

**Transcription:**

**File: Elephant Talk\_EP22\_Sienna and Aldo\_Raj and Gaby\_Final**

HOST

Welcome to episode 22, of Elephant Talk. In this episode, we look at the power of two. Sometimes when two people come together, their gifts combine in such a way that they're multiplied. The couple together can do ten times more than either individual alone.

SIENNA

*"We knew that we could push each other to fulfill the potential that we saw possible, not in just each other but in the culmination - the sum of us together."*

ALDO

*"Yeah. I feel the same way. I feel like you push me. It's like we agree we're going to jump out of a plane, you know? But at the end you are the one who pushes me out [Laughter]."*

HOST

Sienna and Aldo run a small artisanal chocolate company. She is from a small town in America, he is from the capitol of Mexico. Together they are an example of how two can equal four...or even more. We spoke as they were coming up on their seventh wedding anniversary and a few months away from welcoming their first child.

**BREAK: MUSIC**

RAJ

*"One of the things that always comes first to me is this odd fallacy that seems to have just infused our culture that if you're with the right person that your relationship should just work...we never are taught how to have a great relationship and it's one of the most challenging things I think on the planet."*

GABY

*"People who meet us now, say, 'I want what you have,' and you know I always say to them, 'It didn't come out of the box this way. This was not like a Cracker Jack Prize.' It really has taken some effort."*

HOST

Our second couple is Raj and Gaby. They use themselves as a model for how to be in partnership together. It's not perfect but they're very courageous in putting their stuff out there for other couples to learn.

MY NAME IS ANDY HORNING, AND THIS IS ELEPHANT TALK. IT'S ABOUT ALL THINGS RELATIONSHIP - THE SOULFUL, THE SILLY AND THE SEXY.

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- ALDO My name is Aldo and I'm from Mexico City.
- SIENNA And I'm Sienna. We just celebrated our seventh anniversary. We've been married for seven years
- ALDO We started a chocolate company and we've been working on understanding cacao as an ingredient.
- SIENNA We initially started the idea for a company when we were living in Tokyo and then we travelled to Denmark to have some hands on life experience of what an artisanal, gourmet company, what that looks like.
- ALDO The way we feel is that we were being held down a little bit by our companies...that we couldn't do as much as we can. And so we decided to, maybe, if we do something together we could do more.
- SIENNA We knew that we could push each other to fulfill the potential that we saw possible, not in just each other but in the culmination - the sum of us together.
- ALDO I think it's been the story of us, like, since we met each other till like this way of growth.
- ALDO 'La fuerza para empujarse el uno al otro' ¿No? Spanish for: The strength to boost each other, isn't it?] Yeah, yeah. It's this constant energy, you know? Always moving us.
- ALDO We met in Mexico City,
- SIENNA I had been living there for about a year.
- ALDO At that time was working as a manager of a very big club. I would sell like close to six thousand dollars every night make thousands of drinks. It was pretty crazy. Something you can only do when you're young. One of the PR guys that worked for the club.
- SIENNA It was a circus. He gave me a bunch of free passes and we headed to the club but I had to use the restroom right away so I was standing in the entrance bathroom.
- ALDO I was rushing, like usually, just right before people come. I went and turn into the bathroom and I saw Sienna and it really, really, struck me, she was so beautiful and there was something about her.
- ALDO It was just like pop! You pop out of the whole thing, the whole world and I- and

I just had to say that she was beautiful but I didn't have time to stay so I just kind of said...

SIENNA Dropped a comment.

ALDO Yeah, drop a comment and keep running [Laughter].

ALDO I went and crossed the kitchen, and went to the bathroom, whatever, and came back, and you were right in front of my bar which is the main bar,

SIENNA You were just returning and I didn't know that you had left or that you were the person that said that I was beautiful or anything and so... I ordered my drinks.

ALDO And I was like 'Ok, ok, slow down, slow, please just tell me your name' because it's such a big club, sometimes you don't get a second chance. You tell me your name. We started talking and I offered you to pay for the drinks and you said 'you don't have to pay for this'.

ALDO I was quite impressed about that. The night kept going, people kept coming to the club but then you started walking again to the bathroom.

ALDO I followed her to the bathroom and she went inside but then I used my club card, you know, since I have power there, I went inside the bathroom of the women because I know it's just like- it has like a lounge in the bathroom, like a person that is helping you and have separate booths, it was not going to be that scandalous but- so I opened up the door and all the women looked at me and I was- I was not feeling embarrassed but I need to do something so I didn't have a plan and what I did was just kiss her.

SIENNA You walked in and... I mean, it was very romantic you pushed me against the wall, like a romance novel [Laughter] you kissed me and ran back out and you didn't say anything to me.

ALDO I didn't have time to talk.

SIENNA I was very impressed.

ALDO We share core values, similar interests. We're both interested in art, we're both interested in gastronomy, we're both interested in music.

SIENNA I don't know if you feel this too but I was kind of- like I had a lot of ideas and things I wanted to do but once I met you it was kind of like 'ready, go!' now we can do them, you know?

ALDO Yeah, the same.

SIENNA It was almost like we can do even more than we were planning to do individually.

- ALDO Yeah, exactly.
- HOST Soon after Sienna and Aldo met, they decided to go to Japan together.
- SIENNA We were there for five years.
- ALDO One year after we were pretty well established and then the earthquake came.
- SIENNA Really living in Japan was like a vision quest or something for our relationship, it was a challenge one of the most difficult things that I've ever done. And you've expressed the same to me.
- SIENNA I think it's a beautiful, very easy place to travel if you're going to visit, it's very comfortable, very safe, very clean, all wonderful things about Tokyo that everyone loves but to build a life there, to be incorporated into the city as a member of the city is difficult.
- ALDO Yeah, it's very hard.
- SIENNA But we committed a hundred percent, that was also part of why the earthquake was a really intense experience because so many of our family members told us 'you should leave, you should leave, why are you staying there? I can't believe you're not flying home right now, we'll buy you a plane ticket' everyone was very panicked and we didn't.
- ALDO It was not an option, even though definitely was a question; everybody in your family questioning 'why you're staying there' and you were like, It's because my life is here.
- ALDO Being foreigners together it was something completely different because being in Mexico, you are the foreigner, I am not, it's completely different dynamic.
- SIENNA The most difficult thing [Laughter] was in the grocery store, I want to understand everything, I want to understand 'is that decaf coffee? Is that regular coffee?' and you want to kind of go with it and grab a coffee, and taste it, and if you like it you get the same one, the next time we get a different one.
- ALDO I like to explore and observe [Laughter].
- SIENNA Yeah, I observe and I like to- sometimes, not always but in that context I think my feeling of insecurity of not being able to read because I was illiterate really pushed me to want to have all the information and so I think we argued sometimes. I think our worst arguments were in the grocery store or pharmacies.
- SIENNA Just like anyone I have blind spots and there are patterns that I've gotten comfortable over time that don't actually get me the results that I want but that

I'm used to doing them over and over. One of the things that you do very effectively, is shine light on those blind spots because you have a very different way of approaching things and solving problems. If I'm able to put my ego and not think that I have the best way, I can learn a lot of new techniques from you.

Just yesterday we were working on a recipe and I very much disagreed with your approach of the recipe but, my thought process why 'I've never made this recipe before either and so why not try his style' and it ended up being successful so that helps me kind of relax the control I have over my decisions

ALDO Yeah. I feel the same way. I feel like you push me. It's like we agree we're going to jump out of a plane, you know? But at the end you are the one who pushes me out [Laughter]

SIENNA [Laughter] I get impatient.

ALDO I'm thinking too much, okay, let's see, is this a good spot?

SIENNA I'm definitely more impulsive.

SIENNA I have encouraged you to- to just go for it, you know? And solve the problem as we go.

SIENNA And that brings a really nicely into our concept in our relationship a strong duality that we both have individually in each of us that has allowed us to really... be able to do that together because that takes so much trust but it also takes, uhm, both that sensitive piece that we both have and that courageous piece that, we both resonate together and without one of those in either of us I don't think we could have done the things that we've done so far.

ALDO One of the examples is when we leaved Japan, we didn't have a clear- a very clear plan of where we wanted to go to, I mean we knew what we wanted to do but not how we were going to get there. So, it was my birthday and we tried this amazing beer. This beer is a really small name for it because it's in a champagne bottle and they sell it in just really exclusive wine shops it was a changing life moment, I mean it's kind of dramatic but it was.

SIENNA But for us those things are really impactful

ALDO For us it really impactful for us, yes. So we wanted to do something with food. You contacted the people that was pretty- ballsy. You went for it.

SIENNA And I more than just contacted, I told him we wanted to go and live with them.

ALDO Yes.

SIENNA [Laughter] and learn how to make the beer [Laughter].

ALDO And I was like 'how can we go live with these strangers?' 'this is a little weird'

‘what if they’re crazy?’ and I don’t speak Danish so...

SIENNA I didn’t even think about us not speaking Danish until we landed. [Laughter]

SIENNA I had an intuitive feeling that it was the inspiration we needed for the next step. If it wasn’t logical, I didn’t know anything about them.

ALDO Over time I’ve been learning to trust those intuitions of yours because I don’t get those intuitions, it’s more of investigation and a decision. Sometimes they are scary. I didn’t do my research enough. That’s a moment of I have to jump out of the plane with my eyes blind, you know? And... we did that!

SIENNA That’s a good example of the different ways we have of doing things that have worked out successfully. They’re not always successful. I appreciate you trusting, especially in that moment, because you like privacy and you like space. We had no idea where we were going to sleep or where we were going to do anything, we’re going to go for five weeks, live in their house and we’ve never even met them before, there was a lot of trust you put in me.

HOST Sienna and Aldo went to Denmark and lived there for five weeks learning to make this exclusive beer.

ALDO We learned how to make the beer. After that, that’s when the chocolate idea came from and it comes from that, meeting Casper and Gite, they were kind of soul mates.

SIENNA You connected very deeply with Casper. That connection the two of you had opened our experience to be really, very positive. From that kind of culmination we understood what we could do together, you and I, as a business.

ALDO Yes.

SIENNA They’ve been kind of like life mentors. They were both very similar in their relationship, in their marriage, they were artists, and they were interested in theater. It wasn’t that they chose to be brewers and then the rest of their life fit into that, it was that they chose a lifestyle and then the brewing complemented that lifestyle and as a result they made incredible beer. That was the style of business that we wanted to start, we wanted to build live a lifestyle and then have the product to kind of be born from that.

ALDO There’s this quote about Tom Waits that I love, he said ‘You’ve got to marry a woman that you can take to the woods’ you know? You know you’re going to go to the woods and you’re going to survive with her. I see you that way.

SIENNA We have an end goal that is the same and so, allowing that wiggle is part of the journey.

ALDO That’s the part that to me feels more metaphysic, the more like magical or the more like impressive for me, of how we grew up with completely different

values, you know? I am Mexican from the ghetto and you are a girl from Boulder.

SIENNA It was more than that simple definition of who we are.

ALDO And we keep talking about Japan because that was sort of like where we practiced all of these ideas together and realized how strong...

SIENNA We could be- we could be more than that definition.

ALDO Exactly.

SIENNA I remember when we were leaving for Japan, I was telling Elena, my best friend, I was saying 'this will either be the end of our relationship or we will be married when we come back' [Laughter]. And that was really how I felt, it was always really like 'we are going on this adventure and it's a huge adventure, there's no making this- we are moving to Tokyo without any plans together. We've been together for less than a year and we have no money' [Laughter] no friends or anyone there and that this is going to be a test for us, like what we can do together, what we can make happen together.

SIENNA I think right from the beginning, that we have made it a practice to keep stuff off of our chests. There's nothing that we hold back- we feel something...

ALDO I actually can't.

SIENNA If we feel something - Yeah, it's impossible. I can't either. I am horrible, horrible at hiding stuff so...

ALDO Yeah, I can't. So then...

SIENNA If we're unhappy about something that comes up, we go through it and if it gets too intense we get some space away from each other and let it bubble down. And then, inevitably, if it's really important, we find a way to come back and talk about it. If not, we can let it go.

SIENNA We know that we can withstand a pretty high level of frustration and so, when we fight, if we feel it really strong, it comes out really strong. I mean we don't- we don't minimize anything for the benefit or comfort level of the other person, we really have expressed whatever is that we're feeling.

ALDO Yeah, yeah.

ALDO Everybody has an idea of who the other is, you know? In this case Mexicans or Americans and- and this, you can call it judgment or misconceptions or perceptions or whatever. But there's always something that you don't know. Like, we have a fantasy of who the other is and when you get there and you start to actually live in there, you realize that your fantasy was not accurate at all, you know? Or maybe a little bit accurate or comes from something but you realize how deep that is and then you- you have a misunderstanding. So I

definitely can feel it with some people and I- and I- and I feel, not sorry for them, I just feel that they haven't had the opportunity to go deeper into that to realize.

SIENNA Both of us have been ambassadors for our culture on either side. You have taught my family so much about Mexicans.

SIENNA It's so taboo to be racist but people are still uncomfortable when you're, like, "I'm Mexican" and they're like 'oh, God! What do I do about that?' You know? [Laughter] They get a little weird about it and especially because you're not the Mexican I imagine you should be, you know? You're like, you know, not wearing a cowboy hat or you're not like working cutting grass, you know? And just like when I come to Mexico City and people are 'oh! You're from the United States, but, 'you know, you're a woman but you've travelled all by yourself all over the place.' And there's some kind of shaking up that both of us do just because of who we are but, both of us, to be totally honest, enjoy that surprise that we create when we meet people or we're able to kind of loosen up that stereotype a little bit.

HOST

What struck me about Sienna and Aldo was their sense of adventure and love of travel. They were risk takers. Together they bring great gifts to the world.

**BREAK: MUSIC**

Our second couple in this episode is Raj and Gaby. They've been married more than a decade and actually run a business helping couples find their optimum relationship. But, they opened up to us about their own rocky start...and then, commitment to work on making their relationship great.

RAJ	Remember how we met on that blind date, right?
GABY	I do, best and only blind date I ever went on and I even had to fly to get there and it was so worth it. As we like to say, wonderful is worth it. I didn't really know how wonderful it was going to be. In fact, it was pretty messy. Maybe not that first weekend, but pretty soon after that, it was pretty messy.
RAJ	We were pretty clear that there was something great between us and there was a lot of drama.
GABY	At our engagement party. Good friend comes over and here we are, thinking we're going to get an engagement gift.
RAJ	No gift.
GABY	It ended up being a gift, but it was really embarrassing at the moment when he said, "I



	don't think you should do this. It looks pretty messy to me from here."
RAJ	Yeah.
GABY	It's like, "What?" A little slap in the face, but it was like more like a kick in the butt and got us creating that we wanted a great relationship. It didn't happen overnight even at the wedding, just about to walk up the aisle, my dad was like, "Hey, you know there's a side door. You do not have to do this."
GABY	That intuition was so strong. My body said, "It wasn't the butterflies. It wasn't the nerves." I realized that that was anxiety. Being with you felt like getting into a warm bath and felt so relaxing and comforting. And yet, my mind kept saying, "You've got to be freaking kidding me! Is this really where we're going?" But we knew that that intuition was way smarter than our mind and we just took our commitment to personal development into our relationship into each other and here it is, eleven years later, it just keeps getting better and better.
RAJ	Remember the party at our good friend Ibrahim's house?
RAJ	I ended up running up the street in a big upset with you.
GABY	Leaving the party. Me chasing after...
RAJ	That was a pretty common occurrence that we get into an argument.
GABY	Yes. And at the time, I was... what? 36? You were 39 or 40 and it's like we were in high school, but it kind of had that feeling, a little bit, of the drama that we had to learn how to resolve those power struggles.
RAJ	Power struggles and also I wasn't used to someone being as social as you are. You know, you are the most social person in the world.
GABY	I'm quite an extrovert.
RAJ	And I needed more attention. And it's like, "Pay attention to me. Pay attention." I remember we were, a couple of days, pre Burning Man...
RAJ	You're all paying attention to this six-year-old girl and I couldn't even believe myself how triggered I was. And I was like, "Pay attention to me. Pay attention to me."
RAJ	And I was triggered over and over again by these little things of who you were which I love about you, but there were also very challenging for me to grow into because I was not used to.
GABY	Thank goodness for intuition and trusting our gut because that party, while it was a great party, it had plenty of drama, and we don't have that drama anymore.
RAJ	We don't.
GABY	We did the flip-flop, yeah, we started with messy and just have a little bit of intention, attention, and action spread out over time.

RAJ	I know. I've learned so much from you about actually creating how you want it to be, this whole concept of the problem being the path and that we treat the problem as a problem and that's the problem.
GABY	The problem isn't the problem. The problem is you think the problems are problem. The problem is actually the path. Whereas my friend Sacha Lalla summed it up when she said, "Let your mess be your message."
RAJ	So I was fully not embracing that. I was letting the mess be the mess.
GABY	And make each other wrong for the mess.
RAJ	And then everyone around us would suffer.
GABY	Yes.
RAJ	But yeah, really embracing that imago concept that you choose your partner to help heal your greatest wounds from your past, just really any time an upset comes up, looking at like what's behind that.
RAJ	Remember that time when you wanted me to go to that wedding down in San Diego?
GABY	Yes. That was our last really big blowup.
GABY	<p>What I do like with the mess is your message is really every terrible story that we have usually birth some new tip or game as we like to call it, some way to play with how to let this mess be our message. Going to events, showing up is so important to me especially things like weddings.</p> <p>So coming to you for that wedding three months in advance, like I wanted you to know this is really important. So three days before we were going to go canceling was like throwing napalm into the daily routine.</p> <p>And usually, we don't fight for three minutes, let alone three days, right? We even pulled out the therapist card and we haven't seen a therapist since before we got married, but we thought, "This is an upsetting conversation. We need to do an imago dialogue.</p>
RAJ	We went down to the imago therapist and he basically just sat there.
GABY	<p>We paid him 250 bucks just to sit there just in case and we didn't resolve the issue at the end of that. Usually when we take the time in an imago dialogue is just really taking the time to make sure each other feels heard without even trying to resolve the issue. It usually resolves itself.</p> <p>And we did hear each other, but the issue did not resolve itself. And it still took another 24 hours or so for us to compromise to make sure that your needs were met and mine.</p>
RAJ	<p>Just the whole balance between me being focused on work and you being focused on community, I mean that's the prime example of the mess being your message because for me all of your invitations do like fly here and do this and go that. I'm like, "No, I need to build our business."</p> <p>And what I've come to learn is that we're actually building our businesses through our network and there's no way that we would ever have escalated our businesses as</p>

	<p>quickly without that.</p> <p>So it's just a prime example of my huge resistance actually looking at it as that could be a path to the next level of our life. Embracing that there's something there and working on what there is to work through internally to actually accept the gift that you're bringing to the relationship. Instead of like standing and being right, which like this whole masculine-feminine polarity dynamic where the man has to be like the person that makes decisions and who are you to question what I want to do.</p>
GABY	Remember when you used to get upset when I talk to the maître d' at the restaurant?
RAJ	Yeah.
GABY	Like that was the power struggle. I talk to the maître d' and you'd be so pissed.
RAJ	One of the things that I've learned about you over time, getting to know your family, is that you have a lot of very strong personalities in your family, your dad and your sister particularly.
RAJ	And spending a little bit of time with either of those family members. I get the... how you've developed your strong personality just to even survive, not being like completely trampled over and dominated. And I think through our dynamic, I was always resisting my brother kind of dominating me and telling me what to do. So when we...
GABY	You chose a bossy woman.
RAJ	So that I could actually heal not being reaction to bossiness but rather be confident and assertive and be like, you know, whenever I show up and I'm like, "Hey, let's do this," you're like, "Okay."
RAJ	I realized how hard it is for me to actually say this is what I want to do, like I'm always looking to please and appease instead of like it's okay what I want to do. So I'm still working on that one.
GABY	And doing better and better all the time.
GABY	<p>People who meet us now, say, "I want what you have," and you know I always say to them, "It didn't come out of the box this way. This was not like a Cracker Jack Prize." It really has taken some effort.</p> <p>Those that met us years ago, they really, they're the ones who insisted we start doing this relationship work and sharing with others because they're like, "We thought you shouldn't get married and now look at you." They're the ones who really know how far we've come.</p>
GABY	<p>Just like people used to not take care of their bodies until they got sick, people didn't used to take care of their relationships until they were ready for divorce or breakup and I really feel that we're moving into a more solution focused.</p> <p>Like people have a crave for an extraordinary life and so how can you have the most important part of your life, your relationship be even average and to not just measure your relationship by how long the success, by how long you've been together, but actually how happy are you, how intimate are you. Do you have your friend? Do you have your lover? Do you have your sanctuary? And if you have those, you can handle</p>

	<p>anything.</p> <p>Life is tough out there. When we have each other, to me it makes everything surmountable. And no matter how good everything is. When we're in an argument, all work comes to a screeching halt. I will not work.</p>
GABY	<p>I see way, way too many good relationships go bad. In fact, I've noticed recently newlyweds, when I meet them and I want to tell them, "It's okay if you're really struggling right now." Most people go, "Congratulations!" And when I tell them that, I noticed how relief. They're like, "Oh, thank you." I'm like, "You didn't make a mistake."</p>
GABY	<p>So we've got some practices for... like I love it, instead of when someone is being nasty or cranky and lashing out instead of saying like, "Don't take your stuff out on me," to either just being silent and just letting it be in the space, letting them kind of own it or more loving, like I love how you say that practice now when I say something bitchy, you say...</p>
RAJ	<p>Do you need some loving?</p>
GABY	<p>That just makes me laugh so hard. I can remember being in squeam[Phonetic] being in the car and I was just being nasty. And you just turned around and said, "Do you need some loving?" And I just burst into laughter, this complete pattern interrupt. Instead of like, "Don't take your crap out on me."</p>
RAJ	<p>I'm really amazed that people can get along at all to tell you the truth.</p>
RAJ	<p>We just don't have the tools. I mean, I often say to you that we never are taught how to have a great relationship and it's one of the most challenging things I think on the planet.</p>
RAJ	<p>One of the things I'm really grateful for you is that you have such a low tolerance for things not working</p>
GABY	<p>I like it great.</p>
RAJ	<p>I used to have an attachment to suffering because you know, "Let's have it and be miserable." That's where I'm comfortable. Through our relationship, I just have so little tolerance for, especially with us, things not working and to have found someone that holds that as well even more strongly than I do. It's like a total gift because we'll never get too far off the rails.</p>
GABY	<p>But we did. I mean the ring came off. We were engaged.</p>
RAJ	<p>Well, that was early on. We weren't even doing this work.</p>
GABY	<p>The ring was on. But remember that just after Christmas in New York? We had done Christmas at your family. The ring was on the finger. We went to New York to celebrate New Year's Eve, left Boston. We had argued that morning. This one I do remember what we were arguing about. It was about where to park the car, major issue in New York City, where to park the car. That was the morning through the whole rest of the day. Even at night, we went out to dinner with friends. We were cuddled up in bed and about to go to sleep and I snuggled up and I said, "I'm so glad that our breakdowns no longer lead to conversations about breakups."</p>

RAJ	Silence.
GABY	And what did you say, Raj?
RAJ	Nothing.
GABY	Nothing. And what did I do when you said nothing?
RAJ	You threw the ring at me.
GABY	I said, "I will not build a future on quicksand." And marriage is going to be hard enough but if you're doubting it now, then you're not the man for me because I may have my own doubts as well, but I choose you and until you can choose me, you got to go, and that was 1 AM. How many hours of drive back to Boston?
RAJ	Four.
GABY	So you had to show up like four or five o'clock in the morning to your family. That was not a pretty Christmas for us.
RAJ	It just kind of came to a head all of the different things that we were... that we'd get upset about. I mean, we were so right for each other and apparently so wrong at the same. I would get triggered by this or that or the other things. All the things that make you you that I've ultimately learned to love and embrace would just drive me freaking crazy and I didn't know what to do about it. And I just kept thinking, "How can I be in this relationship? How can I be in this relationship?"
GABY	How can I get the ring off her finger without her noticing?
RAJ	Sometimes it behooves us as men to just like bite our tongue in the moment and just like say... but that wasn't one of them. I remember getting out of the bed because you were like pissed and you hurled the ring at me across the room in the dark. I think I picked it up and it was kind of like my eject button. I'm like, "All right, I'm out of here." And totally in that like, "Did we just breakup?" Like total upset and semi relief.
RAJ	And just trying to navigate like, "Do I really want to be with you? Do I really want the life that we were creating? What is the deal?" Because you can easily try to get back and do something once you've made that break.  And eventually, you and I spoke. And what did you say to me? You're like, "There's no way that we're getting back together unless you make a really big effort to actually make things work," right? You remember you told me that?
GABY	Oh yeah. I had a slew of hoops.
GABY	This is what got us into therapy because the ring came off and we said, "Okay, I'll do 12 sessions and we'll decide to either complete powerfully or choose our relationship." And it was three sessions in that we've realized looking at imago and that we choose our... the person to open up our unhealed wounds so we have a chance to heal them. I was like, "Oh, okay. He chose all these things that he's pissed off about me and I chose all these things that I'm pissed off about him."

GABY	I loved when we did that exercise when we sat down and made a list of all of our childhood wounds and then translated them into ways of a healing way of being like what would be the healing behavior to help with that wound and then declare that that's who we were, like I have a wound about not being stood up for. Every time you stand up for me, I was like, "Oh!"
RAJ	Yeah.
RAJ	It's amazing what you have to move past your own sort of emotional trigger reaction, like I don't want to do that versus like this is the thing that's actually going to make our relationship be great.
RAJ	One of the things that always comes first to me is this odd fallacy that seems to have just infused our culture that if you're with the right person that your relationship should just work.
GABY	And we hear this all the time. "It shouldn't be so hard."
RAJ	I don't know of anything more challenging than being in a committed romantic relationship that continues to spiral up. And even if we could just shift the paradigm that like your relationship is again sort of that Petri dish for your life to excel and it's not going to be easy but it's so worth it.
GABY	Negativity is the most important thing for you to remove in your relationship and negativity is defined as blaming, shaming, complaining or criticizing. It's the Drama-Free Diet which takes that idea that negativity, blaming, shaming, complaining is not good, really should never be done." "If you're going to have a healthy relationship, you need a minimum of five positive experiences to one negative experience." So the Drama-Free Diet is if we say something negative, we will stop and then say five positive things about the very exact thing we just said something negative about so that we're taking that negativity and turning it around and actually if you go to the full five things, you're actually bringing more intimacy than you had to begin with.
RAJ	One other point that I'd love to make because this is also just a really common sort of language that I hear, "Happy wife equals happy life, or, "Yes, dear." And initially, I hated both of those expressions because they just didn't land with me for some reason and I see guys in relationships and they're in this totally disempowered like "yes-dear" space or I just do it whatever that my wife says. There's a totally different framing of that that if your partner is happy, you're going to be happy. And if your partner is unhappy, you're going to be unhappy. So it's in your best interest to actually figure out how to support your partner being happy. It's like the most high level thing that you can do, but do it from like a proactive way of like, "This is going to be awesome," instead of just submissive, like if my wife is happy then I'll be happy. I don't know many men that embrace the happy wife, happy life that are actually stoked about their relationship. It's just kind of like this is a default of how I actually...
GABY	How I avoid the conflict.
RAJ	Avoid the conflict and how I can actually make it through my relationship.
GABY	I've learned not to pressure you into the yes because if I get a pressured yes, it's not a real yes.

RAJ	You'd suffer the whole time.
GABY	We both suffer. I've learned not to like, "Okay, you don't want to go? Don't go."
RAJ	Yeah.
RAJ	<p>There's sort of again this cultural norm that the man has to be the masculine and the woman has to be the feminine. That gets out of whack. And like the man has to like get back into the masculine role and the woman has to like get into a feminine.</p> <p>What I've been playing with is just being able to play with the full pedal because the man can be fully masculine or fully feminine and the woman can be fully masculine or feminine or fully feminine masculine then like you just have complete freedom to like be all that is possible for you because every man has more capacity to be more feminine and more masculine and every woman has more capacity to be more feminine or masculine.</p> <p>And I think we get locked into this societal norm that the man has to be masculine and the woman has to be feminine. And if it's not that way, something is wrong. So if you just embrace that there's a full range for the men that are on the more feminine side, some of their work to do is actually work on embracing more of the masculinity and what's in the way of that, not like it's a problem but there's more capacity for you as a human being that way and the same thing with a woman.</p> <p>And what I see happening is that we embrace the polarity not the fluidity of the whole range of it. And when we do that, it creates all these problems like you should be this way, not that way. But then the society also looks poorly upon that, if the man is dominating the woman. That's wrong. But if the woman is dominating the man and that's wrong. And so I think there's like this great balance that works when you can fully embrace both ends of the spectrum and that's what I find our relationship is doing like I'm, by nature, more in my feminine and then in my masculine and Gaby is, by nature, more in her masculine or feminine.</p>
RAJ	So through my relationship with you Gaby, you're helping me expand my capacity to embrace my masculine and I'm helping you expand your capacity to embrace your feminine but also you're helping me to more authentically embrace my feminine and not it being inauthentic and also you being able to more authentically embrace your masculine in it not being inauthentic.
GABY	I remember the first year we were together. People kept saying to me and to you, we'd be standing next together and they'd say, "Raj, I don't know what you're doing, but keep on doing it and Gaby, you're so much softer." I was like, "I didn't realize I was such a hard ass." But I definitely have softened into my feminine and mostly because that's... you were needing nurturance to really heal your wounds and I was relating to you like, "Get it together. Damn it." And it was just making things worse. And the day I softened and said, "Honey, how can I support you? What's wrong?" you stopped falling apart. You stopped getting emotional all the time. And now even those not making that wrong that there are even moment-to-moment dynamics of the masculine or the feminine that come up in our relationship. I think we really have learned how to dance with those pretty well and not make any them of them good or bad or right or wrong.
RAJ	Even over the last couple of days, I've had this little of a cold and just a lot going on and I felt like I can put my head in your lap without feeling submissive, whereas before like I couldn't even fathom like doing that because I'd feel like a little kid like getting nurtured

	by his mom.
RAJ	So if you can play with the pedal and just get that there is no necessarily any masculine or feminine. There's just through your upbringing, the things that you had to deal with, your family dynamics, whatever, you've sort of gravitated towards one pole or the other and that through, really powerful relating that we actually get to fully expand our capacity as a human being and then be able to use our masculine and feminine strengths we're called upon instead of just being locked in to one or the other.
GABY	Yeah, it's what's appropriate for the moment.
RAJ	We're at a party couple of months ago and this woman that I was sitting with... she said to me what you need to learn to do as a man is to be with your woman's upset. Like, that's all she wants. She wants to be upset and have you not get hooked into it and just like stand in your power not shutting down but just be with her upset. Because what we normally do as men is we get triggered by our wife's upset and then we like get into this like dynamic and I've been practicing not getting hooked by the little bait.
GABY	Remember the last week, I even said to you, "Wow! You didn't take the bait."
RAJ	And for me, that's like really powerful masculinity is actually being able to hold the space of your partner's upset and being okay with it, not shutting it down, not reacting to it. So that's just one example of standing in power.
GABY	Remember the time that you are on the call with all those men and someone brought up an article they had read that said the three words that woman most wants to hear are not I love you. And you said, "Well, that's easy. I knew what that is." And you guessed it and they were like, "How did you know that?" And the three words were...
RAJ	I've got you.
GABY	I've got you. Because we all have that feeling that we're holding so much and at least for me as a woman, my most desired state is to surrender and relax, but I can only do that if I feel that there's container. There's often that I need to be masculine because I got to hold all this stuff together and take care of everybody and manage all of this, but I just want to drop it all and be held and lean into your weight. And that time we were at Burning Man, dancing at the deep end, thousands of people dancing in this wild music and 40 or 50 of our close friends from our camp all dancing in a group, some were doing Capoeira so the dust was in the air, you could hardly see and then all of a sudden, the music changed and our group kind of dissipated and you came over to me and you put your hands - you interlocked your fingers behind my back, my lower back, and you pulled me to you and you put your forehead to me and you said just out of the blue, "I've got you." And literally my knees buckled, the tears came, like it wasn't anything was going on. It's so hit me, I'm teary now, of exactly where I wanted to be held. I mean, that moment is forever with me. Thank you for that, honey.

HOST



File: **Elephant Talk\_Boulder\_Sienna and Aldo\_FINAL**

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Interviewer: Andy Horning [AH]

I loved this interview because Raj and Gaby aren't afraid to take us to their rocky start. And, they use their relationship as a tool for teaching other how to have their best relationships.

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AND, WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK RAJ AND GABY FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THIS EPISODE. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR WORK GO TO RELATIONSHIPFUNANDGAMES.COM.

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