

LL23-Do Opposites Attract?

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

So we've been talking a lot about the connection between people, what works and what doesn't work and just all of those delicious things in between, and today we have an interesting question from our audience and the question is about how two people come together and what two people come together and more specifically do opposites really attract? Is there any truth in that saying and do you really need contrast or reflection to create a lasting relationship? What makes for good connectivity is it really what people say? So Douglas. What's your thinking?

Well . I'm tempted to say.....Hogwash.

Well but with a caveat. I've heard arguments on both sides of this, that people have to be alike or that they have to be very different. And. At least in my experience, I've seen both work brilliantly and I've seen both fail brilliantly. I don't think that the question really is about whether somebody is like you or not like you. I think that human hearts are amazing things and what causes us to be attracted to another person is complex and fascinating. But I do think that there is one thing that must be the same, and that's your values. I think when relationships exist between two people and there isn't a fundamental agreement around what you hold important, where you come from, what your morality is, what your views are, your ethics how you feel about your relationships with others and how you feel about your relationship, if you have faith, with God. Those are really important things and if they're not synchronous, then I think we might add that to your professor's list of predictors of relationships that will fail. That compass between you as you both navigate together on the important stuff is so critical

I would have to agree. I think that when we think of opposites, people think about it really in terms of up and down, black and white. They're just so polar, and I think of it more in terms of complimentary. I happen to do people for a living, my husband does technology. So on the surface it appears that we are very opposite in the kinds of things that we do, where our inclinations and strengths

are. But because fundamentally, as you reference Douglas, our values are so similar how those values are translated into the way that we live may be slightly different but those differences are wildly complimentary in that he has areas of strength where I have areas of weakness. I have areas of strength where he has areas of weakness. Together, collectively, we're stronger than we are individually and in that sense I think that opposites attracting can be a wonderful thing because of the compliment that you bring into somebody else's world. But to your point, if we don't fundamentally believe in the same kinds of things, if we don't share common ground in terms of where X marks the spot, we are here, navigating to the next place is very hard. To be able to be synchronized in the progression of a relationship when you are on two different feet, you're starting on your left foot, I'm starting on my right foot but we're supposed to be marching together that's really difficult to do. so could not agree with you more in terms of the importance of being able to have the fundamental things in unison. Not necessarily identical, but just that our priorities are very similar. In our family, we have three core values, and it's God, Family, Education. We really believe in those three things. Now what that looks like is that we leave room for each of us to express that uniquely to our personhood but it is reflected in the way that we live and make our decisions. So, I'm so in support of what it is that you are saying in terms of the commonality of value structure.

So let me flip this around the other way because I've heard this a number of times from friends, people who had a relationship that didn't really last, it wasn't durable. And the explanation was that we really didn't have that much in common Do you think you have to have things in common in order to have a strong relationship?

Well, I would say on some level, depending upon how tightly your values align with your activity would be the issue of having things in common. If my values and my activity are very deeply aligned and your values and your activities are very deeply aligned and they are not similar in any way, that would make it difficult for us. If Sunday morning I believe that that should be a time of worship and you believe Sunday morning should be your preparation for the football game than we're going to have some difficulty where that's concerned. It's us, it's fundamental to who I am so something that is fundamental to me you don't want to be a part of, or worse yet you may not be a supporter of. It's OK if we do things differently, if we're mutually supportive of each other's interests. The

problem is when not only do I not share your interest, but I'm not supportive of you having your interest. That could create some significant division and ultimately the feeling that we don't have much or enough in common to be able to keep this relationship going.

I think sometimes though that it is used as an explanation or rationalization for other things which are not working in a relationship, rather than being the driving force. I suspect that for two people to be attracted to one another there had to be enough commonality, enough things that they shared in interest, to have gotten together in the first place.

Well I would argue that point slightly. I mean so many people unfortunately get into a relationship as a byproduct of their visual preferences and they often ignore the substantive things that are going to make for a lasting connection. So, if it is my default way of doing things to look for someone who looks like Audrey Hepburn or to look for someone who looks like Meghan Markel or whatever, that may be what I look for long before I even find out whether or not we have any commonalities or shared values. I have already x'd out ninety percent of the room because they don't fall into that very finite box of my visual preferences and it takes a level of maturity to get to a point where you're looking for more than what instantly is the shiny new Mercedes.

I take your point and I think it's exactly right. I think. The larger context around that is, am I just window shopping for something? Am I'm just looking at the bright shiny object? if I'd taken the time to understand who this person is things might be different. To be perfectly candid, I hadn't thought about the fact that there are there are indeed situations where people have not taken the time to learn enough about the other person to say, this person really is right for me beyond the superficial. It's an interesting exercise, I don't know if you do this in your practice, but get a couple and ask them to write down on a piece of paper what they value about the other person. Be explicit, what is it that attracts you to that person? Don't allow that to be something that just resides in the background unsaid, unvoiced but actually make it explicit. I participated in in a workshop in which this was used as a sort of conversation starter it was very effective and fascinating how frequently people were surprised at what it was that the other person found desirable about them.

To the previous point about how we are choosing our partners, there is a show that comes on M.T.V. called *Are You The One*. In very quick context, basically it takes some twenty somethings... a bunch of them together.....and each of them have gone through very intensive questioning to figure out what kind of partner would really be ideal for them. That person is inside of the house but their job is to figure out who their ideal mate is supposed to be? With which person would you have the best outcome in a real lasting relationship? If they're able to find it in, I want to say. it's like ten weeks time, they win a million dollars split between these eleven couples. What is so interesting to see, is how people come into that house over and over again and they choose their visual preferences over and over again. Each week they have to find out how many right matches they figured out. They never know who matched, they just find out whether or not they have one, three, ten and ultimately the goal is to get ten by the tenth week. So I say in you reference that to say that it is it is a phenomenon which exists inside of our Culture, that people continue to use the worst ways of finding connection that are based on the lowest levels of real context and the highest levels of superficiality. The truth is that until we start looking for more, and until we start examining what we really value and understanding who each other are beyond the superficial, we really don't even have to consider whether they are opposites. We have to figure out whether it's people that can work together.

So this is would explain of course why Tinder or Bumble are sites where you just swipe. In my book, *Life Love and Internet Dating*, I talked about how important it is to have a decent picture in your profile and why I could never understand people who would spend the money to be up on a website without a picture. For some, it's as if they are saying love me because of what I say. The even more inexplicable ones are the ones who have no picture and have nothing to say about themselves beyond female, twenty five. What is that statement? So the antithesis of Tinder. I know in fact that you're absolutely correct, that we do tend to rely on a visual stimulus, on that image of somebody. Something must be wrong with me, because if you were to look at the women in my life none of them look alike.

Well we have to stop using the least important things to define the most important decisions that were ever going to make and our partner is

unequivocally that.

Another episode of Love Life...always fascinating, always fun to be with you. We so much appreciate our listeners and we hope you'll be back next week for another episode. Thank you to Barbara Hamm Lee, our producer, and Todd Washburn, our recording engineer. We'll see you next week.