

Speaker 1: It's divorce but different, if that makes sense.

Speaker 2: Couple six, happily divorced.

Speaker 3: I always ask people why did they choose to come and share their story with me.
[00:00:30] Particularly in this couple, I was intrigued. They are divorced. They are two divorce lawyers. They've done it in a very good way according to both of them.

Speaker 4: I just wanted to make sure that my son would never have to feel like he had to choose between his parents.

Speaker 1: We've remained very much committed to not recapitulating what we see our clients do with being positional and fighting about gas grills and every little sweater.

[00:01:00]

Speaker 3: They both state their explicit desire to be in a divorce that is different from what they have often been engaged with with their clients, less friction, less acrimony, and reorganization of the family with an active engagement of both parents.

Speaker 4: I like where we are. I like the type of family that we have been able to build. It's a little non-traditional, but it works for us.

[00:01:30]

Speaker 1: Marriage was hard.

Speaker 3: Because it was a show ...

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 3: ... that you didn't want to play.

Speaker 1: Yeah. This, I like.

Speaker 3: What stands out here is that the two people in the couple are actually getting along much better separated and divorced than they did when they were married. That in itself is not uncommon. What is also not uncommon is that they hover on the border between separate and together with a great deal of ambivalence and a lot of hints but nothing explicit.

[00:02:00]

Speaker 4: When we tell our story and people who know us, and they're like, "Are you doing this because you truly are committed to your son, or maybe there's a chance that you'll get back together or something like that?" I think people wonder

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Speaker 1: It's also very confusing. It is a very gray kind of emotional landscape to inhabit where the normal guideposts that culture, or society, or people, or family provide aren't there. It's like it was before, but it's not. When we first divorced, we did therapy for about a year.
[00:03:00]

Speaker 4: A little more than a year before.

Speaker 1: A little more than a year before the actual divorce.

Speaker 3: Useful? What did you learn about your communication?

Speaker 1: That it was very poor.

Speaker 3: Because? How so?

Speaker 4: It was very avoidant.

Speaker 1: Yes, that's right. It was very avoidant.

Speaker 3: I'm glad that you remember for him. Your lessons she remembers. That's good.

Speaker 1: Yes, yes. She has the institutional knowledge. That's right, I'm avoidant.

[00:03:30]

Speaker 3: Of what?

Speaker 1: Of pretty much everything.

Speaker 4: Confrontation.

Speaker 1: Confrontation. Even though I'm a litigator and I confront personally.

Speaker 3: This is ironic.

Speaker 1: Yes. I was that way with my mom. I was that way with you. I don't like conflict.

Speaker 3: In places ...

Speaker 1: In places.

Speaker 3: ... and in relationships where the stakes are high. But then that doesn't mean I don't have it in me, so I go and I fight other people's battles, which in some way the stakes are low for me when it's other people's battles. It's not my drama.
[00:04:00]

Speaker 1: That's right.

Speaker 3: Put that in your own words.

Speaker 1: That resonates with me because-

Speaker 3: This is therapy in New York City.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 3: It's me, you, and the sirens.

[00:04:30]

Speaker 1: It's easy for me to go to court and fight. These are people's lives who they're going through something like we went through, and sometimes very bad stuff. It doesn't really get to me. I find it easy.

Speaker 3: It's not I avoid confrontation. It needs to be qualified.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Do it for him since you're nodding so much in recognition.

Speaker 4: He's very good at what he does. He's very good at ...

Speaker 3: He's right here. You can tell him.

[00:05:00]

Speaker 4: ... confronting witnesses and just tearing them apart. This is the irony of it. When it's standing up to me, when I say, "This is what we're doing," and even if you're not okay with it you're like, "Okay," and you just won't say anything. To me, that's frustrating because I do want your opinion or want your say in something. I think that was the difficulty that we had.

Speaker 3: He placated you, but he was quietly resentful.

Speaker 4: I think so.

[00:05:30]

Speaker 3: He says yes.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 4: That's why the acting out occurred is because you felt like, and you said this before even recently, that you feel like you can't talk to me because I come across as a very confrontational person, I don't think in a mean way. You can tell me different. I

do. I tell you, "This is what I want. This is what I feel. This is what's happening."
That's where had the clash.

[00:06:00]

Speaker 3: Sometimes the clash is the reverse of what was initially attractive. I can imagine you being very attracted to this woman who states her opinion, who speaks her mind, who doesn't get stepped on. That was very attractive. I can imagine that having someone who was agreeable, and often saying yes, and not arguing about everything, and not challenging, and seeming easygoing was also very attractive. What we are originally drawn to is often what becomes the source of conflict later. It's just because you get a little more than what you bargained for.

[00:06:30]

Speaker 4: Right.

Speaker 3: How much was this central to your divorce? Why did you divorce, actually?

[00:07:00]

Speaker 4: For me, a huge issue in our marriage was about moving back to my home state. That seemed to be a thing because when we first got married he was still in law school, and we were going to get him through school and then move back to where my family is. He's an only child. I have a lot of family. Two years turned into 10, and I kept saying, "When are we going back? When are we going back?" It was always the avoidance of, "Well, we'll talk about it later. Well, I don't know. Well, my career is starting to really take off." I felt in a way betrayed by him putting me off because I felt like this is what we had agreed upon. That was very hurtful to me.

[00:07:30]

Speaker 3: But have you moved back?

Speaker 4: We moved back for a little while.

Speaker 3: After.

Speaker 4: After the divorce. I went back to my hometown, and he came to where our son and I were living. It was a big sacrifice for him because he had just become partner at his law firm. He's a really good dad. He wanted to be near our son, so he made that sacrifice. We were there for a couple of years. I think we both realized that career-wise and then also culturally speaking, because where I'm from tends to be a lot more conservative, we decided that it was better culturally for our son as well to be in a different environment, because we saw the effect that it had on him.

[00:08:00]

[00:08:30]

Speaker 3: Explain to me.

Speaker 4: He's a little boy. Where I'm from, there are certain expectations of little boys. They're supposed to be hyperaggressive, athletes, hunting and all of that. It's very-

Speaker 1: Macho kind of areas.

Speaker 4: Macho, alpha male kind of thing. It was very important to us to not make a distinction between girl stuff and boy stuff. He started to get some of that where it was like, "Oh, I'm not wearing pink because that's for girls."

[00:09:00]

Speaker 1: It was a change. I think we both realized that for our son, for the environment and the experiences that we wanted him to be able to have, it was a better fit where we were from. We have tended to try to make decisions primarily oriented around what we think is going to be good for him and good for us, too.

[00:09:30]

Speaker 3: For 10 years, she longed to go home, and they were locked in a struggle about it. When she finally did and then realized that perhaps it didn't suit not just her son but also her, that it wasn't just that he was subjected to a masculine code but that she too was subjected to a feminine code that she had worked so valiantly to try to get away from, the son became a permitted outlet to claim things that she could not necessarily claim for herself.

[00:10:00]

Speaker 4: I feel like the affair was a symptom of those bigger things. Once that occurred, then

[00:10:30]

we could actually talk about the issues, which was the moving back to my hometown. I wanted to have another child, and he was very ambivalent about that. That's not something that you can really compromise on. Either you're going to do it or you're not. He's very concerned about wanting to be financially responsible. I can imagine that the thought of having another mouth to feed, that was going to put more pressure on him to provide. Then I think probably one of the lesser issues actually was the affair. It wasn't so much him. The divorce in terms of the infidelity was a little more complicated because I feel like that was the only way. My parents divorced because my father was unfaithful. My mother drew a very hard line. It was like, "You've crossed this line, and you're out." I felt like that was it. This is a line that I feel like we both had.

[00:11:00]

Speaker 3: How did you feel about what she did?

[00:11:30]

Speaker 4: I feel like she was right, that she did the right thing for herself. I think she did the right thing in trying to teach my brother and I about having respect for yourself, I guess. It wasn't so much the divorce as it was what happened afterwards because they were not very kind to each other.

Speaker 3: Meaning? That's an understatement, right?

Speaker 4: [00:12:00] Oh, yeah. There was a lot of hard feelings, of course, on my mom's part. She didn't speak very well about my father, and he didn't say very nice things about her either.

Speaker 3: There are sentences you are remembering just right now as you're speaking to me, right? Like what?

Speaker 4: [00:12:30] There are times I would hear her say that she hated him. He would make comments about her and say that she stunk, just really hurtful. I feel like as a kid at 10 years old, I didn't really need to know why they divorced, but I knew all of it because I was drug into the middle of it. When we divorced, it was very important to me to make sure that our son was not dragged into the middle of it because our problems or our issues are ours and not his. I think it's worked. Like I said, he's a very good father.

[00:13:00]

Speaker 3: Your dad, was he a good father?

Speaker 4: [00:13:30] He didn't really make a lot of effort, did the bare minimum, and did what a lot of my clients do, which is, "I gave you the child support, and don't ask me for anything else." I see the way that you are with our son, and it's like there's nothing that you wouldn't do for him. I'm very grateful for that because I know what it feels like to feel like an inconvenience, to feel like you're just a burden.

Speaker 3: I can't imagine that it isn't beautiful for you to hear her say this.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 3: Does she do that often?

Speaker 1: Yeah, actually.

Speaker 3: [00:14:00] Good. Let me ask you a strange question. Maybe it's not strange. Do you have a sense that you can preserve this divorce in its beauty as it is as long as other partners don't come into the picture?

Speaker 1: That's the \$64,000 question.

Speaker 3: But I don't think I'm the first one to ask to think about this, right?

Speaker 1: No, no.

Speaker 4: No.

Speaker 1: [00:14:30] It's a fear that I have, a huge fear. I worry that it's going to change the dynamic. I worry about somebody else being in the picture and me losing my role with our

son. I tend to do this with everything. I just catastrophize everything. It just then spins out of control and just becomes-

Speaker 3: I'm going to meet someone, and she's not going to let me see my kid.

Speaker 1: Oh, no, I worry about her meeting somebody. I never think about it in terms of me.

Speaker 3: What happens to you? You've gone into the priesthood?

Speaker 1: Pretty much.

Speaker 4: I know, right.

Speaker 1: Yeah, no.

[00:15:00]

Speaker 3: Why did you divorce, and who wanted this divorce in the first place?

Speaker 1: I think the moving thing was a major thing, and I also think that having another child was a major thing.

Speaker 3: Would you have one now?

Speaker 1: Would I have a child? No.

Speaker 3: Together?

[00:15:30]

Speaker 1: Oh, no, no. I'm 42 now. To think about at 50 ... I don't think I could have another child. You're also right from the standpoint-

Speaker 3: You come up with some thought that you just showed me you're catastrophizing things. You come up with a thought, you just blurt out something, and then it becomes a reality, and then it becomes a truth, and then it becomes a decision. Sorry.

Speaker 1: You agreed with that.

[00:16:00]

Speaker 3: I don't think you disagree actually either.

Speaker 1: No.

Speaker 3: That's the point. You just showed it to me. It's like, so what? So then you turn 50 when you have an eight-year-old, and you will not think two seconds about it. You

[00:16:30] will just be feeling like you're blessed and you're happy to have a birthday party. You won't be thinking about your age that day, I promise you that. You make a statement, and that proclamation becomes a prediction. I'm thinking about it because it is one thing that you both value enormously and that you do beautifully together. Why restrict yourself to one? The rest are just all kinds of fears, and worries, and just thoughts that you fill your head with that have no rhyme and reason actually. What you just did now is what you probably did five years ago.

Speaker 4: Yup.

Speaker 3: Yup?

Speaker 4: Yeah.

[00:17:00]

Speaker 3: You stood in your own way, and you instigated your own demise. I'm sure that you're very good at seeing other couples do that, but we all have blind spots.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Sorry.

[00:17:30]

Speaker 1: No, it's true. It just seemed like what had to happen in a way. You were very adamant about going back, and at that time I wasn't. It didn't seem reconcilable.

Speaker 4: Yeah, but then there was the baby thing. That was a big issue. You can't compromise on that. Either you're going to do it or you're not.

Speaker 3: To have babies?

Speaker 4: Right.

[00:18:00]

Speaker 3: What you're saying is that you got on a track, and that track of, "We're not getting along. We want different things. We are stuck. We're not moving. It's not getting better. Well, there is nothing else we can do. I guess the only thing to do is to divorce," it becomes this thing that has its own moving force, and it leads to this inevitable. It's not inevitable at all. From what I understood from the little bit I'm getting is you're not divorced. Yeah, on paper, but you're not divorced.

[00:18:30]

[00:19:00] I've been mining the reason for why they divorced. At the same time, what I see in front of me may not only be just a divorce. I decided to take on a different tact. You get along better than you were when you were a couple.

Speaker 4: Yes.

Speaker 1: Yes, we get along better now.

Speaker 3: You're much better. You're a better couple. You're better as parents. You're better with each other, and there is actually no room for others. Call it what you want.

Speaker 4: I feel like we're definitely still very connected. I feel like that's a big reason why I haven't let anyone else really into my life romantically. I think I know that I have dated more than he has, but none of it is ever really serious, or I don't let it go there because I don't want to disrupt what we have, which is to be able to spend those holidays together, to go on vacations together with our son. My mom comes with us. It would take someone who's very understanding, I guess.

Speaker 3: It won't happen.

Speaker 4: Right.

Speaker 3: Not because the person doesn't exist. It won't happen because you don't want it.

Speaker 4: Right, that's true. I like where we are. I like the type of family that we have been able to build. It's a little non-traditional, but it works for us.

[00:20:30]

Speaker 3: The funny thing is I listen to you and I think, "I could think of them as having a very nice divorce, or I could think of them as having a very nice different marriage, LAT, living apart together." The fastest growing couple in America is the LAT. You're a LAT. You live apart, but you are together. You could say, "We are divorced," or you could say, "We have a new marriage. We get the best of each other. We don't have to deal with too much of the grind of each other. We don't really want other intimate partners because we feel that they would disrupt. Sexual partners on occasion probably we have because that's the one thing we don't share at this moment. We're a couple."

Speaker 4: We do everything together. I hadn't thought about it that way, actually.

[00:21:30]

Speaker 3: How does that sound?

Speaker 4: I think it sounds okay to me.

Speaker 1: Yeah, it's remarkable just that framing of it, not being divorced but being in a kind of way married, just differently married. Not even the word marriage because all these words, marriage, divorce, etc., they're so fraught, and they carry stuff with them.

Speaker 3: You didn't end your relationship, you changed your relationship.

[00:22:00]

Speaker 4: Right. I think because the word marriage has so many connotations to it, to say that it's a different kind of marriage, I think, would in a way make me uncomfortable, I guess, because-

Speaker 1: You're importing religious things into it.

Speaker 4: Right, because there's a whole religious part of it.

Speaker 3: Say more.

[00:22:30]

Speaker 4: Just my family and my cultural background, the concept of marriage is something that's very defined.

Speaker 3: What is your cultural background?

Speaker 4: Mexican-American, and we grew up Catholic. It has a particular effect when you use the word marriage.

Speaker 3: Explain it to me.

Speaker 4: Marriage is something that's to me very confining. It's all or nothing. I was never the type of person that grew up wanting to be married because to me the thought of marriage is just very restrictive.

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Speaker 3: For all or more so for women?

Speaker 4: Mostly for women.

Speaker 3: Probably matters to be more precise, no?

Speaker 4: Correct.

Speaker 3: This is a moment when what she says goes way beyond her own individual story, even their individual story. She's not the first woman who has told me, "I needed to be married. I didn't want to be married. You need to be married to be able to be a whole woman, to be able to have a family," but the experience of marriage itself from where she came from, she saw as one long life of subjugation and subservience.

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Speaker 4: A good for instance is there are a lot of things that I like to do. I love to travel. He does not like to travel because he gets very stressed out about the experience, and then being in a new place, and all this stuff. We never really traveled much when we were married because he didn't like to do it. Since we've been divorced, I just go and do it. I just came back from Italy because I was like, "I want to go for my birthday, and so I'm going to do it." I didn't have to ask him or get his opinion. All I needed to know, that he was going to be available to take care of our son while I was gone for 10 days. I always had this sense of when you're in a marriage, everything that you do, you have to run it by your partner. That's very aggravating to me because there's just some times I want to do what I want. The institution of marriage itself is something that was never really appealing to me.

[00:24:30]

Speaker 3: But now you kind of have the marriage you would have wanted or always wanted, the one in which you get to do more of what you want without having to ask for permission, without feeling restricted and confined, without having to do the all or nothing.

Speaker 4: Right. I feel much more free now.

Speaker 3: Of course. You've got the marriage that you wanted to have but didn't think that you could have because that's not how you define marriage.

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Speaker 4: Right, that's not how it was presented to me.

Speaker 3: That's right. Fascinating. You have the freedom that you would have wanted that you didn't think a woman can experience in the context of marriage, and you have the companionship that you wanted without the burdens and the restrictions that came with it.

Speaker 4: Correct.

Speaker 3: I finally have the relationship I want.

Speaker 4: Yeah, I guess.

Speaker 3: One in which I get to travel to Italy, with a father who takes care of our kid for 10 days, and I don't even have to negotiate it.

[00:26:00]

Speaker 4: Right, just like, "This is what I'm doing." Right. It was that context of marriage where I felt so restricted and confined. You're a mother now, so you can't do this, and you can't do that. Again, it wasn't anything that he said or he demanded. It was something that I imposed on myself. It led to me being a very unhappy person.

[00:26:30]

Speaker 3: If she had come to you in the old marriage that you had and said, "I want to go to Italy," which she wouldn't have done, not because you would have said no but because she didn't think one can as a mother, as a wife, etc., what would have happened, you think?

Speaker 1: I don't think it would've been good because I think I was doing a kind of mirror thing to what she was. I don't have any kind of religious connotation too, but I view it in a kind of way that there are just certain ways and norms about how married people are supposed to be.
[00:27:00]

Speaker 4: I know what would've happened.

Speaker 1: What?

Speaker 4: First, you would've complained, "We can't afford it," which ...

Speaker 1: Wouldn't have been right.

Speaker 4: ... would not have been the case. We can't afford it. Then you would've chastised me about, "Why would you want to go for 10 days leaving me and our son?" I can just hear it.
[00:27:30]

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 3: Keep going.

Speaker 4: Then I would feel bad and feel guilty, and then I wouldn't do it. But then I'd be mad at you because I wanted to do something and I didn't because you didn't want me to, and I felt like I had to be a proper wife, that I would have to do what's right for the family.

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Speaker 3: And then keep going. I would not do it. I would be resentful, and then I would not be nice to you. And then?

Speaker 4: And then it would just lead to the arguing that we were doing.

Speaker 3: And then?

Speaker 4: And then I don't know.

Speaker 3: Take it all the way to the affair. That's how this thing got set up, no? Now we're bickering. You are feeling bitter and deprived. He feels unappreciated.

[00:28:30]

Speaker 4: Yup.

Speaker 3: And then? You want to pick it up from here, mister?

Speaker 1: Yeah. That was also a product of me being avoidant about a lot of other things, too. I'm an only child. My mom dies. She dies on a Saturday. I'm back at work on a Tuesday.

Speaker 3: How old?

Speaker 1: She died at 59.

Speaker 3: And you?

Speaker 1: That's nine years ago.

Speaker 4: Nine years ago.

[00:29:00]

Speaker 1: Yeah, 34. I was very close to her.

Speaker 3: I knew that. That's where you learned to yes, to not get her upset, to make sure that she was happy, to make sure that she adored you.

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Speaker 1: I feel like I haven't still dealt with all of her, my mom. I was an only child. She could be the most loving, self-sacrificing, wonderful mom, but she could also be a terrorist. She was tough. She could rip into a person and be so mean. I was afraid of her, and in some ways she's dead and I'm still afraid of her.

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Speaker 3: It was you and her alone?

Speaker 1: No, there was my dad, but my dad was a very docile guy. He just didn't engage. They didn't have a great relationship, but they stayed married. It's interesting how we're talking about divorces that are marriages and marriages that are divorces. I was in an intact home that was no intact at all in many ways.

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Speaker 3: My friend and colleague, Megan Fleming, calls it the invisible divorce, people who still are officially married but basically are completely disconnected from each other and apart in just about every aspect of life except for the basic infrastructure of the institution of marriage.

[00:31:00]

Speaker 1: It was like that. It wasn't always like that, but when I was a kid I didn't know if my mom was going to be good loving mom or screaming and yelling mom. I learned to tell jokes and be funny, or fight with words, or put on a show and do a song and dance. Part of what's hard is I feel like I just repeat it every day. I go and I do this performing monkey routine as a lawyer, putting on a show. I'm damn good at what I do, and I get good results, but it takes a toll on me because I never stop, because I want that validation. I want that win. It just is draining to live that way. Marriage was hard.

[00:31:30]

Speaker 3: Because it was a show ...

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 3: ... that you didn't want to play.

[00:32:00]

Speaker 1: Yeah. This, I like. We can talk about work. We can talk about family and things. It was so different when it was within the context of marriage. I was very resentful of feeling like we had to do certain things because that was what I thought you thought we had to do or I thought we had to do, and it wasn't necessarily what I wanted to do. I've come out of my shell a little bit. We do travel a little bit more, right?

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Speaker 4: I just feel like there's less expectation, less pressure on each other now than there was before.

Speaker 1: Yeah. For a long time too, there was a period where I viewed you in a very similar way to my mother. That got very confused.

Speaker 3: How so?

Speaker 1: My mom is ethnically the same.

Speaker 3: Which is what?

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Speaker 1: Oh, Mexican. Mexican, sorry. You both can be very direct, and sometimes I would experience you both as harsh. There were some times I feel like I was experiencing you, what you were saying or how you were responding, and it was all filtered through the experience of my mom.

Speaker 3: Interestingly, I don't think you divorced each other, but I do think that you divorced your families or origin. You can have finally the relationship that you each want to have, one in which you don't have to be a constant performer, buffoon, and

[00:33:30]

pleaser, and one in which you don't have to feel that everything about being in a relationship is confining.

Speaker 4: Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 3: How do you share rooms when you travel?

Speaker 4: Oh, we all stay in the same room.

Speaker 1: Not the same bed.

Speaker 4: Not the same bed.

Speaker 3: Do you ever want to change beds?

[00:34:00]

Speaker 1: I've never given it any thought.

Speaker 4: No.

Speaker 3: No, I don't think about it, or no, I don't want to change beds?

Speaker 4: I hadn't thought about it.

Speaker 3: Really?

Speaker 4: Uh-uh.

Speaker 3: When they describe how they travel together and they share the rooms together, the familiarity, the intimacy, the coziness between them is clear. Of course I'm going to ask, "And what about the beds?" The answer and how fraught it is tells me not that they haven't thought about it but how much pain is still lingering around it.

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Speaker 4: I guess maybe just we're not there yet maybe.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

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Speaker 4: Because for me, the affair was a very, very deep blow to me.

Speaker 1: I never thought of myself as somebody that would do something like that. I still feel guilt about ... I don't like causing pain. Knowing that I caused you that amount of pain is hard. It's not like, "Oh, it's hard for me and not ..." I don't know what I'm trying to say other than ... Do you know what I'm trying to say?

[00:35:30]

Speaker 4: I feel like you feel very guilty because of how you made me feel, which you made me feel really bad, but you made me feel bad at the time. I don't see why you feel the need to beat yourself up about it all the time. We're here now, and I feel like we're in a better place now than we were then.
[00:36:00]

Speaker 1: I guess yes, we are, but this is something that I do a lot with other things too is beat myself up. There is a huge swell of emotion that is just always underneath the surface with me. I can cry like that. There's enough there that I could just let it go, and I'm not sure how long it would take before it would stop. But I'm scared of all of that pain that I have.
[00:36:30]

Speaker 3: When you were in marriage 1.0, this happened to you, too?

Speaker 1: I didn't cry much.

[00:37:00]

Speaker 3: And you? He saw your sadness, or he saw mostly your resentment?

Speaker 4: Probably mostly the resentment. Would you agree?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Yeah. I don't think he saw the sadness. Maybe if you had, maybe you would have reacted differently. I don't know. But I think he saw the resentment, and then I think he resented the resentment.

Speaker 3: Meaning?

[00:37:30]

Speaker 4: He would say things like, "You only want to go back because of your mother." You made a comment about I needed to cut the apron strings several times.

Speaker 3: If I can't be with my mother, why should you be with yours?

Speaker 4: It almost felt like that, yeah.

Speaker 3: Yeah?

Speaker 1: Yeah, there was certainly some of that.

Speaker 3: Whose umbilical cord were we really talking about here?

Speaker 4: Right.

[00:38:00]

Speaker 1: Yeah, you're right. I was so resentful of her mother, and the thought of going down there and being subsumed in all of that. She has this family. She has all of this. I just have the memories of a mom who was simultaneously really great, and sacrificed, and all of it but carrying around all of the other stuff. Then thinking professionally, and how culturally different it was, and everything else, I was terrified that I was going to lose myself there, that I'd be nothing, you know? It was terrifying, but I did it.

Speaker 4: I did the same thing.

Speaker 1: I know.

Speaker 4: In the beginning.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 4: That's why I was very resentful towards you, because you would do that thing. "I'm going to go down there. I'm not going to know anybody." It would just be this whole rabbit hole.

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Speaker 3: That is the blah blah. That's the way he can conjure up a story. The real thing was he was jealous. Why do you and I don't? If I don't, why should you? I'll put down what you do because it's in fact what I want. How dare you talk to your mother every day when I can't? Not just I can't because my mother is dead, but even if I did, I would never know if I would have a good day or a bad day with my mom. How dare you have such a wonderful time. Be very honest.

Speaker 1: That's absolutely right. There's always the blah blah.

Speaker 3: The money, the child, that's the music that accompanies. That's the background.

Speaker 4: Right.

Speaker 3: But that's not the real stuff. Every music has a light motif and then some stuff around. You need to listen to the light motif.

[00:40:00]

Speaker 1: That's absolutely right. It was envy with her mom, and probably envy about just the family thing more largely.

Speaker 4: That's why I get upset about our son not having a sibling. That was something that was very important to me because I know what it's like to have one, and I didn't want him to be alone. I felt like whenever we tried to talk about it, the answer was always no.

Speaker 3: Is that foregone today?

Speaker 4: I don't know, I'm turning 40 next week.

Speaker 3:
[00:41:00] Yeah. You exercise power in places that are not necessary. Just don't bring the money into it because that's the real lame one, because both of you probably your parents did not think, "Can I afford it?" when they had you.

Speaker 1: That's true.

Speaker 3: Bullshit. They had you because they wanted to have you, and then they gave you everything they had, which wasn't much to begin with. Then you are the ones who made it. Then you're going to say, "We can't afford kids." Is that the bourgeois values that you want to ... No?

Speaker 1: No, you're right.

[00:41:30]
Speaker 4: That's what I would say to him, "Well, we'll figure it out." I think that was his biggest problem with everything was I guess, "We'll figure it out," was just not good enough for him.

Speaker 3:
[00:42:00] Right. When he is afraid, he exercises control. You're not alone, you know? Don't think you're unique. You have a good deal now. You have a good arrangement in a very interesting way. You're in marriage 2.0. You did just enough divorcing. You did just enough divorcing to be able to free yourself from what you consider the constraints. Don't look to him for your confidence because he's not a good source. I'm sure you have friends who are actually better at it than him. He'll give you lots of wonderful things, but if you want to do something and you're not sure, unless you change, unless you fundamentally change and you think that her thriving isn't your diminishment and that she can never have more than you, more family, more motherly love, more of her travels, more, she can't have more if you don't, and if you're going to rise to the occasion, that's the piece that's going to change. You're going to become generous in a different way. Instead of, "We can't," it will be, "I would love this for you." That'll be 3.0. Of course, to me it's obvious that you would have another child because it's a thing that you enjoy, that you do well, and because on some level if you really want to give her back something, it's that.

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[00:43:30] It seemed to me that he owes her an apology, and he's looking for a way back into the good grace not just as the father of the boy, but also as her partner. It's clear that there is a lot of love still between these two people, but I began to explore to what extent having another child, since that's what brings them together at this moment, could actually be the symbol of his apology. Many times when one partner says to the other, "We can't do it. You can't do it, blah blah," it's not

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because they don't trust you. It's because it's the thing they would want, and they don't feel they are capable.

Speaker 1: I think that's the same with another child. We had one, and I felt like I was failing at it miserably, all of the rest of it. When it came time to deal with a second, I felt horrible, and I was afraid. This is going to sound kind of sick, it sounds horrible, but I thought you were too attached to him and not to me. I felt like we had a relationship, and then we had a child. That sounds horrible and it's selfish, but I did have those feelings like I was-

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Speaker 4: Like you were chopped liver?

Speaker 1: Yes, I was chopped liver. Here's the kid, and he gets all of the attention from you and all of the rest of it.

Speaker 3: I once was that person, and now I am displaced. If we have one more, I'll never get anything. It's not a sick thought. It's actually a rather common thought. Not many people are as blunt as you to say it, but just so you know, it's a thought that crosses many partners' mind.

[00:45:30]

Speaker 1: I don't like that I felt that way.

Speaker 4: In a way I feel surprised that that's how you felt because I felt that I was trying to keep us connected. I was always the one suggesting that we go out just the two of us and we get a babysitter. You were always saying, "Oh, I don't want to leave him with a babysitter. He's too young. What if something happens to him and he can't speak?" That was very difficult for me because, number one, I already felt like I couldn't go out and have relationships with other people, like with my girlfriends, and have dinner and whatever, and then I couldn't have a relationship with you either because you didn't want to go anywhere because we were always at home with our son.

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[00:46:30] That just fed into that whole confinement that I felt in marriage because it's like, "Well, I can't go out with my friends. You don't want me to be with my family. I want to go out with you, but you don't want to do that either." It was just further tightening the noose around me. Not to say I didn't love our son very much and I love spending time with him, I still do, but part of the reason why I feel like the current situation works is because I get my time with him, and then I also get the time for myself to go and get my nails done or go watch a movie by myself that isn't Disney. I hear my girlfriends complain that they never have time to just take a shower, or to go get a pedi, or whatever. I'm like-

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Speaker 3: Join my clan.

[00:47:30]

Speaker 4: Right. I'm like, "Well, if I want to go get a pedicure, I just call him up and say, 'Hey, can you take him because I have some stuff to do.'" I guess that's the freeing part about this situation is that-

Speaker 3: I am in no way suggesting [inaudible 00:47:46]. I don't know if that's what you heard. Do not go back ...

Speaker 4: No, no, no.

Speaker 3: ... to 1.0.

[00:48:00]

Speaker 4: Yeah, no. I think if anything, I feel like he should forgive himself for the affair part. Maybe it's just part of my nature to find the silver lining in everything, but-

Speaker 3: He set you free.

Speaker 4: Yeah. As weird as it sounds, if we're going to take anything positive from this situation, I don't think that we would've been able to find this place without that, as weird as it sounds.

[00:48:30]

Speaker 3: For some reason, you've decided that you needed to call this, "We are divorced." I took two minutes at what you wrote and I thought, "That's weird." That's the only thing that's weird. I think these people finally have the relationship that they both would want.

[00:49:00]

What is clear to me is that there is no one size fits all, and that we've never invested more in our intimate relationships than we do today, and we've never crumbled more under the expectations that we bring to our relationships. In this particular case, they actually had already rewritten their story, but they didn't know how to title it because so often we find that it is the language that we use that is in itself confining. We lock ourselves up inside a concept, and we forget how to cultivate

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the quality of our experience. My work is to accompany people in their quest for what will be a meaningful, thriving relationship in which they can find themselves alive, and vibrant, and vital because ultimately my big why is that it is the quality of our relationships that determines the quality of our lives.