



# EPISODE 89: LATINA LEADERS & THRIVING MARRIAGE – DR. VANESSA CALDERON ASKS ME EVERYTHING

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/89](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/89)

Maggie Reyes:

Hello everyone and welcome. We have a really fun episode for you today where the tables are turned. And Dr. Vanessa Calderon from Coaching Latina Leaders is interviewing me about all things relationship and thriving.

Evidence-based marriage interventions and total fun geeking out with the research? Yes. Actionable info you can listen to today and apply tomorrow? Also, yes. I really loved her interview so much that I asked her for permission to reshare it on my podcast too.

So before we head into the interview, I want to introduce Vanessa to you, she is amazing. We are both members of the same business mastermind, which I have been a member for the last three years now. And my Coach Stacey Boehman has brought so many blessings to my life and assembling a most amazing group of colleagues to learn with and grow with has been one of the biggest.

So Vanessa and I met in Mexico at our business strategic planning retreat in August and we had been friendly before on Facebook. So it wasn't quite love at first sight. It was more like love in real life. So Vanessa is both an actively working ER doctor working on the frontlines with COVID patients and everything else that comes into the emergency room. And she's a certified Life Coach who helps Latina leaders succeed at work while they prioritize their family without losing touch with their roots.

And I really want to share her official bio with you because she has so many accomplishments. This isn't even everything that she's ever done. But I really want you to know who she is as a





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professional, who she is as a woman. And I want you to know the brilliance and wisdom that she brings to every question and every insight.

So, Vanessa is a Board Certified Emergency Medicine Physician. She's a resiliency expert and a Certified Professional Coach. She has 20 years of leadership experience and she is the wellness champion and resiliency director for Vituity, a national multi-specialty physician organization.

She is a certified compassion fatigue educator and therapist and a recognized positive neuroplasticity trainer. She is a masterful educator and she is the founder of ICAREMD, the Institute for Compassion, Awareness, Empathy, and Resiliency in Medicine.

She has spent over half a decade reconnecting healthcare providers to their original purpose in medicine through education and professional Coaching. She currently serves as the department chief and medical director of the St. Mary's Hospital Emergency Department in San Francisco. And through the magic of the internet, we were able to talk from San Francisco to Miami to record this interview.

She has been avidly involved in patient advocacy and student mentorship and in health care policy. And she holds a Master of Public Policy from Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, as well as serving as the Director of Health Disparities for the American Medical Student Association from 2006 to 2007.

This woman is a powerhouse and we will link to her Instagram and her website on the show notes. So you can all go follow her immediately. Besides that, she's just a fantastic human. And I





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hope that you have so much fun with us today. And after you listen, come on over to Instagram, follow Vanessa and tell me your favorite takeaway at @themaggiereyes. Here we go.

Vanessa Calderon:

Welcome to Coaching for Latina Leaders, the only podcast dedicated to the advancement of Latinas at every level of life with your host Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Latina with over 20 years of leadership experience. Harvard grad physician and mother of two.

Hello, my lovely Latinas. Welcome. We have such an incredible treat for you today. So, I have on the podcast day, one of my most favorite people, and I'm a little bit fangirling over here because, for me, Maggie Reyes who I have on the podcast today has been a celebrity in my eyes, someone doing something that I think is so incredibly important to all humans but especially Latina.

So, Maggie Reyes herself is a relationship expert and she works specifically with married couples. I think you work with the females in the married couple relationships.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

Okay. I've met Maggie through actually a business mastermind that we were both in and I was immediately... I've been following Maggie for a long time actually on social media because relationships are so important to me.





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And one thing, Maggie, I don't think I've ever shared this with you. But I've always been looking for ways to, and this is probably not the right word, but almost perfect my marriage, but I should be saying I guess create a safe space of passion, love, and legacy, which is my vision for my marriage because my parents were divorced. And that's what I saw. And that's what I experienced. And I had the start error that all marriages lead to divorce.

So, I started following you early on because I was so interested to learn everything that you were teaching because I wanted to create those things that you teach. And so, I actually use a lot of your tools in my own life. One of my mantras is I choose Justin, which is my husband.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

And I do have to say it's been really easy for me to do that to my marriage because my husband is a total dream. He's amazing, a great partner. So anyway, so let me have you on, the most amazing person here. And by the way, one last thing for Maggie. I also really early on followed The Gottman Institute.

And for anyone that knows anything about relationships if you follow the science behind it, the psychologists, Gottman's, the man and woman couple, married couple. So I followed them a long time. And then Maggie wrote a book and it just so happens to be a best-seller right behind the Gottman. It's amazing.





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All right, let me have you on the amazing Maggie Reyes. And if you don't mind, one thing I love all my podcast guests to do is to share a little bit about their Latin roots, mainly because as you probably experienced Maggie, when we were growing up, we didn't see a lot of Latinas leading.

Podcasts weren't a thing, but if they were, there probably wouldn't have been Latinas and if they were, who knows if they would have been immigrants. And so, I come from an immigrant background, and I want everyone listening to know that everything out there is a possibility for you. So Maggie, welcome.

Maggie Reyes:

So first of all, thank you for that beautiful, warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here. It's a total honor. And we'll definitely talk about the Gottmans again and some of the other marriage stuff again.

So my name is Maggie Reyes, I am a Life Coach and marriage mentor. And I am Cuban American. So I grew up in Miami, Florida. So it's a surprise of no one, keep in record. My mom's family came to the US due to communism in Cuba. It's actually kind of a very sad story. So many of us have sad stories in our past.

They told my mom that they were going on vacation and they went on a cruise and they went to Spain. And when they got to Spain, they told her, "We're never going back." So just imagine growing up with that level of trauma.







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So, by the time I came around, I was born in beautiful Puerto Rico. My mom had this philosophy, she couldn't have me in Cuba. So she had me in Puerto Rico. And if you've ever heard that saying from of one bird Cuban Puerto Rico are the two wings of the same bird. I grew up with that saying in my house.

So I grew up in Miami, Florida. I absolutely, when I was growing up, I thought there was Rita Moreno and then Miami, there was Gloria Estefan. We had two people when I was growing up. And definitely on TV or things like that, if there was somebody, I don't know who they were when I was little.

I actually grew up watching Mexican novellas and Mexican TV shows and learned Spanish with telenovelas and really fun stuff, just a little fun fact there. But I ended up, even though I grew up here, taking Spanish to college level fluency in school and really immersed in different parts of my culture and different parts of what it is to be Latina and all of that. So yeah, I'm very proudly Cuban American.

My dad is from the Philippines, so I'm also Filipina. I just did not grow up in that culture. So I'm very proud to have Filipino blood in me. But I always identify as Cuban American because if you've ever met a Cuban, that gene is the dominant one in any combination. So if you have any questions about that, I'm happy to answer anything or take this conversation wherever you want it to go.

Vanessa Calderon:

Yeah, amazing. No, I think that's beautiful. And I think so many people can identify with the





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immigrant story, the trauma that immigrants have when they're immigrating that, a lot of people say in the healing trauma world that you inherit the trauma of generations before you and I think that that's fascinating, and something that I don't think we fully grasp when we are growing into our own when we're becoming our own person.

My dad fled El Salvador right before the Civil War. So, in the 1980s was a civil war and he left a year before that when things were totally becoming unstable. No jobs, no food, and so, can you imagine fleeing a civil war? Of course, you can.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

Your family fled communism.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. And my husband is from Nicaragua. And his mom is a Nicaraguan American. So she was actually born in the United States. And they fled because of the Sandinistas. So my husband literally left Nicaragua in one of the big United States military jets, I don't know what they are B-52, B-47, whatever they are, the big ones.

Vanessa Calderon:

The B's.





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Maggie Reyes:

The B's. And he tells that story and it's such a thing to imagine, I don't know if he was eight or 10, or something like that. But this little kid leaving his country coming to the US. And so something we both bonded over, and really can witness each other in is that our families coming here and starting fresh, starting over. Both his parents and my grandparents, when they came over, were professional people, successful people in their countries.

Like my grandmother came here and started working in a factory. His dad who's an accountant parked cars as a valet, that whole how do we get through and make it through and keep going and create a better life for our kids? It's something that it's very alive for both of us. And we talk about it a lot in terms of just our enjoyment of life is we take nothing for granted. And we enjoy the littlest things.

And we look forward to, "Oh, we're going to watch a movie tonight." Or, "Oh, we're going to do..." Something that's really simple, a lot of people take it for granted. And we have such an appreciation for life, which in some way is informed by everything we didn't have when we were growing up.

Vanessa Calderon:

100%. And just to highlight the multifaceted beauty of what you bring into the work that you do, as not just a marriage expert, a relationship expert, but also experiencing the trauma, witnessing it for your husband, and what you've learned, it's showing up as a source of support for your husband, I just think that that's incredibly beautiful.







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And I love that idea of what you mentioned about gratitude and just loving everything around you. And gratitude is such a huge part, I think of my, not just moral compass, but I also think just genetics. My mom is someone that just, my gosh, if you meet that woman, you'll be like, "This woman is full of life." It's because she's always so grateful that she's even alive.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

And I realized with my kids, we are so blessed right now, both my husband and I have great jobs, we're able to afford a home, the kids have school, and my kids are also very light-skinned. And as a Latina, growing up in an immigrant community, I know the privilege that that's going to afford them in life.

My husband and I are so aware, and we want to keep them so grounded in the roots and in the blessings that are around them. None of this is an accident, we worked our butts off to get where we are. And we're also get to be really grateful. I remember, when my daughter was three, we started to practice a gratitude practice where every night at dinner, we'd go around the table and just say what we're grateful for.

She had just watched the movie Rapunzel. And I was teaching her about abundance, she's three, and we're going around the table, it's her turn, and she says, "I'm grateful that I have an abundance of hair."





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Maggie Reyes:

That's so awesome. That's the best. It's so good.

Vanessa Calderon:

Okay, so tell me... Okay so, now I want to get into all of the amazing things you do. Because the reason why I invited Maggie to be on this podcast, as you all know, we're doing a series this month on relationships and the importance of having a really strong relationship to fuel you in every aspect of your life. And one of the things that were said to me, Maggie, when I was growing up, so I grew up again in a divorced home.

Maggie Reyes:

So did I, by the way, yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

Fascinating, right?

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah.

Vanessa Calderon:

And so, my parents are loving, both of them very brilliant people. And one of the things my dad said to me really early on after he'd already divorced is the person you choose to marry, and this sounds obvious now to me.





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But at the time, I was like, “What?” He’s like, “The person, your spousal choice, that is going to be the most important decision you make of your entire life. More important than your career, more important than how you invest your money. That is the most important decision.”

I think I was in my late teens, 19 or something. And I was like, “That’s ridiculous. It matters more that I go to medical school.” It matters more than this.

Maggie Reyes:

Right, yeah. So it’s so interesting. To relieve some of the pressure around that, we’re always at choice, we always make new choices. Your experience of your relationships is really important. But if somebody is listening to this and freaking the freak out, we just want to say, you can always choose how you experience the relationship that you’re in, which is everything that I teach every day.

But there is research that tells us that a toxic relationship, so a relationship that’s filled with stress, has the same effect on the body as smoking. And a healthy relationship that is not filled with stress tends to lead to outcomes like making more money over the course of your life, being healthier over the course of your life, and then adding years to your life, you actually live longer.

So people with very advanced degrees, have done all kinds of research on these kinds of things, and we have found that if you’re going to be in relationship with someone, make it as healthy as you can make it, it’s the goal.

Vanessa Calderon:





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Interesting. So, I would love to hear, as we're talking about this, for the people that are listening that have already chosen a spouse, if you are listening, and you are wondering, "Oh, my goodness, how can I choose to make this healthier?" What would you tell them, if you could just share one or two things with them?

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, there's a couple of things. First of all, there's a fabulous theory in psychology that tells us when one element in a system changes, the other elements in the system respond to that change. It systems theory.

So, one of my hypotheses is that it only takes one person to transform a relationship. And many people will hear me say that, I was like, "Really? Are you sure? You haven't met me? You don't know my situation." And I always tell them, "Never believe me, just try it. Just see."

And so what happens is, sometimes we get into the roommate situation where we get along, but we're not passionate partners. It's not as delightful as we would love it to be. And when that happens, there are many things that you can do that can help you turn the tide, that can help you have a more delightful relationship. One of the things we already touched upon, which is gratitude.

So, two things I like to think about that are very simple is gratitude, and sex are the glue that holds a relationship together. And so when we express gratitude, that's like the mental-emotional glue. The thing that people usually will tell me is, "Why should I thank someone for something they should be doing already? They should have done it. Of course, they should do





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that.”

Because gratitude feels good to you and your own body, you’re not even doing it for their response, you’re doing it for how it feels to you. And we know that what we focus on, we get more of.

So when we start noticing what’s working in the relationship, what’s working, what’s going well, what we do like, we start, first of all, enjoying and savoring what we already have already useful. And we start cultivating what I call a marriage culture.

So if you imagine a corporate culture for all you leaders listening, I used to work in HR, and I use all the HR things that I did over the years, and I apply it to marriage, and I think about what’s our marriage culture? Is our marriage culture that we’re grateful, and that we have fun, that we laugh together? Is our marriage culture that we blame and we argue and we nitpick? We get to choose what do we want our marriage culture to be.

So A, practicing gratitude. And with sex, some people listening to us will be asexual. Most of you listening to us will not. And so we want to find, what is the way that we like to connect physically? And how can we do that on a regular basis? And very often what I see in my type-A clients is we are so exhausted by life, we’re overwhelmed or burnt out, we’re doing so much that then there’s no space for our partner or to enjoy pleasure or to enjoy physical pleasure.

And so I often when I’m Coaching someone, what we’re investigating is what do we need to remove from your calendar? What needs to be prioritized and what needs to be deprioritized?







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So if you're listening to us right now, and your relationship isn't as delightful as you'd love it to be, very simple, you're already a leader, you know how to lead, you know how to lead other people, you know how to lead your team, you know how to create outcomes.

If the outcome you want to create is to feel more delighted in your marriage, use whatever skills you already use in your already successful career. And if this is a work project, you just got assigned, how would you approach it? Simple.

Vanessa Calderon:

Girl, that's so interesting, totally speaks to my type—A perfectionist brain. In fact, about five years ago when... So I got introduced to Coaching about five years ago, and I jumped into a transformational Coaching program. And at that time, what you put time into is what's going to excel.

And I always said my family mattered most, my marriage mattered most. However, when you looked at my calendar, the things that you would see get scheduled all the time was my job or my work, which is no surprise that I excelled in my career so quickly.

And it was kind of a pivotal point because, for many young Latinas, you're starting your family at the same time that you're advancing in your career. And you're also pretty early on in your marriage. So you're trying to balance a lot of things, have a healthy marriage, have young kids, and balance your career and your career advancement.

And it's, let me tell you, when my kids were young, I remember trying to pump, breastfeed, travel for work, be at home. Where was the room for my marriage? And I just wasn't making the space.





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And so one of the things that I started doing speaks to what you just said, how would you approach this if this was one of your work projects? One of the things I started doing, I just intentionally would schedule my family first. I have a calendar, I'm so good at sticking to my calendar. I just started putting them in there first, my date nights. And I would just block off, I'm no longer available before 9:00 am. I'm no longer available after this time because that's my family time. And it's so interesting

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. It sounds so simple. It's very simple. But also can feel very hard sometimes if we're not used to setting boundaries, if we're not used to saying no, if everyone at work expects certain things from us around our availability or around other things, it's simple.

But then the execution is where you listen to this podcast, you hire Vanessa to help you. It's the execution where you can get stuck. But the actual thing to put it on your calendar and then keep your word on your calendar, it's both hard and not hard at the same time. It's the paradox of that.

Vanessa Calderon:

It's so interesting, too, because just the one last thing I want to say about calendaring and creating boundaries is people will respect the boundaries that you respect for yourself. And so, if you are not respecting that boundary and you're breaking it all the time, people are going to break it all the time.





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I think about that now with my clients, when I first started Coaching early on, they would message me and I would want to respond. Now I'm like, "How do I want to create a healthy boundary with everyone I work with? Even the people I love so much, and I want to help but you're my clients."

So let's go back to your, you mentioned gratitude. So gratitude and sex, it sounds like, "Oh, easy, okay, good. I just have to be grateful." So, can you tell me, have you experienced any type of gratitude that's too small, too big? Or does it ever become disingenuous? Like, do I just say thank you to everything?

Maggie Reyes:

I love that question, does it ever become disingenuous? One of the things that I teach, I teach this concept called the emotional weight loss tools, and there's four of them. Two of them are no convincing and no pretending. There's no complaining and no defending are the first two, you start with those.

And then you go to no convincing and no pretending. And the pretending part is where you either find the place in your heart where it's true. Or you speak your truth, but not from your wound. You speak your highest truth, you speak your best truth.

So let's say you're not grateful for something. Of course, you're not going to say you're grateful for that thing, that's not the point. You're going to notice the things that you are grateful for. Or, for example, let's say, I'll give you an example.





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I grew up with a single mom, and my husband has a huge family with all the cousins and all the things. And when I first got married, every Sunday, there was a barbecue somewhere. There was always someplace to go or something to do. And I'm not used to that, I'm a little bit introverted.

And I was just like, "I found the place and my heart was true. I love how much my husband loves his family. I love how close his family is. I found the place where that is actually genuinely true. And I also don't want to go to every barbecue, and that's okay."

So both can coexist. We just want to check-in. Are we speaking when we're speaking from our wound? Or are we speaking from our highest and best self? And this would probably require a little bit of unpacking, and I have a podcast episode on this. We can link to that in the show notes if you want. But that's just to give you an idea of where I would take that approach.

But to the first part of your question, is there anything that's too small or too big? I'm going to tell you a story that happened before I became a Coach, just me talking with my best friend, and I have her permission to share the story. And I share it all the time.

We were talking one day, she was very, very frustrated with her husband. And she was telling me what was going on. And she said how upset she was. And I said, "Well, when was the last time you thanked him for anything?" Just imagine you're two besties talking, no filter. And she's like, "Why should I thank him for things that he's supposed to do in the first place? Oh, that's ridiculous." She was not having it.

And I said, "Listen, here's what I know. I'm a very happily married woman. And my husband





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appreciates me and I appreciate him. So just try it.” And I told her why. And we talked about it a little bit more. We hung up and she was like, we would say in Spanish “Refunfuñona”, I don’t know if you know that word. It’s kind of like, she was very hesitant to do this. But she did it anyway because her best friend told her to.

So a few weeks later, she calls me and you know how you start a conversation in the middle and you expect your friends to just get up to speed? So she calls me and she says, “You’re never going to believe what happened.” And I’m like, “Oh, that’s great, what happened?” “So my husband stopped at Starbucks and brought me coffee.” And I’m like, “Oh, that’s amazing.” I’m like, “That’s so exciting, what coffee was it?” I’m just following along with my friend.

She’s like, “No, listen, it’s really important. He hasn’t brought me coffee in five years.” I’m like, “Wait, what’s going on? Tell me everything.” She’s like, “I did that thing, you told me to do that thing where I started thanking him for stuff.” It was a fast story. She’s like, “I started thanking him for stuff. And then I felt better. And it felt kind of nice. But then he also felt kind of nice. So he started thanking me for stuff. And then we’re just really much nicer to each other. And then it just spontaneously occurred to him to bring me coffee. And it’s the best, it’s my favorite coffee.”

I love that story so much because I was not even a Coach when that happened, we were just talking. But that’s an example of A, systems theory in action, one element of the system change the other element responded to the change, and then the outcome both benefited from. So nothing too small, nothing too big. To gratitude.

Vanessa Calderon:







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Just created a huge emotional reaction in me and brought tears to my eyes because... So, one of the things that I do, I'm a national resiliency expert for this larger organization. And we bring in wellness tools to essentially provide organizational psychology and improve the wellness of physicians in hospitals, essentially.

Maggie Reyes:

I love that.

Vanessa Calderon:

Yeah. And one of the super obvious things that we teach, which just sound so obvious is appreciation and acknowledgment. Hello, clearly. Every leader that does that shows up and creates a culture of wellness. And so when I think about what you're saying about practicing gratitude, I was trying to make it so complicated when you first said it, I'm like, that's just to say like, "Thanks for getting the kids breakfast. Like, duh, it was your turn."

But the truth of the matter is, you are a source of what you want to create. And I tell this to leaders all of the time when I'm Coaching them in hospitals, "You are a source of what you want to create. If you want a culture of wellness, appreciation, of acknowledgment, you get to start."

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

Same thing with your marriage.





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Maggie Reyes:

It's the same thing with your marriage. And here's another part that's important, whether you're leading a team or whether it's you and your intimate relationship. So many people think, "Well, why should I do all the work? My team should do it, or my partner should do it?" And here's what I say to you person that we love, leader that's listening right now. It's not that you do all the work, is that you go first. That's it. You go first, you role model.

Vanessa Calderon:

That sunk in a little bit.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah.

Vanessa Calderon:

Oh, my gosh. Because I guarantee you, I know so many incredible leaders that if I would tell them, is what you need to model at work, and you're a servant leader, and you get to lead by example, no problem. But when it comes to your marriage, why is that a disconnect?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. If you already practice servant leadership, just practice it at home. You already have the skills, you already know exactly what to do, that's all you need to keep doing.

Vanessa Calderon:

And just trusting. Just trust that it's going to happen. Just trust and surrender that, you're going





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to get reciprocated.

Maggie Reyes:

And I would say when if you don't get reciprocated, that's the data you want to know whether it's your team or your partner. What I see is when there's a foundation of health, wellness, respect, love, whether we're at home or at work, the team will reciprocate, the partner does come around.

But when that doesn't happen, maybe there's someone on your team that doesn't need to be there. And we would want to have that data sooner rather than later.

I'm very pragmatic. I'm a Marriage Coach. And I talk about love and romance, passion, and fun things. But I'm also very much into like, "This is grounded in like, wait, let's see how they respond." We don't do it for their response. But we want to see the data, how do they respond?

Vanessa Calderon:

And at the same time, you're not trying to keep a tally. It's not like-

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, it's not about record keeping or you did this and then I did that. It's this is the marriage culture we want to have, this is the team culture we want to have. Are you available to have that with me? That's what it's about. Are you available to have that with me?

And one of my mentors is a woman named Michele Weiner-Davis, she's a psychologist, has





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been practicing for 30 years. She's amazing. And a training I did with her, she taught me something that I find so valuable. I teach it every opportunity I have, so I'm going to tell you all today, which is measure, whether it's your team or your partner, measure them in willingness, not effectiveness.

Vanessa Calderon:

Wow.

Maggie Reyes:

Think about that for a second. So, we all know we have a team member sometimes who's challenged, right? I can say this because I'm often late to things. I'm a Latina, and I'm time-challenged. This is not my strongest area.

Vanessa Calderon:

And that's not a Latina characteristic, just FYI. Okay, go on.

Maggie Reyes:

I happen to be and I have self-awareness about it. But so imagine my willingness, it's like, "Oh, I was half an hour late, but I was only five minutes late." My willingness is there. If you measure me on my effectiveness, you're like, "Well, it's still five minutes, how dare she? What's wrong with her?" You are missing out on a huge effort it took me to do the thing that I'm not necessarily good at.

So when we look at our partners, sometimes we want things from our partners or from our team,





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that they are not going to excel out in the execution the way that we would. They're not going to do it the way we would do it.

But can we see willingness? Can we see some messy attempts to do the thing? And then how can we adapt whatever our team means or what our relationship needs to work with that willingness to make adjustments for that willingness?

Now, if we see no willingness, then that's data we want to have. But so often we measure on effectiveness, and you just throw willingness out the door and it's like, "Wait, is this person really doing the best they can do even if it's not what my best looks like?"

Vanessa Calderon:

Yeah, that's really interesting. And, for those listening, I think about this in two different ways. If I think about this in a professional way to look at this, I think about my most ideal boss, giving me a task that I have never done in my life. And I'm putting all my effort into it.

On the other end, it's not exactly what they wanted, but they treat me with grace and they're like, "Wow, you tried really hard. It's not what we wanted, we're not going to fire you. Let's figure out how we can get you to where we want to be."

And in my marriage, it's clearly a little different. It's not like I'm going to look at this and say, "How can I manage you husband?" But instead, it's like, "How can I see this with grace and celebrate the part of the things that you did well?"







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Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Here's another one that I love. This is I think it was Stephen Covey. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Now, when I first heard this, I was like, "What the heck is he talking about? What is going on?" But after I thought about it, it really landed for me in a whole new way. So I'm going to give you an example from when I was an HR. I was a recruitment manager. I worked in an ultra-luxury brand. It's amazing. It's a ship called The World. It's very exclusive. There's multimillion-dollar residences onboard. Is amazing, a beautiful team.

Vanessa Calderon:

And Maggie interviewed ER docs.

Maggie Reyes:

I used to hire the doctors, I know all about the training all over the world. That's just a show for another day. But, I used to hire the doctors and the nurses know all about the medical center. So exciting. And when I did that, I was a great recruiter. The main thing was I had an eye for talent, and I was relentless. I was like, no stone unturned, I found all the people.

I was terrible. The word terrible is a bit of an exaggeration. I am Cuban. So I might embellish every now and then when they tell a story. But I was not good at reports. That was not my strongest area. A spreadsheet was not my best friend. My boss was such a wonderful human. And she kept the main thing the main thing. She's like, "You go find the people."





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At the time I managed like around a \$300,000 budget. When budget time would come around, I'd go to her office and we'd sit together. And I'd tell her, "These are the projects, these are the things, this is the forecast." And she would help me with the thing that I wasn't great at. I was still responsible for it. I started to calm with a, what was the strategy? What were we doing? What was all of that?

But the little detail of the box and the color coding and the thing and how it had to be presented for the board and all that stuff. So she measured my willingness, she knew I was willing to do it.

But if she left me alone with it, she'd have to do more work because you'd have to fix whatever I did, that wasn't right on that spreadsheet. So we would do it together and it would be done. But the main thing was what was my skill with this other area, and we kept that the main thing.

When we think about our partners, when we think about our team, the main thing, what's essential? What are they awesome and fabulous at? Let's make sure that they are doing those things, and that we appreciate those things in them.

And then the other things, let's see, check the willingness. But with effectiveness, let's like you said, have grace around some of the effectiveness and then decide what we want to do.

Vanessa Calderon:

That is so good. You know what's interesting too about the gratitude, and I want to talk about the sex too in just a second because that's equally important. But what I find interesting about the gratitude is oftentimes not everything is going right and one of the things you said is but





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what is going right and that's obviously always looking for the silver lining.

And in the resiliency literature, there's a ton of studies to show that you're actually secreting the same exact hormone, the serotonin dopamine, your feel-good hormones when you're actually practicing gratitude. "Oh, I'm so happy for this. I'm so grateful." And when you're looking for the silver lining of what actually could have been happy...

And so, it is so interesting. So let me ask you something my analytical brain wants to answer and I'm sure my perfectionist listeners out there want to know the same thing. Is there a sweet spot? How often do I have to be grateful? One time a day, five times a day?

Maggie Reyes:

Oh, my God, I love where your brain goes. Okay. So, there is no official sweet spot. Follow your intuition. There is some interesting research that I'm totally not going to get the numbers right. So we can look this up later.

No, actually, the Gottman Institute has a concept called the five to one ratio, where you have five positive interactions for every one negative interaction. And I'm going to paraphrase how they did it and all that. You can-

Vanessa Calderon:

Oh, no, I know that study really well. I keep it actually-

Maggie Reyes:





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Oh, great.

Vanessa Calderon:

... in positive psychology. Yeah.

Maggie Reyes:

Okay. So, Vanessa, tell us.

Vanessa Calderon:

So actually, this is so fascinating for those listening. So they did a research study, a longitudinal research study over these widows that had lost their spouse, and they followed them over five years. And what they saw is at the first interview, when they first lost their spouse, the people that responded with five things that were positive to one that was negative, so a five to one ratio of positive to negative in five years had better outcomes because they were less depressed, they were better connected.

So that's interesting. And I love that you just brought that back to science because I'm a scientist, and so that's where my brain goes.

Maggie Reyes:

So one of the things I do is I like to use evidence-based thing. So I mix my intuition with evidence-based things like that and think, "Okay, how do we create that?" So I start with, "Let's practice gratitude." And then if you want to go deeper into the science of it, there's science behind all of it, really.





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So that study I hadn't actually heard of, I'm going to tell you the one that I've heard of that I'm going to totally paraphrase, which is, couples who thrive. Couples who have a thriving relationship that feel connected and healthy and good, they have five positive interactions for every one negative interaction.

So they say, "Thank you for taking out the garbage, oh, the coffee was delicious. I'll see you tonight. Here's a hug. Here's a kiss. Oh, you forgot to mail the check." Five positive ones for negative one.

Where in the way that Gottman Institute talks about it, which I did their level one training. So I'm a life Coach, not a therapist, and their trainings do practicums and therapy and stuff like that. But level one to study the research, everyone can go to, so I won't. And in their research, that's what they found is that the couples who thrive have this five to one ratio.

Vanessa Calderon:

By the way, my study was totally not what you were thinking of, but still, five to one ratio, was fascinating.

Maggie Reyes:

Isn't that awesome? I love that there's more than one study. How do we know something is likely to be useful and effective when people unrelated to each other draw the same conclusions? Yes, I'm here for that. So good.







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Vanessa Calderon:

How interesting. So thank you for giving the analytical listeners somewhat a go of reference point.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah.

Vanessa Calderon:

Okay. So let's shift a little bit and talk about sex. So you said the two essentials are gratitude and sex. So it's almost like... And you know what's interesting, I think about this cycle. It's like some people need to have the emotional connection before they can feel sexually connected. And some people need to have a sexual connection before they can feel emotionally connected.

Vanessa Calderon:

And I feel like gratitude is like maybe your emotional connection. And when people feel appreciated and loved, it's going to be easy for them to become intimate in a sexual way.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, absolutely. So, I'm going to say two things about sex. Of course, we can do a whole episode and multiple episodes, it's such a vast topic that has so many ins and outs. So what we're going to talk about today, we're going to keep it really simple.

But I'm going to enter the sort of the door way of sex by saying something else first, which is one of the frameworks that I use to think about how to solve issues in a relationship, how to





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approach a healthy relationship, I call it the relationship table. And basically, any issue that's going on in a relationship can be solved by looking at one of these three buckets, perspective, partnership, and pleasure.

How are we looking at it? How are we approaching it as a team? And how much fun are we having or how much physical connection are we having? So pleasure is the vast complete prism of pleasure, not just sexual connection. Are we laughing? Are we having fun? Are we doing things that feed our soul, that feel nourishing, including sexual connection?

So, when people come to me and I work with women, so when women come to me, and they are having an issue, those are the three places that I'm like, "Okay, what's their perspective on it? Do they feel a lot of resentment? Are they completely overwhelmed? Are they thinking clearly? Are they in a stress cycle? What's going on with them? Where's the perspective? Do we need to adjust it?" Okay, check.

Then team, are we cultivating team? So if you're a leader of a team, whether you're listening to this and married or not, how are we working together as a team? Do we support and nourish each other? Do we look for each other's strengths and prioritize those? Do we all feel like islands that we need to fend for ourselves?

I used to work in HR, I know all the different things. I know how it goes. So we want to check what is the partnership that we have? Are we cultivating it? How are we cultivating it? What are we doing about it?





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And then pleasure. And when I thought about this, I originally thought about it from marriage. And then because I have that HR background I thought, “This is true at work, too.” If you have perspective, partnership, and pleasure, you can thrive. If you don’t have that, there’s no scenario where one of those is missing where you can thrive. There just isn’t.

Vanessa Calderon:

100%. That’s like the exact equation you need for a well organization. That is incredible. Oh, yeah.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. So we enter sex through thinking about pleasure. But we also want to not ignore that perspective and partnership are really important. And even when I teach, so I teach a six-month program called The Marriage MBA, and we talk about sex in the program, but we usually talk about it once we’ve investigated these other areas because there’s so such a critical component of a healthy sexual connection.

So, what do I want to say about that? In a marriage, it’s just a part of a marriage that we want to check. What is our satisfaction with it? How do we feel about it? Are we enjoying it? What’s the quality? What’s the quantity? And I was just teaching one of my classes on this topic yesterday. And what we talked about was how there’s such a minefield for shame when it comes to sex.

And if I think about Latin culture, the culture that I grew up in, and I sorta - I grew up in Miami and amongst Cuban people, but because I used to watch all the novellas, I watched something that’s from Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico, and all the cultural narratives that we get in all





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these different countries, there's such a place for shame to come in, if I enjoy sex too much.

If I don't enjoy it, if I'm not looking forward to it, it's such a ripe fertile soil to have such difficulty and reluctance to talk about, look at, discuss, hold with love and compassion.

Which is why I say it's such a vast topic, that today, what we will just say is, it matters that you enjoy your own sexual self, your sexual health, your mental health, your physical health, it's all your health.

Vanessa Calderon:

Wow, girl. That was some wisdom dropped. Thank you so much for breaking it down that way and for highlighting that when you talk about sex and marriage, it's so much deeper than just sex and marriage. It's all of that. But also speaking to the shame part, because every couple is going to have some area of shame around sex.

If you were raised in Western society, if you were raised anywhere, you're going to probably be socialized to have shame around sex. Especially if you're Latina. Exactly what you're saying.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, in Latin culture, I think I see that a lot. I used to work in the cruise industry, and there was 36 countries represented, and there's a lot of different mindsets about sex. And if you go to maybe some European countries, they have a completely different experience where maybe shame isn't the thing that comes up the most, but definitely, in the cultural narratives in which I grew up and you grew up, it's such a place where we handle with care.





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We go slow, we go gentle, we see what's there. And then there's ego. And then there's pride, whether it's ours or our partners, and there's like, "How do we navigate that? Oh, I should be good at this, but I'm not."

Then there's physiology, my body is not responding the way it did before. And now, I might even have grief. Look at all the emotions that I've mentioned. Pride, ego, grief, shame-

Vanessa Calderon:

Judgment, yes.

Maggie Reyes:

... judgment, there's so much of that. So listen, if you're having great sex, give yourself a gold star right now. And keep on keeping on. And if you're struggling with any of these emotions, I just want you to know you're not alone and it's totally normal to have this journey with your own sexual health, just like we do with our mental health or our physical health.

Vanessa Calderon:

Wow, that was so fantastic. Thank you so much. So, let me shift our conversation a little bit. For our listeners listening, I just want you to know what a gift this is. Maggie's really a leader in this field, as you can tell, she's so wise, so experienced and has studied so much. And I just think it's such a gift to have you.

So I just want to again, just highlight how grateful I am. I feel gratitude here for you, how much I







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love you. How grateful I am to have you and your expertise and for everyone listening to be able to hear this and just soak it in.

And one of the things I just want to request is, if you're getting a lot out of this podcast, listen to it again. And oh, my gosh, by the way, Maggie Reyes's website is full of the most incredible resources, and we're going to share all that in the links at the end, but it's just amazing.

Okay, so let's go back quickly because, one of the reasons why I had invited you to be on this podcast is because I think a lot of people don't fully grasp that importance of having a strong personal relationship and how that fuels you for everything else in life.

Maggie Reyes:  
Yeah.

Vanessa Calderon:

And you mentioned earlier, you said, "Listen, if you have a bad relationship at home, it's the same as smoking cigarettes for X number of years." So it's clearly that stress and the stress response in your body. So what I'd love to hear from you is, number one, why it's important to have a strong foundation with your romantic partner to have that as your base for a strong foundation, all other aspects of your life.

And you can share any examples of any of your clients that you've personally experienced a breakthrough whenever you saw them have a breakthrough in their marriage, where you saw them have a breakthrough in other parts of their life because, one thing is how you do





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everything.

Maggie Reyes:

So that happens all the time. I think we've just touched a little bit upon why it's so important. But I'll tell you this, one of my favorite quotes is probably 100 years old to some person, I don't know, named Samuel Johnson said this. And I've read it in a book and I loved it. And he said, "To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition."

Vanessa Calderon:

I'm purposely staying quiet to let that sink in.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah.

Vanessa Calderon:

Tell me more about that. Expand on that.

Maggie Reyes:

So it's one of my fueling thoughts in philosophies is to be happy at home, is the ultimate result of all ambition. And when I read that, I thought, "Well, what am I doing all of this for?" It sent me into this inquiry of what is all the hard work and all the things and whatever my goals are, and whatever I want to accomplish, whatever I want to buy, whatever I want to do, if the purpose is to be happy at home, and then I notice that I'm actually creating scenarios where I'm not happy at home, then what?





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And I want to have a really wide definition for home, my mental home, my emotional home, my physical home, too. But it's like, the home that I live in in my brain. When I originally read it, it was very physical like at home. Sure.

But the more I thought about it over the years, I'm like, "Oh, to be happy at myself, to be happy in my decisions, to be happy at my values, to be happy as a human on Earth that says, "You know what, maybe I messed up, but I did the best I could." That's the ultimate result of all the other ambitions. So it's like, "Hey, let's make sure we're aware."

Vanessa Calderon:

Damn, girl, you just went a little like, for me, it just went a little meta because for me, what I took from that is to be happy with yourself and your integrity and who you are is ultimately the result of all ambition.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Vanessa Calderon:

For those who have never experienced Coaching in their life, what you will soon start learning is that the ultimate result of all Coaching is for you to get to know who you are at your core, love and trust that person, and make decisions from that moral compass because that moral compass is exactly all you need, it's enough, right?





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Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Okay. So, everyone, when she said re-listen to this again and take notes, this is what she was talking about. So we're going to leave that there. And I'm going to answer your other question, which I have a really fun story, which I probably have a lot of them but this is just my favorite one. So this one I will share from time to time, but it's just so good.

So I had a client who really wanted to talk to her husband about money without it becoming a fight, without her freaking out, without him freaking out. It was like we wanted to remove the freakouts from conversations about money.

And so we Coached on that and we Coached on that from a variety of different angles. There was some shame on money that had been spent and invested in ways that didn't work out the way she thought it was going to be and there was some forgiveness work to do around that.

And then when we have shame around something, we don't like to look at it. So it's like, "Oh, can I just look at the numbers? Can the numbers just be neutral as we were talking about in Coaching?" So we did a lot of work just unpacking what was her money story or her thoughts about money now, and what does she want her thoughts about money to be and things like that.

And for several weeks, we worked on that. And the goal of that exercise was for her to be able to sit with her husband, with a spreadsheet. And he's the spreadsheet guy. So she wanted to be able to sit and talk to him and talk about vacations and investing in their future retirement and things they want to do for their kids without it becoming a fight. It was a really simple goal.





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So we did all this work. And it was amazing. And she was able to do that. She was able to sit with her husband and talk about things from this calm, centered place, having gone through her own journey, her forgiveness, her release, and all that. We finished working together.

Several months later, she sends me an email, it's one of those emails you love to get in your inbox because it has all these exclamation points, I still remember. So all these exclamation, I'm like, "What is going on? What is happening?"

I opened the email, she's like, "You're never going to believe what happened. I give it off." She got a raise at work. The biggest raise of her career. And this is the best part and my favorite, with back pay.

Vanessa Calderon:

Wow.

Maggie Reyes:

And the original intention was not that. The original intention was, "Can I sit with my husband and not freak out? And can I have that for the rest of my life?" That's still an ambitious goal.

"Can I solve that so for forever we can have conversations and not freak out?" Yes, we can.

Come on, let's get good stuff.

Then because she was able to sit with her husband and have conversations about money, she was able to sit with her boss and have conversations about money. And because she was able







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to do that, she was able to create, first of all, think about getting a raise, and now forever, the rest of your career, anything you get above that is always going to be based on that percentage for the rest of your life.

And the fact that she got back pay is just the ultimate bonus of all the things. I was just so happy for her. So to answer your question. Yes, these things overlap.

Vanessa Calderon:

That is so fascinating, the most perfect example. And by the way, I didn't prepare Maggie for this. So I just love that you knew that because I mentioned a second ago how you do one thing is how you do everything.

And when you're holding on to shame or judgment about one area of your life in this example, your personal relationship with money and your shame around things that you did or didn't do with money in the past, it's showing up everywhere, whether you're conscious about it or not.

And when you breakthrough in one area, and by the way, I personally believe that when you're breaking through in a romantic setting because it's so intimate and so personal, and I don't know if this is going to hold true. I haven't had enough evidence of this just yet.

But in my experience, there's more of an exponential growth when you're breaking through in a personal intimate relationship than when you're breaking through at work. And because sometimes you can silo that and say, "Oh, that's just me at work." But when that's you at home, it's your authentic you.





# EPISODE 89: LATINA LEADERS & THRIVING MARRIAGE – DR. VANESSA CALDERON ASKS ME EVERYTHING

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And then that shows up in so many other places in bigger ways. But anyway, I just love that example, letting go of judgment and shame in your marriage and how that showed up for you in work. That is just fascinating.

It's wild. I suspect and here's my hypothesis on it. I don't have any specific data on it. Maybe someone who's listening does. If you do, I am @themaggiereyes on Instagram, you message me if you have data on this.

But here's my hypothesis is whatever your hardest relationship is when you face that one because, for some people, it is a relationship with their boss. For other people, it is a relationship with their partner, it just depends.

But when you do the hardest one, all the other ones just become so much easier. Because after everything she went through to be able to do that with her husband, and it was such a minefield that had so many different elements to it, then talking to her boss was nothing. It wasn't even hard at that point.

And not that it's not hard, but it's just that she had gone through the tallest mountain you could climb than the other mountains as I go, I could do that in a day. It's not a big deal.

Vanessa Calderon:

Oh girl. I love that perspective. It's like leaning into what's most uncomfortable. We always say, where you're uncomfortable is where the break is going to happen.





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Maggie Reyes:

So, okay, I wanted to say that because I think that's important. But I want to say something that's a little counterintuitive, especially for all you type-A leaders out there. In our cultural narrative that's very patriarchal, industrial society, one of the things especially in self-development or leadership development work is do the hardest thing first.

And sometimes that is the best thing to do. Sometimes you do need to do the hardest thing first and not to discount that. But I think what we've done as a society is we've taken that to be a little bit of black or white thinking, like you must always do the hardest thing first. And what I tell most of my clients on a regular basis and it always just freaks them out just a little is what if you do the easiest thing first?

But if you become a person who just does things, you experience the completions of having done it, you do one easy thing and then another easy thing and then another easy thing and for some things, you need to work yourself up to doing the hardest thing.

So, you can attack a problem, an issue, a goal, a dream from any angle. And I just want to add that to the conversation that sometimes the easiest thing is the best place to start.

Vanessa Calderon:

Maggie, so much wisdom. Thank you. So we are getting close to wrapping up. And again, I just want to say thank you so much for dropping so much wisdom, for taking time for being here for sharing your expertise, your love with everyone listening. I really appreciate it.





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So, Maggie again, Reyes is a Marriage Relationship Coach, a mentor, she's incredible. I think she's really been take on life Coach clients. So Maggie does it all and she's really good at what she does. She's peer Coached me before and totally just changed the way I look at things. So Maggie, how can people find you?

Maggie Reyes:

Absolutely. So first of all, thank you for all those expressions of gratitude, I receive them with so much delight and so much joy. And it's an honor to be here and to talk to you. To spend time with you on earth is always a beautiful thing. And to get to talk to everyone who's listening to us today, I just feel excited thinking about everyone is thinking about things a little bit differently after this episode.

So, you can find me at [maggiereyes.com](https://maggiereyes.com) that is the hub where everything else links to that. If you're on Instagram, you can follow me there @themaggiereyes. And if you love podcasts like this one, I have a podcast called The Marriage Life Coach Podcast that you can listen to where I talk about all this kind of stuff all the time.

Vanessa Calderon:

So good. Thanks, Maggie. And the link to Maggie Reyes's website will be in the show notes. And thank you again so much. I hope everybody enjoyed it. And please, listen again if you found this helpful. I bet there's so many nuggets that you're going to pick up a second or a third time. All right, Maggie, thank you so much. I'm sending you a lot of love from across the country.

Maggie Reyes:





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Bye.

Vanessa Calderon:

All right. Bye.

Vanessa Calderon:

Hey, listeners. If you enjoyed the episode, then you've got to check out the Latina leadership accelerator. It's my six-month all-inclusive Coaching program that gives you every tool you need to live and lead with confidence. Learn more at [vanessacalderonmd.com](https://vanessacalderonmd.com). See you there.

