

Ep #32: Compassionate Communication



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With Your Host

Lori A. Harris

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In this month of love, we're going to talk about communication because communication is essential for all relationships whether it be parental or marital, romantic, platonic, just friends, or professional. In order to be effective in our relationships, we must learn and have a goal to communicate effectively. We're going to talk about today ways to have an effective communication even if it appears the parties are in conflict. Let's get going.

Welcome to the *Unlock Your Life* podcast, a podcast for highly successful visionary women who want more out of life. If you feel that ache of unfulfillment in your soul, you're in the right place sis. Join life mastery consultant Lori A. Harris as she teaches you how to stop living for others and finally put yourself first. Let's dive into today's show.

Welcome back. In this episode, we're talking about love and communication. I call February the month of love because obviously it's the month that houses or presents to us valentines day. While we can be cynical and say that it's just a hallmark holiday, something that's imposed upon us by commercial entities that want us to spend our money, there's another way to look at it.

I'm going to invite you to consider it's a beautiful thing that as we go through the new year and we consider our goals then we go on to consider who do I want to be? How do I want to show up? How am I relating to the people in my life? Am I being loving? Am I representing myself in the way that I hope to? Am I practicing deep listening? How is my communication?

You know that we lost our dear friend and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh just last month, and I've promised you to share a little bit of his teachings and readings each week. So this week this is a portion of a reading or writing that he has relating to compassion.

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He says, “Even a child can look deeply and see that his parents are having difficulties and don’t know how to handle their own pain. They're suffering overflows onto the people around them including especially the ones they love. An understanding of suffering helps anger to be transformed. When compassion is born in your heart, you naturally want to reach out. To help others suffer less.

“Understanding and compassion are not for somebody else to cultivate. They can heal you, increase your happiness. A human being without understanding and compassion isn't a happy being. Without compassion and understanding, you're utterly alone and cut off. You cannot relate to any other human being.”

So to be in relationship with another being means that occasionally there's going to be conflict. Perhaps there’s going to be an official disagreement about what is, what is true, what is right, how I've been treated. How there's been a misstep? There's going to be conflict. As we aspire to be the very best person we can be in our daily living and particularly in our relationships, we need to be prepared for how to handle conflict when they come up.

I am moved by the writing of the poet and philosopher David White who says, “All friendships of any length are based on a continual mutual forgiveness. Without tolerance and mercy, all friendships die.” I love to think about the fact that it’s not unusual for people to have a misstep. It’s not unusual to have something happen between two people relating to one another and being misunderstood or to make a mistake.

It’s a beautiful thing when we get to the place in our practice where we can speak to another person with whom we care about in a loving and compassionate way. It brings about peace not only within ourselves but peace in the world when we can be loving, when we can be compassionate and we can make good assumptions about people regardless of what

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outside appearances may be. When we make an effort to understand rather than judge, we bring about a more peaceful world.

Many people in my community who are listeners in this podcast are people who are engaged in the day to day act of aspiring to be their very best self. Aspiring to be of service. It's important that as you do that that we continue to remind ourselves that even for the people that we hope to serve, that we hope to help, it's important to see these service receivers as whole and complete. Not needing improvement or repair.

If we can come from that point of view, we step to these relationships in equanimity. I think it's important. So it's a good goal to learn how to communicate. We definitely can do that in our relationships.

Sometimes people say you want to learn how to fight fair. Seems like such a hard word. I've never been one to describe my disagreements with anybody as a fault or we're in a fight. That's not something that I would say. We're having a disagreement. We are maybe in an argument, but I'm never going to describe my communications with another person as a fight. Mainly because I want to live a nonviolent life, and that kind of energy would cause too much tumult and upset within my own spirit.

This business about how to have a disagreement in a respectful compassionate way, let's talk about it. So imagine that you're in a disagreement with someone, and you want to communicate with them. It's important because you care about the life of the relationship itself, this small beautiful precious thing between two people and you care about the other person. Yet you have cares about yourself that you want to be cared for and respected. So in this conflict, you've decided that it's important that we have a talk.

Or perhaps it's not something that you can plan ahead, but you notice that feelings are starting to rise and become more heated between the two of

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you. These are things that you can do to keep your relationship guarded and keep it precious. You speak to this person and speak of this person in a way that shows that you love them even if you're in a state of conflict at this particular moment.

So let's imagine that you're going to have a conversation about a conflict or a situation is rising up and becoming heated. I'm reminded of a saying that Reverend Michael of Agape used to say. I suspect he probably isn't the originator of it, but it is a good statement to keep in mind when you're in communication and in conflict. Do you want to be right or do you want to be loved? If you can remember that this communication is with someone that you care about, then you can likely turn down the volume, turn down the heat.

So first of all, when we're having a communication, it's important that we not engage in name calling. Oh that was just stupid, or you'd have to be an idiot if you believe that. No name calling. No judgment about the activity that has led to this disagreement.

So it's important that we learn to be factual and state the facts. So let's pretend that we're having a disagreement about dinner and your partner is late again. So the facts would be that we would meet each evening at 6:30 as a family and have dinner together. You have been late today. You did not arrive at the dinner table at 6:30. In fact, you didn't get to the dinner table until 7:15. I prepared a meal, and I was disappointed that you weren't there on time. It does have an impact on the taste of the food. I wish that you had come when we agreed. Those are the facts.

Now if you can do that without saying a judgment with it feels like you're being really selfish when you do that or you don't care about me or you are just careless. That's a judgement. We can name the activity but not label the activity. Let's just stick to the facts.

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The other thing is we can avoid bringing up the past and not stack and collect transgressions and then bring them up all at one time. See you did this this week, you did it last week, you did it the time that we were going to go to my parents for dinner. You always come late.

Then that brings us to the next point. Don't engage in hyperbole where not only are you stacking incidents, but you overexaggerate. You say, "You always do this. You never do Y." Because that is likely to take the conversation in a direction you don't want to go in. Because then the person to whom you're talking will start scanning their brain for the one time they were on time or the one time they did do it.

It's rare that anyone always does anything or never does anything. Those are extremes on the scale or in polarity. It's unlikely that someone always does it or never goes it. So it's a good thing to avoid saying.

The last thing is no hitting below the belt. Now hitting below the belt is something that we have the potential to do because we're so close to this person we know all the soft spots. We know the soft spots of their belly. We know the things that they care most about.

So if you find yourself in conflict with a person or someone that you love, I invite you to remember this is a special person. This is a special relationship. You're guarding that relationship. You're not going to go beyond and hit below the belt. Not because you don't have the tools in your toolbox to be able to do it, but you're making a conscious decision to be peaceful within your own spirit and not excite violence between you and this other person.

So you can be in conflict without being hurtful. These are the kinds of things that we want to continue to remind ourselves because we don't want to get through this very temporary experience without doing permanent damage and doing permanent harm.

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So I invite you when you find yourself in conflict to remember these few rules. As you talk to the person, remember this is someone that you care about. So as you begin the conversation, you want to remember be factual. Stick to the facts. This is what happened. This is what the agreement was. This is what actually happened. This is where the break occurred. Be factual. Do not engage in name calling. Do not label the person or the incident. Stick to the facts. Avoid engaging in hyperbole of you always or you never because that will also take your conversation off track.

Finally don't bring up the past or hit below the belt. These are things that are difficult to recover from. We're remembering who we want to be and how we want to live in the world. Peace starts within each one of us. It's not something else out there. It starts within ourselves. Be peaceful within yourself and then communicate with the one that you love. Remember that you love them as you're chatting with them and having this discussion about a disappointment that has occurred between you two.

Thank you for listening to this episode of the *Unlock Your Life* podcast. I'm your host Lori A. Harris. If you've enjoyed this episode, please share it with a friend. You can find it by going to loriaharris.com/32. We're on episode 32 y'all. It's a good thing. So thank you for listening. I'll see you next week. Until then remember, it's your life. Make it a great one.

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