



EPISODE 95: HOW TO HANDLE UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS – OVERCOMING GRIDLOCK IN YOUR MARRIAGE

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/95](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/95)

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to the podcast. I'm going to start with some fun things today. So, first of all, I want to call you all something and I want your input. So if you're on Instagram, find me at @themaggiereyes and message me and tell me which one you like.

I like peonies. And I say it peony. I know you can say it more than one way. So I can say, hello, my beautiful peonies or besties? Like we're all besties now. Hello, my besties. Besties or peonies, what do you think?

If you're in Instagram, message me there. If you are subscribed to my emails, which you can do at maggiereyes.com, so that you never miss an episode. Every Monday we send you the email with a link to the audio for the podcast. Just send a reply on one of the emails. Tell me which one you like. I really think it's fun. And I just want to pick something that feels like fun to you and to me. So, peonies or besties, you let me know.

Okay. Next fun thing. This weekend we watched something called the Astrological Guide to Broken Hearts on Netflix. It was six episodes. It was so good, I'm completely obsessed with the show. If you like romcom style shows, I highly recommend it. If you don't like romcoms, stay away.

And as I was watching the show, it was filmed in Italy, so it's an Italian show. We started watching it dubbed in English, and then we actually saw the trailer in Italian and I understood probably 75% of what they were saying, which was kind of fun, but we wanted to understand 100%, so we started watching it in English. And then I told my husband, we should watch it in Spanish because it's closer to Italian.





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So for no reason whatsoever, we watched it in Spanish. It's dubbed in multiple languages. You can pick which one. And so it takes place in Italy. And I was observing how the patriarchy works in the workplace. So the main character in an Astrological Guide to Broken Hearts is like an assistant producer on a TV show and she has all these different men in her lives and different roles in her life.

And she just has to deal with a lot of nonsense from a lot of different directions. And it just reminded me that as women all over the world, if you were socialized a woman, you have gone through so many things, that we have all gone through -- no matter what country we live in, no matter where we are -- the experience of being socialized in a patriarchal industrial culture is so similar no matter where you are.

So all my shout out to just everyone, I love you all. And to all my international listeners, I was looking at one of those charts that had the podcast and where it's downloaded and all those things, and I just want to say a big, big hug obviously to everyone who listens to me in my own home country, United States of America, and to everyone who's listening all over the world.

I just absolutely I'm delighted to know that we're all working together to make our marriages stronger and to create more love in the world. So shout out to all of you.

Okay. What else? When you listen to this episode, enrollment will be open in the next round of The Marriage MBA. That is my six month in depth Coaching and mentoring program, where we have weekly Coaching and teaching calls. We have a private Facebook group for written





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Coaching and support in between our weekly sessions.

And we talk about things like how internalized patriarchy affects your marriage, and boundaries, and communication, and managing stress cycles. And in that program, you decide what vision and values you want to live into in your relationship.

And then we work through six focused months of bringing that vision and those values alive in your marriage. So if you want the details on how to work with me inside The Marriage MBA, you can go to <https://www.maggiereyes.com/group>. And if you're listening to this in November of 2021, you can apply for enrollment for the January cohort right now. Enrollment is open.

And if you're listening in the future, which I love because it feels so sci-fi to me. Hello, person from the future? I am so happy you're listening. And you can still go to that page and see what's coming up next. If you've been thinking about The Marriage MBA, and you want to enroll, definitely go to that page, there'll be an application for you to fill out. There will be a space for you to ask any questions you have, and then we'll be in touch and let you know the next steps.

Okay. Let's dive in. You know I like to go deep into topics on this show. And today is one of those deep topic days. One of the things that people often don't realize, and that I learned from the Gottman Institute's research is that, almost every marriage has unsolvable problems.

So I didn't know it either until I started reading about it. And then of course, I was like, it made so much sense. And we think there's something wrong with us, and then when we have problems, they need to be solved immediately. But because some of them are unsolvable, the way we





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really move forward is to manage them and not solve them. So that is what today's episode is all about. How to handle unsolvable problems and overcome gridlock in your marriage.

This is going to be so useful to you, whether something's going on in your marriage right now, or if it's with a family member, if it's with a coworker or someone that you love, that you're very close to, I think this episode will help you whatever situation you're in when you have a constant, persistent situation that pops up over and over again.

Specifically in marriage, over the past few years, I have Coached Democrats, married to Republicans, spenders married to savers, planners married to last minute adventurers, super verbal women married to super quiet men. Wait, wait, that's me. I'm a super verbal woman married to a relatively quiet man. And yes, I've Coached myself. So I'm putting myself on the list. You get the idea.

Remember that Paula Abdul song, Opposites Attract. They do. They really, really do. And I know that it can be super frustrating when you have opposite parenting styles or political parties or sexual desires.

So, on today's episode, we're going to talk about how to handle those unsolvable problems and overcome gridlock. And if you're not familiar with that term, gridlock, imagine a highway filled with cars where nothing is moving, and that's what happens in a relationship when you disagree on a major thing, it feels like nothing moves.

And so I think it was the Gottman Institute that coined that term of calling that situation in





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a relationship, gridlock. And I think it's such a clear and easy way to think about it. So their research has shown that about 67% of couples have unsolvable problems. That's basically all of us. That's how I like to think about it.

And those are issues that feel persistent, where you feel very spread apart on something like, when one of you wants to live in the city and one of you wants to live on the beach, or one of you is in one political party and one of you is in another, or you have one parenting style and the other person thinks completely differently about some of the issues that come up with parenting things.

So, for me, for example, I think about how I'm quite wordy and my husband is quite reserved. So our communication styles, right, could be very, very different. And that could be very challenging. And if I think about, if I ask my husband, I'll ask him after I record, I should have asked him before, but I'll ask him after, something that could be a perpetual problem is like, I will never be super early for probably anything.

I'll be right on time. I might slide in maybe a minute after. But we've been married for 14 years as I record this particular episode, and that's unlikely to change. Right? He's not going to become wordy and I'm not going to become the early bird. Right?

So think about what it might be for you, what that issue is that keeps coming up where you just feel really stuck. Like you're so diametrically opposed. You're just on opposite ends of whatever spectrum you are in that issue. And as I walk you through some of the ways to think about overcoming gridlock, keep that issue in your mind.





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I think, hopefully, it is my highest intention for this episode, that as we talk through this you might have some ideas on how to approach it by the end of the episode. So, you know I love a good list. Before I was a podcaster I was a blogger, and I have written many listicles in my time. Listicles are those articles that's like, five things to do about this or about that.

So today we're going to do five things to think about and play with for any issue that you feel totally stuck on right now in your relationship. So the very first thing, I should have mentioned it briefly, is to stop trying to solve the problem and look to manage it instead.

Just realizing that it's not something that needs to go away or disappear or be completely handled, just that you can manage it. Now you can move forward with it. So, what do I mean by that? In the case of a couple clients that come to mind that have been Democrats married to Republicans, imagine them trying to convert their partners to their party, like that was an unwinnable war.

So if you're thinking about something going on right now that feels like an unwinnable war, what I'm inviting you to do and what I invited them to do was to stop fighting that war. Just drop all the weapons, just drop them all.

So I happened to be a person who in the past, when I was growing up, when I was a young kid and didn't really know that much about politics, not that I know that much about politics now, but I know enough to vote. I considered myself either a very conservative Democrat or a very liberal Republican. I'm that person who believes we should completely fund the entire military.





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Anything they want, they want a tank, they should have it. And I think we should fund it completely in the same way at home. So veteran services, anything that they need to have support, whether it's mental health support, physical health support, anything that they need.

I think they should have everything that they could ever want. Just like we would do it if it was for spending on an actual, I don't know, device, right? I think we should spend on people the way we spend on devices. That's my thought about that.

But anyway, so I grew up in a family and married into a family that has a very diverse sort of political spectrum. And I've had to navigate that my whole life, not just in recent years, it is becoming so much more polarizing than maybe it has been in the past.

So, because of that, because I've always been surrounded by people who had very different views than I had. When I Coach on this, I come to it with a really deep sense of common ground of asking, what do we agree on? Can we focus on that? And what I find is, when I dissect it or distill things to their essence, we often agree on principles and disagree on the strategies and toxic tactics to execute on the principle.

So when I say stop trying to solve the problem and manage it instead, look for common ground, look for where you agree, look for values and principles instead of strategies and tactics. And once you find something you do agree on, harness it, focus on it, develop it, look for it as often as you can.

So that's in this case, I was giving that example when it comes to politics, but that's really for





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anything. If we're talking about money as a couple, if we're talking about plans or things we want to do for the family, it's like, what do we agree on? And from that place of agreement, how can we, from the things we do agree on, find a resolution that feels like a resolution for both of us. Okay. That's step one.

Step two is, ask yourself the question, what is the middle way? So we've been talking about how we can be on two opposite sides of a position, or two opposite sides of thoughts and feelings around all kinds of things. Right? The extremes. The extremes are why you're listening to the podcast today. I know that you don't listen to a Marriage Coaching podcast if there isn't some extreme in your life or in your relationship right now.

So, from now on when you feel yourself going to an extreme, what I invite you to do is walk back to the middle. Just ask yourself, what is the middle way here in this situation about this thing with this human? And it's such a great question to ask, which also leads into the third thing which is, an invitation to honor each other's dreams or values.

So I often say that there are parts of our partner's world that we don't need to live in. We can just visit. So, for example, my husband doesn't have to watch five hours of Oprah with me, I can just tell him my favorite part. I don't need to play five hours of video games, he can maybe show me one of the clips in the game and tell me why he loves it so much.

We can visit each other's world, but we don't necessarily have to live there. So when they say we can honor each other's delights, the things that light us up without having to adopt our partner's delights as our own, that's the part where we get into a murky territory. When our partner loves





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to do something and then we tag along because, perhaps, internalized thoughts that we have about what we should do and not do, and what the role of a wife should or should not be.

But do we really want to go to that thing? Do we really want to participate? Do we really want to say yes to that? And, first of all, honoring our own delights and passions. Right? And then honoring that our partner can have delights and passions and desires that are different than ours. That is one of the ways to overcome gridlock.

So what I see often, is a partner will have a hobby or an interest, and then there will be judgment or disdain or contempt often for both the thing and for the person. And of course, that is poisoned to a relationship. Contempt is one of the things that if we let it take root, if we let it become like an oak tree and spread its roots in the relationship, it just poisons everything.

So how do we think about contempt differently, or prevent it from happening, or dig out those weeds when they're there? Is we think about honoring that person's delights. We think about, they get to have things they love, I get to have things I love. We think about coming from curiosity instead of judgment.

And we'll link to the Emotional Weight Loss tools in the show notes where I talk about that in depth, around not complaining, not defending, not pretending and not convincing. And that's a whole set of tools that you can dig into if that might be something that can help you.

So you find the place in your heart where you can honor your partner's delight. Can you do that? If you do not want to do that, that's a very different story. You have free choice always, and then





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you can decide, I want to continue to reject my partner and move on.

And I say it almost jarringly to shake you up a little, because I think sometimes we unconsciously reject our partners and don't even notice that we're doing it. So what I challenge you to do, the Life Coach challenge that I give you, is to be all in or all out.

Accepting your partner 100% does not mean agreeing with all their choices. It just means you see that they have agency to make choices. That's it. And you acknowledge that. It doesn't mean you have to be delighted by the choice. It's just like, "Oh, they're human with choices."

And as I go deeper into my own journey of what a feminist is, who am I as a feminist? What does feminism mean to me? I really, I'm exploring some of the things that I teach on a regular basis through this feminist lens. And it's a feminist principle to honor the agency of humans. Right? That's what we want. And that's something we deeply believe in.

And sometimes I think we get amnesia when it comes to honoring some of our partners choices, and I get it too. It happens to me too. I remember a few Christmases ago, I asked my husband to put together some board games. We were going to a Christmas party. And I was doing something and I asked him to do that. And he was very helpful and very kind and did it.

And then he showed me the bag with what he picked. And I was like, "Oh, you picked those?" Right? And it was one of those moments where, he's used to being married to a Life Coach. So he is like, "Hey, isn't this what you Coach your people on?" And he said it like so lovingly and so kindly, God bless him. He was really delightful, how he said it.





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And I said, “You’re absolutely right. It absolutely is. Thank you so much for choosing those things so I didn’t have to do it.” That’s part of the releasing the grip on things. When we want something done, and allowing people to help us is also allowing that their help is not going to look maybe like how we would do it. Right?

So I just share that story to say, I teach this and I get amnesia too. So I want to really normalize that we forget things. We go into our patterns. We have to consciously step out of our patterns. Even thinking about this so much and so often, I still have those moments.

So if you have those moments, I’m inviting you to not judge yourself, to hold yourself with so much loving compassion, we’re all humans in this together just trying to love each other a little bit better. So there’s that I wanted to mention.

And I have an episode called, Fresh starts and Do-overs. There’s never a bad time for a do-over, is also something that I think is so important and will just change your relationship completely when you start practicing that. And that’s what we did in that moment on that Christmas was, I was like, “I’m so sorry. That was not my intention. Can I have a do-over?” And then I was like, “Thank you so much for getting those things.”

So we want to see that dynamic, if it’s happening, bring awareness to it with loving compassion, and then see where that leads us. And I think several of you probably right about now will be asking yourselves and wondering, what if my partner doesn’t honor my choices? What if my partner is judging me all the time or very often, and really being a total jerk about it?





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And I think that it's a great question. For those of you who are asking it in your brain, good job. And I don't have a simple answer for that. Because the ecology of the relationship is a factor. For some of you, you need to literally let go and move on. You've really tried everything you can and there's nothing more for you to do.

For some of you though, you may not have enough data to make a decision. You may have been engaging in behaviors that were less than delightful as well. And both of you together might have some amends to make, and only you know the answer to that.

So, if that's on your mind, if that question came up for you, definitely listen to the episode I did recently called, Deal Breakers, to think more deeply about, if something is really happening persistently in your relationship that isn't delightful to you and you really need to think more deeply about long term decisions, that episode on deal breakers is almost like having a Coaching session with me. I have five questions for you to answer. I go really in depth on things for you to consider and think about. And I know that that will help you if that's on your mind.

So it might be an odd thing that a Marriage Coach that literally helps people have better relationships also helps people end them sometimes. But that is exactly what happens when you get clear. So my philosophy is if you're going to stay with someone, you stay with them to thrive, to make it a five star level awesome relationship that you love being in.

And if that's not the case, then make decisions from a place of grounded, centered love. Collect all the data you need to collect, be in a grounded centered place for whatever you decide.





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Whether it's staying, going, renegotiating things, whatever it is that your next steps in your situation maybe. Okay.

So, to recap, when you want to overcome gridlock, when you want to manage unsolvable problems instead of trying to solve them, the first thing you do is you stop trying to look for the "solution." You stop trying to solve the problem and you look to manage it instead.

Then you look for common ground and milk it as much as you can. You honor each other's dreams, delights, and values, to the extent that you choose to. And the last three principles I teach all the time and they are so important. And the next one is, I call it, always be friending. Friending, like a friend.

So I heard a Business Coach say once about learning a business, that money solves every problem. That kind of stuck in my head. It may or may not be true in business. It can definitely solve a lot of problems. And in marriage or long term relationships, friendship is like currency.

Emotional deposits are like the grease that keep the wheels turning. So friendship may not solve every problem, especially since some of them are unsolvable like we're talking about today, but it helps immensely, immeasurably to confront problems together as friends.

One of my clients right now is going through a very rough time as I record this. And one of my questions for her is, can you be friends? What kind of friends can you be? Let's find out. Engage in all the friendship building that you can and then let's see where that leads you. So if you've been roommates for a while, this idea of friending can feel hard. Right?





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It can just feel like this really tall mountain to climb. And I love to use the analogy of Facebook, because it's so clear and it's something that I love being on. And when you like and comment on people's posts, you see them in your feed more often. But if you haven't liked someone's stuff in a while, and you want to see more of them in your feed, more often, you really have to interact with their posts on purpose, intentionally, before they start coming up automatically. Before the algorithm changes.

So this is how I like to think about always be friending. You have to do it intentionally. You have to do it on purpose and look for the opportunities to engage and connect with each other, which might feel wobbly and uncomfortable. And then it starts becoming automatic. You change the algorithm of your relationship. Right?

And I really invite you to think about it the way I like to describe it, is being sexy besties. Think, having fun and laughing about things, from a place of really enjoying each other's company and valuing each other's point of view, from that place having difficult conversations about anything that feels heavy versus having those conversations from a place of annoyance and disconnection. Completely different outcomes for the same conversation.

The topic could be the same, but depending on how you approach the conversation, the intention that you set about how you want it to go, the outcome could be completely different. And that brings me to the last tool to help you deal with unsolvable problems and really overcome gridlock in your marriage, make them manageable, is to really lean into practicing Soul Centered Communication as often as possible.





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That is a communication framework that I developed just through working with my clients over the years, all the places where I saw people get stuck. And I'll give you a brief summary here. I have a whole podcast episode where I explain in depth what each of the steps are. I will link to that in the show notes. And of course, I also teach it in depth in The Marriage MBA, and we go even deeper into it.

But here's the brief summary. The sole part is to be solution focused. The S in soul stands for solution focused. What does resolution look like? What do you actually want? The O is to be openhearted. Are you open to considering a different point of view with curiosity, without judgment? It's kind of a check in for yourself. If you're not open to doing that, not the best time to have the conversation. Super simple.

Then the U is uncomplicated. And this is one of the most important steps. It stands for, one thing at a time, one thing only, and then the next thing. Of all my clients that I have taught this tool to, the most feedback I get is about how just switching to being uncomplicated, opens up a whole new level of communication and clarity just by sticking to one thing at a time, one thing only, and then the next thing.

Now, that sounds super simple when I'm telling you and we're just hanging out together on the podcast. So when you're listening to me, yeah, uncomplicated, right? But we all know people who can talk in circles and get nowhere. Or can bring up the past, the future, the sideways, the tangents, right? And instead of discussing one thing, like what we will do with this Saturday? Right?





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They want to talk about what we will do every Saturday from now until the end of time. And that just doesn't work. And when I say we all know people, sometimes that person is me. Right? Sometimes I have to remember to be uncomplicated and regroup. So if you take nothing else from today's episode and just lean into one thing at a time, one thing only, and then the next thing, you will see how powerful and how challenging it could be sometimes to stick to just one thing. Okay.

Then the L in soul is being loving with both yourself and your partner. To give love and honor each other equally, in priority, in your brain and in your considerations during the conversation. The idea that you're not above your partner or below your partner. Your partner is not above or below you. You're equally important and your thoughts and feelings and dreams and desires and values, all of those things matter equally.

Then the centered part is, it really doesn't happen inside of a stress cycle. So if you're in fight or flight or freeze or appease, that is the worst time to problem solve or to try to manage any issue. And you want to really start to notice your own reactions and notice your partner's reactions.

You want to start to bring your awareness to when you're feeling a stress cycle open up, or when you see your partner either visibly agitated or visibly withdraw, or just agree to move on, but not really because they agree. Right?

That's the fond response, the appease response, when we're overly agreeable or when someone is overly agreeable with us. If we look for the nuance, if we look for the subtlety, we can start to





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tell they are agreeing because they just want to move on to the next. Right? And when we notice that, then we can do something different instead. So it would not be the best time to try to brainstorm for solutions when either you or your partner is inside of a stress cycle.

So that is the briefest overview, so you get a sense for the steps. Definitely listen to the whole episode on Soul Centered Communication, it will help you so so much. Especially if you have something that you're in gridlock around right now.

Following those steps and really becoming familiar with them and turning to them over and over again, will help that be just a natural way that you communicate and it will help you step out of gridlock. So that is it for today, five ways to approach overcoming gridlock, play with them, see which ones are more useful in different situations and different scenarios. Remember, there are some problems where you will experience the biggest relief when you stop trying to solve them and just manage them instead.

Okay. Thank you so much for being here. I imagine each and every one of you as taking the time to listen so you can pour more love into the world, more love into yourself and into your relationships. And I really believe that this is how we create the world and the relationships that we want to be a part of. One thought, one intention at a time.

I would love to hear your favorite takeaway. Find me on Instagram at [themaggiereyes](https://www.instagram.com/themaggiereyes) or hit reply on any email that I send you if you get my emails. If you don't get my emails, go to maggiereyes.com, sign up to get them, so you will never miss anything.





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And remember, if you're listening to this podcast in November of 2021, go to <https://www.maggiereyes.com/group> to join me in the next round of The Marriage MBA. We are enrolling now for the January cohort. There's a very simple application for you to fill out and we will go from there. Remember, you are one decision away from the marriage you want, and you can make that decision today.

