

Loving on Purpose Podcast

with Bonnie Lyman

Episode 53 Sons and Daughters-in-Laws

I'm Bonnie Lyman, and this is Loving on purpose. You're listening to episode 53 sons and Daughters in Law. Welcome to the podcast. Loving on purpose. I'm your host, Bonnie Lyman. If you're having trouble navigating through your relationships with your adult children, if you are struggling to connect with them or having specific challenges, you're in the right place.

Hello, everyone. How are you doing? I hope you're getting through either putting Christmas away or just settling into winter. It can be a difficult time for a lot of people. I'm actually leaving my Christmas tree up. A friend of mine, Brooke White, she calls it her mental health tree. And so it's driving my husband crazy, but I'm not going to take it down until the days get longer. But I want to talk to you today because a listener asked me to. When I talk about sons and daughters in laws. And so I never have any problems coming up with topics to talk about regarding getting along better with our adult children or just feeling better in life in general, and how we have control over that, how we actually have more control over how we want to feel than what we ever could have imagined. But if you have a topic that you would like me to address, I'd love to hear from you, and so just email me@bonnielyman.com.

So one of the hardest things that we'll ever do in our life as a parent is transitioning from parenting young children to being a parent of adult children. And if you notice, I dropped the word parenting adult children because our role has really changed. When we are parenting young children, and I consider that until they've cut the financial tether or we'll say at about age 19 or 20, it is our responsibility to guide them and to give them advice, teach them, set. Consequences for them, to have behavioral expectations of them, to be an enforcer of rules that we've set for them, maybe even override some of their decisions. And especially be a protector for them and provide a space of safety for them not only physically, but emotionally ever. And that's a lot of things to be responsible for. And we're really into their day to day lives. We are essentially responsible for keeping them alive and to prepare them to be responsible adults.

But remember, once they become adults, we change roles. It's like we've been fired from our old job. Now we only have one responsibility, and that's dependent upon the mental wellness of your adult child, and that is to show them love, to love them, love them in such a way that they know will love them regardless of what they may or may not do. Loving them is accepting them for who they are, who they are right now. I've had several of my clients tell me that as they've had an argument over something with their adult child, remembering one of the last things their child said to them, why can't you

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love me just the way I am? So I always pray that my children will know that I love them. And the thing that we can concentrate on to make sure that we're loving them is not judging them. Because I believe we're either loving others or we're judging them.

So we've got these kids, they become adults. Maybe they go to school, maybe they go see the world, maybe they get a job, whatever they do. And oftentimes they get married. Now we have a new person from a different family that becomes part of our family. Who is going to be the most important person in our child's life. Yes, more important than their parents. You got to remember, you got fired from your old job where you were the key player in their life. And so together with this new person, they are forming a new family unit. But how they act in this new family unit is going to influence or is going to be influenced on how they were raised in their family unit. But remember, you brought two different families together with probably two different sets of rules, behaviors, et cetera. Two different ways of being raised.

So some of their behavior, how they're going to act as this new family unit, you're going to like maybe all of it. And some of it may be to your disliking. It's easy to go to all sorts of judgment of them. But ask yourself or notice which feels better, judging them or loving them. If your children aren't married yet, I've got a very good suggestion for you. Why not decide right now you're going to love whoever they married? And if they are married, decide to love your daughters and sons in laws because your children love them. I still hang my whole life on. All of us really want in this life is to feel good. I believe loving someone feels so much better than judging them. So I practice loving as many people as I can. If you can't get to loving them, try being curious about the things they do that maybe you don't approve of. And I'm thinking specifically of sons and daughters-in laws now. So you may not like how they discipline their children. You may not like their lack of not serving meals in the house. There's just a whole list of things. All of us have our own little peeps about what's going on.

But let's just get curious. And here's a few things to think about. I wonder why she lets their kids go to bed whenever they want. I wonder why she makes her husband do the laundry when she doesn't have another job that she goes to every day. I wonder why he isn't the main provider financially for the family like my husband was. I wonder why he doesn't care if their kids don't do their homework. I wonder why she never comes to our family dinners. I wonder why he doesn't help the kids get ready for school when his wife also needs to leave for work in the morning. But the area to get the most curious about is yourself. And here are three thoughts that could be helpful. Be curious about why am I even thinking these thoughts? What would I be feeling if I didn't have these thoughts about my sons and daughter in laws? What would love be thinking? When my first child got married and had her first baby, which was our first grandchild, my thought was I

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wonder when she will quit her job. I had the expectation that she would want to stay home and just be a stay at home mom like I was. But things weren't going to work out that way, I soon learned.

Number one, she needed to work to help provide for the family. Number two, she liked working. And three, this is what they, including my son in law had decided was best for their family. Our way of raising our children was probably the best way to raise them because that's how we raised them. And if we thought differently, we would have raised them differently. Our married kids are doing things their way. It's a different time with different needs and certainly a lot of different opinions. There are no guarantees in this life. If things are done a certain way, there will be a certain or a guaranteed outcome. And I certainly have proof of that in my own family. We got to do it our way. Now they get to do it their way. We tend to want to judge the son or daughter in law for behaviors we think they need to change. Sometimes we even think they are the cause that things are being done in ways that I don't like. We kind of blame everything on this new person in the family and not our child being part of the decision making.

But this is only our thoughts. These are only our opinions when we don't like what an inlaw may be doing in our family. Do you not have the faith in your child that they wouldn't stand up for something they didn't want to do or go along with something they didn't agree with? I think we raised stronger children than that. So whose problem is it? Is it yours or your son or daughter in laws? We have forgotten that all problems are really just thought problems. Choosing thoughts that judge the spouses of our children cause us to choose all by ourselves. To feel disappointed if we choose to be curious or choose to think respectful thoughts regarding their agency were going to feel peace. Is it our business how our adult children conduct their lives? Maybe sometimes if it's not within our boundaries. But boundaries are different than opinions about how we want them to live their lives. Boundaries are about what happens when they are in. Let's say, my space, my home.

An example might be that even though my kids or my son in law or my daughter in law lets their kids jump on their couches at their house, I may not allow that at my house. But you can't expect your child to respect your boundary unless you tell them about that boundary. My philosophy is that you can request just about anything as long as you do it kindly and respectfully. If my children have boundaries about when they or their kids are at our house, for example, don't scold my child for being a picky eater. I need to respect this parenting style. If we are honest with each other in a respectful, loving way, love and harmony will usually prevail. I can remember when my son Ben first got married. He was my only child living in my hometown here, and it had been a long time since I'd had any of my children living nearby. So I just expected that they would come to my house

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every Sunday for dinner. That's what a lot of my friends did. And so when I said, oh, it'll be so fun to have you over every Sunday night for dinner, he lovingly and politely and kindly said, no, Mom, I don't think that's going to happen. We just really respect our weekends as being time spent with each other, and I just don't think it's going to happen for us. I just don't think it'll be convenient for us to have it happen that often. Tension and misunderstandings usually come from a lack of communication. And the more factual our communication can be and the less emotional and opinionated it is, the more effective it will be.

Like with the couch, I'm not as concerned with the rowdy behavior that my grandchildren would be exhibiting as I am with damaging the couch by maybe splitting the seams open. If we explain why we are setting a boundary, it is usually accepted. Everyone really has the same need. We all want to be listened to and understood and to be told what we're doing right. The more we can tell our children, especially those children in laws, about the things we love that they are doing, the more they will feel loved and accepted. Our role in this in law relationship is to decide how we want to conduct our lives. It's our business to love our children and their spouses. It's our responsibility as a parent to tell our children often what we love about them. It's our business to spend our energy on becoming who we want to be, not spending our energy on trying to change others. If an in-law is difficult to be around, it's not about you, it's usually about them. You will eventually find out that they are probably hurting about something in their life that has nothing to do about you. There is something they can't figure out how to resolve when we're hurting. We need people who still love us, and we can be that person. If you don't know how to love those that are difficult to love, I am very good at teaching people how to love them. So all you have to do is get on a call with me. I'm going to give you some support. We're just going to talk. We're going to see where we want to go from there. Just go to my website, bonnielyman.com. I hope you have a wonderful week and I'll talk to you next week.

If you're frustrated because your relationship with your adult children doesn't look anything like the way you thought it would, I can help you. Moms who are in a painful relationship with their adult children tend to just spin in their sadness and in their pain because they're waiting for their adult children to change or they don't know what to do to instigate this change to have a peaceful relationship. My program is called Loving on Purpose, and I help you fix what's not working in your relationship so you can feel love and peace with your adult children and then be able to move forward in your life. I can help you feel that peace that will cause you to know exactly what you need to do to maintain that peaceful connection with your children. I can help you feel secure and confident in your role as a mom. I can help you be able to choose how you want to feel in any moment, and that means being able to move forward to live a satisfying, fulfilling

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life that includes always having love for your children. If you want some help, if you just want to get on a call with me and see what my program is all about or how I can help you, go to [Bonnie Lyman.com](http://BonnieLyman.com) and click on the little button that says Book a call.