

Feeling Left Out as a Dad? 4 Steps to Reconnect for a Happy Marriage after Baby | Fatherhood | Ep. 32

Hi there! If this is your first time here, welcome to the Parenthood and Relationship podcast. I'm your host Markella Kaplani, a psychologist, a Parenthood and Relationship coach, and a parent myself. Together we explore the transformative journey of Parenthood and its profound impact on our relationship with ourselves, our partners, and our children, so that we can be present and show up as we envision without having to do more.

[00:00:26] Let's get into today's episode!

[00:00:28] Hey there and welcome back to the Parenthood and Relationship Podcast. If this is your first time joining us, I'm really glad you're here. And if you've been listening for a while, thank you.

[00:00:38] So, let's get into it. Today, we're diving into a topic that I know hits home for many dads and it will be very good for moms to listen to because they also come to me repeating, something along these lines as well and that is the exclusion, the isolation that husbands and fathers feel after the baby arrives.

[00:00:59] From the dad's perspective, they are being left on the outside. And from the mom's perspective, they feel like they have to also prove their dedication and baby, their husbands. And so this starts to become a very big problem in the communication between the couple. Because as you can tell from this very initial portrayal that I just made, both parties

feel like they are being wronged in some way. The dad and husband feels like he's being excluded and obviously that's not a very nice feeling and the mom is feeling that not only is she sleep deprived and running on fumes and exhausted and carrying this heavy mental load but now she also has to add on top of that, to make sure that she proves herself, that she shows her devotion. She feels as though this is an added task when she wants things lifted off. And having said that, you can hear how the husband may feel like, "what am I a task? Don't you feel connected to me naturally? Don't you feel the urge to show me your affection naturally? You have to put it on the to do list? Right?

[00:02:03] And of course that's not what it is, but that's what it may seem like. And so we're here today to discuss this very, very important topic because it becomes a strain for both partners in the relationship after kids come along and both parties from their perspectives, they are right. But being right will not make this situation any better. It's really important to understand the perspective of the other person and to be able to understand why we are feeling so heated or so bothered or so hurt by this topic so that we can work on what we have control over, which is ourselves, our own interpretations, our own feelings and thoughts, our own somatic experience of the event and then we are more able to understand where our partner is coming from and how we can make things better.

[00:02:54] This is such a common experience, and yet it's something that often goes unspoken. So speaking to the dads right now, you might feel like the energy and the focus and the love is all being poured onto the kids, whether it's a new baby or maybe this is an ongoing situation where

there are several kids and husbands feel like their wives have not ever returned to the relationship in a sense.

[00:03:19] So, dads, maybe it feels like overnight you've gone from being the center of your partner's attention to just another member in the household. One who's expected to help but not necessarily valued or seen the way that you used to be. If this is resonating with you, please know that you're not alone.

[00:03:37] I'm sure that in conversations with your friends, you may be hearing similar stories and there's a reason behind these feelings.

[00:03:45] So today I want to discuss why these feelings come up for so many dads, the dynamics that make it so easy for both partners to fall into a cycle of resentment and most importantly how to start breaking out of it. And I want to emphasize this conversation is about understanding what's going on without blame. Parenthood is a huge transition. I'll never stop saying that. And both partners are often struggling in ways that don't always align. And if we don't recognize that this is a huge adjustment and that all of this is part of the process, we make it more of a problem that it has to be.

[00:04:22] For dads, your experience of being sidelined, it often brings up deep feelings of being devalued, unappreciated, or like you're fading in the background of your relationship.

[00:04:33] And so this is in a way "normal" in quotes, but that doesn't mean that we leave it unchecked because if we do, these feelings can lead to withdrawal, resentment, and even more damaging consequences like taking distance in some cases or even infidelity.

[00:04:50] And here's where it gets tricky. If we don't address it in a way that's healthy and constructive, the cycle just continues. So you may pull back and then she feels that she's even more burdened and unappreciated herself, which then reinforces this very dynamic that's making you feel sidelined and unappreciated.

[00:05:10] So, let's go on to see how you can start to unpack and address these feelings in a way that doesn't just put more strain in your relationship. Because while it's important to express what you're feeling, just getting it off your chest could sometimes, or quite often actually, have the opposite effect if it's done without a level of vulnerability and self awareness.

[00:05:31] So, let's talk about why so many dads - maybe like yourself- find themselves feeling like they're suddenly in the background after the baby arrives or after kids come along in general. So it is true and I hear it a lot in my sessions that men start to miss the affection that they had from their wives; that they start to see how as a mother, she expresses so much affection and care and focus on the children and that they feel that she depletes all of that focus and energy and care and affection onto the children and there's none left for them.

[00:06:04] So it's not just the affection that is gone. It's also the fact that they get to see their wife being very affectionate -they see that she has the capacity to do it- it's not that she no longer for whatever reason can express affection, but now it's just not with them. And so it starts to feel personal and therefore hurtful.

[00:06:26] So, this is a jarring shift, yes, but you're not alone in it. It happens to a lot of dads, and honestly, it makes sense, because

parenthood brings so many changes along with it, and the dynamic between you and your partner will inevitably shift in ways that are completely new.

[00:06:44] Now, I know what you may be thinking. It's easy to feel like, "I'm here too. I still exist." And you do. And here's the thing for many moms, motherhood can feel all consuming. She's often running on very little sleep, her focus is on meeting the baby's needs because she's got such little energy that this is the only thing that she can focus on and wants to definitely take care of because she feels she will tap out and sometimes her own needs are barely making it into the list.

[00:07:13] A lot of times they don't even make it to the list; they don't even get postponed. They get deleted. And so it's not that she doesn't care about you. It can sometimes feel that way. I get it. Like she's so wrapped up in the baby that you're no longer a priority, but she cares.

[00:07:28] Still, when you're feeling sidelined, when this kicks in, it often brings up all these other deep seated emotions. You might find yourself wondering, "am I even needed here? What is my role? Will anyone notice if I'm gone?" And let me tell you, these questions aren't just happening on a surface level. There's something deeper at play here that I think is important for us to unpack and understand.

[00:07:53] When you as the dad feel overlooked, it can sometimes touch on old insecurities. The parts of us that crave attention, validation, and a sense of purpose are being triggered here. And when that need for acknowledgement isn't met, it's easy to start pulling back.

[00:08:09] Sometimes, without even realizing it, we withdraw emotionally, even physically, because it feels like, "well, if I'm not being noticed, what's the point?" And I get it. It almost feels like a defense mechanism. If you're not being seen, it's tempting to think, well, fine, I'll take a step back. Let's see if anybody notices.

[00:08:27] But here's the thing about this reaction. It often creates a self fulfilling prophecy. When you pull back and when you check out, it reinforces her feeling that she's carrying the load alone. This can actually create resentment in her as well, which only increases the distance between you. So while you're pulling back might feel like self protection and it very well may be, it often ends up fueling the feeling of being sidelined because it creates an even bigger gap between you.

[00:08:57] So if she wasn't giving you attention and focus and energy and affection before because she had way too many things going on and she was running on empty battery, now she's also angry. Now she's also resentful and frustrated with you. And so her capacity To give you the attention that you're looking for to give you this validation that you're looking for is even lower because now she's got To make an effort not only to get past her exhaustion physical and psychological but she also has to get past her resentment and frustration and that is so much harder

[00:09:35] Let me put it this way. It's kind of like you're playing in a team, right? If one player stops showing up to practice because they're frustrated with their role, it only leaves the rest of the team struggling to fill in the gaps. And then the frustration grows on both sides. The team is annoyed that they're picking up the slack, and the player is upset that no one is calling them back in.

[00:09:56] So in a way, you end up creating the very thing you were trying to avoid. I want, therefore, to invite you to take a step back, to ask yourself if there's more to this feeling than just the present situation. Are there any old insecurities there?

[00:10:12] And so in the past episode, we talked about old wounds that are triggered in parenthood. We may be carrying something like old trauma, and trauma used loosely; it could be heavy traumatic situations, or it could be what is called tiny traumas, like things in the way that we were parented that created some form of wound for us. So it could be that, it could be generational trauma, it could be a lot of different things that are there even way before the relationship, way before children, and may be triggered here.

[00:10:46] And so to give you a little bit of a guideline here, it could be feelings that are linked to fear of rejection, fear of being unloved, fear of not being valued for your contributions. These kinds of feelings are totally normal and they don't mean that anything is wrong with you.

[00:11:02] In fact, they're often an opportunity to look a little deeper and understand what might need attention within yourself.

[00:11:09] So if that's happening for you, let me just say this is not about blame. It's not your fault that this is happening and that you're feeling this way, but what it does -if we start to figure out a little bit of the pattern- is that this is a place where you can work on yourself and start to see improvement in the relationship.

[00:11:27] Because a lot of times we think that, "Oh, relationship has an issue. We're having troubles as a couple. We both need to be in the same

space at the same phase with the same intention in order for things to work." Because finally, we understand that we cannot control another person. We can only control ourselves, but when it's the relationship, and since I can't control you, you have to be on the exact same page with me so that we can see some light in the tunnel.

[00:11:54] That's not the case. That's a myth. You can start to see improvement in your relationship by doing some work on yourself. If we're willing to look at our own insecurities and our own interpretations and the way that we are contributing to the problem and we're willing to take steps for our part, not because we're fully at fault, but we have a part in it for sure.

[00:12:15] So if we're willing to work on our part of the equation, then The equation changes on the other side as well. Then we can see the positive effects that it will have on our partner. And also, we inspire them, hopefully, possibly, to be able to invest in doing the work themselves.

[00:12:36] And moving past from, Recognizing your own part in this, it's also important to say that, yes, sometimes our partners can be completely wrapped up in parenthood. So your wife may be completely all consumed in her motherhood role. But if we can look at what's going on internally, it allows us to take action that's truly meaningful instead of just reacting.

[00:13:01] So you're not wrong in this. Maybe you're 100% right. Maybe your wife is totally wrapped up in motherhood and she **isn't** giving you attention.

[00:13:11] Still, like I said at the beginning of the episode, being right won't necessarily fix anything in their relationship. Proving that you're right, again, it will not make her be more willing to do what you're asking.

[00:13:24] So I promise that we are going to talk about, in this episode, how to approach these feelings in a way that actually strengthens your connection rather than just dumping your frustration out and demanding attention, which will only create more tension.

[00:13:40] Okay, so now that we've explored why these feelings of being sidelined are so common, let's go a little bit deeper; because often these emotions aren't just about what's happening right now. They're tied to deeper needs and old insecurities that we might not even realize that we're carrying.

[00:13:57] And so when we feel unappreciated or overlooked, it's tempting to focus on how our partner isn't giving us what we need. It's easy, right? I'm being overlooked by who? By my partner. So it's my partner's fault. But if we don't take a step back and look at our own responses, we can end up missing an important opportunity for growth, both in us and for our relationship.

[00:14:20] Let's talk about preventing frustration for a second. Now, I know it might feel good to think "I just need to tell her exactly how I feel and get it off my chest. And doesn't Markella talk about open communication and expressing our feelings?" Yes. But here's the reality. Just unloading those feelings without careful thought can actually do more harm than good.

[00:14:40] And I've seen this in my sessions with couples. I have people who pride themselves. In being honest with their partner and they wonder, why isn't this working? Why don't they appreciate my honesty? Why don't they understand that it's also vulnerable for me to be this open and do the work but here's the reality.

[00:14:59] When we vent without self awareness, it comes across as blaming, and that immediately puts our partner on the defensive. Instead of feeling connected or understood, your partner may feel attacked, which only widens the gap between you. So here's the shift that I want to suggest instead, rather than puking out our anger.

[00:15:21] As satisfying as that may feel in the moment, and as justified as it may feel, and as excused as it may feel because, hey, open communication is being suggested everywhere for couples, for improving our relationship, right? Well, let's aim for something else. Vulnerability. Authenticity and vulnerability are often misunderstood.

[00:15:42] We hear so much about being authentic that we think it means just saying whatever is on our mind. But true vulnerability isn't about unloading or demanding that our partner makes us feel better. It's about sharing what's going on for us in a way that invites connection, not confrontation. And that means looking at the heart of what you're feeling and what you're asking.

[00:16:03] " What's the deeper need here? What am I really wanting?"

[00:16:07] For instance, if you're feeling invisible, maybe what you truly want isn't just attention, which is what you may tend to express, but you may be looking for acknowledgment, appreciation, a sense of partnership.

When you start from that place, you can share how you're feeling in a way that doesn't feel like blame, but more like an invitation, and you can be more specific about what it is that you need from her to do in order for you to start to feel these things that you want to feel.

[00:16:36] So instead of saying something like, you don't care about me anymore, it becomes more like, I've been feeling a bit distant lately, and I realize I miss those moments that we used to have together. They made me feel acknowledged and appreciated. So if you're looking for a simple approach to begin having these conversations, start by identifying the feeling without any blame.

[00:16:59] "How can I turn my feeling into something that's about me and will make me feel good rather than something that you haven't done and made me feel bad?" Name what you're feeling and then share the underlying need in a way that's constructive. Another example, instead of saying "You're always focused on the baby and never on me," which will then make her feel like she has another baby that she needs to coddle, try instead saying, "I've been feeling a bit left out lately and I realized that I really miss our one on one time. I'd love to find ways that we can reconnect." See the difference? This approach isn't about putting her on the spot or asking her to fix your feelings or to step in and be mindful of your feelings and not dropping the ball on your relationship, which will in fact make her feel more stressed, right? And so it's not that she doesn't care. Her frustration and her resentment is **because** she cares.

[00:17:56] When you come to her, basically is what I'm saying, and Women, let me know if you feel this way and if I'm echoing correctly. Your feelings, when you come to her and you say, you don't love me anymore. You are not affectionate with me. And I feel like we're growing apart

because your attention is all on the baby she starts to get stressed out because she cares about the relationship because she wants you guys to be well because she cares about you, She is going to feel like oh my god. I need to fix this I need to get on top of it, but immediately after that thought part of her will come up and say, "oh my god. I'm exhausted. No, don't put another thing for me to do here Don't put another worry on my mind," because she worries about this because she cares It's not a task on her to do list because she cares about the relationship and about you. She hears your concern and your grievance and now she becomes weighted. If she didn't care, if she thought that you were just being silly and childish and all of these things, even though sometimes she may seem like this is what she thinks of you. If she really didn't care, is she really disregarded your needs and your request for more validation and admiration, then she wouldn't be weighted by this. She wouldn't care. She would just brush it off and say, yeah, okay.

[00:19:17] But the fact that she becomes stressed out about this may make you feel like she's putting you on your to do list and this should not be stressing her out. I should be her safe place. I should be where she comes and I show her affection, then she shows me affection and this lifts weight off her shoulders. And it seems like me asking her to give me attention puts weight on her shoulders. And so if you're interpreting it that way, it can totally be painful for you as well.

[00:19:42] But consider this reframe that I'm giving you here, because it is true. You're hearing it from someone who is a woman herself, is a mother herself, is in a committed relationship for over 17 years. I did dive into motherhood a lot. This was a grievance that I received from my husband. And on top of that, other than my personal experience, I'm a psychologist

and I'm a parenthood and relationship coach, which what does that mean? I work with couples and I hear about these things all the time. So. Give this a little bit of thought. At least toy with the idea that the fact that she is feeling pressured by your request is not that she doesn't want to be caring and affectionate, But it is the fact that she knows that she doesn't have the bandwidth at this moment, and she worries about whether she will be able to show up in a way that you need. And if she doesn't, what does that mean about the relationship? So she cares.

[00:20:41] The beauty in the approach that I'm proposing to you is that it also creates room for her to share her own feelings without fear of judgment. When you approach her without blaming and just describing your own needs, then you show her that you're open and nonjudgmental, and this encourages her to do the same.

[00:21:00] Suddenly it's not about keeping score or pointing fingers, but it's about seeing each other's experiences and finding a path forward together.

[00:21:08] Moving on, let's talk about some practical steps that will help you in shifting this dynamic and breaking out of the cycle of being overlooked. Let's make this tangible. These are simple actions. We don't want to make it complicated here, but they can make a huge difference in how you and your partner connect even amidst the beautiful challenges and chaos of parenthood.

[00:21:30] So get out your pen and paper or your journal, which I hope that you're continuing and let's break down this four step process that I have for you.

[00:21:39] Step one is to reframe your position from wanting to be seen to actively engaged. It's easy to feel like the answer lies in just being noticed again because that's what you feel. You feel isolated and alone. You feel like you're not being noticed acknowledged. And so, yes, "if only she starts giving me more attention, if only she shows me her affection and how much she loves me, everything will be better." But what if, instead of waiting to be seen, you focused on finding ways to actively be engaged in a manner that is meaningful to you. Think of small actions that contribute to the family in a way that resonates with you, like taking on a particular task, planning a surprise date night, or simply making time to check in on how she's doing. By doing this, you're reinforcing your value, not just to her, but to yourself.

[00:22:32] You'll start to feel like an active part of the relationship rather than a bystander waiting for her to hold out her hand and pull you in. And that can go a long way in shifting your own sense of fulfillment. So this step is getting you active on changing your part in this like we talked about before. So this is how we begin to do our part in the equation so that we can start to see a positive change first in us and then it will trickle into the relationship inevitably.

[00:23:03] Step two is to find small moments to reconnect. So here's my problem with relationship advice out there. It's not everybody, but a lot of people will talk about date nights and about carving out time alone and about even parents taking trips without their children. And that is all beautiful. And if you have the capacity to do it, we'll go ahead. But first of all, if our communication and our relationship is not at a good level. Going on a trip together without the kids is not going to necessarily resolve anything. It could just be another distraction. So again, we might be

missing the point. It could lead to more conversations. It could be to our nervous system being more relaxed because we are not running around the kids. But it could also be that I'm on vacation, but I'm still on edge because how quickly can you get off edge if you've been two, three, four, I don't know how many years straight with the kids. And maybe you've dove into the role of mother, and you're fully engrossed in it, so you're not with the kids, but are you no longer "mother"? Are you suddenly not worried about what they're doing? Are you not connected all the time to your phone, glued to see if everything's alright? Is your mind not back there? I don't know. I mean, these things don't just evaporate because we took a plane and we went to a different country.

[00:24:23] So what I propose seems like it's small and it may seem like it will not have as big of an impact but if done with the right intention it could have A much bigger impact than a week alone without the kids than a date night of two, three hours that needed five days of planning in order to achieve. You don't need a huge uninterrupted date night to reconnect, though that's great if you can get it.

[00:24:48] But what I'm encouraging you to do is to look for opportunities to be present together. Maybe it's a 10 minute chat over morning coffee or a short walk around the block after dinner. These moments add up and they remind the both of you that there's still partnership there, even if it looks different than it used to.

[00:25:08] And I want to add, don't wait for her to initiate these moments. A lot of husbands especially in the phase of parenthood, feel scared of their wives. They realize that they're very tired and they're a bit reluctant to propose these things in case she may feel bothered and start saying things like, "you see, you don't get how tired I am. See, this is proof you're

asking me to do something that is way beyond my means and you don't understand me." And so from a point on, if you've heard this, type of response 5 times, you start to become very reluctant to initiate a proposal like this. I get it.

[00:25:45] But it's important that you continue to take the lead, to show her that you're invested in the relationship and that you value time with her, even, if she's frustrated with you, even in the midst of all this chaos. Maybe just tell her, "here's my thinking. I would like for us to get five minutes of feeling like partners again, without that having to pressure you. If there's a way that we could do it, if there's a way that it could uplift you as well. This is not just about me. My point is for both of us to feel uplifted, then I would love for us to do that. Five, 10 minutes. How can I help you in taking something else off of your shoulders so that we can consider how this may work? if it also feels like to you that you want this time to reconnect. I think it's very important. I think we deserve it. We're doing a great job as parents. And I think our relationship deserves this. So if you would feel like it's something that would also contribute to your well being, let's check this out."

[00:26:45] This is a more subtle way to go about it, if you are indeed getting responses like the one I said before. If your wife feels like the minute that you ask her, you're burdening her, and so you feel rejected and you've become scared of proposing and taking the initiative, which would make sense.

[00:27:04] Now for the ladies who are listening in, if you have been responding in this way, it's important for you to realize that you have every right to be tired. And, It's very understandable that this would feel like another task on the list. Oh my god, now I have to think, where do I put

these five minutes, and how do we put the kids down, and oh my god, that's a crazy proposal he just made. Ten minutes walking after dinner? Who will be with the kids? Maybe he will make a proposal that's completely absurd, okay? He's just trying to give you an idea of something that may work. And maybe he didn't think it through, or maybe he misunderstood how it could work. It doesn't matter though.

[00:27:42] For you it feels like he's expecting too much of me. " He doesn't even realize how much I'm doing if he's asking something extra of me." And so you feel triggered because on a deeper level it feels like he doesn't get you. But this is not about him asking you to carry something. He wants to carry it with you. He's saying, "Hey, I get it. We both dropped the ball on our relationship here, but it's starting to take a toll. And I want us to carry it together bit by bit, little by little, without a lot of expectation.

[00:28:15] Five minutes, somehow, somewhere, anywhere. And I don't want to come at you and tell you what to do because I may be missing part of the picture because you're handling so many things, if not everything. And so it's important for you as well to make sure that when he comes to you with such a proposal, if you do get triggered, that's okay. Because we understand where it's coming from and you're human and you're carrying a lot and you're exhausted You're also dealing with like so many things changing internally for you.

[00:28:48] But at the same time, it's important to recognize the intention there and how it's going to be helpful to you as well. So if you don't want to take it on, tell him what can or cannot be done and give him the go to initiate himself. And if you're overwhelmed, tell him about your feelings. So instead of going, "you are overwhelming me with this right now. And I can't think about this as well. And as my partner who loves me, you

should be able to understand that this is too much that you're asking of me," again, every right to come at it from this way. It's not going to help you. Instead, turn it around and talk about yourself and how you feel.

[00:29:27] It will be much better received to be able to say, I am overwhelmed right now. I also want to make sure that we are oiling our relationship and even though we may not be giving it the full attention, that we are maintaining it to a point where we can pick it up a little bit later down the line and for it not to have been irreversibly broken. So, I care about this, and thank you for bringing it up. But honestly, thinking about this has created a feeling of overwhelm. And so while I recognize the importance of all of this, at the same time, I feel very stressed out just thinking of what we need to do.

[00:30:06] And then ask for him to give you a few solutions. And if they sound absurd, just tell him this is not possible because of this, this and that, and give him something to go off on. They are very logical creatures. This is a generalization, but it is the case that the male brain is much more logical and direct.

[00:30:30] And so if you tell him A, B, C, D don't work because of these reasons, but what could work is that, or I don't even know what could work, but at least I'm giving you what doesn't work and for what reason, then you can have him try to find the solution because that's where he thrives. That is what his brain is wired to do, which of course annoys us as women, right, to the men listening.

[00:30:54] This does annoy us as women that your first instinct is to look for a solution. You can't help it, but it's important for you to keep that in mind, because women will many times, -I wonder if your wife has said it, I

would love to get your DM and know- women a lot of times will say, "I just wanted you to listen. I didn't want you to jump to a solution. And the fact that you jumped to a solution makes me feel like you don't think that I'm doing a good job. And so you're offering me an alternative that would make me do better." So this here, we can use the natural tendency for the man, to be looking for a solution. Tell him what doesn't work and why it doesn't work. And tell him, "find a solution for me. Give me a few alternatives. Let's reconvene and discuss at another time. Because I want this, but I don't want to take all the pressure because I'm the one who knows how things function around here. You're at work all day, I mean, okay, so you don't know of course, but here's what I know. Here's what works up until now. How can we make that fit into our schedule? Find a solution."

[00:31:57] So, he was willing to come to you and ask for a date. He didn't know how to do it without overwhelming you now You're giving him some specifics. Use your solution focused mind and figure it out. It's more likely than not that you will both feel really good about this.

[00:32:11] Step three, create a weekly check in ritual. I've talked about something like this before.

[00:32:16] A weekly check in is a powerful way to stay connected and address any small frustrations before they build up. You can set a time, maybe it can be Sunday evening after the kids are in bed. And ask each other questions like, how are you feeling about how things went this week? Is there any way that I can support you better right now?

[00:32:35] This isn't about creating a formal meeting. It's just a casual time to share what's on your minds and to hear each other out. It's amazing

how much can be solved when both of you know that there's a dedicated time for connection and honesty. And again, making sure that we express these things without blame.

[00:32:53] And this is where my couple's communication checklist helps because it's just the one sheet that you can print out - and I would suggest laminate- where you get to have it in front of you and have a few reminders of how to keep this conversation at a level where it's effective, and it's open, and it's encouraging; nonjudgmental. You can find a link on how to download the sheet and there is an option for you to get it for free. If you review my podcast and send me a screenshot at info at MarkelaCaplani. com and I will send it to you manually for free with my massive gratitude for your support.

[00:33:30] Step four, focus on what you can control, not how she or he responds.

[00:33:36] So this is a big one. Focus on what you can control. You can control how you show up, how you communicate, and how you engage.

[00:33:44] But you can't control how she responds or when she's able to fully return your energy. Sometimes when we start making changes, we expect to inevitably, subconsciously, that our partner will immediately respond in the same way. But people don't always respond on our timeline and that's okay. By focusing on the actions that you can take without expectation, you're showing up for yourself and for the relationship in a way that feels authentic.

[00:34:13] And that alone is a huge step forward to breaking the cycle.

[00:34:17] These are the steps that might feel small, but trust me, are incredibly powerful.

[00:34:23] Breaking the cycle of feeling sidelined is not going to happen overnight like I say, for all the things that we talk about here. It's a gradual shift, one that's built through consistency and intentionality.

[00:34:34] You don't need to have everything figured out . Just start with one or two of these steps that I talked about and let them be a starting point for the changes that you want to see. As you begin to show up more authentically, leading with vulnerability and taking actions that reflect your values, you'll likely notice subtle shifts in how your partner responds too, but mind you again, like I said just now, do not expect them to happen, but they probably will.

[00:35:03] It's about creating a new rhythm in your relationship, one that feels balanced and connected, and over time, those feelings of being sidelined will start to dissolve, replaced by a stronger, more meaningful partnership.

[00:35:17] Before I end this episode, I want to reiterate that you're not alone if you're feeling like you're isolated and that your partner doesn't admire you. It's something that happens a lot. It comes with the territory of parenthood. So you're not failing as a couple. Parenthood is an enormous adjustment for the both of you.

[00:35:36] It's an internal adjustment for each of you and an adjustment for you guys as a couple as well. And so these emotions are normal and part of the journey. The steps that we talked about today aren't about transforming the relationship in one go.

[00:35:51] They're about planting seeds with small intentional actions that over time lead to a stronger and more fulfilling connection. It's those daily consistent steps that will make the difference. So as you move forward, keep this in mind. The goal here isn't to get back to how things were.

[00:36:09] It's about building something new, something even stronger and more resilient than before. You're creating a partnership that can weather the ups and downs. It's okay if you don't get it perfect. We're all just figuring it out as we go. But the fact that you're here, the fact that you're listening and you're taking steps to understand what's going on for you, that alone speaks volumes about your commitment to your family and your relationship. And honestly, That's something to be proud of.

[00:36:38] If today's conversation resonated with you, I encourage you to keep the momentum going. Try out one of these steps this week and let me know about it. See how it feels and get back to me. Remember, small progress is still progress. And if you want to dive in deeper, I encourage you to take a look at my reconnect with her challenge down in the description below. It's a way that you can do what we discussed. You can begin to make changes in a week's time using specific strategies on your own without needing her to be on the same page, without needing her dedication and devotion, which are limited right now. So go ahead and check that out if it feels like a fit for you.

[00:37:19] Thank you for joining me today. If you're looking for more support and insight, check out some of the old episodes, which are definitely linked to what we're discussing today, and feel free to reach out with any topics that you'd like to hear about.

[00:37:31] Take care, keep showing up, and I'll see you in the next episode.