

Loving on Purpose Podcast

with Bonnie Lyman

Episode 56 Unconditionally Loving Your Adult children

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. This is episode 56, unconditionally loving your children that are difficult to love. I think that's what I'm going to title this episode, but I may change it before it gets published.

How are you guys doing out there? I can't tell you how much I think about you. I am sincere about that. I think about you all the time. I think about you moms that are sad and hurting because what your difficult children are doing in their lives, of your unmet expectations, of just all sorts of things that aren't going on the way you thought they would be. I heard something. I've read so many things lately. I don't know if it was on the news, but they said people are kind of a mess right now because the world is a mess. And I kind of believe that. I feel like there's so many voices pulling at us. Believe this, do this, don't follow that. You better go to school, you better not go to school, you better go. Just follow your dreams right now. Don't worry about your finances, don't worry about getting married or having an education or no, you should be setting up your life right now.

There are so many confusing voices out there as to what to do. But bottom line, we are all individuals, and unless we have some mental illness, I think we're all capable of making the decisions that are right for us, of making the exact decisions we're supposed to be making for us. And yes, some of those decisions are going to disappoint others. Parents in general will say, but it's other people's lives and they get to do what they want to do. And some of the things they do make us feel sad or hurt. So that's what I do. I help people not change these situations because we don't have control over them. We don't have control over anything outside of ourselves. And so the focus needs to be on what do I need to do to get better and what do I need to do? It's my responsibility to find out how not to be so hurt. But I hope, I hope you're making some discoveries, I hope you're overcoming some problems and tragedies in your life, and they're going to come that's part of life. But we can do hard things. We have the capacity within us to do hard things, and sometimes we need to remind ourselves of that. But once our children become adult, they're they're just like us. They're all equal. We don't have control and we don't have a right to tell them what they shouldn't or shouldn't be doing. We can counsel them. And I like to say, if it were me, this is what I would be choosing, and this is why. But there is a way out of your suffering, and I believe that is through love.

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If we wanted to live the gospel of Jesus Christ, which I feel has the answer to all our problems, three things in particular that he's asked us to do for our well being, is to love everyone, to forgive everyone, and not to judge anyone. But I fall short of doing that. And when I don't work on that, I suffer. I hurt. But the times, because of the work I've do and what I've been taught as to how to love everyone, how to forgive everyone, and how not to judge anyone, I can say 75% to 80% of my life is really pretty content, and I can't tell you how much I want that for you. So I believe the answer to everything is learning how to think those thoughts that cause us to feel love.

I had a completely different topic I was going to talk on this week until I ran into two situations, and they were tough, probably the toughest I've run into since I've been a coach. And it had to do with children who were transgender, who wanted to have a sex change. Now, one mom, her greatest fear was that if her child went through with this, that he would not be accepted in their community, in their community of friends, at church, just whoever. But her greatest fear was because she had such a good relationship with her son and she was trying to see it through his eyes and because she knew she couldn't control whether he went through with this or not. She was afraid that he didn't want to hurt her feelings, that he would run off somewhere and make this change and abandon her. She was afraid of losing him, of having a relationship with him. I would say this woman unconditionally loved her child and she wanted to be around this child no matter what they did. And her biggest fear was not that he'd regret it in the future or I mean, she did have concerns that it was just going to screw him up mentally a little bit because that has to be a pretty confusing decision and thing to do. But she was afraid she was going to lose the relationship with him, but she knew she could maintain at least a connection in her mind by always loving him. The other situation I ran up against was their child wanted to have a sex change, but they were living in a state that did not allow it. And so they were going to move in to this state where she was living, where they allowed it. And she said, I cannot have this child come and live in my home and recuperate after having the surgery because I feel like I'm endorsing I'm supporting the decision to do it. It broke my heart, which she was missing out on and what this child really needed.

Within a matter of a year we had three major things happen to us. First, we had a child, a daughter who was unmarried. Tell us she was pregnant. And she decided to place not one baby she's pregnant with two for adoption. But to even compound things, when they found out she was having twins, there were some anomalies with one of the babies. They didn't know if the baby had hip sockets. Her spine was all twisted, she had rocker bottom feet. She did have an amniotest, and there was nothing mentally wrong and the

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other baby was fine. But she had decided that what was best for these babies was to be raised in a home where there was a mom and a dad and the father of these children did not want to get married. And my daughter was in love with this, I guess you'd say a man seemed like a boy to me at the time. They were 19 years old. And so she was grieving the heartache of not being able to she decided it was her decision, but the heartache of not raising these children and the heartache of not being able to marry this person she thought she was madly in love with.

Then the next thing that happened, about five, six months later, our son told us he was dealing with same sex attraction. And this was in the it wasn't quite as accepted as it was now. And so we couldn't share that with a lot of people unless we had permission from him. But our heartache was he always talked about growing up and having a wife he was going to marry and having children of his own that he could bless. So it could have been a gift we had. We were not angry with our kids. We didn't blame ourselves for how we raised them. And somebody came up to us and said, I hope that if this ever happens to me, that we can handle it as well as you are. And I was shocked by that comment. Those children needed me more than any other time in their life. So in those two stories, some have worked out better than others. But it's loving them despite what they did or what they're doing. My one son is living with a partner right now, and I love that man and I love my son.

And if you're not of my faith, you may not seem like that would be such a difficult thing to do, but we believe that it's breaking one of God's love to have intimate relations with anybody unless you're married to them. And these two are not married. They would be welcomed at our church and loved. But we feel that there's still, you might say, a sin, if you want to call it that. There's something they're doing that's not right in the sight of God. But we would feel that way if they were heterosexual.

There's a proclamation on the family that you can look up if you want to read that talks about our belief in marriages should be between a man and a woman. And I don't want to get into that. And I love you if you feel differently. I love you even if you hate my church, because you know why? Well, for one reason, it's just easy for me to love people, but it feels so much better. But when this one woman said, I just can't have my child come and recuperate in my home because they were doing something that was totally against my belief, I respect I am not going to judge her for making that decision. But I feel so sad for her child. But I also feel sorry for her to have the opportunity to grow, to love someone, to love someone that is difficult to love in a situation that is so difficult.

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I can see where that would be hard for a parent to accept. She thinks this child will regret having done this down the road. Yes, that could happen. There's a 50% chance they will regret it, but there is a 50% chance that they'll be glad they did it. And yes, there are some confusing things. I can only imagine the mixture of hormones you have in your body that cause all sorts of havocs that hormones in neutral just do when normal things are going on. And what a difficult decision this is. And confusing for them. It has not been easy, but I feel like they need the love from their parents more than any other time.

But like I said, I think it is possibly an opportunity to really learn how love feels. So let's talk about that for a minute. Number one, love is a gift we give ourself. And of all the emotions out there that we could feel, love feels the best. Love feels whole. There's a wholeness you feel. There is a completeness you feel. There's sometimes a warmth you feel. It almost feels like you're floating. But it is calm, it is quiet, it is peaceful. There is not a more amazing feeling in the whole world as love. So why do we want to deny ourselves that feeling when it's going to feel even better when we learn how to love a person that's difficult to love? I read somewhere, I think it was called the Newport University. I'm going to get some of these off and I apologize that I'm not giving credit where credits due, but I kind of studied up a little bit on this. Besides, let's just talk about this for 1 second first before I go into this next thing. If we want to feel love, we have to think loving thoughts. Feeling love does not happen by someone else's behavior. Someone else's behavior triggers our thoughts. But we don't have to choose to keep thinking those thoughts if they don't make us feel love.

We don't even have to believe them. But if we want to feel love, we have to have loving thoughts and we have to think them all the time. So a way to do this is practice with learning how to love everyone around you. Just look at someone and say I love the way they open that door for that person, or I love the way he cut his hair. I mean, just start with something little. But let's start learning to love everyone. Hate never feels good. You can hate all the people you want, they don't feel your hate, only you feel it. And it doesn't feel good. Love always feels amazing. Now you can love someone and not want to be around them. But I think we had a responsibility when we had children that we love them in the exact same way as when we held that baby in our arms for the first time.

Unconditional love, simply put, and this is from this Newport Report Institute or something unconditional love is the kindest version of ourselves. In other words, when we unconditionally love, we show up as the kindest way we can because it's our

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feelings that cause our behavior. And you can't fake that. People can see right through it if you're trying to fake it. Unconditional love is the choice to love and respect each other every single day. It doesn't come without as difficulty because there are challenging people out there that are difficult to love. But when you get it right, it feels so good. And that's how they spilled it out. Love has the ability to improve our lives, benefit our mental health, and help us become the best possible version of ourselves. Life becomes happier, brighter and more exciting when you love other people with unconditional love, this is by somebody else. Sorry, I can't tell you who. There is no fear or sense of uncertainty. It's secure, kind and loving. So what that means to you is that when you unconditionally love your children, love just loves you. Just love them no matter what they're doing. You don't have to walk on eggshells because you are not dependent on their reaction or what you think by acting a certain way is going to cause to ruffle the feathers. But when you just love someone, you show up as love and you do what love does. And that means whatever you do is kind and respectful. Even if they don't like it or agree about it, agree with it so you no longer have to feel like you can't be yourself around your children. And the way this person put it was you don't feel like you have to walk around on eggshells to placate the other person. It's safe and warm and it's an emotional space without judgment that you give to that person.

Crystal Ray Poll said, unconditional love is a selfless act. You're not in it for yourself. You can't love someone unconditionally unless your love remains unchanged despite their actions. So a lot of times when I am talking with my clients and they go, oh, I'll always love my child. If you loved your child, you would not be judging them. Love just loves. Just like I've told you before about my grandson and his little lovey. I just saw that little lovey just tonight, and it's all ratty and torn up and he's just hanging on tight. Loving Bunny, which is actually a stuffed dog.

He loves that little stuffed animal unconditionally. And we have more influence over our children if they know we love them. And if we try to understand them, if we try to see things from their point of view, knowing probably that we're not going to side with them. We're just trying to walk in their shoes, that's all. We don't have to change for them to know we love them. We cannot tell them often enough what we love about them. Tell them that you love how they always keep their car clean. Tell them that you love that it doesn't bother them that they never keep their car clean, and then they still can be happy. Tell them if you think they're a good father. They cannot be told often enough of the good things that they do. And when they're doing things that they don't like, that is not the whole person. That is just a part of them. So let's just focus on what they're doing, right? And tell them that.

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A philosophy professor pointed out, even the love between a parent and a child can fall short of being unconditional love. A parent may love their child no matter what they do, but often this love still has a condition. They love their child because their child is theirs. And so when I have a mother tell me, oh, I'll always love my child. Yeah, of course they are. This is their child and they're going to love them. But can they always show them that they love them? Can they always show up as love?

So as I was talking to this parent about allowing her child to come recuperate at her home after this surgery, I said, what if it was just a surgery and they were coming into a state where they didn't? Know anybody, and they didn't have any place to go. And this is your child. And the place that would feel best and safest for them would be with you, their mom. Would you have a different opinion about letting them come? And then I asked her, what would love do?

If you love someone, you support them the best you can without fueling the bad behavior. But you love them and you care for them just like you would anyone else. Unconditional love in a relationship means that we can be our true selves with the other person without fear that we'll be abandoned if we do or say something they don't like. On the other hand, conditional love means that we need to meet the other person's expectation or standards in order to feel sure of their love and support.

So I was reading those, thinking that those thoughts were coming from your adult child. When love is conditional, there's a sense that it's not okay to be yourself. And then your child needs your child feels they need to live up to an impossible ideal in order to deserve your love. This sets up a dysfunctional dynamic that's not good for either person. So I just want to end by asking you some questions to think about. And if you want these questions oh, by the way, if you go to my website, Bonnieliman.com, and go to my podcast, there is a transcript of this podcast, so you can get them from there. Number one, and these came from Book Castile, which I have permission to use. Think of someone who's challenging for you to love. Number two, write the reasons why you find this person hard to love. Number three, what are your thoughts about this person that prevent you from loving them more?

Number four, what conditions have you put on loving this person? In other words, what do they have to do or not do in order for you to love them? What does it feel like when you've chosen not to love this person? Number six what would it look like to love this person without any conditions? I'm sorry, that should be what would it be like not look like what would it be like to love this person? I'm going to answer that for you. It would

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be amazing. You would feel so good. List a specific example. This is number seven, in which this person does something you don't like. What would it take and be like to choose to love them in this moment? Again, I'm telling you, trust me, it would feel amazing. How is unconditional love different from love? How does unconditional love serve you? Is there ever a time when love is not a good choice? Why or why not? My husband worked with a fellow and he retired. And when he retired, they were just talking about raising kids in his life and he said, I only have one regret, and that is I didn't love my kids enough.

I am speaking these messages for you because I want you to have the most amazing life possible. It sounds cliché, but I say it all the time. Love is always a choice. Love is always an option. Love is always available. Love always feels best of any other emotion to feel. I hope you will go back and relisten to this podcast. Speed it up, because it's longer than what I thought it was going to be. In fact, I thought it was going to be a real short one. But do it for you and do it for your family and do it for your child. Just decide today, I'm going to do whatever it takes to love this child, no matter what.

All of us, especially in this world today, we all need to be better at loving each other. I know it's hard, and I'm not judging that client who couldn't allow her son to come stay at her house after his surgery, but I feel we have more influence on helping our children to make some changes that maybe we'd like them to make, that we feel and probably would make them happier by loving them. Not by shunning them, not by reminding them of all the consequences, but just loving them for where they are right now. If you ask any young to mid adult what they wish most from their parents, they say that they would love me and accept me just the way I am. I hope this helps you. If you want more help with this, contact me, get on a strategy call, go to Bonnielimon.com and book a call and let's talk and let's figure out what the next step is until we decide to take some action. It's just wishful thinking, but there is a way out. There is a way to learn how to unconditionally love people that are difficult to love. I wish the very best for you and your family, and I mean that with all my heart. I bet I don't end a single personal email without saying that, because I really want that for everyone. And if we just learn to love people just the way they are, we will have an amazing life that we never imagined possible. I hope you share this with a friend and I can't wait to talk to you next week.

If you like this episode and you felt it was of benefit to you, I ask you to share it with somebody that perhaps it could also benefit. But if you're still feeling kind of stuck in that you don't know how to apply what was talked about or where to start, on changing your thoughts, on changing your perspective, on bettering your relationship, get on a call with me and we can have a discussion, and I can tell you how to apply it and where we start.

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And then you get to decide what you want to do about this relationship that maybe you're struggling with with your adult children. There is no reason to go on the rest of our lives struggling with our relationships with our adult children. Let's assume the best. Let's assume that we all love each other and we're just trying to figure out how to maintain our own boundaries and respect another ones. But I can help you with everything, so just go to [Bonnie Lyman.com](http://BonnieLyman.com) and book a call. I can't wait to hear from you.