



Episode 92 - The Power of Compromise in Relationships

Hey smart human,

Welcome to part two of this series on relationships for Smart Humans. Today I'm going to talk about something which I think is really underappreciated: Compromise.

Now maybe you wince a little at the word 'Compromise'.

Isn't that like giving up your soul?

Not at all. Last week we debunked myths of attraction - this week let's debunk the myths around compromise.

Many people think making compromises is a bad idea. It's as if you're giving your power away.

I would argue the opposite.

But first: definitions. Because compromise has two very distinct meanings.

The first one is:

noun

1. **an agreement or settlement of a dispute that is reached by each side making [concessions](#).**
"eventually they reached a compromise"

So we have a dispute, a disagreement, a 'not on the same page' situation, which is settled by all parties making concessions.

For example, when you make a business deal, it often is a compromise: your client wants more than you want to offer for less money than you want to receive. And you then negotiate to reach a compromise which makes everybody feel like they win.

But the second meaning of compromise is, according to Merriam Webster:

2. **the [expedient](#) acceptance of standards that are lower than is desirable.**
"sexism should be tackled without compromise"

And this of course is the type of compromise that you do NOT want in your life, let alone your relationships.

I think this may be one of the reasons why compromise has got such a bad rep - the second meaning has kind of contaminated the first, relatively neutral one.

Now let's look at relationships - and I'm not just talking Romantic relationships here, I'm talking about pretty much all types of human relationships: friendships, partnerships, collaboration, etc.

Here I turn to the Cambridge dictionary, which defines relationship as:

the way in which two or more companies, countries, or people behave towards each other

And I would argue that all relationships benefit from compromise.

Let's be honest here: the PERFECT partner doesn't exist. Just as the perfect human doesn't exist.

You are NOT flawless and neither are the humans you choose to have relationships with.

Yes, you may have a wish list (and you certainly get to have one - in fact, if you haven't already, check out the previous Episode on attraction where dating coach Laerke Nielsen encourages you to be more 'demanding' so to speak).

Yes, you may have preferences.

But you cannot have it ALL.

And I think in that sense relationships are a great antidote to our crazy perfectionism - if we are able to accept that our partner is going to be imperfect we open up to a much better, more authentic life not just with them but also for ourselves.

Yes so many people I speak to are not willing to compromise.

They won't date someone who isn't as ambitious as they are, for example.

Who hasn't gone to the right school.

Who has different interests.

Different ideas on what to spend money on.

And when they stick to ALL these demands and you are unwilling to compromise, it becomes very hard to stay in a relationship.

Because there WILL come a point when your partner does something you do not particularly like (even more so if you're neurodivergent and they're not, but that's a whole other podcast).

And that is where compromise can be a VERY powerful tool to build and maintain a beautiful relationship.

Let's say your partner keeps buying and building LEGO-sets, and you're not really into LEGO.

What do you do? Is that a so-called 'deal-breaker'?

Of course not.

Not if you can find a beautiful compromise.

Now maybe this LEGO-buying partner would like to spend ALL the family money on LEGO and fill the entire house with it.

And you would prefer that they spend ZERO money on LEGO so that you get to enjoy some beautifully empty spaces, or get to fill those shelves with YOUR obsession.

This is where you get to find a compromise.

Rather than deciding that you're obviously not a good fit, this is where you figure out a situation where both of you get a little bit of what you do want, and a little bit of what you don't want.

Yup. A compromise.

Is your partner spending WAY too much time meeting other people, going out to parties, when you'd rather stay at home to Netflix & chill?

Again, not a deal breaker.

Find a compromise.

Now this is hard for some people, because they are so accustomed to 'ruling the world' and making it do their bidding with their smart mind, and just hanging with people who want to do what do they, that when they get pushback they think it is a sign to break up with someone.

Nope. It's a sign that you're about to learn something.

You're about to learn that sometimes it's worth not getting your way - or at least not 100% of it. That there is something very beautiful on the other side of that: meaningful, long-term relationships.

Does that mean that you should always compromise?

Most definitely not.

As we talked about in the previous episode, there are deal-breakers.

Think lying, cheating, never showing up for you, being all talk and no action, etc.

In those cases you definitely don't want to compromise.

You want to have solid boundaries in place - more about those in the next Episode.

So how does this compromise thing that is the basis of so many beautiful, loving (not to mention FUN) relationships) work in practice then?

How do you decide how much you're willing to 'give in'?

What is a 'reasonable, fair compromise'?

That is something you get to learn and figure out.

And it is a great exploration into your values - and those of your partner.

Some people care deeply about reciprocity for example, whereas others couldn't care less.

Some get extremely stressed out when the kitchen surfaces aren't cleaned up and the dirty dishes in the dishwasher at the end of the day - and other don't even notice them.

So this, in a sense, is also 'dating your partner's preferences'.

You get to learn, to figure out what they like, what they prefer.

And in what ways, if any, you want to cater to their preferences.

And then, rather than getting annoyed or frustrated, you can have a conversation about how you're different - and how you want to bridge that specific gap.

You can say something like 'hey, I'd love the dishes to be in the dishwasher before we go to bed - is that something you're willing to help me with?' for example.

And if you're an introvert married to an extrovert you could negotiate some 'introverted at home time' in exchange for going to a party or something similar with them.

This all becomes a lot easier if you can see it as a joyful exploration rather than a trench war where, if you give in, you lose.

Be curious about that person you want to befriend, spend part of your life with, or collaborate with.

And then see the whole compromise thing as a beautiful dance to have a better time together.

So if you have a pattern of short-lived relationships, I want you to check-in with yourself. Do I feel that compromising means I'm lowering my standards? Do I spin stories about how I deserve more? If so, I would invite you to explore the power of compromise.

Your Homework

1. Identify one area where you don't like your partner's behaviour.
2. Brainstorm ways you could be more open to compromise.
3. Have a conversation about it with your partner or friend this week.

And remember: a light, curious, exploratory joyful touch works best.

Always.

Have an wonderful week,

Else a.k.a. Coach Kramer

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