

## Moving in Together

You know, Alvean, we often get the question, where do the ideas come from for these episodes, and in this case, I want to confess something. I'm going to tell our audience that in this case, the idea for the topic came from real life, as all of ours do, but from my life in particular, because I've just been through the very thing we're going to talk about today, that is, moving in together. The decision to move in together is one of those often interesting, sometimes difficult, sometimes challenging, but usually rewarding decisions that we make in life. So, once you've made that decision, there's a whole flock of things that you have to navigate. And I wonder if in your practice, you run across any of the fallout, the issues that arise from this?

Yeah, that he doesn't put the toilet seat down, and she squeezes the toothpaste from the top instead of the bottom, and he likes to put the toilet paper one way, and she prefers the toilet paper.....

Oh, it definitely has to go down

from behind or from the front? And I know lots of people who like it to come down from the back. So all of these are little idiosyncrasies for how we like to do things. Even the cabinets, when he cooks, he leaves all the cabinet doors open, and she likes you to close every cabinet door, and these little power struggles come from the way that people like to live. The answer is yes, I do hear them and, and coach and counsel people through them. The truth is that most of the time, we are creatures of habit; the ways in which we like to operate inside of our spaces. And having to accommodate someone else being in our space can be very challenging. What I have found just in anecdotal experience through coaching is that people tend to do better if they move into a property together that neither of them have lived in before. So that there is a clean slate for how things might need to operate.

Well, you know, that strikes home. We did not do that, I actually moved into Peggy's house.

God bless you.

Well, God bless her for being willing to accommodate me, and God bless us both for having the wisdom not to try and solve this problem, alone. And let me explain about the problem. When you're young, you haven't acquired a lot of possessions yet, and maybe the moving in together happens early enough in your relationship that you haven't gone furniture shopping, you haven't been down that path. So, you have different tastes, you have different orientation, and things that that are important to you, but you don't have much in contention. When you're older, as we are, you've acquired things. And your taste has probably become fairly well defined, in part through the things that you've acquired; the paintings, the furniture, maybe even the dishes that you have. And to some degree that's your personal stamp.

Now you've got a problem. You've got two of everything or at least have a lot of things. You've got different styles. How do you create some kind of harmonious situation without getting into

the well, I like my dining table better than yours contention? No, I like that painting. And I'm not willing to give it up. Right? Those kinds of conversation. In our case, we recognized that this would be a challenge.

Did you find that to actually be so, or did you recognize it in advance prior to moving in? That this was something that you were probably going to face?

Well, we tried for about a week to have that conversation. And it was tender. I think we both recognized it, we were kind of dancing around the questions that we both had, harboring, and I'll confess this, in the back of our respective minds, gosh, I hope she can live without that particular thing. Because I really don't like. Now, here's the funny part. Occasionally we'll watch Home and Garden TV together. Or we'll look at a magazine like Architectural Digest or other magazines, and we'll see a picture of a room. We always agree on what we like. But, that picture doesn't look like anything either of us ever actually did in our respective homes. So in the end, what we did was to hire-- I know this sounds crazy-- but we hired a designer to integrate our households. We said go look at each of our homes, and then come back with some kind of a plan that tells us what to get rid of, and how to make sense of what we have, so we have some kind of consistent style. Which is what we ended up doing.

That is so cool. So, did they end up also introducing new things as well?

Yes, to tie things together.

I think that is so important, because there's a yours and mine and we have to create an our's right? And that, both in design and in relationship is very important. You don't lose you and I don't lose me. We see that in how we operate as people. And then we see that in how we operate through our processes. And we see that in how we set up our environment as well. So, I love the fact that the designer thought to bring in integrative pieces to create some our for the two of you.

Yeah, and we both had to have some wins, and he wisely understood this. But he was capable of helping us to see the space through each other's eyes, but also to see it in a new way. So we ended up in in a few cases redoing rooms, I mean, not just repainting them, but redoing them from a layout perspective, in a way that made so much better sense than what we'd come up, or with what Peggy originally had or what either of us might have come up with on our own. I think this was a great investment. It wasn't all that expensive to have it done. to have him come in and consult with us, and, and then we had a project that we did together, which was not just the painting. A lot of people come in when they first move in and paint. That was something Peggy had wanted to do for a long time in the parts of the house she hadn't already redone. But we decided to completely demolish an old and I want to say not very attractive fireplace, that was the main focal point of the room where we spend most of our time. 3,000 pounds of rock later, and I remember each one of those pieces we were done.

But to your earlier point, I think that the space part is only one facet. you were talking earlier about the habits, the things that seem endearing when you're not living together, that can become a little less so when you are living together.

You're being very kind, they can be flat out annoying when you are actually living together. And it's no different than when you're raising kids. There are things that kids do that are so cute when they're little. But when they get a little bit bigger, that same thing, it's not so adorable anymore. There are evolutions that take place in all kinds of ways in our lives. Something that worked in one space doesn't work in another space. And then we factor in relationships. I always think that designers are really just like, spatial counselors.

It's fantastic that you said that. I was just going to say I think that they're actually marital counselors, or couple counselors.

They really are, because it really is the same thing. In a lot of ways, the things that we own are just extensions of ourselves. So how we orient to them inside of a physical space is very similar to creating the who we are going to be inside of the relationship. And you physically watching it happen outside of yourself. The truth is, the reason why we're so particular about some things, and some people are particular about virtually everything, is because we do see it as an extension of us. So, what I'm getting rid of, is in some way losing my identity, and the same for what I am integrating in. Am I becoming something different? Am I still the me I was before we became an us? And is it possible for those two things to happily coexist?

Well, I want to probe a little bit more about this question of how to deal with the annoying habit or habits of the person that you're living with? Because I think if left unchecked, it's certainly possible, unless you're a very laid-back person, to find something that another person that you're in such close proximity with much of the time, is annoying.

If not annoying at least something like it. And that becomes a focus. Peggy and I are not unlike other people. I mean, we are different. I've often said that I have CDO, that's OCD, but the letters are in the right order..... And, you know, it bothers me if the pillows are not quite right. Yeah, I'll walk over and change it. Now. You know, if Peggy weren't such a laid back, calm person that might, I think, really become an annoying thing. I don't consciously do it to annoy her.

Yeah, but it's part of your, it helps you to be comfortable. And I also teased that I have OCD because I like a magazine clean home. Personally, I like people to be able to walk into my house at any moment, and it's beautiful.

So you and I should live together.

There are all kinds of things that should be done a particular way. And I can tell from across the room, if a picture is slightly cockeyed. And I have to go over and fix it. When I go into doctors' offices, I still touch it. Just to get it right, just because I love you enough to want your picture to be straight is what I always say. My family members and friends take great pleasure in coming

into my home and moving something just to see how long it will take. So they will just move my picture slightly, or they will lay a candle over or they will tip my pillow because they know I like things done a particular way. So, I do understand exactly what you mean, and what others experience when you're talking about bringing someone into your space.

Well, I think the watchword and for me is, as with most things in relationships, that there needs to be a heavy dose of tolerance.

Absolutely. You are different people, you do have different habits, these are not significant things, these are not important in the scheme of things. And when you find something that starts to become irritating, you need to either address it, or if it's not resolvable in any other way, or step away from it and let it go, which is the much-preferred solution.

Yeah, just step back and say, Look, there are probably 50 things that I'm doing that are just as unsettling, disturbing, annoying, to my partner as I find this. So really, this is not important and I hope you know that. I totally agree with you. And I would add to that, that it is important to know what things really matter to you. there may be a couple of items that your grandmother gave to you or that a best friend brought for you from another country. You know, there may be some things that we may call non-negotiable stuff that you just really love and are attached to. And those are the kinds of things that I think are important to make sure your partner understands matter to you. The more we know about what matters most to us, the better we're able to communicate that the smoother I think the transition and integration become.

What great advice. Another terrific episode of love life. Thank you. And we want to thank Kamarai and Todd and all of you who are listening. We'll be back with you next week. If you would like to comment on this episode or suggest another, write to us at [alvean@lovelife.digital](mailto:alvean@lovelife.digital) or [doug@lovelife.digital](mailto:doug@lovelife.digital). We'll be back next week with another interesting episode, until then, Bye.