



EPISODE 65: CLOSED LOOP COMMUNICATION

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/65](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/65)

Maggie

Hello, everyone, welcome back. We have had so many great interview shows lately. I want to thank you all for the great feedback on those. I'm so happy you're finding them useful. We'll have some awesome interviews coming up again on the podcast.

Today, I get to be alone with you. And we're going to talk about something that came up with one of my clients recently. She found it so useful, she told me, "You have to talk about this on the podcast!" It is called Closed Loop Communication. And it's one more skill to put in your relationship toolbox to help you make your marriage stronger.

Now, before we dive into that, I always love to share what I've been up to lately, share a little bit about what's going on behind the scenes here in Maggie :and. So I just got my second vaccine. As I record this, this past weekend, and I have been really thinking about what re-engaging with life after the pandemic will look like.

We still have a long way to go in so many ways and it's like navigating life on another planet is kind of how I think about it. On this planet, where we have to think about things that we never really thought about before. So for now, I am practicing gentleness with myself and just allowing myself to really go as slow as I need to and not overwhelm myself in the process.

I have also been in a very powerful Certification Program with a very brilliant Coach named Kara Loewentheil. If you don't already know her, I'm so happy to be the person on earth who introduces you to her. I am one of those people who's definitely an early adopter.

Some people are early adopters for technology, like my husband would be an early adopter,





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usually for gadgets and things. I'm an early adopter for trainings and workshops and stuff like that. So I do the first version or the second version of things. Kara has an Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching and I am very proud to say that I'm in class number one of that training, and I have been learning so much. It has influenced my coaching already and I will continue to share in the weeks and years to come.

So many of the things that I've learned, and sort of new insights and new ways that I look at things -- just as a result of really questioning a lot of my assumptions, like I always invite all of you to do. I have been doing that as well.

Talking about Kara, I wanted to share this -- she has a very fabulous episode on her podcast, which the episode is called The Infinite One Percent. I will link to it in the show notes. I want all of you to listen to it. It's amazing. And she talks about the space between doing nothing and doing something. And how that is the longest space you ever travel - is the distance between nothing and something.

So if you think about your marriage, it's the space between not having the conversation you know you need to have, and waiting months or years to have it, versus having the conversation and then having all the other ones that are an offshoot of having that first one. And it's so much easier to have the second conversation about that same thing that's on your mind, than it is to have the first conversation about that.

That is the Infinite One Percent. I have been talking about that episode with my clients and my students in the Marriage MBA, and I will link to it in the show notes so you can listen to it also. I think you'll just find it so, so useful. So I'm excited for you to check that out.





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Now, I also have been having a little bit of fun. I read a fiction book. I think it's the first fiction book I've read in a while. And I really loved it. It's called *Spoiler Alert*, and the author's name is Olivia Dade. It is a modern rom-com type of book about a fan-fiction writer. And if you don't already know I love fan-fiction, I actually read fanfiction.

So when I read the description, I was like, "This is gonna be amazing." And it was. So it's a modern rom-com about a fan-fiction writer who falls in love with the star of her favorite TV show. And then it turns out he's a writer too, and they are online best friends and don't even realize it. It had really sweet, deep and fun moments.

And it also had a real, behind the scenes look at what being part of a fandom is like (when you're a fan of a show, when you join other fans, and you write stories, and get together, and go to conventions and stuff.) So if that calls to you, whether you're part of a fandom, or whether you wonder what that's all about, I highly recommend *Spoiler Alert*, we'll link to that in the show notes as well.

Okay, I have also been super delighted to be a guest on several podcasts lately. I have been sharing little links and snippets on my Instagram if you don't already follow me on Instagram. I am @themaggiereyes over there. So I'm sure there are other Maggie Reyes in the world. But on Instagram, I am @themaggiereyes. So you can see what I'm up to, follow me over there, come over and say hello. And I'll be sharing some links to some of the podcasts that I've been a guest on.

And today, I am very, very excited to share the one that I am supremely honored to have been





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on. I was on a panel of Latina Life Coaches on the Life Coach School podcast, which is the school where I originally trained as a Coach. I'm such a proud graduate of my Coaching School, and my colleagues on the panel are all brilliant. It was such an honor to be in their company. I have decided that this must be what it's like to be nominated for an Oscar.

It's like, it doesn't matter if you win, just your name being mentioned among all of those powerhouses, those amazing people, is its own reward. So that was absolutely amazing. Just being on the panel with my colleagues. And then I got to share my Emotional Weight Loss Tool. You might be familiar with it if you listen to the podcast. We have an episode on that here as well.

But the basics of the tool is it's no complaining and no defending. And I got to share that with one of my most important mentors in my life, Brooke Castillo. And I explained that I created that tool, thinking about how she teaches her Weight Loss Coaches -- no flour, no sugar as a way to reset the body. So what she says is you remove those two things, and then you see what your actual hunger levels are.

And then you can determine what you want to do in terms of listening to the messages your body is sending you. And I teach no complaining, no defending as a way to reset your marriage to then see what your actual issues are, once you remove those two things. So it was one of my dreams to share that concept on her show. It was a complete dream come true moment when I got to share it with her on that amazing panel.

And she called it genius, which was officially like winning the actual Oscar in my book. I'm not an actress, so I won't win one of those, but I definitely am having that experience. Just having that





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experience on that panel and getting to share that concept. It really just doesn't get better than your mentor calling one of your coaching concepts genius.

It was such a beautiful experience. Absolutely amazing. And I wanted to share that with you today just to celebrate it. And also, I really wanted to share that, that special moment - that is such a heightened and really special and powerful experience. Kind of like the glamorous part right is being on the panel and getting to share something like that.

The really special moment wasn't created during the glamorous part, the special moment was created - I think I was in bed in my pajamas with my notebook, making notes, thinking about my clients and their problems, how to help them solve them better. I was asking myself powerful questions, doing my own Coaching homework for my own Coach, which was thinking about my clients and thinking about how can I, you know, be even more clear and more concise and all the things that I teach?

And in this case, the question I asked myself was, what is the no flour, no sugar of marriage? What would that look like? And that concept that I came up with, like in my pajamas in bed has now impacted all of my clients and all of my students, and 1000s of listeners to the podcast. It's just an amazing thing to think about.

And thinking about something like the Oscars where everyone sees that big night, where everyone looks fancy. But that night even for actresses and for actors, is created by 1000s of nights of staying up late, and memorizing lines, and doing rehearsals, and doing auditions, and getting rejected, and trying again, and working at the craft of acting, and then getting better and better at it.





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So I wanted to just draw that parallel, to really invite you to think about: what is your version of that? What do you need to be rehearsing right now? What is your version of being with your notebook and asking yourself a powerful question that will help you move forward faster in your life or more powerfully in your life?

What is that unglamorous thing that doesn't necessarily sound sexy, but will move everything forward for you and will lead to, then, those sexy moments that we all love and love to celebrate, and enjoy. So take a moment right now and think about what that might be. If you get an intuitive hit, pause this recording, write that down so you can come back to it later.

I will definitely link to that interview in the show notes so you can join me at my Coaching Oscars. And then remember that moment was made up with so many days and nights of studying and practicing and thinking and just showing up every day, on the unsexy parts of the grind of life. That's a little bit about what I've been up to.

Now let's talk about Closed Loop Communication. Probably the number one question I always get when I'm asked for help with relationships is how do we communicate better. And one of the most important things to know about that is that communication is only one part of the puzzle, which is why I address so many foundational things about how and why you're communicating on the podcast, and in my programs, sort of like these foundational things that you need to know.

However, today, we're gonna focus on the actual mechanics of one piece of making your communication more effective. It's something that I learned back when I was in the cruise





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industry. And as soon as I learned it, we started practicing at home, and love it and still use it to this day. And I'm so excited to share it with all of you.

So first, I'm going to tell you a little bit about how I learned about Closed Loop Communication, which was on the bridge of a ship. And then we're gonna apply it to your relationship and I'll give you some examples and really concrete ways to think about it.

So as many of you may know, I was very blessed to work for several years in the cruise industry. I worked in human resources, and one of the things I used to do is go on the ship, find out how all the different departments work, talk to the different officers and professionals on board. It was really a fun, fun job for someone who loves to know the behind the scenes of how things work.

And so one of the concepts that I learned and one of the -- I don't know if it was a training that I went to, or something that we did -- was this technique called Closed Loop Communication, which is part of the safety protocol on the bridge.

So let's imagine a first officer and a second officer. Now, I don't totally remember at this point, the duties of the officer. So it might be someone else on the bridge that does this. So if you are a person who knows about sailing, just imagine that it's the first officer and the second officer having this conversation.

So let's say the first officer says to the second officer, "Lower the anchor." And then the first officer says, "Lower the anchor." The second officer replies saying, "I am lowering the anchor now." And then the first officer completes the loop, opens the loop, and closes the loop by saying, "yes," confirming that they received the message that the anchor is being lowered.





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So basically, we say something, the other person confirms hearing it. And the first person who spoke closes the loop on that matter by affirming they heard the first person confirmed. That's the basic gist of how to use it and what it's about.

Now I'm going to tell you some fun stuff. When I was making my notes for today, I looked up the origin of Closed Loop Communication. And I found some really interesting things. It seems to have started back in the military, when radio was a primary method of communication.

So if you've ever heard the terms "over and out" on TV (maybe you've used them in real life, I've only heard them on TV), you have heard pieces of Closed Loop Communication. Or the phrase, "Roger that." Roger actually stands for the letter R and means message received. Now why we say Roger, instead of received, I have no idea - that is like research for another day.

But that is where that comes from is part of opening and closing the loop and having Closed Loop Communication. So "over and out," over means I am done and now you can talk. So "over" means I'm done and it's your turn. And then "out" means I'm done and the conversation is complete. So "over" hands over your turn to the other person. "Out" means this part of the conversation is complete.

So the next time you hear one of those terms, "Roger that" or "over and out" -- now you know a little bit about where they came from. Now it gets even more fascinating. I was reading an article from something called Crico. It's Harvard's insurance program, Harvard University, very famous in the United States and all over the world. Their insurance program found that communication breakdowns were the second most common factors that contributed to errors





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in the operating room.

Like when people are having surgery, communication errors would be something they needed to study and follow and so they have this whole article about Closed Loop Communication in those settings. I will link to that article if you'd like to nerd out on the science of all this stuff. You can see that in the show notes, but I just thought it was really fun.

So communication errors don't just affect your marriage, but the safety on the bridge of a cruise ship, the accuracy and effectiveness of a medical operation. And Closed Loop Communication is one of the simplest ways to minimize communication errors. And in some cases really eliminate them almost completely.

So as you can imagine, when I first heard of this concept, I loved it, I came home, told the Hubby all about it. And now whenever we're running errands or doing things around the house, he'll repeat something back to me and say, "Just closing the loop." And you know, we'll just laugh about it.

And it really helps us stay focused, especially when we have a lot going on. We'll use it to add things to the grocery list, when we're making plans for the weekend, or even just tell each other what we're up to on any given day. And one of us will say something and if the other one doesn't respond, we'll say to each other, "Hey, do we need to close the loop on this?" which is basically really like, "Hey, did you hear me? Is this clear?"

But because we use this protocol that they use on the bridge of ships, it doesn't feel like naggy and annoying. It feels like we're doing something super cool. Right? Which is what I invite you to





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do, right? Let's make marriage super cool.

Okay, so sometimes I will forget something that the hubby told me and he'll say, "I told you yesterday." And I will ask, usually with a little gleam in my eye, maybe a little smile on my face, "But did you close the loop? Was I paying attention?" And sometimes he says, "Oh, yeah, you didn't really respond." And it just makes it so easy to see where the communication broke down. Right? And I will do the same.

Sometimes I will tell him something and I'll consider it communicated, right? But if he doesn't close the loop, did it really happen? Was it really communicated? I think not, perhaps, which is why we're talking about this today. It's really such a great way to not make it a bigger problem to just deal with closing loops instead of going to that place in our brain where we say, "Does he love me? Does she care?"

You know, those kinds of things. And it's like, yes, he loves me, yes, I care. Sometimes he's just watching a movie trailer, or sometimes I'm just catching up with my friends on Facebook. And we just need to repeat it. And that's it. There's no deeper meaning than that.

So I love how connected Closed Loop Communication is to safety, like I think it's connected to safety in our communication in our marriage. And it's connected to safety in so many different professions, right? Professional Mariners attend bridge simulation training, right, where they go through all of these emergency simulations.

And they learn all about Closed Loop Communication, and then they have to practice it during emergency simulation. So on a bridge, they practice it all the time, so that in an emergency, it's





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second nature, they automatically do it. And the purpose of using Closed Loop Communication is to eliminate any doubt or uncertainty in an instruction and what we're doing now.

So if you imagine a billion dollar cruise ship, and you're dropping the anchor, you don't want to be confused whether you should be moving the ship forward, you know, when it should be stationary. Or if you are raising the anchor or dropping the anchor that would lead to like, you know, accidents and danger for the people on board and all those kinds of things.

So you really don't want any doubt or uncertainty about what's happening when you're doing something like dropping an anchor, to give an example. And especially when you think of 1000s of lives on board and those kinds of things.

So as I mentioned, I was, you know, looking up my notes, preparing my notes and looking up stuff for today to talk about this. And they use this process on surgery in hospitals. I found a really riveting article from the Agency for Healthcare and Research Quality - that was fun. And you know, I read these things, so you don't have to.

And they said the process of using Closed Loop Communication is to ensure that the information conveyed by the sender is understood by the receiver as intended. And I really think that's the most important part of Closed Loop Communication because how often have we been in a situation where we say something, but it's not taken or received as we intended, right?

So in their example, they call it the sender and the receiver. So the sender initiates the message. The receiver accepts the message. And the sender double checks to ensure that the message was received. So, I really like this example, it was with a nurse.





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So the nurse would say, "Apply two liters of oxygen via nasal cannula." I don't even know what that is. But that was the example. Then the nursing assistant says, "Two liters of oxygen via nasal cannula," and the nurse says, "That's correct." I don't even know if I'm pronouncing that correctly. You all can come on Instagram, message me, tell me if I said it right.

Okay, I know there's nurses and doctors listening to this. You must be laughing right now. I think it's a fun example, so I hope you are laughing right now. Okay. So think about this, though. If you're going to stick a tube in someone, you want to make sure you're sticking it in the right place. You want to close that loop.

Okay, so this method of communication, hospitals, cruise ships, battle cruisers, you know, firefighters EMTs -- I just think it's super sexy that we get to use something at home that is used in these like really heightened and powerful places. And I really think it's much sexier than the twin sister of Closed Loop Communication, which is called Active Listening.

So this is kind of the fun part of all of this, was I learned this at work, right? When I was working at the cruise line. And after I learned it, I attended a Marriage Preparation Training. So it was for Coaches and Therapists and different marriage educators, helping engaged couples prepare for marriage, that kind of thing.

And yes, I work with couples sometimes who are engaged or in a long term relationship, whether they're even planning on getting married or not. And back then I was studying that and I went to one of these workshops. And I was sitting in a training room with some family counselors and social workers, and the trainer starts explaining Active Listening.





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And it sounds like this very, you know, fancy psychological term. And then she got to the sentence she said, “Active listening is the ability to let your partner know that you understand them by restating their message,” which basically is the same thing as Closed Loop Communication. But doesn’t it sound sexier when you call it Closed Loop Communication? Because it does to me.

So I just like to imagine, you know, if something like Star Trek was real, like Spock and Kirk, right? Would be closing loops all day long, right? They’d be out there in space, having adventures and opening loops and closing loops with the whole crew. So maybe, because in real life, you know, when I see also the beautiful ships sail by I know that they’re closing loops on the bridge, and in the engine room and all these places.

I don’t know, I just think it’s sexier. It doesn’t matter. Both of them really, in essence are the same thing. If you like Active Listening, you can use that term, if you like Closed Loop Communication, like I do, use that term. The thing is, use it because it works, okay?

Good communication really depends on listening and receiving clear messages. It sounds so simple. But how do we put that into practice? By using a tool like this one. When each person is heard, and you can confirm what you heard by repeating it, that helps you get closer to each person, very literally, not just feeling understood, but being understood, right?

And if we think about this, just in terms of day to day life, like I know I feel better if the hubby goes to the store and buys orange juice, instead of like guava juice, or tomatoes instead of potatoes, right? We want to be heard, so that we’re getting the right things or ingredients for





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what we're doing at home.

And it's a great, great practice, to use Closed Loop Communication for simple things that aren't that important, so when something bigger happens, you will already have practiced it. In simulations, just like the ship captains, you'll be ready for the emergency and know exactly what to do. Like you don't want to practice at the most heightened emotional state you have. You want to practice on day to day things and then it'll be easier to practice in a heightened emotional state.

Okay, so my client who told me that I had to share it on the podcast is actually, relatively speaking, a newlywed in her first few years of marriage, and she was really happy to learn this at the beginning of her relationship, so she could start using it immediately.

So I want to thank her for telling me, "You have to share this on the podcast." So all of you can just send some positive vibes to my very special client. And all of them are very special. I'm a big -- I'm like my client's biggest fans. I'm the biggest fan of all of them.

So I invite you to start using it immediately. And to communicate even more clearly and powerfully. As you start using Closed Loop Communication, make sure to check out my episode on the communication framework that I developed called Soul Centered Communication, we will link to that in the show notes as well.

Okay, we are done for today. I'll be back next week with more powerful tools to help you make your marriage stronger. In the meantime, you can say "Roger" (so say it in your mind or out loud if you want) and I will say, "Over and out."

