



EPISODE 20: 5 POWER TOOLS TO IMPROVE YOUR MARRIAGE WITH DR. CHAVONNE PEROTTE

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Hello everyone. Today, we have a very special guest joining us. I really wanted to have her on the show and I am so grateful that she said, yes, my friend and colleague, Dr. Chavonne Perotte is one of the most brilliant marriage coaches in the world. And marriage coaching, I think is a relatively new field in psychology. And I am so delighted to have Chavonne join us as she is one of the cutting edge leaders in our field. And I am so proud to call her both colleague and friend. So let me tell you about Chavonne. Before we dive in today, she has a PhD from Johns Hopkins University. She is a trained health researcher who specializes in communication and intimate partnerships, and she uses her background in research to develop new tools and processes, to inspire and empower couples to love being married again. And that is what we're all about. Chavonne is the host of the Love Marriage Again, podcast. And today she's going to share with us five power tools that will help you improve your marriage. Welcome Chavonne.

Thank you, Maggie. I'm so excited to be here.

So today, before we dive in to these five power tools, I want to talk a little bit about the universal application of these tools. We're going to talk about them in the context of marriage, but you are so wise, and you mentioned before we started recording that we're in a relationship crisis right now. And so tell us a little bit your thoughts about that and how these tools can help us.

Yeah, absolutely. And we are. So depending on when you're listening to this podcast episode, we are currently in a very intense time in the United States of America, really coming on the heels of the deaths of several individuals. Um, one most recently, Mr. George Floyd at the hand of a police officer. And so the country is really in a state of uprising and uproar. There are protests actively happening all the time, and we are all having conversations about racism, what it looks





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like in this country, white privilege, all of those things. And at its most fundamental level, this is a relational crisis. It is a relational crisis in that, you know, people are coming at this conversation from their lived experiences and many times either not understanding and not being open and not self reflecting. And so it really is, as we dive into these five power tools, it really is both something that's happening at every relational level that you can imagine it's happening between husband and wife and their home it's happening between partners, it's happening between colleagues, friends, family members.

Where really at the end of the day, you know, I think what we are all missing is just a true deep appreciation for our value for our humanity and for our worthiness. And so those things are happening on so many levels all of the time. And I think what's happening with the racial tensions in our country right now is really just a bubbling up of so many things that have been historically a part of our culture that have been sort of shoved to the side and hidden and ignored. And I think we are just at a place now where that can be no more where. Yes. And we have to have open conversations I think, about what's happening in our country and then what's happening at home. Like my philosophy is we have to start at home if we want to make any kind of change in the world, to our extended communities and to the people that we care about, outside our home, if we aren't figuring out how to relate to each other, with the person that we love the most, like that's where it all starts.

And so then if we can get that in order, we can kind of get our internal house in order. Then we can go and help the world, get our world house in order. And there's no more critical time to do that than now. Like I am one of those people that feel like I lived inside a fishbowl and didn't see the water. And now the things that have happened over the last, I guess, couple of weeks, it's





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like, I see the water and now I'm like, Oh, this is the most urgent thing we can do is help you all have a better marriage. So you can go out into the world and make the world a better place. Yeah, it's so true. And it's one of the things. So for the listeners who aren't seeing me right now, right, I am a, I am a black woman.

And so many of my clients we've been coaching on this even just this week. And so I think as much as we think about this as an opportunity to have conversations across racial lines, it's also an opportunity for us to even have those conversations within our homes, you know, couples of all combinations, right? So exclusively black couples, mixed racial couples, all, this is just a really important time to be thinking about all of these things. So I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to share these tools that I, you know, that I've thought about within the context of what's happening in our world and in our country right now. I love it. And I'm so glad that you use all that education and that knowledge and that critical thinking and that analysis to have a PhD from Johns Hopkins, like one of the best universities in the world and to apply it to marriage and to bring that brain power to the most fundamental relationship of our time, like our communities are founded on our families. Right.

And then just thank you for being here. I'm a little emotional right now, haha. I was like I should have probably got the tissues. You know, having any conversation with you warms my heart to the fullest degree. Yeah. I feel the same. Okay. Let's dive in. So there's five power tools and I was telling Chavonne that the way I like to organize the show is I like to tell you what we're going to talk about. And then we're going to talk about, so we're going to just tell you what the five powers tools are. And then we're going to go step by step a little bit deeper into each one. Some of them really overlap with things that I talk about all the time anyway, which is beautiful





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because really we need to be doing these things all the time, no matter what. And I hope that when you get Chavonne's perspective, it'll add to anything you've already thought and considered about. I know for myself, when I hear something from another teacher, sometimes I'm like, Oh, I've heard this before, but now the way she explained it, I finally got it. So for my listeners that are like, that sounds a little familiar. I hope that today you get it at a deeper level. That's like my highest intention for you all. Okay. So the five power tools are number one is self-awareness fresh perspective, emotional management techniques, renegotiation of expectations, and then communication techniques. So let's start with self awareness. Why is that so important?

So self awareness is everything. It really is everything. And I think that we are never taught how to be self aware. So when I think about self-awareness, I define it as really just being an observer of yourself. It's being able to almost like sit on your shoulder and have this outside perspective of what you are thinking, what you are feeling, what you are doing. It's sort of like just sitting there as an observer, noticing your impact, noticing how your words come across. So noticing how your tone comes across, noticing how, you know, your husband is responding to your actions. And, you know, self-awareness is just so important because everything that's happening in your marriage is in many ways a reflection of you, right? So a lot of times when you want to look at what we wish our husbands were doing or what we want them to do, and we neglect our impact.

And I think one of the greatest sort of disservices that we sometimes do is that we maximize the impact of the other person, of our husbands and we minimize the impact of ourselves. And so when you're able to really tap into being self aware, what that means is that you are asking





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questions, like, what am I doing that is leading him to this right. Fill in the blank with whatever it is, how am I to the issues that we are having? And whenever I talk with women about this, it's one of those things that I think we know on a very surface level, like, well, I know that I could be more patient, or I know that I can be a little bit controlling sometimes just a little, right. But it's like, but really it's sort of like, yes, you acknowledge it. But if in that same sentence you add, but, and then something else about him, it's sort of an indication that maybe there's a little bit more deeper work you can do in terms of your own self awareness.

And so that's one angle of it. The other way I like to look at self-awareness is really just knowing yourself at a deep, deep level. And there is so much to who we are as individuals. There is so much that shapes how we enter and, you know, continue to operate inside of a marriage. And so I think that when you are very self aware, you will know your issues and you will know your own voids and those, your own pain points that came before you ever met your spouse. Right. You know what those are that you carry into the relationship with each other. And what I always say is like, when you know these things, it just becomes the thing that you carry with you all the time and it shapes, and it colors how you experience everything in the relationship. And so I'll even use myself as an example.

I have, you know, the lens of rejection, like I'm very sensitive to feeling like I am being left out or that I'm rejected in any way, shape or form. And so, because I've developed and built my muscle of self awareness, I recognize now that whenever I'm feeling rejected by my own husband, that I can place most of it to my own stuff, right. My own stuff that I had and that I carried even before him. And I can look at it with a much more clean slate and say, okay, this is just how I'm wired to look for rejection in my interactions with people. And so when you know that about yourself,





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when you know, whatever your thing is, you know, that it's always there. And that sometimes what you may be perceiving yourself as experiencing in your marriage has really happened and is just being magnified in that moment.

But it's so much more than what your husband said or what your husband did. And so why this is important is that once you have the insight, once you can not only see how you might be playing a role in the issues that you're having, and you are aware of your lens to things, you can stop getting angry at the wrong things, right. It's sort of like, Oh, that's what it is. Right. I was working with a client who grew up in a very controlling home as a child. And so whenever her husband would do anything that like, you know, had an inkling of controlling, she had this intense reaction to him. And so, you know, through our process of working together, she realized that it really wasn't him, but it was the void that was created or the template that was created from her upbringing.

And so you can now have a very clear understanding at what is the problem and solve for the right problem, which is not complaining about him necessarily, but really looking inward to yourself as being the solution. And the conversation changes from pointing the finger at him and blaming him to really looking within yourself and having a deep and profound conversation with yourself. I absolutely love that so much. And one of the ways that I describe it is you have to see it to heal it. Yeah. Like we cannot heal what we do not see. And even in what's happening in the country right now, it's like so many people were blind to things that were happening right in front of them at a huge like macro level. And then at home at a micro level, sometimes we're blind to the things like I have the same, I would call it wound that you have, like, I didn't grow up with my dad. And like, abandonment is, I can talk about it sort of humorously now. But for many





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years it was a very painful thing that I had. And until I really understood that, that was a thing that I just needed to be aware of and manage for and solve for, and just be with and just allow like, Oh, I am a little bit hypersensitive about being left out. Yup. That's the thing that I have. Right. Then we, then we can address it and do something about it. But if we have no idea that that's the thing that bothers us, how can we even begin to address it? Right. It's so true. It really is. It's the foundation of so much. Yeah.

Okay. So let's talk about a fresh perspective. So, you know, really well, cause we talk about these things that, I have this thing, I call it the relationship table and his perspective, partnership and pleasure. And you have to have all three, like perspective is like one of the pillars. If you don't have that, you can not get to thriving. And so I was like, Ooh, perspective is one of the power tools let's dive in. I want your perspective on perspective. So tell me how you take on perspective.

Yeah. So I like the table analogy as well. I use it a little bit differently. And so I like to think of having a fresh perspective as taking a different seat at the table. If you were to imagine you're at a round table, right. And let's say it's a table for eight, right? Yes. Right. You're at the table. You are always at the same seat at the, you are looking out the window, seeing the same thing all the time from the same vantage point. And so having a fresh perspective means that you are open and receptive to taking another seat. I think in a marriage, especially the most important seat that we often need to take is the seat of our partner, the seat of our spouse, and being able to see from their perspective, what is happening. One of the questions I love to ask people is I want you to describe this situation, right? Let's say they had an argument or they had an issue, a long standing issue in the relationship. And I want you to describe what this experience is like





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from your husband's perspective.

We see it. What is he thinking? What is he feeling? What is he receiving from you? And I think that's a seat that we don't often take. We often don't want to take sort of like, no, but what about me? And what am I feeling? And all of those things. So having a fresh perspective is being able to sit at a different seat at this table. And what it does for you is it eliminates blind spots. We all have blind spots of things that we're just not aware of. Were not on our radar screen. And so when you have, you know, someone else to process with and, you know, digest things with, they're going to come from a totally different seat at that same table, right. It's sort of like, yeah, you see it this way, but I see it that way. And when I think about some of those aha moments, and I know Maggie you've created the same moments for your clients as well.

It's sort of like one of the biggest things I find is that we struggle in two areas. One is making room for our husbands in our lives and the other is knowing how to be married. Right? And so, especially for women who maybe didn't have, you know, the best examples of what a positive marriage could look like, or women who grew up in a single parent home, it's sort of like the only perspective you have of what marriage could be and should be, is what you had. And so by having a coach, a mentor, someone else to just sort of offer you, well, what if we sit over here and look at it from this angle and creating those aha moments, changes everything. I think so many times when people are struggling in their marriage, they look for the action, right? They look for, what is it I need to say differently?

What is it that I need to do? And you may have all the strategies. There's no dearth of strategies to do. You do them, right? You do them, but it feels like an uphill battle as reason, right?





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Oftentimes that it feels like an uphill battle is that the perspective shift that is necessary to create ease and flow and doing some of those things just hasn't taken place yet. And so really being able to look at things from a completely different angle, from a completely different standpoint, critical is so critical. So critical because when you have a different vantage point, different solutions arise for how to solve the problem, I love that automatic. Yeah. It's automatic. And here's my vision of the table. When you set the table for eight and first I sat myself at the table and then I imagined my husband, their seed.

And I imagined like, Oh yes, I have like the whole visualization. Then I thought, you and I, as coaches and people who help clients get a fresh perspective, what we are is we're almost like the person who's not sitting at the table, like the waitress or the butler or whatever who sees the whole table, and says, if you sit on this seat, you might see this. And if you sit on this seat, you might see that. And if you sit on this other seat, this other perspective becomes available to you. Why don't we like seat hop for awhile and then see what you think at the end of that. Right. I love it. I love it. Yes. That is exactly it. Or for those who really like fashion. I like to also think of it as like we're going on a shopping spree for perspective, right.

Go to this store here and try this on. What do you think? Yeah. Let's go to this store here and try that on. But yeah, there's so many different ways that the key is looking at it differently than how you've ever looked at it. And sometimes using these examples, like, I call it like putting on a sweater and seeing if it fits it's comfortable, but looking at it from this point of views, loosens the grip on the perspective that you're holding, like what I find, and I have done this for a hundred percent sure is when I am convinced that something is one way, I just grip on the handles of my chair even harder. Like I don't get up to the other chair. I'm just like, I'm not moving. This is my





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chair. As opposed to maybe if I do sit in that other chair, I'll see something I've never even seen before.

Right. That's so, so true. I love the table. I will be quoting you on the table again. So next is emotional management techniques. And I know there's like a million we could talk about. So we're just going to talk about your favorites, but tell us about why this is such an important power tool that like, if you'd had these five things and you did these five things like your marriage would improve. Like if you listened to this episode today and you started practicing self awareness and you start imagining, you're like in a different seat at the table, and now you, one of these, your marriage will improve. It's like inevitable, it's inevitable. It's so inevitable. And I think emotional management is so important because I think when couples are in conflict or individuals are, you know, dissatisfied with their experience in their marriage, it is really what it boils down to is they don't feel how they want to feel.

Right? They're not experiencing the contentment, the fulfillment, the joy, the fun, all of the emotions that they want to feel they're not experiencing. And so when it comes to managing your emotions, the key to that is managing your thinking, right? So life coaches know that your emotions are directly the result of your thinking. And I think a lot of times what happens is when a woman, when a person in a partnership is unhappy or discouraged or disappointed or feeling rejected, many times it's attributed to the behavior of their partner. Right? And so when you're looking for that to change in order for you to feel better, it's never something you can actually control. And so the direct route to shifting your emotions or managing your emotions and a better way is to manage your mind. Yes. And in order to do that, you really have to make the connection between what you were thinking and how you are feeling.





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And I know, again, Maggie, you have a ton of tools and ways that you teach that just as I do. And so I think when you can look at what is happening in your head, which again, we're not really taught to do we, as women are emotional human beings, and we know what we're feeling really clearly, we don't often know why we're feeling that you don't really know what is the source. And so Maggie and I are telling you that are listening right now, the source is your thoughts, right? And so in any circumstance, in anything that your husband is doing or saying, or the way that he is being the way you can manage your emotions around that is to investigate your thoughts about it. That is the quickest way to do that. And so there are lots of different tools, lots of different ways to do that. I have a method, the calm down method. I know we may get into that at a later point. And so it's really just asking yourself a series of questions. One is understanding, like, why am I so upset about this? What is this really, truly about. And almost sort of taking him or taking your partner out of the equation and just looking at you, like what is going on in your head and then deciding for yourself, if you could feel any way that you want to feel, what would that be?

Yes. I love that wait, slow down. Cause I think this is really important. If you could feel any way that you want to feel like, let's assume that that's possible. I know some of our listeners right now are like, ladies, I don't know if that's possible, ladies. I like you all, but. So let's say it could be possible. It'll take some work and some effort and some self awareness and some fresh perspective, right. To get there. But if you can feel any way that you would want to feel, how do you want to feel right now? Sometimes you don't even know.

It's so true. It is true. It is absolutely true. And I think sometimes because it feels too far off. One of the things I often say when I'm, when I'm coaching my clients on this is like, okay, if we could





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just get you one notch better. Yes. Amen. What would that be right? Like maybe right now you're enraged and you are super pissed off or you're really, really sad. Like so sad. What would be just like one notch better. Right. And then we focus on that emotion and then we identify, okay, well, what are all the thoughts that you would have to start thinking that you actually believe, right? This is not to create some fantasy world where, you know, you're just oblivious to whatever has triggered you, but it's like, what would you just have to start believing? And a lot of times I think that in some instances it's most healthy to just think about thoughts that you want to believe about yourself, right?

Because when you're very focused on what is happening outside of you, what your spouse is doing, it's very hard to sort of quickly for yourself, turn that around and think differently about it. And so, I love, and this is actually some thing you taught me, Maggie, where it's sort of like you get to choose the impact of someone else's behavior or words on you. Yes. They're going to be in, do whatever they're going to be and do, but you still get to control the impact it has on you. And so a lot of times, you know, you'll hear people say like, well, he ruined the whole weekend and in a person who is mastering or cultivating the skill of emotional management, what that means is if you want to have a fantastic weekend, but you still get to choose that that's still an emotion. That is something that you can create for yourself, irrespective of what he or your partner may be doing. Yes. And I just want to mention, we both, Chavonne and I really work with women to men. So all of our conversations are about husbands, but obviously this applies to any conversation, woman married to a woman or man married to man or any other combination that you might have. The principles are always the same. And, Chavonne mentioned in passing her calm down method is one of the emotional management techniques that she uses with her clients. And when she told me about it, I basically like nerded out on how





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amazing it is and how much I love it. And I asked her if we could have her on another episode, just to talk about that method and to really go step by step through it. And because she is one of the most generous souls on earth and is amazing, she said she would come back. So I like to create a little suspense. The calm down down method with Dr. Chavonne Perotte will be another show that we will do very, very soon. And we'll go step by step on that.

But I love what you shared now, which is basically to think about the impact you're going to allow this other person to have and to decide what that's going to be. And it's this simple. Like one of the things I really like to focus on the show is so many people listened to the show and they've tried a million things that haven't worked. They've read the books, they've gone to the workshops. They're like, why don't I feel better? Right. And I like to really present that. It's not because it's complicated. It's because maybe you've had been doing the wrong combination of things. And when you have the right combination of things, it gets so much easier. Yeah. So it's like, this is not complicated, emotional management. You don't have to do 54,000 things. It's just like, just check in. What are you thinking? How are you feeling? If you could feel any feeling, what would you want that one to be? And how could you take one notch forward?

Yeah, one notch forward. And I think specifically to this point, the question that I love to ask myself that I'll offer to the listeners is what am I thinking about this that makes it a problem? I love it. What am I thinking about this, that makes it a problem, right? Because again, many people respond to different things in different ways. And so there's something for you that is making the experience you're having with your spouse problematic. What is that? What are you expecting that you're not getting?





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So what are you expecting that you're not getting leads us to number four, which is renegotiation of expectations. Yeah. It's a lot of syllables. I'm like, wow. I use a lot of syllables in my words. So basically the way I like to think about it is just wipe the slate clean, right? Like, so we enter into marriage. I feel like we are conditioned to believe so many things. And we enter into marriage with so many expectations that don't serve us. And when you renegotiate your expectations, it sort of means like, you're just looking at everything you thought, everything you expected and you're questioning it. And I think a lot of times we have expectations that we don't even know where they come from. Unconscious. Unconscious, exactly. And so, you know, one of the things I work with, some of my clients on this a lot is sort of like this expectation that your husband needs to be your best friend. Maybe, Right?

I wish you could see Chavonne's face right now. You guys, when she said maybe it was one of those, like, I wish I could like meme that maybe, or maybe not.

And that's not to say that you don't strive for that. But I think, you know, obviously Megan and I are dealing with people who are not having their expectations met. Right. So if your husband is your best friend and you're skipping along, you know, in the park, yes, like keep that, keep it and cultivate it. But for those who are so discouraged and feel like something has gone horribly wrong because they are not feeling like best friends and they have this expectation, then that's when you just have to question it like, is this an appropriate expectation right now? Is there some other way that I can think about my relationship with this person that would serve me? Maybe we just need to rebuild a friendship at the most basic level. And so when you are willing to sort of wipe the slate, clean of your expectations, what that means is you just get the opportunity to allow your spouse to be exactly how they are. Yeah. We're not imposing any





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demands on them. You're not mandating that they show up any particular way. It's almost like you release them from needing to be, do or think anything in order for you to be happy. That is so powerful. And here's what I see is I can already hear in the centers in my brain, but what if he's doing all these things that I don't like, and you know, shouldn't you do this, that and the other. And it's like, maybe right. Maybe one thing I see a lot and I want to hear your take on this. Cause I think it really relates to renegotiating expectations is sometimes the wife is really into like helping the marriage thrive and turning the marriage round. And the husband feels a little bit disengaged. And sometimes that disengagement is if we've been like judging our partner and we've had low self awareness and we've been criticizing a lot, an maybe we've said a few things that are not fun and made me want to do more things that are not fun. And he says, no, we decide he doesn't love us.

He doesn't care about the marriage. He's not committed. Right. It's so funny. You say that I actually have a podcast episode on that exact topic when your husband says no to getting help. And it is also part of my lived experience as well. So I think we make a lot of things mean a lot of things that are not true, not a lot of syllables when I just said that. So we, we assign meaning to so much that may just not be the case. And I think really wiping the slate clean of expectation, and I've even had to do this in my own marriage, has been the most beautiful and liberating experience. And it really just allows what is to be enough. Oh, that's so good. Pause there. When we are able to renegotiate expectations, it allows what is there, what is there to be enough.

What I see a lot. And what I teach about is we're missing out on what is there when we're constantly looking for something that isn't there. We're like looking for this thing that isn't there





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and it's not going to be there, no matter how much we look for it, but then we're missing out on all the things that are there. A thousand percent, a thousand percent. So if someone is listening to this and feeling a little resistant and saying, well, I should have expectations. I, I want to have that. Where would you say is that one notch that they could move?

Yeah. So what I always tell people is like, you should have what you want, right? Like this is not in any way saying that you don't get to have what you want a relationship. I think what often doesn't happen in that conversation is looking at the marriage in its totality, looking at your spouse in their totality. So exactly what you said, Maggie, when you feel like there is something that is lacking, that is not there. That is where your focus goes. And in the process, you miss everything else that is there. And so what I walk my clients through and would encourage the listeners to do is to literally write down all the qualities and all the things you want in a spouse. Yes. And to identify where is your husband currently meeting what you desire to your level of satisfaction and where is that not happening? And then look at the things that are not happening and decide for yourself, are those deal breakers? I think the reason people stay stuck is maybe they have deal breakers that they're wanting to just stare at that page and wanting to see their answer to that question change, right? They want the husband to just fulfill this one or two or three things.

And so when that's not happening, you just stay stuck. And so the question I always offer people is you get to keep the expectation and continue to be frustrated. You can do that. That is a hundred percent an option that's available to you. But if you are not going to leave the relationship, then you also get the opportunity to change your relationship to that expectation. It doesn't mean that it has to go away forever. But what it could mean is that you just get to allow





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what is there now to just be enough, and to create space for the relationship to grow for your husband, to come to his own understanding of that area that you would like to see be a part of your relationship together.

I love, obviously everything you said. And I love the way you phrase this, change your relationship to that expectation. And what happens often is we're very attached to our expectations. We know our expectations really well, right? We grew up with them. Sometimes we've had the same expectation for years and years and years. But if we don't have self-awareness dialed in and if we don't have perspective dialed in, and if we don't have emotional management dialed in, then that expectation may or may not be even relevant to us. So true. Right? So this why it's like these tools kind of go together and you, you really are sort of working all of them in different ways at the same time, because it's like I see an infidelity, right? We have this sort of societal value that is like, Oh, you know, someone cheats, you just drop them like a hot potato or whatever. Like, oh, they're not worthy. And what I have seen over the years is infidelity is a complex topic that isn't necessarily the death of a marriage.

It can be an awakening in a marriage. It can be a crisis, a breakdown that leads to a breakthrough. When we take deeper looks at who we're being and how we're showing up and all of those things. And that is a case where when you're able to change your relationship to that expectation, you can come out the other side in such a powerful, beautiful way. Whether you stay in the marriage and decided to have like marriage 2.0, or whether you decide to part with love and with, you know, say, hey, this is just not what I want, but you're parting from a place of love and decision and perspective and awareness, as opposed to just parting because of some societal expectation, right. That isn't, what's in your heart. I love change your relationship to that





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expectation. That's a good one. Yeah. I agree with everything you just said too.

Okay. Communication techniques. Yes. So I love this one because it's what everybody wants. Right? Like when people are having problems in the marriage, the first thing they say is we don't communicate. We can't communicate something with communication. And a lot of times, and I'm sure you've experienced this too. People want to come and learn, like, how do I communicate better? Like how do I get him to understand how do I express myself in a way that he's receptive and not defensive and not dismissive. And just as you said, like none of the communication techniques will matter if you haven't done these other things first. Right? So communication. Yes. It's about the words you say, but it is also about the energy you are bringing to the interaction. And so when you're not aware of your tone, when you're not aware of your thoughts coming into a conversation, when you're not aware of your expectations for how your spouse is going to respond, right?

Like everything could go haywire, even if you have the best communication techniques. And so I really would urge everyone, right. To just, if you do the other things, communicating with your husband will be so much easier, right? Like you've unloaded so much of the baggage that makes communication hard. Now I'm not going to leave the listeners hanging and offer no communication technique. Right. So I think the most, the most important communication technique is to pause. Yes. Period. Like there is power in the pause. All my clients that listen to the podcast are going to be laughing right now because we literally talk about pausing all the time, over and over again. I sound like a broken record. I'm like pause and breathe. Pause. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You say pause and breathe. I say pause and summarize. So I created like this mini training and the first skill is PS.





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Right? It's like PS pause and summarize. Tell me more. Yeah. So the pausing is of course self explanatory, but it's the hardest part, right? So we, the majority of times we are listening to respond instead of listening for understanding. And so whenever you find yourself in conversation with your spouse and your gut reaction is to respond and you're like, you can't even contain yourself to let you know him, finish the sentence before you're ready to say what you need to say. That is a clear signal to you to pause. I personally like to recommend, like you just notice your body, you notice how you're feeling in your body when you have the sense of urgency and you're, you know, feeling like I can't wait to say what I have to say. That is the perfect time to pause. Yes. And literally to just like, say it to yourself, like pause and then summarize, like summarize what you heard before you respond, because we also have selective hearing, right? Yes. I certainly have it.

When you are not tuned in to listen for understanding you miss sometimes what is actually being communicated and what is actually being said. And so when you pause and you can say, this is what I think I heard, this is what I think you're saying, then you not only become a little bit of self aware of like, what did you actually take in, right? You also have their perspective, like in your hands now, and then you can go from there. And so pausing and summarizing is honestly like the first and the best step. If you do nothing more than that and your communication, you're gonna notice a dramatic, dramatic improvement. The other thing, and I actually got this from my husband, is to just, you know, when you're having a discussion and when you're communicating, identify the points where you actually agree. Yes. I think it's just a thing that we don't naturally tend to do, but when you can start a conversation from a place of, hey, this is what we both agree on. We may have different approaches to getting there, but actually acknowledging and calling it out is so important and it lowers defensive, right? It lowers the





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defenses and it enable you to have an open, free flowing conversation, but you cannot get there if you don't pause. And that is the first step.

I love the pause. You know, I'm a big fan of the pause. And then when I was listening to you explain summarizing one of the episodes we'll link to it in the show notes that I have is not the power tools, but five power questions that just help you return to center. And one of them is, what am I making this mean? It's a very standard sort of coaching question that we help our clients really practice and know how to use it, all of that. And one of my favorite variations of that is when someone says something that riles you up, that, you know, you're riled, right? What did you mean by that? Instead of me trying to figure out, Whoa, what am I making it mean? Let me double check what they meant in the first place. What did you mean by that? Every time I talk about this, when I, my clients and they go in and use it and they come back and we have another session, they're like, it didn't mean any of what I thought it meant.

They were totally thinking about some other unrelated thing. And they just said this, but they actually were thinking about this almost to a T every single time. So what did you mean by that? When you're going to pause and summarize, if you have any trouble summarizing, you run into any hiccups with that, that's a great little question to just include, and that will help you so much. It will help you so much. And I think again, just to reinforce and reiterate why the self awareness is important. I think knowing your spouse is also really important. So communication, there are people who are internal processors and there are people who are external processors. And your question of like, what did you mean by that really triggered that for me. Because sometimes one person may literally say everything they think exactly how they think while the other, maybe half of it's in their head, and half of it's what they say. There's so much room for





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just miscommunication and misunderstanding, just based on how people process and express information to each other.

I love that so much. Just hearing you describe that. I will tell you that I am that person that says everything on my mind. Right. Which, you know, cause you've hung around me for a while. And my husband is very much, I think an internal processor. So sometimes it looks like this, he'll say something at the end of the conversation he had in his head, he'll say, Oh, and then now let's go do this. And I have no idea why, where did that come from? Because we talk about this stuff all the time. I'll say, um, was there anything else in that conversation that maybe needs to be said out loud and he laughs, we're able to laugh about it, but if that has ever happened to you, like if you're listening and you're like, Oh, I think, you know, my partner's an internal processor. If you're able to bring playfulness and laugh about it and say, Hey, just checking in. Was there more?

Yeah, my husband is for sure an internal processor and I was asking him like, okay, but what was the conversation that happened in your head? Yeah. Maybe not the one you said here, but like what else happened in your head? Because there's more to this. Love it so much. That's so good. Okay. You guys are the five power tools. Self-awareness fresh perspective. Get a different seat at that table. I love that so much. Emotional management techniques, renegotiation of expectations. And then communication techniques. Pause, summarize. You can do pause, breathe and summarize. You can combine together, PBS. So, that's awesome. Everyone, we will have a transcript of this episode. You're going to want to print that out and like highlight the questions we talked about. And some of these things, this is one of those episodes to like take it relisten to it, take notes. And if you don't like to take notes, print the transcript and really highlight some of those questions and just start using them. You will see the difference, you will





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see the difference.

So before we wrap up, there's a couple of questions I wanted to ask you. And one of things I wanted to mention is that Chavonne works with couples and individuals in her marriage coaching practice. So I specialize in helping one person change a marriage and some people will ask me, well, do you work with couples? And I personally don't, but you do. So can you tell us a little bit about how your approach with couples in coaching is different than traditional couples therapy? Yeah. Great, great questions. So again, I am not a psychologist or a therapist, but my understanding, and even my experience in couples therapy is oftentimes the unit of change is within the couple. Meaning that a lot of the conversation is focused on the interdependence and interrelatedness and the dynamics between the partners. So it's sort of raising needs, right? Like elevating the needs of one person and how the other person can meet those needs and you know, operating from that lens. And so from my perspective and how I work with couples from a coaching lens is yes, there is the dynamic that is happening between two individuals, which is creating whatever it's producing in the marriage.

And there is everybody's individual work. I call it cleaning up your side of the equation, right? There's $A + B = C$. Now if A changes, you don't get C anymore. Right? So yeah, it's the same principle. I think the, the added insight that I get to have when I do work with a couple is I get to see that play out, exactly. Because again, we talked about those blind spots. So if with an individual, if I'm working with the individual, they come with their perspective, their seat at that table. And I have to sort of like assume what the other person's seat at that table might be. So when I'm working with couples, that piece is, sort of eliminated where I actually get to talk directly to the other person to get their vantage point and really have a deeper understanding





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of the dynamics between them.

But I tell anyone who comes to me as a couple, I tell them all the time, your work is going to be your work. And their work is going to be their work. We work as a team and not police, right. Because a lot of times I think the downfall that sometimes happens when couples are in therapy is they are witnessing what the therapist is saying to the spouse in terms of what they might need to do to improve. And then if it doesn't happen, it's then used against them like, well, you know, the therapist said, you should do this and you're not doing that. And so I really try to help people to focus on their work. Right. And also have the satisfaction of knowing that their spouse is doing the work as well. Individually. Yeah, right. And so there will be sessions where we all meet together and then there's sessions where I will meet with one or the other individually as well.

Love it. So there's the couple and you meet with them together as a team, I love that as a team, not the police. And then you meet with each individually to see what their work is as they're working through things together. And one thing that I think coaching or the style of coaching that both of us do, cause obviously we're friends and we know each other's style. And that kind of thing is we really focus on that idea of personal responsibility as an internal responsibility, as opposed to external responsibility. So we talk about like, she calls it the equation, right? I call it like cleaning up your side of the table. Like let's clean up your side of the table first, but it's the same idea that when we take individual responsibility for our actions, our thoughts, how we're showing up, we're using these five power tools.

I love how you described it. When A changes. If you have $A + B = C$ and A suddenly isn't





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A anymore, now it's H then the result is going to be completely different. And if you do that with both individuals at the same time, it becomes such a beautiful and powerful result. So good. Okay. Chavonne what is the best place for people to find you? Yes. Great question. So you can find me at drchavonne.com. I love it. And we will link to your site on the show notes. And they also wrote a note when you talked about your podcast episode about when your husband says, no, we will grab the link to that episode. And we'll put that in the show notes as well. Cause I think that'll just be so helpful to sort of support everything that we talked about today. And we'll also link to the power questions that I mentioned earlier as well. If you could leave our listeners with one thought or perspective to take on marriage, what would you most want them to take away from today?

Ah, such a good question. I feel it's like the last, the last words, right? Yeah. My last words would be, anything is possible. That's a good, I really like I can imagine, and even in my own challenges in my own marriage, I think a person that is listening to this podcast is listening because they do believe in the possibility of a better marriage for themselves. Yes, yes. And so when you really sink your teeth, sink your minds and everything into like anything is possible. And it starts with me like that is the completion of that. Like anything is possible. And it starts with me. I think a lot of people get into the perspective of like, Oh, why do I have to be the one who did, who, who does everything? Why do I have to work on myself? And if you could just sit at a different seat at that table and see it as an opportunity and as a privilege for you to be the leader of the emotional climate of your marriage, it will be such an honor and such a privilege. So anything is possible. And it starts with me. I love that. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you everyone. We'll be back next week.

