

If It Matters to Me, It Should Matter to You

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[music]

00:08 Jill Savage: Hi. Today we're gonna talk about the slow fade of minimizing. The truth is, we don't get to decide what's important to our spouse. We get to discover what's important to him or her, and this is where minimizing comes into play. We often feel like if our spouse thinks differently than we think, if there are things that are important to them that are different than things that are important to us, or if they express feelings and they're different than feelings that we have, we so often quickly either denounce those as wrong, or we minimize them and say, "Oh, that's not that important."

00:46 Mark Savage: Yeah. I am so guilty of having minimized in the past and today I still have to give effort to not minimizing. Minimizing for me can be easy because of my personality. I don't want the fight or it's not worth it. "Jill didn't really mean to..." Just all of those phrases that will move minimizing to become a slow fade and then a big fade.

01:23 JS: And what often happens is there's really two types of minimizing. There's internal minimizing and external minimizing. And so Mark is an expert internal minimizer.

[chuckle]

01:33 MS: Oh, yeah. I have a college degree in it.

[chuckle]

01:36 JS: And so he really minimizes his own feelings and struggles putting those out there and tells himself, it's that negative self-talk or that self-talk that it's just not important. So the truth is there are feelings that Mark will express and I don't understand those feelings. They are not a feeling I've ever had before. I don't process the situation in the same way he is, but the truth is it doesn't make his feelings wrong. And this is where minimizing really comes to play in so many marriages, that one spouse will work up the courage to maybe share something that was important to him or her, share a concern that they have, a place where they felt like they weren't heard or listened to or valued. And so they share that and then the other spouse pretty much just squashes them and says, "Well, you're being entirely too sensitive. Your perspective is not right." And so then they squash that and they move on, and that leaves the other person feeling very unvalued, and not validated at all.

02:50 MS: For many of us, we can not only minimize feelings but minimize perspectives, that my perspective may be different than Jill's perspective and if I jump immediately to, "because her perspective is different, she's wrong," I miss that opportunity for discovery that marriage is about two people becoming perfected, is a process of discovery, that I have a perspective on a situation, but I can learn from Jill what her perspective is.

03:30 JS: And honestly, that's a way that the two become one. Mark is much more naturally compassionate than I am. He really has a heart that is just filled with a lot of mercy and he also can very much be in tune with how people are emotionally. Me, not so much. And so, use an example of, a parenting example will be maybe... I can remember one time we were at the dinner table and after we were done with dinner and Mark and I were in here cleaning up and he said, "I think something is bothering Austin." And I said, "Really? Really, you think that?" And he was like, "Yeah, I really do. I think something's bothering him." I'm like, "Well, he didn't say anything, so I think he's fine." [laughter] And so he ended up going and talking with Austin and certainly something was bothering him. And so what I took away from that situation was I have to learn to trust and not minimize my husband's perspective, because it brings a fullness to the picture. So, there are times where my logical mind benefits you and you don't get wrapped up in all the emotions, but there are many times that your emotional heart benefits me, because it helps me to be more in tune.

04:53 MS: So, how do we move away from the fade of minimizing? I think that's huge for us. And for me, I move away from minimizing by being respectfully honest with Jill, by stating my concerns, by finding my voice. I can remember years ago... Well, let me back up a minute. This has always been a struggle for me, to be honest, and to state what I'm really thinking, and I remember this one time Jill and I were in an argument and finally I found my voice and I communicated to her exactly what I was thinking, and she hauled off and kissed me and said, "Mark, I have been waiting for you to have a voice for years." And I was like, "You are nuts! What's wrong with you?" [chuckle] That's a true story, that in marriage, when we're moving away from that fade of minimizing, we have a voice and for one of... Usually, one of the partners, that voice is hard to find, because we're afraid. We're afraid that there'll be more conflict or that the conflict will escalate. Or, because we have those inner voices that say we're not important, those voices become louder, "No, you don't need to say anything. You're not really important anyway." And so, we don't. And so, finding our voice and communicating it respectfully is huge.

06:38 JS: On the other side of that, when somebody is an external minimizer, what is happening inside their head is they're saying, about the other person, "Well, their perspective isn't important." And this hurts intimacy in marriage and begins to draw our hearts apart. And so, one of the things that we have found helpful is some phrases that helps us to not minimize each other's concerns. So, one phrase is, "Tell me more. So tell me more." So, if Mark expresses something to me, maybe even a frustration that he has with me, what we usually wanna do is we wanna begin to defend. So we say, "Tell me more. Okay, alright, I hear you. Tell me a little bit more." And that's scary, because we're not always open to that feedback and we don't always want it, but that makes that... It makes your marriage a safe place. So tell me more is one.

07:31 JS: Another one is, "Hmm, that's interesting, I'd like to keep that in mind." Maybe especially if they're telling you something about a desire they have or a like that they have, something that they prefer, preferences. Well, that's good to know. It's amazing how many couples I've actually, we've witnessed where as we've mentored over the years, one will express something that they like and the other will say, "That's not true, you don't like that." And how quickly they tell them what it is that they like. So, like I said back in the beginning, it's not our job to determine what's important to our spouse, it's our job to discover what's important to them.

08:09 MS: But I can think of, what's challenging is for me if I don't voice what I'm thinking or what I'm desiring, and I just follow along with what you want, then before long, you've rightfully convinced yourself that that must be what Mark likes. And when we were navigating the crisis, I got honest with things that had been bugging me for years. And you were like, "Mark, why didn't you tell me these things?" Well, I had minimized it all those years and our commitment in the future is that we don't... I personally don't wanna keep minimizing.

08:58 JS: So, I remember when you made the statement as you were realizing how much you had minimized things that you started leaving our marriage many, many years ago in your heart before there was even another person that was involved, it was in your heart because that slow fade of minimizing started out with centimeters, but it had become miles.

09:22 MS: The centimeters began out of my own upbringing of not being able to voice my expectations. You couldn't have...

09:33 JS: Or, your feelings.

09:33 MS: Or feelings. You couldn't have any expectations or feelings other than what the family or what my stepdad had mandated. And then secondly, my own expectations of our relationship and feeling like those wouldn't be heard or those wouldn't be met, that I stayed silent. And so, that began to compound, very similar to interest in a bank, and before long I was going through the motions of being married but my heart had become disconnected and closed off years prior. And I had to learn how to trust God and to let my heart be opened again.

10:21 JS: So, when I think about myself and my tendency to externally minimize, what often happens is it's when I get too busy, I don't have enough margin in my life, I'm running at a high speed and I just don't have time for this. And that's my own sinful nature, that's where I have to become self-aware and I have to realize that I've got to slow down and not run over those that are around me. And so, when I begin to get my pace back to a healthy place, then I'm able to tune in to your feelings, your thoughts, your perspectives and to be able to give them the weight that they need and that they deserve.

11:03 MS: Yep. And for me, when I begin to minimize, I minimize out of a family dynamic that has been more genetic,

and that's a bent towards depression or a bent towards anxiety, partnered with shame that was passed along through the family. So when you have those tendencies of depression and shame then I minimize, because it moves from, "This isn't important to I'm not important. I don't matter. Nothing matters. Why say anything?" Let me share this verse with you. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

12:01 JS: And I think the words there are be kind and tender-hearted. I think that really helps us to learn how to turn around the slow fade of minimizing.

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