

Rewilding Love Episode 5 Transcript

Rohini Ross

Angus when I listened back to your session with Mateo, it sounds like he really gave you a pretty good run for your money. And you had to really stay on your toes with him.

Angus Ross

Yes, you could say that. He was very resistant to me trying to share this idea with him that Elysia can in no way affect his sense of wellbeing. And that's all on his shoulders. And, and that's where he felt compelled to hold this very strong defensive line. So, I had to look for all kinds of creative ways to penetrate that defensive line. And I don't know if I did it, ultimately. But that was definitely the line that I was looking for. And, you know, kudos to him for meeting me every step of the way, in that respect.

Rohini Ross

Well, we'll get to hear all of your creative ways that you tried to get your point across. But we can start out with just hearing him share a little bit about that bombshell that really got things moving in terms of them deciding to work on the relationship.

Angus Ross

Sounds like a good idea to me. Do you talk about leaving each other or?

Mateo

Yeah

Angus Ross

I know, in the heat of the moment last night, she shared that she wanted to have a divorce. But is that something that's...

Mateo

I expressed it a couple of months ago, and that's what initiated her going to therapy. That's what initiated her getting in contact with herself. I was ready to move like I don't know why.

Angus Ross

Right. And is that something that's now? based? Did you kind of lay down the law and say, yes, if things don't change or move on.

Mateo

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I had divorce papers signed and ready to give to her to sign. I had everything ready. Okay. And the way that...

Angus Ross

You're pretty far along in this...

Mateo

But she talked to me about it. And again, another roadblock of why she's been the way she is right. And, and like I said, I mean, there's that energy behind her eyes that I'm kind of weak for and like, Okay, all right. So where am I right now? I want everything to work out. How much longer can I withstand this living in this negative household? I don't know.

Rohini Ross

Well, the good news is that he does want the relationship to work. But you can tell just in the way that he says that there are conditions on that and he wants the relationship to work if she changes.

Angus Ross

Yes, there is that significant caveat that for the relationship to work, there has to be a significant change as far as Lucy is concerned.

Rohini Ross

And we all know how well that goes when one person in the relationship wants the other person to be different.

Angus Ross

Present company included in that?

Rohini Ross

Definitely...

Angus Ross

Excluded?

Rohini Ross

Included...

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Angus Ross

okay.

Rohini Ross

When you say we went through that at the beginning of our relationship.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I would say significantly, I would say that I always imagined that you would change. And I'd have the woman of my dreams. And I imagine you probably had some similar tape running in your head,

Rohini Ross

I absolutely did.

Angus Ross

And it is, it is always a recipe for disaster. You know, there's this sort of preoccupation with teaming and controlling our partner to fit into our standards and expectations. And it just kind of creates hostility ultimately, certainly, you know, self austerity, born out of a level of resentment.

Rohini Ross

And what happens is that it is toxic toward the goodwill in the relationship that just goes out the window.

Angus Ross

Yeah. Always as, as we, as we well know.

Rohini Ross

Yeah. We've learned that the hard way, and hopefully we can help them see something different for themselves around that.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I'd like to think that that's, you know, we earned our stripes in that respect and can hopefully share our knowledge and know-how about how to negotiate our way through that with the likes of Mateo.

Rohini Ross

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And so, here's an example of what is not working for him in the relationship.

Mateo

Let's just say, let's just take a real quick life example is, you know, I'm not comfortable with the conversations, I feel like it's very aggressive, blah, blah, blah. I'm not showing any emotional or physical, romantic, you know, romance towards her. Okay, so let's take the first instance, she gets pissed off. I know that that's the reason why she's getting pissed off. But she's bringing up something else, right? So, then I'll let her spin out. I just asked her not to yell, bring down your voice, please. I have sensitive ears, so I don't really like loud noises. And she'll apologize, right? What it also takes me time to get over that crazy baby tantrum that just took place. And let's just say It's day two. And I haven't been physically romantic with her. Because I'm in this state of mistrust, and like, oh, my God, that was so exhausting for me. Well, day two comes around, and here comes the same bullshit. And it's like, okay, you want me to reach this point, to be this person, and I want you to, but you're not allowing enough time for me to feel those feelings again. You know, that's why in the beginning, I was like, maybe I should just move out, I want to move out, you know, I want to get my own place and live in my own silence. So, I don't have to come to this every day. So that way, I can kind of break the trend of being mentally exhausted from that.

Rohini Ross

Well, Mateo is sharing his tale of woe with you. And my guess is that he feels pretty strongly that he's got good evidence to substantiate his claims as to why he feels the way he does, and how that makes sense, in terms of why his behavior is the way that it is currently. And you don't respond in the way that he's probably expecting you to at this point.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I mean, you say it's a tale of Whoa, I look at it as being more of a sales pitch, you know, here's his product. And I'm, hopefully, the willing customer, but in this case, not so willing customer, I'm not really buying any of that. And there's probably a little frustration for him in that respect.

Rohini Ross

Well, what the product is that he's trying to sell you is that he's a victim to Alicia. And you're just not buying that.

Angus Ross

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Yeah, that would be a case of like, yeah, make sure that you look at the small print, and there's a 30-day return policy on that.

Rohini Ross

So, we'll hear what you share with him next, but I'm guessing that he was perhaps a little surprised.

Angus Ross

Yeah, a few keywords. All I'm gonna do really over the next few days is just continuously point you in this direction of seeing things, some, some at some point, seeing things differently, seeing that there's nothing that she can do in her behavior, you know, in terms of the words that she's sharing with you, that really affects your state of mind, you affect your own state of mind, you're feeling your own thinking. And there's something there is an insight wrapped up in that's very liberating. And it goes against the grain of pretty much all of our programming. And it gets harder and harder as we get older and older because those neural pathways just get stronger and stronger over years, and particularly in the course of relationships. You know, you've had X amount of time together, how many years have you been together? Seven. So, seven years of creating very strong narratives around you know, what were probably once old standards and expectations that are not being fulfilled. or new behaviors that are unacceptable that have morphed into something else. Those are all. That's all in the intellect. But that's not in the moment, the moment will be now is, I guess, the real hope, I will think what the hope that I would have for you is that you would like, keep an open mind and an open heart in the face of what I'm sharing with you what's being shared with her. And seeing things through that lens with this, if this is new information for you, or whatever level you're This is registering with you. If you can see things unfold differently.

Mateo

I would love for them to and I feel like I am approaching the days with optimism to sometimes you know what? I don't need physical contact right now. Because last night you were nuts. All right. But I'm still open-minded. We can have a chat. Like it's all good. My slate isn't white clean. I trust you today, like I trusted you yesterday, no big deal. But right now, this is my personal space. And I want this. So, I do approach it with an open mind. It's just the level at which the rate at which I open myself 100% is not being received well by my counterpart.

Rohini Ross

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I'm imagining that this might be hard for him to hear at this point. And I guess it would probably be quite hard for many people to hear. So, it'd be good for us to take some time to really clarify what you mean by what you're saying.

Angus Ross

I would say a wholehearted Yes. Because I think that that clarification is often in my experience falls on deaf ears. So, I think we're probably going to be saying this more than once. I'm gonna be looking for all sorts of creative ways like I was with Matteo to convey this message.

Rohini Ross

Yes, absolutely.

Angus Ross

This is a pivotal message in this understanding. And it's hard for people to understand,

Rohini Ross

Yeah, this is key. So, what you're saying to him is that he is not experiencing Alicia's behavior directly, that there's her behavior, then there's his thinking about her behavior. And what he's really experiencing is the thinking that he's identifying with.

Angus Ross

So far, so good.

Rohini Ross

But in his mind, that thinking is invisible to him. So, it really looks to him like he is experiencing her directly. And that she is the cause for his suffering.

Angus Ross

always, in his mind,

Rohini Ross

in his mind. And so, what you're trying to help him to see is that that's not possible, because that's not how it works, that every single one of us experiences life via our thinking. And that's what we identify with. And that's what creates our internal experience. And one of the most profound examples of what's possible for humans around this, I think, is the example of Viktor Frankl who was a psychiatrist who was a prisoner in one of the concentration camps in the Second World War. And in that experience, he was able to be in the feeling of love and

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compassion, not just for himself, not just for the fellow prisoners that he was with. But that even extended to the guards. And that that circumstance of being in a concentration camp did not determine his internal experience. Now, I know that's an extreme example. But it really points to the potential of what's available to all of us as human beings. And that ultimately, our experience is a reflection of our state of mind and the thinking that we're identifying with. That's where it comes from. And when we see that we get so much internal freedom and liberation, because we can never be victimized by those outside of us. We're still free. And I'm not condoning bad behavior. I'm not condoning violence or abusive behavior on any level; I want to be really clear about that. But understand that our experience comes from within, to me is the ultimate and empowerment

Angus Ross

And probably one of the most important things to be garnered from this understanding, if not the most important thing.

Rohini Ross

And we really want everyone that's listening to see if they can have an open mind around this to see if it's possible to really recognize that experience comes from within and we have examples in our day to day lives about this we can be in a situation. And in one state of mind, the situation will look really difficult and impossible. And then maybe we go for a walk, or we have a nap, or we wake up the next morning, and nothing can have changed. And we can have a completely different experience about that situation.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I wholeheartedly agree with that. I think that you know, this is the significant next step for anybody to take, who can first embrace the idea that has nothing to do with external circumstances is not the other person's fault. It's always our thinking that we embrace that idea. And then we just start to see how that's where suffering comes from. And, and then we can stop identifying with the thinking, or at least become better equipped to see how this is always a reflection of our state of mind. This is, you know, for me, that's, that's such a big part of this understanding, in tandem with this idea that it's not the other person or the other party or the external circumstances. So often, what shows up in our thinking is a reflection of our state of mind. So, if we're in a low mood, the reflection in us in our behavior is going to be that state of mind, really, more than anything else.

Rohini Ross

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And what's so helpful also, when we recognize that our experiences coming from the thoughts that we're identifying with, when we see you know, as they say, it's an inside job, then we know that the nature of thought is to settle, we know that the mind is designed to come to a place of peace, that is the natural state. So, if we're caught up in painful thinking, all we need to do is let our mind relax and settle. And then we're going to come out of that experience. So, to me, that's the ultimate and hopefulness because suffering only chronic and continuous when we keep feeding that thinking and living in the feeling of that. But when we understand that the thinking is the cause of suffering, and we let our mind relax, and we leave that thinking alone, the mind naturally settles and we open up to what is behind that, which is our peace of mind and our inner freedom.

Angus Ross

Yeah, beautifully said. And without understanding what we're left with is painful thinking begets more painful thinking, it just creates a vicious spiral that, you know, takes us down a rabbit hole of pure dismay and discontent.

Rohini Ross

And it has us look in the wrong direction in the way that Matteo is doing. He believes that his suffering is coming from outside of himself, rather than seeing that the way he's engaging with his thoughts is actually where his suffering is coming from. And so, because it looks like it's coming from Alicia, he's putting all his energy into trying to figure out how to change her, how to control her, how to tame her, how to run away from her, he's putting all his energy into that direction, which has nothing to do with his suffering.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I'm just continually throwing more oxygen at that fire.

Mateo

Like, I'm not Nelson Mandela, you want to free or end apartheid. Do you know what I mean? Like, I'm not Gandhi, who's, you know, fighting for some revolution? in his house, yes. Who has a choice to go through this shit? Or not? Yeah, no, I'm not leading a revolution. So, I don't know what I'm supposed to do other than expect change from someone else to allow me to be the person that I want to be and the person that they want me to be right. But it does take change from another angle, as well as my new enlightened, you know, mentality of how to look at things. I don't think that's what's clouded.

Rohini Ross

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Mateo really can't see how he's responsible in terms of where his experience is coming from. And he emphasizes here, again, how he's fine. And really, this is all on Elisa being different. And what I love about the tech that you take at this point is you're recognizing that he's not able to take on board, what you're saying. And so, you move away from their specific circumstance and personal situation because it's clearly too much of a hot spot for him to have perspective on. And you shift gears, and you go in a different direction and give another example that is not about their specific situation, a more generic example, that still illustrates the point that you're making, but hopefully, because it's not about them specifically, he's going to be able to hear them in a more neutral way. take on board what you're saying?

Angus Ross

Yeah, I mean, I just had to keep looking for an opening and hope at some point, I will find that pathway to get into a point where he'd be able to receive even the smallest glimmer of this understanding. And because really, up until now, he's, he's just decided it's an open shot case that he's come to court. He's got all his paperwork, he's got all this substantial evidence, and he's just looking at me as the judge is just gonna throw the book at Alicia, and he can go on his merry way. Case dismissed. Actually, let's go to this party in another way. So, in the corporate world, what we do with this understanding, we talk about becoming discouragement proof. So, in a corporate environment, or actually, let's look at it in a sales environment, you know, a salesman has to constantly expose themselves to ridicule and criticism, let's say, or that's maybe a fear that they have, with this understanding, taking on this idea that I don't I cause my own suffering, they're not responsible for how I'm feeling inside someone on the end of the cold call, can say what they want. But that's, that's if I run with that, that's me creating that issue. So that's how we define it in terms of being discouraged prevented the same way in a relationship. That's what we're pointing to is becoming discouragement proof is not taking anything that they bring to the table. And usually, it's what they bring to the table in a low mood, and they're all sped up and they say things that could be perceived as hurtful, we start to see, yeah, they're just sped up, they're out of balance, I don't need to take that shit personally, has nothing to do with me. But if I take that on board, and I take that personally, and then my neural pathways begin to develop, I begin to create this great big story, and the physiology that can come with that story. Yeah, that's doing ourselves a total disservice.

Mateo

Yes, you really put it like a hidden camera and watch us interact. I said,

Angus Ross

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I used to say the same thing. I said if this was a court of law, and we had a hidden camera, the jury would be convicting you, not me.

Rohini Ross

I have this quite vivid memory, of you saying exactly the same thing to me, in the apartment in West Hollywood. I'm sure you said it more times than that one time. But that's the memory that really jumps into my mind. Do you remember that?

Angus Ross

Yes, I did. Yes, I do. For, before the age of reality TV, I must have had some sort of premonition that that may be coming. But I feel like yes, if we had a camera covering all of our interactions that I would have been seen as the party that was really following, you know, what I would perceive as the more appropriate moral compass or the moral high ground, at least anyway.

Rohini Ross

So, you must be able to quite relate to Mateo?

Angus Ross

Well, I could understand the mindset. I don't know if I relate to him in these terms, but I do understand it.

Rohini Ross

And I do too. And what strikes me about that kind of comment is that there's an attachment to that level of righteousness. And when, whenever any of us get into that position, where we believe that we are right, and the other person is wrong, we automatically have a closed mind. And we lose touch of the big picture when we're not able to have empathy and really understand where the other person is coming from. Because of that righteousness.

Angus Ross

Yeah, what I would say that if I was to relate this to myself, now I feel like moving through life, I'm starting to notice that if I'm in judgment, that judgment is kind of like my check engine light that, you know, I'm that I'm already my state of mind has probably gone south, and I probably shouldn't be trusting anything that's coming out of my mouth. Because it's being fueled by thinking that's been really dictated to by my state of mind. So, if I can become more adept at seeing that, then that's where I feel like life starts to look a whole lot better. But yes, there is this position of righteousness. That motto was adopted. But it's coming from a place of

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judgment. And so then one has to ask oneself if you know, what's going on the state of mind, brother?

Rohini Ross

Well, I think a really good rule of thumb for all of us is that as soon as we are in the feeling of judgment, which goes along with righteousness, that we know we can't trust our state of mind at that point. It's gone south.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I would concur, wholeheartedly.

Rohini Ross

Well, you're discouragement proof and you take one more foray into seeing if he can recognize he's not a victim to her behavior. And you even at this point, start trying to throw in some personal examples of what worked for us.

Angus Ross

This was my Robert, the Bruce moment. Do you know the story of Robert the Bruce?

Rohini Ross

I do know the story because you've told me, but others might not.

Angus Ross

Well, Robert, the Bruce was a Scottish King, who was defeated on the field of battle by the English Saxons, found himself or sought refuge in a cave. And he watched this spider, make this web again and again and again. Because every time the spider finished this very intricate web, the wind would blow, and you'd have to start from scratch. He or she, I don't know, didn't really go into gender. But the spider would start from scratch. And Robert the Bruce took his inspiration from there and continued on and finally defeated the English.

Rohini Ross

And so, you are rebuilding your web?

Angus Ross

Yes. So, if at first, you don't succeed, you keep trying and trying and try again. But the things that she says to you when she's out of balance, she's just running her story. She's just running a million stories have been programmed into her head, probably by her family, her peers, by whatever reality TV,

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Mateo

reality TV

Angus Ross

Whatever is coming forward. It's like she's refracting that in her own inimitable way.

Mateo

Yeah, I believe so.

Angus Ross

But that's if she's coming at you when she's out of balance. And she's, you know, her story. The intellect is always going to throw up all that stuff, it's going to throw up all that shit always. Because it's the intellect. That's all it does. The intellect is trying to figure this whole dynamic out. It's in fight or flight. And it's trying to figure things out, we used to joke around this idea, so I don't know if you're familiar with the idea of the lizard brain didn't. Have you heard of that? I mean, I'm not a neuroscientist. And I don't know much about neuroscience. But there's a part of the brain, scientists have nicknamed it the lizard brain. And it's the oldest part of the brain. It's the part of the brain which governs fight or flight. And that's basically the most well-developed part of the lizard brain is fight or flight. So there's really no fight or flight, let's say, you know, fight, flight, or fight and war, let's fornicators basically, that's the right of the lizard. So, we have that in our heads. And so, we get into an experience where we feel fear. And it's like, what are we going to do with this and then the intellect wants to get on board and figure things out. So, there's, there's almost like a, it's like the two are kind of in cahoots with one another. So, we always used to joke that I would behave like this Gecko turning into Godzilla. And I'd be like, out of balance, and Rohini would do this sort of thing with a mouth like a lizard sticking his tongue out, and usually would like, I would see the funny side, and it would kind of break the pattern. But it's kind of for me, it's really interesting to look at that and look at how we just tell ourselves these stories, we just like, we have our flight or fight or flight mechanism, we have our intellect trying to make sense of it all. And the intellect will basically regurgitate all kinds of crap that have come through and points where we're usually out of balance and created this whole narrative. And then it becomes this well-worn path that we can easily default into.

Rohini Ross

What I hear you pointing to in this section, is that when we get into a low mood, we really cannot trust the content of our thinking. And for Mateo, this is quite invisible to him. He doesn't

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seem to have any understanding of how his mood changes, and how his thinking gets distorted when his mood drops, it seems that he really feels that he's just completely rational and logical all the time. But in this next section, you try to attempt to try and attempt at addressing this through using a ride metaphor.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. I think that really, Matteo, is becoming very self-evident that his mood is something that really is a blind spot for him. And I think that that's why I've been really harping on about how our thought is always a reflection of our state of mind. And perhaps I got a little lost in the neuroscience piece, which is, I think, totally my paygrade but I feel like he's Yeah, he's just not seeing how his state of mind is really obfuscating the lens through which he's seeing his relationship. And if we can somehow make some headway there. Then I think we'll see some movement.

Rohini Ross

And I think we can all relate to that. I think every one of us experiences good moods and low moods. And when we get reflective and notice it, we can see how the quality of our thinking changes based on the mood that we're in. It's really quite common sense. But oftentimes, especially when we're in a low mood I know I can speak for myself, is that we don't recognize that our thinking isn't clear in that moment. And we think that we are seeing things exactly as they are, we don't realize that our thinking has got limited and restricted and is actually not accurate.

Angus Ross

Because it's not at all complicated what we're sharing really, at the end of the day, we could just talk about this in terms of being state of mind if we become more aware of our state of mind and how that affects our thinking. And then how our thinking born out of my state of mind really has a strong bearing on how we see the world that we live in. And that's a game-changer right there.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, we can tell that when our thinking gets distorted it's not even about not having that happen. What really makes the difference is just knowing when our thinking is distorted and recognizing when we can trust it like that is a huge game-changer.

Angus Ross

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Yeah. It's a ride at a funfair, we go up and down. We are not in a low mood and we love each other, and we go into a low mood, we hate each other. In that low mood. We can come up with all kinds of shit. You can be an asshole in that low mood, but you're not nice or what you're up when the relationships up here.

Mateo

See, for the most part, I'm Pirates of the Caribbean where there's only one drop in one rise, okay, everything else is pretty fucking flat in my life. Right? hers. It's corkscrewing. It's, it jumps to track sometimes like it does crazy shit and how it is I'm sitting there and just taking this beating, you know whether it's word vomit,

Angus Ross

Yeah, but you can't see it, I guess where I want to go is you can't see it as you've taken a beating. Because you take dominion over your feelings, you're actually the one with a superpower she can't touch you. There is nothing that she can say that can touch you. Because you're seeing that she's gone into her bullshit. If the other party is able to hold a neutral space, and not put their defenses up, which could look like, like cocooning myself in my secret zone where you can't touch me. And that's my defense system. And they're registering that if you can actually be neutral and saying, Yeah, I can see you're kind of fucked up at the moment. Like, and but I'm not, it's not gonna affect me. You're just like, you know, whatever tangent you're going on. And that's nothing to do with me. Wow, I was getting on my high horse a little back there. Maybe it had too much caffeine, I don't know, a touch of over-exuberance in trying to drum home my point maybe?

Rohini Ross

Well, something that stands out to me is that in the way that you were framing it, it was somewhat aligned with his already quite strong idea that it's like, Hey, baby, your issue is nothing to do with me.

Angus Ross

Yeah, you do listen back to that. And I definitely got a sense that he felt as though I may be rallying to his cause. But that was not the direction that I was going in. I was just trying to center maybe use too strong language to sort of suggest that when someone when their state of mind goes south, and they kind of lose the plot, that they've kind of gone a little bit crazy, but maybe in the terms in which I articulated that he may have well thought that I was you I was suggesting Yes, you're but Alicia is crazy. And that you are the one that has, you know, is in a state of continual equanimity, when I was just trying to do was just illustrate the point that

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yeah, this person has got caught up. And you know, you don't have to take that personally. And ideally, you probably have some compassion for the fact that that's where their mindset has gone.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, I think that's the important part for me that when we genuinely can see that somebody's behavior when they're angry when they're upset that that's a reflection of them suffering, and we aren't taking it personally, we tend to feel some compassion and empathy in that situation. And again, I want to emphasize again, the importance of us not condoning acting out behavior. So, we're not saying that it's okay. If somebody's acting out in an angry or aggressive way and we are saying that the more if we're on the receiving end of that, we can see that that's got nothing to do with us. And that's a reflection of that person's state of mind, the more clarity we will have, the more empowered we will feel, to be able to take action that is going to be self-honoring, and to make healthy choices for ourselves. So, we're absolutely not saying you have to stay there and receive whatever the anger is, but it's in that clarity of knowing that it's not personal, that it's about their state of mind that then you can take the action that is in your best interest in that moment, and ultimately, probably for the highest good of everybody.

Angus Ross

Yeah, because when we find a way to move to that higher ground, which hopefully, you know, that's what I was trying to suggest to Matteo is that you will be able to identify the suffering that your partner is experiencing. And you won't, you know, view this situation as you behaving like, you know, feeling like you're being a doormat, you're actually you're seeing the suffering and, and you can very least have a sense of neutrality about that situation. And at the very best have this experience of compassion, that knowing that what they're going through is, is really born out of suffering, it's as simple as that. And that they don't need to take it personally, but we haven't got there yet.

Rohini Ross

No, but you do give it another shot,

Angus Ross

Right, I do! I'm not going down without a fight. For my money change, really, you know, it's so funny, and you know, from my own experiments, and then in doing this, you know, time and time again, people usually come in with this, you know, coming to a relationship where if it doesn't feel right, this is sort of hope that things will, you know, they'll be able to change the person or the person will change, it's kind of like that grass is always greener mentality that

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once they change this aspect of this past, their personality, everything will be good. But it's kind of like there's something, there's some shift that needs to take place for my money anyway, well, that just has to be taken off the table. It's kind of like, I think, and I've seen this time and time again, people can figure things out. And the shift comes when they just, they kind of maybe the person or the spouse can carry on regardless with their behavior. But it's a case of not taking that personally anymore. And in the same way that we do corporate work, it's like, when we have dysfunction in a corporate environment, it's usually because people are taking each other's behavior personally, and then there's conflict is kind of like letting that go. And something about that letting that go, elicits change. But there's a metaphor like that I like to use where and I've heard this, it's not my own metaphor. But apparently, there is an aeronautical principle that if you get into a tailspin, you are supposed to just let go of the controls and the craft will write itself. And it's kind of like my intellect wants to figure things out and wants to control since it wants to control our environment. And, and really hang on for dear life. And it's kind of like in terms of how you're explaining the dynamic between you, you kind of both really hang on to those controls because you want to figure things out. But in a sense, you just gotta let it go. And that letting it go is just not taking any of the other person's behavior personally. And unless they're physically harming you, there's really nothing they can do to affect your thinking, that is all on you or me or it's all on us. We are kind of masters of our own domain, masters of our own intellect, and all the stuff that we make up in the face of someone else's behavior. It's just stuff that we make up. It's just an illusion. It's the matrix that we go into. Yeah, that's coming from you taking it personally, you took all of that personally, and... It's not personal.

Mateo

It's my life that I'm taking personally. It's Oh my God, I'm spending my Friday night yelling with this chick, you know, who's my wife? My life partner. When you know, I was 29, right? I'm thinking this in the car. I'm like, oh my god, this is the worst Friday night of my life. It's not that I'm taking it personally. I'm taking the waste of my time in my life personally, right? Those words don't affect me. The time that I can't get back. That affects me the things that I could be doing other than in that moment, yelling, bitching crying all this shit. That's what I take personally, not the words, words I don't care about. I'd rather be you know, on the beach, taking a walk doing whatever other than that in that moment. Well, yeah, I mean, the words really just, you know, I mean, the words are just what we put on our feelings. Yeah, but you're taking the feelings personally. You're taking her level of feeling personally. I'm taking what I consider wasted time personally.

Rohini Ross

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I really don't understand what he means when he says he's taking the waste of his time personally.

Angus Ross

Well, I think he's actually grasping at straws. And I didn't, I think he doesn't understand what it means to take someone else's behavior personally because it still all amounts to the same thing. He can take her, he can say that he's not taking her shouting, or anger personally. And he's now saying, Oh, it's all about the fact that she's kind of robbing me of my time or time that I could spend doing other things that would be more enjoyable. But it's still he's making her responsible for his wellbeing or robbing him of his wellbeing. So yes, of course, he's taking it, taking her behavior personally, it's her behaviors, always her behavior is robbing him of time as far as he's concerned. And that's how he's taking it personally, even though he's saying he is not taking it personally. He is.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, there are two things that he's really not seeing. One is that he's not able to see that Alicia's behavior is a reflection of her state of mind and the thinking that she's identifying within the moment. And the other thing that he doesn't seem able to really see is that he has a choice in the situation, it feels, the way that he talks about it, he has absolutely no choice and no ability to take care of himself and to set healthy boundaries with her.

Angus Ross

Yeah. And it's kind of almost like, for me when I listen to Mateo at this point, he doesn't really understand the line of questioning or what I'm trying to share. So it reminds me and my brother went through this years ago, there is some kind of training that you can do in Ireland, probably you can do it worldwide, I'm sure there are political consultants every day, training politicians how to deal with the media, my brother went through this training, and they kind of they put you through the situation where you might have to feel the really difficult question, or be expected to come up with an intricate answer, you know, being pressed to come up with an answer. And so, the training consists of like doing everything you can to avoid having to give the answer that's expected of you and look for ways to do that. And keep on doing that until the person the interviewer gives up. And in a sense, that's kind of how I feel with Matteo, he doesn't really get this whole idea of, of seeing that. It's nothing to do with Alicia in terms of his, his wellbeing being affected. It's all to do with his line of thinking. And so yeah, he's pulling, he's trying to pull every hat out the bag that he can now it's about being robbed of his precious time.

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Rohini Ross

You know, it reminds me of how you felt completely victimized by Nikko or puppy when we got him to you. And that you weren't able to see that there was any possibility that you could have wellbeing with this dog with the way that he was behaving.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I was convinced I was gonna be 100% robbed of all future wellbeing, I'll be getting a good night's sleep and having a moment to relax. It seemed like his unrelenting persona would be a real thorn in my side. So, when we got Nico, our Dearly beloved Husky, and we got him from a rescue center, the surrogate caretaker, actually ran a bird sanctuary. And so, in her mind and in her innocence, the best way to deal with this dog, who probably wanted to eat all of her rescued birds, was to put it in a muzzle. So anyway, I guess we kind of won the lottery or I don't, I didn't feel like that at the time. But she decided we would be the ideal owners for this doc. And so, when we got him home, obviously, you know, the first thing we did is take the muzzle off you know, you can kiss this goodbye This is going to be part of your experience of being again anymore. He then proceeded to just go nuts and you know, bit everything inside, but not in an aggressive way in a playful way, but you're constantly being gnawed at. And it was just literally unrelenting. You know, every, every available opportunity to jump on the couch or jump on us and jump on the bed and it went on and on ad nauseum as far as I was concerned. And you know, you're trying to get on with your life and you've got this dog going nuts. You know, I'm doing a zoom call with a coach and my client is perhaps having a very, very emotional month. And the dog's kind of leaping on me and biting my head in my arm and every other extremity that's available to him. So, I decided this is impossible, we can't move forward, and we're gonna have to give the dog back. And, and I made the decision that that's what's gonna happen, you know this is untenable, the dog has to be returned to the caretaker. And so, and so I started making noises to that effect. And, you know, I managed to get my wife and my youngest daughter on board, and then I actually managed to get the rescue center on board, although they did actually present me with this caveat, before that I made that final decision, would I at least see this trainer and I was kind of a little bit, I was, you know, at that point, my mind was made up. But I did have to have a conversation with my eldest daughter, who I actually thought at that point would be the least resistant to the idea of the dog being returned because he didn't seem that excited about the acquisition, I think, probably because as it turns out, she wanted, you know, wanted a very small puppy, not a dog that was four months old. But anyway, I thought I wasn't gonna have a problem here. And actually, she gave me the third degree and said, you know, you can't give the dog back. Now you've made your decision, you got to kind of major barely got a line here. So, I thought I was just I wasn't expecting that. And so anyway, I thought, well, maybe I'll have another conversation with the rescue center.

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Because it's, you know, I still feel like this dog is a pain in the neck, and I want it to return. And, and then she still took this line of like, you know, just try out this train and see what happens, you know, reserve your, your judgment until you've had this experience with a trainer. Anyway, to cut a long story short, the trainer was really not training the dog, the trainer was training me. So, the dog was really acting out and just being a dog, a four-month-old puppy wanting to have fun, and, and when that fun got too much for me, I was tending to get angry, I was getting reactive. And, and that's how I dealt with the dog is, you know, you know, shouting at it or taking a hard line in that respect. And then the trainer said to me, Well, you know what the most important thing in your relationship with his dog is that you never lose your temper, you kind of you know, you can have your boundaries, and you've got to be an alpha wolf. But as soon as you lose your temper, that will be seen as a line of weakness that will be seen as a sign of weakness, and he'll take full advantage of that. And lo and behold, she was absolutely right. Every time I lost my slot with this dog, it would go nuts, and make a bad situation 10 times worse. But when I tried this new approach of like, you know, here's my boundary, and I'm going to deliver this information with neutrality. And yeah, there will be a consequence you, you might have to be, I don't know, put on a leash or put into the crate or whatever, you know, we decided to do. As long as I did all of that from a place of neutrality. It was, it works out fine. But soon as I got angry, the dog just went crazy and would react and not in an angry way in return, it would just be kind of like, Oh, this is fun and games. I don't know why I don't know this experience very well is this, this is fun, isn't it and do everything that I wanted, but it wouldn't do anything that I wanted it to do. So anyway, so that was the story of this dog, for me was this incredible lesson in neutrality and not taking his behavior? Personally, I have the things that I have my standards and expectations about how life with this dog will be. But as long as I continue to sort of have those standards in a neutral way, I'll be good to go. Wow, that was a long story.

Rohini Ross

Well, the key point that I love about that story is that you were personalizing a dog's behavior. And that was what was upsetting you. And that when we were educated by the trainer, about the normalcy of Nico and when he was up to and that really, he just needed to be, have some boundaries set and that you could take care of yourself and I could take care of myself. It wasn't that we had to endure being jumped on and bitten for the rest of our days that we had to create rapport with him, we had to build trust, and that we were reacting to the own narrative that we were creating in our own mind about what this meant in the future when really, we just needed to understand how to be firm and kind and loving, but not to go overboard in terms of the reactivities the way that you say,

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Angus Ross

Yeah, and if you know, the more that I reflect on this, and this is I think across the board in the terms of the work that we do, what I think that I really learned out of that whole exercise was the value of being present with what is here I am confronted with a dog which is actually being nothing more than a happy four-month-year-old Puppy doing what puppies do, and you know is dedicated to having fun and jolly Japes. And, and I'm getting into, I'm kind of really being fueled by this negative future fantasy and my conceptual mind or all these ideas of how this dog is going to actually upset the applecart in terms of my wellbeing. And as soon as I sort of bought into that train of thought, that's where the anger and the activity would come from worse, if I'm in a place where, you know, I don't have to lose my temper here. And really, I'm only losing my temper, because I'm getting into that negative future fantasy if I actually find a way to be present with what is the dog is being perfectly normal. And if I see that, that's going to make it much better, or I'm going to be much better equipped to have this sense of neutrality. And from that place, there's no reactivity, there's really, I mean, in an ideal world, there's actually some compassion here. Yes, this poor dog was like, had to live its first few months of life with a muzzle on and of course, it's gonna like, you know, it's like freedom. Let's go crazy. So, it was for me, yeah, that's been an incredible learning. It was an incredible learning curve. But I think most of all, by that idea, like, you know, being present to what is without all of the old patterns of thinking that we're really being projected into the future, about how that future could look really kind of alarming. And the more that I allow my mind to fester, and in that, in that made-up experience, the worst things got.

Rohini Ross

And what you're speaking to is the importance of your own state of mind, and how that was really what was at play. It wasn't really Nico's fault that you were basically feeling like a victim, not because of the dog, but because of how you were relating to your own thoughts in the moment.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I mean, I was a complete victim, to my own negative future fantasy has nothing to do with Nico. All of my feelings and reactivity in that moment were based on something that actually hadn't happened. And as it turns out, never didn't happen. Yeah, he's a lovely, lovely boy. And I adore him. And oh, my goodness, thank goodness, I didn't, didn't take him back to the shelter.

Rohini Ross

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Yeah, I'm very grateful. And you start to go in this direction now with Mateo in terms of turning away from focusing on what he's upset with the least about. And now you start to check in more with him about how he's doing. And I think that's a great direction that you went in at this point.

Angus Ross

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I kind of, upon reflection, would have ideally liked to talk more about seeing her psychological innocence, I don't know if that would have given me more leverage in the moment. And I did harp on about him taking her behavior personally. But it would have been. I don't know, who knows if he was, I would be able to hear that. But I felt if I had really pointed more to her psychological innocence in the way that, you know, you can see that when she's caught up, and I use terms like her going crazy, maybe there will be in a more palatable way to address that, in a sense, and really, you know, for her, for him to see her suffering, to see that she has got caught up for whatever reason, she's caught up. And that's, that's a way that she has, she's suffering with her thinking, and I didn't really I feel like if I'd gone more in that direction, or maybe even use that language, who knows, that might have been easier for him to hear, but he was definitely finding it really hard to sort of adopt this idea that, you know, I'm taking her behavior personally, like, I think, you know, I don't know, it's like, in his mind is like, what does that even mean? That's why I'm getting the sort of the politician's response.

Rohini Ross

And that's why I think it's great that you took a different tack here and started to really check in with him about himself.

Angus Ross

Yeah. Okay, let's see what happens. Well, that's well, can I ask you about your moods? Because I mean, we all know, as human beings, we get into low moods from time to time. How would you describe yourself in that respect? Do you feel like you're kind of pretty much a content person you had this period of your life where, you know, and obviously, it sounded very tough? And we would probably define that as a period of time when you're in a particularly low mood so that you know, suicidal tendencies come, you know, typically from that space, yeah. Is that something like, you know, your, your sort of regular chair, regular temperature, are you feeling like you're kind of more and in a state of wellbeing or do you tend to sort of drift to the other side of the spectrum?

Mateo

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I feel like I'm a happy person and really driven and really enjoying my work. I think most people would say that I'm happy and I am in my mind a lot. I'm a thinker.

Angus Ross

Yeah

Mateo

That's what I do is Yeah, I really sit, I observe. And I play out scenarios and how I can, you know, I mean, on and I explain it like, I can see everything.

Angus Ross

So, I listened to that. And I think it may be important at this point to say that I decided to bring up the suicidal ideation that he was experiencing at one point in his life hasn't really cropped up in any of the other recordings. It was something that I was aware of, but I felt like it was important to maybe look at them the role that mood plays, so if you have a tendency to sort of getting into a low mood, and I kind of get a sense that he does, then then it's really important to address the fact that his low state of mind will surely have a have an effect on the optics through which he's seeing the relationship. So, I wanted to really, I guess, I'm trying to sort of press home the point that it'll be very worthwhile considering that, how, you know, whether he's able to receive that information, we'll see. But that was something that I wanted, that that's something I know I set out to do here. Because Yeah, you know, state of mind will always have an effect on the way that we see the world that we live in.

Rohini Ross

And we want everybody to recognize that that's not just true in this relationship. Whenever anybody is in a low mood that's going to impact how they see their life is going to impact how they see every aspect of their life. And when we're in a low mood, we really can't trust our thinking when we're in that state of mind.

Angus Ross

The importance of this next bit is that it indicates how Mateo doesn't realize that a busy mind is synonymous with a low mood. So, obviously, he is, you know, he admits to being an over-thinker. But he doesn't, he doesn't see how a low mood and having a busy mind are kind of one in the same.

Rohini Ross

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I would agree. And that he actually thinks all of the overthinking is a really good thing. Rather than recognizing that he's actually not able to have a clear mind when he's got a busy mind.

Angus Ross

And I can see that you're a deep thinker. And there are some disadvantages to that. So, I understand that you know, an active brain. The active mind is just basically trying to figure things out. Finally, you know, creating stories, storing away data. And we tend to sort of forget, you know which side our bread is buttered, which is it's like the intelligence behind like working through us, giving us new information, new fresh thinking. That is actually that's the sweet spot. But we get so reliant on what we've stored away up here as the way to move forward. That we're kind of missing the point. We have our intellects, and they're really powerful. It's kind of like they can also lead us into trouble as well. Yes, and to anxiety, they lead us into suffering.

Mateo

I mean, thinking about all the turmoil we've had, yeah, absolutely. probably not a good exercise for myself and for the wellbeing of a relationship. Yeah, absolutely.

Angus Ross

Well, that's, that's a ray of sunshine right there. Hopefully. I mean, I, you know, hope, I hope I can feel cautiously optimistic that he's seen something here. But yeah, maybe who knows the fact that he's now starting to acknowledge that maybe the fact that he's ruminating on the relationship and the way that he has is not really going to be of service to him or her moving forward?

Rohini Ross

And I would say there are some more rays of sunshine coming in the next segment where he does take some responsibility

Angus Ross

But I wanna be sure, you know, you're taking accountability for how you show up and what you say,

Mateo

Absolutely. I know, I've been a piece of shit to her. I know that I've been this absentee husband, I know that, but something brought me to that I wasn't born without compassion. On the contrary, I have a lot of love to give. I just don't feel like either it's the right opportunity to give that love because I'm not okay. Or I can't give love. Because I'm not okay. That does. I see that.

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Trust me because it hurts me not being able to be you know, come home and just put me in a smack and kiss on my wife and put my arm around her on the couch, like how are you doing? Right? Like, that's what I want to do. But I don't get the chance to do that in my household. All right. It's not like, `` Hey, how are you doing? You know what I'm doing great. You know, I saw this, I saw this flower today. And I was just wondering like, gee, what kind of plants do you think they have on other planets? Like, what do you think? Like, it's nothing like that. It's always some serious fucking dark shit she's going through.

Rohini Ross

Well, it is nice to hear him taking some accountability for his behavior. But he is doing it with the caveat that it's because of her behavior that he's being the way he is.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I think he's kind of cleverly putting a mask over his victim mindset, which to me is very apparent. And we're not out of the woods yet. We may even be deep in the forest. But we'll see somewhat early days, but we'll see how we move forward.

Rohini Ross

And you are persistent. You got it one more time.

Angus Ross

I am certainly tenacious. You're timely, that that hard behavior is causing you to suffer, but I'm really gonna continue in this vein, that the only you create your own suffering?

Mateo

Mm-hmm.

Angus Ross

And it's there, you know, we all have our blind spots. It's, you know when we're introduced, this understanding is like, yeah, it's understanding I get it, it makes sense. But if it wasn't for this one area, that's where you know, doesn't hold any water. So, you're kind of like righteously sticking to your, to your, your guns, this one, but I'm gonna keep going in this direction. Because I think there's definitely, you know, even if, I mean, I would like to think things have changed. But even if they don't, this is really, this is valuable information. Because it is kind of a superpower. In the same way in the corporate understanding, we show them how they can be discouragement proof. And they don't get affected by what other people say or how they

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behave or act. And in that settled state, they get new ideas, fresh thinking, new ways to move forward.

Mateo

Yeah, no, I get it. I do get it. Just wondering which side of the coin is gonna be getting this? Well, I think deep understanding, you know

Angus Ross

I think the cool thing is, that it's kind of that and again, the platitude all boats rise with the tide, as soon as someone kind of like gets it. The other person kind of follows suit, or, you know, what happens if someone gets it, there's a shift that actually, there's some healing that comes in the shift was just one person getting it that things start to feel better. So, you actually could just kick back and do nothing. We could just talk about sports or something. If she has a shift, we'll be good to go.

Mateo

Yeah, as long as one person shifts right, yeah, rising tides.

Angus Ross

Yeah. So, in a sense, doing couples work is actually quite cool. Because it's like, we only need to get one person to get an insight and we are in good shape.

Mateo

Well, I know that there's a TV la here, you can bring your TV. You can catch up on all these shows, you know, it's funny, yeah.

Rohini Ross

Given how persistent you've been with him, and how you have refused to see him as a victim in this situation, no matter how hard he tries to convince you otherwise, I think it's pretty amazing that you have the level of rapport that you do with him. And it's really great to see that lighthearted experience that you have at the end, he's clearly in a better mood after the session.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I mean, it's kind of a testament to his character. It's interesting that the rapport, you know, he's obviously, he's very sensitive to what's going on in his relationship. So, you think he probably might be a little bit on the sensitive side if I was to Badger him too much. But you

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know, nevertheless, we've come through that and, and the relationship between he and I is seemingly really good. I mean, he's a great guy, I really love him.

Rohini Ross

And he's not taking anything that you say personally, which is really impressive.

Angus Ross

I know. He's not.

Rohini Ross

And from my point of view, that good feeling and his lightness and definitely having shifted in that direction throughout the session. To me, that's so important for the work and, and really more important than him having seen anything at this point.

Angus Ross

Yeah, I kind of came away from that session, feeling quite hopeful, actually feeling very hopeful, because I saw how his mood changed in a really beautiful way. And, and, you know, if really from that vantage point, I hope that he'll start to see how the relationship takes on an altogether different complexion from those good feelings.

Rohini Ross

And so next week, we'll hear how my session goes with Alicia

Angus Ross

Sounds good.

Rohini Ross

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Angus Ross

iTunes reviews will steer people to this podcast who need help with better relationships.

Rohini Ross

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Angus Ross

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