



# EPISODE 91: LOVE & LEADERSHIP WITH EMILY FEAIRS

**THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/91](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/91)**

Maggie Reyes:

Hello everyone. Welcome back to the podcast. We have the most amazing conversation on leadership and love with Emily Feairs, like Sasha Fierce today. She is a former member or student in the Marriage MBA program. She is a Leadership Coach who is amazing.

And every time she tells me about her background and the different things she's done, I'm a little bit in awe of all the things that she's accomplished in her life and all the impact she has had in the world.

So I'm going to have her introduce herself and tell you a little bit about her background. And then we're going to dive in on all things love and leadership and you're probably going to want to take notes, so just prepare yourselves. Okay, Emily, tell us.

Emily Feairs:

That was an epic introduction. Thank you, Maggie. Yeah, I'm Emily Feairs and I am a Life and Leadership Coach for politicians, for corporation hustlers, for business owners. And my definition of leadership is very similar to yours -- you're the person who goes first.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Emily Feairs:

You are the person who is either leading the way and organizing your community. You might be the person who is creating the solution in a world for something that you feel is really needed, or you might be the person in your company that is always taking initiative. Either way you are a





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leader, you probably don't notice that you are, but you're incredibly driven and ambitious.

And what I do is help women who have done all these things and achieved all these things really figure out a better way to manage it because they feel like they can't hold it anymore. And they don't know how to manage it without it all falling apart.

And the reason I Coach on that is because I was that. I worked very high level in politics. I was the Chief of Staff for a number of years to ministers, which for people who don't know politics and didn't watch every single episode of *The West Wing* 18 times, is basically like a CEO of multi billion dollar ministries.

And you are managing your minister who is the head of that ministry, but really you're doing everything that is the day to day. Your minister is in the legislature a lot of the time, so you are managing all those little things. And I found that as a woman I would be sitting at boardroom tables and completely have my thoughts and opinions dismissed, and so I had to push harder to be heard.

And the result of pushing harder and learning that pushing harder was the key to my success, I pushed myself to the point where I distinctly remember lying on the floor of my living room in tears feeling like it was all too much and I didn't know how to manage it.

And then I would brush myself off and start answering my Blackberry at 6:00 AM and really pull these amazing things out of all of that. I would create housing plans, put things in the budget. I created the basic income pilot here in Ontario. All of these really major progressive policies were created despite the fact that I felt like I was crumbling on the inside. So I've been through it





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is basically the summary of that.

Maggie Reyes:

Okay, so if you have watched every episode of *The West Wing* 18 times like I have, Emily Feairs is like a real life Canadian Leo McGarry, or C.J., because C.J. -- I used to have the biggest crush on C.J. I just thought she had such a beautiful character arc and so much growth. *West Wing* fans rejoice. And so it's like having a real life C.J. on the show today. Can you feel the excitement? Everyone, let's just take a minute for that.

Okay. Now, before we even dive into anything else I have to touch upon something you said about being in meetings and having your opinions dismissed, because being a woman, I don't know, so I call it corporate America because I'm in the U.S., but in Western industrialized society anywhere in the world, I don't think I know anyone who has not had some form of this experience.

I personally went through being sort of young and innocent and naive and not really understanding what was happening to then becoming very savvy about how to create relationships and partnerships and have internal clients and I always said, "I don't want a seat at the table. I will create my own table." And you're all coming. Because I used work in HR and HR has no seat and no table most of the time.

And I remember vividly having the experience of being with an executive in a meeting, a person who title is senior VP. My boss at the time was a director and I at the time was a manager. And I was the person in charge of the project. I was the person on the ground who knew all the details of everything we were discussing in this meeting.





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And this person who was a man would direct every question to my boss because of the title, and I left that meeting, and at the time I was already advanced enough in my career and had stature within the industry that I was in, and had a track record of performance. And I remember going and debriefing that meeting with my boss and saying, “This is not the way. He must realize that we are in the 21st century and this is the way.”

And so my boss of course was a woman as well, and my ally and was of course equally as incensed of what was happening. And this was an interesting situation because in that situation we had the ability ... I don't know what happened. I don't know what conversations happened behind the scenes.

All I know is the next day I got an apology, beautiful flowers delivered to my office, and we never had an incident such as that again. But can you imagine being at a three person table, for everyone listening, and literally being the subject matter expert on the thing... and being completely ignored.

Emily Feairs:

Which is the experience of so many women. And a lot of times you're the only woman at the table and it doesn't feel safe to speak up.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. Yeah. And a lot of times you don't have the situation that I had where this was a new person to the company, I had a track record in that company for getting results and managing my projects really well. And so it was, I was in this situation where I could speak up and there





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wouldn't be repercussions against me for saying we really need to find a way to collaborate.

So now I just that certification and from this Coaching, and I'm non-hierarchical Coaching and non-hierarchical relationships. And what does that look like and how do we go even deeper into having more equality across different realms?

But at that moment I happened to be in a position of what I would call privileged position, for whatever reason that I was in that position, where I could speak up for myself. And so many women, and so many people of color or any marginalized identity, are not in that situation where they can speak up and say something.

And, to bring it to marriage, sometimes we feel that way with our partners. We feel dismissed, and if we speak up there's some kind of consequence that we don't want.

Emily Feairs:

Just being socialized as a woman, I think there's a lot of ways in which we try and overcompensate for the fact that we have been either dismissed or not listened to or whatever. I think in a marriage it can often look like as you said, feeling as if you can't always voice what you want, because they're so used to their, as a man, being socialized as a man, really having everything that they want and need to completely be fulfilled all the time. That their opinion is the one that drives the conversation.

And then in business, it looks like whether it was -- I was walking into a room to meet with a bunch of business leaders and they all automatically assumed that I wasn't the person that they needed to convince to take on something, because I was the woman.





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And that happened times 10 when I had my two pregnancies during my career. And then it also looked like every man at the table saying something in a meeting and contributing and then afterwards all the women would come into my office and be like, “I was thinking ... Oh, I have this great idea.”

I know that they had that idea before we got into the meeting. But they never felt comfortable putting their hand up when every other man in there felt really comfortable saying the exact same thing that the guy next to them said, but in their own way to make sure that their own voice was heard.

And it’s sort of like having your voice heard in any forum is actually considered secondary, because your needs are secondary because anything you think is secondary because we’re taught to really question ourselves constantly.

And I think that shows up in marriages a lot too. Where if you’re questioning yourself, if you’re the crazy bitch, or you’re being over controlling, or you’re doing all these things that were sort of almost gaslit to believe is us being a bad woman, or a bad wife, or bad girlfriend or partner, but is actually just us trying to advocate for our needs in a really messy way. Because we’ve never really been taught how to do it in the first place.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. And some of those needs we have to advocate for because we’re being ignored-

Emily Feairs:





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Again, again, and again.

Maggie Reyes:

... like other situations, the reason we have to advocate in the first place is because we're in situations where those needs are diminished when they shouldn't be in the first place. And one of the things we talk about in the Marriage MBA is this internalized patriarchy, these patriarchal mindsets.

It's like there are moments when we gaslight ourselves. And it's not our fault. It's not about blame. It's not about anything related to that, it's just we are surrounded by cultural narratives that tell us X, Y, Z thing is not okay. And then when we have that thing, we're like, "Is this okay?" I've been told by TV, by music, by radio, by politicians, by mentors, by leaders that it's not okay. And then, what do I do with myself?

And one of the things that I love to be a stand for in the podcast, be a stand for in any program that I lead at any time, is we are human, we are messy, whatever you're feeling is valid. Whatever you're feeling is real. It's a physiological thing that's happening in your body.

We can question the thinking that created it. We can question how we got here. We can do something about it to move forward. But in the moment, you want to be present to what's real and I think that's something we don't talk about enough. So this is why I talk about it incessantly.

Emily Feairs:

And that's one of the biggest things I got from the Marriage MBA was I think in our careers, if we're high achievers and we've done everything right, we have a certain amount of certainty





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that we create by doing all the things. We're always creating safety for ourselves by making sure that it's done right, it's done complete, it's just done.

And then when it comes to our marriages we forget that we're married to a human who's got messy stuff going on, who's doing things imperfectly. And we don't allow the space for that and then even before I got to thinking about that, I didn't allow for my marriage to be imperfect and for that to be okay and safe.

Because I think knowing how to create so much certainty and safety in work meant that I didn't know how to allow the human part of my life to be really human. And I think I got that in such a deep level from the Marriage MBA to just have a space. I can talk to my girlfriends all day about kids, about work, about all the drama, but if I talked about my husband, I had such fear that they'd be like, "Oh, what's going on with Emily? Is her marriage falling apart? What's going..." "

And so to have a space to be a mess and full disclosure I was a hot mess all the time on those calls. I cried every damn call. And it was amazing. It was the best release to be able to cry on camera in front of a bunch of women. And so, thank you for creating that space Maggie.

Maggie Reyes:

Okay, so it's like, let me go cry once a week.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah.

Maggie Reyes:







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And it's going to be fun. I know everybody listening is like, "What?" So-

Emily Feairs:  
The best.

Maggie Reyes:

... So let's just say, it's really important to me to say, crying is a natural response of the body. I always think of tears as emotions that need to be processed that are too big for words. That's how I like to think about tears. They're just, it's an emotion and it's too big for words, so it comes to a different way.

And one of the things that I really try to do is just normalize all of it. Every emotion, the good ones, the heightened ones, the low ones, all of them. We are born with them, the ability to have them all and then we make ourselves wrong for having them.

And so I cried every call, but it was great, can be possible because that emotional release that happens and then you're just moving through things that are even non-verbal things, we do so much.

We question our thoughts and it's a very verbal program and I give you PDFs and things to read and stuff. But there is this moment that goes beyond words where you're just releasing something that we may never have words for. But the moment that it's gone you have more space in your life for love, for yourself, for your dreams, for your desires.

Emily Feairs:





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And then just to be witness to being in the crying messy goo-filled and having everyone on that call still think that you're a total badass and that you are still a leader and that you're still great at what you do.

I think a lot of women in leadership positions don't allow themselves the ability to be the hot mess crying on the floor and be a leader. They think that disqualifies them for being a badass, for being really strong, for being all those other things that we think of when we think of leadership.

Maggie Reyes:

And let's acknowledge that we do that, because I certainly include myself in that list, because it's a coping mechanism we've had to have to survive in this society that we live in and its current situation. We live in a society, especially with a lot of men in positions of power where they are not socialized to have the multitude of emotions, that they also have access to and they should probably play with more. Society would be-

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Right. Yeah, I love that.

Maggie Reyes:

... very different if there was men crying on a call, being a hot mess and then going to lead. And there are some men who are doing that and it's wonderful and beautiful, but we just want to call that out, that it's like we have these coping mechanisms that we need to use for reasons that are viable and real.





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And then we come to points in our lives like when it comes to a marriage situation where that coping mechanism no longer works. I have to be the hot mess to create and to make connection with this person that I love. I can't just have it all together all the time and have intimate connection. We can't.

And that feels very disruptive to our nervous system and very disruptive to our logical brains that got us this far. So like, "No, that won't get me where I want to go." It's like, "Actually it will." So I love that you mentioned that and we can talk about that juxtaposition.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. And that certainly is again going back to Leadership Coaching, whether it is women running their own businesses and they've gotten to a certain level and they've done all the things. Or politicians, a lot of times always want to like, "Oh, I want to know how to do the database over here, and I want to knock on every door and I want to do."

And they want to do it because they don't want to delegate to their volunteers without sort of having their volunteers know that they understand, that they've been in that position. Or for a lot of corporate people they go to every single meeting just to support their team and to be in the loop.

But what it has you doing is being all the things all the time to create that safety. It's a coping mechanism. And then you get to a certain level and it doesn't work anymore. You literally can't keep any more plates spinning at the same time. And then you start to think it's a you problem and that you're somehow broken, you're not capable of managing it all, versus, oh, my strategy's just off here. I've just got to change up my strategy.





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Maggie Reyes:

Yes. I love that so much. So, right now for everyone listening, what is your strategy in your marriage and is it working? I think about this all the time and I never had the thought what is my strategy. I think about marriage culture, because I come from HR, and I think about how do we create the culture we want to have.

But the idea is how are my results, my day to day results, what's going on, am I delighted most of the time? Am I annoyed most of the time? Where do I fall between delighted and annoyed? And whatever my strategy has been up to today, is it working and do I need to tweak it.

And the good news is, for everyone listening, you're very strategic, whether you're a mom, whether you're a mom and working or a mom and not working. Whatever it is that you're doing, has required strategy to get you this far in your life, and so you know how to revise the strategy.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Exactly and I think you know how to figure it out. Really it's the basis of that. And I think we use the same strategy over and over again because it creates certainty for so many ambitious women. It creates that safety, that feeling of well if I do it all, then I know it's done right and I got to do it myself.

And then we go home and how that shows up is like, well if I want the kids' forms done right, then I've got to do it myself. If I want the kids' clothes done right I've got to do it myself. If I want everything done right, I've got to do it myself. If I want the right marriage, I've got to do that myself. And then it feels like this other thing we have to manage and it just feels really heavy to carry.





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Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. And one of the things I challenge my clients with often is does it need to be done? Does it need to be done at all by anyone? Does it need to be done by you? And can it just be messy? Does it need to be done to that level of perfection?

So I love when you talk about business owners, politicians, that you Coach in leadership positions and who I Coach who often are in leadership positions as well, when we come from a situation where we make a mistake or leave it messy or leave it undone, someone's life, someone's career, someone's livelihood is at stake.

Our coping mechanism, we can't leave that undone and that context is very different. And then we come home and there's form for the teacher and if it's not fully perfectly filled out, what is the consequence?

So I used to work with lawyers and we have conversations all the time about different projects we were working on for clients and different things we were doing. And I was the non-lawyer in the conversation and because I didn't know anything I would always ask these sort of out there questions, and like, "Well, what is the consequence if we don't do the thing?"

And they would all be looking at the statute and trying to figure it out. And then I remember something that the whole office was just all up in arms about. I'm like, "Well, what if we didn't do the thing? What would happen?" And they were like, "Oh, it's a \$500 fee." I'm like, "This conversation costs more than the fee. Everyone"-

Emily Feairs:





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Go home. Dismissed.

Maggie Reyes:

... I was like, "Stop talking right now and let's just pay the fee."

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Yeah. And that's one of the things I got from Marriage MBA too is that idea of what the consequence was, because in those moments getting mad at my husband and moving towards disconnection was a really high fee. It was a really high consequence.

But I wasn't seeing that because in the moment it felt like that form was the biggest thing. And to start seeing those longterm things of what do I want to be contributing too longterm, what's the overall marriage that I want and how does that show up in those tiny every day moments?

That really started to clarify for me what is my choice in the moment and how does it contribute to the longterm? What is the consequence of what I decide now in the longterm?

Maggie Reyes:

Oh, so good. I love that so much. And we think about that all the time at work, and in different projects, different things. And then we come home and we're just thinking about what's in front of us today and just switching that gear to, oh, I could think about it that way. And if I do, does what I'm deciding right now change? And very often, it does in different ways.

Now you were telling me something before we started recording that you found that your work in leadership had so many overlaps with the way we think about marriage inside the Marriage





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MBA, and I'd love to hear a little bit about what you saw in your leadership work and then how that overlapped. I think that's really fascinating and really relevant, so I'd love to hear about that.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, one of the first things you had told us was that the glue to a marriage is appreciation and sex. And it really resonated for me that that's what I teach women when it comes to leadership is that the glue of their leadership is actually self-appreciation and appreciation of their team. And the sex part obviously isn't sex, but it's pleasure. Having fun. Making it enjoyable.

Because those are the two things that are often most lacking in leaders that are really burying out. It's like we feel like everyone around us is either failing or we feel like we're failing. We don't see how we're doing it right. We acknowledge ourselves or catch ourselves doing it right or our team doing it right. Everything just feels like it's a fire to be put out.

And then on the other side, we're not having fun anymore. We've lost the bigger why that connects us to why we show up and do the work. And when we don't have those things really driving us forward and bringing us back and re-energizing us to show up and do the work every day, it becomes us just having a management strategy for keeping our heads above water.

And that doesn't feel like thriving and then we start telling ourselves it's because we're not good enough. And then we start either discounting ourselves from the next level or leadership position. The number of women I've talked to that are like, "This VP position has come up. Or my kids are old enough, I can finally run for this seat." Then they discount it being like, "But I can barely keep my life together right now, how could I ever add to my plate?" Because they just see





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it as an addition to their plate.

And I think what I loved about the Marriage MBA is really you talk about like, “I don’t Coach couples, I Coach the wife.” One person in a marriage, and that can change everything. And I think the same thing about leadership. Women think that everyone in their life needs ... Their husbands are going to have to step up and their teens are going to have to step up.

Everyone’s going to have to step up in order to make this really big thing happen. But really, you go first and you can create such dramatic change in how your team shows up. Do they show up resourceful, or do they show up dependent on you? Are they asking you the answer to every single question and you’re answering them because it’s just faster? Or are they showing up feeling as if they can make a mess, they can get it wrong, they can figure it out and then come to you as a check in?

Or in politicians it shows up as they think that they need to memorize the entire briefing binder so that when they go out and someone asks them this random question about housing policy or this random question about energy policy they can answer it perfectly. But what you teach in the Marriage MBA and what I teach with leaders is you come from your values. That’s always your center point. So you can answer any question from any media outlet if you know your values.

Maggie Reyes:

Oh, that’s so good. You can answer any question from your mother-in-law or the cousin or the sister or the co-worker if you know your values. You can handle it all. And you were talking, and I was thinking, “Let’s just make some messy decisions.”







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There's so much seeking to making the perfect decision, the right decision, the best decision. But it's like, let's make some messy ones and then figure it out as we go. And that feels really hard even to me as I say it. I'm like, "Ooh, I don't like making messy decisions."

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. And so same thing for all the women I work with and me too, we think that actually is a right decision. And so I just eliminate that as there is no right decision. So how do you know a decision is right? And usually the answer is, oh, well I've done it and then I can check in with myself and see if was right.

But as you said when you're so used to working in these really high stakes environments it feels like you've got to get it right. There's so many little things that have to go into it. But something you used to always say is, "Pretend you're Indian Jones and you're taking that step forward and then the next stone appears, and you take the next step forward and the next stone appears."

It's the same thing in how I like to reframe what decision making is. It's not figuring out this giant first domino and whatever domino you push it just sets in motion a bunch of things. It's really breaking it down into really tiny decisions. As an experiment.

So it doesn't even have to be messy because scientists going into experiments are like, "I'm going to prove this wrong." They're not there to get it right the first time. They're there to continually refine what is already there and what is known, and just to see if it's wrong or not.

And so that's what we're doing with decision making, is first we've got to break it down, then we





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check in with our values as the thing that helps us figure out what result we actually want. And then we move through a whole decision making matrix because this is such a tough issue for so many women because we feel like we have to get it right.

We actually are constantly just making all these tiny ones and as a result we prove our self trust to figure it out. To pivot, to manage it as an issue. Versus making one decision and feeling like it's out of our control.

Maggie Reyes:

I think that's so important and it's so important on so many levels. But we have an episode on self-trust. I will link to it in the show notes, but one of the things that I see especially in marriage is when you've had a breakdown, something has gone wrong, we're doubting ourselves and our partner.

And then you saw being in a group and seeing other people going through that, it's like, "Oh, that's normal. Oh wait, first of that's normal." And then you have me and you can tell me anything and I trust for you and for me in that moment of time. And having anyone in your life if you're working with a Leadership Coach like Emily, she trusts for you in that moment that your trust is too small.

Having someone in your life that will hold the vision for that trust while you're figuring out how to do it is so incredibly powerful. And sometimes it's a Coach, sometimes it's a friend, sometimes it's a mentor, sometimes it's a colleague. But really looking for that place where those people are and how obviously we can be that for people in our lives as well, is so so important.





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And this idea around how do you build self trust, what is the simplest way? And I have so many thoughts about all the different ways, but one of the things that has been really pivotable for me even in creating the Marriage MBA to begin with, in translating the work that I was doing one-on-one and in depth within people into a group setting, I was like, “But it has to be deep or it’s not worth doing. And how do I translate that?”

And the one thing that gave me the trust to do that, to take that experiment was, well, I know how to make amends. So I teach fresh starts and do overs and we’ll link to that in the show notes too. But I teach it as a thing and I practice it as a thing with my friends, with my clients, with my husband.

And I was like, “If I ever did something that was so incredibly, oh, that just didn’t land and it wasn’t the thing, I know how to make amends. I can just be human. So you know what, I thought it would be a good idea to talk about this topic next week, but I realize everybody’s worried about this other thing, so we’re just going to switch it.” Which we did. Stuff like that.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. And I think that’s so hard for so many leaders to do is because again admitting that they’re human starts to chip away at this idea that they’re a leader and we have to really start embracing this idea that our politicians aren’t meant to be perfect.

Maggie Reyes:

Correct.

Emily Feairs:





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Because then we expect them to make these big decisions with billions of dollars without there being any mistake, which leads to them being rounded off at the corners. It waters everything down. And that is also a great microcosm or to the idea that we think we have to be perfect, and so we water ourselves down.

The more I started wearing leopard print to the legislature, which is like an open toe shoe would have been a little like “Ooh. She’s getting risky.” The more I started leaning into me. The more I started swearing in certain meetings, the more I started trusting my gut, the better leader I became. And it felt really risky at the time.

But I also felt this other risk of the more I watered myself down, the more I was failing at becoming this version of myself that I wasn’t. And I realized I couldn’t fail at being me. That was actually the safest place to be because I knew how to do it. And some parts of it felt unknown because I hadn’t been listening to it for so long, but the more I became me, the better.

And I think on our consult call there was something ... I can’t remember the context of the conversation, but there was one point where you were like, “Your husband knows that you’re a goofy person.” Your husband knew this before he married you, it’s okay and it’s safe to let that out.

And I think I started to think about the same thing of if I look back, all my ministers know that I was silly or goofy or swore a lot. All of them knew my true personality. You can hide it, but people know. And the more I leaned into that, the more it was really like I became magnetic and I became the leader in the room and I could walk in and I was no longer mistaken for the scheduler. I was known that I was the chief of staff because I could own that as part of who I





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was and my identity.

Maggie Reyes:

That is so incredibly powerful. I love everything about that. And think about when we want to create more intimate close connection with our partners, but we're hiding a part of ourselves, then we are ... And often we switch to blaming them for not being the way we want them to be, but yet, we're hiding a part of ourselves and what I offer to you listening today and to my clients as we work together is what if we just stopped hiding and then see?

And in some relationships when you stop hiding we figure out actually my partner doesn't want anything to do with that part of me and that is data I would want to have, is what I propose to everyone. If that is the case, I want to have that data sooner rather than later, because then, what are we doing?

Emily Feairs:

Yeah, and same with a corporation. If you show up as yourself and they're like, "Actually that's not welcome here." You want to get your ass out of there real quick.

Maggie Reyes:

Real quick. And this, drop of the hat, I was an HR manager. I had at the time a \$300,00 budget. It was I did important things and made big decisions that affected people's livelihoods. And people would come to my office and I'd give them scratch and sniff stickers when they had a good idea, because pleasure. Because fun. Because everybody was so serious sometimes.

So like, oh. Oh my gosh, listen y'all, Emily just ... This isn't on video, so you're not going to see it,





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but she has stickers on her desk and she just showed them to me and my life is complete now. So people knew this. People know that I would know in depth all the things of the things that I was in charge of and the things we had to do and I knew my departments inside out. They knew all that, and they knew scratch and sniff stickers.

And then what's funny is you would get these really serious professional people in blazers and suits be like, "Well why didn't I get a sticker? I said something really good at the meeting." And I'm like, "Come to my office after the meeting, I'll give you" ... And then you'd have that fun. And now on the calls I have a bell that I ring and-

Emily Feairs:  
And a wand.

Maggie Reyes:  
... and a wand. When there's magic we acknowledge the magic in the room. And it becomes like we can talk about something so heavy and so delicate or so tender, but we can bring that humanity to it and we can bring that fun to it and I love that. So many things you're inspiring me to.

There's two things I want to make sure we talk about, just from what you just said. One is, I love how you juxtapose the glue and your leadership. First of all you are the glue. That's cute. And the appreciation and sex and marriage and then self appreciation and joy and fun and pleasure, whatever we want to call it for our life outside of that as leaders in whatever area we're leading.

And one of my frameworks is that relationship table which is perspective, partnership, and





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pleasure. And as I started thinking about what creates thriving. We're not talking about just getting by. We're talking about thriving.

And because I worked in HR for so many years I thought, "Okay, this for sure in marriage you have to have the ability to see your own perspective, your self awareness around how you're thinking and then adjust it if that needs to be." You have to have partnership. If somebody's not interested in being in a partnership with you then that's information we want to have. And if they are interested then we want to cultivate what does that partnership look like? How does it work? How do we optimize it?

You must have perspective, you must have partnership. And you must have pleasure including but not limited to sex. You must be able to laugh together, have fun together, enjoy things, look forward to things. Have all these different pleasurable activities together. There's so much of the self-soothing of the human system that comes from pleasure. Pleasure is a fundamental part of it. And when I think about that in leadership terms, when I was thinking about the relationship table as a concept, I thought, "This would be the same on a team."

I started thinking about all the teams I'd ever been on and all the teams I'd ever led trainings for, anything that I ever was involved in and I was like the teams that thrive have perspective, have the ability to question their strategy. Have the ability to look at what they were doing and was it working and regroup and reset.

They had partnership. They were helping each other. And they had fun at work. Work was fun to them. Work with something they looked forward to doing. And you can have a team that doesn't have those three things, but I've never seen a team that doesn't have those three things thrive.





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Emily Feairs:

Exactly. Yeah 100%. So perspective is huge. The ability to question what you've been driving forward for so long and then stop and be like, "Is this the right direction?" When I was in the housing ministry we had a way that we had been managing rent control for a really long time, but we were at the time of feeling this really big housing crunch here in Ontario where prices in the city that I live in were just out of control.

And so we thought about reintroducing rent control. We had been on this road of, no, we're going to keep it the way it is. The systems working, we're going to keep going. We've got to keep going. And then all of a sudden to have the perspective of, wait, is our strategy still working here? And to constantly question it with humility and just gently look at it. And ever once in a while we come back to it.

And then once we did decide to switch tracks on it, to be able to create that space. We also always had lunch together. I thought it was going to be this sleepy little ministry that I could go back to after my first maternity leave, and it ended up becoming the biggest issue, the biggest focus of every single political conversation was housing and the affordability.

And so we ended up having the center piece in the budget just a few months after I had taken the lead there. And I still made sure that even though we were under immense pressure, we still took a full hour to have our lunch together. We all sat together, we played card games, sometimes we'd watch West Wing or Yes Minister, or something funny.

And it was a nervous system release to have a good belly laugh, to connect, because every team that has done incredible things that I've been on have felt like they've been I the trenches







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together in a way that connects you. It needs that glue. And you need the leader to be in on it.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. I love that you said that because that reminds me of why you felt okay to cry on a call, because of that same reason.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Yeah.

Maggie Reyes:

I love that so much. The other thing that really popped out at me about how we expect our leaders to be perfect, we expect sometimes ourselves to be perfect, or our partners to have the perfect response, or the perfect answer, or this whole perfection as an idea.

And because we're talking about politics it reminded me of many years ago, I don't know how long, maybe 15 or 20 years ago, there was a politician in the U.S. named John Carey. He ran for president. And it was a great big scandal at the time where he was accused of being a flip flopper. That he would have one idea and then vote one way for one thing and then vote differently in another thing.

And he answered a question on this that I still remember to this ... I have no memory of anything else that happened in that whole election, but I remember this. He said, "Listen, of course I voted this way now and then I voted that other way later because when we make decisions we make decisions based on the information available to us in that moment. And when new information becomes available to us and we can make a better decision, why would we keep making a





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decision that no longer makes any sense in light of this new information?”

And that stayed with me for such a long time because the marketing around all the campaigning and all that stuff was so loud. And he was sort of a very thoughtful person that was very sort of really gave that answer. You could tell that that was something he thought deeply about.

And when I bring that to marriage or to relationships or to leadership and other realms, it's like, “Oh, I wanted my life to go this way. I did want to live in this house and have this job and do this thing.” And then suddenly I have those things and I say, “Oh, I now have a piece of data that I didn't have before. Dear husband, I want to buy a house on the beach. And I want to have this ... I was in HR manager and successful career. I think I want to become a Life Coach. I'm going to be a business owner.”

And so we have new data, a new experience, a new desire that arises for whatever reason. And now we're going in a direction that isn't what we expected and it happens to our partners too.

We signed up to get married to this person in this situation and now they're this other person in this other situation. And sometimes we blame them for that and I just want to offer to everyone this idea of it's perfectly solved and then never revisit us again, gets us in so much trouble. What are your thoughts when we just add that in?

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Yeah. Because I think there's the language of it being like a manual that you have for someone. I think we can project into our future, especially when you're first getting married and





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you're thinking about what your future's going to be and you're ideating what it could be like in 10 years or 15 years.

And then anything along the way especially for leaders who are used to ... or business owners who are used to, okay, you do step one, and step two, and that means you get to this place. Anything that doesn't seem like it's pointing in that direction will feel scary. Will feel like you're off the rails. And then you start holding so tightly to what that means to be because that is your idea of safety and it's like you're choking the life out of your marriage as a result.

And that was me 100%. I would take responsibility. I would take control over things as a way to try and direct my marriage where I really wanted it to go, because that's what gave me great success in my career. And even as a business owner, that was a place that I knew exactly how to, if I want to create this result, I do the things.

And these are things that make me know I'm going towards the things. But this idea that we can become new versions of ourselves all the time, we can make new decisions based on the new data and that that's actually the ideal as John Carey pointed, isn't that what you actually want from leaders?

Versus ideological which is I stick with it no matter what because this is what I chose in the first place. And sticking with it is more important than looking around and deciding, okay, now that I'm in this new landscape, what's my decision as to where I go? And I think that's so important both for leaders to gain driving something to a certain place, as well as for high achieving women in their marriages to understand that that doesn't work with humans.





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It can work with the math and a spreadsheet and certain things, but when it comes to humans, your actual safety is in being a little bit more messy. And constantly deciding, okay, in this landscape how do I create my safety? How do I decide how to show up? Where do I want to go from here? Not from the map that I had 10 years ago.

Maggie Reyes:

I did a podcast interview recently with the author of *Needing To Know For Sure*, a fabulous book that I highly recommend. Her name is Sally Winston, she's amazing. And one of the things we talked about, and her whole life's work is investigating this at a very deep level. And I'm so inspired by her work.

And one of the things that she says is, "We think we need more certainty. We think the answer when we want reassurance" ... all her words are reassurance ... "and we think, oh if we're certain, then we'll be fine." And she said, "Paradoxically, no. What we need is to increase our resilience and our ability to handle uncertainty and that is what calms the need for reassurance."

So it's the same thing for safety. What we need to do is cultivate our resilience to be able to be in situations that feel wobbly or messy or quote unquote in some ways unsafe. Where psychological safety isn't the priority of that meeting.

But we can stand in that meeting and have our own internal sense of safety aligned with our values, aligned with what really matters most to us, and that increasing that resilience then allows your ability to explore things you never would have explored before, which is where the magic happens whether it's in a meeting on a project or whether it's with your partner in you





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relationship.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah, because we think we need certainty, but then we get to that place and we don't even trust the answer when it gets there. A great example is a friend who had her second pregnancy and she wanted to find out the sex of the baby. And hadn't the first time.

And so she found out she was having a girl, but the whole time she doubted it was even a girl. She wanted the certainty of knowing what her baby's gender was going to be, but then she doubted it as soon as she had the information. And it's because we don't trust ourselves to manage whatever it's going to be. So the information doesn't actually create the safety for us. It's our trust in ourselves and our ability to handle whatever comes up that creates that feeling.

Maggie Reyes:

So you work with clients for six months.

Emily Feairs:

Yes.

Maggie Reyes:

That's your timeframe?

Emily Feairs:

Yeah.





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Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. Yeah. I find that that's why the Marriage MBA is six months. That's why you work without people overtime-

Emily Feairs:

Same.

Maggie Reyes:

... because this is a conversation you and I can have today and we plant the seeds and everyone who's listening you start questioning that. But when you start living into the answers to these questions there's that messy middle where we fall down, we get back up again. We just worked on forgiving our partner and then we have a fight about something else and that messy middle is part of growth.

We want to first normalize it and also this is why these are very sort of simple, but complex things at the same time. It's this duality. It's both very simple, but there's also these layers of experiences in our life that have all led to these results that we're currently living and to unpack those layers takes a minute.

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Yeah. For so many women we work in things and they just shift 1% per week. And so when we're doing, we open the calls, similar to in your calls you do celebrations, we do what's been going really well for you. What do you want to own as your success? What did you create?

And so they'll say something like, "Well, oh it's not big deal." And we'll dig into it and really see





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that actually what you did was a big deal. Let's think about you just six weeks ago. And how that was just impossible for you to think that handing a situation in which you're 50 minutes late to get out the door and none of your kids are dressed and you feel like, "There."

The lunches aren't packed, everything's a mess and you can't find your keys, you would have been in tears, screaming, freaking out, and now you're just like "Well, that wasn't the best. Maybe we could ask the husband to help out a little bit more. Maybe we can get the kids to pick up their clothes."

And you start seeing how it's not all on you. But it takes 1% shifts for six months. And usually by the three month mark something big happens where you feel fundamentally changed. But then it takes the next three months to integrate that into and live into that and see how it plays out in all these different ways.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. To become your new normal. To become who you are and how you respond moving forward. I think that's so important.

Emily Feairs:

Absolutely.

Maggie Reyes:

Okay, one of my favorite things to do when I interview guests is ask a question from the Questions For Couples Journal, and we have a very, very juicy one for today. I'm so excited to ask this question. So let me pull it up.





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It is, what do you believe is the role of pleasure, which we talked about, so awesome, in your life and in your relationship with your partner? So the way it's written in the book is, "What do you believe is the role of pleasure in your life and your relations with your partner?" And we discussed earlier how the role of pleasure is really critical to leadership as well. So we talked about that. What do you believe is the role of pleasure?

Emily Feairs:

Honestly, I thought pleasure was a weird word before we started working. I can remember you saying it and I was like, "Ick." But you challenged us to figure out a way to bring pleasure. So it was my birthday that month and so I decided what would feel best for me was to have a dance party.

So I rented a gold lame jumpsuit and we had a disco ball and we had a dance party, and it was awesome. And what I learned there was about advocating for my needs and my wants, that they were important and they brought everyone else pleasure. My kids had a great time. My husband afterwards was like, "That was so much fun. I'm so glad we did that."

And I also learned that filling my own cup with pleasure through asking for what I wanted, through doing activities just for me, by me, for me, had me show up in a different way. I didn't depend on them to be my source of pleasure. It was like, well the relationship is supposed to be what brings you happiness. No. No, you bring the happiness. And then when two people show up as being happy and fulfilled, boom magic's --

Maggie Reyes:







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Inevitable. Magic becomes inevitable when you do that.

Emily Feairs:  
Yeah. Exactly.

Maggie Reyes:

I love that so much. I think the pausing to ask ourselves what we actually want is the step that can easily be skipped over, that we do not skip over in the Marriage MBA. So much of my Coaching somebody will come over ... Yesterday we had a call and somebody came with this whole very big situation. I'm like, "So what do you want?"

Okay, all of this is happening and sometimes you as the leader on your team, or you as, Emily, as the Coach or me, we might be the only person asking, well what do you actually want? And so take this episode, everyone listening, and just what do you actually want? Emily and I are asking you today to just sit with that and see wherever that leads you.

Emily Feairs:

And it's okay if the answer doesn't really come up. Because for me, it was really hard to come up with an answer and the latest most easily accessible way to answer it was, well what do I want to do for my birthday?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Emily Feairs:





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And if I had not had a dance party we probably would have just done what the default was, which wouldn't have filled me with joy in the same way.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Yes. And that reminds me of something that we talked about before we started recording, I definitely want to ask you about. I was telling Emily that my highest intentions for the podcast is you can listen to the podcast, you can take the question, what do you want, and you can run with it.

And you can really change your life just from that, living into that answer. And Emily said something that really it gave me chills, and it gave me chills again, I just got goosebumps, that was, "Yeah, you can listen to the podcast. Yeah, it will help you, but there's nothing like being in the room." So can you just share your thoughts on that?

Emily Feairs:

Yeah, well I love that you even call it the Marriage MBA, because that to me is like when I talk to corporate leaders who've had their MBA, it's like, "You can study all these case studies, but until you've actually led a team through a major project you don't necessarily know what it's like to be in it." To make those decisions that aren't just theoretical, but actually apply all that work to real life and see how it all meters out.

And it's the same thing for this. Your podcast was invaluablely helpful and I listened to a lot of episodes before we started working together, but to actually apply it and then to hear you Coach me through my specific circumstances, because there's a lot of times where our brains are like, "Oh, well that makes sense for them, but for me it's my husband actually is the problem.





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So that doesn't apply."

But to actually be shown how it does apply and then show up and do the work. So even if you're thinking about, what is it that I want? Then go out and meet that need. Don't just go out and think about what you need, go out and meet need. The different between just thinking about what it could be that you want and then actually going out and doing that thing, is like, completely different, night and day, right?

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. I think it's so incredible. It is night and day when you actually ... And when you have to report back in next week how did it go. What happened? Because now I'm asking you ... Emily and I are like, "Hey, what do you want?" But we're not going to knock on your door and say, "Did you do anything about it?"

But when you're checking in every week and you're like, "Oh, at some point I'm going to have to say and I wanted this thing and I did nothing about it." And then as Coaches, we're like we have no judgment about that. We're like, "Okay, what happened? What's going on? Is it a stress cycle, is something happening? How can we support you?" Then we can trouble shoot it.

Emily Feairs:

Exactly. Yeah. There's not judgment there. And so if anyone is listening and they're like, "This podcast is so great." But they're not even thinking about meeting their needs through enrolling through the MBA, just stop it.

Just enroll, because if what you're wanting is a better marriage, which you probably are if you're





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listening to this podcast, then doing the actual application, by even just enrolling, changes you. It puts it into action in a way that just listening and then going to the questions and doing a few sort of thought exercises just won't give you the depth of change.

And so if you are sitting there thinking that you should be able to do this on your own. You have all the information, it should just work. Know that that's exactly what your leadership brain has taught you as a strategy you're supposed to go around in the world with. You're supposed to be able to do it all and figure it all out on your own, and having support and enrolling in a program like this changes you in so many ways.

It will help you in your leadership. Will help you at home. Will help you in so many ways because you're starting to open up your world into a way in which you can be supported and you aren't just the support for everyone else. And that is fundamentally you meeting your needs on a first most tiniest step forward kind of way.

Maggie Reyes:

I think that is so important and my friend Lacey Sites, I've been her client, she's been my client, and now we're just friends after all of the client thing. And she says, "The more people that you support, the bigger that you are in support of others, if you were a leader of any kind, the more support you need."

So that's why Coaches have Coaches. That's why we practice self-care. That's why we prioritize these things. The more other people we're holding in our energetic space, holding the vision for, whatever that vision is, whether it's a team, a project, a marriage, a family, whatever that is, the more that we need to be supported as well. And I think that's also something we don't mention.





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It's oh I can support all these people, and how am I being supported?

Emily Feairs:

Yeah. Yeah. Because you think of yourself as the supporter and not the one supported, right?

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. And I always think that we inhale and exhale. Nature has baked into us. We don't just go walking around exhaling. But that's what with do when we're not receiving. And so many marriage issues when we distill them down to their essence, it's something that I want to receive that I'm not receiving, whether it's affection, conversation, intimacy, your deepest darkest secrets.

Whatever it may be that we want a thing, it's okay, you want a thing and you're not receiving it right now, but are you open to receiving at all? Then let's open you up completely to receiving and then let's see where your partner meets you in that receiving. And so often I've seen it, and that happens so many times, when there's a foundation of love from the beginning the partner responds in ways that are often delightfully surprising. And so anyway, I could just rif on that all day. So tell us how we can find you. Tell us if we're mesmerized by your charming delightful wisdom, where are the ways we can keep being in that energy.

Emily Feairs:

Well you can come and see my leopard print in real life on Instagram, that's where I hang out the most. So it's @EmilyFeairs. That's E-M-I-L-Y F-E-A-I-R-S. And that is where I give most of my love, my juicy stuff. All of the wisdom is there.





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I also have a website which is my first name and my last name .com. So emilyfeair.com. But really I want to interact with people. I think that is where the messiness and all the juiciness is. So come hangout on Instagram or message me or DM me, I am always up for answering questions live if you want to send me something anonymously.

Maggie Reyes:

I love that so much. So when you listen to this episode, feel free to tag Emily and me on Instagram and tell us what was your favorite takeaway. What was the thing that you loved the most about this episode and we will just be delighted to have fun with you, because pleasure-

Emily Feairs:

So delighted. Yes.

Maggie Reyes:

... Right. So absolutely I love that. And I don't know, Emily can you take a screen tap, because people need to see your leopard situation. We need to-

Emily Feairs:

Absolutely.

Maggie Reyes:

... She's going to take a ... Okay. Thank you everyone for listening. Leadership and love with Emily Feairs. This has been amazing.

Emily Feairs:





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Thank you everyone.

Maggie Reyes:  
Bye everyone.

Emily Feairs:  
Bye.

