



EPISODE 3: THE FIVE STAR MARRIAGE

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Hey everyone, welcome to episode three. I am so excited to talk to you today about the five star marriage. What is a five star marriage? It is an example that I like to use to give us a place to go when we're thinking about our relationships. For so many people that I've talked to, I ask what kind of marriage do you want? And I get really nebulous answers. Like I want it to feel better. I want it to be nicer, right? We all want to feel better and we all want to be nicer. What kind of life do you want? Right? And sometimes if we haven't spent the time to really dig into those questions it's hard. From where we are today with whatever we have on our plate, whatever we're struggling with, whatever feels like a problem to us right now, it's hard to articulate what we want that's different.

We just know we want something different. So knowing that, I want to give you a place to go, a place to think about how your marriage could be different if you looked at it through the lens of having a five star relationship. So I used to work for many years in the cruise industry and in hospitality. And before I started life coaching, my last role was in human resources in a very ultra luxury environment. And our service standards or service principles were very similar to what you would find in a Ritz Carlton or a Four Seasons or any kind of five star resort. So if you remember the movie Couples Retreat, which if you haven't seen it, it's super funny. You should totally watch it. But if you remember that movie, it was filmed at a St Regis in Bora Bora and it's like the ultimate five star resorts, right?

Everything is amazing. Everything is delightful. When you go to a Ritz Carlton, uh, you'll ask them for soap or a towel or whatever. And the whole team, anyone on the staff will say, it's my pleasure. It's their pleasure. Whatever you want. It's their pleasure. And it's this feeling that they engineer on purpose, when you have a five star experience where they want to create a welcome home feeling, like, welcome back, welcome home, we're so happy to see you. They want to create a feeling that anything that you want that they can provide, you will find in their





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hotel. So imagine creating that type of feeling at home. And I like to give this example because it's also so concrete and so easy to imagine. So if we think of hotels, let's start with motels, right? You have scratchy sheets, you have the basics, you have a shower, you have a bed, you have electricity.

But there's nothing fancy. It's just rudimentary. It's just the basics of what you need. I know a lot of you listening to me today are in a motel marriage, and I don't see this as a bad thing. I say it as a descriptor, like if you're not feeling passionate connection, if you're not having fun, if you remember back to episode one with the relationship table, if there isn't clear perspective, clear partnership and clear pleasure, you're probably in a motel situation. And as you think about this as a metaphor to consider what your marriage could be like, think about going up through the rungs of hospitality. Uh, the hospitality stars, right? So we have the motel, then we have a step up. We have the hotels that will give you a free breakfast. And I love those by the way. And you can fluctuate going back and forth between five star and three star, two star, right in different areas of your life.

There's nothing wrong with that. I really want to invite you to consider these descriptors that I'm giving you today as very neutral as just ideas to consider. Uh, that it's great to stay in a motel. A motel is better than staying under the bridge, right? So like let's give ourselves credit and progress for wherever we are and not make that be a problem. Just let it be an observation. So you can go to the hotel with the free breakfast, have a great time and love those. Then you can go another step up and maybe your in a four star hotel, like a Marriott or a Hilton. And then they have the special beds and special pillows and they have little touches that make it nicer to be there. You could have an amazing life, just going from motel right, one star to four star, right?

But if I want to give you something to think about, what do you aspire to? What do you want to





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look forward to? What could you have as your North star for this is where I'm going? Then I want you to think about living a five star life and having a five star marriage. So when we get into a five star hotel, every detail is looked at. No stone is left unturned. They have search and service principles that they follow to create that amazing experience for you. And what I did when I left my corporate world and started coaching and talking about marriage more and more and trying to create a metaphor that was relatable that you could easily understand, if I tell you motel three star, four star, five star, I bet anyone listening to me right now can immediately tell where they are on that grid.

Instead of taking, uh, an in depth quiz and assessing a bunch of things, which we do too, right? This is just sort of a simple shorthand to see, okay, this is where I am. This is where I'm going. So what we're going to do today is I'm going to go through what I call the seven steps of a love upgrade. Seven elements or seven things that they do in five star hotels and how you can adapt those to your relationship to your marriage. What's really fun, the more that I've developed this concept over the years, is when we think about the origins of hospitality. Um, in Europe they would have guest houses and it would be a home with extra rooms where they would maybe make you breakfast like a BNB, uh, like a bed and breakfast now. And that whole feeling of welcome home was engineered in a very, very simple way.

And over the years, as technology has advanced, as society has advanced, we now have these really sophisticated, beautiful hotel buildings and hotel experiences. There's hotels now where they have their signature scent. And I remember being in a hotel in Hong Kong and I walked in and I was what is that? And it was, they have a signature scent and you can buy it in the hotel store too. So fun. Um, so we have these really sophisticated experiences where the whole point of it is to create that welcome home feeling and now I'm using these examples that have been created and developed and refined over time to go back home where everything started to





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help you create that welcome home feeling in your relationships. I just think that's a fascinating evolution and it makes it really fun. So five star marriages and five star hotels, I'm going to go through very briefly each one of the elements and then I'm going to go back and unpack each one with you. So today is kind of a robust episode, so you might listen to it once, you might then listen to it again and take some notes. There will be a download in the show notes of these principles. So you have a very brief, a reference tool to use. And here's what I'm going to invite you to do, as you listen to each of the seventh steps, start thinking about one step that you can implement in your relationship fairly easily this week. So I'll go through them, you'll think through them. And then if you go to the show notes for this episode, you'll be able to download the notes referring to each one. And then there's little very, very simple worksheet that says choose one of these seven steps to implement right now. So you get to do that. Okay, so here we go. So five star hotels have very well-defined service standards. They answer the phone in three rings, right? They'll knock on your door twice before using the master key.

They will always serve water to the table. You don't have to ask for it, it's always served. Depending on their style of service, whatever their service standard is, it's a very well-defined. It's decided ahead of time and it's really consistent across the different properties. So if I go to a Ritz Carlton in New York and then I go to a Ritz Carlton in California, I'm going to have a very similar experience. And think about in terms of a defined service standard, deciding what are your love standards? What are some things that are just elements of your relationship that you will always have? So for example, my husband and I don't really talk a lot during the day unless something, you know, we're getting a delivery or some big thing is happening, but we'll text each other at lunch time. Whatever my lunchtime is, whatever his lunchtime is, sometimes I have lunch at odd hours.

If it's three o'clock and I'm having lunch, then I'll send them a little text. That's one of our





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standards of the way that we like to stay in touch. The way that we like to stay connected. And so think about ,what is your vision and what is, what are some of your love standards? And then what we do is we make decisions based on that definition. Another thing that five star hotels have is a really beautiful, beautiful physical property. Really beautiful, beautiful physical property. So think about when you walk in, the lobby has fresh flowers. It might have marble or a beautiful steel structure. The design is well thought out for the style and the vibe though it's home, wants to have. So think about your home. Think about your home. I like to think about home as a sanctuary. Does it feel like a sanctuary?

Is there clutter in your home? Whether it's physical clutter, emotional clutter, how can you bring that sense of peacefulness or beauty or being super useful, but also very clean and lovely to your physical property? That would be a five star, right? If you think about a motel, you walk in the lobby, there's a desk. It might be old formica, it might be chipping. You don't care, right? It's just functional. So think about the difference between just being functional and then being beautiful and amazing and a joy to use. Right? Uh, another thing that happens in the five star hotel is the whole team has a commitment to excellence and is really empowered to carry that out for the guests. So, for example, I used the Ritz Carlton and a lot of examples 'cause they, there's lots of books are in about their service standards. A lot of other five-star, um, businesses follow their service standards.

And I think it says a really great um, example and it's one of the properties or one of the companies that I studied back when I was in HR of studying what luxury hospitality was all about. And so at the Ritz Carlton, they have this rule and at the time that I'm recording this, this was the rule. It may change over time, but basically any employee has access to up to \$2,000 to fix any guest problem or situation. So there is a sense that, I am responsible for the experience that my guest is having and I am going to be resourceful and creative in order to





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help that person with whatever it is that they need. So think about that concept of excellence and empowerment. The way I bring that to marriage, is I like to talk about bringing your best self to your relationship every day.

And imagine, you know, we all have hard days and we all have difficult moments, right? So we may not be able to bring our best self every single day, but if our standard is we bring our best self as often as possible, just switching to that standard will make your marriage overall so much better. And then when you're having a cloudy day or a difficult moment, it's so much easier for you to share that with your partner. And it's so much easier for your partner to just accept that you know, today's kind of a cloudy day and then they can help you through that cloudy day. So excellence and empowerment. The next one is, we used to call it, how do you deliver the wow and it's this idea that you always want to surprise and delight your guests when you're in a hotel. And marriage, I think surprise and delight is something we never think about unless you listen to a podcast like this one and they ask you to think about when was the last time you created an experience for yourself or for yourself and your partner, where there was the element of surprise and delight.

I like to call it vitamin F2, flirting and fun, right? So important to bring that flirty energy, that delightful energy. How often do you do things that feel good? Are you taking daily loving actions to nourish the love in your relationship? And if you're not, there'll be other episodes where we talk about forgiveness and resentment and how to overcome some of the things that feel really challenging. But what I want to invite you to think about today is even if there's something that feels difficult to overcome right now, you can choose, starting today to show up with surprise and delight with excellence and empowerment with a love standard. And you can start turning around your relationship for the better just by making a new choice today, even as you deal with whatever it is you have going on that you have to figure out, right?





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We don't have to stop to figure that out before we start making changes for the better. Consider that idea. Think about that idea. And then another thing that five star hotels do is they personalize everything. So they'll ask you your name. Sometimes they'll ask you for, uh, all kinds of information before you even arrive. What kind of tea do you like? Do you like milk in your coffee? Little details that they can make a note of and they have a very large database and they put all your information in that database. So whether you go to a hotel that's, like I mentioned before, in New York or in Los Angeles or in Hong Kong, it doesn't matter. They will have your favorite tea ready and they will have the little things that will make your day better. So they love to personalize everything. And when we think about that from the point of view of psychology, if we think about some of the fabulous research that Gottman Institute has done, one of the qualities that couples who thrive have is that they know each other's interior world.

We know what concerns our partner, what's upsetting them, what's exciting to them, what they can't wait to do, what they hate doing. We know their interior world. Sometimes when you first get together with someone, we feel like, oh, we know them so well. And I can tell you, I've been married, this will be my 13th year. And I have changed so much from the person that my husband married, who was, uh, in HR and had a very, you know, traditional human resources role to being a life coach and running my own business and having all kinds of, of evolutions associated with my purpose and my mission in life. And so we have to remember that we are evolving live, right? So knowing each other's interior world isn't something that you just do when you're dating and then it stops. And sometimes I think we forget that we prioritize other things sometimes for great reasons, but we purchase other things and, and here's my invitation to come back to that and I like to call it building your love database, right?

Just like how the Ritz Carlton would have a database on you. Think about it this way. If a hotel knows your partner better than you, it's time to make some changes. It's time to get some





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new data into your love database. So always that idea about learning about each other, and sometimes there's things you can't share until they happen. Like all of a sudden I like this thing now. I didn't even know I liked that thing a year ago. Right? That kind of experience. Then all five star hotels have some version of a de facto resolution system. It's the system that they use when something goes wrong to say, these are the steps we're going to take to make it right. Let me just repeat that, these are the steps we're going to take to make it right. Imagine the last argument that you had. Imagine if you had a system, whenever that situation comes up again, which it probably will to say, these are the steps we're going to take to make it right.

And I like to frame that, as asking the right questions as I think that's so important. The key in a strong, thriving five-star marriage is not to eliminate problems, but it's to learn how to manage them effectively when they come up. And the last step or the last element that we're going to cover today is five star hotels reward their best guests, right? They have loyalty programs. They have treats. They have, uh, they put a chocolate on your pillow. They put a note from the hotel manager when you arrive, they might have your favorite beverage waiting for you. Maybe it's a cold day outside and they have hot chocolate when you walk in. I remember staying at a hotel in Washington and they had like chocolate chip cookies, right when you walked in. It was really cold. It was like a, it was a very cold day.

And they had like these warm cookies right when you walked in at that. Oh, how delightful. Right? And it just felt like a smile when you walked in. So think about rewarding your best guest in a hotel as appreciation, expressing appreciation for your partner. How often do you celebrate what you do well for yourself? How often do you celebrate yourself and how regularly do you express appreciation for each other? Appreciation is like a power tool that makes everything better. Experiencing gratitude for what you already have, even as you're creating something better, expressing gratitude to your partner, expressing gratitude to yourself. There's literally no





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downside and many, many upsides to expressing gratitude. And so that's something to think about is, when was the last time that you expressed gratitude towards yourself or towards your partner for something that you appreciated, that you enjoyed, that you found delightful?

So those are the seven. We're going to go a little bit one by one on each one of them, so that you have a feel for where you might apply to your relationship. And think about, wherever you are right now in your relationship, how you can go up the ladder from a like a one star to a two stars or three star to a four star. And maybe there's elements in your relationship where you're already five-star. Maybe you're great at having fun together. And the place where you could improve would be to have like deep talks and make those be really productive. Maybe you're great at taking care of your family together and are wonderful co-parents and partners and maybe what you need to add is more fun and together time together. So notice that you can be one star in one element of your marriage and then be five-star in another element.

And that's okay. Okay. So the seven steps to create a Fivestar marriage match with the service standards that I just mentioned. So number one is decide. You already took marriage vows, right? You made vows, you made a commitment. I remember, when I was first developing this concept, thinking, I don't even know what the heck I promised in my marriage vows. I need to go reread those and see what I said. And am I still vowing to the same thing, which I was. Whenever you read them, and I'll probably do an episode on vows, we can talk about that. Sometimes it's time to rewrite the vows, right? To make new vows. What am I committed to? What do I want my marriage to be like? And what do I need to commit to to make that happen? Right? So I invite, I invite you today as you're listening to me right now, to recommit to the vows you took.

If you remember them. Yay. You. 'Cause I didn't, uh, but recommit to them in a bold new way. If you don't remember them, pull out the wedding video, pull out whatever notes you made, you





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know, or make new ones right here and now, right? Don't let that be a reason to, not recommit, but make a decision every morning with regards to who you want to be in your relationship. Do you want to be loving? Do you want to be supportive? Do you want to be devoted, right? If I was being loving right now, what would I do? So in episode two, we talked about power questions and that's one of my favorite ones because it's so clear then exactly what to do when I ask that question. So try that right now as it applies to your partner. If I was being loving right now, what would I do?

What may be different than what I did yesterday? And then step one, decide. Step two, declutter. So, we typically have two types of clutter in our homes. We have physical clutter, and in our hearts we have emotional clutter. And anything that we haven't forgiven is emotional clutter in our hearts, that's taking up space. Just like anything that we haven't gotten rid of at home that's taking up space but isn't useful to us anymore. Right? The difference between clutter and treasure is, in my opinion, simply usefulness, right? If it's still useful, it's not clutter. If I use a coffee mug every morning and I love it, which I do and I do, then it's not cluttered. But if I have 20 coffee mugs that I don't use, then it becomes clutter. So what is the usefulness of the things in your home and what is the usefulness of the things in your heart?

Right? Sometimes we think the other person has to do a bunch of things for us to let go of that clutter. And I really challenge you to think about, I could just decide that I can let go of this clutter. That doesn't mean that we don't have standards, I mean we're talking about standards today, so that doesn't mean that whatever happened was okay. It just means I'm not gonna let it be clutter in my heart anymore. I'm going to be the person I want to be with my standards, with my boundaries, which we'll do an episode on too. So think about what do you need to declutter in order to have a five star marriage. Number three, bringing your best self. I love the idea of making a decision to focus on excellence just to be excellent. I always think that whenever we





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do something in life, if we commit to excellence, we're always going to be okay.

It could be imperfect excellence. We're not going to do it perfectly every time, right? We're learning something new. It might be a few times before we get it to be amazing, but I think the idea of excellence is so attainable and I like to juxtapose. I don't know if that's a word. I like the juxtaposition of excellence versus perfectionism because I know a lot of my community, a lot of my clients and a lot of you listening probably have had perhaps a perfectionist tendency. You are there and the idea of perfection to me is something that causes us so much stress and is so unattainable. It's like we're setting us up ourselves for failure when we strive for perfection because, we can either declare something perfect and then that's great if you have that mentality. But most of us don't use perfectionism for that. We look at perfectionism to look for the imperfections and declare something wrong. So if you've ever had a perfectionist tendency, my invitation to you today is to focus on excellence instead of perfection. How can I do this to the best of my ability today, right now?

And notice that you can do your best today, right now, it may not be perfect, but it is your best. So think about your personal best, your attitudes, your commitments, everything from the clothes you wear, the decisions you make. Think about just going for excellence instead of perfection. What is your personal best and is that reflected in your life and marriage right now? And if it's not, what would help you get closer to that? What would make personal best be? How would I show up if I was really committed to being excellent at being married? Right? The most important relationship in our lives. Okay. So number four is take action. And taking action is that vitamin F2 flirting and fun, that surprise and delight. So surprise and delight does not just happen. It requires action. And I love Oprah moment. Third episode, third, Oprah reference.

Oprah always says that love is a verb. It's what we do that matters. And I like to say that our





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actions reveal our priorities. Whatever it is that we're doing, and that's what really matters to us. If we're not doing it, it didn't matter to us the way we thought it might've. So what are you prioritizing in your relationship? That's the question to ask. And notice how often the answer to the question reveals exactly what our next step is going to be. So as you listen to this podcast, people from all different kinds of cultures and backgrounds and ideas and mindsets are listening. And for each person, their personal best will be different. For each person, their priorities will be different. But when you ask that question, you know exactly what to do. So I couldn't tell you 352 different priorities to have. I could just ask you what's your priority and you immediately know what it is. Interesting to think about, right?

Then number five is building your love database, right? The reason luxury hotels are able to build out personalized experiences is because they gather so much data. So are you creating a marriage culture where you regularly discover new things about each other? Are you sharing how you're growing and changing? When was the last time you tried something new together? Those kinds of things is how you build your love database, right? And building that database is not a one time event. It's something to do through the course of your marriage as you evolve as a human. Number six, ask the right questions. You know I love questions, right? So asking better questions helps you manage conflict when it arises, especially when you think about getting to the root cause of any situation, right? A lot of times, especially, I see this in my coaching practice a lot, we try to solve for a symptom or we try to solve for like the, the thing that's happening today instead of the root cause of why this thing happened today, right?

So maybe I get nervous when a lot of people are going to come over to visit and maybe when I'm nervous I get a little snippy, right? I'm not my most delightful, best self and if I try to solve for that today, then I'm just going to be looking at what's happening today as opposed to saying, "Oh, why do I get nervous when people come over? What are the thoughts that I'm thinking?"





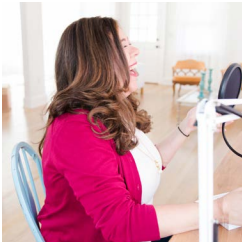
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What are the mindsets that I'm having that inspire me to get nervous? How can I be calmer whenever anybody comes over?" And then that way I'm solving for the root cause instead of solving for the thing that happened today. So as you go through your life and your relationship and things happen, look for what's underneath what's happening, "Oh, I'm getting nervous and that's why I'm not being my best self. Okay. How do I bring myself back to center?"

Sometimes it's as simple as taking a deep breath, pausing, breathing. And what happens when we do that is we give the opportunity to the intelligent decision making part of our brain, the prefrontal cortex to take over from our primal brain that sees new things or people visiting right as dangerous. So sometimes it can be just as simple as pausing, breathing, asking a question, right? Asking a really great question that propels you into really useful action. So the question I like to use is, especially for conflict resolution or for de facto resolution, if it's a hotel, conflict resolution, if it's a marriage, is how can I contribute to resolving this lovingly? I'm going to repeat that. How can I contribute to resolving this lovingly. Okay, ask that question, see what your answer is and then do that. Do it. And then number seven, appreciation. And they like to say that appreciation is the super food for love. It combines every nutrient and maximizes it and it makes your love stronger and more resilient and appreciation. So, so simple. How can you express appreciation today? Right now you finish listening to this, you express appreciation, make a phone call, send a text, or if you're together live, give a hug, say hello, whatever it may be. So those are what I like to call the seven steps to a five-star marriage. And if you do just one of them, you will immediately start to see the vibe and your relationship to just go to the next level. I know some of you listening to me are at a motel situation and some of you already in a four star situation and you see a little tweak to get to five star. So wherever you are right now, what I invite you to do is choose one of those seven steps and implement it either today or tomorrow at the latest.





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And then if you want to tell me how it went, um, you can actually email me at hello@maggiereyes.com. And I'll put that in the show notes. I'd love to hear what you experimented with, how it went, and I'd also love to ask you for questions that you would love to hear answered on the podcast. I love to make it really, really relevant to everyone who's listening, and I love to hear what your questions are that you would love to have more clarity on that I might do either a Q & A episode, or I might do a whole episode on the thing you have a question about. Thank you so much for listening. I hope you have a loving day.

