

## Dive Deep Interview with Bob and Roxann Andersen

Jill Savage: Well, we want to welcome you to this month's Dive Deep interview, and we have with us Bob and Roxann Andersen. They are the authors of *The Marriage Dance*, and we are excited to pick their brain today. So, welcome Bob and Roxann.

Roxann Andersen: Thank you!

Bob Andersen: Thank you very much, we are delighted to be here.

Mark Savage: We're excited to have you. Before we begin our conversation, why don't you tell us a little bit about your family, where you live, and what do you do?

BA: We live in Riverside, California, we have three daughters, four grandsons and one granddaughter. Most of them are in the California area, but we've got one child with one grandchild up in Idaho.

JS: Oh! That's a little far!

RA: So, we have the three daughters and for years Bob was outnumbered. Then we started adding sons-in-law and then grandsons, and it's only four months ago that we got a granddaughter after 36 years!

BA: Yeah. The scales have tipped with more testosterone now.

JS: That's great! I was one of three girls.

RA: Me too!

JS: Were you? We were Jill, Jackie and Julie. My mother would get angry and she'd go, "J-j-j-j-j"!

RA: "One of you! Do it!"

MS: That's so funny! Well, you write about the marriage metaphor...

JS: The dance metaphor.

MS: Aah! Where am I? I'm in California. [laughter]

BA: You'd fit in well here!

MS: So, you write about the *dance* metaphor. How did you come about that?

RA: I think that one's my story.

BA: It is your story, but I almost need to go back before the dance metaphor just a little bit if that's okay, and then I will turn it over to her because it was her brilliant idea for the dance metaphor. But how did we even get involved in marriage ministry? We had been married for many years and we

thought we had a great marriage. I read Charles Colson 's book. It's either *How Now Shall You Live* or *How Then Shall You Live*. One of those two. It was a Charles Colson book on how we have to affect the culture before we affect the politics, and that just really influenced me. I was trying to figure out, "Okay, how can we help affect the culture?", and after we prayed about it, it seemed like family and particularly marriage was a very crucial way to affect that culture. So, we went back to Colorado Springs to a guy who had a marriage ministry himself and he had a particular counseling method that emphasized both getting rid of the sins in your life *and* the wounds in your life so that your heart will not be locked anymore but unlocked so that you can have a great marriage. So, we've started showing his video at our church about how you get past a locked heart. I went to a conference, and the person at the conference was talking about the Trinity and particularly John of Damascus in the eighth century. He came up with this great word called *peri keresis* which when translated "peri" is around like perimeter, *keresis* means choreography or dance. So, "to dance around". And the metaphor was: how do three people move as one? I was really fascinated by that concept and so I went back home and asked Roxann if she wanted to dance, which at this point we'd have to turn it over to her for the next part.

RA: You have to understand, Bob never danced. He was averse to dancing. If we were in the kitchen by ourselves, I said, "Oh, just dance with me a little bit," he would stand there like a stone statue and not move. He just would not do it. In elementary school, he hid under the table rather than square dancing with a girl. So, when he comes home from this conference and says, "You want to take dance lessons?"

JS: You're thinking, "Who are you, and what have you done with my husband?" (laughter)

RA: I started dialing quickly to sign us up. We weren't very good dancers, but at least if you're in the dance class, the instructor tells you what to do and you can follow along. But on Friday night, we have the practice dance, and you are on your own. Remember what you can, and the man has to lead. And here's Bob who is abundantly uncomfortable with even being out on the dance floor at all. On my behalf, I want to say that my intentions were good, but I thought, "You know, I've at least danced to The Beach Boys and that type of thing that you do when you're a teenager," and I thought, "Well, let me guide him a little bit". I was trying to guide, it's called back leading, and I thought I was being quite subtle. But one night, Bob just backs up and he says, "So are you going to push me around the dance floor again tonight?" Mark, when I say this, the guys' faces always look just like that!

MS: We've never experienced this. (laughter)

JS: Never. We don't know what you're talking about. (laughter)

RA: I thought, "Oh my goodness!" I'd been detected, number one, but it was also one of those moments when God kind of drops a brick on you. What I heard was you, "You know, you do the same thing when you're not on the dance floor." There I am back leading, not saying anything, trying to guide and be very subtle, but I got the control of this. So, I just began listening as we were in dance class, listening to the teacher and the things that he might have to say and pretty soon it became evident there are a lot of really good parallels between dance and marriage. Number one, you have two partners who are almost always very different. They each have their own thing that they do, but if there is an agreement to work together you can move together as one very beautifully. You have the partner who leads, and he needs to know what he's doing out there on the

floor and to do it gently and in a generous way that considers his partner.

BA: That was a particular frustration for me because I had no background in dance whatsoever and the man is supposed to lead the steps. I had to remember all these steps and I was just frustrated. So, the fact that somebody comes into the church and all of a sudden he becomes a Christian and he's supposed to lead his wife and he has no idea what to do, I can empathize with that on the dance floor. I had no idea what to do. I would forget these steps and I would just be a disaster on the leader side of it, but in order to dance right, you've got to learn how to lead.

RA: You also have a follower, and in our society today I know it's very controversial to follow or to submit, but on the dance floor, nobody argues with that at all. What we learned is the follower position is not a subservient position at all. You have to be very strong actually to follow and to do the twirls and the kicks and everything that the lady does on the dance floor. You have to be very artful about it, and so it's not a subsidiary position at all. It's just a different position.

BA: We asked our dance instructor one time, between the husband and the wife, the man and the girl, who extends the most energy? He said it's the woman.

RA: Clearly.

BA: It's clearly the woman because she's doing the twirls, the spins, the dips, all that stuff. But you also watch the woman in dance because they've got the fun part of it! We've got this one thing that we do. I'm showing a twirl and I just do it without the woman, and you're just watching the man and you're going, "What is this about?" Then you put the woman in it, and then it makes total sense. She's doing the twirls and the spins and the fun stuff, and it's not like the woman is inferior. She's having most of the fun! Some of the people that we know, they're not Christians at all, but know dance and they go, "Of course the man leads!" It's not even controversial in dance, but you need somebody who leads and you need somebody to follow because if you're going to be two people in very close proximity moving together as one, you've got to have a system down so that you're not kicking feet, stepping on feet, and hitting things. You're in very close proximity, and we think it's a good analogy of marriage.

MS: It totally is.

RA: If a man was a good leader, everybody wanted to dance with him. Nobody said, "Why do I have to follow you?" They all wanted to dance with him, and there was on the other hand one guy who would come, and he was there to show off. When he was doing that and whipping people around, they were getting hurt. He was out for himself, not for his partner and the result was that no one wanted to dance with him. They would start excusing themselves so that they wouldn't have to.

MS: Wow. I've seen that.

JS: I have too, and you know, we've had some history with dance as well. We took dance lessons.

MS: I was the same way as you Bob.

JS: And I was the same way as you, Roxann.

MS: And I think we had that same conversation. “Are you going to follow?”

JS: I tell you, dance lessons can be good for the marriage if you will allow yourself to submit to the lessons. I'm not talking just about the dance lessons. I'm talking about the way that God can use it to help your heart and your head to see things a little differently.

RA: There was one seminar that we gave a long time ago, and it was actually the men's ministry group that brought us in. They were very serious about growing spiritually, but they listened, we did the whole seminar, and then several months later we got an email from the guy who headed up the ministry. He said, “You know, we got this Groupon for ballroom dance lessons, so all the guys went and they took their wives, and boy does what you said make more sense now!”

JS: That's neat! It really does! It was a huge lesson. We've taken salsa, swing, waltz, two-step and all of that, and the only one we remember is swing. We can swing at any wedding we go to or anywhere like that, but even when we go back and get out on the dance floor, we're reminded of those lessons once again. That's great! I love it. Thank you for sharing that.

MS: And that really leads into your most recent book. Your book on conflict resolution.

JS: Which is more like a booklet.

RA: Very short.

MS: Very short, but very powerful. As I read it, one of the statements you made, Bob, was that as a child you were never one who pursued conflict. You tended to shy away from it. What changed for you?

BA: Okay, so as a child I was very shy. I was also quiet. I didn't talk much. So, what happened was that I would always avoid conflict. Through a long circle, I felt like God was asking me to go to law school, so I went to law school.

JS: Which is all about conflict!

BA: So, for the last 40 years, I've been an attorney and I've been dealing with conflict. There's two ways to resolve conflict. One is a third person comes in to resolve the conflict for you, that's if you go to trial and the judge decides. But the better way to resolve conflict is for the two people to get together and figure out a way of resolving the conflict together. So, for the last 20 years I've been trying to do more and more mediations because that's the way of two people trying to resolve conflict without the necessity of third party coming in and imposing the decision on them. I just feel like that is a far better model than going to court, fighting it out, and having the judge decide the case.

RA: His heart has been much happier since he's been doing the mediating.

JS: Isn't that something? When we find that right fit the for us?

BA: So, my default position is that I just prefer to stay away from conflict. Now people usually are in one of two camps. There are three ways to resolve conflict. One is that you avoid it. That was me

and that was actually Roxann too. You might want to ask about that in our marriage because we were both conflict avoiders. The other ones are the ones that are ready to fight. "Oh boy, here's an argument that I can join in." There are fewer of those, but they are clearly out there. So, you've got the two extremes and the problem is you've got to be in the middle. That's where the solution is. You can't run away from the problem, but you can't just fight about it. You need to say, "We've got a problem here. Let's resolve it and let's start working on it." I had to come to the place in my own emotional life but also in my professional life where we say, "There's a problem. Let's talk about it and get it resolved." That's where the book came from.

JS: I love that. So, let me ask you that question. I don't know if you're even familiar with Milan and Kay Yerkovich. They have a book called *How We Love*, and one of the love styles is the avoider love style. Now, avoiders tend to also avoid emotional connection. So, I don't know if the avoiding that you were doing where you were avoiding conflict was also avoiding some emotional connection as well. Or would you say that's completely different?

BA: I liked to be around people who were like me. The more unlike me they were, the harder it was. If I was dealing with an adult, a teacher or somebody in authority, I would kind of avoid that. I'd be respectful but I didn't want to necessarily make them my friend. Girls were definitely out. Guys about my age that liked the same things I liked, I was willing to make a connection with them but it was kind of a surface connection. It wasn't an emotional connection.

RA: I would answer a little bit differently, I think. Or add something. Right before Bob went to law school, there was a painful incident that we went through. As a result of that, you tended to shut down a lot of the emotions. By shutting them down, you know, "I don't get to feel bad, I don't get to feel good either but I'm just kind of stable". Then he went to law school, and you really don't need emotions in law school, so I think that was a lot of where you came from. Where I came from was very different. My family was just chaotic that I grew up in. I will go to great lengths to avoid conflict and just say, "What do I need to do to be harmonious? If I just shut up and don't say anything, will that do it?" That's just kind of my wound, my background that I come from.

JS: So, obviously for the past 20 years you guys have been practicing these five steps that we're going to talk about here in a moment for resolving conflict, correct?

BA: Yes. I've been in mediation formally for like 20 years. We both prefer to resolve conflict than fight about it, so we're not fighters but we could avoiders.

RA: The technique that came out of mediation, I think, was the thing that really helped. They're very transferable concepts that you go, "Okay this is pretty easy."

BA: If you get the five steps, you don't have to be afraid of conflict anymore. That's one of the key things with people that are just now starting to learn how to resolve conflict. There's nothing bad about a disagreement, you just have a disagreement. You just have to go through the steps to figure out how to resolve it.

JS: I love that. Well, let's talk about the steps then. Let's jump right in. Step number one is...

BA: Pinpoint the problem.

JS: You guys did that at the exact same time.

BA: We've got hand gestures for you. The people who are avoiders don't necessarily like to get to the subject. Sometimes they will talk around the subject all day and never get to what the real issue is. So, sometimes it's very, very helpful to even get alone and write it down in a sentence. "This is what I think the problem is..." so that when you present the problem, you're presenting what you really think the problem is. After you get into it, you might see that the problem changes a little bit, and you've got to be willing to go where the real problem is. But to start out with, keep a flexible attitude, but try to say, "This is what I think the problem is to the best of my ability," so that we can talk about what the problem is and not...

JS: Yeah, and not around it.

BA: Sometimes there is an ambiguity.

JS: So, what if you say that this is the problem, you come up with your sentence, but she comes up with her sentence and they're not the same sentences? Do you dialogue until you can identify one sentence together to what that problem is?

BA: You may have two different problems, but you take one at a time. If it's just a different way of stating the same problem, fine. You go into that problem. But you may have multiple problems. Take them one at a time but try to go to the heart of the issue. Ultimately, you need to get to the heart of the issue.

MS: Well, I can even see the value of counseling being that mediator that can help when people can't figure out those problems or they can't pinpoint it.

JS: We've certainly needed that in the past. Seeking help, wisdom, and counseling has helped us. We don't need it as much as we used to, but we needed that third party in some places in our life.

MS: And a big part of it was that I was not very good at that second step. And what's the second step...

BA: Calm the emotions. You have two people involved, and both could have emotional issues. What you're doing in this step is that if the emotions are too far out of control, your brain is in the wrong place. In order to get your brain in the place to resolve the conflict, you've got to calm the emotions. One thing that will come in handy at step three starts with step two. It's to try to name their emotions. That's one way of calming the emotions. What are you really feeling? Now, if the emotions are still in an outrage, you can't really get to the heart of the issue yet. But if I can name her emotion, if she's angry and I tell her she's angry, she feels heard. She feels listened to. That will help calm her down, but it's also part of the resolution that you're going to use later to figure out, "Okay, where is she coming from here?"

RA: And here's the thing too. If he guesses wrong, and he goes, "Man, are you angry," and he's off, I might just respond with, "It's not that I'm angry. I *am* rather frustrated." Then he'll just tell me, "Oh, okay I see. You're frustrated"

BA: And by me stating that she's frustrated, that tells her I'm listening, and it also tells me what the

real emotion is. So, she's calming down because she feels listened to and understood, and I'm thinking, "Okay, how does this emotion fit in when we get to the third step?"

RA: This is the funny part. When this happens and Bob will say to me, "Man you seem really frustrated," I know *exactly* what he's doing. I know the steps. But it still works. I'm still like, "Okay, he's listening to me. He's trying to understand. I appreciate that he's trying to understand."

BA: It works if I'm really trying to listen. It doesn't work if it looks like I'm playing a game. But you really *do* want to know what the emotion is, so you shouldn't be playing a game. You want to know what she's feeling for a reason we will get to in the next step. But first of all, calm the emotions so that the prefrontal cortex part of the brain is starting to work and not that limbic system that's just flailing emotions all over the place. You need the prefrontal cortex part of the brain in order to resolve the conflict. So, get to that part of the brain. Calm the emotions.

JS: Okay. I love that. So, step one: pinpoint the problem. Step two: calm the emotion. Step three...

BA/RA: Listen with your head and your heart.

BA: Now, you're listening for two things here. The head part is the substance of the dispute. Their position. The hard part is that you're still trying to figure out what that emotion is. Many times, the emotion is the real underlying issue. If she says, I'm just making this up, "I don't want to do what you want to do Friday night", and it turns out the real issue is that I'm not listening to her, by listening to her emotions, we're going to get to the real issue which is that I'm not listening to her. She couldn't care less what we do on Friday night, she just wants me to listen to her better, and I'm not listening very well. So that's where the pinpointing the problem could shift as you get down here. You think the problem is, "What are we going to do Friday night?", when really the problem is that I'm not listening to her very well. So, by listening with both the head and the heart, you're listening for both. Here's one of the big problems in resolution. I would say, "I have an idea and it's a great idea. It's a better idea than if you have an idea."

RA: "No, it's not."

BA: And she says, "No, I have an idea, and it's a better idea than you have." That just results in us going around and presenting our positions. That gets you into an argument. What you really need to do is listen to where the other person is coming from. *Really* listen to them. Both their emotions and where they're at.

RA: Can we throw in the dessert example? This is just a very basic example that Bob's a chocolate person and I'm a vanilla person. So, we went out to dinner and said, "Let's share a dessert," and Bob would say, "I know, let's get the chocolate lava cake...death by chocolate thing," and I say, "You know what, I don't want that. I want the vanilla ice cream with the strawberries. I think that would be a better choice." Okay. Our position is that he wants the chocolate and I want the vanilla. But if you go a little bit deeper: What's our interest in it? What's motivating it deep down? Bob might say, "You know what? I have really been trying to watch my calories, and honestly I just don't care for vanilla." So, if it came down to that, I would probably just say, "Let's skip dessert." That's his interest. My interest might be that the last three times we've had chocolate. Sometimes you should give me what I want. Do you care what I want? It's maybe a more emotional thing, but that's the interest. What is it that's underlying? What's motivating you?

BA: And those two words, *position* and *interest* are important because sometimes the position is the statement, “What are we going to do Friday night,” but the interest underlying that is, “Why is that so important?” The question to ask, and this is a very valuable question to ask, is just to ask her, “What is it about that that's so important to you?” If you ask it this way, “Why do you want to do that,” that sounds accusatory and volatile. But if you ask it this way, “What is it about that that's so important to you,” you're actually seeking the information that you need without attacking, and you're trying to go a little bit deeper to try and figure out what the real issue is. Is there an underlying issue that's even more important than what we're doing Friday?

JS: Yes! That's good! Thinking of clarifying questions, we were actually coaching a couple last night and we were talking about just even simple responses like, “Well tell me more about that.” That just gives your spouse permission to share a little bit more of their heart or why that's important. So that can be a clarifying question.

BA: An open-ended question is far better than a cross-examination question at this point. You're not trying to ask a question that forces your spouse to agree with you even though you know she doesn't. You're trying to elicit those open-ended questions that give you the information about what's at the heart of the issue.

RA: He was in law school, and I would say to him, “I feel like I'm being cross-examined here. It's not a good feeling.”

JS: I bet. That makes total sense. Okay, I want to see if I've got the hand motions here. We're going to pinpoint the problem. We're going to calm the emotions. We're going to listen with our head and our heart. And number four...

BA/RA: Make a proposal.

RA: I'm sliding the proposal across the table there.

BA: So now that you've listened to what the real problem is, you understand where she's coming from, you know where you're coming from, you're trying to make a proposal that meets both interests. So, you're not trying to just stuff your idea on her, or she's not trying to stuff her idea on me. We're trying to come to an agreement on how we can both work together on some proposed solution.

JS: Is that a form of meeting in the middle?

BA: It can be. One of our problems was that one of our daughters wanted to play on a coed soccer team. One of us thought that was way too dangerous and the other one thought, “Well, it's probably okay”. In a situation like that, the answer is either yes or no.

JS: True.

BA: So, you can't always meet in the middle. You're still trying to get to a mutually happy solution or at least an acceptable solution. Compromise is usually what you do, but you can be very creative and come up with a third idea that both parties like better than their original idea.



RA: Can you revisit the dessert example? You make proposals back and forth until you come up with something that's mutually acceptable. So, let's just say Bob goes, "Well, how about if we got strawberries that you wanted with pistachio ice cream on top?" Something like that. I don't think that's a very good idea, but I'll just throw it out there. So, we might say, "I don't think that's the best solution, let's keep going. And besides, restaurants don't usually carry pistachio ice cream." So, another solution might be, "How about if we opted for a fruit dessert and split that? Maybe a cherry pie. Something like that that we both like." Or another solution might be, "How about if we got the chocolate brownie with vanilla ice cream on top," and then Bob can have mostly chocolate brownie, and I can have mostly vanilla ice cream. You go back and forth and find what is the most acceptable solution of both parties.

BA: The proposal you make needs to keep my interest in mind but try as I can to satisfy her underlying interest and position, and if it doesn't, maybe she can make a proposal back. "I don't like that proposal, but here's another proposal," until we come up with something that is acceptable to both. We need to get to the point where we can say, "Don't blame the other person." If we can be on the same team trying to solve a problem, that's a whole lot better than saying, "You're dumb..."

RA: "Stop acting like a jerk."

BA: Yeah. So, we get on the same team and we're trying to solve a mutual problem, and then when the problem is solved, it can be fun.

MS: Yeah!

JS: Okay, go back for a moment, because that one that you talked about earlier...the soccer team one. That's a tough one.

BA: It was.

RA: And I'm going to throw in, our daughter was 17-18 at the time. So, it wasn't little kids playing together. It was our 125-pound daughter and grown men.

JS: So, how did you resolve that taking each other's interest at heart? Can you process that a little bit?

BA: Yeah. This brings up another issue because on that particular one, there was no way to compromise. It was either a yes or no. I listened to her as much as possible. So, let me tell you. Our daughter...about 5'5", less than 120 pounds. The guys on the team...6'4", over 220. There was a 100 pound difference, and you're smashing into somebody. You could get hurt. So, on that one, we never could come up with a compromise. That's where the leading and the following came in. I did make the decision, but when a man makes a decision because he's the leader, he's got to realize, it's on him. I think the women need to recognize, "Okay, I had to make a decision here, she had to follow, but if anything went wrong..."

JS: He was going to have to own it.

BA: Yeah. You've got to own that decision because we have to go one way or the other and so on.

That one, it was my call and she went along with it and our daughter did not get hurt, but everything that I could do to give credence to how we can keep her safe, we tried to do that.

RA: Can I just jump in there? This also goes back to the marriage dance obviously and following. When you make that decision to follow, it is not because you think your husband's going to be perfect. It is not because you think he will never make a mistake. He will make a mistake. But that ultimate confidence, that ultimate trust is in God, really. "God, you take care of this." And I will tell you, when Bob made that decision, I was like, "Please take care of Amy. Would you watch out for her and protect her?" And what happened is just by the way the team lined up, she was actually on the bench most of the time. So, she had the fun of being on the team, I had the security of her not being out there getting banged around. But you're not thinking that your husband will never make a mistake. That's not realistic.

JS: One of the things that comes to my mind is, had she had gotten hurt, you also can't throw that into his face.

RA: Right.

JS: I mean, him owning it should be enough at that point. He carries the weight of that. Honestly, there's times we each make decisions where life doesn't turn out the way we want it to, and we could easily throw that in each other's faces. But that's like stomping on each other's toes while we're dancing.

BA: Yeah.

RA: And one of the things that Bob has said to me a number of times, and it's usually when I've been on the bad end of the wrong decision, something that went awry, he'll say, "Let me give you grace this time because I know next time it will be my turn."

JS: Wow!

RA: That humility goes a long way.

JS: What a beautiful gift! Oh, I love that. Okay, so we've hit four of them, and that is: pinpoint the problem, calm the emotions, listen with the both the head and the heart, make a proposal.

BA/RA: And keep the relationship.

BA: We were made for relationship. God has put us into community. In a marriage, the relationship is more important. Don't destroy the relationship because of a disagreement. Keep that relationship. That's the goal. The disagreement is short term, and if you let it destroy the relationship, you have lost a lot. The relationship is far more important than a particular disagreement. Keep that relationship.

JS: Beautiful. And I think not giving up too quickly has to be a part of that too. We've got to fight. Not fight each other but fight for us.

BA: That's why, if you can look at the problem, then we're doing it together. This is a problem. It's

not my idea versus your idea. We have a problem here. How are we going to solve it?

MS: Right.

RA: One of the things that we saw was a couple who came to Bob actually, and it was a marital dispute. I was actually asked to sit in on that one, so that was a privilege to do that. The husband was a very sincere Christian, and he and his wife were just at odds. At the end of the mediation, the problem was not resolved. But sometimes, one of the parties just needs more time. It was probably four to six months later that we got the call, and they had gotten back together. They have resolved it, just not right at that moment. So, if you're making the proposals back and forth, and you don't come to something that's acceptable, give it more time. Give it a couple of days. Maybe more than a couple of days. Keep praying about it.

JS: We have some friends, and we did some life coaching with them. We were really talking about how we work together as a couple, and one of the things we talked about is (and it doesn't always work, but we have used this several times), if we can't find that unity, we don't move forward. Wait. That has been so helpful. Going, "Okay, then we can't make a decision yet." So, we stick with it, keep praying about it, keep talking about it, and as you said, pushing more proposals across the table, but recognizing that sometimes, you're right, it just takes some more time and we're going to have to give it that time.

MS: Yeah. You know, what I love about this is that for most of the couples that we interact with, *men*, it's not 100%, but men tend to be silent. They just go along with whatever their wife wants and yet they're burning on the inside and they don't know how to use their voice. What I love about these steps is that it really gives the process to open up and to really have a voice.

BA: You've got to get it on the table. We used one video in our marriage class in which the husband was frustrated because his wife didn't respect him and basically, he filed for divorce and that's when she found out she had a problem. She was going, "I knew that there was a problem, but this is huge!" You've got to get this on the table. That's the problem with people that withdraw. There's a conflict there, it's just not on the table. It's just under the surface, and sometimes that's worse than two people who fight.

RA: And Mark, you brought up the problem of the spouse, usually the husband, who is quiet and withdraws, and I think that when we talk about conflict, what most people think of is that you've got two people yelling at each other, they're saying not nice things, they may be hitting each other. That is one kind of conflict. But there's also that kind that's very quiet. Bob and I were both very quiet. We'd go to our corner, sweep it under the rug, hopefully it all goes away, you know? And it's not resolved. It comes out in other ways. Even for the quiet fighters, you need to resolve it.

JS: Yes. Oh, I'm so glad that you said that.

BA: I almost think that just about everybody is born without an innate knowledge of how to resolve conflict. Everybody has to learn how to resolve conflict, and it's helpful to recognize that there are some steps that you can learn so that it's not so threatening anymore. If you can learn these steps and just go through it so that you're not afraid of it, you can put it on the table and keep the emotions down, work through it, and get some of these issues resolved.

JS: Yeah. And when you guys are actually resolving it, do you use some of this language? Like, do you say, “Okay, we need to pinpoint the problem here?”

BA: Yeah! How many times have I been driving down the road and she says, “I have a proposal...” Like, okay, I know where this is coming from!

MS: That’s cool!

JS: Oh, totally! But I think we need that language. That's how I view it! You would actually use it. “Okay, wait a minute. What are we really in disagreement about? Let's pinpoint the problem.”

BA: Yeah. And talk about it.

JS: And reminding ourselves and each other, “Let’s keep the emotions calm, but I sense that you are frustrated or angry.” You're right. Boy! It is a gift that we give our spouse when they feel heard by us. That is a gift.

BA: And you need to do that. If you're not listening, if you're just talking, you're not resolving. Somebody in the relationship has to figure out what is the difference and how can we bridge this? If you can look at it together, “Okay, let's keep making proposals until we come up with something,” you really understand the other person.

JS: Yeah, you really do. And what their interest is and what their concerns are. I love that.

MS: One statement that you've made throughout this little book is that if we can learn to resolve disagreements, we can deepen intimacy in marriage. Boy, I would say we've learned that. That's such a true statement.

BA: You’ve got to be willing to go there, but once you go there, you really learn about the other person.

JS: You sure do. Oh, you guys, this has been so rich, and I wish we had more time. We are about out of time here but thank you so much. This has been so rich and so practical. We're starting to have the language and use it ourselves, and we'll continue to do that. I know that our members will as well. So, we close all of our interviews with one question, and since this is No More Perfect Date Night, we talk about creative ways to spend time together or fun ways to spend time together. We ask all of our Dive Deep interviews: What is one of your favorite date night activities?

BA: We have two different ones for you.

JS: Of course you do!

BA: Mine is that I like the weekend away. I have time pressure. When I'm pressured by time, I am not comfortable. So, we try and take two weekends away per year. She plans one, I plan the other, and that way we can just relax, we can talk, and there's no time pressure. We can just sit back and relax. That's what I like.

JS: Oh, that’s neat! And what about you, Roxann?

RA: I want to preface mine by saying that when I was a young mom, my Bible study teacher said, "All of you girls need a date night every week." I took it very seriously, and Bob's mom lived in town and was so gracious to watch our children for us, so we were able to have that. But I think that my favorite would be dinner and live theater. That can get pricey, so that is kind of a special date night. A more common one is dinner and a movie at home. I do like cuddling on the couch, and that's fine. Usually one night a month we might cook dinner together and a couple of other times we might go out some place not too fancy and maybe something the fourth time that's a little fancier for dinner.

BA: Last weekend, we went to Santa Monica, and Max Mclean had put together an entire program on how C.S. Lewis became a Christian. That was of extreme interest to me, so that was a hit for both of us. It was live theater, and he's also got a DVD on it. It was like, "Okay, how did he start out as an atheist and become a Christian? What was the thought process? Very interesting.

JS: I bet that was fascinating. Neat! Well this was good, and we're so grateful. For those of you that have been watching, thanks for joining us and we hope that you remember these five steps. But to help you remember that, we actually have a link that is underneath this video and you'll be able to actually hop over to Bob and Roxann's website and download the booklet for free. Hopefully that will help you to continue to personalize these. So, this is Mark and Jill Savage along with Bob and Roxann Andersen, and we are signing off with a reminder that a real marriage is not perfect. A real marriage is two people being perfected. Thanks for joining us.