

Dive Deep Interview with Milan and Kay Yerkovich

www.NoMorePerfectDateNight.com

Jill Savage: Hello! We want to welcome you today to No More Perfect Date Night, and this is our Dive Deep Interview. Mark and I are so excited about who we have joining us today: Milan and Kay Yerkovich. They are the authors of *How We Love*, and their book was absolutely transforming for us.

Mark Savage: It was. It just really helped us to understand the unhealthy framework that we had and gave us a vision for moving beyond it.

JS: Absolutely.

MS: We're excited that you're here with us today.

JS: Welcome, Milan and Kay.

Kay Yerkovich: Thank you. We're happy to be with you.

Milan Yerkovich: We're glad to be here.

JS: Well, we are thrilled. You are in sunny California, we are in cold Illinois but we're glad that technology allows us to connect. So would you just tell us a little bit about your marriage, about yourselves, about your family, and what you guys do? Just share a little bit about yourself.

KY: Well, we've been married 45 years.

MS: Wow!

KY: And we have four grown children and nine grandchildren. Our ministry that we're in now really was born out of our own marriage issues and some of the difficulties we've faced, and God's answer to that prayer in helping us and giving us wisdom to change that frustrating pattern that was in our marriage.

JS: I love that, and I love that that's really the heart of your ministry. I mean, really honestly, that's the heart of ours as well. I think that's why we connect with you all so well. But can you give us a little snapshot of your marriage story and how that helped you and how *How We Love* came to be from that?

[laughter]

MY: I like that, "how How We Love."

[laughter]

MY: How *How We Love* came about...as we found ourselves at the 15-year mark of our marriage in a repetitive pattern that, like you said, Mark, there was a pattern that was not constructive, it didn't work well. It was repeating a series of frustrations over and over and over again. At that particular time, Kay and I said, "*Something's wrong.*" I was a pastor of a church at the time, and I realized that there were places of inadequacy or brokenness in me. I got to the place where I said, "*Lord, show us what needs to grow up here because something's just not right.*" And instead of seeing the problem as being in other people I said, "*Lord, you've convinced me much of the problem is me.*" We started on a journey of growth and began to learn to speak to one another at levels we'd never spoken before. Honestly, fearfully relating what was in our hearts, our fears, acknowledging a nasty core pattern that was born out of insecurity and a lack of training, of knowing how to listen or speak. That began our journey and now 30 years later we're a very different couple, but I'd say we worked very hard for two to three years to change that core pattern.

JS: You've identified something that you call "love styles," and my guess is you weren't using the language of "love styles" when you were identifying this in your own marriage. Tell us about the concept of "love styles," What does that mean, how does it show up in an everyday marriage, where do we struggle with this?

KY: Well, God brought an area of research into our awareness called attachment theory. Basically, attachment theory researchers just studied how parents attach to their kids in some patterns that can end up affecting you in a lifelong way that aren't very productive. And since God's the author of attachment and He's the one that designed that whole interaction, we realized they're just describing how sin plays out. We took the research and realized that when you grow up, you're downloaded, you're imprinted with a love style that is born out of your relationship with your parents. How they do emotions, what the unspoken rules are about feelings, needs; how well they listen. We ask our audiences often, "*Do you have a memory of comfort where somebody really saw you were distressed and noticed that you weren't doing well when you were growing up, a parent, a grandparent who really sought you out to listen? Did you experience comfort? Did you learn that relief comes from people?*" These attachment styles and these love styles are really based on the level of emotional awareness and the memories of comfort that you do or don't have growing up.

MY: And these aren't always conscious memories, these are feeling states. If emotions start to come up, some people want to back away from those very quickly. Some people become fearful around emotions and/or honesty and they become frightened. Some of us avoid, some of us then get angry and pursue. Some pursue out of fear, which is what I did. And so these are early, early imprints that are lodged in a part of the brain where we don't recall them but they affect the programming of how we behave and react in relationship. So it's a lot about reactivity in relationship of how I feel toward and around you, especially if there is stress or disagreement or friction.

KY: Especially in a marriage.

MS: Yeah.

KY: People say, "*Well, he's the only one that makes me feel like this.*" And it's like, "*Well, yes, you're back into a primary relationship in a home, and that's where these love styles really blossom.*" The love styles are...you might think of them as broken patterns that we learned that are normal to us, and we don't even recognize them as areas of brokenness that we need to grow in.

MS: Hmm.

MY: Right.

JS: Right. Right. And you're right. Sometimes you don't realize...what was normal for you, you don't realize is unhealthy.

MY: Right. That's right.

JS: Until you look at it through a different lens or through someone else's eyes. I know there was a situation... Mark was raised in a very physically violent home, and there was a situation, after we were married. We went back and we actually stayed the night, and his stepfather became extremely violent. We were in a bedroom and I was trying to figure out how to get out the window. I was just completely flipping out thinking, "*we have got to get out of here.*"

MS: And I'm like, "*What are you doing... What's up with you? This is normal.*"

KY: This is normal. Right.

MS: Yeah. Yeah.

JS: Yeah, that was very eye opening. It was the last time we ever stayed there. And it was very eye opening to Mark to realize, "*No, this isn't normal.*" I look back at where we launched, and we didn't even know anything about love styles or blueprints or anything. But we did launch into trying to learn more about our backgrounds, and how what happened in the past you bring into the present.

KY: Absolutely. And some in obvious ways and some in ways that you just don't recognize.

MS: Yeah. Totally, I can see that.

JS: Yeah. Well, we'd really love to spend the bulk of our time with you both really digging into the love styles and talking about them and why they are important. We mentioned love styles in our *No More Perfect Marriages* book, and we do a brief overview. We point people to your book, but we'd love to hear you just share your heart on the concept and then specifically on each love style, and your own personal love styles. As you share that, share your journey with whatever love styles you've dealt with as well. So can we jump in there?

KY: Sure.

MY: Sure.

KY: Well, the five love styles we're going to talk about are the avoider, the pleaser, the vacillator, the controller, and the victim. I'll start with the avoider since that was my love style. An avoider comes from a family where there's an unspoken rule: just don't show your feelings. If I showed my feelings, my dad got mad, my mom got anxious and I just learned without realizing it that it's better just to keep your feelings to yourself and detach from them. Avoiders learn to be independent, to not pay attention to feelings. They dismiss feelings both in themselves and other people. And I don't

have memories of comfort because to have a memory of comfort you have to be able to be sad. And so, going back to that initial question, I didn't learn that people are a place to go when you're not okay. It was up to me to figure out what to do with myself when I wasn't okay. It never even really occurred to me to tell him when I wasn't okay. It took a lot to make me feel unstable because I was used to shutting down. That was all normal to me. It took me until the 15-year mark of our marriage for me to realize that these learnings were greatly impacting my ability to really connect in any way that was emotional, because I didn't have any emotions. We begin to see that that was very destructive. It wasn't a good thing.

KY: Now, an avoider is usually very responsible and there's a good side to independence. The trouble is, it's unbalanced. The avoider can't really ask for help. They don't know how to go to a person for relief. I had very hard time putting any words to what was inside, because you learn self-awareness when a parent asks you to describe your inner self. I didn't have those experiences, so I didn't really have words for what was on the inside. That's something I had to learn after the 15-year mark of our marriage.

JS: Mm-hmm. Right.

MY: To me that felt like emotional apathy and relational apathy. There was a natural disconnect that was created, which then aggravated or irritated me because I was more sensitive than to closeness and distance. I would have to modify something Kay said. We're going to look at *six* attachment styles, the last one being a secure attachment that we're all trying to grow into. These are attachment styles that are defined by 70 years of attachment research, and we call them love styles for our book. But as you can imagine, this non-relational, emotionally suppressed person, where I didn't know what was going on inside of her...

KY: I didn't even know.

MY: And she didn't know. It just created an alarm in me. This is not about gender either, you see. There's been a lot of talk in the last several decades that about gender difference. We typically associate emotional avoidance with males. But here you see clearly is a female with this attachment style, so these are not about gender. These are about how you happen to have that early experience. So, were you going to say something, Jill?

JS: Well, I was going to say, what's interesting is my love style is avoider as well.

MS: Right.

JS: So here you've got two females. [chuckle] And I completely relate to that. What I didn't understand is that I was unintentionally sending a message to Mark that I did not need him.

KY: Right. And the truth is, I didn't really need him. Did I like being married? Yeah, I like being married. But did I need him? No, I learned not to need. That's part of the avoider imprint is that you learn to meet your own needs, not to show needs and that needs are almost something that will be a painful experience if you're needy because no one's going to see.

MY: So Kay actually says that, Jill, to audiences. She'll look at the audience after describing the avoider and say, "Did I really need Milan?" And the answer implied is, "No, not emotionally, not

relationally." There was no distress for me to comfort in her life.

JS: Yup.

MS: Yup.

JS: That was the way it was for us as well. In fact, we had a situation that happened, this was shortly after Mark returned home from our separation, and I knew I had to make changes. I knew I had to do something different. I got a very distressing text one afternoon. I was in the kitchen, he was in the family room, and I began to respond emotionally to that text in the way I had for 30 years. I started to head upstairs to go to the bedroom and cry by myself. I was not much of a crier anyway, but if I did cry, it was going to be by myself.

KY: Absolutely.

JS: So I headed up the stairs, and I caught myself halfway and I thought, "*No, that was the old way.*" I came back downstairs, I walked into the family room where he was, I showed him the text, I burst into tears, and I crawled into his lap.

MY: Wow.

JS: And it was the first time in 30 years that he had ever comforted me.

MS: Yeah, and I loved it. I had dreamt of this and the opportunity to love her through it and lead her through it was quite incredible.

MY: Wow.

KY: I so relate to that, Jill.

MY: That's a beautiful story.

KY: I know. It took me... I had to have a feeling word list to even know what did I feel?

JS: Yup.

KY: And then to reach out to a person is so frightening when you've spent your lifetime doing it on your own. It feels so vulnerable, and neediness almost felt pathetic to me. I had to really unlearn that and realize that, "*No, Jesus wept in the garden and asked for help. And Jesus was not an avoider.*" So, if I was going to be sanctified moving in that direction, I'd have to really grow in my ability to ask for help, articulate feelings, and let my needy side learn to be dependent.

JS: Mm-hmm. Right. Absolutely.

MS: Yeah.

JS: Agreed. Alright, so we've got the avoider love style. What would be the next one?

MY: Well, the pleaser is also, if you will, a close cousin to the emotionally avoidant person because the pleaser also wants to avoid disharmony, discord, conflict, and they are very apprehensive also about negative feelings and emotions. They don't like to acknowledge their own feelings and emotions, nor those of others. They want them all to go away and they want the other person to smile so they can smile. So if you're okay, I'll be okay. If you're happy, I'm happy. The pleaser cues off of the other person at an overly dependent level for their view of self. They're always trying to scurry around, they're very fear based, and they're trying to make the other person happy. So the only goal... Can you imagine, Jill and Mark, if Kay is quiet or reclusive and she's not smiling or affirming to me, then that would set my alarms off and I'd be wanting to know what's wrong and what happened. Is everything okay? Did I make you upset? And so, my whole approach of pursuing her ended up being pesky and feeling overly needy. And of course, that wasn't the attractive person I'd hoped and wanted to be [chuckle] as a husband.

MS: Right.

MY: But it was born out of fear, which grew out of my childhood. I was only okay if my explosive parent was okay. I learned very early that when the explosive parent was smiling, then I could smile. But I grew up, and I carried that with me into my adulthood. So, that's the pleaser. They're very fear-based and they just want everything to be okay quickly.

MS: Yeah.

JS: Wow.

MY: They don't like reality. They don't want to discuss problems. They don't want to discuss yesterday's bad news. They live very much in the day, in the present, and they don't want to look at anything that's difficult.

JS: Yeah, and that was your (Mark's) number too.

MS: Yeah. Yeah, definitely I can see that in my home growing up, so that blueprint that was established. It was my stepdad and if he was smiling, we were good, but we also couldn't trust it to be true.

KY: Oh, right. Right.

MS: It was like a moving target, so I definitely carried that into adulthood.

JS: One of the things I also notice is, I think pleasers tend to take the temperature of the room and the temperature of the relationship.

MY: Right.

MS: Yeah.

KY: Everyday.

MS: Everyday.

KY: More than once a day.

JS: And avoiders, I don't know about you, I'll speak for myself but...

MS: What temperature?

JS: What temperature? [chuckle]

KY: Right. He would say, "*How are you?*" "*Fine.*" That's what all avoiders say when you ask them, "*How are you?*" "*Fine.*" "*Well, are you sure?*" "*Yeah, I'm sure.*" "*Well, you don't look fine,*" "*Really, I am fine.*" Over and over and over again for 15 years.

MY: Let me also add to that, Kay was also an introvert. Now, an introvert mustn't be confused with avoider because an introvert is someone who needs to be alone to recharge their battery. Crowds, people, stimulus wear them out, then they need to be by themselves to recharge. They will withdraw into a place that doesn't have people in it to recharge their battery. All that withdrawal also accelerated the alarms inside of me, with the emotional shutting down and the introverted withdrawal; I didn't know how to make sense of it 30 years ago. She's still an introvert but she's no longer an avoider.

KY: Right.

MS: Right.

JS: Yep, I totally understand that.

MS: That's Jill.

JS: Because that's me. [chuckle]

MS: Yeah.

JS: Yeah, totally.

KY: Now we can define that and we understand it and he even often says to me, "*You need some introvert time, don't you?*" And I'm like, "*Yeah, I really do.*" "*Okay, go take it.*" Instead of just that internal reactivity of fear, he understands that now.

MY: Well, that fear's not there anymore, we're at a different place now.

JS: I would say, you're not making her behavior about you anymore.

MY: Correct.

KY: That is correct.

MY: That's something we often do, we personalize the behavior of the other person. We take it on

personally as though this is something about me when, in fact, it's about how the other person relates in close relationship even to others. We personalize it and, of course, in marriage that can feel very difficult and hurtful.

KY: Yeah, we tell couples all the time, your marriage problems didn't start in your marriage. They started before you ever met each other and the rules you learned about relationship.

MS: Oh, yeah.

JS: That's great.

JS: Okay, so we have avoider, we have pleaser, the third one?

KY: The third one is called a vacillator, and this person was raised in a home where usually there is some connection, which they love, but it's inconsistent. It's usually more based on the parent's mood to connect than really the child's needs. This child gets enough connection to turn up the longing and the desire for more, but then they're made to wait and in that waiting period, they're frustrated and sometimes angry that they're made to wait. By the time the parent comes back and wants to connect again, they're conflicted. I want you, but I'm mad at you. I can't depend on you, you show up when you want to, and of course children don't have the words to really articulate all that. Vacillators are in and out. They feel like, I love you, I don't like you. This is great, this is awful. Often that's the experience with the parent, it's just really good or it's kind of nothing.

KY: Vacillators, I call them the kings and queens of hope, because they deal with pain by idealizing the future and idealizing life, so dating goes very well for them because it's also ideal. But then when marriage happens and they're made to wait, because that's part of marriage, they get very triggered. They get very angry and disappointed, and they don't realize that their own abandonment in their own childhood, their mate triggers that and they're more likely to protest when they're stressed. Avoiders flee, they get out of Dodge. Pleasers freeze and want to fix you, and vacillators protest, they get angry. They tell you what's wrong, and what you need to do to fix it, and they don't really see their dynamic as a part of the problem.

MY: Yeah. They blame the other person for their emotional state. If you're not looking at me, visualizing me, or I don't feel seen and I feel insecure then this horrible feeling inside of abandonment, shame, loss is triggered. Then, *"I blame you for that because here I am in your presence and you made me feel that way"*. Their introspection and self-awareness is very low.

MS: Yeah.

KY: Sometimes the abandonment in the background was blatant. Sometimes the dad or mom left. My dad was a vacillator and he could be home, but he wasn't present. So they usually have a parent that was in and out.

MY: What were you going to say, Mark?

MS: Well that that's my primary style, and definitely what you've said is so true. I'm the poster child. [chuckle]

KY: What's great about this whole love style concept is that everybody can find their style. It's based on a continuum from mild, medium to strong, but generally everybody has at least a little bit of something. Sometimes we have a lot because of our history. With your violent, unpredictable stepdad, and then something happened to your real dad, that's a lot of abandonment right there.

MS: Yeah.

JS: Yep, very much so. Even just understanding... not only understanding yourself, but as we've dug into this, me understanding the lens that then Mark looks at our relationship through, and for him to understand the lens that I look at our relationship through. As we were moving from avoider and vacillator and pleaser to secure, that gave us a higher level of compassion and patience with each other.

KY: Definitely.

JS: Because we really understood that it was this blueprint that was driving that. What a difference that made. I think that helped our healing.

KY: The thing that bugs you most about your spouse probably has a wound sitting right under it. A childhood wound. When you see that, it's like *"Oh, no wonder you do that! That makes so much more sense to me now."* And you start to have compassion, and that is a big page-turner in a marriage.

MS: Oh, for sure. Yeah.

JS: It sure is. Okay, so we have avoider, and we have pleaser and vacillator. Number four.

MY: Number four would be the chaotic, disorganized attachment, which is a home that is dangerous, or the child is put into a position where there is fright without solutions. Often the parents are missing in action because they have addictions, they are emotionally unstable people themselves. It's a home where it's disorganized to the child. They don't know rhyme or reason to connection, or safety, or comfort, or who's safe, or who's not safe. It's called chaotic and disorganized. The child often suffers immensely in this home. The child is threatened often. We hear stories of abuse, misuse, neglect, persecution of the child. We just hear horrible things.

MY: And then these children grow up, and they can kind of flip into one of two modes. The one who is going to push back on the system and become angry, and say, *"I'm so humiliated and shamed by the control that others had over me that I will choose to flip, and I will become controlling. Everybody needs to do what I say. I will control my world so that there's nothing unpredictable, and then I will feel safe."*

MY: The other person is a person who has learned to tolerate the intolerable, and they're used to it. So they continue... They don't protest, they continue to remain the victim persona as they walk into adulthood because they don't know how to tell people no, they've learned how to tolerate the intolerable. They simply walk into adulthood in the same mode. And so they don't know how to protect themselves. They don't have boundaries. They freeze also. The controller also protests and fights with anger like the vacillator, but the vacillator is trying to connect and improve connection. The controller is attempting to control for the purpose of compliance, because, *"if you comply, I feel*

safe."

KY: And they often don't realize what is at the root of that control.

MY: No, they don't. None of us realize why we do that stuff.

KY: It's all about childhood pain. If I can have control, I'll never have to feel that again. Of course, we know that you have to feel it again in order to heal. You have to have the comfort and compassion that you did not get as a kid. Many times people from this chaotic category, they will say, *"Well, I'm all of them."* I have people come up and say, *"Well, I think I'm all of them."* And my next question is, "Did you have a very difficult childhood?" They always say yes, and I say, *"Well, you tried everything, so just pick the thing you do the most in your marriage right now and work on that."* Because as a kid, you'll try and adapt, but nothing works in this home.

MY: Yep.

JS: Right.

MS: Yeah.

JS: So when I think about... Here is the junk in the trunk that we all carry into adulthood. But then you put two people with junk in the trunk together. And you guys call it a dance.

MY: And a core pattern.

JS: Okay, a dance and a core pattern. It's how your dysfunctional love style works with your spouse's dysfunctional love style. Talk about that for a little bit: The core patterns, and what happens when this all comes to a head in marriage.

KY: Well, it's like two histories colliding. Depending on the two love styles interacting, what we can do is we can identify a very predictable core pattern. For example, you were the avoider-vacillator. The vacillator's trying to get connection. The avoider doesn't even get it. This makes the vacillator angry. This makes the avoider retreat. Then as the avoider retreats, the vacillator gets even more angry. *"Come on!"* The avoider is like *"Come on what? I don't get it. I don't like your anger."* *"Yeah, but you don't connect."* Around we go, and it's very predictable.

MY: And that's a bad dance.

KY: It's a bad dance.

MS: Yeah.

KY: It's a frustrating core pattern. For us, it took us 15 years to have honest conversation. Do you want to describe our core pattern?

MY: Yeah. I would pursue her like the vacillator would pursue. I would pursue out of fear, not anger, because anger was something that was a separating emotion. I didn't want to risk separation so I tried to be nice. *"You want a back rub? What can I do for you? Can I do something nice? Blah"*

blah blah."...because I was alarmed at her distance. That pursuit would push her away because it would feel suffocating and overbearing. And then she would retreat further which would then further alarm me, which would then speed up the chase.

KY: It's just a quieter chase, than your vacillator-avoider.

MY: Well, and there's more back rubs involved in that too.

KY: Yeah, that's right.

[laughter]

MY: That what's I'm saying and more nice things.

MS: Yeah.

MY: But the bottom line is, too much niceness is like having too many sweets: It starts to get nauseating after a time. I had to one day say to Kay, "I realize how frightened I am as a human being." That came about in reading a bunch of journals that I was thinking of throwing away to destroy the evidence of my journaling. I read through them and I realized that I only journaled when I was anxious or fearful.

MY: And I told her that, I said, "*I realize I'm a fear-based person.*" Like you said, it was a part of a turning point where I said, "*I don't want to do this anymore.*"

KY: Yeah. He was so used to being anxious that he didn't even really describe it as anxiety. This is true of many pleasers, they have high levels of anxiety, but they don't call it anxiety because it's just normal to them.

MS: Oh, right.

MY: We tell people in our offices, (we have counseling offices and we specialize in couples), and all of our staff therapists, we teach people that you have two choices: You can either learn to manage this core pattern and eventually take charge of it...

KY: And move out of it.

MY: And move out of it in a positive way towards secure attachment. Or it will take charge of you for the rest of your life. We need to pick our pain. The pain of growth, because it's hard to grow.

KY: It's hard to change those habits.

MY: It's not fun to change and to do something different than what I'm normally... Like you said half way up the stairs, you had to check yourself and go, "*I'm going to do what I'm not used to doing which is go to Mark.*"

KY: Which is uncomfortable.

MY: Of course...

JS: Big time.

MS: Yeah.

[overlapping conversation]

[laughter]

JS: We're now five years down the road and I no longer get half way up the stairs, but I still have that moment where I have to realize what my default is, and then I have work against that default. Knowing, no, this is not healthy. Even five years later, I feel like I get there quicker, but there's still a little bit of a battle there between what I feel like doing and did for many, many, years-and what I know is the healthy thing to do.

KY: Right. I love that you shared that, Jill, because those imprints are very ingrained, and I would have to say at the five year mark I was right where you are. And down the road a bit further, I don't even have that pull to go be alone. I'm just heading for a person. The beauty of this is, if you really work on it, you can free your marriage from that core pattern entirely. It just takes time and the desire to keep doing the thing that is uncomfortable. Over time it becomes less and less uncomfortable to where, I now think that going to each other for comfort and speaking the truth in love is very normal.

KY: Another concept that I think we really learned was to repair ruptures. And each love style has difficulty with repairing a rupture because they didn't learn those skills growing up. As we were growing out of the avoider and pleaser, we had to learn to have very honest conversations, we had to learn to listen well, and we had to learn to repair something when it was ruptured instead of just pretending it didn't happen.

KY: But oh, the freedom, the freedom of being out of that.

MY: Yeah.

JS: Yes.

MS: Yeah.

JS: And what does that repair look like, are you talking about a full apology? Asking for forgiveness? What elements are part of repairing the rupture?

MY: I would say that the elements of repairing the rupture are to find out what the other person just experienced and to say, *"You know we had a rough patch right there in the car. What happened to you during that time? I'll tell you what happened to me. Let's reconstruct the accident scene and let's see if we can then describe what was going on."* A lot of times when couples have collisions, relationally and emotionally, it's because they're stressed or they're somehow at a point of weakness. Or they're at a place where they're just not doing well and they haven't thought to tell the other person that. One of the things we'll do is I'll say, *"You know what, I really am irritable today, I didn't*

sleep well last night. I woke up and...I had some bad dreams. Or I woke up and realized that the following things were taking place and I felt agitated about them. So I'm a little bit more irritable today. I just want you to know that. It's not about you, it's about what's going on inside of me."

MY: So, what you're describing the two of you as, and what we're describing us as, is we now have a secure attachment. I'm comfortable in my skin, I'm able to take the real me and present it to the real her knowing that she'll see and accept and love me for who and what I am. She can also be different, have different opinions, and different thoughts which we can tolerate. We have compassion and empathy for one another and we don't cause further harm. And that's what we call secure attachment.

KY: Yeah. But we don't have a perfect marriage. We still have ruptures.

MY: Right.

KY: It's just they're really not based on the core pattern anymore; they're just based on life.

MY: Yeah.

MS: Right.

KY: However, learning how to repair those is a big learning curve because we didn't get those skills growing up.

MY: Mm-hmm.

JS: Mm-hmm.

KY: We call that the Comfort Circle in our book. We find that people have the hardest time knowing what to ask. On our website www.howwelove.com, in the freebies section, you can scroll down in the blue band at the bottom and there's a guide there called the Guide for the Listener in the Comfort Circle. It's eleven questions that you can use to ask another person, and stay as the listener through all eleven questions, no matter what you hear. You'll be amazed at what you find out.

MY: Yeah.

KY: It's just a guide to help people.

MY: Well, the Comfort Circle is the reparative piece to these broken attachment styles. We learn to communicate with one another and build a new cycle. We're trained in cycles, over and over and over and over again, as infants. But we retrain ourselves in cycles over and over and over again. The Comfort Circle is the last third of our book which talks about having self-awareness, speaking the truth in love, learning to listen to each other, and then finding whatever the resolution is that's needed for the moment. To your point, Jill, sometimes it involves an apology, sometimes it just involves an explanation, sometimes it involves reassurance. Sometimes it involves ownership, like I was evidencing there a moment ago. *"I'm feeling irritable today. It's about me right now, it's not about you."* These are some of the things that are in our book as the Comfort Circle.

JS: Gotcha.

MS: Yeah, that's powerful.

JS: You know, you just did that the other day. He did exactly that conversation. He said, "*I just need you to know I am irritable today. I'm struggling with these couple of things, and they're in my head.*" I so appreciated that. We've talked about that on our blog. Are you pushing information to your spouse or requiring your spouse to pull it from you?

MS: Right.

KY: Right.

MY: Yeah.

JS: That makes such a difference because then it helps you to also not personalize their behavior.

MS: Yeah.

KY: But, you have to be self-aware to do that.

MS: Right. Right.

KY: I didn't have that as an avoider, and he was aware of me but not himself. And vacillators are aware of how you hurt them but their own self-awareness is low.

MS: Yeah.

KY: Of course controllers and victims, all they're aware of is-that was painful back there.

MS: Yeah.

KY: That skill of self awareness, using a feeling word list in your conversations, and always referring to the list and talking about feelings are huge parts of developing emotional intelligence in your marriage.

MS: Yeah. I really do appreciate your website too... the information that you have there, we refer to that often. Actually I've been using your resources in my employee relationships.

KY: Yes, it helps, doesn't it?

MS: Oh my gosh. We had a huge conversation with one of my employees who is an avoider, and navigating that conflict differently this time because of my own emotional health but also your resources, so I appreciate that.

KY: Oh that's so neat to hear.

MS: Yeah.

KY: That's very exciting.

MS: Yeah.

JS: Well this has been a great conversation.

MS: Yeah.

JS: We are just so grateful for your willingness to join us and...

MS: Yeah.

JS: Our hope is that there have been some light bulb moments for our members as they have listened to this or watched it. I do have one last question, it's a question we ask all of our experts, and that is, just from a personal level, since we call this No More Perfect Date Night and we encourage couples to take time with each other. Do you guys have a favorite date night that you do, just the two of you?

KY: Oh gosh. Well...

MY: You've stumped us! [laughter]

[laughter]

KY: For me, it is two things. We love going out to dinner, and we pick quiet restaurants now, and it doesn't have to be expensive. Just having that time away from the house and putting our phones down, and just having a relaxing dinner with no interruptions is a huge connect point for us.

MS: Yeah.

JS: I love that you said that though. You don't even have kids at home right now.

KY: No.

JS: You're past that point. For couples that have kids at home, that's even more important, but even when...

MS: It's still important.

JS: It's still important to step away from just the routines at home and say, "*Hey, we're here for each other.*"

MS: Right.

KY: Right.

MY: And the date night or special things we do for each other tell the other person, "*I see you,*" and

tell the other person, “*You're important to me.*” It can take the form of buying somebody something that we know they like, or it could be a date night. Every single day Kay and I check in with each other, and we know each other's emotional state, and we care about how the other person thinks, feels, and how they're doing. We can monitor one another well. As empty nesters, we don't have a lot of distractions and so we're able to be able to stay in sync with each other. But if you have kids you really need to pull away so that you can stay married.

KY: Absolutely.

MY: A lot of couples allow children to prevail over the marriage.

MS: Right.

MY: I tell people that parenting is a phase within a marriage. If you're going to have a marriage after the phase of childrearing is over, it means you've done some work. I would have to say our favorite things to do are to be in, as Kay said, quiet places where we are enjoying one another...

KY: Like at the beach.

MY: Yeah.

KY: Huge.

MY: Then I'm going to say something that just really, maybe you hadn't thought of. Non-sexual physical touch is important. We hold hands, we still kiss, we still hug each other. Craving closeness and physical proximity that's comforting, that doesn't always turn into sex, is just really important. It's part of the friendship. Those are just some highlights.

MS: Yeah.

JS: I love that.

MS: That's cool. Part of the friendship.

JS: Exactly.

MS: I love that.

JS: Very good. Well you guys, this has been a great conversation. Thank you for joining us.

MS: Yeah, thank you.

KY: We loved it. We love the work you're doing and keep up the good work. We love your testimony. We love that you're using it now to help other couples. So, we're on the same page and we just love what you're doing.

JS: Well, thank you.

MS: Thank you.

JS: Well, this is Mark and Jill Savage, and we are so glad that you joined us. We are signing off with a reminder, “*A real marriage isn't perfect. A real marriage is two people being perfected.*”

MS: Yeah.

JS: Thanks for joining us.

MS: Thank you.