

## LL06- The Best Way To say Goodbye

Hi I'm Doug Weiss,

And I'm Alvean Lyons, and this is Love Life.

And we've got an interesting topic to talk about today it's the breakup.

And we're joined today by Barbara Hamm Lee, a wonderful producer and co-conspirator in lovelife.

Actually, we've gotten several letters on the same thing, which is the whole idea of when do you call it quits. You know you're in a relationship you've been in it for a while or especially now with this internet dating where'd you go out, you finally meet someone in person then for whatever reason it's not working for you, right, and so the question is how do you say goodbye?

Well it's funny, to be very honest some people would be surprised to know, if they don't know me particularly well, that I'm friends with a lot of my Exes. A lot of them, and really good friends with them quite honestly.

I'm married to a wildly secure man but we grew up together, We've been together for going on a quarter of a century at this point so he's very much my best friend. So I have a level of freedom in our relationship as long as we maintain complete and total honesty. I don't lock myself down, I don't go sit someplace else when I'm having these conversations if it's a conversation I can't have with him present then it's a conversation you don't need to be participating in, so as a result we keep a level of integrity in our relationship that allows room for other kinds of relationships than most people probably would have. But I don't say goodbye, what I would probably say is that I will see you differently later as in we no longer have a romantic interest in one another. But we can remain in a relationship because many of my guy friends that I've dated I've actually had a friendship with inside of that relationship. So, when we took out the romantic element, the pursuit of romance, there was still this abiding friendship. So, by my saying, I see you differently is to say I won't see you through this lens, but I can continue to still have a relationship with you in this lens. So we've actually stayed friends.

There are very few people in my life that I've actually had to say goodbye to. I generally only do that if we are toxic for one another, and it doesn't mean you're a bad person we're just not good for each other and I think there's a couple of issues that come up. One is how long have you been together? I mean if this is your first date and it's not working right then I think that's a that's a very different kind of experience

Kind of like that commercial where people are talking honestly and then the guy says we're never going to see each other again.

Exactly, but if you've been together for a while, and you've been dating and it looks like it's progressing, and for whatever reason you've reached that point where it's not working, then I think that first of all you have a responsibility to yourself and to the other person to approach this with great integrity and directness and I don't profess to be an expert by a long shot. I've gotten it wrong more often than I've gotten it right, but those times that I have gotten it right, it's because I looked the other person in the eye. And I said are you happy with the way our relationship is going? Is this working for you?

Of course you can get the answer, yes. But in my experience. you pretty much know, you both know and if you're being honest with each other you both have to come clean about the fact that it's not working. Maybe you can salvage at that point, maybe you'll have a wonderful epiphany and understand why it's not working, but if it isn't, you've at least laid down the groundwork for a way to convert what was a romantic relationship --- to take up your point of view--- into a friendship, without doing that, "but we can be friends" conversation, which I think is just flat footed and a lot of times disingenuous.

I wonder, what if it really is one sided? I mean, what if it really is not working for me, but it is working for that person?

If they believe that it's working or that it will, all the more reason to be absolutely direct about it and say why it's not. Maybe that person has no idea of why, of what's not working in the relationship. And maybe-- this is not to say that you are going to try to change them-- we all understand we can't change other people, we can only change ourselves, but by helping them to be aware of the things that are problematic in the relationship you at least bring it to a point of crystallization where they can make an informed decision about how they feel about you and what they're prepared to do or not to do to address that situation. That's a choice, and by withholding that information from them you're not helping the situation you're actually being dishonest, and I think that we often do that because we think that's the kinder thing to do.

Have a temptation not to be direct.

And to hold back at exactly the point, where we should be saying in the kindest of ways, in the most loving of ways, this isn't working for me, here's why not.

So, if you say this isn't working, and you're not looking to continue a relationship, I mean you don't break up with them?

Do you allow them to come back into your space, do you do you play that game of well let's just talk about it some more? I mean in other words, do you make a clean break, move on, or is it more of a gradual kind of thing?

It's very interesting that you say that, because I don't think that any formula is absolute for all people, because the unique dynamics of that relationship really need to guide the decision that you make. If you're dealing with someone good, a person....they're truly in love with you... but they're the wrong person for you, allowing them to stay in your world is like choosing to allow them to go through water torture one droplet at a time. So, you're actually doing the kindest things sometimes by making it a clean break because you love them enough to let them go so they can find the person they need, rather than for you to be there, to shadow dance in their lives in such a way that it's just preventing them from really opening up to someone else so that this can really be a past chapter in their lives rather than the subtext of every new chapter of their life.

So, I really think it's on a case by case basis, that we can really do that well, based on how well you both know yourselves because one of the other things that can happen sometimes is that elements of your relationship don't work.

So let's be very matter of fact, let's say for instance you have wonderful physical chemistry but you're only good horizontal and you're not good vertical and so the problem is if you don't end the horizontal relationship, the person will NEVER vertically be able to walk into a relationship with someone else. So you have to allow for there to be sort of this inbetween space, because you know that you love your horizontal relationship so you're tempted to allow that to exist inside of the relationship too because that part does work, but a whole healthy relationship is not one dimensional so you have to be able to work both horizontally and vertically, and if you care about yourself and the other person, sometimes it needs to be a total and clear and clean break so that both of you can move on.

I'll give you an example of what happens when you don't handle things this way. I dated a woman who I think on our second date started talking about her ex-husband and she was the one that left the marriage. She left the marriage because, as she said it, he doted on her too much, and smothered her when he was too needy-- that's her description-- and then she looked at me wistfully and said.

"But I miss him and I tried to get back with him but he's moved on". And I thought to myself as she was telling me this story, yes he's moved on you have it right, and it was very clear to me that as delightful as she was, there was no room for us to have a relationship until she had closure. He would always be, if you will, in the room with us, and how could she and I build any kind of positive relationship?

Wow. So here's a real practical question. Say you're engaged and things don't work out for whatever reason

I'm looking at you having a female question, so do you give back the ring?

I think it's always the polite thing to do to offer the ring back. Some of us really don't want to give it back because some of us feel like it's a compensation gift for how much time I had to put up with you.

So you offered a female perspective but I think that it is the gracious appropriate thing to do to offer, would you like the ring back, and I talk about the ring but there are a lot of people who when they come together in a relationship they come together as a household. They buy things together, they do all of that.

So what is the best way after you've had that honest conversation and you've looked them in the eye and you told them very specifically... if you are the person doing the break up...should you be the one then to just to take your things and go, or do you expect them to take theirs?

Well so I've been on all sides of this one, and I can tell you I don't think that there's again, an exact science to it. I think a lot has to do with the degree of respect and kindness that you harbor for each other.

I can tell you the wrong way to do this, which is the brutal: and get out and take your things now or you've got three days or whatever. That is not a pleasant experience to go through. To go from, we are in a relationship and we love each other, too and you're a stranger and I don't want your things in my house. There's a lot more going on that wasn't coming to the surface. There must have been some pretty deep seeded anger and resentment for that to play out that way. On the other hand, I think you do have to have boundaries and I think you have to talk about it openly and say, so we need to find a way to unwind certain accommodations we've made with each other, and if one of those is living together, then we need to talk about this and not do it in anger and rancor.

At least I never have gone into a relationship, ended it and wanted it to be an angry, ugly experience. I wanted to find a way, if it was at all possible, for us to continue to have some kind, of I won't say friendship, because that may not be in the cards, but at least some caring about each other that went on beyond the relationship  
I'm not capable personally, of caring deeply about somebody and then throwing a switch and not suddenly caring about them. I don't know how to do that.

I had a friend who actually wrote out a contract. That she and this person were deciding to live together and it said, if this does not work you have thirty days to move out.

A relationship, not even a marriage but it worked for them.

To each their own, I mean there's no perfect way to say goodbye, but there are sensitive, caring, thoughtful, and respectful ways to do so.

We want to hear from you. We want to hear to hear your stories. Good and bad break ups that you might have had. So write to us at [alvean@lovelife.digital](mailto:alvean@lovelife.digital) or [doug@lovelife.digital](mailto:doug@lovelife.digital), and we want to thank Barbara Hamm Lee and Todd Washburn our recording engineer, and part of the extended love life family. We will see you next week.