



EPISODE 41: OFFERING YOURSELF GRACE WITH RENEE LITKE

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/41](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/41)

Maggie

Hello, everyone, I am so delighted to bring you another interview episode today. As per usual, we're going to go deep and have fun at the same time. And my guest today is Renee Litke. Renee and I have worked together for over a whole year period. So she's just wrapping up her second round of coaching with me. And Renee is a senior clinical strategist at a major health company. She's a former nurse with a master's degree in management. And she has taken all of her experience from being on the floor with direct patient care, to becoming a senior case manager at a top ranking pediatric hospital, to then specializing in vaccine related diseases and now working exclusively with C-suite leadership teams to develop and create value based care programs. And in her work, she focuses on innovation and population health strategies. So needless to say she has a lot going on right now. And I am so grateful that she's joining us today to talk about her experience, and what she created in her life and her marriage throughout our work together. Welcome, Renee.

Renee

Thank you, Miss Maggie. It's such a pleasure to be here. I'm so excited to talk to you today.

Maggie

Awesome. So tell us a little bit about what you do.

Renee

Yeah, just to break it down in a really simple way I work to develop population health ideas and initiatives to keep folks healthy. So that's really the crux of what I do.

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That is so good. Thank you. We need everyone to be healthier right now. So like there's never been a time that it's been more important to keep people healthy. So on behalf of everyone, thank you, Renee.

Renee

You're so kind Yes, definitely it's a fun position, to be able to really spread your creative wings.

Maggie

I love that, I love that so much. So tell us a little bit about why you decided to hire a marriage coach, why did you decide you wanted to work with me over a year ago now?

Renee

Yeah, time has gone by so quickly, I can't believe it's a year. So I will share. I've had a really rough couple of years. I've had some experiences at work and had some difficulties in my marriage. And, you know, I've been married for 34 years, and really found myself in a place that I never thought I would be in. You know, passively looking at a separation. And I had gone down the path of, you know, traditional therapy, both marriage counseling, personal, you know, working with behavioral health specialists, and myself. And completed all of those things and felt like, I had gotten things in a better spot. But I still felt like there was so much more work to do. And there were things that I had underneath of there that still hadn't been addressed. And I had found your web page and was following you on Facebook and the posts were just so relevant to where I was at that moment in life. And I really made the decision to invest in myself. And I have to say it's the best decision I've ever made.

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See, as we have to pause this for me to say, That's amazing. That is the goal. That is my intention always. It just fills me with delight to hear that. And here's something that I think is really fascinating is like sometimes and I've been through this in different chapters of my life, is like we've tried so many things that didn't work, and then we're still looking for what is it that's gonna work for me. What was it that you saw whether it was one of those posts or anything like that, but you thought, you know what, I'm gonna give this a try. Because so many people have never heard of life coaching, they have no point of reference for life coaches, what made you think I'm gonna give this a try?

Renee

I have to say, like, I have been following along with interest for, you know, probably decent period of time, like three months. And I felt like so many of the posts were relevant and directive to me, whether it was about a communication style, or how to manage a difficult topic or you know, how to manage anger and those types of things. And they really just applied to me and I was like, Oh my gosh, I think this woman is on my wavelength.

Maggie

Yeah. Okay, so now let's talk a little bit about some of your favorite things you took away from coaching, whether it was a concept or an experience or an aha moment, I'd love to hear some of your like, top favorite things that happened over this last year.

Renee

I have to say I'm happy to take a swing at at what the top ones were. But there are so many and I have, I feel, such a robust toolkit that I can go to now. You know, so just to review a few, I think one of the biggest aha moments for me, was I can change how I'm thinking I can think another





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thought. And just because I think it doesn't mean it's true.

Maggie

That is so important. Yes. Please say it again, Renee.

Renee

Just because I think it doesn't mean it's true.

Maggie

Yeah.

Renee

So really taking advantage of the thought models, the ability to download where I'm at. Looking at things through a different lens. Yeah. And I think another big aha moment for me, was how and when to set a boundary, because it was definitely never a skill that I learned how to do. And now I feel very confident in being able to do that.

Maggie

Yeah. What was challenging about learning how to set a boundary? Or what is more clear now that maybe wasn't before? Can you walk us through that a little bit, because I know, that's something that a lot of people struggle with.

Renee

So I think for me, really understanding that a boundary is something for me, and it's something that I will take action on. Not setting a boundary and expecting somebody else to do something,





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because it just doesn't work out that way. So really, understanding that, and practicing that, and developing that muscle memory has been a, it's been a challenge for me. And, you know, I'm very much one of those people who does the right thing, because it's the right thing to do. And I expect everyone around me to do that as well. And that's just not the case.

Maggie

Yeah. And now, when you set a boundary, what brings you relief? Or how is that impacted your life to have the ability to set a boundary, like what's different now?

Renee

I think what's different now is that I'm empowered to enact on that boundary. So it's not happening to me. And I can be like, Okay, this was my boundary. And I'll give you an example. You know I have some family that just consistently wants to lean in and push buttons to, you know, talk about things that I'm not willing to discuss anymore, because they're just very unhealthy and dramatic and just not going to go there. So now, I know that when that happens, when that particular topic comes up, that I'm, you know, free to say I need to go now or, you know, I can't continue this conversation. And I have the power, I'm not giving my power away to someone else. And just being at will of having to have the experience,

Maggie

right. Just because someone invites you to a conversation doesn't mean you have to stay in it. Right?

Renee

For sure. Yeah.





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Maggie

That's so so, so, so good. And then when you mentioned, I can think another thought, would you share like maybe one or two of your favorite thoughts that you like, think often?

Renee

Oh, gosh, I think a few of my favorites are I get to choose. I am choosing whatever it is, to be grateful, to be happy, to be in this moment, intentional. So I get to choose. And I think the other one is, I get to create what I want, right? So I get to create that moment of connectedness with myself. You know, and I can create, once I have that down, then I can create very specific actions that get me to the result that I want.

Maggie

I love that so much. Why do you think it's so meaningful and powerful to you when you remind yourself, I get to choose, and I'm asking for this reason, I know that someone will be listening to this and think, well that's so simple, of course I get to choose, right? But we don't realize in the moment when we're sort of swept away in an intense emotion. Like, that's the moment we want to remember that we get to choose. That's what we practice, you know, over and over again, in coaching. So why is that meaningful or powerful for you?

Renee

I think I'm going to completely validate what you just said, like, I never thought I had a choice. I thought that life was happening to me. And you know, that I didn't get to have a say in the direction instead of me happening to life. So I may not be able to control the circumstances of what comes to me. But I can control how I think about it, and what I want my outcome to be.





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And that is so empowering Maggie, like, beyond words empowering.

Maggie

Yeah, I like to think about it as the ultimate power. I was just doing an interview the other day was feeling like there's something similar and she was just like, you want to control things, control that. Control your reactions, right.

Renee

That's a superpower.

Maggie

Yeah, yeah, it's so good. And it sounds deceptively simple. And I really want to sort of address a little bit, I feel like there's a little bit of an elephant in the room. It sounds so simple. I could just choose another thought. It sounds simple. But just because something is simple, doesn't mean it's easy to do, especially in the heat of the moments that we have as humans. Would you agree with that?

Renee

I completely agree with that, Maggie. And I think one of the things that I've had to continually remind myself is that I'm not always going to be perfect, I'm gonna have moments where, you know, I get swept up in the swirl, and I get to choose to recenter and refocus. So it's really around offering myself grace. And you just have to keep practicing. That's the only way that you get good at it, is muscle memory.

Maggie





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Yeah, I like to say that nothing in our lives or our marriages needs to be perfect in order to be awesome. Like, I think that's such an important thing for us to just have a collective conversation around, it can be messy, and it can be beautiful. I can do it imperfectly, and it's still moving me forward. I don't have to have it all figured out to take the most immediate next step. Like that idea that, like, perfectionism is an illusion, especially, you know, you're a very driven woman, I'm a very driven woman. When we're at this level of our careers and our professions and the types of things we do, that perfectionism can really trip us up.

Renee

Oh, for sure. It's been a challenge to not be like, Okay, I'm back at step one, you know, step one square A. It doesn't invalidate the progress that I've made, I just have to continue to try to make it happen. And, you know sometimes you have to hunt for the good days, there are days where you just have to hunt for the good. And that's good enough.

Maggie

Yes. That's so awesome. Hunt for the good everyone. That's everyone's coaching homework for this week is go into your life, go into relationship and hunt for all the good you find. That's like, the best.

Renee

Absolutely. Definitely, it's there.

Maggie

Was there one more like, concept or experience or anything that you wanted to share or, were those two like the major ones?





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Renee

I think those were the major ones. One of the other key things that I learned, Maggie around the models is that everybody's walking around in their own model. Yeah. And what they're doing is not a personal affront to me. Yeah. It's about them. And really, understanding that they're operating in their own model has just been huge for me. Because I will say that for the longest time I walked around and I took everything personally and everything to heart. And, you know, that's been really impactful for me and it's helped me understand my husband more in terms of where he is and how he's feeling and to realize that it has nothing to do with me at all.

Maggie

That's so special. And so when he says everybody's walking around in their own models, if this is the very first time that you hear this podcast, I just want to say welcome. And what she's referring to is one of the coaching tools that I use called the self coaching model. And basically, we all have thoughts, we all have feelings, we all take action, and we all create results. And that combination of things is the model that we're in, I will link in the show notes to the episode called Relationship Mastery, where I sort of explain the model step by step in there. But that's what Renee's referring to, if you're just hearing this concept for the first time, just you have a feel for that. What kind of results did you create? Like, what are some of the things that you were delighted by in the coaching process?

Renee

I have to say, I am absolutely delighted by how healthy I feel, right now in my interactions with my husband, with family, with friends. The results, in terms of my communication in my marriage is, not just communication, everything in my marriage. Love languages, communication, facts,





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everything is exponentially better. And the one, piece that I really want to share is, during our time together, you know, I've had our conversations, and then I've walked away and you know, had some time to think about it, and, you know, maybe talk to my spouse about it. And I have to say there have been more moments than I can count, where I will hear my husband, use Maggie-wisdom. And I will be like, is Maggie here?

Maggie

That's the best, right?

Renee

So that has just really changed the whole dynamic of, it's just a healthy way of interfacing with each other. And we can both say things like, you know what, I'm just having a moment over here. Or, you know, I want to express gratitude and appreciation. It's just so much cleaner and healthier.

Maggie

Yeah, and for those of you listening, who have been frustrated in the past, maybe you've wanted to do couples counseling or something like that, where your partner didn't want to participate. One of the things that we focus on is just this idea that comes from systems theory in psychology, which is when one person and the element change the other people in that system, you know, reacts to those changes. So it's not like Renee goes and has our calls, and then gives her husband a step by step like, this is what we're doing for coaching homework. It's not that, it's just that Renee goes out into her relationship, and integrates whatever it was we talked about. And suddenly her husband's like, well, what what are you having? I want some of that.





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Renee
For sure.

Maggie

Yeah, so I just want to clarify that. So in coaching, sometimes we will find out things about ourselves, that we're not delighted about, like, sometimes we'll just see something when it's not our best self, or it's not really, you know, my most delightful feature. And one of the things I like to do on the show is, as you know, both in coaching and on the podcast, is really keep it real and really say like, hey, that's gonna happen too. So, can you share a little bit about when you have those moments where maybe you uncover something that wasn't your proudest moment? How do you handle that now? How do you whether it's you comfort yourself, or you see that in yourself? Walk us through that a little bit?

Renee

Absolutely. There have been a couple things that have come up that I've been like, ooh, I really, that's me. I think the crucial piece is, you know, people are not alone. You're not alone in feeling that way. In the moment, whatever it is anger, shame. You know, whatever the emotion is, you're not the only person that's in that boat. Offering myself grace, for where I'm at in the moment, and then really being aware of that.

Renee

Once you have awareness, I know Maggie, you quote all the time Knowing and not doing is not knowing. And, you know, really having that awareness creates the opportunity for you to change how you approach, the lens that you view through, other considerations. So There've been several times where I've had to take a hard look at myself and be like, Oh, I was really





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being a brat, or really being selfish or really being angry. And it's comforting to know that I'm not the only one that's been in that headspace. And there's opportunity to create change.

Maggie

And we're all human. And we all can be brats. And we can all be selfish, and we can all get angry, and it's part of our humanity, right? We don't have to reject that part of ourselves. We can actually come to a point, it may take a minute, but we can come to a point where we can see that part of ourselves and still love that part of ourselves.

Renee

Yeah, I have to say, Maggie, one of the biggest things that I've learned is, all feelings are welcome. So whenever I was feeling angry, or sad, or whatever the uncomfortable feeling was, I was like, Oh, I gotta get this over with right away. I can't be feeling this. So I would try to rush through that. And now you just have to be like, Okay, welcome. Come in. Sit down.

Maggie

Sit down. Have some tea. Let's chat with why you hear what's going on. Right? Yeah. I think so many of us, and I definitely have done that to, want to rush to the to get to the good parts, right, we just skip, right. And whenever I feel that instinct or that urge, I remind myself of like watching a movie. Like, I would never go and turn on I don't know, the Fast and the Furious and say, Well, let me fast forward to the last 30 minutes. Let's just miss everything that happens in between, right? No, you want to be there for the whole thing.

Renee

Absolutely, Maggie. And that's, you know, some of those emotions and those feelings, you just





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want to get out of them as fast as you can. But the more you resist them, the more they want to stay and hang around. So, that's been very insightful.

Maggie

Paradoxically, when you allow them and you just like, serve them some tea and hang out with them, they leave much faster, you actually get the result that you want to create, right?

Renee

Yeah, for sure.

Maggie

Something you mentioned I really want to touch upon is you said offering yourself grace. So if someone's listening to us right now, and maybe they're going through a hard day, maybe they just realized, Oh, I was kind of bratty this morning. That wasn't my best moment. And they don't know how to offer themselves grace, or they're like, I don't even know where I would start. What would you say are one or two ways that you offer yourself grace?

Renee

I think, for me, it's being in the moment, being aware of it. And recognizing you're like, yeah, that, that wasn't really what I wanted to do. And then just offer yourself some love. And whatever that looks like, whether that means like, okay, that happened and I'm going to move on. Offer myself some love, whether that's going outside, reading a book, filling up my tank, so to speak, because, you know, I know it's a little bit cliché, but you can't pour from an empty cup. And then realizing that tomorrow's another day and you'll try again.





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Maggie

Yeah. Here's something that's really interesting, too, is oftentimes when relationships are struggling, and we have that perfectionistic tendency, and we don't offer ourselves grace, and we don't know how or it feels really uncomfortable, it feels really weird. We often struggle with offering our partners grace as well. So the moment that we can turn to ourselves with kindness, just with kindness, what would be kind right now. So if anyone's listening, they're like, I don't know, ladies, I don't know about this grace thing. What kindness do I if I was being kind to myself, what would I do? Just the act of doing that allows you to then be able to do it with your partner also. And so you creating a connection with yourself that's filled with kindness or generosity or grace, allows you to have that with your partner. What do you think about that, Renee?

Renee

Oh, I totally agree with that. And having that approach, and that mindset has really opened up my communication with my husband like in the past, he would never have said, you know, I feel anxious or I feel angry or I feel whatever. And he will now say those things to me and I am in a place where I can hold space for that and know that it's not about me and that I don't need to fix that. Yeah, just be in the moment and walk alongside.

Maggie

Yeah, you just be with him wherever he's at. That's so beautiful. That's so powerful. So what is a fun memory that you have from coaching either from a session or for something you did from coaching homework, like we talked about how sometimes is hard, let's talk about the fun stuff. So what's a fun memory that comes to mind that either makes you chuckle when you remember or just brings a smile to your face.





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Renee

So I have to say your approach, you are fun and spontaneous and light. And yet, you can still deal with the hard topics. And you will walk alongside the person that you're coaching and be in the moment with them, and still be able to come out of it with something that's action oriented, that you can do. So I think for me, some of the best parts have been, you know, ringing the bell, the fairy one, the little celebrations along the way, the laughter. And really, I think, overall, just being with me, as I walked through this process with you, has been so hugely supportive, I cannot speak highly enough of you.

Maggie

First of all, thank you from my heart. And second of all, just to tell people what is ringing the bell, I literally have a bell. And when my client's say brilliant things, I will ring it. And it's something that is so fun. And, like sometimes we obviously, you know, when you're struggling in your marriage, you all know if you're listening and you're struggling with something in a relationship, that's not fun, right? We already know that. And so when we have those moments, so that we can add that levity to figuring out right, what your next step is, or you know, what your approach is going to be. I really like to bring the fun to it. And I think that's something that's important for everyone to know is like we can we can bring our own fun, no matter what the situation is that's happening. And we don't have to wait for everything to be resolved to add some light hearted moments.

Renee

Absolutely, that's what makes it feel so much better. As you're doing it to not have it be seriousness, you know, the laughter just brings so much magic.





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Maggie

Yeah, totally, totally. I love that magic. Okay, so this is kind of an optional question, if you had a chance to ask your hubby what he thought about our work together and if he had anything to say, what do you think he would say?

Renee

So he's been super supportive of the fact that, you know, I wanted to do this work. And when I say that there have been Maggie ripples, there really have been. I mean, he's asked my opinion about things and, you know, during our conversations over this past year, there have been several times where, literally, he will say something and I'll be like, what just happened? I think he's talking to Maggie on the side. One of the one of the most recent things that's happening is my husband and I are planning a move to a completely different state. And he heard me discussing it with our older son that you know, and I was calling it adventure, it's going to be an adventure. And we got in the car to drive home after a visit. And he said to me, he's like, you know what, that's an awesome way to look at it, it really is going to be an adventure. And I couldn't have a better person to do it with.

Maggie

Oh, how sweet is that? Let's just have a moment for how sweet that is.

Renee

So those are definitely concepts and those are all part of my work of how am I looking at this? How am I thinking about this? He very supportive of all the work that I've done. And you know, I think that he really has appreciated a lot of the learnings that I've done and it's been huge Maggie, just knowing when my tank is empty. To be able to say my tank is empty, this has





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nothing to do with us, it has nothing to do with you, I just need to refuel.

Maggie

Yeah. Yeah. How many of us make up stories when our honeys, you know, are having a cloudy day, I call it having a cloudy day that, oh, did I do something? Or honeys will make up stories, oh, did I do something as opposed to, hey, heads up I'm just having a cloud day. I love you the same, nothing is wrong. Right?

Renee

Absolutely. And you don't have to walk away and worry and be like, Oh, my gosh, Is this about me? What happened? How much cleaner is that communication alone?

Maggie

Yeah, so, so good. So powerful. Is there anything else you want to add? Before we start wrapping up today?

Renee

I think overall, this has just been such a phenomenal experience for me. And I'm so glad that I made the investment in myself and in my marriage, and in my relationships. And I just, Maggie, I think you put such good energy out into the world, and I really appreciate all of the love and care that you apply to working with all of your coachees.

Maggie

Thank you, I received that. You know, I tell all my clients, and I want everyone who listens to the podcast to know like, I believe this work is like a sacred honor to do this work. To help someone





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in a chapter of their life that's really pivotal. And it's my highest intention that that's what my clients feel. And one of the reasons I'm so so, so grateful when my clients come on to the show, is for people to know this is possible, right? I remember the first time I met someone who was both married and happy.

Maggie

Like I knew a lot of people who were married, but I know a lot of people are married and happy. And just the example of saying, Oh, this is possible that I could have this. I think it's so so so, so powerful. So thank you for coming on the show and for sharing your experiences. I have a fun question to ask you. So one of the things that I like to do when we have guests on the show is I'll pull a question from The Questions For Couples Journal. And this is a fun one so I can't wait to hear what you have to say. Let's imagine that you win a free vacation for the next five years. But you have to go to the same place every time. What place do you choose?

Renee

Oh, Maggie, that's a hard one. I would have to say that if I had to go to the same place for five years, I would go to London. I love to chase Henry the Eighth. Visit his castles and just go to all the places. And there's so much history there. I love to stand in a place and ponder how many people have been there before me?

Maggie

Oh, that's so good.

Renee

That was a great question.





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Maggie

Yeah isn't that fun? So there are some deep questions that would require a lot more thought in the book, it's a mix and match. But I just think it's so fun to pull those out and just have fun with them. So thank you for a beautiful answer. I love London. Great choice.

Renee

Well thank you so much.

Maggie

You're welcome. Thank you for saying yes. I hope that everyone who's listening today can offer themselves some grace just going by your example.

Renee

Absolutely.

Maggie

Bye, everyone. We'll be back next week with more guidance to help you make your marriage strong.

