

LL37-The Art of Persuasion

I'm Alvean Lyons, and I'm Doug Weiss and welcome to Love Life.

So Douglas, this week our audience wants to talk about the art of persuasion. How do we reach compromise in a relationship, how do you get what you want? Do you have any ideas how to effectively do that?

I want to start by recommending a wonderful book. It was written primarily for the workplace but I think it has tremendous relevance in interpersonal relationships regardless of the circumstance. It's called *Crucial Conversations*. So what's a crucial conversation? Well some of the characteristics are that there's an obvious point of disagreement in the conversation. The stakes are high and it's emotionally charged. Sound familiar? To me that's a lot of relationship conversations. We have issues of compromise that need to get resolved. A number of observations from that book that I want to share. The first is that we all have a filter. We're not even conscious of the fact that we have a filter. Filters are the sum of our life experience, how we have dealt with circumstances akin to what we're dealing with now in the past, how they were resolved, and what the outcomes were. You could say here it's everything from your childhood on but that's the filter we apply, and we apply it so quickly that often we're not even aware of the fact that we're applying it, and it conditions our response. That's the first point. The second is that we (and this is interesting because in last week's episode we talked about this very topic) we often don't listen well to other people. We are preparing the next argument in our own mind even as they are speaking. We've already disagreed before we've heard them out. Both the filter and the inability to listen carefully contribute to what is inevitably going to be a difficult outcome in a crucial conversation. I would say that where we really have to start a crucial conversation is backwards. We have to start with the desired outcome, with the ending. What success is at the end. Is it about my winning at all costs? Is it about my creating an environment where you feel safe to discuss with me whatever it is that you're feeling? Or am I the kind of person that wants to flee at the first sign of any conflict? So the fight or flight instinct kick in in any emotionally charged situation. The fight is one we all clearly acknowledge. You spoke about this recently, the degree to which things can turn personal in a heartbeat and everything gets escalated to a nuclear outcome. If I can't be heard the way I want to be heard, if you won't acknowledge what I want to say then I'm going to take my football and leave. I'm going to disengage whether physically or emotionally I'm just not with you anymore. In a Podcast not that long ago I remember you talking about the signs of the death of a relationship I'm paraphrasing here and I think what I heard you say was when people don't even care enough to fight anymore, the relationship is over. So the lessons from crucial conversation, and there are many, are:

Start by acknowledging and echoing back what you've heard to make sure that you understand and to prevent that filter from just kicking in.

Second, probe, try to understand what's behind what's being said. Often, we talk cryptically. We don't feel comfortable enough with what it is we want to say to another person because the stakes are high, and so we use euphemisms, indirections, we mask what we're really concerned about in the conversation and so it's never going to reach a good resolution because we're shadowboxing with each other, we're not really talking about the thing, the elephant in the room. We're talking about everything but that. So it's important to probe a little bit and see if you can get to the heart of what's really on someone's mind. The echoing gives somebody a chance to do that. Here's what I think you said, is that what you're trying to tell me? That gives somebody an opportunity to step back and maybe restate what's on their mind, it gives you time to think about what they're really saying. That's a useful tool

The other part of this is that it's necessary for you both to reach a place in the conversation, if you're going to attain some compromise that says I'm not going to get everything I want, you're not going to get everything you want. This isn't a competition it is a race to the Middle. It's an opportunity for us to grow together by finding some optimal set of conditions that we can both agree upon whatever they happen to be. It's not going to be perfect. Now that may mean sometimes that you're going to concede something. It happens.

But it's not a quid pro quo folks, you got it last time I get it this. More often than not if you engage in the kind of behaviors that we're talking about you can find the path to a middle ground. You can find the place where you can both agree. So finding points of agreement rather than points of disagreement in the course of the conversation is a good beginning point for attaining that compromise. So acknowledge what you've heard. Find the points of agreement, and then use those points of agreement to see if you can fashion between you a larger agreement around whatever's the subject of your altercation.

Well what I love in what you said was the notion of honesty I always say that is that the truth is much like using your G.P.S. It is your start point. If you want to get from where you are to where you'd like to go, you have to put in your current location. If you lie about your start point you begin this journey planning to get lost so it is so essential that we are honest about what we are really thinking, how we're really feeling, what we really want in all of this so that we can figure out where are we now on the map and how we get from where we are now to where we want to arrive. I watch often as couples work through their stuff, people not saying what's really going on inside, when someone digs their feet in the sand. This is rarely about the issue that we're discussing, there is something that is underlying I will not compromise on. There is a meaning associated with this conversation and this submission that I cannot allow, that is deeper than this moment and if we talk about what that is, if underneath that it's destroying my core values, this is something that I hated as a child, this is something that has always made me feelif I'm honest about that you will discover. But he who cares and loves you will discover that. Suddenly the thing that they thought they wanted they don't want so bad that you have to feel badly, but when we don't tell the truth about how we feel we don't give our partners the opportunity to hear and understand us, to recognize why it's so significant to us and to even figure out well what I thought was a big deal for me isn't after hearing what this means for you. Let's find a way that you don't have to feel that but we can accomplish this. If we hide those things we are plugging in the wrong start point inside of our G.P.S. and everybody wants to arrive somewhere

I love that analogy.

I think that the other important thing that needs to happen early in the conversation is establishing a sense of safety. When people don't feel safe in a conversation that's when they're either going to fight back or that's when the fight or flight is going to take place because fear is inside of that and fear can take a lot of forms. Fear can mean you're going to reject what I'm feeling. Fear can be actually a fear of something physical. My partner is somebody who's very demonstrative physically and I've seen ---guys lash out--- guys, I'm speaking to you here. I've seen them in a highly emotional state exhibit what I could interpret as rage or physicality and that scares me and so I don't want to talk about the subject because I'm scared. I don't want to trigger that. So, understanding this is important for people in a disagreement. To start you need to have some groundrules and some sense of safety. One of the most important things that you can say to somebody in a conversation where there is a fundamental highly charged disagreement is to set the most important ground rule. Find your own words. Mine are: nothing you are going to say to me today is going to change how I feel about you. I love you, I will always love you. We'll get through this. We may not agree, but nothing that you're going to say to me is going to change that fundamental thing.

And once you've set that as the baseline for your conversation. You're off to a pretty good start. Chances are that you're not going to ever let it get out of hand because you've established from the beginning that sense of safety, established the ground rules....we are in this together. When we talk as we did in a number of our podcast recently about unconditionality in love, that's what unconditionality is. I go to the spiritual, that's the way God loves us. No matter how we mess up, no matter what we do he's ready to forgive us, ready to love us. He's forgotten, he's put it aside. He has our back. When you establish that with your mate, when your partner in life is someone that feels that you care about them that way there are no conditions on your feelings for them, then you can navigate any conversation no matter how difficult it may be. Because there is safety.

Absolutely, it's the environments that we've talked about. It's the atmospheres we talk about. It's are you creating the conditions for me to be my full self, to be emotionally naked before you and to know that it is safe for me to be able to do that. And when I can that means that we have the chance to create something better as a result of this. Each one of these things that could have been the breaking point in other

relationships can end up being the bricks of, the foundations and stairs and newer heights inside of a relationship because I saw how you handled this. You made me trust you and so I can reveal more and more of who I am to you and go through the challenges without the fear that this is going to end us or change the way that you see me when I disclose what I struggle with on the inside. Finding our way to compromise is a heck of a lot easier when you're actually talking to the person about what really matters to them. It's a truism that I think we all intuitively understand that while we don't seek adversity when we have navigated adversity we emerge stronger. We talk about it as being character defining.

And let me tell you that when a couple has navigated together adversity, they are they are stronger as a Couple. And that equips you for what life is going to deal because all of our lives we're going to face adversity at some point or another. We hope it's not going to be too difficult but to be perfectly honest in a relationship one of us is going to outlive the other. I've already been through that and I can tell you that's not one of the easy things in life.

Hopefully that's the last of the ones that we're going to have to deal with but but often we go through many many challenges before we get to that destination, and navigating those is not just a test of our characters it's a test of our relationship, and it's defining for who we are and who we want to be. It is the opportunity to be our best selves or not. in a play of words of course our pod cast it's called love life but when you learn how to do love well you get a chance to do life even better.

What a great note. I think we'll end on that because there's nothing I could say that hasn't been said.

We've enjoyed this time with you. We're just so grateful for the opportunity to talk with you each week and thank you for sharing our podcast with all of your friends. If you have some thoughts, comments you'd like to offer please write to us at doug@lovelife.digital or alvean@lovelife.digital

We want to thank Chelsea Washington, our producer, Todd Washburn, our Recording Engineer and the entire Love Life family, including you, our listeners. We'll be back next week with another episode. Until then, have a wonderful week. Bye folks.