

499: Ask a Marriage Coach



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

499: Ask a Marriage Coach

Of all the topics that we coach on, marriage might be the most frequent, and it's also one of the ones that coaching is a really good fit for. Today we have your real-life questions, and we're going to be asking a marriage coach to answer them for us. This is Episode 499, Ask a Marriage Coach.

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we transform our lives by transforming ourselves. My name is Jody Moore. In the decade-plus I've been working with clients as a Master Certified Coach, I've helped tens of thousands of people to become empowered. And from empowered, the things that seemed hard become trivial, and the things that seemed impossible become available, and suddenly, a whole new world of desire and possibility open up to you. And what do you do with that?

Well, that's the question... what will you do? Let's find out.

Sometimes, listening to a podcast is enough. But sometimes, you'll feel inspired to go deeper. If you hear things that speak to you in today's episode, consider it your invitation to a complimentary coaching workshop.

On this live, interactive Zoom call with me, you'll get a taste of the power of this work when applied in real life. You can participate, or be a silent observer. But you have to take a step if you want to truly see change in your life... two steps, actually. Head to jodymoore.com/freecoaching and register. Then you just have to show up. Your best life is waiting for you. Will you show up for it? JodyMoore.com/freecoaching. I'll see you there.

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Jody Moore: Hello, everybody. Welcome back to the podcast. We have a really fun episode in store for you today, I think, but I don't know. We're about to record it here. And I brought in the world's best marriage coach. And I might be biased because she is my sister, Natalie Clay, but you guys are biased also. Everybody loves Natalie. Say hi, Natalie.

Natalie Clay: Hello.

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Jody Moore: We should just disclose that we're sharing a mic because I can't find the other mic. We're just snuggled right up to each other. We're basically like cheek to cheek. And so.

Natalie Clay: In matching dresses.

Jody Moore: And I just drank a protein shake. So maybe I need a piece of gum for a minute.

Natalie Clay: Yes, maybe you do.

Jody Moore: Anyway, we're gonna do our best to get really close to the mic and make this sound good for you, but tell us a little bit about your coaching practice, how long you've been doing it and all that for anybody that maybe hasn't met you before.

Natalie Clay: I've been coaching for about nine years and I have spent eight of those years focused on marriage.

Jody Moore: What's the craziest situation you've ever coached on like a marriage, like the biggest challenge? You know what I mean.

Natalie Clay: Yeah, would you like names and locations?

Jody Moore: No.

Natalie Clay: Oh, okay. Gosh, the craziest? I don't know. Nothing is coming to mind as the craziest because everybody deals with different things, and so things don't really stand out as crazy anymore. So I don't think I'm going to have a helpful answer. Everyone just struggles with different things.

Jody Moore: I know, but people have major challenges in their marriage sometimes, right?

Natalie Clay: Absolutely, marriage can be really hard.

Jody Moore: And even within the LDS church, because I think we all go to church and we look around and we think like, well, these people are like,

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you know, everybody's happy and healthy and these marriages are fine. And they are, and yet there's a lot going on sometimes that we may not know about, right?

Natalie Clay: Absolutely. I have coached lots of bishops, state presidents, and a general authority couple, and everybody struggles. And it's funny how people feel like their struggle is unique or it shouldn't be as hard for them. And that if people really knew how much they were struggling, that it's somehow shameful, but it seems like a lot of people struggle.

Jody Moore: Yeah, with major things, I will just say, because Natalie's protecting the privacy of her clients as she should. But there's major stuff going on. And I only say that because I want people listening to know that if they're experiencing that, or not major stuff, that they're not alone and it's normal, right?

Natalie Clay: Oh, absolutely. Basically, anything you can think of, I've coached people through.

Jody Moore: Okay. So I have a few questions here. I'm going to go ahead and share the question and then turn it over to you to answer this in the way that you would. Obviously, we're filling in gaps here because in coaching we ask more questions, but let's just start with this one. There's a talk that was given by the president and prophet of the LDS Church, and it's called Think Celestial, right?

Great talk, but this person has a question about that topic. And just for anybody listening that's not a member of our church, think celestial meaning like think long-term, think big picture, and aim high, like be the best version of yourself, right? So that you can have the best life now and in the afterlife, if you will. Quick summary of it, right?

So this person says that they remember the church, of course. They say, "Sometimes I feel sorrow when I listen to that talk, Think Celestial, because what I'm realizing is I'm not sure I want this relationship for eternity." It's

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another part of our doctrine is we believe that we can be married for eternity, right?

She says, "I know I can think about it in a different way and see that long-term everything would work out. But right now, that thought doesn't bring me any peace or joy. I feel sad that this is my marriage. And I feel guilty that sometimes I want a divorce. We talk to our kids about eternal family, and we follow these teachings. And we're very active in the church" and she's saying basically that's been a good thing for her family.

"But lately I just don't feel authentic. I want to stay in this religion and in many ways I want to stay married, but I feel alone like this marriage has broken me. I'm depressed. We talk about our past and challenges in different ways. He says great things, but nothing changes."

Interesting, right? That she's saying, "I know I can leave, I know I can stay, and I know they're both hard." Interesting how that thought of like an eternal marriage that for a lot of people brings a lot of peace and joy, sometimes actually brings us some stress and anxiety.

Natalie Clay: Absolutely, because if we're trying to think about it in terms of I'm going to be enduring this exact dynamic for eternity, yeah, that could easily feel very discouraging. So I like that she's giving herself permission to know that she can stay, she can go, but right now she is choosing to stay as long as she's still in it.

The part that stands out to me is, first of all, feeling guilt for that. I think you can attempt to think celestial and that doesn't mean you should feel that way now. That's the disconnect, where we can aim for that and that can be something we can hope for, but as long as we think we know how we should get there, that's where we get ourselves into some trouble.

And one thing she mentioned is, he says things but he never changes. That kind of indicates that she has an idea on how she could feel more that way in this situation. And her idea is if he followed through on some of these changes, he says he'll make. Which is absolutely what we all naturally

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gravitate towards because if this other person just changes, then we don't have to choose to be as vulnerable or trust or hope or be patient in other solutions and other ways that that feeling can come about.

So I think we have to first absolutely have those conversations and sometimes some things do change, but over time if it's consistently not, then it's actually making you feel worse to be relying on that to change for you to feel better, because that's when you start feeling stuck.

So what I would suggest instead is acknowledging that this is hard right now, and you need some compassion for that instead of guilt, because that's not something that you can just choose to be positive about all the time. But it's challenging right now, and I'm choosing to stay in it, which ultimately is, I believe, how we become more celestial, is by doing hard things.

It's not a result of just having a conversation and things change easily, and it's really easy to just feel all the things we want to feel. That doesn't really require much of us, but knowing that this whole life is a refining process, and marriage in particular can be an incredibly refining process. But it's allowing yourself some patience to be where you're at and always maintain that optimism that things can get better, but maybe letting go of our rigid hold on the way we think that should happen.

Jody Moore: Sometimes I feel like even just taking a soundbite, like think celestial, right? That should bring us joy, or we should, I don't know. It like, we add a should to it, and it sort of weaponizes what's meant to be a tool, what could be helpful. I do remember talking years ago actually to a friend of mine who said a similar version of this. She's like, I don't wanna be with him for eternity.

And the idea of anything being eternal, if I stop and think about it, it kind of freaks me out. Like even living for eternity, if you really think about it, it kind of sounds awful. I can't wrap my head around what that would be like. At

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the same time, I think that we are going to want that. I think it is going to be fine.

I just don't think that right now we can comprehend what that would be like. And to be with your spouse for eternity. I don't know that that's a helpful thought for her right now to have in her marriage, would you say?

Natalie Clay: Definitely not if it's causing her to feel guilt or to feel like something's gone wrong. So anything that we're told, whether it's by a therapist, a prophet, a coach, anyone, you have to pay attention to how does that make me feel when I think about that or when I'm hearing that advice.

And if it's causing you to feel anything other than hopeful and empowered or excited or any of those emotions that are going to help you achieve more of what you want to refine, more satisfaction and things, then we can just kind of set it aside. We don't have to say it's not true. We don't have to kick against it, but it can be.

Yeah, I see that that could be a helpful thought in certain aspects of life. But for me and my marriage right now, that's not something that brings me any sort of peace or hope. So I don't need to think about it in terms of my marriage right now.

Jody Moore: Okay. So this next question says, "I'm 64 years old and then divorced and I've been dating a man now for three years. Our relationship is good and we love each other. He's a little bit older, about almost, yeah, 10 years older and has been alone for 10 years or so. So I feel he's fine to never get married.

I'm the one that brings up a question now and then of could we be married, and he gives short answers, but he's never liked to talk very serious for very long. Part of me is okay with that and just going along with it. Another part of me wants to know if we could ever get married."

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And she's saying, basically, I can't stop obsessing about it either way. Even though it's good right now, I'm fine with how it is. I can't stop thinking about this idea of, could we get married, should we get married?

And I thought this was an interesting one because it's an interesting question either way, but especially like there's a lot of people in this situation, right, who are divorced or maybe a spouse has passed away and we're in like a different part of life now, and it feels, I don't know, I just think there's a lot of interesting dynamics. I know you've coached people in this situation as well. So what are your thoughts on this one, Nat?

Natalie Clay: So what I would suggest to her is the obsessing is saying the things that I'm not liking about the current situation could change. And so the obsession comes from trying to solve it logically. If I can just make a logical appeal to him or I can find a way to not want this, then things can be better.

So it's giving yourself too much control over the outcome basically or what he may or may not want. And I think we have to just in the situations like that, it helps to just be more present with what is and to acknowledge right now, I still want to stay in this. And I do hope that we get married, if that's something that you want. And he may or may not be open to that. And at any point I can leave or stay.

Now that's not gonna be satisfying. That's not gonna feel great. But a lot of times relationships teach us that we have to be patient on how do we get to the next thing. And at any point, if she's feeling that tension, it becomes too great, then she'll feel like relief could come from deciding not to be with this person anymore. And maybe she wants to find someone who being in a committed married relationship is a higher priority.

But until that time, there's pros and cons and making some peace with, here's why I'm still choosing it and it's okay that I want something different, but I'm still choosing to stay in this right now and it's giving yourself

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moments to have some of the moments of frustration, but not needing to focus on how do I change it? It's that resistance that's getting her.

Jody Moore: I kind of left this part out, but at the end of her question, she says, "I'm trying to get to a place where I don't have to care whether we do or not."

Natalie Clay: You wanna make sure that you're being true to yourself. If you do care, I think it's worth investigating. Like if you really want that, ask yourself why. Are you insecure? Do you have this idea that being married is going to bring more security? So to just allow her to have moments of, yeah, I really feel disappointed right now that we're not married, and I really love being in this relationship.

So much of what marriage teaches us is how can we hold two beliefs at the same time? And sometimes it does feel like they're opposing, but they're not. It's just both are true. I don't like that we're not married, and I do like being in this relationship. So it's making peace with both of those at the same time.

Jody Moore: Do you have any other advice that you would offer to people in this phase? Like I said, maybe divorced or have lost a spouse, and now they're just navigating do I stay single? I think it's interesting, you know, we all joke about like, well, if our husbands - say we're just gonna live together like The Golden Girls, why would you get married again? And we're kind of kidding, and at the same time, kind of not. And then I think we all understand the reality that it's lonely being alone. Like what are you seeing happen out there? Are there anything that people should keep in mind? Any thoughts on that topic?

Natalie Clay: Well, I do like this idea that there's always opportunities for learning and growth that are always being presented to us through the different experiences of life. So if your spouse passes away or you get divorced, I think you have to be open to, I don't know how I'll feel at that time and whatever I want is okay.

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But the reason it's confusing at all is because there's pros and cons. Otherwise it would be so obvious and everybody would choose to do that thing, like stay single or get remarried. But a lot of it comes down to trusting yourself and deciding whatever I choose next, regardless of what happens, it's okay and it's an opportunity for me to learn instead of looking at it like this is gonna be a failure if it turns out this way.

Jody Moore: All right, so next question says, "My husband and I have fought since the beginning of our marriage, and we both think it's the other person's fault, which makes us both right," with a winking emoji. She's started listening and learning this stuff that she's working on herself in this area, but this is what she thinks now. "I firmly believe my husband is emotionally abusive and somewhat narcissistic. He will be kind and considerate to others, women especially, and then turn around and criticize or just completely ignore me." And then she gives a lot more examples of this and says, it's not intentional, but it's like he has no idea I'm even there.

Before we read the rest of this, do you wanna speak to that at all? Do you think, is that - obviously we can't diagnose someone as narcissistic from like a few sentences, but what are your thoughts on that?

Natalie Clay: Well, when it comes to, because we hear that term a lot, a lot of people are quick to diagnose people with narcissism now. And the way I think about that is, if someone told you, yes, he's narcissistic, or yes, that is emotional abuse, how does that feel? Does that give you permission to not like some of the things? Then that's useful. Does it give you permission to take the action that you're telling yourself maybe you should or shouldn't? Then it's useful.

But if it just causes you to feel like a stuck victim and more justified in getting him to change, then it's not useful. But bottom line, you have to decide, if I don't like something, that's okay. I don't need any justification for it. And at the same time, what's within my control to be able to find something better, a better situation here.

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Jody Moore: I've heard you say that before. Like if we get the diagnosis, then does that help? Or does that just leave us going, oh great, I'm screwed here, you know? Interesting question. I do also, I don't know, just as I'm reading this question that this awesome person sent in, there's a little bit of like, of course that makes sense, right?

Like if I'm meeting someone new, I behave a little bit differently or if I'm around, you know, just acquaintances or strangers towards them than I do towards my spouse, or you, my sister, because there's a different level of comfort and familiarity and relationship. And I'm not saying that excuses what you think is bad behavior by any means I'm just saying we I feel like we sort of make it this extreme like he - I know I've done this before to myself I'm like, you know, look at my husband when we're with you know, like our team he's so friendly and then and then when it's just he and I at the end of the night, he doesn't even talk to me.

I sort of dramatize it in my own head when in reality, that's because we see each other all day, every day, and we've talked about everything and we do maybe need a break from each other. No, like there's a little bit of normalcy to that. I'm not saying there's not behavior going on here that you don't wanna tolerate or that you're not picking up on something inappropriate. I'm just saying the way that we dramatize it, do you know what I mean?

Natalie Clay: Yeah. The way I like to think about this is when you were single, you had some highs and some lows. And then we get married, and because there's that initial period where the neurochemistry is so intense that we think, finally, we found this situation where we can just be happy all the time and feel loved and supported and safe. The contrast of when our neurochemistry starts to re-regulate itself and we're left with the insecurities that we brought with us sometimes causes people to feel like something's gone wrong.

So what I heard in this question, she said they've been fighting their whole marriage. So I'm guessing it's two people that probably have a high emotional range to some degree, but it's easy then to sometimes step back

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and say, okay, but look what you're saying isn't okay, or the what you're doing isn't okay.

Where, what I think is a much more effective approach is if we assume the best about each other, because I think that gets us to a much more honest analysis. So like your example of at the end of the day, if we're not talking as much, if you're assuming the best about your husband and saying, okay, if I knew, which I do on some level, that he loves me and he does want me to be happy, then how might I interpret his behavior?

Oh, I know he's probably just tired, or I know he's a little introverted and he's tired. But what happens is we resist how we're feeling. Like if our insecurities are coming up or we're disappointed about something, we instantly, it's human nature, just like kids do, say, I don't want to feel this way.

And either I should just be happy with something I'm not, or they should be a little bit different. Where the solution isn't to do either of those things, but it's just to have a moment of, oh, I am just feeling disappointed, and that's okay.

Jody Moore: That's really good, yeah. You may have kind of already answered the second part of her question, but I wanna share it anyway in case there's anything else you wanna add. Because she goes on to say that she's trying, like you said, she's trying to have compassion for him and herself, and she says, "I feel like I need to start calling him out when he mistreats me and let him know it's not okay. But I have a lot of anger and resentment built up so I can't do it from a good place."

You know, this starts crossing over into boundaries. Do you want to speak to like, if you really are like, no, that's mistreatment, what do we do in that situation?

Natalie Clay: In situations of mistreatment, we don't want to leave it up to him to acknowledge and understand that his behavior isn't okay. Because he may know that on some level, but it's still happening. And I'm guessing

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that after being married for this long, he probably knows what you do and don't want. So I just don't see that being effective. And it's also putting a lot of your safety on him to be able to follow through on this, or even your emotional safety, where it sounds like you're looking for some justification to decide, I don't like this, and you're totally justified in it.

You don't need a doctor to diagnose him with anything or anyone to confirm it's emotional abuse. You can simply not like it, and that is valid. Now what do you want to do, knowing it's okay you don't like it? And that's the part that requires the vulnerability because it's, okay, that means I want to end the conversation. I want to say, listen, we're going to have to talk about this later, I'm feeling defensive. Or I'm not talking about this when you're angry.

Whatever it is, he's probably not gonna like it and that's where the vulnerability comes in and that's the part we want to avoid by getting him to see it different and him to change. Because then you don't have to do the work on yourself which is he doesn't like what I'm doing. He thinks I'm overreacting. Maybe I am overreacting. So we get rid of all of that chatter and make sure that we're protected in these situations by simply saying, I don't like it and that's okay.

Jody Moore: Have you heard Mel Robbins talk about her latest book? It's called Let Them. Yes. It's reminding me of that, right? Where you're like, don't try to convince him that this is wrong.

Like you said, he probably knows and maybe he doesn't think it's mistreatment. So it's like Mel Robbins' term, just let them. Not like let him mistreat you and just take it and don't do anything to stand up for yourself. But the second part of her, her let them tool is then let me, do I need to remove myself from the room when he's acting that way? Do I need to put up a boundary, right?

And say, I'm sorry, I'm not going to have a conversation when you're this upset. It's also just her question, because this is such a common one. I'd love to hear what you have to add on this, because you have a lot of

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experience coaching couples on this. But when the dance that we're used to doing is fighting, if that's how we communicate, that's how we move through conflict, whether we would call it resolving or maybe it doesn't get resolved, but that's what we do, is fight. Then as soon as one person stops fighting and the first time you do it, it will feel weird, right?

To be like, you know what? You're upset, but I'm not going to get upset. This is what I had to do in my mind at times when I've tried to break patterns like this, right? It's like, he's going to be negative and upset, but I'm not going to be negative and upset. That he's negative and upset. And it's so weird. Your brain kind of freaks out. Like, what do you mean? What are we going to do then instead? That's the only option.

But you break that pattern and you really can change these things, right? Have you seen couples have success with this? And what would you add to that?

Natalie Clay: Oh, absolutely. And I think that requires a certain level of vulnerability because even saying, and I really love that one, I think it's so helpful to kind of break up that resistance in our mind when you say, they're upset and I don't have to be. Couple things we have to remember is people say, well, that doesn't work. I'm like, well, that doesn't work if they're upset and I don't have to be means you feel great. You're not going to feel great.

Jody Moore: Or they say stop being upset.

Natalie Clay: Right, it doesn't mean that either. But that's where the vulnerability comes in, which is, and I like to think of it in a really logical, rational way, which is as soon as either one of you are feeling defensive, you're not actually communicating. You're two attorneys in court that are arguing their case and attorneys are not arguing for truth, they're looking to prove something. And what are we looking to prove in that situation? That my feelings are justified and yours aren't.

Or you're letting me down in the relationship. And that's not gonna go well because we can't really prove that. We're not dealing on the level of eternal

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truth here. So simply deciding like, okay, they're upset and I don't have to be just helps us remember that this is just a moment and we don't need to resolve it. We just need to let some time pass to get to the other side of it.

Jody Moore: It's super hard to do though.

Natalie Clay: And you know what's interesting is we have different, I call them kind of weapons of war, essentially. Like some people use harsh words. Other people just shut down and won't talk, and they know their partner's really uncomfortable and wants to talk. There's other people that go to people pleasing, which we don't think of that as a weapon, but it essentially is. Like, as long as you're okay with me, I'm safe. So it's all these different tactics, but as soon as we're in that place, you can tell we're not open to a conversation.

Like real communication says, I wanna understand how maybe I'm missing something here. And I wanna hear where you're coming from so I can learn a little bit more about you. We are not in that place when either one of us are feeling defensive.

So yes, it can be hard, but what we have to do is practice doing it a different way and showing our brain that even though we're doing it a different way, it's gonna feel really risky and irresponsible and scary, but for our brain to see, and it resolves in about the same amount of time, sometimes even less, then you can start getting more confidence in doing it that way. It doesn't take too many times to change that pattern.

Jody Moore: And I know you and I have both done this in various ways in our lives with different relationships and things. And we talk a lot about this, how like some days we're like, I did such a good job. Like my kid was so upset and I didn't get upset about it or whatever. And other days were like I just couldn't like I just I would I got defensive and whatever and so I just think that's important for people to know that especially if it's a longtime habit then it's like anything else.

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You're gonna practice it and sometimes you'll succeed and sometimes you won't, but you'll get better at it. It will get easier and you don't have to be perfect at it to still make a pretty significant change in your marriage.

Natalie Clay: Yeah. And I do think that we're drawn to certain people for certain reasons. We don't need to get into all of that right now, but subconsciously we are, and sometimes some of the things that we're drawn to sort of exacerbate some of our insecurities in our dynamic. Instead of looking at all of these interactions as something's gone wrong, we need to figure out how to do this differently.

If you look at it instead and know this is an opportunity to grow and to heal from things that have happened in the past, it can be a lot more useful and motivating when you're trying to come up with new patterns. Because that each time you're trying to respond in a different way is creating a new pattern.

So instead of, oh, this happened and then it happened again, so we're not making any progress, it's this happened and we did it slightly differently this time, which means we are on our way to making huge strides towards a different pattern.

Jody Moore: Okay. Again, I think this is kind of a common scenario nowadays. It says my husband changed his spiritual beliefs a year and a half ago, and we've done a lot of work to embrace our differences and find out how to work together. I believe I can make my marriage work with different spiritual beliefs. I'm struggling with the thought that I really want to be married, that is part of the same church as me and has the main goals in common with me. How do I know if this thought is my hang-up for being happy or if it's just really what I want?

Natalie Clay: So if someone that you respected said to you, "Yeah, that makes sense that you don't want it," does that feel like relief or does that feel like pressure to have to do something that you're not wanting to do? That's how you'll know. Because sometimes that thought says, "Something

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doesn't feel right, or I don't like this, and I don't know how I'm going to get to a place of peace," and so I don't like that. I don't want this. And that's real.

But we can hold two beliefs at the same time, which are, "I do not want to be in this marriage" and "I do not want to leave this marriage." Both can be true at the same time. So I would suggest if this is new, it's giving yourself some time to see how this lands for you and allowing yourself to not like certain aspects, but to also remember, I don't think we're even aiming for a time where we get to a point in our marriage where there's never any struggles. These struggles are our opportunity to learn and grow.

Jody Moore: Is what we want something that's like intrinsic, pointing me towards my best life, and we just have like pure desire, if you will, or is it all conditioned by our experiences and what people tell us? You know, like I'm always fascinated with how, like I really wanted a white kitchen forever, but that's only because Shay McGee told me I wanted a white kitchen. Now she's like, you don't want a white kitchen. You want like warm earth tones.

I'm like, oh yeah, that's what I want in my kitchen. Like what I want is I think mostly condition. And the reason I point that out is because whenever I find myself asking that, like, wait a second, what if... it might be true that what you really want, what you prefer, is to be married to someone who has your same spiritual beliefs and same goals. Okay.

But if it scares you then to think that maybe you should leave this marriage and you don't actually want to leave your marriage, at least right now, then there's no point in sitting around thinking about what you want. I always use this example in coaching when people are like, well, I just want it to be easier. I just want this to be different. I just want my husband to go back to church. I'm like, okay, but I want to be able to eat anything I want and not gain weight.

And I want to be able to just jump out a window and fly to wherever I wanna go. But do you know how much time I spend thinking about how I want

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those things? Zero, because I know that's just not reality. And so you can want something and just decide that if what you choose is stay in the marriage, for example, then thinking about it, focusing on it has zero upside. And it's tempting to do because you'll look around at your friends and be like, well, her husband goes to church with her and she has this in her marriage.

And like you said, there's no perfect marriage. It's all like compromised at some point. And so I think the question itself, even I just wonder if it's even a relevant question. Okay, you want it, but so what that you want it?

Natalie Clay: Yeah, and I think we're much more childlike in this area than we realize as adults because I think we're all so complex by how we all have different temperaments and different biology and we hold on to trauma different and we express emotion different and some people can experience emotion on a deeper level. I mean, that can all get really complicated, but we're actually all pretty simple at the same time. Like, we all want the same thing. We want to feel safe, which means accepted by a tribe.

So all of that though, when it comes down to, is this just something I want or is this something I'm being guided towards? I think it can all be the same thing. We don't have to know the answer to that, but that's where I like that. That's the kind of test for me is, if someone told you you're justified in that, does that feel good or bad?

Jody Moore: What else do you wanna add before we wrap this up?

Natalie Clay: Well, let me compare this to a different situation that they're not involved in, sometimes it's easier to see it there, where, like when I'm dealing with someone who is in a marriage where there's infidelity, someone will say to me like, this is not okay, right? Like, they can't just be engaging with this other person. Like, yeah, I can see that you don't like that and you didn't enter the marriage with the agreement that we'd be seeing other people, and yet this is happening.

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So as soon as you tell yourself it shouldn't be this way, then either you have to not care or you have to leave the situation to respect yourself, or we have to figure out how to get them to change. Or I think it's much more honest, and that's really what I feel like I'm always working with people on is how do we be much more honest with what we're wanting, not wanting, feeling, not feeling, instead of resisting it.

Then it's, okay, I do not like that and I do not want to stay in something long-term where this is going on, and at the same time, I'm not ready to leave it yet. Okay, let's just let the truth be the truth and then that helps get rid of all this shoulds.

So in a situation like that, it's like, yeah, you don't like it. Just like kids, they don't like going to math class, but we're like, is there a reason why we might have them stay in math? Yeah, there is. And so it's okay, they don't like it, but it's giving us that same permission, which is, are there reasons why I might want to stay in this?

Well, yeah, divorce is expensive. Maybe that's your only reason. Maybe it's for the kids and that's your only reason. I don't think there's any bad reasons. If you have a reason that's compelling you to stay, that's okay. As long as you're not telling yourself, I'm choosing this so I should be happy all the time, or I'm choosing this so they should change. That's where we get ourselves into trouble.

Because really, we are going to meet a lot of needs of each other, like people will sometimes say, like, well, if it's not up to my partner to meet my needs, what's the point of even being married? And I like to remind people like, no, we get lots of our needs met from our partner, I don't think you want to be in a relationship where they're not meeting any of your needs, and vice versa. But we take all that for granted, because we think it should be all of that plus everything.

But if we just remember, like, no, there's a lot of areas where we are meeting each other's needs, but then the areas where we're not, that's

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where we want to take some personal responsibility only because, not because you're not entitled to any of it, which by the way, you're not. But that's not the reason why. It's just because that's where freedom is gonna come. That's where growth is gonna come.

And oftentimes the things that we're struggling with in our relationship are things we brought with us into the marriage. It's our own insecurities from any stage of life, right? It's our own hangups and this situation brought it up, but they can't resolve it for you because if they're playing that role that you want them to play and so it feels better here, it's gonna pop up over there.

So that's why when these things come up, I think it helps to look at it like we're all flawed people. We're all insecure. We're all selfish at times. But are we trying our best? Do we care about each other? Do we want each other to be happy? Okay. Do we want to stay married for any reason at all? That's really all we need.

And then there's so much we can do to make the painful moments less painful, to stop all the fighting that's not beneficial, right? There's so much that can be done as long as we're focusing on the things that we actually do have control over.

Jody Moore: All right, so if you have a question for Natalie, I think for next time, rather than do them in writing, I'd love to have people call in and leave them on our hotline. We have a podcast hotline. It's 1-888-HI-JODY-M. That's H-I-J-O-D-Y-M, as in Moore. 1-888-HI-JODY-M.

And we'll do another episode of this because it's so useful. In the meanwhile, where can people get some more help from you, Natalie, with their marriages?

Natalie Clay: Yes. So if you are interested in talking to me about opportunities to help with your situation, you can just go to natalieclay.com/meet and you can schedule a consultation.

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Jody Moore: So just for clarity, that's natalieclay.com/meet, M-E-E-T, as in meet Natalie, and they're gonna talk to you live, yeah?

Natalie Clay: Yep.

Jody Moore: And do a consultation. Should it be just them, or should they bring their spouse, or what do you normally do there?

Natalie Clay: Whatever you're most comfortable with. If you are looking to do it together as a couple, that's obviously what I recommend. If you're both open to getting help, then yes, both come for the consultation. If your partner isn't at a point where they're ready to get help yet or they're not interested in that, you can also come on your own.

Jody Moore: Natalie Clay, natalieclay.com/meet. Okay, thank you Natalie for your time and your help and your expertise today.

Natalie Clay: Thanks Jody Moore.

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Oh wow, look at that. You made it to the end. Your time and attention is valuable, and I don't take it lightly that you made it this far. In fact, it tells me you might be like me; insatiably curious about people and life and potential and connection. Maybe you have big dreams but a small budget and no time. You're tired, but bored. You're content, but dissatisfied. Sound familiar? Come to a free coaching call and see for yourself what's possible: jodymoore.com/freecoaching to register. That's jodymoore.com/freecoaching.