

**Transcription:
 Episode 26**

Speaker	Dialogue
Andy	<p>MY NAME IS ANDY HORNING, AND THIS IS ELEPHANT TALK. IT'S ABOUT ALL THINGS RELATIONSHIP - THE SOULFUL, THE STORMY, THE SILLY AND THE SEXY.</p> <p>Today, we bring you a different sort of episode...we hear a conversation between Marypat and Kurt... and the issues they've struggled with throughout their 21 year marriage.</p>
M	We went to Nepal. It was really difficult. You can't drink the water or anything. I had just about had it with you and I swear if I had never seen you again, it would have been fine...and I really wanted a divorce.
K	I could wipe myself with one square in Nepal. I broke it into four pieces.
Andy	We follow this with an experimental conversation...a counseling session between Marypat and Kurt and marriage counselor, Dr. Susan Heitler. Together, they look at some of these long-standing areas of tension.
Dr. Heitler	So that's the good news and the bad news. You're very bonded as a couple. I love that. So you're very sensitive and in a way maybe the problem is you're too empathic so you go straight into feeling what the other person is feeling.
MUSIC BREAK	
M	I had lived in Steamboat about a year at this point and you moved there.
K	I moved there and got a job with the Forest Service and was working with Whitley.
K	She said, "Hey, my roommate's birthday is tomorrow. We're going to have a little party at the Smokehouse. Why don't you come?" She thought we might have something in common because you had done that year long, bike trip through New Zealand and Australia.
M	Yeah.
K	And I rode my bike across the country that same year.
M	You came over to my house.
K	We exchanged our journals.
K	I was volunteering for the Forest Service. I needed another job and you were working at Mocha Mollie's the coffee shop.
K	And they needed a baker. I said, "Vaughn, I'll bake you some bread and muffins and bring it back in the afternoon." So I did and he hired me. And that's kind of where we fell in love at

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	the coffee shop.
K	You didn't want anything to do with me because you're eight years older than I am.
M	Yes. That was a problem for me.
K	Then Cathy came out, your sister.
M	Yeah. She told me to...
K	Do the doughboy.
M	And my mom said, "Look at this way at least you won't be a widow." Because at that time a bunch of her friends were becoming widows and she thought that that would be good. So if my sister and my mom approved, I thought, "All right, I'll give you a shot."
K	We were together for what? Two and a half years?
M	Yes. And then we broke up.
K	You gave me the ultimatum. You said, "Hey, my biological clock is ticking here. I want to have kids, so either marry me or hit road." So I was like, "All right, I'm hitting the road."
K	Then I left for three months for South America.
K	So I came back after three months in Patagonia and I realized down there sitting on this lake, I think I was with my mother and my sister. We did that backpack in Torres del Paine for a week. I was like, "I'm going to marry Mary Pat." So I came home.
M	I was training for a 50-miler. So I was running a lot.
K	You were running. It was on Mad Creek.
M	Running at Mad Creek and you were walking down with Lauren
M	And we talked for a minute. And Lauren is like, "Hey, could you give him a ride?" and I'm like, "Yeah, sure." And Lauren left so, and that was it. And then you told me all this crap. "Oh, you know, I decided I want to marry you." I'm like, "Yeah, whatever." I didn't believe it.
K	I stuck that little note in the Juniper Tree.
M	What did the note say?
K	It just said something like I love you.
K	I wrote four different letters and I put them in little envelopes. I said, "I will marry you."
M	And you spelled marry wrong. Gotta love that.
K	I went to the flower shop and get four big things of flowers and had them shipped over right across the street to your office there.

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K	That was 10 o'clock in the morning and I said, "Meet me at the Smokehouse at noon."
M	I wasn't going to do it, but Michael said, "You need to go do this," and I'm like, "Whatever."
K	What else did he say?
M	He said, "If you don't want to come back after lunch, just take the rest of the day off." I said, "I'll be back," but I didn't go back.
K	I hadn't gotten a ring yet. So I went to Del's.
K	The only jewelry shop in town.
K	They had like five diamond rings and I said, "I'll take that one."
K	We're talking and I reached in to my pocket and I think my hand was shaking.
M	Yes, it was.
K	I pulled the ring out and I said, "Will you marry me?" And you go, "You're fucking serious, aren't you?"
M	Yeah. Well, so the flowers, I was just like, "Yeah, he's still full of crap. He's just talking out of his ass." But then when you had a diamond ring, then I was like, "Oh, you're fucking serious." That's exactly what I said.
K	And you slid it on.
M	Yeah.
K	And didn't say yes or no.
M	No. No.
K	Didn't say anything.
M	No.
K	And we decided to go out there, out there to the Sand Flats again out at Browns Park and we drove out there that night.
M	Where the note was.
K	Where the note was.
M	And needless to say, I didn't go back to work, just like Michael predicted.
M	We did it under the stars in our sleeping bags, remember?
M	Remember I said I wanted to make sure I still wanted to have sex with you before I was going to say yes to marrying you, right?

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K	The next morning, we got back to Steamboat.
M	Did you live at the G House?
K	Yeah. And that's where on the backstairs you said, "I'll marry you."
K	We got married a year later.
M	So then we went on a 10- month honeymoon around the world and it was really hard. We went to Nepal. It was really difficult. You can't drink the water or anything. I just had it about with you and I swear if I had never seen you again, it would have been fine and I really wanted a divorce. I don't know. I don't remember what I was mad about, but that day was terrible, whatever it was. It was probably some hard thing that happened. I don't know.
K	There were multiple hard days, but that was a great trip.
M	And you would meet people and they would say to us, "If you make it to this honeymoon, you're going to be married a long time."
M	I even think that's true because some days, even now, we have hard times and we go through lots of hard times, but I do think that history of that 10 months together traveling, it's like, "Who else do I have that history with? Nobody."
MUSIC BREAK	
M	I think we got along super well, but then when you have kids in the mix, I think then it gets much more difficult, I think.
K	I mean staying home and raising kids is a hell of a lot of harder than working. I don't care what kind of work you're doing.
K	But I think a lot of partners don't understand that. The ones that if people are staying home with their kids, but that's definitely something that I know we don't always agree on it, but you're a damn good mother.
M	Thank you. He said that the other day when we had beers. That was nice.
K	Well, that's because I kind of noticed it.
M	Yeah. You're a damn good father too sometimes when you're not yelling at the kids.
K	Yeah. The kid stuff is hard.
M	My upbringing was a lot different than yours I think. So a lot of times we don't agree on how stuff should be done.
M	I think just the way I speak to the kids. I'm not negative. I always think if you want to do something bad enough, you can fucking do it. I really try to instill that in the kids. And maybe you're coming around a little bit these days, but I don't know. I just don't think that that's how you were raised because you tell me stories about different things that happened in your family. That never happened in my family.

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K	There wasn't much empathy in my upbringing.
M	There still isn't.
K	There was stuff my parents used to do to me. I was like, "I'll never do that to my kids if I have kids." There I am, doing it. The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree and I think it's like that with both of us. We have good traits and bad traits.
M	Yeah. But even Ian will say to me now, "I hate it when he yells and screams or whatever." And I'm like, "Yeah, me too." And then couple of days later, he'll be talking to me like that. And I'm like, "Ian, you're talking to me just like daddy talks to you and it's not going to work."
K	Yeah. I need to change that.
K	Well, with the kids though, I mean one thing I'm realizing is they're getting ready to leave the house.
M	So you better get your shit together? Is that what you're thinking?
K	Yeah. I mean I want to sort of break the cycle of, you know, bad habits from...
M	It might be too late is what I'm thinking.
K	Well, yeah.
K	I mean a lot of people have told us, "You have good kids. You guys have done a good job." I always worry that I'm not doing a good enough job. People see it from the outside. They don't see what an asshole I can be at home because I let my guard down with you guys, but you know it's easy to hide that from everybody else.
M	I know. You're always on your best behavior when other people are around. It's true. We all are.
K	Your mother was a perfectionist at that.
M	Yes, she was.
M	And she thought you were the salt of the Earth. Every time I complain about you to her, she would say, "You stop it. He's the salt of the Earth." Whatever. You try being married to him.
MUSIC BREAK	
M	It's always about money.
K	Yeah.
M	Because we don't agree on that.
K	Yeah.

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M	I don't know that we ever will.
K	No. I don't think so either. At least we've got enough of it now that we don't have to worry too much.
M	Yeah, but it didn't matter if we didn't have any money or if we had money, still was money. I just can't figure that part out.
M	Sometimes I just can't back down on stuff. And if I could just agree with it there probably wouldn't be any fighting, but I'm not that type of person. I don't have that kind of personality, but you knew that when you married me.
M	An example of us both being stubborn would be the heating. You like to keep it at 58 in the daytime. Ridiculous! So me and the kids walk by the thermostat, turn it up, and you go, "What the hell!" And then you turn it down and then you leave and then I just wait a minute and then I just go turn it up. I mean it's so ridiculous.
K	I mean there are a lot of things, like I grew up with my mother because my parents had gotten divorced when I was in fifth grade or something. We'd have real butter maybe once or twice, I remember when I was a kid, and I'm like, "Who's coming over for dinner?" Because we knew somebody was coming over for dinner if we're having real butter. She'd take powdered milk. We always had powdered milk and she'd water it down. That's what we'd have for cereal.
M	And you still yell at me about toilet paper, like pretty much once a week about how much toilet paper we use. Really?
K	I can hear it spinning.
M	Yeah, whatever.
K	I could wipe myself with one square in Nepal. I broke it into four pieces.
M	Well, I'm sure. Yeah. That's different. We're not in Nepal anymore, Toto
K	Remember that pink toilet paper over there?
M	Yes, of course, I do. But things were different in Nepal and that's another thing you love to bring up. "Well, people in Nepal don't have any money." I'm like, "I know, but we don't live in Nepal. We live here."
K	Another thing that I've just realized and I think I realized this when we were in Rochester to visit my family this past trip. I love going home. I mean it's where my roots are.
M	I know.
K	Sea breeze. The house my mom lives in that I grew up in, I mean, it hasn't changed and I love the fact that it hasn't changed. I love going back there. It's comforting for me.
M	Yeah.
K	But one thing I realized is, you know, that's comforting for me and I don't think it is comforting for you.

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M	What's comforting?
K	Going back to the way things were 40 years ago. I'm totally comfortable with that.
M	Yeah, you love that.
K	I love the '80s, the music from the '80s and that drives you crazy. It's like you love that stuff. Well, I do. I've got great memories from that.
M	I understand, but I don't have any memories of that place. I don't have any roots there. It doesn't do anything for me. So I try to be empathetic that I know you want to go back there.
K	Well, not just at them, just saying other things like with what we've done since we've been together. I love going up to Steamboat where we met.
M	Well, so do I. Yeah. I love going to the Smokehouse.
M	You like to reminisce.
K	I tend to remember the good times, not the bad times. It's just like, "Well, I survived that. I'm a breezer."
M	I know you were. Yes, you are, honey.
K	I think it's the same way with our relationship.
M	Yeah. Yeah. I agree.
K	We've been through some hard times, but I don't dwell. There's not stuff I'm dwelling on, I mean the negative stuff.
MUSIC BREAK	
M	"What are our goals? What are our goals when our kids gone? It's not that far off." And you're always like, "I just want to get the kids out of the house." You just want to like launch these great kids.
K	Get through college.
M	Which I think we are doing and I think our kids are amazing, but I don't know what we're going to do. We haven't really made any plans. I mean I think of things that I would love to do, but I always try to get you to talk about where you see yourself or what you do want to do or what's your dream retirement look like. You know, I don't know. I can't get you to tell me, I guess, what you'd love to do. And I'm always, you know, happily ever after, everything is going to be so great, but I don't know. I don't know what you want to do because I just can't seem to... do you know what you want to do?
K	Yeah.

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M	I mean do you think about that? Because I think about it all the time, building my dream house.
K	I think, you know, like we called up Tom and Frannie the other day to see if they could meet us out for dinner. We could invite our friends over and have a dinner, you know? That would be nice.
M	I know, but do you want to live in Lafayette? Do you want to buy a place on the beach somewhere? Do you want to have a few different houses? Do you want to move to Arizona, to the desert? I don't even know what you want to do.
K	Well, I've been thinking about it. I don't know if we're going to stay in that house we're in when the kids are gone.
K	And I was thinking we could build a little place above the garage at 111.
M	I think that's a great idea.
K	That could be where we live when we want to be in Lafayette and then we can figure out something else. I know you want to build a straw bale.
M	So my dream, I think you think it's cool, but I don't know if it's your dream. I would love to know what your dreams. You don't tell me, but a straw-bale house is, you know, stacked up straw bales and then you put stack over the outside and it is super energy efficient.
K	I think it'd be cool to have a straw bale.
M	But we have to have land to have a straw bale. So that's something we should buy sooner than later because it's not going to get any cheaper.
M	I think the reason the straw bale is my dream is because I'm tired of being cold and hot all the time. I'm cold in the winter. I'm hot in the summer and a straw bale is so much more energy efficient. And I just think, "Oh, wouldn't that be great?" We'll see. I don't know if it will ever happen, but it's kind of my dream, but I don't know what your dream is because you don't tell me. So it's funny that I think you know a lot of things about what I want, but I don't really know what you want and I'm not quite sure how to get it out of you or if maybe you don't know what you want.
K	Well, yeah. You know I'd like to get the kids through college.
M	That's what you say every time you try to talk about this.
K	I'd like to not work at this level for another 20 years.
M	Well, but you're in your 40s. Don't you think most people in their 40s are working pretty hard?
K	Yeah.
K	I mean it'd be fun to travel.
M	I know. I would love to travel. But I just want to say one thing about that. I'm not 30 anymore. So I don't necessarily want to backpack through Nepal. I mean I would, but I'd also like to go

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	on a little more plush adventures as well maybe.
K	A five-star resort tour.
M	Not. Well, that could be thrown in there every once in a while.
K	Yeah.
M	It doesn't have to be a five-star resort but a little more luxury, if you will, would be okay with me.
K	I mean I'd like to have something like to come back to.
M	Well, that's fine and I think that's a great idea to build a house over the garage there, to build a little apartment for us. I think that would be awesome. At some point, we won't be able to maneuver stairs as well. So I envision the next house that we buy having a main floor master, you know, living situation. That's just the realtor in me coming out thinking, "I don't know why people don't build more ranch houses."
M	I would love for us to, you know, just talk about where we want to live, like I don't necessarily want to stay in Lafayette when I'm a little old lady. I love the beach. I would love to have a place in somewhere warm. You love the beach too.
K	Yeah, I do.
M	When we go there you love it.
K	Yeah.
M	I don't want to wait until the kids are out of college and then be like, "Okay, now what should we do?"
K	We don't have the resources to buy a nice place on the beach in Florida.
M	It doesn't have to be Florida just because my sister is in Florida. I don't want to be just like my sister. Don't worry.
K	I mean the other option is to have a home base here in Lafayette.
K	And not necessarily buy another place but go to different places.
M	I like investing better than renting stuff.
K	But then you're always going to the same place.
M	That's okay.
K	Yeah. I mean I'm more than happy to try to start figuring that out. We're in a position now where we actually have, you know, some discretionary income. We've never had that before.
M	Yeah. And it's funny to me that no matter... when we didn't have any money and when we do have money, we still have money troubles. It's never going to change, I don't think. It drives

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	me crazy.
MUSIC BREAK	
M	So, when I talk about money troubles, I just mean we just don't agree on much when it comes in the way of finances and I think in our whole relationship I think that's our biggest issue. Would you agree with that?
K	Yeah.
M	I don't know why that is because we pretty much grew up with not much of anything, both of us.
K	Yeah, I agree. I kind of look back and enjoy the simplicity of the way things were before we had five mortgages and you know all this responsibility and everything.
M	I know you like it when we were living out of our backpacks in Nepal, but that isn't the case anymore. We need to take more vacations. We need to live for today a little bit in my opinion because we could be, as my dad would have said, six feet under. You never know when that's going to happen.
K	Yeah.
M	We don't have to save every penny because we may not even live to enjoy it. So I'm kind of about enjoying the day today too.
M	I think you're very nostalgic.
K	Yeah, I like the way things were in the past.
K	I think selling that red house is going to sort of open a new chapter in our lives.
M	Well, you did sell it.
K	I felt bad, like I had a real bad hangover after we sold it, but I'm feeling a little more relieved like yesterday when I was putzing around in the yard. I felt like, "Okay."
M	I think you were happy.
K	I haven't allowed myself to let that new house feel like it's home. Our neighbor came over and borrowed the drill. That's the first time in two and a half years or any neighbor in that neighborhood has asked for anything.
K	It's good to let go of that. I mean it's hard, but I think we've always agreed that things happen for a reason even when they seem hard.
M	Yeah.
K	So I think that happened for a reason.
M	My biggest thing is just to try to figure out what's next for us as a couple, not with the kids. Forget about the kids. What's next for us? Where do we want to see ourselves? What do we

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	want to do?
K	I think part of that might be it doesn't have to be we do everything together.
M	No. We don't already do everything together. So I think we'll be good on that.
K	Yeah. You should sign up for that trip next year with Mike and Cathy. I mean I've been thinking about it. I'm not sure it's smart at this point for the kids and I to go too. I mean that's almost three years of college.
M	Okay. You don't have to twist my arm.
K	I'll drive up to Alaska with the kids. I could do it for a fraction of the cost.
M	But I don't want you to go to Alaska. I want to go to Alaska too.
K	You can fly up and meet us when you get back from Africa.
M	I'm going to do it. It's probably better if you don't go actually.
M	Because I have a certain idea of what I wanted to be like and I'm afraid if you do go, it won't be like that, but I would like you to go and take photos. That's why I really want you to go.
M	I wish you did more of that stuff that you used to love to do.
K	Like taking pictures?
M	Yeah. And writing in a journal. That would help you I think get through stuff because you used to always write. Every morning you wrote in your journal. Then life happened.
K	That was back when there was nothing.
MUSIC BREAK	
M	I love our story. We broke up and then we got back together.
K	Our honeymoon.
M	It was difficult.
K	It was a lot more difficult for you because we both kept journals. I remember reading through your journal. If you read your journal and my journal, you would have thought we were on two totally separate trips.
K	You were just like crying every day and upset about this and that and I was like, "This is great!"
M	It was hard, Kurt. It was hard. Guys are different, you know, in terms of roughing it. I didn't have a shower for 15 days on my honeymoon. Who else has a honeymoon where they don't shower for 15 days? I don't know anyone. So I think you've lucked out with me.

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M	Every day we don't always like each other, but I definitely think we love each other for the long haul.
K	The sex is like wine, you know, it gets better with age.
M	That's good. That's good to hear. I would agree.
AH	<p>I love this interview because it really illustrates the love and connection between Marypat and Kurt... and also the areas of challenge or disconnection that every relationship has.</p> <p>There are real areas of tension. But, I also hear a willingness to work through those challenges...and a recognition of the investment they've put into their marriage thus far.</p> <p>We were very honored that Marypat and Kurt took us up on our offer for a recorded counseling session with Dr. Susan Heitler... a marriage counselor we interviewed last season in Episode 12...</p> <p>Take a listen...</p>

Speaker	Dialogue
SH	Welcome, Marypat and Kurt.
SH	Good. A pleasure to meet you both.
MP	You too.
SH	Good. This is the first time I've met you and what we're doing is essentially a first is therapy session. The way I do therapy is we'll mostly focus on what's going on right here in the therapy room. Ready?
MP	Yup.
SH	How about you, Kurt?
KU	Ready.
SH	Okay. Let's go for it. As you think, maybe close your eyes each of you for a moment and think for a minute about your relationship and how things have been going. Notice what issue comes up as something that you'd really like to use this session to work through. Notice who's doing what. Notice especially the feelings that come up in you as you see that scene. Okay. You can open your eyes. Share with each other what scenes each of you saw.
MP	For me, I was thinking about our usual issue and it's about money and I was just thinking about new mountain bike versus new stove and that's what I was thinking about.
SH	And for you?

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KU	You know the first that came to mind was not yelling as much when we're talking about issues.
MP	Good.
SH	So what I'm hearing is you would like to do something about the yelling. Is that right?
KU	Yeah, just communicating on a more even-keeled basis rather than tying emotion into it all the time.
SH	Right, without the emotional intensity.
MP	Right. That what family would like to do something with that issue at our house.
SH	Who yell in the house? Speak for yourselves.
KU	Everybody yells now.
SH	Who trained them?
KU	Well, our kids learned from us.
SH	And you both yell with each other?
MP	Yes, I would say so, but I think some people yell more than others.
KU	Yeah. I've been accused of being the yeller.
MP	I would say.
KU	Both kids and Marypat.
SH	So we're going to look at yelling and we're going to look at that over the issue of spending specifically mountain bike versus... what was it? Stove?
MP	Yes.
SH	New stove.
SH	Has that been settled yet?
KU	Oh, that's settled because she's getting a new stove. She wanted a gas stove for 20 years and now she doesn't want a gas stove anymore. She wanted an induction stove.
SH	Talk with each other.
MP	Kurt, since we moved into the house and I've said this from day one, "I want to get a gas stove. I want to get a gas stove." Well, a few weeks ago, I went on the Kitchen Tour, I have a Dream Kitchen Tour with some friends and one of the women I went with has an induction stove and she's had it for 30 years and come to find out most of the kitchens on the tour, they also had induction stoves. And that's the new thing and it's amazing and so then I went to the place where you buy these, you know, appliances, and I tried one and you know you boil

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	water in like two minutes.
SH	I'm going to pause you here.
MP	Yes.
SH	What are you experiencing right now, Kurt? Share with her.
KU	I mean I think what we have is fine, but a lot of things we have are fine. I mean you make do with what you have, but I think this, I thought, "Okay, we're going to get a gas stove." All these years I thought when we get one, it will be gas, but it sounds like this thing is better. I'd like to go and see one.
MP	Right. So let's go to the place and try one out and you'll think it's awesome and then maybe you'll be on board with it.
KU	Yeah. So I just hope it doesn't cost \$8,000.
MP	Here's where we get into the money thing.
SH	You just turned to me. Respond to him in a nice way. I want to hear you at your best.
MP	Well, we've talked about this a bunch already. So it's kind of here we are saying the same thing again. You know we looked at stoves like two years ago and now we still don't have one and it's irritating to me because the second you decided I needed to a new mountain bike, boy, I had a new mountain in like a week. Isn't that interesting? And you know what? The mountain bike is probably more expensive than the damn stove.
SH	I see you smiling. What's the thought that goes with the smiling, Kurt, or the feeling that goes with it?
KU	Well, I'm not angry or mad or anything. It's just interesting to hear you say that.
SH	So if you look back on the talking you've been doing so far, how is this the same and how is this different from what you would do if you were at home, especially if this was the first time you brought it up? Each of you look within yourself at what you're doing differently.
MP	There'd be yelling if we were at home and nobody was around to witness it.
MP	I believe Kurt would yell. I don't know.
SH	And what would you do?
MP	A lot of times I don't participate. I shut down and I say...
SH	When Kurt yells, you shut down.
MP	Yeah. And I'm not going to fight and I'm not going to yell. And the other day, we were up at the lake with the dog and he started yelling and I said, "You know, I'm leaving," and I walked home with the dog because I'm not yelling.
SH	And how is that for you, Kurt, when she said I'm leaving, I'll go for a walk?

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KU	I said, "Well, all right." I just went home. What was it over? I can't even remember.
SH	So what do you think you could do differently in the future that will make it easier to settle it right then?
KU	Don't yell, add more empathy, both of those would probably help.
SH	So those are very interesting. Empathy and keeping the voice volume down. Were you aware that the key points in the earlier conversation you're having in front of you me here, there was a missing piece of what in a practical sense I think of is that empathy from both of you actually. When one of you says something, the other one was missing on picking it up. So I didn't highlight it then, I wanted to just let it flow for a bit only. I'm going to keep my ears open and how could you begin to recognize that because what happens if you say something and it doesn't get picked up? What happens to you emotionally?
MP	You feel like the other person isn't listening and/or doesn't care.
SH	That's how you feel.
MP	I do, yeah.
SH	I feel like you're not listening, he doesn't care. And how do you feel when she's not picking up on something you said?
KU	I get frustrated and then temper will start flaring.
SH	So I have a hunch that the little technical glitch of not picking up on what the other person said may be one of the triggers for the flare ups.
MP	It could be.
SH	It's a thought. It's a thought.
MP	I very much try to listen though and I try to pick up on little nuances and stuff. I feel like I do, maybe I don't. You know?
SH	I'll bet you do try and I'll bet sometimes you do and I did notice several times when one of you said something and it didn't get picked up. So we have a grammar of dialogue and your grammar of dialogue even when you're doing your very best is missing that piece of explicitly picking up at some key moments. So that's striking to me if you then say, "Oh, that's what inflames me. I feel frustrated with the word you use," and remind me again, what's the word that...? Oh, I feel like he's not listening to me...
MP	Or doesn't understand, not listening or doesn't understand.
SH	Doesn't understand or doesn't care.
MP	Yeah, doesn't care.
SH	If you look at what you could do and the other person doesn't hear, what could you do?
MP	You just have to be more...

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SH	Let's use "I" instead of "you".
MP	I would just have to explain things more fully and more explicitly because clearly...
SH	Right, that's one choice. You can give more detail.
MP	Right.
SH	And there's always a second choice. Want to help her out?
KU	Just listen and have me explain it again.
SH	Yes, ask gee what's going on with you. So there are always two choices. As soon as you begin to get the negative little feeling like frustrated of, "Oh, he doesn't care," and you find yourself going down that negative labeling, he's dense, let's not take that road. In fact, close your eyes for a minute. Let's put a big barrier on that road of negative labeling. What does a barrier look like? How are we going to close it off?
KU	Just pile up a bunch of Jersey barriers.
SH	Jersey barriers? What is Jersey barrier?
KU	The little concrete things on the side of construction job.
MP	I just like I didn't know what those were either.
SH	So did you notice? What did I do when I said to him that I didn't quite get it? What did I do?
MP	You asked what it was.
SH	Exactly. I asked the question.
MP	Explain. Please explain that.
SH	I asked. So good questions begin with one or two words. What or...?
MP	How or why?
SH	Exactly.
MP	How?
SH	How. Why is more complicated. It gets people a little defensive. People have to do a whole lot of thinking to explain the rationale. How or what. Just stimulate the flow of information.
SH	When would you use that tool of asking questions?
KU	I a typical guy thing, you come in, all worked up, "Oh, this client is so frustrating. I can't believe I got to do this and this," and boom, I'm throwing out solutions and that's the last thing she wants to hear. She just asked questions like, "Oh, how did that happen or what happen?" and just listen because...

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SH	Wow! I'm impressed. Exactly. So that was how and what questions, the tools that are useful for a number of situations. One, if there's a road you don't want to go down and if you just say, "What?" I'm going to pause for a minute. What's a question I could ask?
KU	I so often just get when she's all worked up, I get worked up too. I think if I just need to remove myself from getting worked up and sort of getting all emotional...
SH	So you're very emotionally permeable to her feeling and it sounded to me that's two way.
MP	Yeah, I would agree.
SH	So that's the good news and the bad news. You're very bonded as a couple. I love that. So you're very sensitive and in a way maybe the problem is you're too empathic so you go straight into feeling what the other person is feeling and I love the idea that, oh, if you step back, then you have a shot of saying, "Oh, if I step out of this for just two miniseconds, the odds are higher that I can use my new tool, how and what questions." Just ask for more information. What would that be like for you, Marypat?
MP	Well, oftentimes, I don't want anyone to help me. I'm not asking for anyone to help me solve something. I just sometimes need to vent. You know?
SH	Okay.
MP	Like I don't want someone to be like, "Well, you should do this or you should do that or maybe try..."
SH	Okay. Excuse me, I'm interrupting. There are two ways of solving. You, like most women, don't want someone to come in and tell you the answer. They don't want to fix it.
MP	Right.
SH	Probably you wouldn't be saying anything to him if you didn't want to move toward solution on that issue or digest it in some way.
MP	Yeah, but he was referring to just things about my work and stuff and he's not part of my work.
SH	Okay, hold on just a minute. Interesting. Did you hear what she just said, Kurt?
SH	Yeah-but. What does yeah-but do? What does it do?
MP	It tells you you're not important or I don't want to hear what you have to say.
SH	Yes.
SH	So you are pushing the information away from me.
MP	Right.
SH	Right. I was giving you the idea that maybe when you start talking about something, I wonder if there is a part of you that's looking for solutions.

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MP	Well, I'm sure sometimes there is, but a lot of times I don't think there are. A lot of times I just need to be like, "Oh, I'm home," and, "Oh, blah, blah, blah, blah," this happened, but I don't want necessarily.
SH	Okay. So there were a lot of but's in there.
MP	To discuss it.
SH	Let's get used to changing the "but's" to "and's". So a lot of times when I come home I just want to share what's going on.
MP	Exactly and I'm not really interested in getting someone else's input in how I couldn't look it right.
SH	So you definitely don't want... you correctly perceived Kurt that that's not an invitation for you to fix that and give her answers and at the same time, you have just shown Marypat that you are female.
MP	Right. I'm sure. Yeah.
SH	Because whereas men rush to solution, to fixing it, women have a tendency in the problem-solving process to express what they're feeling, verbalize their concerns, "Oh, I was so annoyed that my colleague when he went this and..." what they forget to do is what men do so well is to ask, "Oh, so what could I do about it?" So I wouldn't be at all surprised when you dialogue between the two of you about a shared problem like anything to do with money, the topic we're on today, probably that same pattern happens that Kurt you're at risk for rushing to a solution either insisting on your way or prematurely giving up on what's important to you. Does that resonate to you?
KU	Yeah.
SH	Right. So it doesn't feel really win-win. It feels like, "Okay, I can fight for what I want or I can fold." Am I accurate? I love your smile.
MP	Well, it's so funny because...
KU	I got damn good at folding lately.
MP	No, but see, that's what he thinks he folds and I think I hold on. So that's very interesting.
SH	I'm going to call you each time, call it out, not you but have it, each time I hear yes-but or no-but. What did he say that was right? Tell him.
MP	He said something like I've been folding a lot lately.
SH	What makes sense that he's been folding a lot lately?
MP	He hasn't been. So that's what I get confused about.
SH	Use your new tool, how or what questions.

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MP	What have you been folding about lately?
KU	Well, I mean, lately it's just been a progression over the years.
MP	Explain. Name some things because I sure could name some things what I think I've been folding about, but I'd like to hear what you've been folding about.
KU	A new house.
SH	That's a big one.
KU	Couple new houses.
SH	I'm doing your job. I apologize, Marypat. I said that's a big one because this is the empathy point that I was making before. There's a missing habit of digesting out loud what the other person said. So if he said a new house, pick up what makes sense about that, do something with that data. So he knows you heard it.
MP	Well, I want to rebuttal that because...
SH	Hold on. Hold on.
KU	Are we in the court?
SH	So if you want to have a smooth relationship, am I right that that's what you're here for is to make more flow, more ease, less tension, adversarial, et cetera?
MP	Yes.
SH	So while you're the overtly louder one initially, Kurt, you're the rebuttaller. You flip it from collaborative to adversarial inadvertently. I do not think you do this consciously. Am I correct? You're not trying to get on the opposite side.
MP	Right.
SH	Each time you push away data, [inaudible 00:25:25], what's the word that's the push away word?
MP	Yeah-but.
SH	Yes or no-but, but essentially deletes whatever came before. So there are various flavors of deleting there's dismissal or there's push away that's minimizing. Yours is push away and then substitute your own view. So that's your rebuttal. The minute you do that, the conversation switches from collaborative [inaudible 00:25:56] information flow, additive dialogue. You say I fold, you say, "Oh, what do you fold about? I wasn't aware of that. I know I fold a lot." And he says, "Well, for instance the house, the new house," and now I see you're shaking your head again, find out in what regard...
MP	I can talk a lot more about that from my end.
SH	Hold on. Right. You're very experienced, how many years of marriage at rebutting.

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MP	Almost 21.
SH	So I believe you when you say, "I am the champion of rebuttal." That's my words. Would you consider yourself the champion?
MP	I don't know if I'm the champion, but I certainly am not a push over if that's...
SH	All right. So if the two choices are rebuttal, go into fight mode, rebuttal is a debate, a fight, adversarial or push over fold.
MP	I will not push. I will not be the one. I do not like to be the one who folds ever.
SH	So you can really empathize that if Kurt's been feeling like he's been folding, that's not a good feeling.
MP	But he hasn't. Okay.
SH	Wait a minute.
MP	Oh but, I said but.
SH	And this better hold on and even better how or what. Keep going.
MP	Well, yes.
SH	Find out more about his experience of folding on the house for instance.
MP	Tell me exactly what you think went on with the house.
SH	Now, are you going to listen to tell him what's wrong with what he's saying or do you want to switch channels and listen for what makes sense to update new information? You tell me which channel might be more productive.
MP	Well, to listen and try to get information would be more productive.
SH	I think so too, which will bring more harmony to the relationship.
MP	Yes. However...
SH	No, that's a fancy 'but.'
MP	Okay. Well, it's just that we've discussed this many times.
SH	So this is an opportunity to take in some new data that in the past has been pushed away.
MP	Okay. Go ahead, Kurt. I'd love to hear what you would like to say about the new house, although it's two and a half years old now.
SH	It's the decision making process that went into it. Is that correct?
KU	Yeah. I mean Marypat became a realtor.

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SH	Tell her, when you became a realtor...
KU	You're always looking at new houses.
MP	It's my job.
SH	<p>Now let's move it into you talking about you. The basic rule of collaborative dialogue, you can talk about yourself but you can ask about the other. Nobody gets to talk about the other.</p> <p>That's what I call a crossover, crossing the boundary between the two of you. See the little white picket fence between the two of you? If you can picture that, you're not allowed to just hop over it. You stay on your side of the fence. So your job is to talk about "I". Tell her when I felt like I was folding about the house.</p>
KU	I just felt like there was always the desire to have a new house or something. So eventually I was just like, "Okay, let's get one."
SH	So when you experience folding, what's the difference between agreeing and folding?
KU	I think agreeing would be where we could carry on a conversation and look at the pros and cons and just come do a logical decision together to say, "Well, I think this is the best way to move forward."
SH	Exactly. Pros and cons if it's a decision within you or pros and cons between the two of you. That's what I call the win-win walls. You put your pros and cons Kurt all on one list, and yours Marypat on the same list. So now what you're doing is listing all the underlying concerns that come up about buying a new house moving. Once you have all those concerns, if you want to end up with agreement, a win-win solution, you make a solution say a plan of action responsive to all the concerns. So it may still be to buy the house only. Marypat, any idea what the concerns were that weren't accounted for in that solution? If not just ask him, what or how.
MP	There are so many things I want to say, but I'm not.
SH	And I'm not right now. Thank you for now, let's just move forward where the things you are going to say in agreement with him or about how he's wrong, he's wrong, he's wrong, he's wrong, and he's wrong.
SH	So let's drop that for now because your job is to talk about you or to ask about him. You can talk about yourself or you can ask about him. So find out what was going on that didn't get adequately conveyed that he ended up feeling like he folded rather than that this was a mutual agreement.
MP	What she said.
SH	You can do it, Marypat. I want to hear it.
MP	Yeah. So I would love to know how you were saying that you think you folded or whatever it was about the house because...
SH	Okay. Keep going. Your turn, Kurt. She wants to know in what regard you folded.
KU	I just got kind of tired of having a conversation about how you wanted a new house.

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SH	And what was tiring about it? I'm helping you out here. Okay, you do it.
MP	Yeah, what was tiring about it? That's a good question. Also...
SH	Remember, your job now is to try to understand him, not to rebut him.
MP	Also... I don't know. It seems to me... Okay.
SH	Because it seems to me that you, that would be a crossover. Got it?
MP	Yes.
SH	It's telling him what to do. It's not for you to say to him what you think he thinks, what you think he feels, or what you want him to do. Giving him what is not as helpful as a good how or what question.
SH	So what about those discussions that the two of you had felt tiring?
MP	It happened in a couple of hours. So there wasn't much discussion actually, which is interesting.
KU	It was the years ahead of that of looking and a desire to have a different house that were tiring.
SH	And in what sense were they tiring for you? Because that can be fun. A lot of couples like sort of like a treasure hunt, looking at this house and that house. Something about it was tiring for you though, what was that?
KU	I am happy with what we had.
SH	And what about what you had was happy for you?
KU	It's just kind of, you know, I like having things sort of normal the same. Change was difficult sometimes.
SH	Change is difficult for you. So that was one of the issues for you. So that gives you an opportunity to ask more information about that. If you did go down that road and you got some surprising answers, Marypat, what would be lovely about that for you?
MP	Well, anything that would help us communicate better, so to understand more about what he's thinking would be great.
SH	Exactly. And what would be nice for you Kurt if she kept asking you questions? Like I'll do just one question now.
SH	Think about change, change of houses, change, what moment comes up from your personal history as you think about that?
KU	It's not nearly as difficult as it was when we were living paycheck to paycheck.
SH	When you think of living paycheck to paycheck and then change and this was earlier in your marriage, am I correct?

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MP	Yes.
SH	If you then go back even further in your life, when earlier in your life did change feel scary, or threatening, or like it was going to be negative?
KU	Well, probably when my parents got divorced.
SH	Wow! How big of change was that for you?
KU	That was a big change. I mean it needed to happen. They weren't very compatible.
SH	What feeling came up around change then?
KU	I was in fifth grade. It was just kind of confusing.
SH	<p>So change meant confusing. For a fifth grader, that makes a lot of sense. And often in people's lives, the change from being an intact family no matter how bad it is to the shell around the family cracking and splitting open is a terrifying or confusing or something negative challenge.</p> <p>So my guess Marypat is that by asking more about change you're getting to know Kurt better. He's beginning to know himself better and he's beginning to understand why he's got response to change is a negative response because the template for how to react to change goes back to when you were 10 years old.</p>
SH	What's different now about change for you?
KU	Well, I think it could be an exciting thing if we can learn to come to something that we agree on, a new house is going to happen in the next five years and I'd like to not get into a pissing match about, you know, \$500 square foot countertops or just...
SH	And what you'd like to do instead is be able to do what?
KU	Just to talk about it realistically and say, "Okay, let's talk about everything we have in mind. If a budget is part of that, a budget is part of it and say here's what we can agree to."
SH	How are you going to feel if you make decisions by one dominating and the other one folding? How would you feel if you're the folder?
MP	I don't like feeling like I'm the folder.
SH	How would you feel if you fold?
KU	I don't like it, but...
SH	<p>I don't like it, but let's leave off the "but". We don't like it. Nobody in general wants to fold. In fact, the fold road goes to depression. It's a low negative feeling that we get. It's a lose, like even when your favorite athletic team loses, you have a low feeling.</p> <p>So if instead of making decisions with a winner and a loser, which is what you get from adversarial decision making, what would happen if you made those decisions all win-win looking for agreement? Let's buy a new house and let's talk over each decision in a way where we're really respectful, we're collaborative." It's yes-and and lots of how and what</p>

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	<p>questions, rather than debating so that one person's perspective counts and the other one gets pushed away.</p>
SH	<p>Because what we've been doing in this session is setting out a new paradigm for how to talk with each other. So everyone's data counts. Nobody's data get pushed away. And so the voices stay quiet. Nobody escalates.</p> <p>The first technique we talked about to prevent the escalation is if you feel yourself beginning to escalate, step back, just step out of the room if you need to or just step back for a moment from the conversation, come back and ask a question to get more information.</p> <p>Remember the rule? You can talk about yourself, "Gee, I'm feeling a little uncomfortable right now," or you can ask about the other, "What did you mean when you said tiring whatever?" Talk about yourself or ask about the other. Any time you step back instead of continuing to escalate then step in in a quieter tone of voice.</p> <p>That for you Kurt will be essential to staying on that road of collaborative decisions that lead to agreement that makes decisionmaking fun between the couple.</p> <p>And for you Marypat, the skills of taking the data he gives you seriously instead of pushing it away.</p>
AH	<p>We are so grateful to Marypat and Kurt for diving into this experimental counseling session!</p> <p>In our busy day to day...going to work, dropping kids, running a household...we don't often think about how our language impacts our communication.</p> <p>It's fascinating to hear how Dr. Heitler dissects the language of 'but' and 'and.' And, the power it gives us to collaborate... when we acknowledge that two perceptions of reality can exist at the same time. Moving from either/or to both/and is a potent tool for communication.</p> <p>As anyone who's been married a long time knows, successful relationships don't necessarily look like "happily ever after"...rather, they look like what we just heard from Marypat and Kurt.</p> <p>They are messy, they aren't perfect, they require our love and attention...and, they require us to choose them every day...this is something Marypat and Kurt have done.</p>
AH	<p>THANK YOU TO MARYPAT AND KURT...AND DR. SUSAN HEITLER FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THIS EPISODE.</p> <p>FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON THIS EPISODE, OR TO COMMENT ON THE SHOW, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE, ELEPHANTTALK.ORG. AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION!</p> <p>ELEPHANT TALK IS PRODUCED BY KIM POLETTI. OUR THEME MUSIC IS BY ROB BURGER. AUDIO PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY LESLIE GASTON-BIRD AND JOSH KERN.</p> <p>YOU'RE LISTENING, SO YOU KNOW HOW TO FIND YOUR PODCASTS...</p> <p>BUT, IF YOU COULD PLEASE REVIEW THE SHOW ON ITUNES, WE WOULD</p>

Interviewee: **Marypat [M] and Kurt [K]**
Interviewer: Andy Horning [AH], Susan Heitler [SH]

	GREATLY APPRECIATE IT! REVIEWING SPREADS THE WORD. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING. I'M YOUR HOST ANDY HORNING. THIS IS REAL LOVE. THIS IS ELEPHANT TALK.
	END FILE