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**Exclusive video: "Are we putting ourselves second?"**

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*Automated transcription by Otter.ai*

Hello, and Happy Sunday, I hope that you're having a beautiful day and a beautiful weekend. My hair is so short right now because I cut it off, I bleach it so much. And it starts to get like hay, like straw. So then you have to cut it off once it's just beyond salvaging. So now I'm a little bit shorter than I'm feeling like I'm loving, but wait a little bit, and it'll grow on you – ha. I'm in a good mood today. Are you in a good mood?

Okay, now, let's get to the basis of this video, which is about "are you putting yourself second anywhere in your life?" I think inherent in that question is a little bit of blaming, like, "is it your fault that you are being left behind?" You know what I mean? That's not what I'm intending to say. But is there anything that we are voluntarily doing, or any sort of cycle that we have a role in? That is putting us or putting our needs second, putting our wants second, suppressing ourselves.

I don't mean to say that other people don't have a role, because they might absolutely have even a majority role in pressuring us to put ourselves second or in feeling entitled and expecting us to do that, right. I'm not saying "blame yourself." I'm saying more, I find it personally empowering to inquire "what is my part in this?" because that is all that I have power over. And if I stop doing that part, maybe there is a ripple effect that either that person alters how they're behaving, or maybe we part ways if they're unwilling to change... Obviously, if our boss puts us second, we can't always do a whole lot about that unless we get unions and collective bargaining. But if our partner is neglecting our needs, and we are not speaking up about them, then there can be a little bit more that we can do in terms of challenging that. So let's talk about feeling like we are second place somewhere in our interpersonal peer relationships.

So how do we know it's happening? I still don't always pick up on it the first, second or third time it's happening. It can be really slow and insidious. It can, as we continue to grow in this area, it can still pop up in just smaller ways, or ways that we thought weren't a big deal, but are still a part of the pattern. So how do we know we're doing it? For one, if I'm burnt out, and or if I'm feeling resentful – whether I knew about that resentment slowly building or suddenly the resentment falls down on my lap all at once and I can't ignore it, but I was kind of dissociating and not aware of the buildup – that can be a good sign that I've not really been considering what my wants and needs are, and making sure that they are part of the negotiation.

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So you know, maybe I agree to something that I don't want to do, out of fear of the consequences. like, "I'll take on that extra work because I fear that if I don't, it won't get done". Or, "I will try this sensual thing with you because I don't think it's a huge deal for me and I don't want you to feel rejected. I don't want you to feel sad. So like, I will just go ahead and do this thing, even though given the option in a vacuum, I probably wouldn't be into it." My intention with this video is not to be like "this is good" or "this is bad". It's just to be self inquiring of why we're doing what we're doing. because I think there's always a context or framing in which considering someone else's needs above ours in a peer relationship might be the move. if somebody is more vulnerable, if somebody is struggling more, maybe I put myself second that day. And maybe that is an act of generosity and love. But I think it's more when we talk about it as a pattern. What is our role in maybe causing that or perpetuating it? And what can we do about it?

As well, I think it has been helpful for me to ask myself, "does it feel good to do it?" On some level? Do we see self deprivation as a virtue? I did for an embarrassingly long amount of time, I thought it was impressive that I never slept. And I gave overtime unpaid to my boss, right? Because in this case, an employer took this surrogate parent role, friends and colleagues praising me, "look at all your output, Good job." And so the pursuit of praise from an authority figure and acceptance, celebration, praise from my peers had me exhausting my body, depriving myself of sleep and food, and doing unpaid labor. And even if we hate the pattern, and we're like, "I really have been trying to break this, I'm trying to not do this," there usually is something that it is giving us, at least in my experience.

So, I'll give an anecdote: I had a really non reciprocal relationship with a close friend for a while, that eventually I realized, "Oh, I'm crushing on a straight girl." And so whenever I did something for her, got her a little gift, or drove way out of my way to pick her up when someone closer could have given her a ride... I wanted to have intimacy with her, I wanted to have closeness with her. And even though she was not getting me little gifts, she was not inconveniencing herself to benefit me, I still was getting something out of getting the praise, getting the "wow", the "you're so amazing" that would come my way. Because I was like, on some level – and this only became clear in hindsight, by the way – I was trying to simulate this intimacy, trying to create this closeness, this proximal romance with big gestures that would then receive a lot of warmth and glow and praise. So I was pursuing that, and I was doing it to my own detriment. And often feeling even okay with the lack of reciprocity.

That also revealed kind of a low self worth issue, because I thought that's what I deserved. And I thought that I should take table scraps and I, I really felt uncomfortable with reciprocity, because if someone is giving to me, as much as I'm

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giving to them, then one: that implies that I'm worth it, which took a lot of years of therapy to internalize that I am. And two: it implies that everyone else I wanted that from, ever, could have also done it. Right? If it is possible for someone to give to me and have reciprocity, then those other people could have done it, too. So this is where the layered part comes in, of me having to stomach the ache and process, the pain and the anger of how I've been treated in the past. Because I'm being treated well. Nothing really changed for me until I started doing work on why I felt and thought that way about myself and where that originated from.

So I've touched on how I notice it, I've touched on what I might benefit from it, or what that pattern still gives to me, with an example of someone who is kind and warm and does not wish harm on me. But what about the people who perpetuate those cycles with me, who are not kind, who are not warm? Who will get angry that I have needs? In cases like that. A lot of us have equated just having needs, just saying what we want, as being "difficult."

Every time – and it's almost kind of a funny game to play with myself now – every time I'm in a conversation with my mom, her trigger word is when I say "I want." she will have a trigger response, right? She will go full rage monster about "it's not all about you". That's her catchphrase, "It's not all about you". And so ever since a very young age for me, anytime that I wanted to say I want something, I would get that response. "It's not all about you. And so you don't get to want things. How dare you want something?" I learned it as a survival skill, if I do want something, to come with an argument for why it would be good for everybody. and to come with reasons of why this is what should happen, and what you would get out of it. So I learned that self advocacy, if I ever did it, had to come framed as a gift to you. And there's like these machinations and manipulations going on in order to find a way to tiptoe around your landmines, in order to be heard, or to get even a fraction of what I want, you know? So a lot of changing this pattern, for me, has been changing the internalized narrative that even having a need is being selfish, that even having a desire is being confrontational.

Even if we agree to a role where we are just asking for less from a person... Consent isn't something that just happens once in the beginning. You can't just be like, "well, you agreed to this up front. So, tough deal for you if you want change." we're in relation to each other. And relationships are always evolving. So we can always reopen a conversation once there's new information that, "Oh, I'm actually building resentment against you. Can we talk about how to not have that keep happening? Because I don't want to resent you." And if that person were to be like, "nope, non negotiable, these were the terms. Take it or leave it." that is very telling that they are not maybe the safest person to break this cycle with.

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I've been able to break this cycle across the board, because the closest people that I bring in are people who will challenge me to advocate for myself, who even in a conflict, even if they're upset with me, if I'm saying, "Ah, nevermind, I didn't want this, nevermind, I don't need this". And they're noticing I'm doing that again. They'll be like, "okay, look, I'm frustrated. But I'm frustrated, more that you are shrinking right now. you have a need, what is your need, you gotta tell me." right? They will still push me to know myself, to speak up for myself. That is who I bring closest. Those are some green fucking flags for me today.

Just as much as other people can perpetuate those patterns that we don't want to keep doing, other people can also lift us up and encourage us to keep going in the direction we want to go. And I'm really grateful for that. And I'm really glad that I have those standards that I have today. Because yeah, I can't... there's no going back. I really had to push out of, at least out of my inner circle, I had to push out the people who were demonstrably digging in their heels, demonstrably not on board with me advocating for myself more.

A big way I've started to turn it around, or successfully feel like I have turned it around, was acting as if I deserved it. Because for a long time, I thought it wasn't a big deal. I would be happy to take the hit as long as nobody else took a hit. even financially like "Okay, everybody else is putting equal amounts into this trip that we're all going on. I will put in double of what everybody else is, so then we're square. but hey, none of them are inconvenienced. So I'm happy to inconvenience myself," right? I did shit like that in every area of life. Acting as if reciprocity should happen, "Hey, I noticed everybody's putting in this amount of money. Just a heads up and I don't think y'all knew this, that means this amount is left over. I was going to try to take it all on myself but I think that's maybe not the best idea for me. So who here is financially able to take on a little bit extra?" And I even still wound up putting more into the trip. But it was significantly less than it was gonna be, because a lot of other people were like, "I could shoulder a little bit more, I could shoulder a lot more", you know. And so lower emotional stakes, it was literally just math and dollars for a fun trip with friends, that helped flex that muscle.

Then it got into, with partners, wanting to go to a different event than they wanted to go to. I was really hoping to go to this one-weekend-only art exhibit when they really want to go to a movie. And I'm like, "oh, I could definitely go to that movie too. But I was thinking I want to go to this art exhibit. So I'm trying to decide if I want to just go ahead and do that alone, catch up with y'all later." In the mix is what I want to do., and y'all can do whatever you want. but I was sharing all of that out loud. And they were like, "Oh, actually, I forgot about that, I would love to go to that, too." If I had just

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said "cool, see you at the movies", and never brought it up, I would have not reminded that person that they also wanted to go to it right? Or worst case, I go take a solo date, and enjoy myself and then see them after the movie. And then we have food and really get to share our experiences with each other. So, I started with really low stakes, and then in interpersonal connections, less emotional, more logistical. worked my way up to more, "I think I need this kind of communication. I think I might need some extra love this week, because I'm feeling really insecure about your new girlfriend". So I didn't start with a heavy-hitting, that felt like the highest stakes, hardest way to say what I wanted or say what I needed. I started with the baby steps of, even if this goes the worst version of itself, it's not going to be the end of the world.

So in starting with those smaller situations, we can see how somebody might handle a bigger situation. Because if I have a need that challenges what they need, and they're trying to shut me down and attack me and all of that, "oh, okay, that's good to know, maybe I put you a little bit more at arm's length." And these other people who said "yes, of course", tried to collaborate on solutions with me, maybe then I feel a little bit safer getting closer to them. And in that way, it felt much more manageable, it felt much more doable, to start to behave differently. I just started with what I felt like I literally could do, and it built trust in the specific other people. And it builds trust in myself, "I did this and I actually got what I needed, or I got part of what I needed. Awesome." How good that feels. It builds momentum in that direction, it gets easier to do it. I might still need help having those harder conversations at first. That was some advanced shit. But we can gently and firmly say what we need. And we are allowed to take up space. And people will show themselves to us in small and large ways when we do that. And I don't take it as a sign of "me having a need is the problem". Nowadays, I take it as "Oh, if they are very angry that I'm saying what I want or need, that's good to know. maybe I should dial back how much I'm entangled with them."

I think a lot of times, when we are trying to change these kinds of patterns, we can overcorrect and become very forceful. And like, instead of not saying what we need, then demand "this is non negotiable. Here's my boundary, take it or you leave it" and become very all or nothing, almost like an ultimatum. Obviously, that can look a lot of ways depending on your style. But the point is, we can overcorrect. and then put other people in a position where they feel like they can't say their needs. But if we don't trust ourselves yet to honor what we need, sometimes we can double down and try to make it like a steel fortress. "I'm so protective of this tiny, little fledgling Want, because it was so hard for me to discover what I wanted. And now, I don't totally trust myself to not betray it and destroy it." And so we can come across as really hyper vigilant or non collaborative. So just to keep an eye on that, just to check

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in with people that you trust, on ways to say, "Hey, I think I might need this, are you down to provide it? Or are you down to find a way to factor that into what we're building here?" When someone says what they want and need, in a very calm and kind of relaxed way, that tells me that they very much are seasoned in providing that for themselves even if the person says no.

So it did kind of feel, for a long time, like "I don't know if I'll ever get past this" or "maybe this is just a permanent part of my personality" or whatever. And you know, patterns are hard to break. It will pop back up when it feels scary. We fall back on our old defense mechanisms and coping strategies and stuff. But in general, I genuinely don't act that way anymore, which is kind of phenomenal, like a literal phenomenon. Because a lot of times people just don't change. But we can, if we want to, and we're willing to humble ourselves and ask for help and do things differently.

Anyway, that's what comes to mind for me. I hope that was helpful for you. Let me know what else you want to talk about. I hope you have a beautiful day and a beautiful week and I will see you later.

xxx