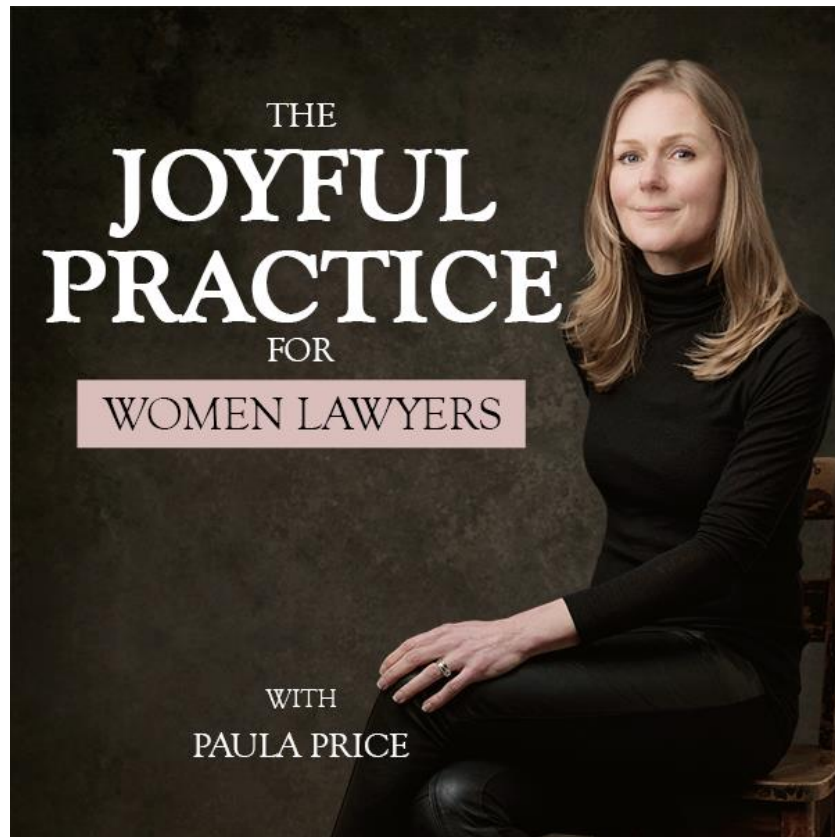


Ep #29: Five Star Relationships for Professional Women with Maggie Reyes



Full Episode Transcript

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Paula Price

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You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast episode number 29.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, lawyer turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. Join me every week for a break from the hustle so we can focus on you, what you truly want, and how you can create it.

If you're over the overwhelm, done with putting out fires, and ready to create a life and practice that brings you more joy, you're in the right place. Ready for today's episode? Let's dive in.

Hello my friends. Welcome back to the podcast. I hope you're all having an incredible week, and I'm so glad you're here today. In this week's podcast episode, I interview the extraordinary Maggie Reyes. Maggie is a marriage coach who specializes in helping high achieving women create better marriages. Whether you're in a marriage or not, I know you're going to learn so much from today's episode and you are going to love Maggie as much as I do. I know you're all excited to hear from here so let's dive in.

Paula: Hi everybody and welcome back to the podcast. I am so excited to be introducing a very special guest. Her name is Maggie Reyes. She is an amazing coach. She works with high achieving women to help them create better marriages. I'm so excited to be having her join us here today.

I first found Maggie through her podcast, *The Marriage Life Coach Podcast*. She is truly amazing. I was drawn to her work because she talks about all the different topics that come up in relationships.

Having listened to Maggie for some time now, I know that she is a fan of Oprah Winfrey. So what came to mind for me is she is kind of like the

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Oprah of marriage coaching. So if you have a topic that's on your mind or something you've been wondering about, you can literally find a podcast on any of those topics if you go to her. So I'm so delighted to have her here today. Maggie, welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much for being here.

Maggie: Okay thank you for that presentation. I am so excited to be here. Hello everyone. We're going to have so much fun today. To be called the Oprah of anything is amazing. So I am just filled with so much joy to get to share some time with you and talk about healthy relationships.

Paula: So amazing Maggie and thank you so much. I must tell you now that you're here that you've had such an impact on me and the way that I try to show up in my relationships. For those of you who are listening, I've joined her marriage makeover program. I had the benefit of being coached by her the other day. It was so impactful. I think she's just such an amazing coach.

I'm excited because I think for all of you who are listening to the podcast, I know that you are high achieving women. I know from you and from the clients that I work with that your professional work isn't something that you do in isolation. It's all connect. The challenges that come up interestingly in your marriage relationships, in your professional relationships, some of them really overlap. So I think the work that Maggie does not only applies to the relationship that you have with your partner but also with relation to those that you may encounter in your professional context.

Another thing about Maggie is that she used to work in a law firm. So she's got an HR background. She knows us very well. I can see her smiling. You don't have the benefit of seeing her gorgeous smiling face, but maybe you can tell us a bit about that Maggie. What was your background before you decide to get into coach?

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Maggie: Sure, absolutely. So I hear that there's a lot of lawyers listening to this podcast. One of my besties is a lawyer too. I actually worked my way up. I started as a receptionist back in the day. I think I was 20 or 21 something. Very young. I left that firm being the training director for—I used to train lawyers which I used to say, and I still say, is like herding cats.

I had a great time. It was such an education in my life just being around really thoughtful people. I remember we would have conversations about things like ethics and what was the right thing to do and the best thing to do? Really bringing so much thoughtfulness to the different things we worked on. We were a corporate law firm. So we did things like trademark registrations and contracts and corporations and all that kind of cooperate law kind of stuff.

I remember when I left and I went into the cruise industry and I still was in HR but in the cruise industry instead. We didn't just sit around having conversations about ethics and what was best and what wasn't. I remember thinking, "Oh this is so interesting." Right? The lens through which we see the world determines how we approach the situation of our work or of our life or anything like that.

So hello to all the lawyers. Thank you helping us all have a better life. I come from a family that came to this country because of communism. I think that the law helps us. Like sometimes the laws need to be changed, right, but the preservation of the law and the order and the evolution of the law. Everyone who's involved in creating more just laws. It's like this is how we change the world.

So I just want to say to whatever specialty you have within the law, thank you for doing what you do. We need you. You are how democracy persists. So that was my little soapbox moment right there.

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Paula: Well I love it. Thank you so much Maggie. I'd love to know more about the work that you do because your niche is working with high achieving women. I imagine you came across some of them while you were working with lawyers. Can you tell us more about what you do?

Maggie: Yeah, absolutely. So I am a life coach who only work with the individual. Usually I say the human who identifies as a woman, whoever has been socialized as a woman in the relationship. I help them when they want to have a better marriage and maybe sometimes their partner may not want to go to something like a counselor or workshop or something like that. But they still have something they want to do to improve their relationship.

I really look at it through this lens around we have the power to create the life we want, the career we want, the relationships we want. Why would we wait around based on somebody's mood, what side of the bed they woke up that day, whatever things are going on for them. Why would we wait around for them instead of taking command like we do in so many other areas of our life around what we want to experience and then taking positive action in that direction.

So I have a lot of facts about—Especially thinking about the history of marriage and how in so many societies, women were considered property. So let's take this idea that we were once property in this thing that we call marriage and let's own it, right. Let's become owners of our own experience and relationship to our partners.

So what I do now is I do it in a group program. I've done a lot of one-on-one work as well. But I help one partner be the change they want to see in the world or in their relationship and come to their relationship with a new perspective, with a fresh sort of outlook on what they want to create. The fundamental sort of theory or hypothesis that my work is based on is called

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systems theory. Basically when one element of a system changes, the other elements in that system respond to that change.

To give you kind of a vivid example, the person who's the first person who goes to college in their family and then everyone else goes to college in their family. Or the person who like broke the four minute mile, and now a bunch of people can break the four minute mile.

If you think about your offices when we used to go to go work in pre-pandemic days, right. Somebody would welcome you and say, "Welcome to the office and have donuts that day. Everybody's vibe would just shift." Or somebody says, "There's bad news. There's a meeting in five minutes. It's an all hands meeting." I used to hate those, right?

It's like one person doing one thing can have such an impact. So what if that was a focus really directed impact on the relationship that you want to have. That's my approach in a nutshell.

Paula: I love it, Maggie. It's so impactful. One of the things that I think our listeners would love to hear is you work in such an interesting environment. Because for most of us, our marriages are something we live out in private. We may share bits and pieces of it. We may see somebody's Facebook reel where it's all, "Here are our photos that we have in the beautiful autumn park with the changing leaves and everyone's smiling."

So we don't really know what happens in other people's marriages. Then when something isn't perfect, we think that something's gone wrong or there's something that's unique about our relationship. What do you find are some of the challenges that are common among the people that come to you for help working through their challenges?

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Maggie: I think that in so many ways, it's similar to what you talk about on this podcast all the time and the clients that you help in their career where it's like we have this cultural narrative that says I did the thing. I should feel amazing, right. Whether it's making partner or whatever it is in your career. Then you're doing the thing and it does not feel amazing.

It's like, "Oh, I'm married now. We've met all the goals. We've done all the things we said we were going to do. What's happening?" So there's a variety of issues, and I'll give you a couple of examples, but it's that underlying feeling of why doesn't this feel the way I thought it would? Is that okay? Is it not okay? Do I need to change something?

In terms of specific things, sometimes it's a communication challenge. Sometimes it's arguing. Sometimes it's no communication at all. So sometimes it can be heightened communication and sometimes it can be none in terms of communication. Sometimes it can be what I call a new term that I have coined. I haven't shared it yet. So it's special for you Paula. It's a connection deficit.

So a connection deficit is that there's some way that you want to be connected that you aren't connected right now. So for some people it's intellectual, with communication, with emotions, with sex, with money. There's some place we can isolate in your relationship where there's a deficit of connection, and we want to not be in a deficit. We want to be in a surplus, right. That's what we all want.

So the variety of things it can be really for each person, it's going to be slightly different. There's usually this underlying feeling of, "I don't think it's supposed to feel this way. What are the others way it can feel?" So that's one.

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Then I would say also a lack of the cultivation of the friendship and the relationship where you have roommates. You're sort of functional. You're sort of getting things done, but the enjoyment of each other's company, the delight in each other's presence that you had when you first got together. If you imagine it like a dimmer, like a light on a dimmer, there's an ember. There's something there, but it's not as brightly lit as it can be.

Some of these different ways or things like I mentioned like communication or sex or this connection deficit are the ways that that ember is kind of like, "Wait, how do we get this to brightly lit?" That's what we work on in coaching.

Paula: It's so fascinating. So I had the benefit of being coached by Maggie in one of the sessions. The thing that I brought to you Maggie was sometimes evening get really crazy. So it's not just the kids and my husband. It's this dynamic is overwhelming. I do not show up as the mother or the partner I want to show up as. I get grumpy. I withdraw. Whatever.

So you helped me really come to a place where I was able to find a very simple strategy that I could do before going to get the kids in the afternoon to set myself up for a more successful evening. Since we had that coaching session, I have implemented it not all the time. I notice when I do implement it, I have a much more smooth evening relative to the evenings where I don't put that strategy into play. So a big part of what I took away from that was the importance of self-care.

Maggie: Yes.

Paula: And how that can make such a big difference in how you show up in your relationship. So can you talk a little bit about the roles that self-care plays in your marriage relationship?

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Maggie: Absolutely. I love that you mentioned that that it was like a strategy for how you want to show up. So a couple things before we dive into self-care itself. If we're socialized as a woman, we also have a lot of cultural narratives about what a wife should be, what a mom should be what are all the things that we should do.

I think that part of the next evolution of what marriage is or what long term partnership can be is questioning all of it, right? We take on a mental load, an emotional load, a bunch of responsibility because we think we're supposed to for a variety of reasons. One of the things we definitely do is just question. It's kind of like the same in your legal career. "Oh I want to make partner. Well, why? Do I want to work that many hours? What would partnership look like if I want to reinvent what a partner is?" Or something like that right.

We're in a stage, I think, of womanhood where we get to question and change things and move things forward, and that's part of it. So for what self-care looks like, I think a lot of people think that self-care is getting a massage or getting your nails done or something like that.

To me, self-care first of all is going to be different for each person. Can sometimes include personal grooming and things like that. Very often it can talk with self-talk. It can start with not berating ourselves when we miss a day on our intention that we set. It can start with not overscheduling ourselves, not overcommitting ourselves.

Self-care is being in relationship with yourself as if you cared about yourself. If you cared about yourself, how would you work? What would you commit to? What would you say yes to? What would you say no to? What would you eat? When would you go to bed? When would you wake up?

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So to me, self-care is such a deep... It's simple, right? It can be very simple. It can be as simple as setting an intention when you're going to pick up the kids. It doesn't have to be complicated, but it can be a very deep relationship with yourself. Which most people who come to me want to have a deeper relationship with their partner.

What I often say well if you want a deeper more intimate more connected relationship with your partner, let's start with having a deeper more intimate connection with yourself. You get to practice. You get to practice. You get to see what all that's like, and then you get to take that to your relationship with your partner.

Paula: I love that, Maggie. I mean I think it's so true. I see that and I hear that in when you're talking in your podcast and when I'm listening to the gold that you're sharing about relationships. Really, it's starting with the relationship that you have with yourself.

I love how you've explained self-care in a way that is something that you can practice. It doesn't have to be reserved for a trip to the spa or a vacation with your spouse or your girlfriends or whoever. It's not something that is separate from the life that you live. So finding ways to build that in is something that's not only desirable but it's totally doable. So thank you for giving that perspective.

Maggie: Yeah, absolutely.

Paula: One of the topics that we talked about which I love is this idea of perfectionism. I know a lot of my listeners can relate to having tendencies, not always, but to tend to perfectionism. Do you see that in your clients? How might professional show up in a marriage? How might it impact a marriage?

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Maggie: I think it impacts it in a lot of ways. What's in your personal experience for yourself, your expectations for yourself, and your expectations for your partner. So what is perfectionism? What is it? It's the desire to be in some "perfect" state. To do things the right way instead of the wrong way, right.

The idea of a right way and a wrong way is really sociologically speaking something that exists in a colonized patriarchal society. The idea that there's only one right way, that's the way, and everything else is the wrong way is not something we have to subscribe to. But in so many pieces of our society, we get these messages over and over again that that is the only way it can be as opposed to we can create a life that includes so many things. There's more than one way to get there. More than one way it can be amazing.

So perfectionism is like this idea that if we get it perfect, we are somehow worthy or safe or okay. It is very much a coping mechanism for something. Very often working with a coach like you or working with a coach like me, we try to figure out what is it a coping mechanism? To get to the root cause to then loosen the grip of perfectionism on what's going on. So that's one way that I look at it. It's always sort of a symptom of something else. That something else when we solve for that softens how that symptom shows up.

One way it sort of drives a wedge in marriages is when we have an idea of what our partner should be doing at any given moment. When they're not doing that, they're not meeting our perfectionism ideal of what it should be. Then we get mad. We get angry. We get bitter. We get all these different things that we get. And in that way when we don't pause to question why are we invested in that? Why does that matter? What am I making that mean? That action that they're taking or the non-action that they're taking. When we get curious about it, we can sort of loosen the grip on it a little.

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I'm curious how it shows up with your clients. Like what is one thing that you see where perfectionism just knocks on the door all the time. What do you see?

Paula: I will answer that, but I just wanted to highlight, Maggie, what you just said. It's that pause and then asking yourself that question. Like number one, does this thing even matter? What am I making it mean? Approaching that with curiosity instead of self-judgement I think or judging somebody else.

To me, that's ringing so true in the context of relationships, in the context of work in terms of perfectionism. I mean it shows up in all sorts of ways. I think where perfectionism shows up quite commonly is people talking themselves out of doing things out of fear that they're not going to do it properly.

I think also my own experience with perfectionism is I think sometimes we hold ourselves to these unrealistic standards. Then in turn hold others to unrealistic standards. Then sometimes the communication breaks down a little bit, right. It's because we're all holding ourselves to these super high standards. There's no room for the real relationship, right?

It's like well I should be acting this way. I should be acting this way. I should be the perfect parent, the perfect partner, the perfect wife, the perfect whatever. So it deprives you of experiencing what really is going on and appreciating that for what it is instead of looking to that gap between what's currently going on versus what you think should be going on.

Maggie: I love that you said this. Because when we think about lawyers or any profession where it literally does matter if you're right or wrong. Like a person, their liberty could be curtailed. Their business could end. All kinds of consequences that are involved in whatever you're doing in the law.

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It's like we have this hat that says right and wrong really, really, really matters over here. I must get it right. I can't make mistakes. Mistakes can cost people their livelihood or all kinds of things. Then we go home and we need to be right about whether we play Monopoly or Uno after Thanksgiving, right. We take it home.

What I want to say is because I work with so many sort of STEM related engineers and doctors and lawyers. I see that it's like it's so useful in this context. Like if you're in a courtroom or you're writing a proposal or agreement or whatever it is you're doing, it is true in this context. We don't want to ignore it. Yes, triple check your work 100%. If you want to go take a dancing class and learn the tango or something, you're allowed to make mistakes in these other contexts. I think that's what we forget. What do you think of that?

Paula: I love that. I would add to that it's not only just sort of seeing the mistakes. I think particularly among lawyers and other professionals as well. I love how you set that up. It's like there's that goal that we're aiming for. It's the right or the wrong, and then there's the gap, right.

We talk about the negativity bias among lawyers and how it's very high among lawyers because lawyers are essentially rewarded for spotting the problems, right. Whether it's a risk in the contract or a risk in something that's gone wrong. The type in the email. You get rewarded for it. So in a professional context, seeing the gaps, seeing the things that are wrong, it magnifies that.

So not only are you in a situation where in real life the relationships not going to be perfect, but the gap between where you are and the notion of perfect, it feels bigger. You see it bigger because that's what you're trained to look for.

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Maggie: Yes.

Paula: So as you said, you're not wanting to take the same approach or the same skillset that you have in your professional work and apply that to your relationships because you're not going to get the results that you want.

Maggie: Okay I have two lawyer things to share based on that. So one of them is this is actually something that I tell my clients from any background, but you lawyers will appreciate this. Because I used to work in a firm that did a lot of contracts and contract law, we would talk about definitions. So you know in any agreement, the first thing we put is “for the purposes of this agreement, we mean this here” right?

I invite my clients to think about that in their marriages and their relationships and their agreements with their people. What do you mean by doing this? What do I mean by doing this? Just a simple act of putting some definitions really helps create some context. I know all of you are very experienced at doing that. So that is something you can take over, right.

There's the idea of the context. In this context, this thing may not be appropriate, but in this other context if we have a definition it may be appropriate or not here. So just invite you to play with the idea of where is there some place in your life where some definitions might be useful. That might be helpful.

Here's a place to zero it in on. Especially in any relationship where you are perpetually disappointed by something, what is a definition that hasn't been established. Because if you're disappointed, that means your definition and the other person's definition is not the same.

Paula: I love this, Maggie. I'm totally stealing what you just said.

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Maggie: Do it.

Paula: In the work that I do with my clients because I think for each of us, and I love language just like you. I love definitions. Beyond just the definition that you find in the dictionary, and I know you have a bunch of dictionaries at home. Because you've mentioned it somewhere.

Maggie: I do.

Paula: So I'm imagining you with all your books. I think for each of us, we define things differently. So take success for example. Success for one person is going to be defined completely differently for somebody else. I think your idea of drawing the analogy to a contract. You're absolutely right. That's the first thing you do. You agree on a set of defined terms and then you operate within that definition. As we all know litigators and solicitors, the definition is critical to what the meaning of that instrument really is.

So I love how you've drawn that analogy, and I think that's so true. We get to look at the words that we're using as symbolic of something, right. It means something to us, and we each get to create what that definition is. In a relationship, having a common language so that you're both on the same page when it comes to definitions. So I really love that. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Maggie: Yeah, my pleasure.

Paula: Thank you in advance for now the future when we talk about that because it's such a powerful way to describe it.

Maggie: Oh don't apologize. You absolutely talk about that all you want. Like the more that we get more clear, the more that we all have better relationships. This is how we change the world. I am all about it.

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Paula: I love it. I love it. Maggie, this brings me to our next question which is you talk about the power of one. You mentioned that while we were sort of a little bit earlier in this interview. One of the things that, I think it was in one of your lessons where sometimes people will say, "Well, why should I be the one who does all the work in my relationship?" Right?

So if you've got one partner who is working with you who is trying to figure out how to approach their relationship in a way that aligns with what they want, who they want to be. Maybe you can tell us a little bit more about what you mean by the power of one. Maybe address that question. Like why should I be the one to go, and I'm using air quotes here's. Why should I be the one to do the work? You know?

Maggie: Yes, absolutely. So that is literally like I get that question all the time. It really took me a while really sitting with all the different scenarios and all the different things I've seen to really come to land in a place where I have my own clarity around it. Because I always thought it was useful and I thought it was good, but I was like but why is it good?

Here's where I landed. The place where I teach this in more depth is inside the Marriage Mindset Makeover. One of the days I just do a whole little mini workshop on this. Here's the gist of it, which is not that you do all the work. It's that you go first. That is the distinction that I'd love everyone to take with them. It's not that you do everything.

In fact, a lot of the coaching that I do is around stopping doing things. When you're over functioning and when you're overcommitted and overscheduling yourself, a lot of the work that we do is ask, "Well why are you doing all these things? What needs to be removed? How do we approach that?"

So it's not really about doing more things. It's about questioning that you're doing the things that really matter to you. You go first in that questioning

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and you go first in maybe apologizing for something or asking for a definition for something. I'll give you an example just of what does this mean I go first?

So one of the things that almost any marriage coach, counselor, therapist, anybody who teaches anything marriage related. Almost all of us will talk about do overs because they're very useful and they're very powerful and we all recommend them. So a do over is just like, "Hey, this wasn't how I wanted to show up today. Can I try that again? Like welcome home. I'm happy to see you." Or you're in the middle of an argument and you're like, "Hold on. This isn't who I want to be. I'm actually honored that you're concerned about this, but this also concerns me."

Like the idea of a do over is really just the idea of oh wait, was I conscious in my communication and connection with this person? Or was I sort of going on my default programming and I want to become more conscious? So a do over is super simple. You literally just say, "Hey, let me try that again." Let's do a take two on whatever it is.

So I taught that to one of my clients years ago. We were coaching, and the next week she came. We kept on talking about different things. A few weeks later she says, "You know my husband walked through the door and he didn't immediately greet me. He kind of went and did his own thing. Then he stopped himself a few minutes later and said, 'Can I do that redo thing that you do sometimes? I'm happy to see you. I'm happy you're here.'"

It was so hilarious because she had been doing this for months where she would be like, "This is not who I want to be. Let me show up differently." She told him openly, "I'm working on this thing. I want to be more patient. I noticed I wasn't more patient." Then he saw that modeled for him. Then he responded, right? This is the core of you go first.

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Now for all our lovely lawyers listening, I want you to think about your own profession. Being a law clerk is often very involved. Clerking for someone, learning from that person. So I used to work, as we mentioned before, in human resources. I've actually thought about this from the human resources angle. So Paula, tell me what you think about this.

For millennia until modern industrial age, the way we learned things was by apprenticeship. If you wanted to become the blacksmith or the baker, you followed the blacksmith or the baker around. You saw what they did, and then you did the things, right. This is how humans are wired to learn through mimicry, through imitation, through watching someone do a thing and then doing that thing.

So even to this day when you go and clerk, you go and do the research. You learn to think in a critical thinking elevated way, and then you take that elevated thinking to whatever you're doing to do. So this is really the same idea. They're clerking for you. It's the same idea where you bring your elevated thinking to your relationship. Then what we want to see is how do they respond?

In so many cases when there's a foundation of love, there's a reason you got together in the first place. Partners respond surprisingly well. They actually are interested in the thing. They'll do what my client that I just mentioned. They'll be like, "Can I do the things that you do?" They won't have a name for it. They won't have read five books about it. They won't have listened to 10 of my podcasts. They'll just say, "I want to do that thing that you're doing because I like it when we do that."

So that is really when I say you go first. We have all this sort of evidence of how does that work and what happens when I go first. If your partner doesn't respond. If you go for three months and you're like all your best loving self, you have channeled your inner Oprah, you're like there with all

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the things, and they don't respond. I say that's data we want to have. Now we can make decisions based on that. But still the reason we do relationship work in the first place is who we want to be in the world, not for the person's response. So that's it.

Paula: It is so good Maggie. It is so good. I love what you just said. It's like who we want to be in the world. I love how you described this as an apprenticeship. I think we know that intuitively on some level. I know as a parent, that's something that I remember another parent saying that to me. That really it's how you model that is most important. I mean you can tell your children that they should do things a certain way and eat your broccoli, but if you're not eating your broccoli then really what kind of model are you showing them?

To then take that and take that one step further and say in your romantic relationship where you may not see yourself as having an apprentice, as it were, that you can model the behavior that you are trying to introduce the way you want to show up. I think it also is a model for how we want to be treated, going back to that self-care point. Caring for ourselves, it allows us to care in that same way for others. When we model that self-care in a sense, I think we're also modeling for others how we want to be treated.

Maggie: Yes.

Paula: So I think there's so many different layers to it. Thank you, Maggie.

Maggie: Yeah, yeah. My pleasure. Now one nuance that I want to add because I think especially when you're lawyers and your job is to look for nuance, right. What's the loophole or what's the thing? Here's something I want to add. This is a fun example. It's meant to be playful and fun. This is not meant, I'm being really explicit, to create a power differential where you're clerking for me and you're my apprentice. This is not the point.

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Paula: Yeah.

Maggie: Some of you are very literal. My literal people who are listening right now. This is not the point. My philosophy and the approach that I take is to have a collaborative relationship of equals, right? So we're equally as brilliant, as amazing. We have equal capability for love and compassion and all these things. I'm just happening to do it first in this case. Then my partner can follow me or not.

So I want to just make sure because as I was saying, it's meant in this spirit of playfulness and for you to have fun with it if you want to experiment with some of the things we're talking about. It's not meant to create a power differential in the relationship, which is actually something that I think is not useful that I don't recommend that we do.

And the way that I say it is if you ever feel like you're a mom and you have a child plus your partner, that is not useful. We want to eliminate that immediately. We want to question all the ways that that was created and then we want to do different things in the face of that moving forward. So I just wanted to add that nuance for my literal people. Very important.

Paula: Beautiful. Thank you so much for clarifying that, Maggie. There was another concept that you came up with, which I love, which is this notion of emotional leadership. So can you tell us a little bit more about that because I think it really ties in nicely to what we're talking about here.

Maggie: Yeah absolutely. So I always will say become the emotional leader in your relationship. Think about what is a leader? A leader is a person who influences people into action. If we wanted to distill it to its core, a leader is a person who influences, guides, helps, maybe sets a vision for something and has a vision for something, right?

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So what we often do is we'll often be in a relationship where our partner, for whatever reason, which we can explore on another episode someday. For whatever reason, their either not equipped, not able, not willing to have the vision or execute on the thing. They're very open and amenable to doing the thing.

So if I told my husband I want to have a date night every 12th day of the month or something, he would be like, "Great, that sounds like fun. Let's do it." He may never be the person to suggest that. If I don't take leadership over the thing that I want to create or the vision I want to implement, the life I want to live and I'm just waiting for him to come up with the idea, then that's a recipe for failure and disaster for me.

So my invitation is become the emotional leader in your relationship from the point of view of influencing and guiding in the direction you want to go. The best leaders, I think, are practice servant leadership. How do I help this other person on my team or in my company get the thing that they want, and then I get the thing that I want?

This isn't so far away from just like how do I help my partner just have their best life? This is the person I love most in the world. Why wouldn't I want them to have their best life? Then how do I help me have my best life? I'm not not having my best life either, which is something that we do is we prioritize whatever it is that they want and then resent that we're not pursuing what we want. That is not emotional leadership. Emotional leadership is like we all get the things that matter the most to us.

So that's how I would describe it. But again with that nuance of it's not meant to be a power differential. I would think about it maybe like a sports team. So in baseball we have the pitcher and we have the hitter. Each of those people has different skills. They are both essential to winning the game. One of them is not better than another.

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Imagine that you're in practice and you're practicing doing all your hits with the pitcher that's on your team, but you never tell them I really need to practice you throwing me this particular kind of ball because that's the one I always miss. That's emotional leadership. Let me tell you the thing that would help me the most so we can win this game as equals. Does that make sense?

Paula: It totally does. It totally does. What I love about this is going back to the point that you were talking about earlier about going first, for example isn't about... I mean on some level, it's this apprenticeship, but it's not that there's a power differential. What I take from this emotional leadership is actually something that's quite a bit deeper than that. It's actually being more vulnerable, right? To actually go and ask for the thing that you want. Or in the case of modeling, for example, if you're going to do something that is hard for you to do, I think you're really putting yourself out there as a partner because you're allowing yourself to be vulnerable. So that, I think, is so powerful in deepening that relationship that you have, in letting your partner see what it is that you really need.

Maggie: Again thinking about our lawyers listening to us now. Vulnerability in the courtroom or in a negotiation or something like that is usually not the thing that you're practicing all week long at work. So to go and practice that at home, it's like it takes a moment of saying, "Wait in this context, it's okay if I ask for help or show a vulnerability or express something I'm worried about." That idea that you're switching to a different context for that is useful. It takes a little bit to really get in your groove with that.

Also we want to see like how can your partner receive your vulnerability or not? It's data we want to have. I know some of you listening right now will be like, "Well if I was vulnerable with my partner, that just wouldn't work. My partner wants nothing to do with it. We don't know. Let's find out."

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If it's true they want nothing to do with it, then you get to decide. Do I want to be in a relationship long term with someone who doesn't want this part of me or isn't willing to experiment with me on how this could go? Do I want that? Maybe you do for a variety of reasons. Okay then how can we make it better for you while you're there? Or actually that's a dealbreaker for me. I actually don't want that.

So this testing of where we practice our vulnerability in a way that doesn't feel overwhelming. We start with tiny steps, right. Imagine when you become a lawyer, you didn't do the biggest case of your career the day you graduated. Like same, same. Tiny steps, right? This idea of opening yourself up and to see what can this be, I think, is really important.

Paula: I love how you've articulated that Maggie with the whole idea that it's a test. You're gathering data. You're learning. You're learning about yourself. You're learning about your partner. You're learning about the dynamic of the relationship. Because really we come together we become married in whatever that means to you, and then there's that evolution between both the people. We're all changing. We're all evolving. So being able to say my marriage isn't this static thing.

I mean when we watch the rom coms, for example, we see them. The couple that was having the story before they got married, and then kind of closing credits start to roll. We don't really know what happens after that. In our own marriages, it's like we're living that out. So to be able to have that adaptability, to be able to be testing for new data, to see how we're growing, how they're growing, and how you can find ways to grow together.

So I love that this isn't like a right or wrong or a black and white. It's let's test, let's see, let's find the data. Then let's move forward based on the data that we have.

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Maggie: Absolutely. For some reason, this came to mind. One of my favorite depictions of marriage on tv was the show *Madam Secretary*. So it was Téa Leoni as the Secretary of State for the U.S., and then her husband had a variety of different roles throughout the run of show.

If you want to see a couple who's committed to each other, loves each other, but doesn't agree on everything. They sometimes disagree on the foreign policy. They sometimes disagree on a bunch of things that are really relevant because she's the Secretary of State, right. So if they disagree on foreign policy, it's a big deal.

You sort of see them not being on the same side around certain things but still loving each other while they figure that out. I think for me, I grew up with parents that were divorced and I didn't have a lot of examples. I was like what does this look like? I want to thrive in my marriage or I want to feel good in my relationship, what does it actually look like?

On my podcast, I often have my husband as a guest partly to talk about interesting things with him because I think he's fascinating. He's an engineer and he sort of brings a very fascinating point of view, but also for people to just hear what a couple who loves each other sounds like. This is what it sounds like. So anyways *Madam Secretary*. Highly recommend.

Paula: I love it. Maggie, the point that you made too about they didn't always agree. Sometimes they disagree. I was listening to your most recent podcast episode this morning, which was amazing. It's all about how couples, I think you said something like all couples have problems. I think you called them unsolvable problems, and that's perfectly normal.

I just I think knowing, number one, everyone should listen to your podcast episode because it's really good. And it sort of validates you, right. That a perfect marriage or a solid relationship, a healthy relationship isn't one that

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is free from differences of opinion. It's figuring out how to deal with those differences.

Maggie: First of all, yes. I think there's a statistic. I'm sure I quote it on the show. It's probably from The Gottman Institute. They research marriage and then they give us interventions based on the research that they have. I think if I'm remembering correctly, it's like 67% of couples have some issue in their relationship that we would deem unsolvable.

To give you a practical example, it's like a spender marries a saver. A democrat marries a republican. A person who loves to plan ahead marries the most spontaneous person on Earth, right? Like those things may not change, right. A person who loves to be on time marries somebody who's chronically late. That's something that we may not want to divorce them over, but we need to manage that if we're going to live with them for 30 years or 40 years. We need to figure out what we do to manage that thing.

So one, we need to just recognize is this an unsolvable problem? Then so many of us try to focus on solving the problem. Let me get my person who's a spender to become a saver, which is not going to happen probably most of the time. As opposed to managing the problem instead of solving it.

So let me get my person who's a spender. Let's talk about our values and our budget. What do we want to spend our money on? Can we both agree to spend our money on those things? Do we need to have a special fund for this thing that is their hobby that they love? Now we're managing that thing, leaning into it, as opposed to spending all this time solving the wrong problem that is never going to lead to a resolution.

Paula: The next question I have for you Maggie is one that I think is really important for all of our listeners to hear. It's about a tool that you have. It's called the Anger Scale. Because I think for so many of us, anger is

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something that we don't really want to acknowledge that we even have. Or when we have it, we don't know how to deal with it. So you have a really practical tool. Can you tell us what that is?

Maggie: Okay I'll tell you the gist of this tool. I do have a whole podcast episode where I explain it in depth. So if you look up my name Maggie Reyes and the anger scale, it will just come up. Basically here's what I noticed. Working with my clients, I noticed that we basically think of anger as an on or off switch. We're either angry or we're not. Everything has equal importance.

So maybe leaving the peanut butter can open on the counter is equally as important as forgetting our anniversary or something like that. Like the level of anger or the place we go in our brain was the same. I thought oh, maybe it's not the same. Maybe it's different.

So I was talking to one of my clients who really was angry about a variety of things. As she was sort of giving me the list of all the different things, it was like level. If we think of one to ten where ten is the highest and one is the lowest, everything was level ten. I'm like are the socks on the floor equally as upsetting as we are missing my cousins wedding or something like that? We were late to the wedding. They don't sound like they're equally the same.

So as I was exploring this in the process of sorting coaching my clients, I was like what if we created a scale? So this is the homework I gave. The first time we sort of finessed it. Then I tested it on my other clients. I was like let's have a scale and something happens and you're upset. Great. No problem.

Also, people socialized as women, we are not encouraged to feel our anger or be angry. It's not an emotion that we're encouraged to feel, express, or

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have a healthy relationship with. So for everyone listening, what if we could have a healthy relationship with anger? What would that look like? This is one door that you could open to start exploring that.

So the idea is we use the scale from one to ten. Ten is like the most biggest thing that would be the most upsetting, and one is kind of like the socks on the floor. Although for somebody, the socks on the floor might be a ten. So let's think about a simple, simple thing. So one to ten.

So as the things happen that you get upset over, you decide. Is this a one? Is this a seven? Is this a nine? You give it a number, whatever number is real for you in that day. No judgement if the socks on the floor is a seven that day. It's fine. Then you also decide what number requires action from me in some way? A renegotiating, setting a definition, some of the things we talked about today. What number doesn't really require action?

The purpose of the anger scale, first of all, is to not judge everything equally as urgent. Then it's to decide what is the appropriate action, what is a proportional response, to whatever it is that's happening.

So the person who is upset every single day about the socks on the floor, it may be the solution again to manage an unsolvable problem is do we need to put a bin next to that door? Do we need to do something different of what we have? Is it a structural change that actually has a solution? Or did I just marry somebody who puts socks on the floor and I just have to accept this about them. Then we explore, right. What the action that I need to take is with regards to that thing.

So as you rate the things, the idea behind it is let's say we pick a number, and it's just going to be random. Anything that's six and above requires action. A conversation with your partner, investigating where we put the bin, whatever the action might be. Anything that's five and under, you do

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nothing. I remember as I've taught this different times, my clients have said, "What do you mean nothing?" I mean nothing. You do nothing. They're like, "Why nothing?" Because it doesn't matter.

Paula: So good. So good.

Maggie: So that's the anger scale.

Paula: It is so good. Maggie, I love it. So it reminds me of a story. I was reading an article about the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg who we know was the former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Somebody was interviewing her on how it was that she was so successful. She said, "Well I applied professional advice that I was given when I got married to my husband."

It was her mother-in-law who told her to have a successful marriage, sometimes you need to be a little bit deaf. I love it because to me this is exactly what, at least I think, what we was talking about is that you don't always need to treat the socks like the unpaid mortgage, right? That there's that threshold.

Like you said Maggie, you have the option of doing nothing. So you may be high achieving and you think every problem needs a solution and you always want to get in there and fix it, but maybe sometimes the answer is I'm not going to fix it. I'm going to let that go, and I'm going to be okay with that.

So I think it's such a fabulous tool. It's so applicable. I think even just that process, even just thinking that there is such a thing as an anger scale and increasing your level of self-awareness when you have the emotion that feels like anger to you. Knowing that you've got options and knowing that you don't always have to respond to it. Just that increased level of

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awareness, I think, is so powerful. So thank you so much for that. Maggie I've got one other question for you. You talk about this a lot, which is gratitude and what the role of gratitude is in your relationship.

Maggie: So I like to think about it like glue. It's part of what helps relationships come together. I think for most people, sex and gratitude are two types of glue that are very, very, very powerful. There are some people to who are asexual and it may not be as a critical thing, but for most people most of the time physical connection and then emotional connection, which is what gratitude creates, really helps a marriage overcome the things that are hard.

So imagine. Everyone who's listening, imagine at work if you had a boss that no matter how many times you turned yourself into a pretzel to meet the deadline, do the thing, win the case, submit the paperwork, whatever it is never appreciated it. How much fun would it be to work for that person? It would be zero fun.

Now imagine you had a boss that every time you did any little thing, they were like this is great work. That was a great sentence, whatever. This was a great display of your intellect, every single time. How much fun would it be to work for that person, right? With so much love to the rocket scientists in the family, this is not rocket science, right?

So it's kind of like what role does gratitude play? One, it helps you connect with what you appreciate about your partner. For those of you in long-term relationships that are ongoing, you'd be like why am I here? Let's make a list. Why are you here? What are all their virtues? What are the things you love about them that allow you to then deal with the things you don't love about them as much, right?

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So for your own experience, step one it makes it makes it better. Then when your partner receives the gratitude, very often, not always. Some people are uncomfortable receiving gratitude. So that's going to be tricky sometimes depending on your different situations. Most of the time when people receive the gratitude, it helps them feel better and lighten their day and have something to look forward to and have something that they get to be the winner. They get to be the hero, right? They get to be the hero of your journey, of your relationship.

So it really helps on both sides of the equation when you express appreciation, when you look for things to appreciate, when you give credit for the small things both to yourself and to your partner, it really does function like a glue. So when something goes wrong.

So imagine you had glue and something was really held together by lots of wonderful glue. If something goes wrong, it's not going to break because all that glue is there. It still stays stuck together. If you don't have gratitude and then something goes wrong, what happens is it just breaks.

Paula: I love how you explain things. I love you're talking about the glue and I can see it. I just think this gratitude component is so important. As we know in relationships, in work, in the things that we do, the more that we appreciate the more that tends to grow. So really acknowledging what you're grateful for and sharing that allows your partner to know this makes me feel more connected to you. I appreciate this. They do more of that, and you can do more of that for them. I think it's just such a powerful way of approaching your relationships.

Maggie on the topic of gratitude, I'm so grateful that you came here today. You're amazing. Everything that you shared is so impactful. I know everyone who's listening is going to want to learn more about you. So how

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do you work with lawyers? You mentioned you have a group coaching program. How can people work with you?

Maggie: Okay so that's a great question. First of all, you can find me at maggiereyes.com. Whatever's happening in my life, you will see it there for sure. So that's the simplest, easiest thing.

Paula: We'll link to everything in the show notes for this episode. So yes. There's your website maggiereyes.com.

Maggie: Yep. Then I run a group program called the Married MBA. The reason I call it that is if you think about business, like an MBA teaches you how to run a business. So this teaches you how to run a marriage, right? It takes you through the same mindset around it.

That program is a six month program. We talk about things like this. We talk about lots of things that we talked about today. Then I teach some of the things that I teach on the podcast and some things that I don't teach on the podcast that we sort of go deeper into.

So one of the things we do, to just give you an example, is I recently completed training in feminist coaching and bringing feminist principles to my coaching work. So we have an internalized patriarchy relationship inventory. What are some of the things that we don't even recognize that have just been internalized by our cultural programming and how do they affect our relationship? So that's something that's kind of a more dense topic. We talk about that in group discussion inside the Marriage MBA.

So that is my sort of signature program, the way that I help people really make their marriages stronger and better. Then *The Marriage Life Coach Podcast* that we already mentioned. If you love listening to podcasts, I talk about all these things in depth on the podcast. One of my personal

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philosophies is I want you to be able to make your marriage better whether we ever work together or not. So you listen to the podcast. I teach a lot of the coaching tools and different things that I use. Absolutely I invite you to go wherever you like to download podcasts and subscribe to that.

Paula: Beautiful. You also have a bestselling book *The Questions for Couples Journal*, which has I gather a number of prompts that you can ask yourself with your spouse. How does that work?

Maggie: So the book is called *The Questions for Couples Journal*. So many people tell me they don't even know what to talk about. Like if we have a date night, we still talk about what I call maintenance and problems. Like oh we have to call the plumber. Oh we have to do this thing. So if you are in that category of I don't even know what to talk about with my partner, it has 400 different prompts or questions. They're categorized.

So there's things about our dreams and our goals and what we want to create in the future. There's things about our past, about our memories. There's things about how we want to communicate and what is the role of communication in the relationship? There's sexy questions that are to connect more physically. What do you enjoy? What do you not enjoy?

It sort of opens the door to ask questions that you wouldn't just normally talk about on a Sunday at brunch or something like that. So *The Questions for Couples Journal* is really meant to be a very simple communication tool. My favorite thing about it is it's not a book you read, it's a book you do.

Paula: Totally.

Maggie: So just grab a question and have fun.

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Paula: Oh I love it. All the dialogue that that would create. For anybody who's thinking about group coaching, I know one of the things that love as part of a group is I get to see other people ask their questions. That's one of the things I love about working with you and seeing other people come to the table with questions because you can always relate to what they're talking about. It may not be that it's exactly the same set of facts, but often you can draw parallels.

So for anybody who's interested in that dynamic who's not familiar with that dynamic, I think it's a wonderful thing. Do you have any observations or anything you'd like to share?

Maggie: Totally. So sometimes thinking about talking about your marriage in a group of strangers feels intimidating or it feels like you have to be vulnerable, right. It feels like something you want to think twice about. I totally understand. If that's your case, here's what I want you to know.

One is right now in a sort of western industrialized society, we don't often have people we talk to about these things. We sometimes feel like our friends or our family, if we tell them something happened with our partner then they'll think about partner differently or about us differently. So if you're going through something, who are you talking to about it, right?

One of the things about doing a group program is now you have a group of likeminded go getter type people who are solution focused who want to do better. They're not just going to wallow in the problem with you like some of our friends do. Our friends will be on our side, but they really won't offer us sort of constructive solutions either. They'll just be like, "Well that's terrible." This is not that. This is okay. That's something that hurt. Where do we want to go from here?

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So that ability to sort of be in a group that is to a certain degree sort of curated and people who have those same kind of values. It helps you have a place to go not just from the leader or the coach who's helping you in my case, but from the other colleagues that you're with. So that's one thing.

Then the other thing is sometimes when we're talking about something, so think about this podcast and all the different examples and analogies we gave and things we talked about. You can just receive it because it's not about you. Sometimes if you're being coached directly. So just imagine being in a meeting and your boss gives you a piece of feedback. Then you freak out a little, right?

When you're being coached directly, you can have a moment where you might freak out a little. When you're hearing somebody else get that same feedback, you're like oh that makes so much sense. I do that too. Maybe I shouldn't do that anymore. Maybe I should do that differently.

So that is really a benefit of being in a group scenario is where your defenses are not up so you can receive whatever we're talking about in a deeper place. I have found that both as a coach and as a client being a person in a group. I have found that really helpful to me as well. So that's what I would add to that.

Paula: Beautiful, thank you. I totally agree with you Maggie. I would love to keep you here all day. I know everybody else would love to keep you here all day, but we're going to wrap up. So Maggie I just wanted to say a huge thank you for joining us today and for sharing all your wisdom about relationships. Not all your wisdom. Some of your wisdom because there's so much more. I just want to thank you for the work that you do. I think it's amazing. I think it's impactful. It's been such a blessing having you here today.

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Maggie: Thank you so much Paula. Thank you for inviting me. I love to talk about these things. I think this is how we change the world is one healed heart at a time. Thank you to everyone who listened and took time in their day to day to just spend some time with us. It was my pleasure and my honor.

Paula: Oh fabulous. Thank you so much. Thank you everybody. We will look forward to reconnecting next week. Bye for now.

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