



# EPISODE 23: MARRIAGE TRIGGER MANAGEMENT 101

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/23](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/23)

Hello, everyone. Welcome. I am so happy you're here. We are going to make your marriage better today. We're going to talk about triggers those things that always kind of rub you the wrong way, and we're going to talk about how to handle them. So they don't knock you off your center so that you stay powerful and resourceful, no matter what is going on around you. And we have a lot to cover so we're diving right in recently. I asked the question in The Better Marriage Club, which is my Facebook group, if you're a woman and you want to talk about marriage and you want to talk about the delights and the challenges of being married, come and join us, The Better Marriage Club. And I ask questions there all the time, and I comment on things and I post different resources that you can use to make your marriage better.

And one question that I asked recently is what is the topic or the issue that triggers the most fights or arguments in your relationship? And of course there are many, there are so many, we're going to talk about a bunch of them today, right? If I ask you, as you listen to this episode, just think about that thing. Everybody has that thing. You know what that thing is, just have that in mind, as I walk through how to handle that trigger when it comes up on this episode today. So obviously we're not going to solve every argument in one podcast episode, but it is my highest intention for you to always be able to listen today and apply tomorrow when it comes to the podcast. So you will definitely leave this episode with some very concrete, actionable takeaways that you can use and apply when something comes up.

And when you get that unsettled feeling that leads to arguments and moments of disconnection, this episode is going to help you manage those moments better. So here's some very special instructions for today's episode as you listen. As you listen to the different suggestions, the different I'm calling them, trigger, hacks, the different trigger hacks we're going to talk about today, on how to manage disagreements in your relationship. Listen for the one





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thing that you're going to take away and that you're going to try, play with, and experiment. So just listen for the one thing. And when you find it, it's like, okay, that's my one thing. Okay. So that's your challenge for today's episode. Okay. So obviously we know what we're talking about, but just to make sure there are certain things that every time they come up, they just trigger that stress response. That's why we call it a trigger.

You get the fight flight freeze or appease. And what happens is when there's a disagreement and there's a stress response, we want to solve it, right? We want to hash it out. You want to talk about it, but what happens is that is the worst possible time to problem solve. Who is thinking clearly when they see red, no one. Not you, not me, not the most patient loving person ever. So imagine a car cutting you off in traffic, right? And there you are, you're seeing red. Is that the best time to negotiate a peace treaty? No, it's not. It is so obvious when it's a car in traffic, but then we're home. We're in our pajamas. Something comes up and then we're all riled up, and we stay riled up, until we come to a resolution. I have been that person I've been: no, we're not going to sleep now. Right?

I've gotten better. I'm proud to say, I've practiced my tools and I have improved, but I have been that person. And I know some of you listening right now, you are that person. Okay? Some of us might even get offended. If our partner doesn't want to hash it all out and figure it out in the moment. And some of us might have partners who would get offended if we didn't hash it out a little bit or work through it. Right? So one of the pieces of guidance that I give my private coaching clients and that I'm going to give you today is this. When things are normal and calm. So not during the disagreement in a normal and calm moment, when you're not in the middle of an argument, you can experiment with telling your partner. I am trying something new. I'm going to see if I can take a moment or several depending to come down and I may need to step away.





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Not because I don't care about the thing or about you, but because I so deeply care about you and about the thing, I want to be able to be focused and clear when we talk about this big thing, right? That's so important to both of us. Would you be okay with that? Right? That's way of approaching your partner when you're not in the middle of a sticky situation to set the stage, right? To give your partner a framework to say, if I step away, it's not because I don't care is because I'm trying to see if there's a better way to handle these situations that when they come up. So that's one experiment to play with. Now, let's say you haven't done that yet. And you feel that triggering moment happened. So then I have this very sophisticated, high-tech two step formula that I applied to any intense conversation.

You ready? I call it the pause and breathe method. You pause and you take a deep breath. You let your primal freak-out-brain disengage. Your prefrontal cortex, calm brain takes over, right? Pause and breathe. My clients laugh because I say it so so often you can repeat it like a mantra, right? Pause and breathe. Some of my clients do a double feature, I call it a double feature, of pause and breathe and no complaining, no defending that may sound familiar. If you've been listening to the podcast every week, that's my formula for Emotional Weight Loss, no complaining, no defending. It is to marriage, what no flour, no sugar is to your body. When you remove complaining and defending whatever's left is what you really have to deal with in your relationship. And I explained that in depth in episode four. So we'll definitely link to that in the show notes.

Okay. So back to breathing, the best possible thing that you can do is to take a deep breath. And if possible, see if there's a moment that you can step away. Sometimes it's just going to the restroom. Sometimes it's going into another room. Sometimes it's going outside, taking a deep breath, letting that stress response flow, right, flow through your body. And then come back





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to the situation when you're feeling calm and you're feeling steady and you're feeling ready to problem solve. So, trigger-hacks, right? Trigger management hacks. Let's think about some of the common trigger items. Communication, money, kids, boundaries, parents in law, feeling unseen or under appreciated, the distribution of chores, all of those kinds of things, right? It can be taken in a variety of ways. And here's what I want you to take away from today. All of these things, we can make a long list of all the other ones, right?

There's so many, all of these things are symptoms and you always want to go to the root cause and solve for that. So I have another episode of the podcast called The Five Why's and you simply ask why, and then you ask why, again, you ask why, again, until you find out the root cause why the thing is happening, right? So when you're looking at why the disconnect is even happening, we want to look for that layer underneath, right? The layer, the underlying issue that is causing the surface situation. And I like to think of it like algebra. In algebra, you solve for X and then really get to the root cause of the problem. So the next thing that is super important, and I want you to lean in listen closely. This is a five gold stars, highlighters moment! Is for you to realize that once you identify the root cause it's never the actual issue that is causing the pain.

It's always our thoughts about the situation that make that situation painful. And you can always change your perspective. You can look at how you're thinking about it, even as you take action to find the resolution with the issue. So that doesn't mean we don't have to address whatever it is, our parenting style, how much sex do we want to have? What are we going to do about our kids or parents or whatever else is going on. So it doesn't mean you don't address the issue, but once we can understand that if we shift our perspective and we look at how we're thinking about the situation, we can minimize some of that emotional pain so that we can focus





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on solutions and focus on moving forward. Then you can pause and breathe and ask yourself, is there another way I can look at this? And then from that other way, look for the resolution, right?

You would suffer so much less, which is ultimately the point, right? To suffer less, to love more, to be more connected than disconnected, right? So before you do anything else, look at how you're looking at the situation. And one of the most common things that I see with my private clients, and sometimes some of the comments in the better marriage club as well is it brings up this question for me, which is, are you making your husband wrong? And that was like to clarify, I use husbands as an example because I work with women married to men all the time. These examples really apply to any combination of couple. So if it's the same sex situation, it's the same. The psychology does not change. Okay? So since I work with wives, married to men, I talk about husbands.

That's not to say right, that your husband may not be wrong. So let's say you're making him wrong and he may actually be wrong, right. Or you may be wrong. We don't know. But any conversation that starts with blame when you're making the other person wrong, it just never ends well. And I'll take myself as an example. So imagine somebody comes up to me and says, they don't like how I'm doing the podcast. Right. You're doing the podcast wrong. And I would think, well, I don't know. I love how I'm doing the podcast, I think I'm doing it great. Unless I practice my no complaining, no defending mantra, unless I've paused and breathed. If I didn't have those trigger hacks to use, I might just immediately get defensive and tune out. Anything else that the person had to say right now, if the person came to me and said, I love your podcast. I think it's amazing. And maybe if you spoke a little slower, everyone would understand it better. Right. Maybe, right?







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I would be able to listen depending on their approach. But if they approached it in a way that felt like they were blaming, I would not even be able to hear the rest of what they're saying. Right. Think about those examples when you can't even hear right. Or it feels like your partner can't even hear the rest of what you're saying. It invites us to question our approach. In this example, my stress cycle would kick in. I'm either in fight or flight or freeze, I can't focus. And then from that point of view, if you can imagine your stress cycle kicking in or your husband's stress cycle kicking in, that's where empathy becomes so, so important. If you put yourself in your husband's shoes and you ask, why is he looking at it this way? What does he think we should do about the kids?

Why does he think this? Right. If you can look at it with empathy and curiosity, you can get closer to creating connection. Then if you've already decided that he's wrong and that's that, and that's the way it is, right? If you're able to pause and look at it with empathy, you can see maybe he wouldn't approach it the same way that you approach it, but you might be able to find a middle ground. And that is so, so important. Now, pausing and breathing, practicing empathy, we start with those things. And then we go to prevent, let's talk about this. One of the best ways to manage a trigger is to prevent and minimize it from happening at all in the first place. Right? So if you know that you always argue about a particular thing, how can you minimize the opportunities for that argument to occur?

So think about your car. It's much easier to change the oil on time, on a regular schedule and to keep the tank full of gas, then to order a tow truck in the middle of the highway, because your engine stopped running, it's much easier to prevent than to then solve that problem on the backend. Right? So when I practice prevention, I'm talking about changing the oil and getting the gas right before the situation happens. So what can you do to prevent or minimize





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the impact of a trigger? And I'm going to give you an example from something, someone commented on a post about boundaries with their parents. So we all have mothers and fathers and all kinds of different situations with our parents, right? How can we minimize having a fight about that? Can we talk about it the weekend before? Can we talk about the holidays?

Can we make the plan for the holidays ahead of time? If we have a parent who's living with us, the living situation is intense. There's something going on. How can we approach it as a team? And then when the situation comes up, we already have a plan in mind and we make that plan calmly, not in the heat of the moment. We can explore alternatives together. We can brainstorm, we can really help each other right, and be partners. So one of the keys are preventing, as I was mentioning earlier, is making sure we're not making the other person wrong. Making sure that we are practicing empathy. That's why we started with that. And when you're looking at the situation, asking yourself, why does this person want this? How can we find something that works for both of us, right? Those are great questions to sort of take a step back and think through.

So that's prevent. Now, the next hack is accept. I have a whole episode on acceptance where I go into a lot of depth on that. And we will link to that in the show notes as well. And I really like linking to the show notes because I imagine a person of the future, like a sci-fi moment, listening to this right, five years from now, maybe it's their first episode of the podcast. And they have never listened to it before, they have no idea that I talk about all these things. So if that's you, hello person of the future, use those show notes. And for my person of the present, I'm so glad you're here. Acceptance is a very big topic. I did a whole episode on it, so definitely listen to that. But in the meantime, here's the scoop, here's the summary. One of the key things that will overall make your marriage so much happier every day for the rest of your life is to practice





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acceptance. Accepting yourself, accepting your partner, and accepting the situation as it is right now, today, right?

And when you're able to do that in the context of triggers for arguments like we're talking about today, and you're able to just accept this is happening and remove the blame from the situation and just step into problem solving, you'll make so much more progress. A great example for one of these is one of the members of The Better Marriage Club talked about making a list with her husband of everything that needs to be done in the tours of the home, and then distributing those things between each other. And then every once in a while, they'll organize and update the list. And it becomes sort of this very calm assignment of tasks and reorganization of tasks. And I love that example because one of the reasons that the list process works is there's no blame. There's no argument in this situation. There's just the oil needs to be changed. Is it going to be me, or is it going to be you? The gas needs to be pumped, Is it going to be me, or is it going to be you? Right? The groceries need to be purchased. I'll choose the oil. You take the groceries. What do you think? Do you want to trade? It becomes so much more simple. So when you can get to acceptance, that is something that will give you so much peace in your relationship. And it's worth really practicing, even if you're not sure how to do it, even if you're not sure what to do. One of the key things about acceptance is knowing you do not have to agree in order to accept. The only thing acceptance means is that you stop arguing with reality as author Byron Katie would say.

You stop wanting your husband to be some other way other than how he is today, and you just look at, this is how he is today, now let's decide what we're going to do about it, right? And when you accept, you can still take action to get whatever needs met that you need to meet. Right? So for example, let's say he doesn't clean and your thought is he should clean, but he never







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becomes a good cleaner. That's just not his best quality. Are you ready to potentially lose your relationship over that? And end, your relationship over that? That's a question that I think all of us need to ask ourselves. There's no right or wrong answer to that, there are situations where we are willing to lose a relationship over something that we might consider a trigger, because it's so important. If it's one of our core values, then the answer might be yes, but in many cases, the answer is no.

So then we need to go to the root cause, again, make sure we're clear on that. And the root cause in this case, if I keep with the cleaning example is not whether or not he should clean the answers. How do you meet the need for cleanliness? Whether he cleans or you cleans or a cleaner comes, or the kids clean somebody else cleans? How will the need for cleanliness be met, right? Whoever is providing that solution, right? So that leads me to the next hack to help you with your triggers, which is to ask a better question. You know, I love questions. I love the ability to use the question to return to your own power. So when I say ask a better question, when you name any of the topics that could be a potential trigger, a great question to ask is what would it take to get peace or satisfaction around this issue?

What would it take? Just answer it, think about it, see what you both want to answer about that. Whichever's the thing that triggers you the most. Now, remember not in the middle of a heated argument, but if you think about your finances, let's say, what would it take to get peace or satisfaction around this issue around how you manage your finances? What do I need to be peaceful about this? Is it a redistribution of how we organize our bills? Is it that some kind of negotiation that we need to make, do we need a more modest vacation? Do we need a more elaborate vacation, right? What would it take to get peace and satisfaction around this for yourself? And by the way, there's the behind the scenes blooper. I'm going to tell you right now





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because you must know, I cannot keep recording without telling you.

So I write up the notes for the podcast. And as I'm talking about peace right now, how would you get peace in this situation. For some wacky reason, the computer auto-corrected pizza instead of peace. And I just can't stop smiling about it. What would it take to get some pizza out of this? Just had to pause for that. So when you get your peace and your pizza, then you can speak lovingly and calmly with empathy to your partner and see where you meet in the middle for that peace or for that satisfaction. Okay. So let's recap, pause and breathe, practice empathy, prevent, accept, ask a better question. Those are five trigger management tools that you can always bring up for yourself to minimize the impact of a trigger or the impact of an argument. And it's not that we're not going to have arguments because we will, but we can minimize our impact and we can use arguments as breakdowns that lead us to a breakthrough.

So an argument that brings you closer instead of more distant, that is a high level of emotional mastery right there. Now here's the another thought I want to leave you with, as you think about minimizing and managing triggers and really using arguments to get closer and finding resolution when you're peacing your pizza, right? What if you made it your goal to not argue about the same things all the time? What if you could only argue about new things? Just take a moment and imagine that, like, if you had that as a rule. Back when I worked in human resources, I used to be the training director at a law firm, which if you're a lawyer listening to this, I love you. And also training lawyers was like herding cats. Okay. Love you all. But fun times. And seriously, there's nothing a client can bring me now that I can't handle because I spent years training lawyers.

It's all good. So this was my rule when I was training lawyers. I would tell them all the time we





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know all of these mistakes. These are the mistakes that were made before, I am going to teach you how to prevent all of them. And you're going to come back and you're going to go make new ones. And then you get, come back to me and we will figure out how to handle those together. That was my challenge. So that's what I'm going to invite you, you all to do today, you know, the issues that can trigger you, you know, how to address and strategize. So those issues can be minimized and become less painful. So now I'll go out and make new mistakes. Imagine committing to not making the same old ones over and over again. Just imagine that. Now I want to recap something.

I said at the beginning of the episode, which is to write down one thing that you took away from this episode that you're actually going to try on like a sweater and play with this week. Imagine this could be the week that you start turning your marriage around. This could be the moment you make that decision. Doesn't that feel powerful and amazing. I am completely cheering you on and I am so excited for you. This world needs all the love we can give it. In my heart of hearts I believe we must be that love that we want to see in the world. And I really believe the way we contribute to peace and prosperity on earth is to live in peace and prosperity in our own lives. And I often tell the moms that I talk to, that there is nothing more important you can do for your kids than show them what two people who love each other look like and sound like. And I'm telling you today, there's nothing more important you can do to contribute to peace and healing on earth than to experience peace and healing in your own home.

I think it's so important. And you know how with COVID, you can breathe on someone and they breathe on someone and that's how it spreads. It's literally taught us how contagious our breath is. Right? Think about how contagious our love could be. I'm feeling very soap boxy today, but we're going, we're on the soap box now. Think about every person that you interact with and





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every person that they interact with being touched by you, feeling lighthearted and you feeling forgiving and powerful and strong and loving and resourceful. Think about how just you working on your relationship at home has a massive ripple effect of goodness in the world. I really really see that as a sacred duty. And I really invite you to think about your relationship in this deeper way as an opportunity to practice who you want to be in the world, no matter what your partner is doing, no matter what else is happening on earth, we have some wacky things going on. Imagine hate that you take your relationship, working on your relationship at home and just imagine the ripple effect that has for everyone on earth as it becomes like, oh my gosh, I'm totally gonna do this now. So powerful. Okay. Before I forget, if you have not downloaded the Move Your Marriage Forward Worksheet, go do that now, we talked about it in the previous episode, it's five simple questions that will help you get unstuck and move forward in any situation that you're facing in your marriage right now. You will find the link to that in the show notes for this episode. And you can find the whole podcast archive at [maggiereyes.com](https://maggiereyes.com). Okay. That is a wrap for today's episode. I'm sending you all mental hugs, let us make every marriage better and let's start with yours.

