't about fixing, the doing is simply about making space and allowing the other person to express whatever they express. And that in itself, makes the feeling if you want, go away.

[00:25:30] Rather than trying to fix it, not being able do so and then wanting sympathy for how hard you have tried because you are suffering with your powerlessness in making the feeling go away. It is such a common couple's dynamic that we are addressing here. And very difficult for many of us to sometimes to just simply say, "I hear you, I know it's tough. You had a hard day." And to think that that is actually equivalent to doing a lot.

[00:26:00] You overburden yourself with your motivation. And in the end, she doesn't get the acknowledgement that she needs or that she wants because either you can fix it right away, either you start to become critical about why she feels the way she feels because you're trying so hard and you're still not able to make the feeling go away.

Speaker 2: Yeah, that's how it feels.

Speaker 3: And that piece of you feeling that you are this person with all these people who depend on you, your children in ways, that is not a world that you want to stay in.

Speaker 4: No.

[00:26:30] Speaker 3: While I'm interested in the sense of responsibility that he feels over the psychological well-being of the women in his life. I'm also interested in how this young woman seems to be much more independent when she's in Mexico without him then when she's with him. Something happens to her whereby she relinquishes her choices, her ability to move and she puts herself into the role of needing to be cared for.

[00:27:00] My fantasy at this particular moment is that when you're in Mexico you're much more independent than when you're here.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: It's like you give up all your resources when you show up here and you plop yourself and in a way you say to him, "Now you do. I've done my part, which is to show up and now you do the rest." And you are not the same person when you're here and when you're there.

[00:27:30]

Speaker 4: Yeah, no. That's true. It's very true. When I'm in Mexico, my phone doesn't work for example. So sometimes we don't even text or talk and at the end of the day when I come back home, it's like just checking in and that's fine.

Speaker 3: And you do things in Mexico besides work.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: And you have friends.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: And you have fun.

Speaker 4: Yes.

[00:28:00]

Speaker 3: And none of that travels with you.

Speaker 4: No.

Speaker 3: So that's a problem.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Why? [foreign language]

Speaker 4: I'll say-

Speaker 3: He loves the independent woman but the independent woman doesn't come to Texas.

Speaker 2: Bingo.

Speaker 3: She stays in Mexico.

Speaker 2: Bingo. That's very true.

[00:28:30]
Speaker 4: That is true. I think it might be just an excuse but I feel I really think that I haven't come to acceptance yet that, okay this is ... I'm actually coming.

Speaker 3: See that's your version of what he does. You too stopped living.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: You have more than one home now.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: You have two homes and you need a life in each home. With your activities, your people, your habits, your schedules and they both become your homes. You have freedom, you can come, you can go, you can decide if you want to come less often, more often. But there is a part of you that does it and says to him, "I'm doing all this for you. Therefore, you need to ..." That's a story that you're choosing. What would happen if you said, "I'm choosing this for me." Are you allowed to make these choices for you? Or are these only things that a woman can do for a man? Are you allowed to leave home or your own terms?

[00:29:00]

[00:29:30]

Speaker 4: Yes.

Speaker 3: For things that have nothing to do with a man is waiting for me.

Speaker 4: Yeah, definitely.

Speaker 3: You are?

Speaker 4: Yes.

Speaker 3: Okay. You know that?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: You agree, you believe, you are on board?

Speaker 2: Which is why I love her.

Speaker 3: Okay.

Speaker 2: It's like when I was describing her when she was in school.

Speaker 3: Her is right here.

Speaker 2: [00:30:00] You were always so independent. That the reason being with you makes me feel safe is because I don't feel like I have to take care of you. I've never felt like you're a gonna be someone that, like with my parents, that just one of them doesn't work and I have to take care of you forever. I've taken this responsibility because and I've told you multiple times, I know it's temporary that you do want to have a career. That you're not just gonna be bound to me and I love that.

Speaker 3: [00:30:30] But she's also telling you one more thing. "I am very independent but on occasion I like a little bit of attention. Without you thinking that that means that you have to take care of me."

Speaker 2: Right.

Speaker 3: 'Cause you live between the two extremes.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Yes, he does.

Speaker 3: Say more.

Speaker 4: He-

Speaker 3: No he.

Speaker 4: Oh, I think you do feel like I am working, I'm independent and-

Speaker 3: Therefore I have no needs.

[00:31:00]

Speaker 4: Exactly. And therefore, you feel that when you come home, like, "Okay cool, we both work, we did our thing, now let's go to bed." And I still want to connect with you because I miss you, I mean I love you and I want to be with you and so I feel like when you come home and you're just like, you're good and that's it.

Speaker 2: There are things that-

Speaker 3: Hold on one sec, what did you hear her say just now?

[00:31:30]

Speaker 2: I heard you say that I'm there but I'm not there mentally.

Speaker 3: No, no, no. That's a paraphrase. When we are in a rebuttal and we disagree on stuff, generally we can tolerate listening to 10 seconds before we forget what has just been said 'cause we're busy with our response.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

[00:32:00]

Speaker 3: So say it again and just listen and then before you answer, just say, "What I'm hearing you say." And repeat it.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 3: Let it land on you before you go right out with your rebuttal.

Speaker 4: The problem I think is when you are with me, you are not present.

[00:32:30]

Speaker 3: I'm going to give you a frame, a structure. X, Y, Z. When you do X, in situation Y, I feel Z. 'Cause then you're talking about you and what your experience is and you're not busy describing him for which he will then become defensive because none of us want to be defined by anybody else. So when you do X, in situation Y, I feel Z.

[00:33:00]

Speaker 4: When you are still thinking about work and other things that are unrelated to our relationship, when I am with you, I feel completely lonely and ignored.

Speaker 3: What I'm hearing you say ...

Speaker 2: What I'm hearing you say is that when I am thinking about work and things that have nothing to do with our relationship when I'm around you, you feel alone.

[00:33:30]

Speaker 3: Is this it? You can ask so you know that you captured it.

Speaker 2: Is this it?

Speaker 4: I think I feel more lonely than alone.

[00:34:00]

Speaker 2: [inaudible 00:33:50] I don't engage you, so you feel lonely. Do I rebuttal now? I don't know.

Speaker 3: Can you respond without rebuttal? Meaning, you don't have to justify yourself. You don't have to defend yourself. You don't have to counterattack. You can just simply say ...

[00:34:30]

Speaker 2: I understand. I do. I know you said don't defend yourself. I'm not trying to defend myself, I do understand how you feel because I do genuinely feel that if the roles were reversed and we were living in Mexico and you were working all day and coming home and I was trying to engage you, maybe on a book I read or something and you just were checked out, I would probably feel lonely as well.

Speaker 3: Correct, that's a wonderful answer.

[00:35:00]

Speaker 2: I would probably feel lonely, I would. I feel lonely when you're not here and I've told you that. Even when you're just not here and you're traveling, I feel lonely coming home to the apartment. So I understand that it's probably how you feel.

Speaker 3: The focus is on switching from reactive to reflective. And so I introduce a way for him to practice reflective listening. And for her, to speak in a way that takes

[00:35:30] ownership over her feelings and speaks about her without it becoming statements about him.

What do you do for fun?

Speaker 2: I watch soccer.

Speaker 3: And when you are together?

Speaker 2: We try to make every Friday date night so we try to find maybe a food that we want to try, like Moroccan or something and then we go to a movie.

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: And then on the weekend-

Speaker 4: We visit his parents.

Speaker 2: We might visit my parents or we'll stay inside. I'll admit that I don't know if you do that for me-

[00:36:00]

Speaker 4: I know you want to stay in.

Speaker 3: And you spend most of your time just the two of you?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: And where are all the college friends?

Speaker 2: Gone.

Speaker 3: Where?

Speaker 2: Well her friends live in different countries.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Right.

Speaker 2: And I just barely interact with mine. They live in different states.

Speaker 3: You're like a cactus.

Speaker 2: Explain.

[00:36:30]

Speaker 3: It means you lack connections with others. That are playful, friendly, easy, light, fun. That in itself is gonna the oxygen out of both of you. Because you are expecting everything from each other.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: If your only value for being here is measured by his acknowledgement and if he's the only one that can tell you it's nice to see you-

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 3: That's too much on one person and not enough for you.

[00:37:00]

I realize that we've been talking for two hours about their challenges and the difficulties and the burdens of their relationship and there's a major dimension that has not been addressed. These are two young people in their 20s, where's the fun? I want to make sure that we don't forget that erotic dimension of their relationship.

[00:37:30]

That feeling of aliveness, of vibrancy, of vitality. That one hopes to find throughout the relationship but certainly in the beginning of a relationship.

So how do we first of all create a social circle for you? This is not good ecology.

Speaker 2: I feel like I haven't created a social circle for myself because I have felt like it would be unfair. Because I'm going to make you feel like I'm just trying to get away from this relationship and I'm tired of you.

[00:38:00]

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (negative), mm-hmm (negative), mm-hmm (negative).

Speaker 2: Personally, I like to stay in 'cause I'm tired but I also-

Speaker 3: No, you need friends. You're holding each other too tight. You're holding each other too tight. And everything gets personalized. I don't want you to feel X, so I'm going to deprive myself off. And in the end you're gonna suffocate, each of you. You need more than one person in life. And you need people with whom you have other kinds of interactions. And then when she comes, you can say, "I have this group of people, let's go and meet such and such." And maybe she meets somebody there and then she makes a new friend as well. And each of you feel multiply supported. Irrespective of the borders, irrespective of the travel. That people you don't need any INS to help you change this, you can do this on your own.

[00:38:30]

[00:39:00]

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: There are big things which you may not be able to influence but there's small things that are just as big actually. That you can change as of today. You didn't prove anything to her by going into a sensory deprivation tank and experiencing nothing of life as a way to show to her that she's the only thing in life that matters. Does she put guilt on you? You feel that she [crosstalk 00:39:33] Do you feel that you cannot separate yourself?

[00:39:30]

Speaker 2: I think that when you talk about your sacrifices versus mine and it frames it in the context of, your sacrifices are greater, you make me feel guilty, so yeah, I think you do put guilt on me.

Speaker 4: So when I talk about things that I'm sacrificing, you feel that's me trying to guilt you into-

[00:40:00]

Speaker 2: I don't think you're doing it on purpose but that's just how I am. I feel guilty and I start feeling like maybe I should be doing more to make you feel better.

Speaker 3: Okay, we're going to suggest something. When you feel guilty, in this particular instance, it's a noble feeling and it's useless. At the best, you should be appreciative. Instead, if you feel guilty, it still is about you. If you are thankful, than you're saying to her, "I'm a lucky man that I have a woman who's willing to travel across the border, with all of the ... What that means, twice a month to be with me. Man, I'm gonna savor this." Can you imagine this? Want to try it?

[00:40:30]

Speaker 2: I always thought I was the luckiest person in the world. I know you sacrifice a lot and I am thankful.

[00:41:00]

Speaker 3: Aye, aye, aye. I don't want you to do it from a place of, I owe you. It's a very different feeling when you just say, "I'm so appreciative because you make this possible for us." And that will make her feel a, special, two, acknowledged, three, that what she does has meaning, and it will make you feel that you are important to her and it's a win, win on every front.

[00:41:30] Love comes with an element of entitlement in which I feel deserving of the fact that you love me. And when you do all this for me, when you travel for me, one would hope that he would feel appreciative, thankful and good about himself for being that important in someone else's life. Unfortunately, at this moment, he still feels

[00:42:00] that he has to tell her, "I'm working hard for this. I'm not just receiving. I am meriting what you're giving me, I do my share." And part of this he acknowledges is that he still doesn't feel good enough about himself to just appreciate the entitlement of love. Rather than the conditionality of love.

[00:42:30]

Speaker 2: It's very hard. Because I don't feel appreciated.

Speaker 3: You're stuck.

Speaker 2: I am.

Speaker 3: You're stuck. You don't feel like you deserve this until you tell her what you're doing for her too.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 3: Rather than just receiving this.

Speaker 2: It makes you feel not good enough.

Speaker 3: But no, it should make you feel marvelous.

Speaker 4: You are already good enough.

Speaker 3: So will you tell him one more time how much you give things up to be with him? Try it.

[00:43:00]

Speaker 4:

It's really hard to structure my life around our relationship and I do it every month. I get on planes, I cross the border and I do it even though it's really difficult.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

[00:43:30]

Speaker 4: That's all I need to hear. Honestly, that is all I want to hear. Just-

Speaker 3: What is your nickname for her?

Speaker 2: I call her, Wapa.

Speaker 3: Wapa.

Speaker 2: Princess.

Speaker 3: So that's where you want to start with that word.

Speaker 2: Gracias, Wapa, gracias.

Speaker 3: Say it again.

Speaker 2: Gracias, Wapa.

[00:44:00]

Speaker 3: What is beautiful about this couple is that they come in the beginning. And so many times couples come often when it's too late. Often past due date. Here, everything

[00:44:30] is still in the make and so the dough is hot and it can still be baked.