



EPISODE 99: THE POWER OF GOING FIRST WITH MELISSA PARSONS

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/99](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/99)

Maggie Reyes:

Hello everyone, welcome back to the podcast. I am always excited to get to spend some time together. I just imagine everyone either walking or running errands or doing fun stuff while you're listening to the podcast. I know my husband listens to the podcast while he's cooking, hello honey.

So I'm just so excited to get to spend time with all of you and we have a very special guest today. We have Melissa Parsons here to share about the power of going first and usually when we prepare an episode, I'll do a little introduction before we start recording and I'll review what we're going to talk about.

And as we were doing that with Melissa, she showed me her one page of notes that she has prepared of all the things she wants everyone to know so I'm going to hand over to her and we're just going to let her guide us where she wants us to go for this episode.

But first I just want to mention that Melissa is a Certified Life Coach. She helps humans who identify as women who have brains, manage their brains around all the things that happen in life. So she is a general Life Coach like you would be like a general family physician.

She's a general Life Coach, you can just walk through the door, she can help you, and she used to be and still remains always in her heart a pediatrician and Coaching is what helped her change her profession and follow a new and different dream so we'll talk a little bit about that today as well. So welcome Melissa.

Melissa Parsons:





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Thank you Maggie. Thank you for having me on as a repeat guest. It is an honor, always, to talk to you.

Maggie Reyes:

Thank you for saying yes, thank you for being so open and transparent about your story. So if you haven't heard Melissa's first episode, we'll definitely link to it in the show notes. It's a fun time for everyone, and I'm so happy to have you back and to talk about this idea of the power of going first. So if you want to tell everyone how we had the idea to do this episode a little bit.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. We were talking ... You are my Coach now, and we were talking in one of our last sessions and I was thinking about it and it seems like our sessions now are a lot of me just rooting into the fact that this is my life now and a lot of celebrations and that type of thing.

And we were chatting about how powerful Coaching is and what an amazing investment it is in your human brain and what an amazing investment it was in my marriage at the time and how the lifetime value of Coaching just cannot even be quantified because it affects everything about your life if you're Coaching.

So it's affected my marriage, it's affected my relationship with my kids, it's affected my relationship with my mom and my in-laws and my sister. Like just every relationship, my friends, every relationship that I care about.

So I think we were talking about how you always talk about the power of one and how the systems theory, if you change one thing in the system, that obviously everything downstream





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from that one change changes, and we were talking about how amazing it has been and how much my life has changed since you and I worked together.

Maggie Reyes:

And for you, this idea of going first, did it feel hard when you decided to go first? Did it feel ... Tell us a little bit about ... So this is for everyone sort of listening to us who is dissatisfied in some way with some aspect of their life.

If you're listening to The Marriage Life Coach Podcast, there's probably some area of your marriage that you're dissatisfied with and so it's like this idea of going first but not necessarily doing all the work. That's something that we constantly sort of talk about and have distinctions around, that going first doesn't mean you do everything.

In fact a lot of times we talk about you doing less things and how you manage doing less of the things that either aren't useful, aren't productive, don't help you move forward, and more of the things that do. But the idea that you go first and then your family responds or your partner responds, but in the beginning, it's not necessarily like, "Oh yay. I want to go first. Let's throw a party."

Melissa Parsons:

Right, right, right.

Maggie Reyes:

So tell us a little bit about that.





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Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. I mean John and I had been ... And just so everybody knows, I asked him if there was anything off limits about what I was going to talk to you about and he said absolutely not, go for it and I support you.

So I have an amazing husband, we've already established that and if you ask Maggie, she is definitely #TeamJohn. So we've already established how amazing he is but he and I have been having kind of the same argument over silly stuff for years and we didn't really know how to get out of it. So I was thinking, Maggie, I know you love metaphors.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Melissa Parsons:

And that type of thing, so I was thinking about this yesterday as I was thinking about being interviewed today and it's kind of like going on a hike in a dark forest and we knew where we wanted to go but we just weren't sure how to get there.

Like we knew that we wanted to have a better marriage, we knew that we wanted to enjoy the time that we were spending together, we knew that we wanted to provide a safer environment for our kids to grow up in and provide them with an example of this is what a loving relationship looks like, so we knew that we wanted those things.

But we just didn't know what to do, so what I think of is ... Like we had a compass which was our love for each other, and then we had you as our guide and then there was me, I was in front,





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and I was holding the flashlight and we only needed to see a little bit in front of us to know if we were kind of on the right path and John was willing, he wanted to be there on the hike with me in the forest because he wanted to come where I was going too. And it was just my willingness to be in front and to hold the flashlight and to ask for help from you.

Maggie Reyes:

Oh that is so powerful. I'm there, I'm on the hike with you. I'm there on that mountain. I see the starry night. I love that. Yeah. Yeah.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah, and it's just ... We knew what we wanted, we just didn't know how to get there. We didn't know and that's where you came in and the power of me asking for help. We had talked about going to couples therapy or something like that, but he really wasn't into that. He didn't want to dredge up a bunch of stuff and then have us have to do work and talk about our problems or our things that we were bringing with us into this relationship together.

So I think that he had a bias against therapy, not that there's anything wrong with it but I think that the idea of me doing the heavy lifting with you and him being there to support me and to do the homework that you asked and we talked about it on my first interview with you, how he was definitely a willing participant and asked, "Can I do the homework too? Can I read the books too?"

And so ... And I think he saw the power of Coaching in me before we ever worked with you, because I had worked with Dr. Ubell and the Weight Loss For Doctors Only program and he saw the power of that and he was like, "Okay, if that works so well for you, let's try this for us."





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Maggie Reyes:

I love that so much and let's just spend a moment there around ... Couples therapy can be really, really useful in different contexts and not useful in others. Just like Coaching could be really useful in different contexts and not useful in others.

I always think about it like forks and knives and spoons. Like when you need a spoon, a fork is not the best tool. There's nothing wrong with a fork, there's nothing wrong with a spoon, it's just you need different tools for different things and sometimes they're very complementary, sometimes you're eating something where you have a fork and a knife, and sometimes you have something where you just need a fork.

So I just always want to be really explicit about how I view that. Many of my clients do my programs in whatever format we're Coaching and do couples therapy and many of my clients don't and just do the program, and several people have asked me, "Well, can my husband participate?" Or, "Can my partner come to the calls?"

And the programs that I lead, in your case which is one-on-one but also in my groups, it's really just for the one person, but I always say and I want to say it on the podcast too, you can share everything you're learning with your partner of course.

Now you have to make sure you make it an invitation and not a demand. You have to make sure it's in the land of requests and not in the land of demands, like you have to do this or we must do this together. It's like, "Hey, I learned this thing. I'd love to share it with you," is a very different vibe and energy.





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Melissa Parsons:

Yes.

Maggie Reyes:

So that's pretty important, yeah.

Melissa Parsons:

And that was a learning curve too for me when we worked together. There was one point that I was like, "We must do this," and you were like, "Hold up. I never said that he had to participate," and that was me coming from my thoughts and fears, like if he doesn't participate, I won't get the most out of it and that type of thing and that wasn't really true at all.

Like he could have not participated one little bit, and I could have still had transformation in my relationship. I am grateful that he had chosen to do it too, and then I think one of the biggest things that came from me going first in Coaching with you is that he saw that it was safe, it led ... Me knowing that I could be a better partner and doing the work on our marriage led to him knowing that he also could do work with his one-on-one Coach.

He's since hired a Coach that he works with and has led him to becoming his best version of a husband and a dad in his work at the hospital and that type of thing. So I think that the power of me going first in the Coaching arena has led him to know that it was safe for him to do it too.

Maggie Reyes:

And let's just be clear because I know lots of people will be listening and thinking, "Well my partner would never do that, so if my partner has to also get Coaching, then that's not going to





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work,” or things like that.

Melissa Parsons:
Right.

Maggie Reyes:

So let's be clear that Melissa and I, first of all we worked together originally in 2018. Literally years passed, many adventures, before her husband even had the thought to go on his own journey around his own things that he wanted to explore and get help around and that it's really not necessary. Like you all still make progress into things without that happening for literally four years.

Melissa Parsons:

Yes, yes, yes. Several years, yeah.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. So this ... I know, I always thing, I know somebody listening is asking themselves this question. This answer's for you.

Melissa Parsons:

Well yeah, and honestly, if you had asked me at the time if I thought that he would ever do something like that, I would have said hell no. Like it's just not even a thing, but I think that he saw all the progress that I was making and he was like, “Okay. This might be worth exploring too for myself personally.”





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Maggie Reyes:

And that's one of the things that I think is so important and so powerful is we ask ourselves, "Well how can we create a behavior change?" And sometimes the behavior change is in our perspective and how we receive things and how we process things and sometimes we do want our partners to join us in some thing in our life that does require some modification of behavior on either side, and I always think, "Well make it amazing. Like be the example of how amazing it is to be in this way."

And then you make invitations and you see if your partner wants to rise up to meet you or not, right? So it's like, "Oh, I want to express more gratitude in my marriage. I feel unappreciated." That's something that is a theme that I see a lot. It's like, "Okay." So express appreciation to yourself and express appreciation to your partner. Like become the thing that you desire to some degree and see what happens.

Because every time that I give that exercise which in The Marriage Mindset Makeover day one we talk about appreciation, every time I give that exercise, something moves forward when people do it. It's different in a variety of ways, but I have never given that exercise and not seen some kind of move forward, whether it's in your own perspective in your relationship with your partner and their perspective.

And it's just the idea, this idea of going first to express the thing you want and not the absence of the thing you want, but to bring it in to whatever measure you can to the relationship you're already in, and that example of feeling underappreciated is like, "Well, what is one thing I can appreciate myself for today? What is one thing I can look at my partner no matter how frustrated I may be and acknowledge and celebrate in my partner today?"





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Melissa Parsons:

Yes. I think that that exercise that you gave us, like the daily appreciations that I invited him to participate in, were really powerful for us because we would carve out time and it's time for our appreciations and they were silly by the end because we made the rule that they had to be true and that they couldn't be the same ones over and over and over again. But it just led to us being silly and giggling and that type of thing which is so fun. We needed more of that in our marriage, so ...

Maggie Reyes:

The playfulness, yeah. That's so powerful. I love that so much. So tell us what you put on your notes. We all want to know the magic.

Melissa Parsons:

Okay. So I think that one of the things is that the Coaching, believe it or not, it's weird. It freed up time for us so I was no longer thinking that something was wrong with me. We were no longer spending a lot of time fighting and attempting to control one another, so it really freed up a lot of time for us to do what we really wanted to do and another little thing that ... It's not a little thing, a big thing that happened was that we both stopped drinking.

So the amount of time that that freed up in terms of our evenings and being available to each other and that type of thing, just gave us lots more time together and really starting to do stuff that lit us up and silly stuff like watching Family Feud with our 16-year-old every night. Like we just have so much fun, just laughing at Steve Harvey and the faces that he makes and that type of thing.





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But really it's hard to put into words, just like having all this extra time whereas before, before the Coaching, John used to say that he was more stressed out at home than he was at work. Because we were kind of waiting for an argument to happen or kind of walking on eggshells and that type of thing and knowing that our fuses were short and that type of thing and let's just put out there that he literally saves lives at work.

Maggie Reyes:

Right. He has a very stressful job, yeah.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. Or he is talking people through the hardest hours of their lives, like deciding to let go of a loved one. So to say that his life at home was more stressful than it was at work before, I mean that is so huge, and I think now our home is more of a sanctuary for both of us, and I so much look forward to him coming home and our weekends home together and that type of thing where ... Like we don't have to do anything.

We can just be here and spend time and just sit. We don't even have to say anything, like it's just like ... It's just such a peaceful place that ... And I mean that's not to say, and I mean you and I have talked about this, like arguments still happen and shitty things get said to one another and we're not always acting as this most highest version of ourselves all the time. But we're trying to be that person.

Maggie Reyes:

More often.





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Melissa Parsons:

Yeah, and we know like when stuff happens, it's like, "Okay. We're not back at square one. We just took one little half step back. Like we don't have to make this mean that all of this work that we've done for years is over and we've blown it all up and we have to start all over." It's just there's so much more compassion and less judgment and just way more peace and love here than there used to be, so ...

Maggie Reyes:

Okay. We need to slow that down for a second because there's a bunch of things to unpack there. The idea that you freed up all this time is fascinating to me because one of the things I hear a lot is ... You know when you're Coaching, very often the programs that I run, it's like an hour a week you come to a call, you do a thing, it's like, "Oh, how will I schedule that hour and..." It seems like this huge time commitment sometimes, right?

And it's like, yes, you spend an hour on purpose focusing on this and then you have hours and hours and hours back throughout your whole week and then for the rest of your life eventually, right? Where I always say the fight you don't start is the fight you don't need to recover from.

So just that idea of going first to think about, "Oh, if I don't pick the fight, I don't have to recover from that fight." So we just skip all of the things that we do of the fight itself and then having to make amends and then figuring it out and then unpacking it and all of those things that sometimes are important and we need to do, yeah.

Melissa Parsons:

And then the other thing that you taught me too, this is the converse of that, is that defense is





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the first act of war.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah.

Melissa Parsons:

Right? So if he says something that is “triggering to me”, I get to decide, “Wait, do I want to defend that or do I want to just let that go?”

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Melissa Parsons:

Like not make that mean anything about me whatsoever.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, that’s one of my favorite Byron Katie quotes that has been very profound to me, so I first heard that idea, like defense is the first act of war, from a teacher called Byron Katie, and it’s really one of the reasons that the emotional weight loss tools, the way that I teach it is like no complaining and no defending.

Because when we remove complaining and defending from the relationship, whatever is left is what we actually need to work on. But it’s sort of really, really, really simple but it can be really hard at the same time.

So it’s like simple doesn’t mean easy, it’s just ... It’s clear what we need to do and then it’s like, “Ooh, how do we do that?” Come and come over and join one of my programs and I will help you do that, right?

Melissa Parsons:

Yes.





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Maggie Reyes:

So I love this idea, the extra time, and the things that you do and the peacefulness and the fun and spending time with the family and we have to talk about TV, because I watch TV too and I watch TV with my husband and we make it an activity. It's not a passive experience for us. Nothing wrong with it being a passive experience by the way, you can watch TV however you want.

But I just want to put it out there that we watch To Tell the Truth with Anthony Anderson and we will pause and vote. There's a part in the show called To Tell the Truth where the panel of judges votes for who they think is telling the truth and then they get points and they can win or lose the game.

So we always participate as if we're playing along in the game, and we crack each other up and make jokes and all the things, right? And so it's a way to create connection and to have fun and enjoy the time you spend together, where everything isn't just maintenance of problems, right?

Melissa Parsons:

Right, right right. Yeah, it's funny, we do the same thing with Family Feud. Like we put our hands up as if we're going to hit the buzzer and shout out our answers and then another show that John and I absolutely loved watching together is Ted Lasso.

Maggie Reyes:

Ooh yes.

Melissa Parsons:





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And it was just so good and so profound. I mean we both love football because our son played and just all the metaphors for life and this is a spoiler alert, I don't know if this podcast is going to be released before Christmas, but I got John a Ted Lasso mug that says "Be a goldfish".

Maggie Reyes:
Oh.

Melissa Parsons:
And have that little short memory so that you don't have to be holding onto memories and grudges and that type of thing and I think that that idea of being the goldfish really works well in your marriage too.

Maggie Reyes:
I love that and for everyone listening, if you haven't watched Ted Lasso yet, it's on Apple TV. I think Apple TV costs, I don't know, \$6.00 a month or something.

Melissa Parsons:
So worth it.

Maggie Reyes:
I literally have told my friends, they're like, "Oh, I don't have Apple TV." I'm like, "Go buy it."

Melissa Parsons:
Yes. Do not pass go.





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Maggie Reyes:

Just get it and watch it because it's such a refreshing and very deep. It's sort of very funny but very deep at the same time. My husband and I also watch it together and we have conversations about all kinds of things that they say on the show and do on the show and what is our take on it and things like that.

Maggie Reyes:

So using simple things that we're already doing in order to connect is just a really good use of your time in your relationship. So I'd just invite everyone to think about what are some things you already like doing that you can tweak into becoming a way of connecting, whether it's just talking about a movie after you watch the movie or what were your favorite parts, what did you enjoy, what did you not like.

One of the things that we know from the research from the Gottman Institute is that couples who thrive know each other's interior world and it doesn't mean we have to live in their interior world, we just know their interior world.

So my husband's a gamer and I'm not a gamer, but he tells me when the new video games come out and what games he's excited about and things like that. I'll tell him Brene Brown's new book is out or something that he might not engage with but we're just aware of each other's interests and I think that if you're looking to create more connection which so many of us are, I never want us to overlook the simplest, most accessible ways to do that.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. Yeah, we do it too with dance parties and that type of thing. Like we'll each have an airpod





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in and he'll pick a song and we'll just be silly and dance or whatever and it's usually like fast stuff and we jump up and down and pretend we're at the concert and that type of thing.

Maggie Reyes:
That is so fun.

Melissa Parsons:
We both love music and live music and that type of thing, so ...

Maggie Reyes:
Yeah, it's so powerful. Okay, tell us what else was on your notes.

Melissa Parsons:
Well, I was thinking that I am so glad that he and I did this work on our marriage before COVID because we had so much time together and with our whole family stuck, the time that we didn't plan to have together, and one of the things that you and I worked on was we used to live our lives in anticipation of going on vacation.

Like we would be like, "Let's just get through this next month and then we'll go on vacation and we'll be able to ..." There's vacation John and vacation Melissa, and they used to be much different from at-home John and at-home Melissa but we really have been trying to live into being the vacation, relaxed, more easygoing versions of ourselves and that type of thing and with COVID, we haven't really had much opportunity to go on vacation.

All the trips that we had planned for 2020 of course got canceled and that would have been ... I





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mean it was sad to cancel the trips, don't get me wrong, we wish we had been able to go on all of them, but it just gave us so much more freedom to be at home and to live into those vacation personalities so that we're not living to get to the next vacation.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Melissa Parsons:

Does that make sense?

Maggie Reyes:

That 100% makes sense and I always think about it like Hawaii, like when you go to Hawaii, there's this feeling of aloha, that when you come back from Hawaii, you're just like ... I don't know, I've never met anybody who's come back from Hawaii and didn't want to feel like they were still in Hawaii.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. Especially when you live in Columbus, Ohio.

Maggie Reyes:

Right? Yeah. And so I always think about how do you recreate that aloha feeling, that Hawaii feeling at home because the truth is you're in Hawaii and then you have all of these thoughts about where you are and what you're doing and then you have all these feelings about where you are and what you're doing and then we think we can only have them at a certain latitude and longitude.





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No, it's like you could have those thoughts over here too. Like, "Oh, it's going to be a fun day," or, "It's going to be amazing," or, "What adventure will we have today." So my husband and I will go on errands and we'll be like, "It's going to be a caper. Will we find the light bulb or not? News at eleven." Like we'll just make it so silly. We're looking for a particular light bulb right now that Ikea has discontinued for this bookcase that we have.

Melissa Parsons:
Oh no.

Maggie Reyes:
So it's literally like we may not find the light bulb, what shall we do? New lights for everybody.

Melissa Parsons:
I'm picturing you guys with capes and masks over your eyes and everything, yeah. I love it.

Maggie Reyes:
For the record we don't actually wear capes and masks but we have danced in the middle of the supermarket and fun stuff like that. And with COVID, what has been really interesting for us, we both have situations where we were on a very severe lockdown, a much more severe lockdown than maybe some of our friends or colleagues might have been, and his joke that I find endlessly amusing and accurate is, "We could live on a space station."

Like we spent so much time together and have come out of it ... I mean the pandemic is still ongoing but have come out of that chapter of the last couple of years really ... We could go





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anywhere and we could do anything, and enjoy each other's company and make each other laugh, even when obviously very sad and awful things are happening in the world as they always are in different ways, right?

Melissa Parsons:

Right, right right. Yeah.

Maggie Reyes:

And I think that that is so important. It's like if you were stuck on an island or on a space station with your partner, would you get excited or would you freak out?

Melissa Parsons:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. Exactly.

Maggie Reyes:

And if you freak out, then let's do something about it. Go ahead.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah, no, that's what I was just going to say. Like I want to always look at my hubby as a safe place to fall, a safe place to be, and I certainly always want him to feel that way about me and how can I create that in my own brain so that ... Obviously I can't control his thoughts and feelings but I can be the person that I think will make him feel safe.

Maggie Reyes:

And I think it's not even make him feel safe but can create the conditions that safety can be





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present. So I think about it like if you're throwing a dinner party, you're inviting someone over to your house. Maybe you bake a cake or you have some delicious tea or you have a wonderful meal. But maybe they arrive and they're allergic to that meal.

But they can see the intent that you had to welcome them and to make it feel lovely and so that energy, that thought and feeling combo, which is in the energy that surrounds that invitation is very welcoming, even if they're allergic to something that's in the meal. Even if they can't eat the cake for whatever reason, and I think sometimes we forget that, that we do have influence over our partners.

We are so focused sometimes on controlling that we forget that when we release the control and just focus on the what can I influence here, how can I make it warm and welcoming, and go from there, I think that's just a place to take our brain that can be really, really useful.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. Yeah, I like that idea. Just ... And I think you're right, it is definitely the intent from which it comes. Like you can feel the difference between inviting versus controlling.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah. I think that's so, so important and one of my mentors who I adore, Michele Weiner-Davis says, and I teach all of my clients this ever since I learned it from her, is when you're thinking about your partner and you're feeling disappointed or something's going on that isn't quite right, measure their willingness, not their effectiveness. Are they trying? Did they do their best? Maybe their execution was crap.





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Melissa Parsons:
Yeah yeah yeah.

Maggie Reyes:
Right? And I think about myself. Sometimes I'm doing something with all the best intent and my execution is crap. My husband can tell -

Melissa Parsons:
Yeah, and it just doesn't land.

Maggie Reyes:
That I was there and I was right. So it's like when you measure willingness instead of execution, there's so much more richness there for most people, and if you are a person who is trying to measure willingness instead of execution and you say, "Well their execution is crap but their willingness is zero," then I propose to you that's data you want to have about that relationship. It's like in this area, can you live with zero willingness or in this area is zero willingness not something that's worth investing more of yourself into?

Melissa Parsons:
Right. Right right right right, and knowing that sooner rather than later is a good data point to have.

Maggie Reyes:
Exactly. Exactly, exactly. Tell us more. What else did you make a note of?





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Melissa Parsons:

Let's see. Yeah, I mean I think ... I really think that ... I'm just so proud of the work that I have done and I'm just so happy that he was a willing participant and that he's been willing to do amazing work on himself too. I just think there's just ... This is just, in my estimation, the work that we have done so far is just going to keep compounding.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Melissa Parsons:

And I think a lot of my colleagues and friends and that type of thing, we're all kind of getting to this certain age where our kids are going to be out of the household and we're going to be with our partner and that type of thing, and I'm just so grateful that I know that we are not going to lack things to talk about, we're not going to ...

There's not going to be any of that, "Oh, who are you? Like I don't know you, I don't feel like I know you at all," or, "You're not who I thought you were," or, "Now that we don't have the kids' schedules dictating our lives, now what?" Like there's going to be none of that. We have so many fun plans stated, unstated. I just know that there's not going to be any lack of things to do and wanting to spend time together and that type of thing. So that I think brings a lot of peace -

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Melissa Parsons:





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To my heart. Knowing that no matter we do, we're going to be fine.

Maggie Reyes:

Oh, so that's a great thought. No matter what we do, we're going to be fine. Everyone, just write that down. And the idea if you're worried about something like an emptiness, if you see your kids are growing up, the time is coming, things are changing. The best time to really solidify what you want your next chapter to look like is the moment you realize there's going to be a next chapter. It's like let's get on that now.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah, there's a sequel.

Maggie Reyes:

There's a sequel. What will that be?

Melissa Parsons:

What do we want to write it?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes, yes, absolutely. I think that's so incredibly powerful and there's a fun story that I tell and I just ... Anyone who's ever heard me tell this story with Melissa's name attached to it, I have her permission to tell that story. But this is a fun one that came to mind ...

Tell me if you remember, because I only remember it because it was in a session and it was so vivid to me but let's see if you remember. I had given you this homework to choose your





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husband on purpose and you had to go around all week saying, “I choose you, I choose you, I choose you.” Do you remember that?

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. Oh yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative). I was like, “I choose you even though you leave your socks by the side of the bed every morning.”

Maggie Reyes:

So that was the homework, anyone who wants to take that homework on, go for it. It was very effective for Melissa. And then there was ... Not necessarily an argument, but a discussion of some kind occurred while that was your homework and how I remember it, and tell me if you remember this, was you were talking about this thing very passionately and then you just blurted out, “I choose you,” in the middle of the thing.

Melissa Parsons:

Yes. I do remember it happened in my kitchen.

Maggie Reyes:

I just think -

Melissa Parsons:

I wonder if John would remember. That would be funny.

Maggie Reyes:

I think it's so fun because I remember how disarming that was to whatever you were talking





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about. It was just like, “What do you mean you choose me?” “I choose you even now.”

Melissa Parsons:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, and it’s so powerful because it’s so true, right? I mean we can tell ourselves the story that whatever they’re doing is the source of our unhappiness, but it’s really not.

It’s really the thoughts that we’re thinking about them and I think one of the most powerful things you said to me that I say to my clients all the time now is your thoughts about your relationship with whoever it is is your actual relationship with that person, and I know it’s been said by multiple people but I will attribute it to you, and I’m like, “Okay. I get to choose how I want to think about John. How I want to think about our relationship.”

Like it all can be very intentional and knowing that the thoughts that I was thinking before were very unintentional and just kind of like flapping along in the wind and like the little things that came up, because of our negativity bias, so many of us go around looking for the things that are wrong instead of searching out the things that are right.

So that idea of I choose you, like if I am a sane and rational person, like why am I choosing you in this moment. It has to make sense, so there’s some reason I’m choosing you still after 25 years, and it’s on me to figure that out.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Oh, that’s so good.





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Melissa Parsons:

Right? It's on me to figure out why I'm choosing you. I mean if you ask anybody else, they'll give you a million reasons why they choose John Parsons because he is an amazing human and he does so much for our family and for me and that type of thing and for the community.

I mean he's an amazing human and I'll never forget one of the ... I was complaining about him in one session, I can remember I was parked down at the Alum Creek Dam doing our session because I was on my way home from work and you said to me, "You know Melissa, the only thing I know of your husband is what you have told me, and I think he's an amazing human being based on what you've told me," and I forget what I was even complaining about.

But you were like, "What if you just stopped? Like what if you just let that go and let that be one thing that's wrong with him."

Maggie Reyes:

Yep.

Melissa Parsons:

"And concentrate on these other 57 things that you've told me are amazing about this man," and that was just so powerful for me. Because I was like, "Oh. Like I can choose to let this one thing be wrong with him."

Maggie Reyes:

You can also choose more than one thing.





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Melissa Parsons:
Yeah, right.

Maggie Reyes:
For everyone listening, they're going to be like, "Listen lady. I've got more than one thing and I'm not so sure." And it's like it can be more than one thing, we're all human here.

Melissa Parsons:
Yeah, it can be 99 problems, right?

Maggie Reyes:
Right. Yeah.

Melissa Parsons:
But I think if you are in that thought model of I'm choosing this, I get to, I choose to, I want to, I can instead of I have to, I'm supposed to, all of those things. I don't know. It makes sense.

Maggie Reyes:
It totally makes sense and it's so powerful. I love that. I love that so much. Yes, you can focus on the things that are working and harness those and cultivate those as much as possible and then usually those things will help you get closer.

Melissa Parsons:
Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, so good.





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Maggie Reyes:

Okay. One of the things I love to do is ask a question from The Questions for Couples Journal.

Melissa Parsons:

I can't wait.

Maggie Reyes:

If you're new to the podcast everyone, I wrote a book with 400 questions in it. It is not a book you read, it is a book you do, and it's called The Questions for Couples Journal, we'll put the link in the show notes and one of the things I love to do ... Ooh, Melissa has something to say.

Melissa Parsons:

I have given this as a wedding gift. I have sent it randomly to people and it's a great gift. If you have a newlywed couple or anybody really who wants to get to know their partner better, it's fun.

Maggie Reyes:

Love it so much, so good. Okay, here we go. 20 years from now, when you look back at your relationship with your partner, what would make you consider it a great success?

Melissa Parsons:

Ooh. So I think one of my ultimate goals for our family and our relationship is that we have a house where our kids and at that point their kids will want to gather and be around us. So I think that if we have a home and we have a relationship such that our family wants to come and spend time with us, I will know that we have been successful.





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Maggie Reyes:

That is so beautiful and so powerful, right? When you don't live from obligation or guilt and you're only living by choice, and your choice is I want to spend time with these humans when I can spend time doing anything else on Earth, how beautiful and powerful is that?

Melissa Parsons:

Well yes, and without me putting the obligation on them or the guilt.

Maggie Reyes:

Yes. Yes.

Melissa Parsons:

And just having it be a natural consequence of our behavior that they want to spend time with us.

Maggie Reyes:

Yeah, and let's think about that in our marriages, right? If we just want to spend time with this human that we love because it's so much fun, so amazing, when you're going through a tough time it doesn't feel fun and amazing, but one of the things I think that stops people the most is they think they have to have everything figured out before they can have fun again.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah, that's a BS.

Maggie Reyes:





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That's 100% BS, it's like the way you get to have fun again is you have ... Even if you can only have 1% fun or 2% fun, you do something that brings you closer to the things you enjoy, the things you care about, whatever you want to be doing, while you're still figuring out the rest of whatever else still needs to be figured out. It doesn't mean we sugarcoat or we ignore something that's important that must be addressed. It's just we don't stop for that to be 100% fixed before we enjoy life.

Melissa Parsons:

Yeah. It's kind of a paradox, right?

Maggie Reyes:

Yes.

Melissa Parsons:

I mean for me I think part of the beauty of Coaching and being in the Coaching world and that type of thing and having been Coached and Coaching others is that I know I don't have to have it all figured out and I don't want anyone to come away from this call thinking that John and Melissa Parsons have the perfect relationship.

We do not, it is perfectly imperfect, and we fight and I give him a hard time and he gives me a hard time and sometimes I say something that he made tastes too crockpotty and he gets upset. I mean it's just ... It's not perfect, but just the confidence of knowing that it doesn't have to be perfect and we don't have to have it all figured out in order to do our best and to try. So good.





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Maggie Reyes:

Yes. I think that is so important. I love that. Thank you so much for joining us. How can people find you, Melissa?

Melissa Parsons:

Oh, they can go to my website, it's melissaparsonskoaching.com. They can find me on Facebook, just Melissa Parsons Coaching, they can find me on IG at [Coachmelissaparsonsmid](https://www.instagram.com/coachmelissaparsonsmid). So lots of different ways.

Maggie Reyes:

Love it. Okay. We'll put all those links in the show notes as well. Highly recommend following Melissa. She is awesome.

Melissa Parsons:

Thanks Maggie.

Maggie Reyes:

Thank you for being back and for everyone listening today, what is one way in which you can go first to help yourself create that thing that you want in your life or in your marriage, think about that today and we'll be back next week. Thank you everyone. Bye.

Melissa Parsons:

Bye.

