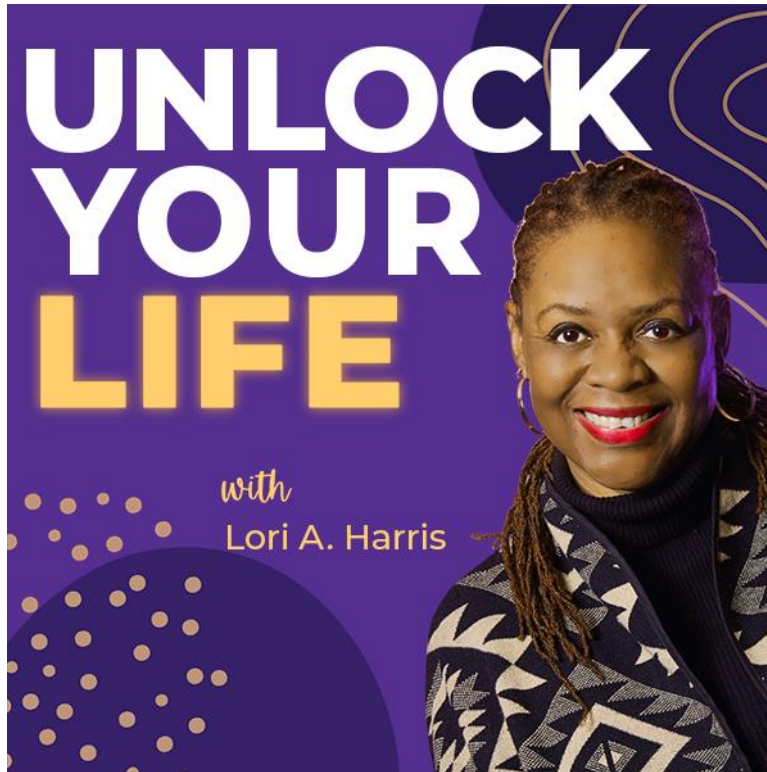


Ep #33: How to Handle Conflict



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lori A. Harris

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So lean in. I'm going to share something with you. Sometimes I make a mistake. Sometimes I get it wrong. I suspect you might get it wrong sometimes too. This is the month of February, the month of love, and we're talking about relationships. All kinds of relationships. Romantic, family, platonic, professional.

If you are dealing with another human being, there's going to be a time when there's a misunderstanding. There's going to come a time when things are not understood as you wanted them to be. Or sometimes you're just going to screw up. You're going to make a mistake.

The essence of being in relationships with other humans, with other human beings is continuing to open up that hard space within ourselves that is willing to forgive, that is willing to be forgiven, and that is willing to seek forgiveness. It can be hard sometimes to admit when we're wrong, but it is important. So I'm going to give you a big of a framework on how to make an apology, and how to have a difficult conversation. It starts with the heart. 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.

So I think you know that last year I was blessed, fortunate, so lucky to acquire a home in the mountains. I'm very excited about it. I love it very much, but it's at a lower elevation. Just enough to have a little bit of a chill on it. Just enough to have a beautiful lake and beautiful trees, but I haven't really given a whole lot of thought to there would be just enough snow.

There was snow in December. There's likely to be snow again this year before spring comes. When we had snow, we had to shovel it. I was just

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kind of marveling at myself that I had purchased a home that required me to deal with snow because it's been a long time since I lived in the snow. The last time I was in the snow in Denver, Colorado, dear god I did not enjoy it. It was Mother's Day weekend, and they had a baseball game. It had been bright and sunny, and then suddenly it snowed six inches. I was like dear god what is this?

But here I am. It's December. I have a house. It's in the mountains, and we've got snow. We weren't really planning on leaving, but we looked out the window and we saw all of our neighbors just out there shoveling. My daughter and I looked at each other and it's like, "You think we should shovel?" And we did. Got out there and shoveled the snow even though we didn't plan to go anywhere. Then it hit me. Oh that's what they mean by that saying shovel while the piles are small.

So I want to talk to you about shoveling while the pile is small when there's conflict between yourself and a beloved. It's human nature we're going to have encounters with people. Sometimes it's going to lead to conflict, disagreement, and sometimes we will misstep.

It's important to develop and build the skill to be able to acknowledge when we've had a mess up and to ask for forgiveness when necessary. Because that's how one, we can be a better human being. A human being here in the world. But also how we can care for and water our relationships. We can make these missteps places where we get stronger, the relationship gets stronger. Either we can use it as fertilizer to build something beautiful.

So we want to make sure that when we have a conflict that we don't turn it into a must be negative, must be bad situation. It's a constructive way of building relationships and strengthening our relationships. So don't allow your relationships and conflicts to go unresolved, but learn and build the muscle to face them head on. So we're going to talk about it, and we're gonna learn how to shovel while the piles are small.

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Now back to my house in the mountains, why would we go out there shoveling when we knew we weren't going to leave the house? The reason why we did it is because we learned pretty quickly that unattended to snow sometimes becomes ice. Then snow comes and falls upon that ice, and it makes it very difficult for clearing. It would have been hard for us to get out of our driveway had we not dealt with it.

The same is true in our relationships. If we are unwilling to address them then our hearts can become hardened and develop ice upon them. It can be hard to melt it away. We can get gross and more difficulties piled upon them. Before you know it, it feels like you're miles and miles away from your beloved. It can be difficult to figure out what to do next.

So we want to remember to shovel while the pile is small. The other thing we want to do is we want to be direct as we address the situation with our counterpart. So the first thing is we're going to be direct, and we're just going to ask for permission. Hey, I know we've been having a hard time for some time now, but I'd love to talk to you about it. When would be a good time? Or conversely, is this a good time?

You want to give the person the opportunity to really receive what you're about to say. Sometimes people just aren't ready and you don't want to descend upon them when it's not a good time, not when they're at work, not when they're taking care of their responsibilities and their mind is elsewhere. Or not when they say, "I'm not ready. I don't want to."

So ask for permission to have the conversation. Then you want to set an intention. Setting the intention could simply be, "I'd love to talk to you and explain what happened." Then go into what you would love to talk about. But make it clear that your intention in having the conversation is so that you can reach a place where you are closer. At the end of the conversation, I'd love for us to be closer.

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Perhaps you won't have it all resolved. Perhaps you won't be back to where you started, but you will have started to have built a bridge where you are closer than you were before you started the conversation. So you can set an intention.

Then you want to make clear that my goal is that our relationship is stronger as a result of having this conversation. It's my intention that you remember and that I communicate to you that I care about you. And this conflict between us matters to me, and I would really love to address it.

Then the next thing you want to do is go into how you see it. Try to stay as direct and less judgmental as possible. So you can describe the facts of the situation in simple statements explaining it from your point of view. Without defensiveness but just that this is what happened. This is the information that I had at the time. This is what I was acting upon. This is how I understood it. I recognize that I may have had it wrong, but this is what I thought was going on.

The next thing you want to do is go into your feelings. Describe your feelings and the circumstance and remember your feelings. Feelings are not what you think. Feelings are emotions. If you can substitute the statement you're about to make with "I felt or I'm feeling" with "I think" then you're not describing a feeling. It's important for you to remember that.

Here's an example with thinking about feelings versus thoughts. I felt sad and angry when you spilled paint on my leather jacket. This is a thought. When you spilt paint on my leather jacket, I felt you didn't care. That's a thought. I thought you didn't care is a more accurate statement because you can't really get inside someone else's brain and describe what they are thinking or feeling. So you can only describe what you think about another person and their behavior.

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You can describe your own feelings, your own feelings about the situation. So when you spilled paint on my leather jacket, I felt sad and angry. I felt disappointed that I would have to throw my jacket out. If you could say when you spilled paint on my leather jacket, you didn't care. You were being careless. Those are thoughts. That is not an accurate way to describe your feelings. This is what we're going for. We're trying to describe our feelings.

Then the next thing we want to do is move into a way that you can see the situation might have been handled differently and what would you like to have going forward. What a new outcome could be to resolve the situation between the two of you.

So continuing with our jacket. In the future when you're working with your paint, I would love if it you would do it in your studio and not bring it out into other parts of the house. Be careful around things that don't belong to you. I really love that leather jacket, and I was deeply disappointed when it was damaged.

So then you're talking about a behavior that you saw in which you would love to do to see a resolution in that. Then perhaps you can move towards making a new agreement between the two of you about a productive way to handle the situation in the future.

Now, further that's kind of going from the point of view of this is something that happened and I was disappointed. However sometimes we have to apologize for things that happened for our own responsibility in it. So if you're going to do that, a great way to start is just start with the facts. This is what happened. This is how it occurred.

So let's switch it. Let's pretend I'm the person who spilled the paint and say describe the situation from my point of view. I was moving about the house. I did not realize that someone else had come in. I didn't know you were

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home. So when I sat it down, I sat down the paint bucket thinking that I was alone and the room was just as I had left it. I didn't realize that your jacket was there.

However, I recognize that we had an agreement that I wouldn't bring paint out of the studio. I'm sorry for the damage that I caused to your jacket. In the future, I will not take paint out of the studio. I will keep it in the studio and keep it away from other places in the household where the possibility of damaging other people's belongings would be. I'll keep it in my space as we agreed.

This is my plan to make sure it doesn't happen again. I have put up a sign saying to myself, "Remember, don't leave the studio with your pain supplies." Now is there anything else you think I could do that could help us to resolve the situation going into the future?

Now that's one way to handle it. Dr. Jenn Mann, she suggests four R's. Her four R's are recognize. Recognize that you made this mistake and take responsibility for it. So you want to show remorse by recognizing that it happened. You want to take responsibility, and then you want to have a plan for going forward. You want to show remorse, take responsibility, recognize the wrongdoing, and then have a plan for going forward. This will help you in the future with being in communication with others.

So what we talked about here is one, how to have a difficult conversation, and two approaches to how we might give or offer an apology. It is not usual in the human experience to have conflict with another human being. It is normal. Don't make it wrong because you've had a conflict. It is part of our experience is how we grow. It's how we grow and improve in our relationship with others and with our selves.

This month continuing to honor the life of Thich Nhat Hanh, I offer you this loving kindness mediation. I used it a lot when we were going through the

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election here in the United States. It helped me to stay solid and stay stable. I hope that this meditation or this loving kindness meditation will be helpful to you.

Thich says, “May I be free from attachment and aversion but not indifferent. May she be free from attachment and aversion but not indifferent. May he be free from attachment and aversion but not indifferent. May they be free from attachment and aversion but not indifferent.”

I love this particular form of the loving kindness meditation because it allows me to consider that I'm not always right, and that another person can have another point of view and it doesn't make them wrong or evil. It allows me to stay inside of my own commitment to be a caring person and to be peaceful here on the Earth, and to provide loving kindness towards my fellow human beings.

It can be difficult navigating the tumultuous times of politics and changing governments and all of that, but I seek to remind myself that everything changes, nothing stays the same. That's okay. That is the nature of life. That is the nature of interacting with other human beings. That is the nature of sharing the planet. It helps me to calm down even though there are times when I am disappointed. Even though there are times when I am sad. I hope to continue to be a caring person and not different, and to be a person that's free from aversion.

Something more than tolerant. I want to be more than tolerant. I want to be loving. I want to stand in love. I want to be a peaceful person so that I can stand being in a world where I don't always agree with everyone.

Thich Nhat Hanh tells us that to love is first of all to accept ourselves as we actually are. Know thyself is the first practice of love. When we practice this, we see the conditions that have caused us to be the way that we are.

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It is easy for us to accept ourselves, including our suffering and our happiness at the same time.

So I've read for you from *No Mud, No Lotus* but Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Art of Transforming Suffering*. I hope that this has been helping to you. I hope that you will remember some of the concepts of how to have a difficult conversation when there appears to be conflict or disappointment between you and someone that you love. Further, I've shared with you a couple of approaches to offering a sincere apology and hope that you will keep them in mind.

So we want to express remorse. We want to recognize our wrongdoing. We want to have a plan for how it won't happen again. We want to take responsibility for our own behavior. Further, we want to be the kind of person that can have an honest conversation, to experience and communicate where we went wrong, and to communicate that we truly do aspire to not make that mistake again. Here is my plan for avoiding it. In having a conversation, we want to shovel while the pile is small. Don't let things build up. Shovel while the pile is small.

Well this is it. This is episode 33 of the *Unlock Your Life* podcast. I appreciate you being here. If you've enjoyed this episode, I hope you will share it with a friend. You can find it at loriaharris.com/33. Wow. This is episode 33. So thank you for listening.

Please if you're enjoying this show, please go to Apple Podcasts, offer your review. If you're so inclined, a five star rating. You can rate, follow, and review the show. This is how we grow the show and get to a larger audience so that we can build a community that is peaceful and loving and stands for peace within ourselves, and then reflect it out into the world. Remember, it's your life. Make it a great one.

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