

LL57-What are your biggest regrets?

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

Alvean I've got a question for you. This did not come from our audience. Okay, this is my own question, actually. Is there a use by date for marriages? Let me put that another way. Do you think that there's a point in life where couples should probably just agree to live together but not get married?

Alvean:

Do I think so? Let me make sure that I fully understand this question. Do I think that there is an age, almost an expiration date at which individuals should just live together as opposed to getting married?

Doug:

To amplify just a little bit. There are practical considerations. I mean, how you handle your retirement, how you handle health care issues, how you handle taxes, all of these things, are among many practical considerations. But that's not what I'm focused on, I'm really talking about whether there is a point in time where marriage, the addition of that formality, particular structure is probably not advised.

Alvean:

I think that has less to do with age than it has to do with a perspective. I think that age can offer a perspective such that perhaps marriage isn't the end goal for the relationship. But I don't think that that is necessarily a byproduct of age, per se, that there's an expiration date. If you are 70 years old, when you guys are serious enough, should you get married? if you're 62 years old? is there is there a particular date like a retirement date, I don't necessarily think so.

I just love people. So I like people of every age; girlfriends that are practically my kid's age, girlfriends that are my parent's age, and everything in between. I have a girlfriend who just got married last year. She is 70 and loves being a wife again, because she lost her husband several years ago. And I mean, several decades prior, but she didn't want to get married. She dated and enjoyed dating, but she did not necessarily want to get married. And then she found her beau as she referred to him, and there was this thing about their relationship that lit both of them up. They made a decision that they wanted to leave this earth having belonged to each other in a way that was not only acknowledged by their own personal commitment, but acknowledged by the masses, so to speak, that that she was his wife, and that he was her husband. They did a destination wedding. I mean, they still did it up, it was their first wedding minus, you know, the white dress with the 200-foot train, they skipped some of those things. But they really did do all the romance around getting married, and she couldn't be happier. So I don't know that anyone should steal that from someone, but I can understand people coming to a place and a perspective that says that we are enough right here. We don't need anything else. We're both totally happy. And if that's the case, I'm totally good for it. But I don't know that I would withhold this brass ring just because of a set age.

Doug:

Well, you know, I wasn't asking the question for me. But I did have an ulterior motive. Increasingly I've noticed that couples I know of my age –I am 71 and a half years old--couples who were married and lost their spouse through divorce or death and subsequently met someone else, elected not to get married. Peggy and I had exactly this conversation not very long ago, kind of scratching our heads about how we felt about it, whether it made any difference to us or not.

Alvean:

What did you guys decide? I'm so curious.

Doug: Well, I don't know if we have decided, but I think that our initial-- and I won't speak for Peggy, our initial reaction was, what would it change? Would it increase or in some way improve our relationship? In which case there's every good reason to do it? Or would it become an impediment in some way?

Alvean:

How do you think that marriage at this point in your in your life could potentially be an impediment?

Doug

I think for some people, it changes the tenor of the relationship, the dialogue and the consequentiality of the relationship. It adds a structure to it that can feel constraining. I'm just speaking for myself, but I think that it adds a different gravity. I feel as bonded to Peggy as I could be. I can't envision a scenario in which I would feel more bonded.

Alvean:

How long have you guys been together now? Officially,

Doug

Two plus years. I have no sense of that diminishing, if anything, increasing.

Alvean:

And you'd be perfectly fine if you guys didn't get married?

Doug

I think I want anything she would want but I think I'd be fine if we didn't. Yes, I mean, the things that I need to do to be responsible in my relationship financially and otherwise, I am already doing. I don't feel as if there are other steps, but I would be happy to take them. But I also I don't feel that marriage is the *raison d'être* for doing those things.

Alvean:

I wonder, though, because marriage is, as you know, as much between two people, as it is everyone around

What if you just you did it for the two of you? There's just that thing that is between you, almost like your own little secret that people don't even know, your little adventure? We decided that we're going to cast it to the wind, and we're just going to make sure that if it ever comes down to that day, that she can make the decision for me, or I can make the decisions for her. Because legally, we're just gonna be tactical. Legally, we can, but it's, but it's so not for anybody else. And it's so not to change the way everybody else relates to us, or the rules they want to put upon us, so to speak about our love. Don't even tell anybody Peggy and I got married last year, nobody even knows. Would you ever consider doing something like that?

Doug:

I think the question ultimately is, would that in and of itself, increase or improve our relationship? If the answer is yes, then by all means, we should. I didn't hear that from Peggy, that it would materially change or improve our relationship. But asking about it was a good and a healthy conversation to have, and one that we should revisit periodically when either of us feels compelled to do. I certainly would never take it off the table. But neither am I feeling any particular need to put it on the table either. We are just still very cautious with each other, you know, I have my own home, we have our own friends, we have our own lives outside of our relationship, and we have one together. But the primary relationship we have is the one we share.

But I'm interested in this largely because I have observed the phenomenon among an extraordinary number of couples that I have met. Maybe it's sort of being more observant but it seems to me that the number of couples who have made the decision not to get married is increasing.

Alvean:

I think that might just be the trend that we're seeing in our society as a whole. We are evolving and I hate to say it this way, but we're almost a post marriage society. Some people like the idea, being able to choose their partner each day, rather than be obligated to their partner each day. Just as a perspective, I happen to be in love with marriage, but it's because I love my marriage. And if I didn't have that experience, I might think very differently about marriage. You know, so I love the idea of people spending forever together. You know, I'm a sucker for the Notebook. I don't care what anybody says. I've watched it like 1000 times. But I just say I think that we're changing as a society and our concept of relationships, rules and structure is changing significantly. And we're seeing that on every level. And this perhaps, maybe just one of them.

Doug:

I wonder if this will persist because I've read a number of articles of late that suggest that amongst millennials marriage and fidelity is on the rise. There are fewer divorces, fewer separations?

Maybe this is a boomer phenomena, and maybe boomers were caught up in living inside of all of the traditional roles, and finally, they're at a different point in their life. I suspect that we observed in our parent's generation, a generation that stayed together no matter what. That that may be the reason why some said, no, not for me. If marriage is not working, and I've invested the effort to try to make it work, past a certain point, I'm going to stop. I think that may have had some effect. It will be interesting to see over the next decade whether that trend continues.

Alvean:

I agree. I just think that as a culture, we're in much greater pursuit of happiness at this point. And whatever happiness means, inside marriage or outside of marriage. That is what people are far more committed to.

Doug:

That's a great punctuation point on the conversation. We wish you happiness, and we hope that you will be back next week to hear another episode of love life. In the meantime, write to us at doug@lovelife.digital or alvean@lovelife.digital

We want to thank Kamaria Mason, 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.