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*Automated transcription by Otter.ai*

Hi, and good morning, I hope you're having a lovely weekend. Thank you, as always, for supporting this project, supporting me. y'all help me pay my bills, and that is really powerful and impactful. And I hope that I can continue to be helpful to you this week.

So many conversations I've had, the theme was, I have something hard to tell a person I care about. How the hell do I do that? I'll probably split it into two parts, because the two main umbrella situations that I notice around this are - requests and revelations. what does that mean?

Requests being - I like or dislike this, I want or don't want this, I need or don't need this, right? It is an opening to a negotiation, it is an opening to collaboration on solutions. Most importantly, it is asking for a change, or expressing that a change should happen at some point. A revelation might be an event, an action, an identity, revealing a non negotiable fact. And it's not that I think likes/wants/needs are negotiable, I think those are more like opening the door to a discussion of how those things can be met. how those requests can be fulfilled. I don't see revelations as necessarily, in and of themselves. open for discussion. It's like, this is true, or this happened, and you need to know about it. And then maybe that leads to other conversations about - Okay, so how do I continue to know you? Or do I need new boundaries? Or do I accept this? And so today, I'm going to focus on the former, and then I'll make a part two about the latter.

So when it comes to requests, likes, wants and needs, I consider what is my frequency of exposure to this situation, that is not going the way I want it to or needed to, if it is very frequent, that might expedite my need to discuss this, right, because I keep getting hit with reminders that my need is not being met, and so forth. I also consider what is the intensity of my reaction? How high are the stakes? does this feel like a devastating I'm about to be abandoned? I have a primal need that needs to be met? Or is it an annoyance? Is it something that if I don't tell you over a year or so I'm gonna snap at you, and that there's a whole spectrum in between there is there an entanglement like the stakes are very high, because when we own property together, we're about to have a child together, any kind of hard to undo interdependence that could feel threatened.

So, telling an uncomfortable need to somebody, a rejection of that, potentially we feel could be a rejection of, or a loss of some staples of our life, understanding those things can sort of guide us on when and how, and with what level of urgency, we

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discuss it. So yeah, in considering who the audience is, what are their own vulnerabilities? What are their own histories? Like? were they raised in a home where there was a big demanding parent? And so they might be filtering our request through that lens? what is their, What are their buttons? What are their triggers? And can we be mindful of that when we approach requesting something.

so I'll give some examples to make it a little less abstract. Let's talk about likes and dislikes. this can usually be a little bit lower stakes, but not always. I actually had this week an uncomfortable conversation with a person I'm dating. They're into metal music, and I've tried listening, and I tried going to see their band. And I was like, I don't like this. because we've only been on a few dates. I felt like this is such an important part of their life and their identity and their passion. How do I share, it feels both low stakes, but potentially high stakes because it's a newer relationship, a loss of it would not devastate me. And also, I would like to continue it. And I don't want this person to feel fundamentally rejected for who they are. Because it's not just an interest. It's a life for them.

They got an album that they were really excited about. And I saw that as an in to discuss it was like, Oh, can you send me, a link to one of their songs that you really love. And it's not that I am repulsed by the sound. It's not that I am anti the culture, right. In fact, I've dated plenty of people who are like in noise bands, metal bands, I have a type right, incredibly modified and pierced and tattooed and very sweet, but scream in their music. And in text, I responded and I said, I have mixed feelings, seeing the music live. I could feel catharsis but I wouldn't necessarily feel relaxed playing it at home. And I said, I hope that's Not too basic of a reaction to have, with like little hand covering eyes emoji. And so critically, I wasn't using rejection statements, I wasn't saying like, who you are, what you love, it's bad. I don't like it. I was saying I have mixed feelings because that was true. I was acknowledging what I do appreciate about the thing, and saying, My emotional experience that I was having, I feel anxious. And that can be easier, more accessible for a person and clearer of why we don't want to engage in something. It's like, oh, well, if it makes you feel that way, then totally fine. You know? And that's essentially, what they said is like, Oh, well, I could understand that.

I said it early on in my noticing of it, if I had just gone weeks/months, like pretending to support the band showing up secretly hating it, and then it would become this building thing, where at some point, I'd be like, I can't pretend anymore, right? I can't fake this anymore. I hate this. Because I would have suppressed my real reaction for so long, it would come out without tact, at some point, it would come out even bigger. how many fights are about the dishes, but not about the dishes, but about the dishes? Like, how many small things go on acknowledged because Oh, the

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stakes seem low at first. But if they do it 100 times now it's a pattern now I'm angry. Now this is unacceptable. And the reaction is very large. So that's an example of a lower stakes. I like or dislike this.

What might a higher stakes like or dislike be? most of us usually have experience with this in the bedroom, for example, right? It can feel very emotionally high stakes to tell somebody we love this kink that you want or this position that you love, or the way you talked to me and it got us so hot, I hated that. Or the inverse of just like I really like being peed on. Right could be high stakes, like or dislike expression, what how do we go about even saying that, again? What's the frequency of exposure is this somebody you see once a year, and they do something that's a little in bed, but it doesn't feel like it's so important, or that I would experience it so often that I really need to prioritize pushing back on it. Maybe next time I see them, I'll say, hey, I meant to say this last time. i You don't love that as much. But if this is something I really like, or something I really hate, and it's a partner that I'm with frequently, that's gonna nudge me to say it faster.

But as well, absolutely. Who is it that we're talking to? So if it's a partner that really has a lot of sexual shame, and I want to say, I want you to hit me, I had this with a partner, before I was even polyamorous, I wanted to be hit, I wanted some impact. And I didn't really know a tactful way to ask for that. And trauma response, just instant trauma response from him, of just - his mother hit him. I was not seeing him. It's not that it's bad for me to like that is that if I'm disclosing that, I should probably upfront carefully, first validate, hey, I know this about you, whatever you feel about what I like sexually, just know that you'd have no pressure to participate in anything that would like bring up trauma for you grounding the conversation in a validation in a recognition of the person in front of me, especially if it is feeling very heavy, or if it could activate their alarm bells, and then their ears closed, and then they just are gone from the conversation, the earlier that I can validate your safe, I just want you to know a thing about me, that can make the conversation go a little bit more smoothly.

In my experience, if we omit it out of desire to not hurt their feelings or not Creep them out or not get a bad reaction, it will come out. Even if it comes out in five years, even if it comes out in the middle of a fight about something else. And that lying really is what hurts more than the reality of what we like or dislike. And if I can't even take you at your word at what you like or dislike, can I trust you with these commitments or I trust you to take care of me? So any form of withholding however small it might seem, however well intentioned when it comes out, will create a larger conflict than the original would have been.

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And that might be a good segue into a request, not just to be heard, but to do something about it. I like this and I want it we go back to that same framework. How often am I experiencing a want to do or stop doing something? Okay, should I say it sooner or later. For example, I had a breast lift surgery back in like 2018 and I had wanted that probably for 15 years, I had wanted that since my teen years, I knew I needed help, there's always a risk of rejection, there's always a risk of conflict coming from expressing a want, especially if what we want requires another person to participate. That's like, a request for them to change what they're doing or start doing something in order to accommodate us that fear is real.

And you know, if this had been a need, and we'll talk about needs in a second, I think it would have been a less vulnerable conversation. If I medically needed something, it would be kind of a dick move to say, well, you're on your own, even though we lived together that would not have carried the same fear as expressing a desire a want and an intentionality to do if circumstances allow this elective surgery, I felt clear on what the ask was, right? If I want this, what does that mean? I'm asking of you, I needed to have that answer ready that I need you to be available for X number of weeks and be willing to, basically serve me that needed to come hand in hand. Because if I say I want this, but I don't know what it means for you. One, it forces us to draw out the conversation over multiple conversations. But it could imply that I've thought nothing of how this impacts you. And I want it to be clear that I have.

And I can't remember the exact words that I used, right. But I think there is something along the lines of like, how would you feel if I told you I wanted a cosmetic surgery? And he thought about it. And he was like, Well, I love you, I'll always support you to do whatever you feel is best. I know you're in a good place with your eating disorder. Have you - I have to ask - done some unpacking of your motivations for this, like, is this a desire out of self hate to change? Or something else? And I felt so loved by that question. And I absolutely had already considered it. And so yeah, once he was clear that he wouldn't be supporting or enabling self harm, and he would actually be supporting me to love my body more. i Yeah, it was like a no brainer. Yeah, tell me the timeline, you think, if you need me to go to the doctor with you, if you're nervous about the consultation, like he was just there. He was there, had my back. So that is also the beauty of saying we want something or saying we don't want something anymore, is we could be seen we could be validated, even brought closer together.

So how do we say something we don't want that feels high stakes, right? That can be just as hard in saying we don't want something, it could be perceived as a rejection of a person, if I don't want to see each other as often. If I don't want to move in with you. If there's something I realized I don't want, especially in this relationship, that

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needs to be said that needs to be known. And it can be really hard to say it. Because it's feels counterintuitive to say something that brings about pain in our partner, but I specifically say it that way, because I don't think we're hurting, I don't think we're harming I think we are bringing up pain, and those I don't see as synonymous if I was harming my partner. Probably it would be if I moved in with them when I didn't want to, and it would come out at some point. And it's like, well, why did you get so integrated with me financially? And physically, if you didn't even want this? Right? That is harm.

I would be hurtful. If I said it in a very, like biting cold, callous way of Yeah, I would never want to live with you, that would be hurting them. But expressing I don't want that. That's just true. Right? And that's kind of neutral information. So yeah, going back to the frequency of how often am I engaging in this thought? Yeah, maybe one day we'd live together, sort of lofty future thoughts, in which case it could be discussed today. But it wouldn't totally cause harm to chill until it became a more tangible reality. But if there is active discussion of my lease is up, I want to move in with you like there's a ticking clock that then necessitates saying it as soon as possible. And what is the intensity of this feeling I'm having? Am I certain that I definitely don't want to live with this person? Or am I feeling apprehensive? Is there a way that we could make it a month to month thing in the beginning? Like is there a trial period kind of to see if we make good roommates? Like, what is the level of intensity with which I feel this? Because that would alter what I am asking for like what is the request? I don't want to do this. So either we don't do it at all, or we do it in a different way. Or we think about doing it later. Like maybe I just don't want to do it now. and those are all different outcomes that could be important to clarify in the initial conversation.

Critically though we can not minimize or shrink. If we No, I do not want to live with you period ever, it could be tempting if we see them getting upset to say, I mean, maybe in a few years, or maybe maybe we try it, that would be a betrayal of both of us, if I sort of tried to do something, despite being clearly not wanting to do it, creating a situation that would have a bigger conflict later. Like that's, that's the thing, this is all preventative right. And this is all these are all moves to keep people in our life, ideally, they always have an option to not, but I cannot continue to know someone intimately. If I'm hiding what I like, dislike, want or don't want.

if we have a partner who has high insecurity, very much envisions a different future for us. So they would be processing grief, conflating it to breaking up, like, sometimes people do have those deal breakers, if we're not escalating in this particular direction, then it's deal breaker, I don't want to be with you at all, there's the experience of a partner who has a really easily dysregulated nervous system, or they're actively

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working on trauma stuff in therapy. And so at the drop of a hat, they could be, spinning out, and we naturally want to prevent that or avoid that. And if we do not say it, that could be worse, this whole idea of I don't want to hurt them, I think the more honest thing that I've experienced in the past is, I don't want to feel uncomfortable, I don't want to receive their reaction, I don't want to witness them in pain. I don't want to feel powerless, that I'm confronted with the reality that what I want caused pain in a person that I think is a bit more specific than I don't want to hurt them. Because withholding information eventually hurts them.

I might lead with a validation of you're safe, I love you, I love our relationship, like some kind of grounding in what is absolutely true. What I absolutely want to make sure they don't misunderstand, that could still make them nervous, but it also sets the tone upfront, we will not forget, that is how this conversation was started. Once I give that grounding, I usually detach myself from the want or, or lack of want, I've realized I don't want to live together, or in a different framing can say I've noticed a desire to live alone, sometimes it can be received better, if we're observing a lack of desire that's happening to us, maybe that's not your style to say, in such a depersonalized way. But I personally enjoy that because I can not feel guilty for the like or dislike, I'm not doing this to them. The thing outside of my control is doing this to our plan that can kind of reinforce for me anyway, we're on the same team, what we do next could include some form of adding distance or even decoupling, right? But I critically am focused on not being adversaries with my partner, especially when I'm saying I don't like or I don't want something that they like or that they want.

Which brings us to need. like/want/need, these things can sometimes come in tandem, right? Sometimes they influence each other, maybe they don't need to have that distinction. Maybe they can be condensed all into I like this, therefore I want it therefore I need it because it's that important to me, right? But it's not always coming together as a package deal. I don't want this but I realized I need it is common, or I need to not do that. And I'd love to work with you to get to a place where we can do that together. Right? There's a nuance here. And so it's not always synonymous that what we like is what we want is what we need. So for example, I realized this year I need to rest more and I need to lower my stress and anxiety levels. This was agreed upon by my therapist and my medical doctor. Now the solutions to that need could be many. Who do I need to collaborate with on that need?

I work directly not just with you cuties, not just with my commitment to this project, but I also still work with clients and another field, how would more rest How would less work fit? Were in the calendar or were on the timeline of our projects. Could I scale back a bit of my involvement and so that turned into a logistical strategic collaboration. it wasn't just saying I'm going to work less. So heads up. I mean, could

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do that, but it would set a different tone. I want there to be a gentleness and ease, I want them to feel considered. I need this. And I want you to have your needs met, too. So what do we do about it? Can we talk about it? In approaching the conversation, I am definitely open to trial and error. Or you tell me your idea. And I'll tell you what I think about it, I don't have all the ideas because I don't have all the information. I don't have your reaction yet, that can be malleable, that can be flexible.

And also, who is sitting in front of me? Are they prone to pushing boundaries? Are they prone to disrespecting my needs, then I might come in a little hotter and a little bit firmer. But if they're friendly with me, and still they might feel anxious, or they might get scared, I might say, well, this is happening to us, this need is happening to what we're doing. Can we talk about solutions, and that can be a lot gentler way and in doing so kind of lower the barrier to entry for me, like remove the block for me to even bringing it up in the first place.

So that's what comes to mind for the first part of hard conversations like swans needs. I am curious if I've left out any big categories, right? I'm not you know, a comprehensive knower of all ways relationships can go so I would love your feedback. If there's like an angle to this that could still be addressed. Part two will come soon. And let me know what else you want to talk about after that because I'm trying to plan a little bit in advance for the holidays. I love you so much. Have a beautiful week.

xx