



Episode 48: Navigating Friendships in Adulthood, A Conversation with Dr. Taylor Dyson

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: (00:32)

Hey everybody! I am excited to bring you another amazing episode today with a colleague, a long-time colleague going back to the grad school days. Throwback! Um, I have Dr. Taylor Dyson with me today. And Taylor works as a marriage and family therapist in Dallas, Texas. Following our trend of the last few episodes, she's also a therapist here on the Millennial Life Counseling team. Um, and as a minority therapist, Taylor has a huge desire to bridge this gap between minorities and mental health. She loves to be challenged, and work collaboratively with clients in order to see both growth and change. And just getting to know Taylor on our team (after a few years apart, doing different things in our life) uh, it's just been so amazing. And having, having you here with us, Taylor, is wonderful. So good morning!

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (01:25)

Good morning! I'm so happy to be here. It's just so nostalgic to be, you know, with you. You know, back with you, and working with you, and just being able to just be back in the therapy game. And just being able to elicit change. So everything you said is just, like, super important to me, especially bridging the gap between minorities and mental health. So any, any chance I get to talk about anything mental health, I'm always game.

Liz Higgins: (01:55)

That's awesome. And I know, that is so true. You really embody your interests and boldly putting yourself out there on your social media and your platforms to just speak to, uh, to our industry, right? Being therapists and trying to help others. So, maybe let's start by having you share a little bit (for people that don't know who you are) um, just a little more about you and the types of

clients you enjoy working with.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (02:23)

Yes! So again, I am Dr. Taylor Dyson, and I have been a clinician for some years now. And that comes with a lot of, you know, growth and development and just really trying to figure out, like, what speaks to me. Um, and what helps to define me as a therapist. And while I would love to take on all types of clientele - couples work, family work, and minority work are just really three different categories that I am extremely passionate about. You know, working with high conflict couples, this is where I feel like I can save the world and save all marriages. Um, and even those who are, you know, in relationships... Relationships are hard work. And so working with high conflict couples and just helping them gather the tools to be effective, um, individually and within their relationships. So it's, it's multifaceted the type of work that you can do with couples and how that translates across the map.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (03:25)

And so, while I see change in their marriage or their relationships, I'm also hearing that they have change in their friendships, change in their families... Because they are just learning effective ways to communicate. The importance of connection, the importance of happiness, you know, and just being able to help them define, you know, the different cycles in life. The different patterns, and just to create new ones that they get to define. And I just get to be a part of that. So I'm just, you know, super passionate about couples work, um, and specifically just, like, the high conflict couples. Because I think that there's a stigma or barriers about like, 'Can anybody help us? Or is this just like a lost cause?' And when couples come in and they feel defeated, um, and just, you know, there, there's an opportunity for me to assist them in promoting vulnerability. Because I've, when there's high conflict, there's these walls that we put up. And so when I am diving deep, sometimes I stay on the surface, but being able to welcome vulnerability back in the room helps create this safety that couples have about saying that to their partner. They're sitting right next to them, but they haven't done it in so long that it just doesn't feel like safe territory. So...

Liz Higgins: (04:51)

Yes, that is so true. What you just said there, I was like, 'Oh my God, that's like an aha moment for me almost.' It's like high conflict couples... They, it's almost like this other kind of closeness that they have, and it's not vulnerability. It's like they're just enmeshed in the problem and the conflict. And that can be really activating, and that can even mean they're together a lot in that murky space, right? But you really bring them out of that activation and maybe into a more, a, a much deeper place of vulnerability where the issues can actually be attuned to, not just retriggered, retriggered, retriggered. Um, I think that's a really huge thing for people to hear, because there really is an art to helping people get out of these, um, conflicted, painful spaces that they're in. And, um, I love that that's something you love doing, because we know in our industry, there's so many therapists that like, don't wanna touch couples issues with a 10 foot pole, because it is difficult work. It's difficult to facilitate and be a part of sometimes.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (06:00)

Yes, it is. And without the, the, without the comfort, without the tools, without the additional education, it does feel like you're just, like, a referee. And that's not necessarily what couples need. They need someone who is going to slow them down, someone who is going to be a team player, and someone who gives them something different than what they're used to. So it's uncomfortable for them. It can be uncomfortable for me, but in, in the end, um, it's a beautiful

thing to witness. And, and it does take the cooperation of, of everybody involved, and it takes patience. It takes time to build that momentum. So sometimes, you know, therapists might feel uneasy about the process, but it is, I mean, it is, there's that cliché term of like, trust the process because it is, it is a slow game. It's not a, it's not a fast game. So you have to be comfortable with knowing that we're gonna stick this out for some, for some time. And it's not, it's not a quick fix and, and it shouldn't be. Right? Because we need time to work on these skill sets and become comfortable and confident in that.

Liz Higgins: (07:09)

Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, and speaking of the, the long-term work in life, um, let's say a little bit about what we're gonna talk about today.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (07:21)

Yes. So I, you know, I, I really wanted to be intentional with what we talked about today. So I did some polls out there on my handy dandy social media. You know, the ways to reach people quickly, and I, I presented some different topics, but navigating adult friendships just kept coming out on top. And yes, I actually thought it was super important to have that conversation. I think putting it out there also helped other people just kind of reflect and think about like, 'How well am I navigating my adult friendships? Or what do they look like?' Or maybe just want to hear a perspective of how to be successful, um, as an adult operating in these, these friendships. So I was happy to talk about this because I feel like the definition of friendship has changed over the years. And what we have learned and what we know can sometimes define who we are as friends, or what our expectations of friendships are, and it might not be aligned with the stage of life that we're in.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (08:28)

So I just wanted to really focus in on really... When, and when I say adult friendships, I, I wanna make sure I'm clear in that that kind of looks like friendships after college. I'm kind of targeting the 25 to 35 year olds. Um, I think that is the transition period that I'm, I'm talking about because that can, it shifts from what we know from elementary to high school to college. We saw those people every day. You know, we. We see them every day. And so... Working on friendships was easier because we were, they were easily accessible. But after post-college, we are trying to find our way in the world. And that, that journey, that road looks different for everybody. And that can sometimes create some barriers where friendships are concerned. So that is what we're gonna be talking about today, um, as it pertains to how to, how to navigate through that.

Liz Higgins: (09:28)

I think that's great. And it's so interesting to reflect, like, you know... The bubbles that we grow up in, and how grade school inherently is this bubble of a life, right? And then going to college is just this own other version of a bubble, depending on what that looks like, I guess. So many people shifting into virtual universities and things of that nature. It's an interesting, um, no doubt that... That's its own kind of a bubble, maybe with even less connection in the flesh than others may have if they go somewhere in person. But I think it's a huge, um, topic and that's so cool that that's what you were hearing people want to listen to some thoughts about. So what you were saying a minute ago about the definition of friendship changing, and maybe that means, like, the expectations people have of friendships in adulthood. Can you talk a little bit about that? What do you think people are needing and wanting, and how do they define that?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (10:26)

I, you know, it, it is different, depending on who we're talking about and what stage of life that they're in. But I think sometimes that initial after college transitioning to a different stage of adulthood, I think that might be the most pivotal time to consider what our definition of a friendship is, because we go from being super accessible to our, our tribe, our friends, um, to kind of growing and going. So I would consider the definition with, well, first I would say, when you're considering your definition, I would want you to... I would want someone to be mindful of extending grace. Um, having, what, what does balance look like? Um, help define what, what, what is balance, you know? How often would I wanna see my friends? How often is that realistic? How often do we talk on the phone? How often do we text?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (11:24)

Am I okay with texting as a form of communication versus picking up the phone and calling or a FaceTime? Um, do our interactions have to be hours long, or am I okay with a, a coffee date? You know? When, when they start developing new relationships because now they're in corporate jobs or, you know, becoming entrepreneurs, like, what is, what does that look like? Am I, do I just want my separate friendship with them? Am I okay with, you know, joining in as a group or adding new people to our group? You know? Or how, how flexible am I? How adaptable am I? So when we're, when we're developing this definition, there are many factors that we need to consider because we need to know what we're okay with. We need to know what, what that looks like.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (12:11)

And then furthermore, we can communicate and be vocal with that. You know, sometimes you ask people questions and they just know they don't like something, but they don't know what they don't like about it because they haven't taken time to reflect about what is it that I don't like right now. And why am I feeling isolated, and why am I feeling like I'm not a priority? Well, let's think, you know? You know it's because we used to talk five days a week, and now I haven't heard from them in two weeks, you know? But I would be okay with reaching out or them reaching out, you know, a couple times a week. And that would still make me feel connected. So when we're thinking about this definition, there are many different factors that I think would be important to reflect on and have some solid insight, you know? Because our friends are not mind readers, and they don't know what the, what the new expectation is.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (13:02)

So it's almost like a kumbaya. Let's, you know, come together to figure out what this looks like so that we are mindful of ourselves, but we're also mindful of other people, and to know that their definition of friendship might look differently from yours. So we wanna be open-minded. We don't want to feel like, 'Okay, I'm presenting this to you and these are the ground rules. This, these are the new terms and agreement to this friendship.' No, because their journey might not look like yours, and their availability might not look like yours, and their capacity might not look like yours in this stage of life. So we wanna be mindful. 'Okay, I said I wanted three times a week and one once a month get-together. But theirs might be, I, I really only have Wednesdays at six, from 6:00 to 6:30, and I'd love to be able to talk to you if you have the availability. But they would also have to be understanding if you don't. So it's, it's different when, you know, versus trying, making assumptions and just not knowing where our friends stand as it relates to where they are in life.

Liz Higgins: (14:08)

I think what you're touching on with all of that too, which is like such valid points and experiences for a person to be waiting through in their adulthood, is giving grace. Like having grace, the ability to offer it, the ability to, like, receive it from others, because this is also real. And I'm just thinking about the context of so many of our clients' lives that we sit with in the therapy space, where we're hearing those stories of people that miss those friendships, that they long for that connection you're talking about with other non-romantic people. And it's so hard to come by when they're building a business, or growing a family, or trying to get pregnant, or working 80 hours a week. You know what I mean? Um, people in this demographic you're describing are very much, I think, still hustling to get where they thought they were gonna go in life. Um, especially a millennial generation, right?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (15:11)

Right. That's exactly right.

Liz Higgins: (15:13)

What do you think, through life transitions, what do you think people need the most from their friendships?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (15:23)

You know, when, when we think about friendships, these are people that we laugh with, we cry with. These are people who hold us accountable. These are people that support us, and I believe that's what we, we need in this stage of life. We need to have some mental peace that we have people that are there for us, people that we can pick up the phone and call that are not available to us in, or not so easily accessible... But I know that they can lend an ear. They might not, they can't, like, pull up to my house and sit for five hours, but I can send you a voice memo and support you. Um, encourage you, relate to you, right? Um, normalize this journey that we're on. You know, every, everyone is going through a different journey, but we're all on a journey.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (16:21)

So I feel like right now what we need in friendships - support, showing up, you know, for, for one another. It is, you know, an important thing. It is a, a baby shower. It's a wedding. It's a, I, you know, I, 'Can we schedule out time because I, I really need a friend.' It, it just looks different than what it, what it looked like when, when you saw your friends everyday. But it can, it can still give you these gems that you need or these, you know, opportunities to still feel connected on a friendship level. Everybody wants to be able to tap into friendships because they, you know, they are important. And they're a different category, and they're a safe place for us to go when we, when, when we're trying to escape our different roles. From being, you know, a daughter, um, a sister, a coworker, you know? We wanna be able to just be with someone that feels safe. So vulnerability, grace, support, um, accountability. Those are things that I feel like we need within our definition of friendship in, in this stage.

Liz Higgins: (17:34)

Mmm-hmm. I'm even just thinking of some of my own closest friends, and I'm like, you know, I'm having this reflection right now that those are some relationships of mine where I don't feel this load of pressure or expectation from the friendship. Like, there's just really this understanding around the phase of life that we're in, and that we aren't as available to each other as we maybe were in previous phases of life. But it's kind of this healthy space for us to come to late at night when we're in a bind. Or it's like that whole thing of like, you don't have to talk for a month, but

when you do, it's like you never, you never went a day without talking because you're just right back into your groove. Those natural, long-term friendships can really come in handy. Well, I, I guess there's this whole other challenge (and I wanted to ask you about this) of people, you know, in this age range or, or phase of life that are trying to find friendships like that, um, are trying to cultivate adult friendships. Maybe people around them aren't in that same phase of life as they are, and they feel a sort of separateness there. But what do you see around like, the value of people cultivating new adult friendships and like, how do they even figure that out?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (18:56)

You know, I, I really love this concept because at one point, I think it was a song. It is a song, it is a, I don't think... It is a song, and the song was titled "No New Friends", right? It was, you know, the, the message was, it was more about, you know, just keeping your circle small and, you know, just really connecting and building on the friendships of people who have been there, you know, for you throughout, you know, you know, the... The people who have been friends since kindergarten or preschool, you know? So it was kind of like really, um, limiting really, to be honest. You know, it, and there's, there's, that's great, right? To be able to continue to grow with people that you've known for years, but limiting, in that there are other people, they can add value to your life in different ways and being open to that.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (19:58)

Um, and I do think that they first... Sometimes people who are searching for friendships sometimes dive right in. And I think sometimes it can be overwhelming for a new, for a new person, right? Because we have to build something, we have to build something. And that requires, you know, the, all the aspects of relationship building, you know? A consistency, trust, uh, vulnerability, um, transparency, all of those things. But we want to, to gradually grow into that. And I think sometimes, um, a mistake that can be made is that some, some people, you know, dive right in. But I think creating maybe even labels around who people are to you when you first meet them, um, helps create some balance. Um, because they can kind of maybe even stair step, right? Like, if I say I have, okay, I have my friends that have been my friends for years, and then I have, like, my coworker friend, right?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (20:59)

So my expectations for my coworker friend and my solid friendships might be different, because I'm working on a, my coworker friendship. I'm working, like... I have a gym friend, I have a, a mom friend. So I have these friends in different categories, but my expectations are different depending on what stage we are. So I think being vocal, right, with, if I want to extend this coworker friendship to a deeper friendship, then I'm also vocal about that. I'm also setting my other friend up for success by telling them like, 'I really wanna get to know you more. I really would like to build something with you.' Just like we would in a romantic relationship. These, the, the different stages.

Liz Higgins: (21:41)

So, I was just wondering about that. I was just wanting to ask, like... This... do you feel like this is similar to what people are pursuing in romantic relationships kinda?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (21:50)

Right. You know, we, we have to.

Liz Higgins: (21:52)
There's that intentionality.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (21:54)
Yes.

Liz Higgins: (21:55)
Well, you're, when you're trying to find something intentional.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (21:58)
Right? And the different stages also help, just like with romantic relationships, the different stages also help you see red and green flags, right? You know, I might, yeah... The outside thing, like, oh, this coworker, or this gym friend, or this mommy friend, like, they seem so cool, right? And so I wanna build something, but if I take it too fast, I might just miss some signs or signals that might not be aligned with where I'm going in life. So taking that process slowly would be really, like, really some good advice to give someone who is searching, currently searching for new friendships and wanting, you know, wanting more. That we don't have to rush the process that, you know, I really wanna get to know them. I wanna spend some one-on-one time with them. I wanna spend time with them in a group setting. I wanna get to know, you know, get to know them and just their ideals on certain situations, and just introducing deeper topics and, and more, and, and encouraging more transparency just to see if I wanna keep them in this category of just like my coworker, which has its boundaries and limitations, which is where I, where I want them versus, you know, jumping the gun.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (23:03)
And now like, it's kind of like, now I have to kind of reverse this process because I, I took it too fast. So yeah, I'm, I'm so open to new friendships. I think that it's a, it's a beautiful thing to have these different categories of friends who ha, who have different, who hold a different purpose in your life. But I also think that we should always be in a reflecting mindset about the value that all of these friendships bring to us, and the value that we bring to the friendship. I think I, I don't think I've exercised enough that this is a revolving door, and it is about reciprocation. So it's not all about what I want. It's about everyone's thoughts, and opinions, and having a real good balance of selfishness and selflessness. And knowing what's when to look out for yourself and when to look out for your friend. And, and not getting lost in, in, in this role of a friendship. And not having solid boundaries, and not knowing what I want, or not knowing what they want. Or, you know, we hold the manual for our love language in our friendships, and we need to be able to have a good balance of that.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (24:15)
So... So it is okay to be selfish and choose yourself. And it's also beneficial to be selfless and choose your friends. And know when they need you to. So it's, this is not... I'm not telling you all, like, you just go with your list and tell your friends, 'Hey, this, I'm laying down, I'm laying down the law.' No, this is an open dialogue. And know that I, I, I said I was talking to the 25 to 35 year olds, but after that, there is a different stage where it will require more self-reflection and more transparency about, now where are we? You know, and what does this look like? 'Cause our availability might become, might be more frequent, you know? As our kids get older and they don't need us as much, and they're out with their friends, we'll have more free time. So being in a reflecting mindset of these different stages and what they... What are the challenges and the benefits that they present?

Liz Higgins: (25:11)

Yes. And I wanna ask you more about that in a second, but, but first I wanna go back to something you were talking about, like, green flags and red flags. And I just loved what you said about like, there's, it's a revolving door. This is a reciprocal relationship. I think that's so important for people to hear. Like, especially in adulthood, when you feel that longing to have more friendships, maybe better or deeper friendships that are aligned with the phase of life that you're in. It's that, it's a two-way street. You know? It's not all on you to do all that legwork. I think that, I'm just wondering about people who maybe struggle with letting others in. That... Maybe this notion of putting themselves out there, being vulnerable, trying to cultivate new friendships, whether it's somebody at the gym, or through work, or online, um, through an app, you know? Um, it can be maybe hard for them to open themselves up. What would be some suggestions or thoughts you have to a person like that?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (26:13)

You know... I would be curious about, you know, I'm always, we're always in a curious mindset, right? (When it comes to being therapeutic.) But I would be curious about why there are some barriers. Or why the, the confidence is maybe... There might be, um, a lack of confidence when it comes to, or hesitancy, rather, when it comes to new friends. And it makes me think about those potential red flags that they might have seen in themselves, or in other friendships prior, and, and being cautious of other people. So if I were the vulnerable friend, then, uh, my other friends weren't vulnerable, and I just felt like I was, you know, a burden. Um, then I might be hesitant to initiate conversation because maybe I was told that like, 'Oh, like, you, you are really intense. You're a really intense person. So that's what made me not wanna, you know, be friends with you.'

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (27:11)

Um, and maybe you are, you know... And sometimes we have to highlight some of these maybe constructive, critical suggestions from other people and decide, you know, what I'm okay with. And ensuring that our self-esteem is intact, you know? Uh, when it comes to reaching out to new people and, you know, letting them know, you know, who we, a little bit about who we are, you know? I think a, a, a intro... And a confident introduction helps someone else see if they would want to cultivate something with you, right? If I am upfront and confident about who I am, and I am showing, showing that to someone, then they get to decide, you know, if they, if I'm someone they would wanna grow with. Or if they would just like, you know, to keep me as a social media friend. Or whether or not they would like to go out, you know? And, and actually build something. So I think, you know, sometimes friendships are built on, like, gossip, or jealousy, or lack of intentions, or, you know, lack of boundaries. So we would have to really sit down and decide like, what is it that we're looking for? And make it known! Make that known in the beginning and not, you know, naturally, right? You know... Again, we're not, like, 'Hi, how are you? Like, let me, you know, can you take this assessment real quick to see if we're compatible?' You know?

Liz Higgins: (28:40)

I know so many people that would love that.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (28:43)

Even ask for like some references, right. You know?

Liz Higgins: (28:46)

Yeah. Lemme just screen you before I decide if I can take you on as a friend.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (28:50)

Yes. I mean, I, I think we all think that, right? There's, there's, there's always that fear and that risk that we're taking when we, when we, um, develop new friendships. And it's even risky in, in our current friendships, even in the, the strong friendships. People do grow and, and change. And, and that's okay. It might, our friendships might not always align, but it doesn't have to be a bad thing, Liz. Like, it's okay to also like, grow and go without this mindset that I like, that there is an issue or, um, anger that can come with, you know, uh, losing a friend. Or a friend growing or, you know, just kind of feeling like, 'Oh, they think that they're, you know, you know, better.' Or sometimes it's just a natural growth process, um, that creates, like, more distance. And I'm not as close with someone as I used to be, but that's also, that's okay. That's okay. Um, I think we struggle to accept that sometimes, and that comes with its own challenges.

Liz Higgins: (29:57)

Well, and I think you're touching on something really relevant there, which is this question of what if friendships don't work out? How can you navigate even like, the loss of a friend?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (30:09)

Yes. Because there are so many reasons why friendships end. You know, sometimes it's a disagreement, sometimes it might be betrayal. Like there might be, like, evidence to provide as to why a friendship ends. But sometimes, there's not. There's not that solid evidence. That we don't always have the pieces to connect or, um, the facts there. And, and sometimes those are the relationships that just kind of naturally grow apart for whatever reason. You know? Sometimes friendships just kind of fade into, like, the background of our lives, and we just, like, lose touch. But it is also okay to grieve that loss. And it doesn't mean that you didn't have a successful friendship. I would rather reframe that and think that some friends enter our lives exactly when we need them the most. And sometimes they're only here for that season of life.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (31:05)

Um, and some of us, some, some friendships walk with us for more than a season or two. But the length of the friendship doesn't, doesn't define whether or not it was important or meaningful to you. Um, it doesn't define the depth or the, the, the, the closeness, or the memories. Like those will, you know, still stand. But it's also okay to miss that person. Um, they might become like... Our close friend to like our Facebook friend and just grieving that, right? Just saying like, 'Oh, I, you know, I, I wish that we could have continued to grow, but when I think about it, these circumstances kind of stood in the way. You know, I had two kids and I, you know, I was in the house more and I couldn't, I couldn't create, I, it, you know, I just struggled to find a balance.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (31:58)

And that lack of balance for me, you know, just presented different friendships. I became, I, you know, I found more mommy friends because I had to take my kids everywhere I went, you know?' And, and, right. Um, and so, you know, the different friendships look differently. And then sometimes we consider when we're, when we're grieving, sometimes there's the consideration of whether or not we can't, we should reach out and reconnect. And that, that would be definitive upon your availability. You would have to think about why did the relationship grow apart in the first place, and do we have the tools now, or do we have the availability, or have I grown into a person that, that can reconnect and continue on? Because it, it can... There are friendships that

pick up, drop off, pick up and drop off. And sometimes it's, it's simply dependent on growth and availability and, um, whether or not you all are, are aligned. So, yeah.

Liz Higgins: (32:54)

Yeah. I'm just, I'm thinking too, as you're talking... About how our culture, our society doesn't necessarily... Like, there's something you can do for every painful thing you feel to not have to feel it. There's so much we can do to self-medicate, so to speak. Like, almost, like I'm using quotey fingers. There's a pill for that. Like, to not feel so much grief. To not feel that loss. But I think that in that grief, and in that loss, maybe represents a reflection of, um, a really great relationship that was, and like being able to honor it for what it was. Receive what it could give you and move forward. Like you said earlier, grow and go. That... I was, that was really great. Because sometimes we do that and there's a natural ebb and flow to these relationships even. But you know, you were talking earlier about self-reflection, and I'm wondering if you can say a little more about that. Like, how, how can you do self-reflection on yourself as the friend? Or around, I guess, the friend you're trying to be for others?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (34:02)

Yes. So, you know, I would think about, think about what you require as a friendship. Um, according to your definition and, and pose the question. It's, of course, it's a hypothetical question. Or you could actually do this, but think about if your friends would define you as the same way, you know?

Liz Higgins: (34:22)

That's great. I don't think I've even thought about that in the way that you're saying right there. Like, how do my friends experience me as a friend?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (34:30)

Yes, yes. Because we might think we're doing a really good job. We might think that we are balancing the, the, the friendship. Like we are acing it. But our friends might have some different thoughts, you know? Um, it would be, you know, it would be important to figure out your strengths. It would be important to, to also think about your growth areas. And, your intentionality with your friendships. And if you, if you feel like you're lacking something, then yes, speak up. But also be open to hearing the, the opposing viewpoint. We need to hear from others just how we show up for them, or how we can grow as their friend. Um, because their needs might look differently. And when they're giving you this reflection, understand that it's personal to what they need, just as you would be telling them what you need.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (35:28)

So self-reflection would look like toning down that defensiveness. Because you might hear some things that might be hard to hear. You might reflect on some things about yourself that might be hard to admit that when you, if you go down your, uh, your roster of friends, and you might say like, 'I'm really killing it with this friend. Like, I'm doing a good job. We talk all the time.' But then I get down to, like, friend number five and think, 'Oh man, it's been months.' You know? And that would be, yeah, an opportunity to be intentional with that friend. And because I'm already solid with the, you know, the, the, the other friends that I've done the reflection on, you know? That's, I'm, I've done a good job of reaching out. I've done a good job of supporting, I've done a good job of, you know, being an ear, but this particular friend, I haven't. You know? So why don't I take some time and reach out and be intentional? Even just take 30 days, even if it would be hard to do a self-reflection every, every 30 days.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (36:27)

But it would be important, because it will keep you on your toes and keep your friendships close. Um, and that, that's usually the goal of this. Uh, it's usually a goal for us to have strong friendships. And it is okay if one friendship is stronger than the next, but if you are not operating like the friend that you want, you have the power to control that. You have all the power to be a good friend or a bad friend. Everyone else has the power to be a good friend or a bad friend. And as long as you can stand behind who you are, then there, you know, there's confidence there. But if there's at all some hesitancy or some insecurities, then I would always consider like, what is my part? What, what is my part? What role am I playing in this friendship?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (37:19)

And how am I ensuring that we stay connected? I can't always blame, place blame. Well, they didn't, well, she didn't, well, last time it was me, you know? Okay, well... If we can go back, Liz, to what we, where we started and thought, thought about everything that our friends have on their plate, then maybe that's why they haven't reached out. Because we show, we're showing grace. This person has a new job, and they, they already told me that it's extensive. Of course they're not reaching out as much. And maybe they didn't write back immediately, but they saw that text from me. They saw that text saying, I hope you have an amazing week. I hope this works out for you. I am sending positive vibes on this interview. Like, they see the effort, you know? And yes, there will come a time for you to reflect over, you know, months and years if you feel like it's not reciprocated.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (38:11)

And maybe you do, do some reflection on whether or not this friendship is still serving me. But it's not something that you easily give up on, not if you define it as a friendship. That, that if you, if I'm defining someone as my friend, that comes with my own expectation in, in different, different roles, but if they are not my friend, then yeah, maybe I, I could quote unquote dispose of them. Or move on from them, because they're not my friend. But if you're going to call someone your friend, then you want to, you wanna nurture that relationship. You want to ensure that you are doing your part, you know? And, and communicating. Yeah. And, and fighting for that friendship, because it's important. It is important. It's really important that we have these connections outside of these different roles that we have in life.

Liz Higgins: (39:00)

I love what you're saying! And it really feels like there are so many overlaps with just some of the nuances, and the being intentional around all this with, like, a partner relationship. It's like, friendships really are these important spaces where if we want it to work and, and we have conviction that a friendship, if it matters to us, needs to be prioritized, then it's worth doing the legwork to figure out what works and what you need. And like, that feedback you were talking about, getting from opposing viewpoints and whatever, listening to what others think about how you're doing as a friend, or letting them ask for what they need is really not conflict in my perspective. It's a gift. Yes. It's like, a gift that can make that bond even stronger in a friendship, to be able to go there with each other and to, to share, like, 'Hey, I feel like you've been slacking.

Liz Higgins: (39:57)

I, I need you. I miss you.' And I really love the way that Esther Perel, um, has talked about this, really in partner relationships. She's talked about like, during different seasons of life, like child

rearing, or busy work seasons, or whatever. Sometimes partner A is gonna be stepping up and really being the pillar of that relationship while partner B needs to just focus on themselves for a little bit and kind of do what they need to do to be in a good place. And it's, it's imbalanced at times. It's not always fair. And so, yeah, I think shifting away from 'it needs to be 50/50 and we both need to be putting in just as much all the time'. It's honestly unrealistic. So I love how you're opening space for this conversation on like, it's kind of complicated, but figure it out together.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (40:49)

Figure it out together. Yes. That, that is, that is essential. It, it, it is essential, um, communicating and just being a team. A team of supporters, it increases that vulnerability too. Because I'm, I'm, I would be more confident to come to my friend knowing that they want to know how I feel, they want to be open to hearing my perspective, and, and they also know that I'd be open to hearing theirs'. So the patterns that you create in your friendship will determine the strength of it. So, um, the more we are investing, the more we are reflecting, the stronger we are as, as a friend group. So, you know, I, I have been in, in a position to reflect. I've been in a position to give feedback. And I mean, the friendships that I have now are extremely solid. I feel really, really good about it.

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (41:44)

Um, but it took some time. It took... We had to weather the storm, you know? Um, to get to the other side. But the reason they're on the other side is because we fought for it. And there might have been some distance, and there might have been some, you know, conflict, but we meant enough to each other to work through it, you know? So, uh, like you said, Liz, it's not, it's not, it's not an easy, it's not an easy race to run. Um, but it is worth it when everyone is on the same page and is constantly working on growing, and elevating, and deepening that connection and friendship.

Liz Higgins: (42:21)

Oh, I love that. I think that's a beautiful, beautiful space to end on for our conversation today. And I just really appreciate you for sharing what you (clearly) are very passionate about, but also have worked hard as a therapist to learn the legwork of what it takes to have healthy relationships. Um, is there anything else you wanna share on this topic to people that are listening?

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (42:47)

You know, I just, I would just encourage, encourage everyone to, you know, take away from this that, you know, be open to new friendships. Um, work on the friendships that you have. Constantly be in the state of, of working, growing and, and building something better than, than what you have, you know? Make time for friendships. It's important. Um, it's important to, to create space for different roles. It's, it, it, it's, it provides opportunity for you to step outside of your safe place as an individual. Your safe place as a mom, husband, brother, sister, cousin, friend. It just gives you, gives you variety in life. And it's, it's necessary. Um, and if you have had some tough friendships, then, you know, stay in the state of reflection as well. And, and, and don't give up because there are people who want what you want. And, um, and, and underneath the umbrella of healthy friendships, people do want that. Um, I think sometimes the, the missed opportunity is just not being aligned with other people who want what you want, but it can happen. So I just, I just ask you all to stay encouraged, stay motivated, and stay in the... Stay in the mindset of reflection.

Liz Higgins: (44:14)

Yes. Stay in the mindset of reflection. I love that. And I know for me, this has inspired me to go reach out to some friends that I have kinda dropped off with. I'm like, man, this is so important. It's like a lifeline. It really is. It's good for our mental health. We know that too. So I love that you brought this, um, dialogue to us today. Taylor, thank you so much for being a part of the conversation! And I hope listeners get something from this. And just for everybody that is listening, Taylor is taking on new clients right now. Individuals, couples, and even families in our Dallas office and virtually. So be sure to check out her information on our website, hellomlc.com. Thank you Taylor!

Dr. Taylor Dyson: (44:57)

Thank you Liz! Have an awesome day.

Liz Higgins: (45:02)

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