



The Millennial Life

podcast

with Liz Higgins

Episode 22: Three Questions to Transform Your Relationship Today

Liz Higgins (00:02):

Hey, y'all! Liz Higgins here, and welcome to the Millennial Life Podcast, where my main goal is to share conversations that will inspire you and drive you toward the life and relationship you desire. I'm here to share what I've learned as a licensed therapist and relationship coach specializing in millennial relationships and wellness, as well as transformative conversations with other professionals. Thanks for listening and enjoy today's episode!

Liz Higgins (00:34):

Hello! Welcome to today's episode. This one should be a quickie, but I want to bring to you three questions that can honestly transform the way you show up in your relationships starting today. I'm giving you some good stuff here. Um, a couple of these are questions that I will ask every single new client I get... Oftentimes in the very first session. And when I see their faces as I ask some of these questions, it's like, 'Oh, you haven't thought about it this way. Have you?' So I hope you gain a takeaway and I want to dive right in. The first question I want to ask you is, is your relationship getting the best of you or the worst of you? Believe it or not, that's a really important question to sit on. Think about it. We are such a fast paced culture society. We are go-getters.

Liz Higgins (01:35):

You are probably a hard worker. You're grinding day in and out to accomplish your goals, to work your career, perhaps to be a parent, to take care of others, all sorts of things. And let's be honest, our culture as a whole continues to change, literally at the speed of light, we become so much more disconnected. And we may not even be living close to family or friends as we maybe were years ago. Like, think about it. Is your relationship getting the best of you or the worst of you? Does your partner see you after a day of doing it all? And how are you in those moments? Now, I don't know about you. But I kind of fall into that category many days out of the week. Now, sometimes I'm home taking care of my kids and you know, on some levels you would think that is rejuvenating and relaxed, but a lot of times it's not when you have toddlers. If you have toddlers out there, I know you know what I mean.

Liz Higgins (02:39):

It's, it is a job some days and it's a lot of work. It's a lot of energy and certainly, you know, my husband gets off work and it's like, all right, you're getting scraps because I am done with a capital D. I know that happened a couple of times for me last week. And it was really, really hard. What made the difference though? I think (I believe this to be true from the rest of that evening or whatever reflecting on being more of a catastrophic event in my relationship) was that I had some self-awareness that that's where I was at the end of that day took it out of me. There was a lot going on, I mom'ed all day, and I didn't want to have, you know, I, I didn't have it in me to bring any energy to connected conversation or taking care of my partner's needs or anything like that.

Liz Higgins (03:31):

I just kind of needed to chill out and rest. And you're going to have those days. Right? But being able to hone in on this question 'is my relationship getting the best of me or the worst of me' can be really, really helpful. I explore what contributes to the kind of energy you have to bring to your relationship. Do you put effort into your relationship? Are you actively nurturing it? Are you doing things to keep it healthy? Keep it alive. Going on date nights, taking care of yourself, taking breaks throughout your week, going into nature, eating healthy, exercising... Even hearing myself list off those things, I can start to feel that sense of overwhelm inside. Of no, all those areas of my life are not being nurtured. And my relationship probably is impacted because of it. That's really important because that also helps you realize and recognize that any kind of dissatisfaction you might be feeling in your relationship might not actually be because of your relationship. It could be because there's other aspects of your life (and what helps you be at your best and bring your best to your relationship) are not being nurtured and need to be nurtured. Question number two - what can I do to help you give me what I need? I know it sounds a little algebraic, but I'll say it again. What can I do to help you give me what I need?

Liz Higgins (05:07):

Sit on that for a minute. I think in relationship, we very subtly (but quickly) get cozy in this idea that we're going to learn each other. And we're just going to be able to read minds. If I had a nickel for every time I heard that coming out of a couple... maybe not in those words, but certainly an unspoken expectation. "You should know what I need, you should give me what I need when I need it." Every time. We've been together long enough, you don't care. I'm not gonna deny the fact that people get lazy. They get lazy in relationship, or it could also be a myriad of other things. They never learned how to really show up and be intentional in relationship. Maybe they never learned how to really put their guard down and receive what their partner does try to give them. There could be all sorts of reasons.

Liz Higgins (06:06):

We get stuck in this pattern of conditional love. And I kind of mean that in the negative sense. The conditional, conditional love that is not spoken. It's not been clarified. So when you look at it from, 'Okay, I have this need and what can I, what can I do for you so that you can give me that need? So that you can meet that need, how can I help support you?' That's making your relationship systemic. That is being systemic. And that's how you want to be in a relationship. It's not two individuals on totally different planets. It's two people on the same planet, same playing field, same relational biosphere, that have a reciprocity about the way they meet each other's needs. 'You know what, yes, I want to give you that. And it would really help me if you did XYZ to remind me how important that is for you.'

Liz Higgins (07:12):

And I'll give you some examples of this. Perhaps it's as simple as... alright. I'll go to something that's at the forefront of my mind, which my husband is awesome with. We help each other out really well with the household tasks most of the time. Alright? Sometimes I lose my mind a little bit when I'm stressed and I'm internally off. Then the house becomes the easy target to focus on to criticize him. But aside from that, I think something that we do really well out there is validating those efforts that we see the other person making. We actively appreciate each other, and we've, we've identified. Like, it feels really great to hear, hear that mutual appreciation for the things that we do. And when you're in the throws of parenting, that kind of active appreciation out loud, it really goes a long way, for sure.

Liz Higgins (08:09):

So that is definitely an example. Um, I think you can go super creative with this. If you bring this question into your relationship, and even just share it with your partner, you know, what can I do to help you give me what I need and what I need is this. And here's why it's important for me. So what would help you give me that? What can I do? And see what happens. See how that opens up more of an interactive process of working towards meeting needs and nurturing each other through that process. The third question I want to hit you with is one to get you into the self-analysis process with you. So let me ask you this. What is the hardest part about being in a relationship with you?

Speaker 2 (09:03):

I love asking people that question because, especially when we get to a point in our relationship where there's a lot of, there's a lot of discontent, there's a lot of frustration, there's maybe fighting and conflict and all these kinds of not wonderful things occurring in your relationship... We get hyper-focused on the other person. It's human nature. We, our nervous system is taking precedence. Our brain is trying to protect... Our heart might still want to connect, but our brain wants to protect and we're not being super relational. That's just the truth. So part of the work that I do as a whole is helping people understand where they go in those moments. And when your relationship gets to that contentious point, like who are you? And focusing in on that piece that you have empowerment of, which is yourself, your own actions. You can make a big change today.

Liz Higgins (10:03):

We get hung up on that unspoken, conditional change. I'll make a shift when I see that you're making a shift. When I see that you care, then I'll show that I care and that's very, self-protective, it's not relational. Like it would be to kind of own your part first and then act accordingly. I'm owning that I'm upset. I'm owning that I'm dissatisfied. My needs are not met. I don't feel great. I'm owning that. And I need to do XYZ. I want to be XYZ. Asking that question, exploring, you know, what's become difficult about you? What is your partner maybe experiencing in you? Now, look, let's make a couple of clarifying points here, right? If you're in an abusive situation, if you're with a really blatant and grandiose partner that is borderline harassing you, this is not, I'm not saying like, look at yourself and figure out what you need to do to change all that.

Liz Higgins (11:11):

No, but as a general self-reflective practice, this is so great to do. I do this for me. I think back, you know, 'Hey, this past week, what was difficult about me? What was maybe a hard part about being in a relationship with me?' Cause, like, I'm pretty self-aware. I, I think I'm a decent person. I'm certainly trying to be a decent human being and I want my marriage to last, I want it to sustain. And so asking myself that question helps me reflect on my growth edges, where I still fall off kilter. "What's the most challenging for me and how I can pull back on skills and the knowledge that I've gained as a therapist, as a partner, etc. And how can I work on being better?" We often don't think about applying these same principles that we use with like progressing our career, improving our friendships, all those things.

Liz Higgins (12:08):

We don't think about applying that stuff day in and out to our most intimate partnership, but that is really what helps make great relationships last. And it's what makes good relationships great. So as you probably hear, these are some pretty self-reflective questions. Um, it's always great

to think about the kind of partner you want to have - for sure be aware of that. But what actually creates waves and takes motion in new directions is to focus them on who am I in this relationship and who do I want to be, and how do I become that person? And how do I get on the same team as my partner and express my needs, own what I need, but also be a part of helping them meet those needs for me because we're different and we're going to have different needs. The difference between okay couples and couples that fizzle, and the great lasting partnerships are that they are intentional about learning themselves, about growing themselves up in the relationship, not out of the relationship. And they are on board with the life long process (or however long they're together process) of becoming with each other. Becoming. I hope this was helpful and I definitely would love to know other questions that you may be asking yourself to be reflective in your relationship experience, to keep working towards the vision and the hope that you have for what your relationship can become.

Liz Higgins (13:56):

And let's keep encouraging each other. Thanks for tuning in!

Thanks again for listening to the podcast. If you like the show, leave us five stars or write a review. If you're interested in learning more, sign up for my free ebook "The One Barrier to Commitment All Millennials Face" at millennialrelationships.com.

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