

LL04-What's Real?

I'm Alvean Lyons,

and I'm Doug Weiss and welcome to love life.

So OK Douglas, you hear the word REAL a lot in this generation and there's a colloquialism, we have to keep it real... things have to be real we love reality television, everything is about what real is, but what happens when we're talking about real in terms of relationships? How do we know when a relationship is real?

So the funny part about that I think is that what we call real so often feels very unreal.

It feels more fake than anything, exactly, I mean reality T.V. really, reality?.

In any event. the question's a good one, how do you know when you found Mr or Ms Right? And what's the litmus test for that?

I said in another podcast, for me the litmus test is if you wake up every morning and you look at that person next to you and you say I love this person. I love this person and that love doesn't go away it's not something that you feel one day and not another. It's notone day somebody does something that puts you out of sorts and all of a sudden you're not in love when you never were.

Right, right and that's called infatuation perhaps it's intense it masquerades like love but it doesn't have the endurance of love and often it's about chemistry and lots of it.

Oh absolutely. I tell the story about my late wife Susan. We met once at an industry meeting. And then we did not meet face to face or even talk on the phone for over nine months. We had what turned into an email relationship. That sounds like something out of ancient times, the modern day version of love letters going back and forth in the seventeen hundreds on packet ships or whatever. It's OK, this generation does virtual relationships on Facebook and Twitter and text so yeah, we had back in the in the ninety's an email relationship and here's the funny part.

We fell in love.

By email, so that when we finally saw each other again I had forgotten what she looked like.

We met we agreed to meet in this hotel lobby and I brought a book knowing I got there a little early, and so I'm reading my book and every time anyone walked into the lobby I'd look up and think to myself is that her?.

So I got absorbed in the book and I'm reading the book and all of a sudden she's standing there and I look up what oh my that's Susan

It was like.... it was perfect. If Hollywood had directed this it could not have been done better.

There were these shaft of sunlight coming through the windows in the lobby like back lighting and she and she's just standing right there and I looked up and it was this angel. I mean it sounds corny, I know but that was the experience of it at the moment, it was this Angelic Presence and my heart leapt. My chest literally was racing and.

You knew.

I knew.

That you were in love.

And then I knew I was in love, but it wasn't because of the chemistry of seeing her, it was the nine months of writing back and forth and without any of the physical stuff in the way, understanding who this person was.

That's so interesting that you would say that because my husband whom I just freakin adore OK, is the same. He's just the best. We had a long distance relationship. We met on the street, literally on the street. So he was walking down the street one day and my dad was out of town on a business trip and I had his new sports car and I was on the other side of town than I was allowed to play in because Daddy was always where were you worried and I had my college roommate and my little sister in the car.

And I think my college roommate said to me, oh my God he's so cute, and she said that he looks like Eric which was a guy that I dated in college who was a model. So we were starting in a good place from my perspective.

So I decided that I would pull the car over. Forgive me guys, I was young, I didn't know any better, so I decided I would pull the car over and I was looking in my side mirror to determine as he got closer if he was as cute as Eric was and as he got closer and closer he got cuter, cuter and cuter. So I decided that I thought we would have a conversation. Well we talked that day at the car and then we had a phone conversation and.....

I love the fact that you're the one taking the lead here.

I was a millennial woman. And we ended up talking and let me be clear he didn't call me.

We exchanged phone numbers but he didn't call me, which I was not accustomed to, right, so I decided to call.

As guys you know, we're partly feral so.

But his logic was that he didn't think that I was going to take him seriously, so he didn't know that it made sense for him to make a phone call that would probably go nowhere given that sort of exchange that we had. I can tell you guys on a different day all the details of that, but for sake of time we end up having a very long conversation on the telephone and we go out for a date. We went to go see True Lies ,it was nineteen ninety four, and we stayed together after that and we went to two different colleges but because we didn't have.... similar to your story.... we did not have the physicality of each other to really muddy the waters of whether or not we had a real connection.

Much of our relationship was literally by letter because email was not a big thing then so we wrote letters back and forth and we talked on the phone and every vacation, every break, we would spend together. We would be inseparable but then we'd spend long periods of time separated again and I will admit that both of us, at a different points, saw other people kind of casually, and quietly knowing that we wanted to be with each other but the companionship of being long distance we didn't necessarily have the maturity to be able to handle that at nineteen and twenty years old

But there was not a question about the fact that he's different and she's different such that over time as we matured all the other kind of temporary fillers became completely unnecessary and it just became about us, because at the foundation of our relationship was an immense friendship. And I tell people all the time, marry your best friend.

Well there is real merit to that, to marrying someone that you have the kind of dynamic that you would have with a best friend. I can say to Matt, I need you here as my best friend but not as my husband and he can do that. It's like he can switch hit so he can say to me OK babe and I know you're my wife but I really have to tell you this.

And we could talk about some gorgeous woman that he saw or some really interesting romantic dream I could have had and we're not threatened by that because secrets are like cancer in a relationship and we don't keep secrets from each other and there's just a safe place that being able to be real with each other has afforded us. Because we're never in the business of hurting one another with anything that comes out of our mouths.

But to be real requires....it takes some effort.

Oh it does, it's easy to allow yourself to just sort of coast along in the fantasy world of the feelings that you're having in the moment for somebody rather than to step back and objectively understand who they are and whether this is the right person for you and sometimes we commit a kind of serial stupidity, we find ourselves repeating going

back to the same kind of person that we already know is not right for us. Right, it's nothing to do with them, they are not bad people they are not bad, they are just not right for us.

Exactly right. One of my favorite jokes by Paula Poundstone is her famous line about her cats that they keep eating rubber bands and spitting them up and she thinks that they just assume they've got a bad batch the last time. It's kind of like that when some people have a dating experience like that.

Well it didn't work out that time, but I'll try it again. They say that's the definition of insanity, doing the same thing over and over again and again thinking there will be different results and we do it in relationships.

I have to confess that I did that. Early in my life I had a pattern of being attracted to a certain kind of person and they were all, let me say categorically, beautiful people, wonderful people. I was a wounded person myself. Because of some things that had happened early in my life when I was a child. I kept being attracted to other wounded people who were not whole and together, instead of becoming whole, together we were wounded rather than being whole. And that pattern of behavior is, I think, something that gets repeated in many relationships.

Absolutely, we have an experience and then for some reason we have to feel that again, we have to try to get, maybe we're just trying to prove to ourselves that it's not us?

We've talked before about worthiness. Until you are whole it's hard to attract somebody that's whole. Anybody who's ever fished ...if you put a certain bait on the hook you're going to attract a certain kind of fish. If we don't change our bait we can't expect our catch to be different. On rare occasions you'll get a fish that is just absolutely starving and it will eat something that is not its usual. For some of us dating is like that, sort of catch and release.

Kind of like, it was beautiful but I got to put it back in the water. It can be that, but when we change who we are we put out something different which attracts something different and then you have the opportunity to create something different, but I think you so aptly said that it had to do with where you were and what you were bringing into that first exchange. What you were in pursuit of was a byproduct. We tend to mirror out what it is that we see in ourselves. If we see ourselves as broken we tend to look for brokenness. If we see ourselves as whole, we tend to look for wholeness and we put on those rose colored glasses where we're really not looking at the other person and we're caught up we've got all that... all those hormones coursing through our body we're just pumped.

At that moment we're not really looking carefully and we're not stepping outside of ourselves to see what's going on in this relationship.

And seeing that this is not amplifying, we're not resonating and creating something greater than what we are individually but we're actually in some ways subtracting and I think that's one of those moments where you have to step outside yourself, you have to look at the relationship and say, is this creating an energy that keeps fueling our feelings for each other, or is this creating an energy that...if you go home at the end of the date and you're kind of feeling like.....

But some people get addicted to the trauma, some people get addicted to the pain. Some people can have relational addictions the way that you can have drug addictions that you are so in pursuit of something you have to have this high that the pain gives you, so you're constantly feeding this thing that is killing you, not perhaps in a physical sense, but is emotionally destructive for you. But there's a high even in the pain, so we have to be honest with ourselves that where we are and what we're doing and what's going on. and sometimes part of the reason we don't pursue certain things is because of that fundamental fear of rejection. Yeah, that someone whole will not want me, so what I'm in pursuit of is broken because only someone broken would accept me.

We get hung up in the rush of feelings of being in love so that we keep pursuing that, rather than pursuing a person.

Absolutely, rather than pursuing the relationship and because we don't love ourselves first, we're waiting for somebody else to fill us rather than filling ourselves.

That's our story for today. We hope you're going to send us some stories that we'll put on the air and we'll respond to you and if you'd like to do that you can write to me, Doug@lovelife.digital or you can write me, Alvean@lovelife.digital. Bye folks, we'll be back next week.