

Episode 029 Transcript

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Moving from Two I's to a We

Marina: Hi and welcome to episode 029 of the Simply Great Relationship podcast. We're so glad that you could join us today. I am Marina Voron and with me is Meredith Silversmith. And today, we are talking about "Moving from Two 'I's' to a 'We'" - something we both had to do and something we've guided a lot of couples in doing. And today, we'll be covering "I" mindset versus "We" mindset, How to know if you're ready for the big we, challenges in becoming a "we", "We"-ing without losing our "I's", I know that's something that's been really important for both of us, and creating your own "We". So there is no one-size-fits-all "we", how to create your own best is really best for you. And also make sure to stay until the very end because we've got a really great bonus for you and we'll tell you how to get it at the end.

Meredith: Yup. This is an interesting topic, I think. You know, this idea of the "I" mindset versus the "We" mindset. I don't know that it's explicitly talked about a lot. I think it's sort of like people are aware of it without labeling it this way, and then I know you and I, when we're working with couples, we kind of draw it out but the "I" mindset, I kind of notice when someone's coming from an "I" mindset place when they're talking about what's best for them, what's their view of the best kind of relationship, a lot of "shoulds", when you start to hear, "Well, it should be this way and it should be that way and this is what I want", and you know it's a very individual-focused process rather than looking at the collective good.

Marina: Yeah.

Meredith: What do you find about that?

Marina: The word rigid comes to mind. It's a certain rigidity that goes with that. I don't want to use it, it's so cliché but "It's my way or the highway" but it is a little bit like, "This is my way and this is the way it should be done."

Meredith: Mhmm.



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Marina: And I think it creates a lot of room for assumption because if you know in your head how the relationship is supposed to look but your partner doesn't because different person, different background, different values but you're assuming they do, that's where all those miscommunications and all those head-butts and all those fights and all that pressure and distress and unmet needs come from and that's what makes the relationship feel really unstable.

Meredith: Yeah, definitely. What do you think about the "we" mindset? How do you start to notice when an individual or a couple are coming from that place?

Marina: So I think there is this real kind of collective focus "What is best for us?" viewpoint as opposed to just like "What's best for me?" moment. And it's not necessarily giving up what's best for you. It's just also really making a mindful habit of always considering "I'm a part of this system and I function as an integral part of this system and I always have to keep this system in mind."

Meredith: Mhmm. Definitely.

Marina: And sometimes put what's best for the system as opposed to just what "I" want in the moment.

Meredith: Mhmm. Yeah, and that's a big shift, right? And going from the "I" mindset to the "we" mindset is something that needs to happen in a healthy relationship and doesn't always. I do think that that's something that can come up when couples aren't aware that that's a part of the process. They start to run into that conflict and some of that not being able to come to a mutual understanding. I know we talk about this with our clients, but how to know when you're ready, if you're ready and when you're ready to become a "we" because it's not just, "Oh, okay. We're gonna move in together.", "Oh, okay. We're gonna get married.", you know. It's a lot more than that.

Marina: Yeah! Definitely! I think it's about creating a true collaboration.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: It's like almost building a team and then considering, "Is our team ready to move in together?", "Is our team ready to get married?", "Is our team ready for all this stuff?" And I think there are some really key questions that you can ask yourself that give you a lot of insight into like, "Am I there yet?", "Am I ready for this?" This is where you're allowed to be kind of "I" mindset. "Am I ready for this in this point in my life?", "Am I ready to give this part of myself and live in this collaboration?"

Meredith: Yeah!

Marina: The first question that comes to mind is "Is it okay that sometimes, I'm gonna get these things that I want and sometimes my partner's gonna get the same things that they want but most of the time, we're gonna compromise and meet somewhere in the middle-ish?"

Meredith: Yeah.



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Marina: "That most of the time, it's not gonna be exclusively what I want."

Meredith: Mhmm. Yeah! So it's right. Is the answer to that question a "yes"? Then, you're probably closer to being ready for becoming a "we". If it's an absolutely "not", then, maybe not so much. I know one that comes up a lot is, you know, and if we think of it, it's sort of as a belief, right? As we create our own family, because becoming a "we" is creating your own family, we will need to set healthy boundaries with our extended family and friends. And that's a tough one and I've definitely worked with couples where I think even the friend thing comes in where one partner is used to spending every Friday/Saturday night and football Sunday or brunch with the ladies, some sort of rituals with friends that takes up the whole weekend and that's great when you're an "I" but if you're forming your own family and making it a "we", that may not work for your partner. Do you believe that that wouldn't be ideal for your relationship and are you ready to give some of that up and shift your energy in a different direction?

Marina: Yeah. And I don't think that's always a negative thing because you wanna be in a relationship because it's positive and enriching. It's just are you ready to embrace the change?

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: That's how I always put it out to couples I'm coaching. Change is not a bad thing. I feel like people treat change as this tough, harsh, emotional process. It's not! It can be a super rewarding thing but you need to be ready to embrace that reward and I think this question really asks, "Are you ready to embrace the reward of your relationship in lieu of maybe giving up some time or other well-established relationships?"

Meredith: Mhmm! And that that's okay.

Marina: Yeah. And that that's okay.

Meredith: I think that's the big thing.

Marina: Yeah. Another question is, "Am I in this place where I can accept and be okay with the fact that my partner and I are not always gonna agree and that that's just fine?"

Meredith: Mhmm. Yeah! Because it's not realistic to think that you're always going to agree with your partner. Nobody always agrees with their partner. I don't always agree with my partner.

Marina: I certainly don't always agree with my partner and I feel like I have a great relationship and I hope George feels the same way, right? But I think that is such a tell-tale sign of "I" mindset because we always agree is more "My partner always agrees with me."

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: Right?



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Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: So, to me, that's always a bit of a red flag and a tell-tale sign of that is "I" mentality, not "we" mentality because couples can agree on a large majority of stuff. They can have really similar values and backgrounds but if you're like "We're gonna agree on everything all the time" - and this is something I've come across a lot - that to me is always a bit of a red flag. And this is where it's really important to be genuine with yourself. We're not saying it's wrong to feel this way. We're just saying that that is indicative of a certain place in your life, not a forever place.

Meredith: Yeah, definitely. Another one that comes up quite a bit is if you are more ready for a "we" is "I expect each of us to be responsible for our own actions and emotions" and not "Well, my partner's gonna be responsible for my emotions." or "My partner can't make me feel that way." or "I should make my partner feel this way." It's sort of this, I mean, we would use the word enmeshed, right? It's sort of we've gone from two "I's" to one big "I" instead of from two "I's" to a "we". So you wanna kind of come from a place of believing we can seek support and comfort from each other, we can offer empathy and validation, but neither partner is responsible for solving the one's problems or changing their emotion. That's your job as an individual.

Marina: Mhmm. Yes! So I think that question is really good to see, "Are you gonna dive into the deep end of the pool?" which is also not a good place to go to right away. Another one is, are you in that frame of mind, are you in that place in your life where you're really ready to embrace a change? Things are going to change. Things are going to change in good ways, things are going to change in challenging ways. "When we become a 'we', am I ready for that? Am I ready to embrace that? Am I ready to take the good with the bad?"

Meredith: Yeah, because that's realistic and I think a lot of this, if you really look at these questions and beliefs, it's about being realistic, about what a healthy relationship looks like and can you get behind these ideas? Can you align yourself with these ideas? If yes, then you're ready to step into that relationship and that "we" place.

Marina: Yeah! Definitely!

Meredith: What do you think some of the challenges are in taking that step?

Marina: Let's preface this. I know we've talked about this before a lot. We're both only children so I feel like I was married to my "I". So I think this is something that I can really speak personally from where the challenges come from and I've seen this a lot in my work also. I think it can be hard to switch from an "I" to a "we" like when you've been used to an "I" for a long time and because it can really feel like it's associated with the feeling of sacrifice or "I'm losing myself".

Meredith: Yeah! Sacrifice of "What I want, what I need, what my values are", right? We become so married to those things. "What I want out of life, what I need, what I think is right, what I think is wrong" and that's not to say you should put those aside but it can be hard to navigate the balance because I think sometimes we're more attached to wants and might think that they're needs but they're not.



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Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: "I need to have a husband who is home at 5 o'clock everyday so that we can have dinner together. I need a husband who goes to the gym 5 days a week." Those are not needs!

Marina: No, but nice to have.

Meredith: Yeah. But not needs. So I think that's one of the challenges. Sorting through as an individual, what are your real needs, your real non-negotiables versus things that would be nice.

Marina: We talked about this in the previous episode, we will link that at the bottom because I do not recall which one exactly it is, but talking about non-negotiables and deciphering, "is it really a non-negotiable or is this a nice to have?"

Meredith: I think it was the "Compromise" episode.

Marina: Mhmm.

Meredith: But we'll see. We'll double check on that.

Marina: We will definitely link that below because I think going through that can be really, really valuable. I think another thing that's hard in becoming a "we" is you have your nice little "I" habits and "I" routines and I know what my habits and routines were and when I became a "we", I had to let some of those go and modify some of those because I wasn't just functioning for a one, I was functioning as a part of a team and that can be a little bit challenging. I think this is more challenging if you maybe haven't been in a relationship for a while or you've been dating for a while and you like to date more casually and maybe you're entering a more serious relationship and you're considering things like moving in together for the first time or spending significantly more time together where if you have really fixed kind of habits and routine and now you throw in another person in there, it can be a lot.

Meredith: Yeah! And you know, I've actually had this come up with one couple in particular where we kind of realize that one of the real challenges they're experiencing was they just didn't have enough time together. They really didn't have that quality time on a consistent basis that you need to refill the emotional bank account. And when we broke it down, we realized that they had both maintained a lot of habits and routines from when they were on their own. So one partner always got up really early to go to the gym before work and then went to work and went to get home at, I don't know, maybe 6 o'clock/six thirty/7 o'clock from commuting but the other partner had a habit of going to the gym after work. So she would be going to the gym so they'd be on basically these opposite schedules. They wouldn't even wake up together in the morning, their work schedules were a bit different and then they would be going to the gym and do the same activity but at a completely different time of day. So by the time they get home, they're exhausted, it's late and now, they haven't even had the opportunity to eat dinner together. So everything was criss-cross and something was simple as, you know, when we worked through it and we were able to come to compromise and put a plan in place, it was like huge changes because they had that quality time together, working out together, they then opened up the time to have dinner together, waking up in the morning. Everything shifted and it was like such a plus in their relationship. So it really is significant.



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Marina: Yeah. I think this is when people forgot that their relationships exist in time.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: And your relationship needs time to grow. And if you're not giving it that time, it's not gonna grow. And I think time investment is a really big part of becoming a "we".

Meredith: Yeah!

Marina: Another big thing that I've noticed, and tell me if you've noticed this. In becoming a "we", I think certain parts of our society really overvalue the "I" and undervalue the "we". "You have to do what's best for you", you know, all those cliché advice columns and things like that? "You have to put yourself first.", "You have to do what's right for you.", "You have to be your own best friend.", "You have to watch out for number 1." All that messaging that's like "I, I, I" and I think it's really easy to misinterpret that. I think that can apply to certain parts of your life. I think you should do what's best for you at work. I think you should put yourself first when it comes to certain situations but to say, "This is how I live in my relationship and if I let go of this 'I' mentality, I'm losing myself or giving myself up or giving up the power in becoming subservient." This is where I see it happen the most. The most problematic is when you feel like there's a real kind of downgrade in power. I think that's where we tend to run into issues. I work with a young couple that came for some pre-marital and it was this guy that came from this really warm, loving family and his partner, she had a single mom who works multiple jobs just to provide her a really good home and to put her through university and the messaging she consistently got from her mom was "You must be independent. You must only do for yourself. You are your own best friend. You can never trust anybody. You are who is gonna watch out for you." All the messaging was "I, I, I" and so she's been in this relationship and they got engaged and he was almost sensing this coldness from her because she was so scared to truly integrate in the relationship because she felt like she was gonna lose her sense of personal power.

Meredith. Mmm, wow.

Marina: Right? And when we worked through it, she realized that he was not gonna take anything away from her. If anything, he was gonna bolster her up and very much so did. He was very supportive of her career path, her education path, of a lot of personal projects that she had in her life. That is what becoming a "we" on the inside is. I always think that there is like your inside world and your outside world, and your inside world is your "we". When you can really integrate on that "we" level, it can really bolster you up to the rest of the world and she was really able to let go of that mentality when it came to her relationship.

Meredith: Mmm.

Marina: And she was fine and really embraced making decisions that really involve both of them and feeling empowered by that as opposed to disempowered.

Meredith: That's great! That's really good! I love that!



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Marina: Yeah! It was very heart-warming. I was very touched by that and I actually saw some of their wedding photos. They looked very happy so...

Meredith: Aww. Because if you think about, I know I always think about this, what if they hadn't seen you? What if it's likely to have happened? And what's likely to have happened is that they could have ended their relationship because this got too hard to manage and they didn't have the tools to cope with it. So I just love when things like that come up and it was really... you were able to set them on the right track.

Marina: Mhmm! So, what are some other things that you think are challenges in becoming a "we"?

Meredith: I think that pressure from the outside world which is kind of funny actually now that we're talking about it. The same way that we get this messaging about "I, I, I". Some of us also get a messaging about becoming a "we". So you get "Oh, when are you gonna get married?" or "You two have been in a relationship for so long. What are you waiting for?" or "When are you gonna move in together?" or "If you like it then you should've put a ring on it", right? All these societal pressures to become a "we". Okay, that's very nice, outside world, that you feel that this person should become a we or everybody should become a "we" but not everybody is ready and that's okay!

Marina: Yeah! I think that the big message here is you are the one who knows when you're ready.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: You get to evaluate that.

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: But in evaluating that, you also have to challenge yourself. You have to ask yourself the hard questions, not just travel down what feels the easiest which is what people kind of tend to do sometimes. So for what's easiest, if you really wanna evaluate, you really have to ask yourself the questions that we have talked about before to know if you're ready to delve into some of that deeper stuff because there are mixed messages.

Meredith: Right and you may find in considering those things that either you don't feel ready or it might feel like it's too big of a commitment for you right now. You may not feel like the decision was yours. You may feel pushed or people are forcing you into it which is very disempowering and not a good place to be coming from with this type of decision.

Marina: Yeah. I have personally seen quite a few couples where it will come out like, "Oh, I didn't feel ready to get engaged but I felt so pressured."

Meredith: Mmm.

Marina: And the worse is if that comes out 15 years later.



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Meredith: Yeah. It's not worth it. It's not worth it in the long run and I think one of the most common which we kind of touched on earlier is people who aren't always really clear on what would be a "we" entails and what being married entails and what being in a committed relationship is like and not just society's definition but talking through the two "I" stuff, like talking through what I think of marriage is, what my partner thinks of marriage is and then constructing our shared vision of what a marriage is. So without that, you're kind of going in blind to this decision.

Marina: Which again reminds me of our bonus that we made in talking about creating a shared dream.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: I think that's utilizing that bonus but to talk about your vision of what your relationship should look like. It's a great place to start in terms of - are you ready for that "we"?

Meredith: Mhmm! Yeah, that's a great suggestion.

Marina: So, we're gonna link that also. We're gonna link that bonus below.

Meredith: What do you...

Marina: Go ahead.

Meredith: I was just gonna say - what have you seen the helpful for becoming a "we" without losing the "I"?

Marina: So, I think the biggest one is you have to maintain your sense of identity. Like we talked about earlier, there's a big difference between "I" to "we" and going from two "I's" to one giant capital "I" and jumping too deep into that pool and almost creating a co-dependence.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: It's about maintaining your own sense of identity, so still coming to the table being who you are. It's just shifting your mindset and extending a consideration, right?

Meredith: Mhmm. Yeah.

Marina: So, you're still you and as long as you can keep that "I'm still me. All I'm doing differently is I'm shifting my mindset from 'I' to 'we' and I'm extending the consideration so when I make a decision that may affect my partner, I consider my partner in it."

Meredith: Mhmm. Yup!



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Marina: Yeah! And again, you don't have to agree on everything. You just have to really understand where your partner is coming from.

Meredith: Right.

Marina: You're getting to understanding not to agreement and if you think of becoming a "we" as getting to a place of understanding, I think that you're 95% of the way there.

Meredith: Yeah, definitely. So go back and listen to episode 012 and then go back and listen to episode 015 which you mentioned earlier - How to Get Your Partner to Support Your Life's Dreams - those are the two that would really be prerequisites for this process, I would say. And then, listen to those, get in that headspace, and then download this week's bonus - The Full Proof Guide for Going from "I" to "We" - and go through that process with your partner and you'll be in great shape.

Marina: Again, we don't want you to just listen. We want you to listen and integrate this into your relationship, so we've put together our bonus and you can get it at www.simplygreatrelationships.com/029. And if you know that this is a hot button issue in your relationship and don't feel like you can resolve it on your own, let us help! This is what we do. The quickest way to a simply great relationship is to work directly with one of us and we're really, really easy to reach and get a hold of. You can send us an email at info@simplygreatrelationships.com or you can text us which is I feel like, at least people I work with, that's their favorite mode of communication. So we are textable at 914-440-4814. You can also visit our website www.simplygreatrelationships.com and submit a request to talk to us there and we will definitely get back to you.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: Let's talk takeaways.

Meredith: Hmm, takeaways. I don't know! I think for me, the biggest takeaway is just that it really needs to be an intentional process, that it's not as flowy and natural as I think portrayed in society and media and that it would be amazing if we could almost do pre-committed relationship preparations with everybody because that would just set couples up for such success and happiness and reduce conflict and drama. That's our goal ultimately, right? We just want people to be as happy in their relationships as we are in ours and whatever we can do to share those tips and tricks, we wanna do. So taking into mind that this is an intentional process and needs to be an intentional process that takes work and talking and self-exploration. I think that's my takeaway.

Marina: Yeah. I think my takeaway is really tied in your takeaway which is it's okay to not be ready for that process but you have to go through the questions, you have to go through an intentional process of evaluation and then say, "This may not be for me and that's totally fine."

Meredith: Yeah!



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Marina: Right? So, if it's not for you right now, it doesn't mean it's never for you or it doesn't mean that it has to be for you. It's just either one is okay as long as either choice is intentional and empowering.

Meredith: Yup! Definitely!

Marina: Well, that's all for today. We hope that you take these tips and start integrating them right away and we'd love to continue the conversation with you in our Facebook group where we'll be doing Facebook live and hooking you up with tips and tricks and all kinds of great contents exclusive for our members. You can find us at www.facebook.com/groups/simplygreatrelationships or go to our website www.simplygreatrelationships.com and click on the Facebook icon there. Until next time!

Meredith: Yup, we'll see you then! Bye!

