



The Millennial Life

podcast

with Liz Higgins

Episode 27: You Will Have More Than One Marriage

Liz Higgins (00:02):

Hey, y'all! Liz Higgins here, and welcome to the Millennial Life Podcast, where my main goal is to share conversations that will inspire you and drive you toward the life and relationship you desire. I'm here to share what I've learned as a licensed therapist and relationship coach specializing in millennial relationships and wellness, as well as transformative conversations with other professionals. Thanks for listening and enjoy today's episode!

Liz Higgins (00:34):

Hello, you listeners. Thanks for tuning in today. I'm, I'm excited to be here with you and just want to share a little bit real quick about something that I have recently gone through, which is my, my dear grandmother passed away last week. Don't really know how else to say that, um, except to just put it out there for you. And as I'm sitting here on this Monday, May 3rd, it's actually her birthday. Um, and so I'm just feeling really nostalgic and connected, I guess, to the memory of her.

Liz Higgins (01:14):

I'm honestly still processing. Still totally in shock that she's even gone and just had a, you know... I don't know how many of you out there can relate to this, but it's, it's like, although she lived a long and full life, she would be turning 94 today. And I'm so grateful that she had that. And that I had all this time with her. We just can't, we can't be ready for it. I'm just, I'm not, I'm, I'm still kind of in shock that she's gone and really, and truly, it is just really hard. So that is where I'm at today. And although I have a different topic for today's episode, I thought I would be a little transparent because I have a feeling that coming off of this experience, um, being with her last week towards the end of her life, a lot came up for me. And a lot in different ways than I would have anticipated.

Liz Higgins (02:11):

One of those things being just a real, a real vibrant reconnection to my own childhood where she was so present. She was such a huge part of it. But I was telling somebody the other day, it was almost like I just kept having these visceral, bright memories pop up in my mind of, um, times of my childhood. I don't know if you've seen the movie Avatar, but you know, it's really like bright and colorful and just, like, neon and so unique. But the movie, you just feel so alive throughout the colorfulness of it. And like that, that's what I felt like on almost an emotional level. So again, I feel like it's kind of helping to influence where I am right now, just emotionally. And what I feel compelled to share more about as I go forward with the podcast, with work with clients, and just building my business.

Liz Higgins (03:11):

Um, everything I've gone through the past week we had with my grandmother, um, has just brought me back to a reminder of what is the most important piece of life, period. And that is our relationships. So I feel validated in where I am, and thought I'd take this time to hopefully reach people out there that need to hear this stuff. And my grandmother's life and the way that she inspired me and loved me and supported me in my career, and was always interested to hear about it and talk about it... It all just connects. And it has really, really put the pedal to the metal for me in continuing on my mission and nurturing the pieces of this business and my attempts to help relationships out there as much as I can. So let me dive in to today's topic. Alright. I want to talk about how you will have more than one marriage.

Liz Higgins (04:14):

And when I say marriage, you know, I do have, um, you know, a certain meaning that I put for myself on that word and what it is. Like... Marriage for me is kind of the traditional sacramental promise that I have made to my, my husband, my partner. But for so many people out there, marriage means something different. And it can take on many different life forms. And so I want to be inclusive when I use that word to, to mean that I'm talking about a long-term committed relationship. Okay? So if you have tuned into any of my episodes, you know that I share a little bit about my anxiety that I held during my engagement period. Back when I was engaged, part of my experience, anxiety... It was this plaguing question of 'how can I possibly know I'm with the right person?' Capital R I G H T.

Liz Higgins (05:13):

And trust me, I sit with clients, even today, that bring that question, that very vulnerable question. But unfortunately the wrong question to be asking. And I feel like I can totally judge that question because I'm sitting here right with you acknowledging, 'Hey, I had it too.' And I want to talk about where that comes from, but backing up. Okay. So I was with a great partner. I'm with a great guy right now, the same one, but back then I guilted myself for even having that question. Really? I resisted it. I tried to tell myself that was silly. Why would I be like, wondering about that when everything about him is so great? Everybody loved him. We were great together. He met so many needs that I had. Um... Such a great communicator. We connected and all those things. So why the hell did I have this plaguing anxiety of 'but how can I know?'

Liz Higgins (06:13):

How could I know he's the one?' The question found me time and time again, and eventually, I couldn't ignore it anymore. But you know, we're all millennials here, right? Well probably. And here's one thing I know - we value information. We want facts. We prefer to have immediate access to all of that. And I think that somewhere in our generational psyche, we feel like we really, truly should have the answer to that question, that we should be finding the right one for us. And that the stars are going to align in such a way that we really will figure it out. We'll be told somehow that we have made the correct choice. It's just not how it works. And the only path that really took me to a place of being able to dismantle the power that that question had on me was on my journey to becoming a couples therapist and relationship coach.

Liz Higgins (07:11):

It really, truly saved me. I mean, I don't think that like, had I not gone on that path... I really think that somehow I would have catastrophized my relationship. I really do think that. Even worse, I probably would have found a way to make it out to have been my partner's fault rather than myself. Rather than my own doubting, rather than my own anxiety. Just taking me off the deep end, defensiveness is one of my knee-jerk reactions. I mean, trust me, ask Greg today. Like I can get, I can get defensive. The truth hurts sometimes. Right? But thank goodness I didn't get to that point. Instead, what I learned was that one of the cornerstones, one, one of the pillars of what leads a

long-term committed relationship to last (to truly last longterm) is to be able to tolerate relational anchors. Let me just say that one more time.

Liz Higgins (08:15):

One of the foundational pieces of a long-term relationship is growing the skill of tolerating relational anxiety. Well, what is relational anxiety? Relational anxiety is just simply the fact that, that we won't always be certain. That we can't always know. That we never really (I have my quote fingers up) "have" our partner. We don't own them. Simply put, that's what I'm saying. We don't own them. This is kind of like newer age stuff as compared to, um, I don't know, generations past. If you go way, way, way, way, way far back to, I'm talking the, the beginning of the history of marriage, it wasn't this way there kind of was an ingrained, um, structure where, you know, for a lot of women, you got married and you were kind of owned. And that's just not how it is today. Right? Today we look much more for a partnered structure where it's more of a same-as, we're on the same playing field as one another.

Liz Higgins (09:27):

Now there's still things like, you know, traditional patriarchy and different things like that that keep us on different levels. And we're working through that. But all in all, the structure of a committed relationship is very different today. So you gotta be able to learn to tolerate anxiety, to be in the unknown, to acknowledge the fact that a committed relationship takes risk. It takes a lot of not knowing and again, uncertainty. So what I was feeling on a very real physiological level and the anxiety that I was having was really bringing me back to a truth, a truth that I wasn't told, which is that the one doesn't exist. And here's where I get a little, a little mad with this, right? I wanted to talk today about how you will have more than one marriage. You will have more than one long-term relationship, even if you are with one person for all of those, there is not just one version of my partner and there's not just one version of me.

Liz Higgins (10:38):

And if we're trying to trick ourselves into believing that who we are saying "I do" to is going to be the same person that we're saying "I do" to in five years or 10 years, we're, we're honestly setting ourselves up for major failure. Because if we're putting each other in boxes and saying, 'This is who you're telling me you are, don't change' well, we're in for a rude awakening. So I find myself incredibly lucky and incredibly privileged in that I'm a therapist. Because I have, I feel like I've unlocked Pandora's box on so many things that if, again, if I were not on this path, I wouldn't have learned. And that's why I'm so incredibly passionate about doing this podcast, about offering coaching sessions, about putting together this Facebook community that we have now for millennial women... Because we need this information and these mindset shifts for long-term committed relationships to be, like, general knowledge.

Liz Higgins (11:41):

The stuff needs to be understood by everybody. And if it were, I just have this, like, fantasy that the divorce rate would be totally decreased. And not that divorce shouldn't happen, but that people would have more full awareness of what it is that they're signing up for. Because when we sign up for forever, we have to realize that we're not agreeing to freeze ourselves in time. We have to realize that what we're saying yes to is a huge journey full of pain, full of opportunity with another person who chooses to do the same. So I had no idea at the time that the anxiety I was feeling, that I felt ashamed for having, was actually leading me to a deeper understanding of the risk of being in a relationship. Which ultimately has become the beauty of being in a relationship. It's the reality I've leaned into and embraced that I am on a path and I'm growing and changing, and that my husband will too.

Liz Higgins (12:55):

And we may not always love those changes that happen, but we sure as heck need to learn to lean in and choose to navigate them together. It's when you stop choosing to navigate together that you start to hit the conflict. It's when we decide that we don't like the change that's happening around us, because it means that we have to adjust and we don't want to do that. It doesn't feel fair, or it doesn't coincide with our value system. It could be real stuff. It could be really difficult stuff, but that's kind of the core at where, you know, intimate relationships can become challenging, right? So rather than explore this question of how can I know, how can I know he is the right one? How can I know I'm making the right choice rather than going down that path and inviting constant FOMO into my brain?

Liz Higgins (13:49):

I have shifted to exploring some different questions. Instead, I asked myself, can I commit to showing up for my partner as he changes as he grows, as he continues to be his own person who is oftentimes very different than me, can I commit to showing up for him in this relationship? Can I commit to showing up for myself and holding space for my needs as I change in this relationship, too? I want to do a whole other episode on that concept because it's critical to feeling fulfilled in your relationship. It's actually being able to hold, hold onto yourself and identify your needs and own those and create space for those. You invite what you want and what you need when you own the wanting, when you own what you need. And just to be honest, a lot of us had childhoods where we didn't feel seen or heard, or that our needs and wants were met, or that they were okay, that they were acceptable.

Liz Higgins (15:00):

So it is our job on this journey of life to, uh, to bring space to those needs and those internal drives and to let our relationship be the safe space for all that stuff to occur and to heal and stuff. So that is the ultimate gift of commitment from my perspective. And this is what I've seen really be the differentiator from couples who truly level up and take things to the next level - it's the ones that say yes to leaning into this concept, that their relationship and this commitment represents a safe space for them to grow, to change and to transform in themselves together. So that's where we come full circle to this idea that you're going to have more than one relationship. You're going to have more than one marriage. And a lot of times it'll be with the same person. Thinking this way has really allowed me to experience, well, maybe not experience in the moment, but definitely reflects on every frustration, every conflict, the growing pains that we have as a couple... Thinking this way allows me to see those things as invitations to level up, invitations to grow, opportunities to really stretch and develop myself.

Liz Higgins (16:36):

And in my relationship... I've been with my husband over, Oh my gosh, I guess, close to 12 years total at this point in time. And that's a long time. But what is really exciting about that? Even though we're in, you know, somewhat of this phase of like parenting toddlers and little kids, and we're really tired a lot of the time and our energy is dispersed in a lot of different places right now. I still feel like we're, we're growing and developing and supporting each other in that growth in different ways that it keeps things so exciting. And I can't wait to bring more episodes to y'all about some of these things that really help long-term committed couples stay fulfilled, stay feeling excited, stay feeling the energy of that change in a positive way. Rather it feeling, uh, like a threatening thing. It's all about reframing.

Liz Higgins (17:34):

And it's all about changing the way you experience the stages of life in yourself and in your relationship. So to wrap it up, I love this quote by Esther Perel, she says, 'Instead of looking for a person who checks all the boxes, focus on a person with whom you can imagine yourself writing a

story with that entails edits and revisions.' I just love that. I mean, you, when you choose that path of a long-term committed relationship, when you choose that path of marriage, you are really saying yes to becoming a co-author. And you've each got your own pen and paper, but you are collaborating the heck out of this thing. And when you're in that space of acknowledging, accepting, and leaning into the fact that change will happen. And the fact that change is meant to help you stretch and grow and become even better than before.

Liz Higgins (18:33):

The, the stuff that follows is just really fascinating. So I hope this was helpful for you. And, um, you know, thanks for listening. Like I said, today is coming off of a really, um, a really hard and heavy week for me. But it's all really, truly brought me back to what is most important. And I hope that you feel grounded in your world today, knowing that even through the hardest moments, the hardest times... Change, pain, loss - it's all meant to help us become more of a full, full self, full person, whole person, and to help us grow. So I look forward to talking to you next time!

Thanks again for listening to the podcast. If you like the show, leave us five stars or write a review. If you're interested in learning more, sign up for my free ebook "The One Barrier to Commitment All Millennials Face" at millennialrelationships.com.

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