

## Arguing with my Partner

What Is Up Daddy Gang It is your founding father Alex Cooper with Call Nancy Dreyfus Welcome to Call Her Daddy Thank you It's great being here Nancy Dreyfus is a psychotherapist and author of the book Talk to me Like I'm someone you love Relationship Repair in a flash You are an expert at helping couples transform unproductive arguments into moments of connection through communication and vulnerability I want to go through some common situations Couples may find themselves in during conflict and then discuss how if navigated properly It can actually bring the couple closer together So the title of your book Talk To me like I'm someone you love is a profound one Can you elaborate on the concept behind it and share how it can transform our relationships for the better How did you come up with this title The first thing I want to say is have everybody imagine what they wouldn't say if they didn't say talk to me like I'm someone you love They would say don't talk to me in that tone of voice or I'm not gonna listen to you and the beauty of talk to me like I'm someone you love is that there's a dignity to it And I'm treating myself respectfully and with love not pushing not criticizing you And the basic premise of mine Alex is that people treat you how you treat yourself So when I say talk to me like I'm someone you love I'm raising the bar Yeah it's so interesting to hear you say that sometimes people just need to be reminded I think sometimes when you're in a fight you can almost go to a different place and you kind of forget your humanity and the person that you're in a relationship with that you love And so that is such a mature way to look at it because you are setting a standard for yourself of like I love myself Do you love me And if not then that's a whole another conversation How do you define conscious communication in a relationship Wow that is a great question and no one's ever quite asked it So let me just say this conscious communication isn't a technique and it won't work as a technique It requires actually being conscious So let me explain to you what I would mean by that And I wanna talk a little bit here about childhood wounding and the word wounding is unfortunate because it makes it sound worse than it is I'd like to say childhood programming Many people in this day and age hear about horrific things that have happened to Children and they think my my family was so normal Um you know there was none of that and my parents loved each other and nobody thought of a divorce and we you know nobody was abusive However this is a scene that virtually everyone has experienced The kid You're five or six years old or

even eight or nine years old And your mother comes in and says oh my God grandma's sick We have to go to the drugstore and get her prescription Come on let's go the most innocent well meaning interaction But what's happened The mother hasn't said to the kid I see that you're involved in building your legos or you're playing what whatever you're doing in that moment the child gets a message that my reality is important and not only that you're supposed to know what my reality is you're supposed to understand my priority right now But nobody is saying to the kid I am so sorry I'm interrupting you This must feel abrupt and Alex I have had grown men with no consciousness work who may never have cried And since their father died 20 years ago and I simply roleplay this and I say to them imagining they're five or six I feel like a witch I am so sorry to have to interrupt you and they cry And the reason that they cry is because for many people and we're gonna now get to adult relationships promise for many people that is the first time in their life they experience something that there were two realities Mom wants to go on an errand I'm doing something and mom can hold both realities and we're still friends And in a sense if you've never learned that a relationship can hold two realities it becomes very very difficult to negotiate conflict and to be able to hold two realities at once So what is conscious communication It involves ideally being aware of one's own childhood wounding is and why we're getting reactive And it also is holding in mind that we're holding two realities at once Just because I knew I was being interviewed by you I reread all my flashcards in the last week I must admit something I have not done for a while and I realized something I had never realized before I thought they were effective because there was no voice tone and boy voice tone we all know is the killer but it's that most of them are holding two realities at once I know you're feeling nagged but don't leave the room I'll feel abandoned And the very fact we're holding two realities at once is actually putting something in what I would call a relational frame So conscious communication which none of us do naturally I teach this because I need to learn It is being able to hold two realities at one Thank you for explaining that because it is complex but it does make sense when you really start to try to wrap your brain around it And it also is essentially being conscious that we are all living in our own bubble of our minds And we have to try especially when you're trying to be in a relationship where you respect the person it doesn't have to be romantic It could be familial it could be a friendship But like if you want to have an honest and respectful relationship you have to not just think about yourself and how this relationship is affecting you because at the end of the day then

that person's gonna feel respected and then they will respect you back So it's like kind of this big cycle Totally Totally Totally But when you have had years of programming and a partner who annoys you it's hard to get but you just hit the nail on the head Yeah Yeah What is the number one mistake you find couples make when it comes to navigating conflict I wanna tell you how I typically begin a couple session by the way and I work with couples and individuals Everything is really relationship therapy and I would not do something that was a light if I sensed there was an affair a suicidal child or a kid who was a drug addict But if I sense it's something a little more excuse me Garden variety This is what I do I'd like you to be a stand in OK I say to one of the members of the couple Alex I'd like you to say something to me and use my name Nancy say Nancy This is a little hard to say to you but I think you have antlers growing out of your head Nancy this is a little hard to say to you but I think you have antlers growing out of your head You know Alex I'm not that vain but I must admit I did look in the mirror before meeting today You know I guess that was hard for you to say I looked in the mirror but you know I didn't see I had antlers growing out of my head But my God if it looked that way to you that must have been so off putting the idea of the therapist with antlers growing out of our head The couple is now looking at me glazed They're not sure they're in the right office And then I say to them you know why you're here knowing nothing by the way about why they're here I say you know why you're here because you can't do what I just did You're still glazed I say to them you know what I did that you can't do I wanted to say to Alex are you fucking out of your mind But I did not because I wanna have a better relationship with Alex Cooper And if I wanna have a better relationship with Alex Cooper I have to trust that she's seeing something I don't see And when you guys are able to do that So generally in real life no one is telling you you have antlers growing out of your head But they are saying you were looking I saw you with the party you were staring at her breast I saw it People are saying things you didn't forget doing that You just didn't want to do it I mean people are telling you things all the time that do not fit your reality And the first thing you want to do is set them straight This is this is the biggest problem in relationships not being able to hear how it is for the other person Do you do you actually say that exact line Like you say the oh my God that I do At first I was like where are we going with this Nancy Like what the you know I thought about this but to be honest and you have said such outrageous things At first I said can I ask Alex to do this You have said such outrageous things I figured this would be tame for

you Oh it was so tame It just took me out of left field because I was like not anticipating that But it is so interesting to hear you say that because you're so right the way that you responded back to me I was waiting for you to say like why I don't have antlers coming out of my head And you're so right that even when you are a bystander listening to a couple fight it's constantly just the person is speaking from their point of view and their understanding and their feelings about it And they're completely neglecting the fact that there is human being over there that's doing the same thing on their end of their feelings and their view on it And so in order to come to any type of agreement or solution you got to merge the two and you got to be willing to compromise But most people can't see it that way in the moment Thank you for being a good sport By the way of course of course I knew you were bringing it somewhere Nancy I just didn't know exactly where we were going with it But now I see you say we're not usually upset for the reason that we think you write about that in your book and it's not the content of the argument It's the context So let's say that you planned on having dinner with your boyfriend at 7 p.m. but now it's 7 15 and he's running late from drinks with his friends and you are boiling with anger How does someone understand what is really upsetting them in this situation So great question OK Relationship is not for the fainthearted I I just wanna say that nobody recognizes the work that's required So what we would hope for in that situation By the way we do have some um ground to be upset if we set a date and somebody isn't taking it seriously You're not completely crazy but usually it's the intensity of the reaction So to take a moment and say what is it that I'm really feeling I'm feeling not respected I'm feeling not taken seriously I'm feeling you're not thinking about all the effort that I may have put into the to the dinner So the actual event is what I would call the catalyst But in the end we're still responsible for our own reactivity My one way I have of describing my childhood is that I was before and my mother was here to put me into after I was a smart kid got into an Ivy League school My senior year in high school I had to go to New York every Saturday morning I had to get up at five in the morning to go to the barber modeling school I can do things with a lipstick brush The problem was I was £45 heavier than anybody who was in the Barbizon modeling school So my mother was very interested in glamour and in looks and part of my journey which got me very interested in relationship is in third grade I wouldn't play the card game old made with the other kids I was already worried in third grade Nobody would want me Ok So I married to my ex-husband who was attracted to me If I

gained £10 it was fine with makeup without makeup And one day he's looking at a magazine I will say a fully people have asked a fully clothed woman and he simply says to me I'd love to see you in peach lipstick I was a Banshee I mean you you wouldn't you wouldn't have you know you wouldn't have wanted me to be the janitor in your building I mean I needed to know that my reaction was inappropriate but how it felt to to little Nancy was that someone was saying I wasn't attractive enough So the best way to be able to really understand what you're upset about is to take ownership of the wound but not deny that the somebody did something So here's my rule of thumb If you're upset with a partner a boyfriend uh anybody you probably have a legitimate grievance Alex The intensity of your reaction is the pre-existing one That would be the best thing that I would have to say So in the situation with the dinner I would say to my partner a part of me wants to kill you I feel so disrespected You can come home the dinner will be on the table but I will not whatever you want to say And another part of me is aware that the intensity of my reaction is also something I bring to this And what happens is when you really know that somebody has done something that's off it's really hard to want to take responsibility for your own wound Yeah that's so interesting I appreciate you sharing that Like thinking about the peach lipstick If you went at your ex-husband in that moment I'm sure he was like if I just said a fucking peach lipstick would basically look actually nice on you I would love to see you in it But to you it was those childhood wounds of not being good enough and you your mother having you do these things that you were always feeling like down on yourself that immediately you felt like oh my God And then I'm sure you spiral too of like how often does he think these things Like does he not like the way Like it just begins And so I love though you're saying your reaction what is the intensity level Because I agree everyone listening It's not that he's 15 minutes late It's that maybe your parents never showed up for the things that you loved whether it was your soccer game or you're at school and every parent's there and your parents are never there on time to pick you up and you feel abandoned And so there's like themes within yourself that you have to try to own not to say which I love that they didn't do something to you what you can't do in order to resolve it to say I'm pissed that you're 15 minutes late and keep going in circles about the 15 minute gap It's really hey you know about my childhood that I've shared with you this makes me feel really unloved and abandoned and I feel really insecure that I put myself out there and you didn't show up So it's like trying to get it underneath for yourself and being able to be

vulnerable and articulate it to your partner and then allows them to not go into a frenzy in a spiral of like why the fuck is it a big deal That it's 15 minutes It's not that big of a deal It's not about the 15 minutes correct And to say I know I'm overreacting and this is why we'll immediately um soften something It's hard to take responsibility for women's own insights Alex If you and I had an upset and the world agreed Everybody agreed your mother your father your boyfriend that it was 90% your fault and only 10% mine I still have to take 100% responsibility for my 10% if we're gonna heal this Yeah I mean usually it's not just on one person It it takes two to have something happen So an instinctive reaction during an argument as we're kind of discussing is defensiveness I know I'm guilty of it at times If we can feel ourselves being defensive what is the best way to redirect the conversation and the way that we're speaking well the best way to redirect it is to actually be with it And I love that you even talked about your own awareness of your defensiveness which trust trust me puts you ahead of the game The first thing to say is to say I'm feeling defensive Well look at the difference and this is really why I love my flashcards Although my greatest mission in life isn't for people to walk around with flash cards It's to try the flashcard So they actually say that non defensiveness works and then just get inspired to want to do it themselves To say that you're being defensive is relating to somebody If I share with you I'm feeling defensive I've moved out of an adversarial stance I'm actually being vulnerable with you The problem isn't that you're defensive The problem is that you're not taking ownership of it So once I say to you I'm aware I'm feeling defensive That's one step And then what I might say is I really want to hear you Can you say that in a less attacking way Can you take some responsibility for your part so that I now have a new problem not that you initially attacked me or criticized me for something or I thought you said something that was unfair I am now reframing the problem How can the two of us right now work together so I can listen to you It's a very lovely thing to say to someone I really want to listen to you and it's hard to listen to you when I'm scared of you That's so helpful because then my immediate next question would be let's say someone is not even maybe they're not able to do that themselves But when we're sitting in a fight what if we feel our partner is being defensive What's the best way to redirect the conversation as you're watching them be defensive Like what do we say What are we laughing to myself I wanna like ask whoever is listening to this Have you ever been with someone who is defense Ok Ok So I I've I've given this great thought and I have some good

techniques about it One is to say to somebody I wanna ask you something right now Are you feeling attacked Why would somebody be defensive because they're feeling attacked So let's say say they say yes yes you are attacking me You are And I and I've just said I'd like to see you in peach lipstick I say well thank you for telling me how it feels to you And let's say they say I say to them are you feeling attacked And they say no he said well then I'm wondering why you're defending yourself because you're acting like you feel attacked So if somebody is being defensive we need to go to why they're being defensive They're feeling attacked So I would go directly to that area That's one thing to do Another thing to do is to possibly say to somebody I'm hearing that this is hard for you to hear right now I might be if I'm in a generous mood I might say to someone you might might what's hard about hearing that Usually what's happening is that people are feeling misperceived That is the biggest problem in relationships I can't listen to what you're saying because I it's putting me in a poor light and that is called lack of differentiation It's actually emotional fusion No I'm telling you what my experience is but we hear it as a commentary on ourselves That's so fascinating right Like they can't differentiate the fact that you're actually just asking them a question but their mind is going to such a different place that they're riling themselves up Like sometimes I mean even I've I've had it in a moment where I wasn't even being essentially accusatory I was asking an old partner and I didn't know that he had been cheating on me So there was this defensiveness that started coming up and if anything it was a red flag to me because I was like whoa whoa wait what is this about Like what's happening There must be something under there for you because I what are we talking about And then it came out that he had cheated and I was like well now So sometimes it can be something to be aware of if your partner gets a overly defensive Like what are you feeling guilty about Yes Yes Yes But that's the unhealthy healthy side nancy We're trying to stay healthy Well let me give you a a seemingly benign example I say to my partner you say to somebody I was worried that you were late I was worried ok And he says there was a lot of traffic He hears it as a criticism rather than me being worried This is what basically occurs in relationships I'm simply saying it's a declaration of love There's no criticism Oh I was so worried I was so I was so worried Well there was a lot of traffic That's the moment to say could you just hear that I'm worried and I I wasn't blaming you right And then because the reaction could be I'm ok and I'm happy that I'm home and and maybe next time I'm sorry like I could call you and just give you a heads up But I'm fine I actually

have a great quick example of something to to share with you Yes please A client comes in couple for a session the night before she had come home from work They're both hard working professionals with a six year old kid and all she had wanted to do was go to the supermarket when she got home She loves to cook and prep for some dinner party They were having a few days later and he was also home from work and gonna take the kid for a walk in the park and says to her nicely we would love you to come with us to the park And nicely she says you know most days I would love to do that My heart is set on going shopping and cooking tonight and he says well thanks for ruining our day Ok Ok Look a Alex It happens So they they're now in my office and I say to the guy I'm gonna make up his name Mark what were you feeling when she didn't want to go to the park Well he said disappointed So I said to him as I'm now gonna say to you Alex and who's ever listening You're now gonna get the secret to life If you had simply said oh I'm disappointed you would have gotten laid Ok Oh my God Well when you said you've ruined our day who were you making responsible for your disappointment I mean if anybody is gonna take a nugget from this conversation that is the difference between heaven and hell Be disappointed Does anybody see me thinking He shouldn't have been disappointed pointed But if he had said oh I'm disappointed he would That is what is meant by taking ownership of your own feeling Was she the catalyst Yeah he was the catalyst but she wasn't responsible It's up to him Whether he's gonna say I'm disappointed or thanks for ruining our day That's it You're so right too because had he been like oh I'm disappointed Like I miss you I want to spend time with you Like but ok I I understand then maybe she's like halfway out the door and she's like well fuck like all right Actually I'll I'll go in an hour I want to go with you guys Half of the of course you're hitting the net Exactly You are now seeing how love flourishes rather than how how it right But but it's so interesting because it requires vulnerability but it's so obvious Both sides are showing your hand which is thanks for ruining our day Did that really ruin your day Mark No but but it's again it's your reaction and the level that you took it to of her just wanting to go to the grocery store like it's not that intense but your intense reaction is showing how hurt you are So instead why don't you Instead of saying a rude statement Why don't you say I'm hurt I want you to come with us Well now I'll tell you why So you actually uh if you were in my office right now I'd have you asked me the question I won't do that Why is it He didn't just say he's disappointed That's the \$64,000 question Why OK Why Because for most people there's such deep interpersonal disappointment



There is so much pain Alex that so many people are sitting on They don't want to feel that because it's a line in to every time his father wouldn't play catch with him Mhm You get that It's a line in for every time his mother wouldn't let him cook with him in the kitchen cook with her in the kitchen It's almost like their defense and survival mechanism But in order to have an actual healthy relationship you have to let someone in and you have to start to break that down and not treat your partner like they're your father What a concept What to my world You're like this is your wife not your mother Ok We have a flashcard that actually says I am not your mother And then there's a blank I'm Alex who loves you We actually have it's a popular flashcard It is crazy too because I do want everyone listening to know like half the time that you are frustrated with your partner more than half the time probably all the time It is basically you getting triggered from something that happened in your childhood and it's bringing something up for you I had a very embarrassing situation probably 20 years ago I don't think it would happen Now I was with a very annoying argumentative man maybe in his forties and unbelievably I go mom No no he's like what Oh your mom Well you're acting like it Oh that's so good Oh my God You know we're talking about like going out someone or trying to adjust our language But when is it OK to step away from an argument with your partner In what moments is it productive And in what moments is it giving up It's a great question I'm I'm not sure I can answer 100% It's giving up if you're not gonna come back to it That to me and what I would say is that physiologically I'm saying this to every male and female listening to this physiologically women can get energized in an argument and men get what's called flooded their nervous systems get overwhelmed and it is almost like physically painful for them even though men can be combative and they can scream it is extremely uncomfortable for them and for men to be able to a man to be able to say to a woman I'm feeling flooded right now I need a time out But please please add and I'm gonna come I'll come back That's the problem People leave They just need to know you're gonna come back That's all Yeah Yeah That's a great point I mean I've I've been in arguments before where the person storms out and you're just like it doesn't feel loving and it doesn't feel like a solution But if they someone said and I have one of your cards here and it's like I'm frankly confused about what's going on between us right now and I just need a little time to sort this out Is that ok with you It's allowing people to know that you aren't oblivious to the fact that they have feelings and that they want to have this conversation as well But you're also respecting the

relationship and you're it's actually a respectful thing to say Like I'm not my best version right now This is we're not going to get somewhere because I'm going to take accountability that like I can't something is not working for me where I I'm having a hard time Can you just give me some time I don't think that's negative at all I think that's a healthy version Well what you're I I love that you chose that card I mean what you're describing is really what I've been pointing to the card holds two realities It holds my reality It's your reality I'm being respectful Is that ok with you It's holding what I would call a relational vibe Hm From my own experience in therapy I've learned the power of taking responsibility in a situation and saying sorry But why don't the sorries and apologies always land like what are people getting wrong when they're just saying sorry Oh I love I love that You're asking me that question It's one of my favorite topics So let everybody listen to this We're going to imagine that right now Unbelievably Alex Cooper has hurt my feelings OK And I'm gonna respond to Alex in two different ways and we're gonna see the difference and Alex will see the difference Alex I am so sorry I I am so sorry that I hurt you Did I say you heard me Well I that I hurt you and I'm gonna be apologizing right now I am so sorry that I hurt you II I wish I hadn't done that Ok That's the the I'm sorry And that's the apology And then we have this one I am so sorry I hurt you I can understand why you'd want to get away from me What am I doing in that second one that makes it more appealing I'm doing I've been talking about I'm entering your reality And so what happens is who hasn't heard I said I'm sorry what else do you want from me I apologize and you feel guilty because the person did apologize but something still isn't feeling good Why Because you're not just wanting the apology You're not needing that person to say I'm a bad person who did a bad thing What you're actually wanting is for somebody to care to enter your world and feel what it's like I told you what I do how I often begin a couple session I'm gonna tell you how I often begin any session an individual session very quickly and everybody listening to this you can do this Imagine you're 10 years old You're in fifth grade and somebody who you really like the same sex kid having a birthday party you weren't invited to and you're crushed Do you go to your mother and tell your mother you're crushed That already can tell you light ears If you wouldn't have gone to your mother most people would have gone to their mother Not not all boys but most girls would think about what your mother would say You go mommy I'm so upset Um Brittany was having a birthday party and I thought we were close and she invited the other kids and she didn't invite me almost

universally What parents will do a parent might say Oh honey I'm sorry Or even if that might hurt but what most parents do immediately is they want you to feel better So they reconize it There'll be other parties Maybe she could only invite six kids I knew she wasn't a nice kid I never liked her mother That was my mother The apple doesn't fall far from the tree Ok That would that would be that's where this comes from But the parent what is the parent doing The parent is trying to make the child not feel what she's feeling It is a very rare parent who does what we're all craving which is that must really hurt I know how important to you She was That must have been confusing and embarrassing or whatever to be with the child in the misery Rather than want the child to see it differently And again I want to be a spokesperson for people not turning away from childhood wounding because their families seem more or less normal Unfortunately this is the innocence of the wounding a mother who says oh honey I feel badly Let's go to the movies That is not a toxic mother but it's still help It's still creating a child who doesn't know that someone really entering her reality is what's gonna hit the mark So then you grow up and your partner just says I'm sorry And you don't have the ground inside of you because of your childhood programming to say I just need you to to say to me don't even mean it but just say to me I can see what you wanted to get away from You don't even know you're allowed right It's like the validation of whether whatever the situation was whether it was rejection whether it was something they said was hurtful whether it again abandonment or embarrassment or shame or whatever it is It's like allowing your partner when you feel like you've hurt them by just saying you're sorry half the time It's like well what are you sorry for And a lot of times people are like I don't know but I know I'm supposed to say this when really if you have a partner that can be thoughtful it's like I'm really sorry I know I hurt your feelings and I feel awful about it and I understand why you then wanted to get away from me and now I'm coming to you and I want you to know that Like I really am sorry that I did that Yeah Do you feel better Nancy We can keep going with the interview You're not going to cancel out because I heard you But if I said sorry Nancy get over it which is what most people which is what most people not most people but a lot of people do People do really a lot of the time What if someone feels like the norm in their relationship is that they are always the one who apologizes first in order to to fuse the arguments Like how does someone go about shifting this dynamic It's very common actually very common If I were that person the immediate apologize I might do this And again I'm being a little strategic

I must admit but we're wanting to create some change I might say to somebody the next time this happens I said I noticed something I was just about to start to be conciliatory I can't stand the distance between us and I'm aware I've done this so often It kind of makes me feel I'm in a one down position So I just want to share with you right now A part of me can't stand that we're so far apart but it's starting to feel a little humiliating that I'm the one who always in issues it would make me feel cared for If I felt you were caring for the relationship Nancy you're good You're like I know Oh wow Well I want to say something to you about me being good I first of all I want I I can't believe I'm saying this Probably my ex-husband on with whom I'm on friendly terms is a psychiatrist and he tells me that I am always supposed to tell people this Sometimes Nancy is brilliant and sometimes she's just having a notion Ok Ok So II I wanna give you the warning bottles the warning label Ok But the other thing that I want to say about me being good is when I was a teenager and you've heard enough you know about my my family I would watch couples that I thought were normal Like the cool couples and I would actually have the thought How did they know what to say to each other Is there a book somewhere I I had no idea So I had a to the degree that I am good It's simply like anyone else Alex I had to learn it Yeah There's a lot of work that goes into it Right I had to learn it Iii I knew I was in I knew I was in trouble No and I appreciate you sharing that That's similar It's it's interesting hearing your experience It's uh very similar to the way that my mother describes her upbringing and it's like almost exactly the same with her mother and her father and and it and it then everyone always looks at my mom now and it's like how does she know all this And my mom's like a lot of work Like I did a lot of therapy and a lot of you know and I wasn't always perfect But it is nice now though obviously that you're able to share this like wisdom with you know the younger generation because it is like you now do see it more clearly So I appreciate you you know I would like to share something with you along these lines how my growth process got started because it I'll I'll be I'll be brief I am This is a second career for me I used to be a journalist and I was in what I wouldn't have known at the time was in a me too situation I was 21 involved with a 50 year old well known writer and he was gonna further my career He was a New York writer It was all very exciting We would go to showings but it was in this day and age It would have been a me too situation and surprise of surprise of all surprises He was a critic He began being abusive with me He was quite abusive and that's what got me into therapy In fact he hit me once because I disagreed

with the review And I said what's a nice girl like me doing with in a situation like this So I started therapy and this may sound a little controversial Maybe not when it was pointed out to me why I would be in such an abusive relationship I had a mother who was a nonstop critic and a father who never talked to me So a little girl looking for a father figure and when I realized it was abusive I actually wanted to confront him or report him which eventually I did confront him But I want to tell you what my therapist told me and what my therapist did with me And I I had unwittingly shared something that was a little embarrassing that I loved I'm even a little embarrassed now telling you I loved elevator music You know the kind of music people roll their eyes like music It's like it's just like homogenized Unter it was soothing for me I grew up with chaos Now I can tell people I like new age music but we didn't have new age music then And this is what my therapy said someday you will confront him But first you need a self And he told me my first therapy therapeutic assignment was to tell three people who I thought would judge me who had defined musical taste that I loved elevator music Are you ready The rock critic of the biggest newspaper in Philadelphia a cellist in a jazz quartet And somebody in my gang who saw herself as the second coming of Joni Mitchell three people who were really into music I had to tell them I loved elevator music I wanted to run out of the office and I thought he was crazy By the way I did it with all three of them None of them said to me oh Nancy we so admire your transparency They all looked at me like I had two heads But he said something to me that was profound And I say this to anybody who might be in a similar situation He said if you had more self-love and you accepted yourself more you wouldn't have been a match for this man What I first needed to be able to do was to love all parts of me That was my first therapeutic assignment And then when I confronted him which I did to be able to say he took advantage of It was a few years later that he you know in certain ways I felt used it wasn't confronting him It was just sharing with him what my truth was because it wasn't a battle because there was more Nancy in the soup Wow I really appreciate you sharing that because it's so interesting to hear like I'm sure people that maybe aren't in therapy are like wait like you had to go and talk about music How does that have to do with like a me too situation But it's like finding it within yourself of like who gives a fuck what anyone thinks about your taste in music if you like it But again we now know your taste in music because of the chaotic household you were brought up into And so then as you do work not to say that you couldn't love elevator music when

you were all you know whole and in therapy But you may be interested in a couple more genres as you do the work on yourself because it won't be so triggering But again it's like that step towards loving yourself and accepting yourself then you're able to walk into a room to someone that was essentially abusing their power over you and you were able to advocate for yourself in a different way than maybe had to thank you for thank you for appreciating that There are a lot of people who are standing up for themselves in a way that's not coming from their strength It's coming from weakness or self doubt or even self hatred that they are avoiding They think it's also something to be said especially for women of like you are not less than or weak If you need to take time in order to like confront something in your life it still can be so powerful if it takes you five years 10 years 20 years down the line like you're not stronger if you face it head on in that very moment or the next day like make sure you're good with yourself before you move forward with something that could potentially be very triggering to you And also make sure you're good with yourself because you'll feel that much better about it when you have the knowledge that like oh I can do this and I'm gonna be ok no matter what that person person's reaction because I'm good with myself So I think sometimes people get shame of like well why are you bringing it up 10 years later Because I need the time I wasn't able to do it then I love Alex I love what you're saying Besides the fact that I feel understood right now Um I love what you're saying and you're appreciating why I would even think to share that story with you I feel I feel very lucky that that's what he had me do because it put me it put me very much on the path of self acceptance and when you're really really accepting yourself you don't have to be strident Yeah And it it does go back to what we're talking about today again It's like everyone listening like you're in these relationships and and if you're having a hard time and you're in these fights with your partner and you feel like you quite literally are like disintegrating in moments because you don't know how to act You don't know what to say You don't know how to go about it You feel stuck you feel like the same issue keeps coming up A lot of times not to say that you're partner is not doing something wrong But a lot of the times a lot of this can be solved by you just looking inward and really trying to connect the dots for yourself And then all of a sudden you're going to be able to be a different better person in that relationship because you're going to be mature enough to own something that you did And then you could actually in a great way be the person That's the catalyst towards healthier relationship Because if your partner sees you constantly owning

things naturally as human beings they're going to try to replicate what you're doing because they're going to feel like wow you're being so vulnerable you're connecting this to your childhood or to an insecurity or whatever it is Now I want to share And so I really appreciate you sharing that because it is very intertwined into the conversation we're having today And I think a lot of women unfortunately but fortunately you being here like probably can relate to that situation Nancy and are gonna be like oh shit like I've got work to do but it's exciting to know what's on the other side which is clarity and a voice for yourself I I love you're making a big deal about it Because it isn't an easy thing to confront an abuser But sometimes it's harder to tell something You somebody something you feel embarrassed about such a great point when you're in dynamics in relationships and you get to this place where you're like you have it's a post argument standstill Let's say I'm sure we have all been there where both sides have said sorry everything is technically fine but you're sitting on opposite sides of the couch not really speaking It's like oh we got over it like we we talked it through We're fine How do you regain intimacy and closeness after an argument that clearly doesn't feel resolved That is so human We've all been there That is that is so human I you know one of the uh things I I say about my book and my thinking is how easy it is to go from cozy to crazy like you can be in the most loving space with someone I I promise you I'm gonna address your point You can be in the most loving space with someone and they just look at their cellphone for like a nanosecond and you got the evening is ruined I mean it's the unbelievable the speed It's the speed Alex from which we go from cozy to crazy or the person is telling a story and they've gotten a detail wrong and every OK it is takes so long to go back from crazy to cousin and some of that is really because our fight or flight response has gotten activated And so I am a big believer that the fastest way to get where we want to be is to also be where they are So I might say to a partner I've certainly been in the situation and you can see I have a number of tricks on my sleeve and in the spirit of full disclosure I I can't tell you I immediately have the trick from going from crazy to cozy I just say I'm not completely back yet I would say maybe 71% And then he says I'm I'm back maybe 72% And you join with each other or on your around your not being back so that you just be with what it is We just or I might say to my partner we're not back yet We got pretty activated My nervous system has not calm down Is there something I could say to you right now that would make you feel cared for Hm What could I say right now That could be soothing to you What could I say right now I love that

because most of the time there's something either a lingering that you can just speak up and it's like well I guess I'm just having a hard time because this keeps happening and you keep doing this one thing that's hurting me And I'm trying to understand like how is this not like there's gonna be something that you're holding on to that then maybe and now that it's more settled and you're now more you're in a better place where you're both kind of not activated that then you maybe your partner then can really say I hear you And I'm really gonna be more conscious of when it can get to that place that I I'm gonna make an effort And then maybe they because it's like almost like I find when you're post fight you're sitting on opposite sides of the couch and it's awkward you then both want to fix it But that's also kind of a beautiful place where weirdly the conversation can become what you wish The initial conversation was where you're both more relaxed You're both willing to be like OK how are we going to sit here all night and do this Like let's connect let's find our way back Those are kind of the most beautiful moments But I agree You have to you have to make an effort to say I don't feel like I'm fully back right I am not a believer I I'm probably there I know there are exceptions to what I'm gonna say I'm not a big believer and fake it until you can make it sometimes But in general it's not a great policy So simply to be able for both of you to bond I remember once my partner said to me I know you hope I'll never do this again I know that in itself was coming I know you hope I will never do this again I cannot promise that I'm sure I will do it again But I'm trying and that was coming for me It was real him saying I will never do this again Wasn't as common take it in him saying I will never do this again which is really about see me in a good light see me in a good light right I will never do it again What is coming I I probably will do it again But I want you to know I want to get better at this Wow Yeah It's just like meeting your partner and again that does again validate like they know that you're stressed that they're going to do it again and we're human We can't ever make promises that we won't do something again That is a behavioral thing that's been kind of ingrained in the relationship but you can tell them you're going to try your damn hardest to make sure and to not try to hurt your partner again That feels pretty good I like that one What if someone is listening Nancy and is thinking this all sounds great But my partner and I never ever ever fight Is that at all a red flag for you It is It is And I must admit it's a prejudice and I am sure there are some very very evolved something Couples I don't buy it because what that says to me that that's a couple that's actually at some level terrified of difference I would say



in general um that is a couple where they're living in a sense of fusion Um emotional fusion where we have to be aligned it it in I I'm sure there's some exceptions I just have never seen them Yeah No I agree I feel like naturally as human beings we're individuals even as you can be the most in love and a great partnership like as human beings we have just different needs and wants and interests and and reactions and emotions and traumas and history So it's like conflict is normal and it is natural Actually you're making me think of something about it What a relationship is is a container to be known And if we're not having any conflict it's not important enough for me that you know me and it's not important enough to you to be known And that that makes me nervous It's a great point Yeah It's like it to not be known It's like why aren't you Because it if as you grow and change as human beings especially in a partnership you're going to have to adjust because one person may be growing at a different rate than the other One person may be seeing things about their past their childhood that they're working on that the other didn't recognize and So there's like a constant push and pull that's happening where naturally as human beings we're trying to fuse our lives together but it never should actually be fully fused Because the beautiful part of a partnership is it's a partnership where there's two people that are complete individuals that come together and bring things different to the table Naturally There should be conflict in moments I guess my next question though is when it comes to fighting I know there's no number that you can give But like how can a couple evaluate if the number of arguments they get into is unhealthy I would have to say some of the happiest couples I know myself from time to time Uh There's conflict This is the question not how much conflict but how much goodwill and positive interactions do you have so that it's a it's much more of a ratio It's not how much conflict is There are five or six times as many interactions where you just crack up or you make kind of shared eye contact over some private language or some private symbol or moments of intimacy And if you have that the conflict is not so scary I I really appreciate you coming on today I feel like I could have gone for like a whole another hour or two hours because and I would love to have you back on I think you obviously have such a great way of talking about relationships With yourself with a partner And I think that a lot of times breaking down specific instances like we did today sometimes you're like oh my God where are we going with this But it really is so ingestible for someone listening even the horns coming out of your head Nancy like it Now all makes sense of trying to be a better person for yourself and a better

partner in your relationship starts with you taking ownership And that also then forces you to look inward of like why are you the way you are What happened in your childhood And that is a really big path to begin on if people are not in therapy Like I understand why people are hesitant to begin opening that Pandora's box of what happened when you were younger Why are these your triggers But what I can say and what is is helpful What we talked about today is it's the beginning of you taking ownership and not being fully affected by just what your parents did When you were younger you can now have autonomy over your life the minute you start to recognize So I can't thank you enough for coming on This was like such a beautiful great conversation that I think is gonna help you II I totally I totally enjoyed it One of the things I was a little nervous about in the spirit of vulnerability you know we're different generations you're very hip I'm a recovery bookworm I was worried I would sound like Eleanor Roosevelt but I don't think that no that's what I was worried about Oh my gosh Nancy That makes me like I think that's also the beauty of what probably I mean you do and I do like in different capacities like it makes us better people when we meet people that maybe we don't know know we're going to be like minded or similar or we're going to be a little insecure Like in my point of view I was nervous because I know how much of an intellectual and how smart you are and how much you have done in this field and I'm just beginning and trying to keep up So like I appreciate you giving me the space to have a conversation where like thank you It would be a pleasure It would be It was just lovely talking to you I feel really received and I I look forward to um uh take two Yes we should maybe we can be in touch again and we can come up with even just like more specifics even if I tell my fans to write in specific things they're going through with their partner and we could just come back on and do another episode to just keep the conversation going Yeah I have an idea about it I'll let you know Oh great Ok Nancy Thank you so much You are so welcome