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How Being a Little Selfish Can Enhance Your Marriage

This is Stay Happily Married #129, "How Being a Little Selfish Can Enhance Your Marriage."

Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Today's episode of Stay Happily Married is brought to you by the Rosen Law Firm. For more information, visit us at Rosen.com.

Lee Rosen: I'm Lee Rosen and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. We often hear that marriage is all about compromise, about the two becoming one. But today we'll be talking with life coach Andrea Gross, who says that putting a little focus on yourself and being a little selfish is actually vital to making a marriage work.

Andrea has both the training and the life experience necessary to be a certified lifestyle expert. She knows what it's like to deal with all of the complications of relationships and families today. She's also got a book coming out shortly; it's called *When You're Ready*, in which she uses her personal experiences to teach others how to transform themselves in order to be ready for a real relationship.

Andrea, welcome to the show.

Andrea Gross: Thank you, Lee.

Lee Rosen: I'm really glad that you could join us today. And I think that this idea of being a little selfish is intriguing. You know, as a life coach you're used to focusing a lot on personal understanding and growth. How does that apply when it comes to dealing with relationships?

Andrea Gross: I think the most important part about a relationship is how you show up for it. And I think most people need to do a lot of inner

work and feel good about themselves. And if you're feeling confident and your self-esteem is high, then you show up differently in a relationship.

Lee Rosen: So you're thinking -- I mean, I guess you're sort of saying if you come into the relationship feeling good, doing well for yourself, you're bringing to the table something that has a much better chance to work than if you don't have those things in order in your own life.

Andrea Gross: Yes, exactly. And I think if you are in a good place then you inspire your spouse to also be in a good place.

Lee Rosen: Right. Okay. That makes sense. And when you talk about sort of you being in a good place, what are we talking about? How do you get there? What does that mean?

Andrea Gross: I think the key word here is being connected. If you are connected with who you are then you can connect with somebody else. And if you're not feeling good about yourself and not connected, then the people around you are going to sense that and feel that. If you have good energy and positive energy and you're happy and you're appreciating the little things about your life, then people are going to sense that and want to be around you.

Lee Rosen: So I hear a lot of people say that you really have to sort of love yourself before you can love somebody else, that that's sort of a prerequisite. Is that really a requirement for making a marriage or relationship work?

Andrea Gross: I think definitely, because if you're not loving yourself then you can't really expect other people around you to love you. Because if you're loving yourself, then people want to be around that and they want to know how to love you. If a man -- a lot of men aren't really sure how to love a woman. But if she can inspire him and show him how to love her by loving herself, then that's a major factor in a relationship.

Lee Rosen: So if you've got to be a little bit selfish, what do you suggest? When you're meeting with clients, what are they going through and what are you suggesting in terms of taking care of themselves? How do you go about being a little bit selfish?

Andrea Gross: Well, a number one thing I see with a lot of women is they feel guilty about taking time for themselves. And I think it's so important to have some "me" time, whether it's an hour at night or during the day.

I also see a lot of women not really taking care of themselves. And I think when you take care of your health and you learn to eat right and exercise right, that has a huge impact on your relationship. Because if you're feeling good about yourself and feeling healthy and feeling pretty, that's something that your spouse wants to be around as well.

Lee Rosen: Interesting. So do you think -- and I sort of hear from you a focus on women needing to take care of themselves. Do you feel like men just do that or do men have the same need?

Andrea Gross: Men definitely have the same need because I see a lot with my married couple clients that men really depend on the women to lead the way in the relationship, I feel. And in reality, I think a man really wants to be able to love the woman and be able to be the one to suggest to go out and suggest things, but I think a lot of women aren't giving the men a chance to do that.

So I think a big part of relationships is communication. And when someone's feeling good about themselves, they can relate to their spouses in a different way. If you're feeling confident and secure, you're going to be able to discuss things with your spouse in a nice, loving way. When you're feeling not good about yourself or you're feeling fat or you're feeling lazy or feeling bored, you're going to be fighting with your spouse about it because you're really angry with yourself and it all comes out onto your spouse. And I think that's a key problem in a marriage.

Lee Rosen: Right. I'm curious now. So how are you in your life -- when you're taking care of yourself, what are you doing differently, maybe, than you've done in the past to make sure that you come into a relationship ready to roll?

Andrea Gross: The number one thing for me is probably health and exercise. Because I know when I'm feeling good and fitting into my jeans and feeling pretty and eating healthy and my skin is glowing, I'll walk into a room differently. If you're feeling fat or feeling not attractive or letting other people's problems affect you, it shows in your energy and your whole being.

Lee Rosen: It makes a lot of sense. When you're in a session with a couple, do you ever get -- I mean, it's interesting because they're there trying to straighten things out in the marriage and you're sort of advocating a, hey, let's take a step back and take care of yourself sort of thing. Do you ever get any push-back from couples or from one party in the couple saying, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. I don't want this to be about her; I want this to be about her taking time for me," or vice versa?

Andrea Gross: Right. No, I know what you're saying but I think once we're in the session they start to understand what I'm expressing to them. Because I have a lot of couples, they'll be sitting on the couch and they'll say, "Well, he's not romantic," or "He's not fun," or he's not this or he's not that.

And what I say to the women are, "Well, if you want him to be more romantic, you need to be more romantic." Instead of blaming the spouse --

Or I'll say the same thing to the man. If he says, "She's not romantic; she's not doing this," then I say, "Well, what are you bringing to the table?" If you want somebody to be romantic, then you be romantic. If you want somebody to be fun, then you be fun.

Lee Rosen: So it really is all about you. And if you don't start it, you can't expect it to turn out the way you want it to. That is very interesting. Now, do you feel like what you're doing is very different than what, say, the average marriage counselor is doing?

Andrea Gross: Yes, because there are a lot of marriage counselors and there are a lot of relationship coaches. That's why I call myself a lifestyle coach, because I don't -- I believe that it comes from an individual. And if I can help you change your lifestyle, it will affect your career, your relationships, your marriage, your relationship with your children; everything is affected.

I think a lot of relationship coaches teach people really how to play the game and get him to listen and get him to do that. What I'm saying is, get to be yourself again and love yourself. That way, the way you communicate and the way you come off to your spouse is in a loving, different way and you can have a better relationship.

Lee Rosen: Right. Now, we've covered a lot of ground today and I think you've made a pretty good argument for being a little bit selfish. And I do buy what you're saying in terms of it really helping to make the relationship work better than it might have otherwise worked. Any other tips that you'd like to pass along? Any other bits of advice you think are important?

Andrea Gross: I just think there are also little things you can do even in your home to create a loving environment, even like -- I love burning candles and I have a lot of vanilla candles because I like the smell. I put a lot of love and care into my home.

When your spouse comes home from a long day at work and they come into a messy house and you're screaming at the kids, he kind

of wants to get back in the car and go away again. But if your home environment is a loving place where you can both come in and just be yourselves and be loving, I mean, that's a big way to start.

Lee Rosen: Right. Great advice.

Andrea Gross: Right. And I think -- you know, a lot of people stress having date night and things like that, but I think you can do more than that. I think you can order Chinese food and eat in bed. Just do something different. Throw things off a little bit. I think everyone's so afraid of change and I think that change is what relationships need. Because if you can't grow and change together, then it gets boring and stagnant and that's where the problems develop.

Lee Rosen: Terrific. Well, I'm going to -- when we hang up, I'm going to go order some Chinese food. I'm excited about it.

Andrea Gross: You have to eat in bed, though.

Lee Rosen: Well, okay. I'll eat it wherever you tell me. You're the expert. What do I know? I'm good with it.

Andrea, thank you so much for spending some time with us today. I really appreciate it.

Andrea Gross: Thank you.

Lee Rosen: If you'd like to learn more about Andrea, she has a website at AndreaGrossOnline.com. I'll put a link to that in the show notes and you can learn more about her and more about lifestyle coaching. Very interesting site. Lots of material there worth checking out.

Thank you so much for joining us today. I hope that you will be back with us again next week. In the meantime, we'd love to hear your comments about this episode or any episode. We have a listener comment line set up at (919) 256-3083. You can e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com.

I'm Lee Rosen. Until next time, stay happily married.

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