

Rewilding Love Episode 17 Transcript

Rohini Ross

Amy, thank you, Dr. Amy Johnson.

Amy Johnson

I know.

Rohini Ross

Thank you so much for being our first podcast guest quite...

Amy Johnson

oh my gosh!

Rohini Ross

honor for us.

Amy Johnson

No, I am so honored. I've been telling people I know I've told you guys several times. I'm such a fan of your podcast, I feel I was telling someone, someone I work with, who also was a huge fan of your podcast. She's like, Do you listen to their podcast, and she has a whole ritual around listening to it at night when she's like doing her art. And I'm like, I listened to everyone. And I'm going to be on it. We had this whole like a little freakout, so I feel like total fangirl. I love the podcast, I was on the edge of my seat, like what's gonna happen with them. And I just love it. I love being able to be in those sessions and then pop out and have you guys talk about it. I love how you guys banter off each other. And like, I'm saying all Angus` phrases like everybody's batshit crazy. And like we're painting ourselves in corners. All the little stuff alone.

Angus Ross

Wow, that's so awesome.

Rohini Ross

Thank you, And I had no idea. I mean, I know because we've been talking about this podcast for a long time. So I knew you knew about it. But I didn't know you're actually listening to it. So that's amazing.

Amy Johnson

I was really happy. Because Yeah, so we've been I heard a little bit of bits and pieces as it was coming together. So yeah, I feel like I got a backstage pass to the whole thing.

Rohini Ross

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So one of the things that we thought would be great in terms of having guest speakers on is for people to get more of a sense of how broad this understanding is, how practical it is how it applies to all different areas of life, not just relationships in the way that we've been talking about it. And so Angus and I would love for you to share more about, you know, the ways that you work and share this understanding with the people you work with.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, it's so interesting that it is all you know, everything's a relationship, in a sense. And, and, and so we have relationships with what appear to be other people, which are other people. But really, as you guys explore, we're really in relationship with our own thinking about other people. We're all obviously in relationship with ourselves, which really just means our own thinking about ourselves or our own thinking in a moment. And so yes, when I think about my work, I mean it, it has largely, then for people who are struggling with habits or anxiety, although it is and it isn't, you know, that's kind of where people tend to be when they first come to me, and we first start working together. But then as that clears up, they just see so many other things and you know, is you know, then it's like all kinds of relationships start changing. So yeah, I primarily, I love to work with people with habits and anxiety, because those are two things, I struggled with myself for a long time. From the lens of, of seeing that we are habit-free, we are anxiety free, we have everything we need, life isn't a problem, everything's okay. And we see and experience all of life through this revolving kind of lens of our own thoughts. You know, and, and our thinking, by nature is very habitual, because, like thought is creative, the power of thought is fresh and new. But we're humans, and it gets filtered through a brain and our brain spits it out in these very habitual ways, you know, so. So as people start to see, okay, what I'm hearing and feeling and seeing, it sure can feel like it's the same old stuff over and over again, and I can feel stuck in it. But I'm not that that's just the show that's playing, you know, I'm, I'm something bigger than this conversation that's playing. That's where it gets amazing. And there's just so much freedom you can feel your way into.

Angus Ross

I wanted to give you a big shout out for your book, The Little Book of big change. Because I think, you know, in terms of what you've just said, I think that this is apropos. In the work that I do at the treatment center, I go in a couple of days a week, and for the new residents that arrive in their swag bag is the little book of big change. So we I guess, we try and sort of actively encourage them to read that, read your book. And for those that do they are always heavily impacted by it. But I just love the fact that for me, because your book is such a big and important backdrop to their experience, and the way that I teach and work with them. That book is always very, it's ever-present, you know, what that book is pointing to is always ever-present. And I feel like what I do there and what I learn there from my interactions with those guys and talking about your book really informs how I kind of show up and do the work that Rohini and I do in the relationship arena. It's amazing how we're all kind of pointing in the same direction. And it is so universal. And it feels like this understanding, it doesn't really

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matter what you're doing. We're all having kind of the same conversation. So I'm in a similar, I'm having that conversation with the people in treatment, I'm having that same conversation, the people that we're working with on relationship, and I just love that I love that element to this work. But I also wanted just to say how that book is just really impacted me and continues to impact so many people on a weekly basis, certainly at that treatment center.

Amy Johnson

Thank you.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, definitely check that out, Little book a big change. And we'll include that in the show notes. There's something that you said, Amy, that I would love for you to just say a little bit more about in terms of how we are all habit-free. How I can't remember all of what you said. But it's like, there really isn't a problem. And I think that I hear the truth in that. But I can imagine some people might be like, what, what is she talking about? So I'd love for you to share more about what you mean by that.

Angus Ross

Yeah,

Amy Johnson

Yeah, it's, you know, I think exploring this kind of distinction that most of us don't really explore, and actually, between our experience, like what we think feel, see, smell, taste all of it, like the human experience, what the reality we're in what's going on for us in any given moment, that is always changing. It's, you know, it comes from thought it's informed by our senses. It's this big, psychological, physiological kind of mishmash of energy moving through us. And that's what, that's what we get to live in. You know, it's pretty great when we see it that way. But, um, but I know for me, I think for most people, like that was the end of the road forever. It was like, Okay, well, this is life, you know, I'm feeling this, I'm thinking that I can try to alter my thoughts or feelings, but life's just given me life. And this is as far as it goes. And what this understanding is really kind of opened up or has the can open us up to is like, no, there's a whole world beyond experience. So what we think feel, do say all of that is constantly changing. And in the distinctions between what's always changing, so what we're experiencing and what never changes, what never changes is a lot harder to send sometimes because it's invisible. It's not in our faces it has it doesn't have us getting in trouble or wrecking our health or wrecking our relationships or finances, like our visible stuff does, you know, but to just even start with that, that little opening of like, wow, like, there's a whole What if there's a whole other world beyond how things appear? What is there, what's the backdrop behind all of this stuff that just moves through us all day, every day, when people start to explore that, as you know, you know, like, it's just, it's vague. And it's like, I don't know. And it's kind of weird at first, and then it's not so vague, and then we get a feel for it. And then

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we can get really familiar with it. And that's amazing. And that's when the scales start to tip a little bit where we're still human beings having all the thoughts and feelings that we have. But there's a bit of space between us and all of that. And it's more like we're just words, but it's almost like we're resting more in who we truly are. And all the other stuff is going by, like when you guys talked about letting the train go by, you know, the train just goes by, and we're here on the station looking around saying, Wow, there's a whole world out here. I didn't have to jump on that train.

Rohini Ross

I thought you're gonna jump in.

Angus Ross

I was, I was just somewhat loving the fact that Amy Johnson is quoting, quoting something that I said, I'm choosing not to hop on a train, I was just sort of enjoying that moment.

Amy Johnson

I'm trying to hold back.

Rohini Ross

We can just fan out on each other here It sounds like. And that the way that you just spoke to that so beautifully, Amy, that shift in identification, I think is so powerful, where we tend to identify with what's tangible, what we see is you're saying what's constantly changing, whether that be our thoughts with that beer feelings, whether it be our behaviors, but as we look in the direction of what's beyond that, we might say the intelligence behind life like what's that formless energy? what's that energy that drives the rewilding and the metaphor that we use? We start to identify less with what's tangible and more with our true nature, who we are beyond that, and it doesn't limit us, from embracing what changes and being present to it and enjoying it, this isn't about transcending the human experience it's about. For me anyway, when I identify more with what doesn't change, I actually get to enjoy my humaneness more and get to feel more and tend to make better choices. Well...

Amy Johnson

Yeah, it's like, it's like watching that action thriller movie, knowing you're watching a movie, you get to get fully into it. If that was you being chased by the bad guy, you'd be in a very different place. But it's not we're just eating our popcorn and watching it. And, and, yeah, I agree, I think there's such a sweet spot there. And, and it can feel at first like, oh, I'm not I'll be detached from my life, or you know, all the concerns people have. But I think like you said, it's just the opposite.

Rohini Ross

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Yeah, that's it's beautiful way to just dip in more deeply, and realize what else is there when we look in that direction. And I know you have your school coming up the Little School of Big Change to go along with your book, The Little Book of Big Change. And that's, I've heard so many people that have participated in your program, and experienced such profound shifts in terms of greater freedom, from habits that they've been troubled with. And so I think it would be really great to hear more about how you see that supporting people in making those kind of shifts in their life. Because initially, we're saying, well, your habit free, but it does take some kind of effort, in a sense to see that your habit free, like we can wake up to that in a moment. But often, the conditioning is very strong. And so I think what the container that you've created with the school is really helpful for helping people wake up to that. So love to hear more.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, I think, I mean, I think what you said is right on, it's like, first opening up to like, Hey, we are habit free, we have everything we need, this is our essence. And we don't experience that a lot of the time because like you said, the conditioning is so strong, like from the from the time we're tiny, we are pointed outward, I mean, even the fact that our eyes look out at the world and bring it back to our brains as if, you know, is if it's all out there coming in at us. So there's a lifetime literally for all of us a lifetime of conditioning that we're we're dealing with and and that's why I love this container of you know, a group of people from all over the world, all of us just stepping step by step together in it with curiosity, with like, what if all in everything I do in the school centers around these? what if questions like I don't, I don't know how life works? For sure. I don't want to tell anyone anything. But what if this is true? What if you actually are healthy right now? And what if this moving, changing, habitual, but moving and changing experience isn't you and it isn't personal. And you don't have to get so wrapped up in it. And so, you know, we just kind of step through this exploration as a group. And it always blows me away how much people see from each other, you know, and I know you guys run groups, and you see this all the time to that it makes our job so much easier. To that it's like, Wow, look at all your peers, like people just open up, they're so vulnerable and honest, and, and what that does for everyone around them, because we're really all the same person. If we really were all so different as we think we are in our heads. A group like the like ours wouldn't work so well together. But given that we're pretty much exactly the same except the surface level details which aren't that important anyway, we see ourselves and everyone else, even when our circumstances are so different. You know, someone comes in with an eating disorder. And I'm working with someone with depression and the person with the eating disorder sees their health through that conversation. So it's so beautiful that it's not about the details and the specifics, we get down to the universal part of life and that's where there's just so much power.

Angus Ross

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Yeah, I think that what I've been noticing in the group and we had a conversation this morning and our group is that people you know, the rain, he reminded me of something that I feel like I've been seeing a lot lately, which, you know, 10 years ago, I would have been horrified to think that I would even say this you know, take me outside shoot me if you heard me saying this. But now I very much embrace this, this idea that we are a spiritual being having a human experience. And lately I've been saying that a lot, but I have now realized that what I've been saying is that we're spiritual beings, having a human experience that in somehow we're still kind of these individuals in our, in our spirituality. And I'm glad that I caught myself doing this this weekend, because we are a spiritual being having this human experience. And in that spiritual being, it's a very level playing field, it's universal. And I think that's kind of like, at some point in the conversation, often, I feel like within the group, we realize that and there's this beautiful space that kind of unfolds, where everybody drops in and gets quiet. And it's just a really beautiful feeling that comes out of that. And that happened this morning in our in our community. And I think there is something in that sort of universal quality of that space, that that people drop into by just having this conversation and looking in that direction. It's really quite magical.

Amy Johnson

Isn't it so against, again, all that conditioning and everything we've been told about fixing our problems? And no, this is a real thing, therefore, I need to work on it. Like, yes, if you're in an addiction, or anxiety or a marriage that's going not well, it's a real thing. But Therefore, I need to talk about it and look at it and fix it and work on it all the time. Like that piece is a little off, you know, so it's like, hey, there's something to see here. But when we see that, yes, that's the that's the, the psychological piece of it. Just beneath that always there is that shared, and that's, you know, it's like you guys said, like, love can always be rewilded. It's always there all the time.

Angus Ross

And I think there's a relief in that isn't that when suddenly people realize, oh, like I've been, I've been sticking to this narrative for so long. And yet, it actually is not real. That's not who I am. There's something far greater at stake here. And we all kind of getting a sense of that. I think that those are those moments that are so beautiful.

Amy Johnson

Yeah.

Rohini Ross

I also really appreciate what you're saying, Amy, about the power of group and the power of looking in a direction together that we see that all the time in our welding community. And that example of how someone that has what on the surface looks like a completely different issue, you know, eating disorder versus depression, how the same understanding can have an

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impact and help wake them up from the same, you know, from the conditioning, even though the content of the conditioning might be different. And the behavior in the way that it shows up, looks different. It's the same understanding that has the power to help make those shifts. And when we often when we're not being worked with, you know, when we're hearing someone else be given feedback, or we're hearing someone else share their insight, when we have an open mind, because we're not thinking about our problem. That's so often when we get to hear something fresh and new, that arises within ourselves, because we're not focused on what's wrong with my marriage, or what's wrong with my behavior. Why is it this way? We're just genuinely curious, genuinely open minded. And then bam, we get hit. And it's so powerful.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, it kind of, you know, makes you think, whenever something feels really sticky, or we just can't see around it there. It's always because it's about us in our own heads, you know, our mind has made it about us, or it just looks so personal. And so that's why I think like you're saying, Yes, when we're just listening to someone else, it has nothing to do with us. So we just get to hear it in such a different way.

Rohini Ross

And so I just want to let everyone know, Amy does have a school that's going to be starting up. What's the date that it starts up? Amy?

Amy Johnson

It starts Monday, March 1, and yeah, enrollments open through that week. So we,

Rohini Ross

yeah. Okay, great. Well, and we will be accepting enrollment on March 1. I know this is going to air on the first so people can still sign up.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, through the fourth through March 4. Okay,

Rohini Ross

great. So we'll include all of that information in the show notes. I can't recommend Amy's program more. It's just I've again heard firsthand, not just from Amy, her experiences. I've heard those two about the wonderful transformations. But I've heard from many of her participants as well, because our communities often blend, which is really cool. They'll be talking about what they're learning with you, Amy, and they're sharing it in our community. And so, yeah, if it's something that interests you, we'll include the link in the show notes and you can go check it out. So, Amy, let's talk a little bit more specifically about relationship. Are

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you okay with that? Yeah. So I'd love to hear for yourself when you're married. Correct. And how long have you been married for?

Amy Johnson

It'll be 15 years this year.

Rohini Ross

So quite a while. So I'm wondering, I know for Angus and I there was a big shift in our relationship pre understanding versus post understanding. And I would say that we might have been on the remedial end and the relationship areas. So that was a big shift. I guess you're laughing? Do you not think we were remedial? Well, absolutely.

Angus Ross

Yeah. I think the relationship was quickly heading towards a cliff face. For about to fall off a cliff. Should I say?

Rohini Ross

Yeah, so I want to acknowledge that not everybody has that kind of experience, where it's like the understanding tends to go to where it's needed most. And for us, it was really needed in the era of our relationship and made a pretty dramatic impact on us. So that may or may not be the case for you. But I'm just curious, we're curious to know, if you did notice a shift or how it's, it's supported you in your life in terms of your relationship with your husband and your relationship with your kids or anyone else.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, I think I was probably pretty remedial, I think he was doing okay. But I was definitely, especially in the early years, one of those people that was always in the name of like, I'm gonna make sure we get this right. I was always kind of predicting pitfalls, noticing things that weren't really problems, but could be that we needed to hash out before they became problems. So there was a lot of that kind of stuff happening where my poor husband was like, is this finished, like, really, this is a problem. He's like, I don't know, I don't feel it as a problem. And I could, you know, in a good example, as I, I remember, really, before we got right before we got married, really having a little bit of a cold feet thinking about. So funny to even go back there and think about this now. But thinking about like us, when we were we have a 10 year age difference. So I would imagine us at 60 and 70, wanting to do completely different things. Now, mind you, we were like 20 and 30. But it was clear that it was so obvious where we were headed, you know, 30 years into the future. Because you know, as most couples, we have some different preferences, I'm a little more active, he's a little more relaxed. Like we kind of have a you know, we have our differences, which haven't changed, they haven't changed at all. But they used to look in my mind like such a problem. And if not, Now, again, this is where my mind was always 10 steps ahead. If not today, like sure we're okay now, but there's no way

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this is going to be great. 30 years from now. And, and you know, like, like, it just sounds crazy to say that a little bit. Now, nut nut, you know, it's a normal thing I'm sure that a mind would do. But I'm so much under that umbrella of my mind looking ahead and predicting and doing all that has just changed so much. And yeah, now it's just even if we're in a place where we want totally different things like like activity wise, you know, like, I do want to do something and he doesn't or whatever, like those differences, for sure come up quite a bit. They just don't look meaningful. And it kind of surprises me to look back and think that I thought that was so important. Like if we didn't want to go on a hike together, that was going to mean something, you know, and now it's like, oh my gosh, like, it doesn't just doesn't matter. So there's just so much on the surface, all the thinking about it. And the meaning especially, has just melted away. And and then so when differences do show up, they just don't look at all like I like I think they used to

Angus Ross

this, this is a stupid analogy that comes up because I feel like for sure, I'm sure so many people think along these lines. But it's kind of like I don't know, I don't know if I've ever done bingo, but I know people who have and talks about it. It's almost like you got to like, let the numbers line up. And I feel like with my with our relationship, I was always looking, the numbers have to really line up and then all of a sudden, now they're not lining up, that really means something we're doomed to failure. And then I can predict into the future is like, yeah, the numbers are not looking good. It's not gonna like I'm not going to be able to yell out bingo at any point in the near future. Kind of makes me feel like that.

Amy Johnson

That's a good analogy. Yeah, yeah. I mean, and it can look so serious when you're in it. You know, when all your whole relationship looks like that bingo board. It matters, you know, and it's kind of like we like we were saying earlier in the conversation, but when we get to back up a little bit, and see, well, that's just a bingo board. There's a whole other life a whole other way to connect beyond that.

Angus Ross

Yeah. Yeah, the bingo board in itself is just playing the game. That's beautiful as it is.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, if.. I'm trying to play with that metaphor a bit, but if you're not attached to getting bingo, then all of the numbers on that board can be really fun. Doesn't matter how they line up. And I think that's one of the things that we hear a lot, and especially even over a four day intensive that we do with a couple, the shifts that can happen between how they see each other on that first meeting, when we sit with them to where they're at, when we leave it, when they leave, it's it's like that shift, and it's the same person. Right? Like you and your husband, you're the same people, but yet, it can look so differently, just because the difference that happens when

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we stop making that meaning up, or we're just open to different meanings, I mean, we're always going to be making a meaning, but to see that the one meaning that we've been making up all along, doesn't have to be the only meaning someone shared with me recently. And it was really profound how it was kind of like your What if question, Amy, like, what if my partner has loved me all along. And that flipped everything for them. And I just thought that was so beautiful, because that was not the assumption that they were operating from, they were operating from the assumption, my partner doesn't love me. And life looks one way when that's the assumption, but it's like, well, what if my partner loves me, and then a whole different world gets created from that?

Amy Johnson

That's, that's amazing. It does. I mean, everything follows from whatever we're starting with, our brain just finds evidence for whenever we expect, you know, I'd see a lot of that too. And so that kind of is, you know, I was, I see a lot of great relationships before mine, you know, and so I just kind of anticipated problems, because that's what I was familiar with his problems and, and there was a lot of filling in the blanks, and what are our problems going to be, because we're definitely going to have them and, you know, and I think there's some truth to that, but I, I was holding problems is like a really deep, meaningful, serious thing that how they look now. So much about having a sense of this understanding is so like, it just keeps our thoughts. So fluid, and I think allows us to just have insights, so naturally, so in thought that otherwise would be kind of invisible, gets to be more visible. So I, I recognize two, I had a whole thing about my husband, it would drive me crazy when he would spend a lot of time watching TV. And he would, and he does, he still does and doesn't change. But he you know, he's a super chill guy, he just likes to relax, a lot like Angus is just like laid back, just kind of, you know, but he likes his downtime, and I'm not like that. So much. And, and I recognized that I had so much thinking about it early, early on that, um, I would see him doing certain things, and my mind would fill in the blanks to again, see him turning into his dad, or like, turning into his parents and I and it would just complete this whole story that was so fabricated, and it's kind of like, kind of what you're saying about that? What if, you know, I just, it was an unexamined belief I had, I didn't even know I had it. And as I just kind of get out of my head in general, a little bit more a lot of this stuff. Now when it shows up, it's hard to explain, but you know, I like it, it kind of pops out like oh, that's what I was thinking, you know, so there's been so many of those assumptions. And, you know, it's still sort of habitually drives me nuts sometimes when the TV's constantly on, but, but I see it, like, I know where my mind's filling in a story. And then it comes back to here and it's like in this moment, is the TV a problem? Now, what would be a problem? Isn't my husband becoming his dad and all this other story, but that's not happening. What's happening is he's had the TV on all day.

Angus Ross

I love what Amy was saying about the fluid nature of thought there's something for me to sort of, that's a growing edge for me there. I feel like there's an insight in the making, to look in that

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direction. I feel like so much of what I do is informed by you know, the little book of big change in terms of the way that I see how you're pointing to the biology behind thought the biology behind habit. I think that's such an exciting reference point to begin this conversation. And what you're saying about the fluid nature of thought is that I often talk about when I do groups, I talk about the biology of thought, and I talked about it being kind of like, the screenwriting software of our lives is how we constantly kind of creating narratives. And it's interesting to consider it on those terms is like, Am I gonna, like follow the narrative, or are actually going to follow the fluid nature of thought, and the fluid nature of thought very much, is encouraging me to look in the direction of my intuition and that intelligence. And that is a whole different way of showing up that there's just to constantly rely on the old habitual thinking. So I just love that idea, the fluid nature of thought, and you, Rohini, were talking about the weekend, something about the neuroplasticity of the brain, in a sense is like, yeah, it's constantly changing. And we can really celebrate that possibility rather than get so stuck in our ways. Because we are creatures of habit, in a sense, we're designed to be creatures of habit, you looked at our biology, it's set up for us to be creatures of habit. But understanding that really allows us to sort of start to to have a different human experience that's not based on water under the bridge that's based on Yeah, let's live in the moment, let's do life in the moment, rather than you know, what happened yesterday or last week and be kind of gripped by that.

Amy Johnson

And I think to seeing that, our patterns, and those habitual places our mind goes, they're not again, they're not personal. I know, people sometimes have a hard time with that, because it feels like they're personal. And they're coming from our childhood or wherever they're coming from. But yeah, that's just the biology of it. That's just how the machine works. So, you know, I got so much out of listening to your podcast, just just seeing things. And from my own relationship around their dynamic and hearing a little bit about your dynamic, and you know, like, Alicia was very volatile. And you guys said, Rohini, can be volatile. And then there's this whole thing, there's a reaction to that. And you know, and that's like, what people feel like they get caught up in. And me too, at times, like for us, we both had a lot of volatility in our families. So we both go the other way. Now. So we have this tendency when our thinking is out of whack, to just both go inward and shut down. And we can just be ships passing in the night for a while until we wake up and say, Hey, we haven't talked in a while. We're both very happy, just being introverts and not talking that much. But yeah, it has its things and, and for a long time that looked like, wow, there's something in that psychological pattern. That means we're not going to work together, we're not good together, we need to fix it, we need to get to the bottom of it. And now it just looks a lot more like it's not me, it's not him. It's the culmination of all this stuff, and our sweet little minds trying to help us and protect us and saying, We don't like yelling, so let's just be quiet, and then our minds take it too far. And then we just wake up to it when we wake up to it. But you know, it just doesn't just doesn't mean anything about

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Amy and Ora as a couple together. And that is huge. It's huge, because the pattern still happens sometimes. But the bounce back is quicker. And the meaning is not so much.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, there's such freedom in that, as you're, as you're talking about it I was it occurred to me to have this thought like, Oh, yeah, my operating principle was, you know, when Angus abandons me, that was the premise that I would work from, like, when he abandons me, this is how I need to take care of myself and abandoning me could mean leaving me or it could mean dying. Or it could mean being mean to me, like it was just like this whole range of when Angus abandons me and that would be what I was constantly trying to protect myself from the way that you're describing, like, Oh, you don't want to have conflict. So you go into the quiet mode, and it's like, oh, wow, that's so helpful to see that. And see, like you said, Your sweet little mind like that's just what our brain is trying to help us with in terms of our survival. And that when we can see it for what it is, we have perspective on it, and even if we still do the things that we do in terms of the self protection or even still create that meaning, having perspective on it is such a game changer because I always used to think that well, it's not about having perspective. This has to be got rid of like I have to stop having this operating principle or I have to you know, never think that those thoughts again, but what I see now, which is such a relief, is that one losing perspective is okay, because it can come back. And that too, when I have perspective, even if I'm engaging in a behavior, creating meaning that isn't really serving me in the moment is a blast from the past. In a sense, it takes the pressure off. Yeah.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, I love that just just knowing we have we fall into these, these little patterns and habits, but the perspective on it is huge. And I really appreciate that. A can see how, sometimes for some couples, this the psychology, like the patterns, even with perspective, right, it's just gets to be too much. Sometimes people just say, Hey, is this this doesn't work, you know, but I, I don't know, there's a whole whole level of kind of relief or freedom or something that comes from this understanding that even then that's okay. Like, even, you know, even if it if a relationship doesn't work out the way we intended it to, we only intended that with our minds anyway, like, we make up these rules, right about how it's supposed to look. So it's like, that's not you know, typically when any married couple wants, but it's just so nice to kind of see, hey, sometimes our psychology is really strong, and people move on and even then, because again, my my parents divorce was not a friendly one, like, it can be a friendly separation for people at times, if it comes to that.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, absolutely.

Angus Ross

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So much of it is, it's thinking about state of mind, you know, going back to that to what you were sort of highlighting or low lighting, as the case may be in terms of marriage. For me, it was like, Oh, I will get into this sort of pattern of thinking around, they're not going to be enough bingo moments. And I need to really teach her how to play bingo, this marriage is gonna work properly. And for me, that's just that just surfaces when I'm in a low mood when I'm in a low state of mind, I'm projecting all over you in that respect. But it's also worth considering that you know, that a lot of those narratives were born out of me having a low mood, per se. So if I start really getting hip to my state of mind and look at it from that vantage point, then yeah, why would I start taking my thinking nearly that nearly so seriously, or, or in a better way, that becomes an indicator to me that my thinking has gone south, or my state of mind has gone self best, best not to engage at this point, or the very least, you know, you know, that will be where I can start to get neutral.

Amy Johnson

Yeah, yeah. When Rohini's nails bother you, we know.

Angus Ross

That's my best. That's my best.

Amy Johnson

Now it seems like I'm stalking, you guys or something

Rohini Ross

I think you probably knew that already gave me the same for full disclosure because, Amy, you know, we've known Amy for a long time. And when we started to hear how similar some of the dynamics are in your relationship, and kind of like how I'm a doer, and I like getting things done. And, you know, rasdhoo needs that. Not not that I don't think rest is a good thing. But Angus is a lot more, you know, mellow likes to take things at a different pace. He's like, I don't know if you should be spending hanging out with Amy.

Angus Ross

I know. When I run out of wiggle room to blame Rohini for all my woes I can always then turn to Amy because he's like you're learning it from her?

Amy Johnson

Well, I'm glad my husband doesn't know you guys cuz it would probably be the same thing. Like no more Rohini's time

Rohini Ross

And we all know, Angus's sacred Sunday.

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Angus Ross

I know that's been that's been violated in no uncertain terms of late.

Rohini Ross

Anyway, but I do have a greater respect for taking it easy and rest because of you, Angus. So I think we balance each other out.

Angus Ross

And I've learned I've learned to work a little harder to you will find some no I should I say find some inner resilience better. Find some inner resilience that I ever like, tapped into that I didn't know was there because of you. That's a good thing.

Rohini Ross

Amy, we have some questions that we're going to be asking all our guest speakers and they're just kind of like improv. So whatever comes to mind, are you open to playing with us in terms of these questions?

Angus Ross

Yeah.

Rohini Ross

All right. So Angus, you ready? Can I start? Yeah. Okay, so the first one is, what's one of your fondest memories in your relationship?

Amy Johnson

There's one image that I always go back to the night before we got married. We got married in Chicago, we lived in Chicago at the time, and he was staying in the hotel where our guests were staying. And it's just, it's not anything even that special. But you know, just you asking that question just brings back this little moment of just this little like, wave goodbye, knowing like, tomorrow was a whole new whole new start was gonna happen. And our wedding was so nice. And, you know, I, I don't know, one of the things I love too. Sorry, I won't go into this too much. But, um, that I just, it resonates so much about your rewilding concept and just bring in this in that literally, like, you can ask that question. And I can go back to almost 15 years and just feel that if you know if our experience isn't coming from the inside out, I don't know how the heck that would make sense. Cuz 15 years ago, you know, so just that a question like that can like make me all giddy? That's awesome.

Rohini Ross

And then you were on zoom doing this. So we know it's just gonna be audio, but you should see Amy's face when that memory like it was just so beautiful to see that fun is lovely.

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Angus Ross

Yeah, that's so gorgeous. Thank you. Okay, well, I get to ask the next question. What is one of the funniest memories in your relationship?

Amy Johnson

Oh, gosh, there's been a lot of funny stuff with our kids. Like since we've had kids. Actually, one of the funniest ones might have been last night like my husband is six foot three, like 220 pounds. He's like a big guy, right? And my kids are nine and 11. They're kind of little and my son who's an iron is super into karate. Thanks to Karate Kid. And now Cobra Kai, he's all into fighting. So he always wants to spar and do all this stuff. And I'm in my fight my big husband he asked my son Miller asked for a fight just fight don't fight hard. Just fight the way one of my friends which like we always kind of make fun of Miller's friends are kind of funny. So he does this thing. I can't do it. You won't see it on the on the audio, but um, he does this dance with the craziest face and he's like coming at my son with our all of his like, flailing all over the place. And we ended up calling him we say Look, when you look like a giraffe who's just been a tranquilizer. I was literally last night. There's a lot of fun stuff. And I and I love. I love having kids. You know, I mean, for both of us bring out our humor and everything like

Rohini Ross

yeah, it's funny when you're sharing that I love I love that picture sounds like a perfect tic toc. It just I got this memory of our kids one time. I think we all had the stomach flu. And they were both I think one of them was like maybe one and one of them was three. And we kind of slept separately because they both weren't well, and there was in between the two bedrooms was the bathroom. And we ended up both of us in the bathroom at the same time with each child throwing up. And we just burst out laughing because we were so exhausted. We're either gonna cry, or we're gonna laugh and we may have a laugh about it now. But I know kids definitely give us those memories. So a little bit more serious than this. No, but you don't have to take it seriously. It's like, what's one of the most difficult times in your relationship? And how did you get through it?

Amy Johnson

You know, I think honestly, like we haven't had a lot of really prolonged big hard times. But I do think probably in recent years, you know, when life was super busy, or even now when life is a little bit less busy, but we're all under the same roof. 24 seven, we haven't had a date night and over a year. There's just little moments in the kids who seem to be always around. So there's maybe an hour when the kids go to bed before I fall asleep. Like, you know it, I just have such a respect for how we can get tough and how we can just fall into this. Like, is it really worth the effort? You know, like we both are tired and busy and everything else. And just and just to see how more often than not, we kind of take that nudge and say yeah, it's worth the effort, you know? And if it's not right now, like Don't worry, we don't have to make it mean anything. We'll get back on track, you know, but I do think Yeah, and these early years of not

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even little kids but for us, I think maybe our kids being like kind of five to 10 range. There's just whirlwind of activity and stuff and very easy to kind of lose connection.

Rohini Ross

And I acknowledge you especially during this time of pandemic having young kids that that definitely shows your grounding to navigate that

Angus Ross

I don't know how well I would have done in those under those conditions or these conditions. Okay, so next question. How do you divide domestic labor in your relationship?

Amy Johnson

Well, my husband is primarily home with our kids and taking care of the house. So and I'm primarily working a lot. So it's kind of easy in that way, really, I mean, we sort of have an agreement, it'd be a lot harder, I think, if we both worked, and we had to navigate that. That said, I like things cleaner than he does. So even though I work all the time, you know, by choice, I work a lot by choice. And technically, the home is kind of his thing. That doesn't really stop me from kind of making lists and saying, Hey, you know, I think this could be a little cleaner. Why don't we? Why don't we look over here this week, focus on this, when you have some time this week. We have those conversations almost every weekend. And sometimes there's a little tension around them. Although that is another area that I really want to like that I'm really proud of us, you know, that we've, it's not easy for him to have me tell him what to do? No, no doubt about it. And I try my best and, you know, but yeah, sometimes there's a little tension, a lot of times less and less. Now there is a lot of times there isn't. But even when there is it's like we kind of give each other that, look, we know what's going on in each other's minds. And there's tech in general, this kind of sense of like, okay, yeah, we're a little on the nerves right now. But just go do our stuff. And we'll come back together and it'll all blow over.

Angus Ross

I have this vision of you coming home from work and walking around the house with a clipboard and doing quality control.

Amy Johnson

I have a white rag.

Angus Ross

Yeah, white gloves? No.

Rohini Ross

Luckily, Angus likes things cleaner than I do. So he tends to benefit from that. And so how are the finances handled in your relationship?

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Amy Johnson

Well, it's interesting, when we first got married, we kept things separate. We, you know, I was 29. And he was 39, when we got married. So we both had a little bit of a history of having separate and there was no reason to combine. But when our daughter was born three months after our daughter was born, he quit working. So everything's just obviously been all together since then. And it's pretty simple. I mean, we that's never been an issue for us. He pays the bills, most of his auto pay by now. But you know, we both just know what's there. And yeah, he takes care of most of that.

Rohini Ross

That's great.

Angus Ross

That's just me, isn't it? What was the biggest misunderstanding you woke up from in your relationship?

Amy Johnson

I think I think around that bingo card and around the activities, you know, again, when it just looked like a good relationship looked a certain way, it looked like you have these things in common you spend time This way you do all these things. And it was almost it was gonna be a losing battle. Right? But, but kind of saying, oh, wait a minute, what if it's none of that? What if we can still have a great relationship, even when we're super busy, and we haven't really talked in a day or two? And, you know, because it's deeper than all of that surface stuff. So I think, you know, to borrow what you guys talk about knowing that that love is there. And whether we're feeling it or not, in a given moment, kind of isn't even all that important. That sounds weird to say, but it's not. It's like, you know, and I can remember, I'm sure many couples have this where, early on when, you know, maybe six months in when we kind of hit that point in early dating, where we sort of knew we were in this, you know, like, where every fight wasn't going to be a breakup, we were kind of like, okay, like, we're doing this together. So now it's a whole new level, we're just going to work it out. And that's more and more, that's obviously now but you know, more and more, that's how it feels like none of this surface stuff matters that much. And that's just such a such a gift.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, that's so freeing, and takes so much pressure off. We talked about that a lot. Like when everything looks like it's gonna be the end of the relationship is constant stress. And when it's just like, Oh, yeah, this is all just normal part of being human. There's just such a relief and being able to go, we'll work it out. Even if right now. I'm not feeling the love. It's okay.

Amy Johnson

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And now it's not about the end of the relationship, because we know that's not gonna happen, but it's about the connection, like knowing the love and the connection is there, even when we aren't feeling it? And every moment it's Yeah, it's huge.

Rohini Ross

Yeah. What's one of the favorite things you're partner does for you.

Amy Johnson

He does so much for me. He, um, he's, he does a lot for me, what's one of my favorite things? I mean, he, he's constantly listening for. I don't give him enough credit for this, I'm gonna go thank him for this after this call, and how did you ask this question, it comes up and he's constantly listening for like little things he can do, you know, because he knows, I work a lot, you know, you know, he, he gets it, he cares so much about this work that I do. Even though he's not in this conversation a lot. He has such a respect for the fact that what I do helps people and he contributes, he contributes to that so much. And he I think he takes a lot of pride in that. So he knows that when I can go do an event somewhere, to be able to do that, and know that the kids are fine, and the house is fine. Everything's taken care of. That's the only way I'd be able to do that. You know, so he, I think he really feels like he plays a role and all of this. And he absolutely does, he should feel that way. So I just think that's really sweet. It's not like Amy and her career. And then me and my thing. I mean, he sees this as a partnership, even though it doesn't look like one from the outside and the traditional ways, and that's great.

Angus Ross

Oh, yeah, we're doing this exercise might put me in a situation where the bar is being significantly raised.

Rohini Ross

And I'm, I'm taking notes.

Angus Ross

I'm worried

Rohini Ross

I'm gonna get to spend even less time with you now. Amy.

Angus Ross

Okay, so what is the least favorite thing your partner does?

Amy Johnson

watches TV, obviously.

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Angus Ross

That's easy.

Rohini Ross

And this, this might be a non issue, given what you said. But just and again, you can take it lightly. But what's one of your relationship deal breakers? And why?

Amy Johnson

Yeah, I don't think we have any deal breakers. I mean, you know, like, abuse would be or something like that, perhaps, but we don't have any deal breakers that really, really even come up. You know, I think for both of us, the worst thing that comes up is just feeling not seen or heard. You know, like, that's kind of about as bad as it kind of gets. And that's not fun. But yeah, I don't know, though. There are any real deal breakers.

Angus Ross

Okay, so how do you keep physical intimacy alive in your relationship?

Amy Johnson

Well, we, we noticed when it hasn't been alive, and we just have to make that effort, you know, and really, there's a, this is something he's amazing at two is, he's opening up the definition for all what all of that means, because it doesn't take much for either of us. But it you know, it doesn't take much meaning like, he'll just like, see me in the kitchen and come give me a hug when we haven't connected in a little while. And that's all it takes. That's all it takes to kind of melt the ice, open the heart, you know, and, and it's just those little things that kind of need the consistent effort. So he's much better at that than I am. I will say that, but it's just the little things here and there that kind of feel help us feel connected, not just like parents or partners. Yeah.

Angus Ross

Yeah, that's awesome.

Rohini Ross

Yeah, that's so so key. So I have the final question. If you could, if you could only say one thing to your partner. What would you want to say to him?

Amy Johnson

Making me so emotional, I want to like go talk to him now. I think I mean, I think I would really just want him to know how grateful I am for him. Really like he, you know, I love him. Of course, there's all that stuff. But I just want him would want him to know that I do see and feel and know his heart where his hearts coming from even you know, even when things are tough.

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I know he's always he always has that, that. That loves that's where it's all coming from the goodwill is always there for him. And it is for me too, but it's really there for him. I know he cares so much. And yeah, I'm just really grateful for all the little things he does.

Rohini Ross

It's beautiful. I love just feeling that level of warmth and love that comes through you for him and what an amazing partnership the two of you have.

Angus Ross

Yeah, it does. It sounds spectacular.

Rohini Ross

Well, thank you, Amy, for being our first guest and for everything that you've shared. We're really grateful. And as we've mentioned, Amy has an amazing book, *The Little Book of Big Change*, one of her books, but it's one of our favorites. Her course, the *Little School of Big Changes* starting tomorrow. First, Amy also has her podcast *changeable* so that comes out every week and it's really insightful, informative, inspiring, so highly recommend anything that Amy's up to. We're big fans.

Angus Ross

Yeah. Amy, thank you so much for getting us off to a flying star.

Amy Johnson

Thank you so much for having me. This is like such a thrill. I can't believe I get to be on your podcast.

Rohini Ross

Are you gonna listen to yourself?

Amy Johnson

No. This will be the only episode I don't listen to