

LL-26 It Is All About Me

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

So Alvean, we're partners?

Yes we are.

Well I want to tell you.....It's really all about me.

I'm so glad we've had that revelation.

Well I'm kidding of course, but sometimes in a relationship one or the other partner seems to put themselves first, and you get the feeling it really is all about them. The question we've been asked is What do you do about that.

Well I'll tell you, in some of the work that I've done over the years one of the more difficult experiences I've had is to work with couples through is this very thing where someone is so focused on their needs being met that they're really not concerned about the other person. We talked about empathy a few weeks ago and really being able to see beyond yourself and into the emotions, to the needs, to the fears, the issues that may be the struggle and the pain of somebody else. When you're in a relationship with someone who, in all honesty boiling it down, who's just selfish, truly selfcentered that it is just about their happiness and as long as they are happy in the relationship they believe it's a good relationship, really ignoring the experience of the other person. What is that person experiencing? It is profoundly dangerous in relationships to be with someone who does not value you, for you to matter and your needs to matter inside of that relationship. It happens more commonly than people would like to acknowledge.

I think there's a reciprocal here and that is that there are people..... I mean you'd think it would be easy for you to spot somebody who's that selfcentered I think the truth is that there are people who consciously or unconsciously perhaps go into relationships for precisely that reason. They see themselves in

relationship with another person as the subservient partner. They see themselves as having to placate, to please the other person and there's an imbalance in the relationship from the beginning that will ultimately cause both parties discomfort. Less so for the one that's ascendant, more for the one that's placating. But indeed I have been around this kind of behavior before and seen this. We try to avoid as much as possible any gender stereotyping but sometimes you can't, and at least in my experience I've seen this more more commonly with women than men. Women who get into a relationship with a man and cater to this kind of self-centeredness as sort of a badge of honor. And they feel themselves more Womanly, more giving, more emotionally expansive, because they are catering to this incredibly destructive behavior. So I've offered up a male perspective there but what's your take?

Well I would say and since we actually rarely go this place, why not for this subject matter consider it as love making. The most wonderful experience to have, love making, is to be with a partner whose joy comes from your joy. And if you can have two people experiencing this whose priority is equally the other person, both people leave that intimate experience thrilled for what this has been . Because your happiness, your moment of high was my pursuit and my moment of high was your pursuit, so what happens in that space is one of the most incredible feelings you will ever have. If we were to take that from it's horizontal space and turn it into its vertical space, relationships need to be about mutually being interested in the joy of the other person, not at the expense of one's own but rather that I am choosing a relationship with someone who is just as interested in pleasing, in being there and satisfying me, as I am them. So there is a beautiful and healthy reciprocity that exists that we can be very aware of horizontally but tend to be very ignorant of vertically. When we're looking for who we should and how we should, watch for the little things. It's like the Bronx Tale if anybody's ever seen that movie. One of the main characters says that when you're choosing a girl open her door and then watch to see if she reaches over to open yours.....this was back before automatic openings. It showed self absorbance if you didn't even recognize that your partner was locked out of their side of the car. For me as a woman, with my husband I wanted to see that he would wait till I sat in the car because I opened my own door, but many times he would make sure that I was sitting in the car and the door was closed before he sat in the car. So that primal sense of being covered, protected, was evident in those things. When we used to be broke college students, we would go to the

laundromat because we didn't have our own washer and dryer is inside of our respective apartments. So we'd go to the laundromat and he would fold my undergarments and as silly as it may sound, I love the fact that something so small as undergarments that you can easily just put in the corner after you folded all the main things.... nobody would be offended..... he would fold the undergarments. And it said to me what I have experienced in relationship with him, that the smallest most intimate details of my world he cared about doing them. It's tiny little things that we do one for another that speak to our interest in the other person's satisfaction wholeness and fulfillment.

I think we should add that there are times in every relationship. Where one partner or the other needs more from the other Health issues certainly. I remember when my father died and my wife could see just how difficult this was for me and that I was struggling with it. And there was a period of probably a couple of months, where probably it was all about me. I'd like to think it wasn't quite that extreme but I wasn't aware during that period. I was kind of down in the dumps and she rose to that occasion just as later in our relationship when she was ill I had to rise to the occasion. So to your point, putting the other person's needs ahead of your own is the surest way to ensure that your needs are going to be met. I mean if you want to look at it in that sort of transactional sense. But a healthy relationship is one where you're seeking a richer experience, joy, the happiness of the other individual, and that's your priority.

Absolutely, there is something so beautiful about selfless individuals and I want to be very clear because you referenced it so appropriately earlier that we're not talking about people who choose relationships so that they can be martyrs inside of their relationships. We're talking about individuals who recognize the value and beauty of their partner and that that is one of the most important things to them. They behave out that appreciation, that gratitude, that love and adoration for their partner through the choices that they are making. There's times when we can allow ourselves to be a model to our partner because sometimes our partners did not have the experience of watching healthy love. They did not have the experience of watching selfless love, and sometimes it requires that we show them how to be what it is that we want. We model for them that kind of love because we don't do ourselves any service by asking for something that we're not willing to be to our partner. We need to be the thing that we're asking of our partner. That is the most effective and healthiest way to be able to say and show

love the way that we want to be loved. The way that we may need to be loved at some point. I will say with one small caveat understanding love languages as well, because how I may need to be loved may be different than the way that I naturally give love or how you need to be love may not necessarily be my natural way of getting or receiving love. For us to be able to flex our languages in such a way that if acts of service as what translates as love for you but words of affirmation is what translates for me being able to flex back and forth between those things so that I can show you what affirmation sounds like and you can show me what acts of service look like. We can both speak each other's love languages in ways that neither of us question how much we are loved or the priority that we represent in each other's lives. So rather than putting our selves ahead of others we want to put our partner ahead of ourselves the way that God loves us indeed.

And that is another episode of Love Life.

One of our favorite things is to be able to respond to questions from listeners we hope that if you have a question you'll send it to us at, alvean@lovelife.digital or doug@lovelife.digital and we'll respond to you on the air. That's it for this week. I want to thank you, our listeners. We love you Our producer Barbara Hamm Lee, Todd Washburn our recording engineer, and will be back with you next week.