

Interviewee: **Janice Caillet [J]** and **Alexander Caillet [A]**; **Hilary Illick [H]** and **Pierre Valette [P]**

Interviewer: Andy Horning [AH]

Transcription

Speaker	Dialogue
H	<i>"It was intense, we weren't sure if Taya was going to live or die and everybody was crying and wailing, first responders were coming, it was- it was- and both, you and I, had this moment that we didn't talk about for a long time afterwards because we were in triage, we both had a moment getting to the road where we thought we'd just crossed over into the land of the fucked. And, our life was never going to be the same again."</i>
P	<i>"...it was like time stood still, I turned around and started running, we all started running."</i>
A	<i>When we don't spend a lot of time together, our intimacy goes down. And because our intimacy goes down, when we see each other there's no intimacy between us, So the more I travel, the more I think our relationship is more transactional partnership based.</i>
J	<i>"...there is so much more to you and me than what happens in that bed."</i>
AH VO	<p>Happy 2018! And, welcome to episode 32. Both of our couples today have been married a long time.</p> <p>And, while each couple has had their challenges, they both show us the importance of relationship work.</p> <p>They both have regular practices they've used throughout the years to move through challenges and keep growing together and not apart.</p>
AH VO	<p>MY NAME IS ANDY HORNING, AND THIS IS ELEPHANT TALK. IT'S ABOUT ALL THINGS RELATIONSHIP - THE SOULFUL, THE SILLY AND THE SEXY.</p> <p>WHEN THEIR DAUGHTER, TAYA, WAS 12, HILARY AND PIERRE EXPERIENCED WHAT EVERY PARENT SECRETLY PRAYS WILL NEVER HAPPEN...THEIR DAUGHTER WAS HIT BY A CAR.</p> <p>THEY WERE INCREDIBLY FORTUNATE AND THEIR DAUGHTER SURVIVED. SHE HAD MONTHS OF REHAB BUT WAS EVENTUALLY ABLE TO RESUME A NORMAL LIFE.</p> <p>HILARY AND PIERRE'S RELATIONSHIP, HOWEVER, HAD TO ABSORB THE SHOCK OF THIS TRAUMA...</p> <p>JANICE AND ALEXANDER IN A WAY... HAVE A LONG DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP. HE IS ON THE ROAD FOR THE BETTER PART OF EVERY WEEK.</p> <p>IN FACT, YOU'LL HEAR HIM ON THE PHONE IN THIS CONVERSATION.</p>

	<p>...AND HE HAS DONE THIS SINCE THEIR CHILDREN WERE YOUNG.</p> <p>THEY TALK ABOUT THE IMPACT THIS HAS HAD ON THEIR MARRIAGE AND ON THE FAMILY.</p>
J	<p>Knowing how to communicate is key. So it's not just 'yes, we communicate' but is how we work communicating, it's the words we use, really thinking about what we're going to say before we say it. And that doesn't happen all the time certainly, right honey?</p>
A	<p>we have to take a look at how we, as individuals, and the other is changing and evolving and... be intentional and conscious about the desire and willingness to accept change. And that's- a lot of the really deep communication is about a [Inaudible 00:02:07] the most difficult communication because there's... everyday transactional communication are getting through stuff but there's the harder stuff about that. And that's a point that I think that we do pretty well or at least we think we do.</p>
J	<p>[Laughter]. We do well from time to time, how's that?</p>
A	<p>From time to time, yeah.</p>
J	<p>No, we're still individuals, he has a very profound purpose, I have a profound purpose in life, we have one for our couple. So there's actually three between us and understanding each one of those and respecting and helping each one of those grow is key.</p>
A	<p>Yeah, that's absolutely true. That has to be an agreement not to fix each other but that evolution and change are going to be natural and that we're going to be partners in the- in the watching of it, the gentle exploration of what that's going to mean as the couple evolves. And that was a big insight for me personally.</p>
A	<p>Through the experience of my first marriage, what I came to realize is that my belief and my ex-wife's belief that perhaps we could change each other and fix each other, it was a real fallacy and it just... it just didn't work that way.</p> <p>Janice and I are going to evolve and change. We are who we are as we start. We will evolve and change and instead of trying to fix each other, we are better off watching the changes occur and being in an exploration about it to figure out how those changes are affecting the couple and therefore how we can react to those changes. It goes from- trying to fix someone to actually being with my partner in their change process</p>
J	<p>Yeah.</p>
J	<p>There are still things that we both do to maybe not change but shift a little bit who we are to accommodate the other.</p>
A	<p>I was more judgmental of you Janice.</p>
J	<p>Yeah.</p>
A	<p>And assessments about your habits and I think it was time when I realized that actually by coming your way I was giving myself some freedom and letting go of so much rigidity on the way I saw that things had to be done.</p>

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A	<p>Today as you walk around our home, the laundry is not totally put away, it's spilled over, beds aren't made. The kids' rooms are messy. The kitchen isn't always perfectly clean. So things seem a little more lived in and they're not perfect.</p> <p>I went from living in an apartment that looked almost not lived in to now inhabiting into a home that now looks lived in, I feel that when people walk to our home it feels like it's real, it's alive, it's normal, it's not so perfect and that to me was a coming- becoming aware of being able to live in a place that felt more homey than museum like [Laughter].</p>
J	Yeah.
A	I think I used to live in a museum! [Laughter].
J	Yeah, yeah, a little sterile, honey, yeah.
A	[Laughter].
VO BREAK	I asked Alexander and Janice to talk about how his travel has impacted the family.
A	<p>I really miss Janice and the girls a lot and as time is going on I'm getting more and more tired of the travel.</p> <p>For all the years that I've been traveling I would call once a day for sure. It was rare that I would not call once a day when I'm on the road, sometimes twice a day, typically in the evenings. and in the evenings it was after work, in the hotel room or maybe before dinner or after dinner</p> <p>I was always interested in knowing 'what have you done today? What happened and what happened with the girls?' Quick! 'What did you do? How are the girls? How was their day?'</p> <p>And whenever I could find out what happened, I felt like I was in the know. And to me, a way to be part of the family is to know what you're doing, what the girls are doing, what you're up to. And then always, always, always say I love you; even if I felt upset or anxious, it's just what I have to say on the phone.</p>
A	I think now that I'm getting older, I'm fifty three, I've done well in my career. The desire to travel is waning and I have more and more longing to be home, in my home, with my family, in front of my- my fireplace.
J	Yeah.
A	I'm watching the girls grow up fast now. I see them now, you know, sixteen years old, as she should be, more interested in being with her friends. I'm noticing how much time I missed and I'm starting to feel that sense of regret.
MUSIC BREAK	
A	<p>When we don't spend a lot of time together, our intimacy goes down. So the more I travel, the more I think our relationship is more transactional partnership based. But the more then we start to see each other and be in contact with each other and spend time with each other, the more the intimacy comes back.</p> <p>And what I notice between you and me, Janice, is that when we're together for a longer</p>

	<p>period of time, there's more hugs, there's more kisses, there's more gentleness, whereas when I'm travelling a lot that gives way and I think that's been part of our relationship in the beginning.</p>
J	<p>It's been the same pattern ever since I've known you. In talking with some of my girlfriends about how, you know, all their husbands just started travelling, you know, and then having to share sort of what I've learnt over the years of this being the normal for us.</p> <p>We have a pattern, we're transactional and we get stuff done as a couple and the intimacy does... wear off. But some other couples find that when the husband goes away or the wife goes away, and they come back, that there's more intimacy.</p> <p>That's just never really- that doesn't work for me, you know? Unfortunately. So it is great when you're home more and I can see you more and then fall in love with you all over again, uhm... it is harder when I don't see you.</p>
A	<p>Growing up I moved around so much I had to very quickly connect with people knowing I was going to leave again, I'm more able to quickly come back after week and get right back into a connected relationship.</p> <p>I think for you Janice it's been harder to do that but I- over the years I think you've come- you've come more that way.</p> <p>I know is not always easy but come and give quicker connection with me even though I've been gone and I think as time goes on you've been able to do that... better or quicker.</p>
J	<p>Yeah.</p>
A	<p>That took time.</p>
VO BREAK	<p>I asked Alexander and Janice to talk about how his travel has impacted the family.</p>
J	<p>We have our own routine going on, Alexander comes into the house, nine o'clock at night or whatever from flying in from somewhere and we get up from what we're doing and say hi [Laughter] give you a hug. [Laughter]</p> <p>So sometimes we're bad and we stay with our routine. We stop what we're doing, we go in, we give a group hug uhm... that sort of exchange lasts for about ten minutes max before we go back to what we were doing prior so it's not as intimate [Laughter] as what you're saying but at least we do that!</p>
A	<p>Yeah! It's nice! [Laughter].</p>
J	<p>[Laughter] that sounds so bad!</p>
A	<p>I love that! and for me it's also-</p>
A	<p>It's the look in your eyes, Janice. There's a look of acknowledgment. There's a look we give each other that says 'oh, hi! How are you? I get you, you're there' and that's a look that I think you and I love. And I think for years I would come off from a trip and that look wasn't there it was just kind of a glazed look, protected.</p> <p>And I know that it may be just five or ten minutes but it says 'hi, you're there, I'm here, you're home, I want to acknowledge that you're here, Alexander' and that look feels connected. It feels like you're giving me a little bit of love, like a little bit of 'welcome home'</p>

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	and some emotional softness that makes me heart go 'oh! She's there' and when you do that... then I'm like 'ooh! I'm home!'.
J	I think that, happens more often because I don't feel so much like a single parent during the week anymore, the kids- you know, the kids are getting older, they're taking care of themselves, and they're pretty independent! Right?
J	Because now the kids are on social media and Skype, and the phone with you! And that's their way of connecting, even more so than even face-to-face. So you're, I think, more part of their lives home or away than you used to because when they were little, one: technology wasn't there so much or they weren't using but they are now, and I think you're more part- more a part of their lives even if you're gone.
A	Actually the fact that they are starting to become more interested in their friends and their social life, takes a bit of pressure off of me
J	Yeah.
A	When I come home I'm not as interesting as I used to be...I'm not occupying as much of that need and desire space in their mind as I used to, which makes me feel like 'ok, they have their own lives, they're growing up.' And that just relieves a little pressure. But then that's when my...you know, that's when I start to get a little regretful of how much I have missed in the past. It's kind of a double edge sword.
VO BREAK	I asked what ongoing tension exists in their relationship that they've learned to soften around it but it still exists?
A	Well it's the usual three, right? Sex, money and... sex, money and kids, right? Those are the three. Not that they're so unresolved but they're constant.
A	I think this is something that a lot of couples are working through.
A	When you and I first met, you know, we had a very vibrant... physical relationship, it was- it was- it was intense, it was passionate, it was physical, emotional, cognitive, and there was a lot of uhm, you know, a lot of physicality shall we say, we had a really.
J	We had a robust best sex life! We did!
A	We did, we had a great sex life.
J	Totally awesome and robust sex life, we did, yes.
A	As time is passing, that's changing and it's changing in ways that are not the same for you Janice than for me. And what I'm noticing in you is that you are actually evolving away from the ability, willingness or desire to be just physical sometimes to really requesting a sexual physical relationship which is much more physical plus emotional, plus spiritual and even cognitive. It's almost you want more of a holistic experience and I've watched you evolve and mature emotionally, and even spiritually in that manner. And I think for me, I just haven't kept up with that. I think a part of me has remained very

	<p>physical... I do achieve those emotional, spiritual moments with you. But I can be just physical still like I was with you many, many years ago. And my sense is that you have really moved away from that.</p> <p>And I'm just not sure that I'm there yet. And I know that as a man and as your partner I've really had to work on that. Really take a look inside and say 'what is it going to take for me to evolve to a place where we can have that exchange? And that to me feels unresolved. Sometimes I feel like it's really the place where you and I become stuck.</p> <p>And I think that a lot of that right now falls on me because I'm not sure how to manage it. But I do know that because we talk about it and because we're working on it, that the moments when we do connect at the level that you want, that it's amazing and I'm like 'wow!' Like we had that once but now it's an evolved version of it. And so, as hard as it is, I really appreciate the learning journey with you on that.</p>
J	<p>When I look back in the beginning of our relationship, in my mind I felt like the definition of a relationship was mostly sex and... That was great and that was fun, and we were young and we didn't have kids or a house, or all this other kind of stuff.</p> <p>And then after a while when all those things sort of creep into our own lives and I see that definition of relationship and partnership changing.</p> <p>I felt guilty that I couldn't still keep the same percentage of our relationship as sex. But then it just didn't seem right either. It's like there is so much more to you and me than what happens in that bed.</p> <p>And I felt really loving that other part, how we raise our children, how we... live the day to day. And then I was questioning why was there so much emphasis on the physical part.</p> <p>I almost felt like it was my duty or... it just seemed to be so much more important a long time ago only because I didn't realize how much more important- not more important but as important as other stuff is...us navigating through a life together, us bringing up children together, that to me is part of the definition of relationship and partnership as well.</p>
A	<p>Yeah.</p>
J	<p>The sex didn't go away but the other stuff became important as well.</p>
A	<p>Right. Right [Laughter]. I'm not sure why but, you know the pleasures and the deep satisfaction of being in that partnership, of building life together, you know, can be as or even much more satisfying than just finding that connection in the physical plane.</p> <p>That there's the spiritual, emotional, cognitive place where we meet, where the pleasure is real and that's just a learning experience, that's just something that I've had to learn how to grow into.</p>
A	<p>I'm actually in a field right where I work on... human consciousness and mindfulness, and building skills. It's what I do for organizations around the world. And I feel like... 'I should know this' [Laughter] 'I should be able to do this.'</p> <p>Like 'why don't I remember this?' or 'why can't I just get there as quickly?' or 'why is it taking me more time to fall into this?'</p> <p>So it's one part 'I should' one part 'I'm embarrassed' and then at the same time is 'thank goodness! Thank goodness she's got that. And, she's got our back on this and she's going to drive us' and the thing about you, I know Janice that you don't give up.</p> <p>You truly have this ability to never give up and you will take this till the end. I know that</p>

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	you've got our back. I know you're taking us there. So I do feel relieved knowing that is just a matter of time and practice, and we're going to get there so it's a combination of feelings really.
J	To me it always seemed like the easy way out for intimacy is sex. The deeper way and the more connected way is through the living together, the doing things, the appreciation, the... everything else outside the bedroom. That's more complicated, more complex and more challenging. That's the intimacy! The other stuff is easy, man!
MUSIC BREAK	
J	... I think we- we dealt with all the transaction stuff that we needed to, so we- now we have to part ways because I have a call in a few minutes and so do you [Laughter] so...
A	All right so are the girls... are the girls home yet?
J	Uh... no, Lexie is coming home- and Atlanta is upstairs though.
A	How was her day?
J	I think it was good, she was having me build a website today.
A	Really?
J	Yeah!
A	I've got to get back to this next meeting here, can we please talk tonight and just... say goodnight.
J	Ok! Perfect.
A	All right. Tell the girls I love them, ok?
J	All right, well, I love you.
A	Tell them I can't wait to see them tomorrow night, I love you, ok?
J	Ok [Laughter].
A	All right.
J	All right. Bye, sweetie.
A	Bye.
J	Bye, honey.
AH VO	What strikes me about Janice and Alexander's conversation, is the respect they each give the other and the curiosity they each use. They are able to separate themselves from their own desires, in order to ask...is

	there something I can learn from this dynamic or this experience? This allows them to continue growing together.
AH VO	In our last conversation today, Hilary and Pierre share how their relationship emerged from a trauma that oftens ends marriages.
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H	It was intense, we weren't sure if Taya was going to live or die and everybody was crying and wailing, first responders were coming, it was- it was- and both, you and I, had this moment that we didn't talk about for a long time afterwards because we were in triage, we both had a moment getting to the road where we thought we'd just crossed over into the land of the fucked and our life was never going to be the same again and it was... and we- we managed- we managed but we were- it was like survival mode as I recall for a really long time... and anyway she was taken away in a helicopter and then we had to meet her in the hospital and we didn't know if she'd be alive or dead and she was alive but she wasn't conscious for a few more days, it was really stressful and took its toll on us but we weathered it.
H	Leaving the hospital and Taya was in a wheelchair, and we were- we were in an elevator and I remember seeing across the elevator this cute, elderly, banged[Phonetic] up couple that look really cute together but like fucked over by life, they'd been through hell and the elevator door is open [Laughter] and it was our reflection, it was us at the end of five days in the hospital just so... haggard.
H	we were... visiting my brother and sister in law. Their family has two houses on either side of a street in. We were in one side of the street, my brother, his family and my parents were on the other side of the street and Taya who was twelve was crossing the street to go watch the World Cup on TV with her cousins and siblings, and one car slowed down on this country road to let her pass and another car came zooming around the car that had let her pass and hit her as she was crossing the street, and then Ryan, came into the kitchen and said 'someone's being hit by a car.' So I ran out to the road and way, way, way down the road from where there was a parked a car, like alone on the road, was my little girl inert in a sun dress, one flip flop, the other flip flop was gone and there was blood puling around her head on the pavement and she was motionless, and I ran to her and... surrounded her with my body, splinted her, like all this innate, biological stuff happened, I knew just what to do.
P	That was the only kind of window to the outside world and we were glued to it and drawn to it, and Taya for some reason was... drawn to the Dutch soccer team.
H	The Netherlands.
P	The Netherlands, the orange man, and she absolutely was fixated by them. Most of us were gathered on one side of the- you know this... single, you know, two lane main road, we were in one side of it watching it and Taya was stuck at the other house and she absolutely wanted to watch this game, she was finishing up her

	<p>cereal and then ran to the other side of the street.</p> <p>Ryan, came running into the house where we were and said 'Taya's been hit' and it seemed like a suspension of reality, we were watching this game 'Taya's been hit' didn't make any sense and we just- it was like time stood still, I turned around and started running, we all started running.</p> <p>And it did feel like time was standing still on this... it's the moment where... our life is going to change and our daughter is either going to be dead or paralyzed,</p>
P	<p>and there were the sounds of the blades of the helicopter coming, sounds of sirens and... the medics did what they needed to do.</p>
P	<p>I think we realized our smallness, I mean there's something powerful about Taya been taking away and pulled into the sky, and us driving little vans in a very humble way towards the- towards the hospital.</p>
H	<p>It was so harrowing to go through that and it was a miracle, and things really turned out incredibly well. And I don't know how marriages survive when the kid doesn't because it was- it was so stressful just... our short amount of time under that duress.</p>
P	<p>Fortunately Taya was fine so we didn't have to... we didn't have to see if our marriage would survive that or not.</p>
P	<p>I think often when Hilary and I have issues is because we need- we need something from the other, I need something from you and I'm not always good at expressing what I need and... We have needs and we don't- there's trauma, there's stress, we have needs that we're not expressing and you might need just a hug from me or... a kiss and I'm just trying to process information and I need to- that's my way of taking care of myself and you may see that as not hugging you when you need to be hugged and not being attentive to you, not attending to what you think Taya needs and the same story is going on with me and I think that can- you know the unmet needs which in a trauma are quite quadrupled as each partner's needs and that trauma are so huge and they're just not being met.</p>
P	<p>Just because we're signed up to make it through doesn't mean that there's now work involved and I think after twenty five years of marriage, knowing we have a really strong... great relationship, like we're committed to doing that work and we do have- we do have certain uh... processes for working things out when they get really crappy and knowing that that exists I think hold- like knowing that we can, no matter how shitty it gets, if we- you know, we call it tea ceremony, knowing that 'ok, we've got to do tea ceremony tomorrow or the next day, whatever' knowing that there's that [Inaudible 00:23:02] that landing space, that beacon, whatever you want to call it, that exists I think helps me... work through the- the kind of tension conflict.</p>
H	<p>The tea ceremony...I can't say it saved our marriage but it's given us a tool the first person talks for ten minutes, it starts with whoever is holding the cup of tea talks so you have a timer, so the first person gets to talk for ten straight minutes then the second person holds the cup of tea and talks for ten straight minutes, hopefully not a rebuttal to what the first person said, hopefully is what they would've said if they went first but it never is because they heard all the shit first and then the first person goes again with the rebuttal for five minutes and the second person goes again with the rebuttal for five minutes, so it's a total of half an hour and it is so great and you</p>

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	are absolutely not allowed to interrupt each other now we do it on an as needed basis and it's really helpful.
H	The fights are stupid, the content's stupid, it's just that we're in pain and- and then the tea ceremony gives us time to air out the pain and hear the other person's experience which is so valid.
P	What you and I have working against us is just not having space and when we have space and time... and freedom and not the clock ticking or constraints... then things can usually go pretty well but I mean, life is about constraints and time, and obligations so... you know, we have to navigate, building room for our relationship and then... navigating those constraints and the demands of our time.
AH VO	Hilary and Pierre's experience aside from being a parent's worst nightmare is also something many relationships might not survive. Their practice of the tea ceremony kept them communicating and connected during a traumatic time.
AH VO	THANK YOU TO JANICE AND ALEXANDER AND HILARY AND PIERRE, FOR SHARING THEIR STORIES WITH US. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON THIS EPISODE, FIND OUR SHOW NOTES AT ELEPHANTTALK.ORG . 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. PLEASE REVIEW THE SHOW IN ITUNES - YOUR FEEDBACK IS GREATLY APPRECIATED. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING. I'M YOUR HOST ANDY HORNING. THIS IS REAL LOVE. THIS IS ELEPHANT TALK.
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