

Episode 012 Transcript

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How to Agree to Disagree

Marina: Hey there and welcome to episode twelve of The Simply Great Relationships Podcast. We're so glad that you could join us today. I'm Marina Voron, this is Meredith Silversmith, and today, we are talking about how to agree to disagree. We'll be covering: is it normal to disagree with your partner, why couples fear disagreement, how to accept disagreement, and how to actually agree to disagree. Yes, there is a way. I promise you.

Meredith: There is, there is.

Marina: So, make sure to stay with us until the very end because we've got a great bonus for you and we'll let you know how to get it at the end!

Meredith: Yup, awesome. I love today's topic! I feel like this comes up A LOT.

Marina: All the time!

Meredith: With all the couples, all the time. So, first question is really my favorite. I think I love everything we're talking about today. Is it normal to disagree with your partner? Yes, it is!

Marina: Yup!

Meredith: It's normal to disagree! And we are talking about more than just not seeing eye to eye on like a little thing like "what do you want for dinner?" We're talking about some bigger like, I'm not gonna use the word fundamental but bigger issue disagreements where you just don't see it the same way. I know we've mentioned this before but 69% of problems couples have of disagreements are perpetual. They will never be resolved.



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Marina: You' ll never agree on them.

Meredith: You will never agree! 69%! The majority of things you disagree on, you will never come to an agreement on. And that' s in any relationship. So I feel like that statistic is extremely important because this is normal! This is so normal! It' s not a sign of anything beyond, we' re a couple.

Marina: Yeah! Exactly! And also, just when you think about it, any couple is you' re two different people, you have two different histories, you have two different backgrounds, you have two different sets of experiences. There' s no way for you to agree on everything and I think disagreement adds a lot of richness and a lot of room for interesting conversations and all kinds of good stuff to a relationship. I don' t wanna be married to my clone and just agree on everything.

Meredith: I don' t know, Marina. I don' t know if that sounds so terrible but I see what you' re saying.

Marina: So, you know, I think it only makes sense two different people would disagree!

Meredith: Yeah, for sure! So I think what we see a lot is that couples really fear this. It may not come out as fear but we know that underneath the anger, frustration, whatever, there is a fear of disagreeing and we' ve come up with a lot of reasons why this is the case and we wanna share them with you because I' m sure you felt it. And again, to kind of normalize the experience, this is not an abnormal experience. And if you understand why you feel this fear, it' s easier to make better choices while the situation comes up. So one of the fears that I know I' ve noticed is the fear of the disagreement leading to a really escalated argument, you know?

Marina: Yeah. So, you start out just not agreeing on something and then all of a sudden it' s World War III in your living room because you don' t quite know, well, you know, I think what happens in that situation, people are really good at going from partners to lawyers and all of a sudden, it' s not about like "Hey, let' s listen to each other and learn about each other" . It' s like "Hey, if you' re not being, if you' re not completely agreeing with me and 100% pulled to my side, there is something wrong with you!" , and both people feel this way so both of your are not feeling heard and it' s really about like my way or the highway and of course, that creates a lot of tension and a fight.

Meredith: Mhmm. Absolutely! So fear of "Oh, no. Here we go again. This is where it' s gonna lead to" . Another one is a fear of "What does it mean if we don' t agree?" . I think we put a lot of pressure on relationships sometimes that they' re supposed to be this way or my favorites, the "Shoulds" . "It should be this way" , "It should be that way" and if it' s not, what does that mean?



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Marina: Yeah.

Meredith: I think this is probably equally as common for the couples that I see as the first one but we've thrown down some things that we've heard and come up with but if we disagree, does that mean we're not soulmates?

Marina: Yeah, and like, "If we don't agree, I feel like I'm not known by you".

Meredith: Mhmm!

Marina: Like this inherent vulnerability. Like "If we don't agree, there's an inherent vulnerability or weakness in our relationship".

Meredith: Right. "You don't see me for who I am. You don't know me. You don't understand me", another favorite, "You can't read my mind".

Marina: Yeah, like, "You don't just know that this is how I feel and you should feel the exact same because that's how great relationships work".

Meredith: Right! In great relationships, you're supposed to be able to read each other's mind, (not the case).

Marina: Nope. Not so much.

Meredith: Unfortunately.

Marina: I think a really big one is "We aren't compatible if we don't agree".

Meredith: Mhmm!

Marina: And I think I have like a little bit of a caviac here. I think, when we're talking about this, we're not talking about your non-negotiables, your true non-negotiables. We're talking about your everyday stuff and even bigger stuff. It's okay to not agree on it and still be fully compatible.

Meredith: Mhmm!

Marina: When it comes to non-negotiables, if your non-negotiables are like completely opposite, maybe there's something, right? But everything else, totally fine to disagree on and still be extremely compatible.



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Meredith: Absolutely! I think the, you know, some of the ultimate fears are “If we don’ t agree, are we gonna split up? Are we not gonna last? Is our relationship doomed to fail?” . You know, I think a lot of these fears really come up and that’ s in those small moments and that’ s part of what escalates the argument is because our fears get triggered and then we’ re like “Well, no. For me, do not feel this fear. I need you to agree with me!” . And then we start, like you said, becoming lawyers and trying to pull them onto our side.

Marina: Yeah, and my favorite is when couples do the comparison agreement, “If we can’ t agree on this small thing, how are we ever gonna agree on this bigger thing?” when a lot of things are standalone issues. You don’ t have to agree on small things to agree on big things. They’ re all independent but I think sometimes people really, really over inflate the value of it, agreeing on some trivial thing because it means “Well, if we can’ t agree on this trivial thing...”

Meredith: Right. “...how are we ever going to do it on the big stuff?” . That is a big one.

Marina: Yeah and again, it’ s not necessarily like a logical argument but I think it’ s really ingrained in this vulnerability and fear of “At its cores, my relationship’ s not good because we’ re not agreeing” .

Meredith: Right. Yeah! So, I mean, think about those a little bit and are those things that you ever felt before? Is this something that’ s come up for you? And try to notice, what are your trigger points because they’ re different for everybody. And just keep that in mind as we talk further about this because that’ s gonna help inform how to handle it.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: So, a big part of agreeing to disagree is acceptance. So, agreeing to disagree means “I feel this way, you feel that way. We don’ t agree and that’ s okay” . That’ s really what we’ re talking about so accepting that that’ s the case. The first way to do that is by changing your goal. So stop fighting the wrong battle. It’ s not about pulling your partner to your way of thinking. The goal is understanding.

Marina: Yeah. This is really where you have to take that lawyer hat off and put that partner hat back on! If you’ re gonna make that your goal, you’ re setting yourself and your partner up for failure and of course, you’ re gonna end with frustration.

Meredith: Mhmm!



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Marina: Another one is, the goal is to really gain insight into why something is important to your partner and why what's important to you is important to you. It's really about going through that learning curve as opposed to arguing and that could add so much riches and value to your relationship because if you're disagreeing on an issue, it means you have your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, ideas, values around it that come from who you are as an individual and so does your partner. If the goal is to understand and validate, you're really learning much more about each other which brings you closer, which makes your relationship more connected, more solid and it's not about agreement. It's just about saying "Wow. I didn't know this about you! That's great! Now, I have this insight into this part of your world".

Meredith: Yeah! For sure! And, you know, it's obviously a collaborative effort to get to the understanding part but as an individual, you play a role. You each play a role. So your goal as one part of this team is to breathe. Breathing is very important in that moment. Take a breath and say to yourself like accept that it's okay to disagree with your partner. Tell yourself that it's okay rather than telling yourself which I know is happening "Oh my God. This is not okay. We're disagreeing. What does this mean? This is gonna mean this. This is gonna mean that". And like playing all the "What ifs" in your head and getting really, really escalated internally. You need to stop that narrative and say "This is okay. Disagreeing is normal. Let me try to get to a place of understanding".

Marina: There's something that you taught me that I really love that I think is a really good little life hack here which is instead of hearing your partner and like going "Well, I understand BUT...". It's the "I understand", period, pause and then go forward because I think the second the "But" comes in, and we talked about this when we are talking about communication, probably? The second the "But" comes in, it becomes a little more adversarial.

Meredith: Yeah! It's like drawing a line through everything you just said. That's what I always say. Anything you said before the "But" now doesn't matter. You just negated it so you really wanna be careful with that.

Marina: Mhmm. And I think a big part of avoiding that bit is also really checking in with your urge to win. I know some people are very competitive and very "Wanna win. Wanna be right". That's a really strong urge. But letting go of that urge in a disagreement, because again, the goal is not to win, can really pay off.

Meredith: Yeah, definitely! And the reality is your partnership. You're married, you're in a relationship, you're together. So, if one of you wins, the other one's gonna lose. And if that's the case, you're both losing. Right? That's the reality. This isn't two enemies going at it. You either both win or you both lose. And, you know, you really wanna choose wisely.



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Marina: Mhmm! And also, the more you kind of dig your heels in on your side and say “It’s my side or no side”, the more you kinda make your partner do that also. It’s like you get into this really nasty power struggle and you really polarize each other so like an issue, you may have been this far in disagreement on all of a sudden becomes like this far just because you’re in that power struggle, not because you actually disagree this much.

Meredith: Yeah! And, you know what? The way a lot of couples describe that to me, I wonder if you see the same thing, they’ll come in and they’ll explain it like “If I say the sky is blue, she says the sky is purple. And I say, no look at the sky, the sky is blue! And she says, nope! The sky is purple!”. That’s this. That’s what we’re talking about.

Marina: It almost reminds me of oppositional teenagers. You’re not oppositional teenagers. You’re grown adult partners who love each other. Sometimes, it’s really important to check in with that notion.

Meredith: Yeah! Just a little bit. Just for a second. So, we wanna give you some really specific ways to connect and to be able to actually agree to disagree without harboring frustration and resentment. So the first step, like we talked about a few minutes ago, is committing to understanding, making your goal understanding each other, understanding your partner and being understood by your partner. And the best to do this if you haven’t already is to go back to episode one on “Communication” and listen, but especially to download the bonus the communication tip sheet because that is, it’s like gold. That has 4 or 5 main tips for communicating in a healthy way, breaking it down step by step. That is your foundational information for many if not all of what we talk about.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: So that’s step one.

Marina: Another one is to make it your goal to understand why your partner’s opinions are important to them. Think about that as something that truly enriches your relationship. If you wanna understand why something matters to your partner, you’re actually taking the time to like say “I wanna come in”, right? As opposed to attempting to persuade them. So it’s like letting go of that urge to persuade and being lovingly curious which is again, something we talk about in the communication tip sheet and in episode one. So, really getting into that space of “I am lovingly curious. I’m not a lawyer who’s here to persuade you that I’m right and you’re wrong”. It’s more like “Tell me why this is important to you. I really want to know this part of you”.



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Meredith: Mhmm! Definitely! And then, you know, as you gain more understanding and you're talking through it in a more constructive way, you want to look for commonalities rather than where you differ. You wanna look for areas that you have in common on that topic. You know, search for them, they're there even if they're small, they do exist. If you find the ones that are small, you can try to expand on them. So a really helpful episode for this piece is episode six on "Compromise". And there's also a really good freebie with that one too, the compromise cheat sheet that takes you step-by-step through this process. So you go through the talking through it, understanding one another more deeply and then working on compromise. And compromise doesn't always mean there's a solid solution to the problem. Sometimes, compromise just means agreeing to how we're going to manage our disagreement.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: You know? Marina: Yeah! Definitely! Again, I think that goes back to where we started that 69% of the problems you're not gonna solve so it's more about, compromise is more about like "Let's improve our quality of life around this thing" as opposed to like, again, "Let's be lawyers and look for a clear cut solution here".

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: Again, we don't want you to just listen. We want you to listen and integrate so we've created a road map from disagreement to acceptance. This has some really great explorations and questions to consider and you can get it on our website. It's www.simplygreatrelationships.com/012. So let's talk takeaways.

Meredith: Let's talk takeaways. I think my biggest takeaway is just around the fears that come up for people when you disagree with your partner. That, it's not just like "Oh, I want you to agree with me just because...". It's a lot deeper than that and I think that from on the other person's end, like when you see your partner disagreeing and digging in their heels, we don't feel that empathy, right? We don't feel like "Oh, they're really hurting right now" or "They're really fearful right now". We feel like, "Oh my God. Why are they acting like that?", right? So, keeping in mind the fear, the fear-based place that that action is coming from. I think that that's really significant.

Marina: Mhmm.

Meredith: What about for you?



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Marina: My big takeaway is, and you say this a lot and I love it and it's always my takeaways, like when you say "but", you're striking out everything that's come before it. And even though your intentions may be good, you're really turning things adversarial when you throw that "I understand, BUT". So, for me, don't do the work and then strike it out. That's my big takeaway from today.

Meredith: Absolutely! So, that's all for today! You know, as always, we hope you take these tips and start using them right away. Definitely download the freebie because that's gonna be really helpful. We'd love to continue the conversation with you in our Facebook group. We'll be hooking you up with tips, tricks, and live streams exclusively for our members. You can find the group at www.facebook.com/groups/simplygreatrelationships or you can click the link on our website www.simplygreatrelationships.com. 'Til next week!

Marina & Meredith: Bye!

