

**Episode 190:  
The Art of Love with Dené Logan**

“Marriage is not the end of romance, it is the beginning.” — Esther Perel

Hey winners, welcome back to Win the Day! If this is your first time here, we sit down with some of the world’s true changemakers to give you all the tips, tools, and strategies to win the day EVERY day.

The quote for this episode comes from Esther Perel and says:  
“Marriage is not the end of romance, it is the beginning.”

Joining us in the studio is marriage and family therapist Dené Logan. Dené specializes in supporting couples in finding more fulfillment in their relationships, and using her background in ‘depth psychology’ to help others reclaim their authentic selves.

Her first book, ‘Sovereign Love: A Guide to Healing Relationships by Reclaiming the Masculine and Feminine Within’, has just been released.

In this episode:

- The biggest challenges facing marriages today.
- How to balance competing desires within the relationship.
- What a healthy marriage looks like in today’s world.
- How to bring more connection, love, and trust to your relationship than you ever thought possible.

Before we begin, the right bit of inspiration can completely change the trajectory of someone’s life, so if there’s a friend or loved one who needs to hear this episode or could use some help to Win the Day, share it with them right now.

Let’s WIN THE DAY with Dené Logan!

*James Whittaker:*

**Dené, how are you doing? Thanks so much for coming on the show.**

*Dené Logan:*

Well, thank you for having me, James. You have the best voice. I really think it's so great. I'm just listening in awe like, "Wow." That is amazing.

**Very different to episode one, I'm sure! I don't dare go back and look at my first podcast episode. Yes, we get better over time, but thank you very much for the compliment.**

Yes, that's real. I have a podcast as well and sometimes someone will send me an early episode and I cringe a little bit. I'm like, "Well, thank you for listening, but that's embarrassing."

**Exactly. Listen to a new one, not one of the old ones.**

Yes, please don't go back that far.

**Don't dive deep into the catalog.**

Exactly. Absolutely.

**Well, to kick things off, what was the model of marriage that you had in your household when you were growing up and how did that shape the trajectory that you ultimately went down?**

Oh, that's the first time someone's asked me that question and I love it. I think my parents' marriage was very similar to what I would say most people grow up in terms of the paradigm of like, "What matters is that we stay together." As a Black woman, I think that there is a lot about the model minority template that was really important in my household. It's like, "You don't air your dirty laundry." And you make sure people are experiencing you as a model family and that you guys are doing okay. While both of my parents are amazing people and I think individually... Well, I think my parents didn't necessarily have the happiest union. I certainly think seeing them navigate like we are staying together even though we are clearly not happy here, really impacted how I view relationships and how I view the couple's work that I do.

My mom grew up in a household with a single mother. Her father died when she was four. While I think things went on in their marriage that really made it challenging for my mom to want to stay in that relationship, she grew up without a father in the house. That really impacted her decision to stay with my father. I often say to couples, I think we grow up with this idea that the worst thing we can do is to allow a relationship to dissolve, but I know I'm not alone in the experience of wishing my parents would get a divorce. Wishing that they wouldn't be together so that both of them could have been happier.

Yeah, I think I definitely grew up similar to so many people, the idea that what we're attempting to do is keep this container intact, but I don't know that that's always the best thing for the relational container. That's a lot of the work that I do with clients now is I hold the idea that the relationship is my client, right? I want what's best for the relationship and sometimes that ultimately means for the relationship to change form versus keeping it intact at all costs.

**You talk a lot about polarity in your new book. Your new book is amazing, by the way, and I know we're going to talk a lot about that today and all the different themes and topics that you've got in there. Do you want to give us a bit of a definition of what you think a healthy or a strong marriage looks like in the world we're in today?**

I love that question as well, James, because I think that's really changing and I think what we have come from is what I talk about a lot in the book, sort of a wounded masculine template of what relationship dynamics should look like, which is really what matters is how it looks on the outside as we were just talking about. It's really productivity focused and we want the holiday cards to send out. We want everyone to envy our dynamic and our cars and our vacations and all of these things, but there is an idea of like, "This is what the perfect marriage should look like." And it's defined by some external authority. I just saw this thing the other day that was talking about how the show Mad Men... I don't know if you ever saw it?

### **Advertising? Yeah.**

Yeah, but it really highlighted how all of these ad men were the ones to define what the nuclear family structure should, quote, "Look like." And that this is what a healthy relationship looks like and this is what you should be modeling your marriage after. What was beautiful about Mad Men is it gave us this behind the scenes look of what life was like for these really struggling maladaptive ad execs who were defining what a healthy life looked like, but their behind the scenes were very different, right? I think that's true. I think the beautiful thing about being a therapist is I get to see that that's true for everyone. I think the healthiest, most thriving relationship template to me is one where we're really honest and we're really showing up and attempting to be the most authentic, healthy version of ourselves, moment to moment, breath to breath.

And that can continuously shift, that we define it for ourselves. Sometimes I have clients that are bi-coastal and one person really loves their life in New York, but really loves this person that they're in a relationship with in Los Angeles. And it's like, "Well, this just can't work." And it's like, "Well, but why?" Who says? Why is it some external authority defining what makes a healthy relationship? Maybe we love to see each other twice a month and when we're together, we're really present and we're defining what is a beautiful connection for ourselves. I think that's what relationships are evolving into is that the people involved in the dynamic are the ones who decide versus someone else telling us what healthy is.

**Yeah, it's almost like undefined, isn't it? I spoke to someone who was a guest on the show, incredibly successful woman who's right in the thick of it with all of her business stuff. We had a conversation off-air where she was talking about the pressure that a lot of couples feel like to do things, like have a weekly date night and do all of those different things, but they're both traveling a lot, they're very deep into their business. They've got two or three or four young children and they're like, "Look, we don't want to put that pressure on us." They say they go to church every Sunday and that's what works for them. That's their time to be centered, but they don't have those unrealistic expectations that would make them feel frustrated by not rising to that.**

**They're like, "Cool, we know we're in a bit of a unique time now. Let's make the most of it. Let's still have that family time when we can." And their marriage seems very strong at the moment. It seems to be working very well for them rather than trying to fit into one of**

**these boxes of what a great marriage should look like from someone who might not be that happy away from the smiling holiday card photos. Because my personal holiday card photos, you'll get one this year. My kids are eating sand in the background. It's an absolute disaster. Rather than doing all the smiles, I just want to put out the most realistic holiday card of all time, just crazy children going nuts on the beach.**

I love that. That is, I think, so permission giving. When we see the actual real real of what people's holiday photos look like or their lives in general look like. And I think that's beautiful. You were describing about the pressure that so many people put on themselves. I think one of the most common things that comes up in couples therapy is like, "How often should we be having sex?" And it's like, "Well, we're not having sex at least once a week, so does that mean that we're not a healthy couple or we're not happy?" And it's like, "Well, how often would you like to be having sex? It's actually up to the two of you."

I think that we're just so accustomed to not giving ourselves permission to have what we want. I think that's very much a part of the ethos that we've been raised in is life is hard and you need to be striving and if you're not striving, you're not doing life right. I just have found that the more we give ourselves permission to really live a life that feels good for me, the more everything is impacted, our relationships, the way that we're functioning and the work that we do, all of it just starts to flow a little bit more seamlessly. It's like we've got to give ourselves permission to want what we want first.

**And a big turning point for you was you getting married yourself. How did that change your life at the time?**

Oh gosh. It's funny, James, because I was 27 when I got married and it feels like another lifetime. I think this is... I lead a lot of retreats for women who've really come into the space of realizing that they've been self abandoning for so many years of their lives and they've really been disconnected from themselves. That was certainly a part of my story, but I was following the template of what I should do. I was in my late 20s. It was like, "When is Dené going to settle down and stop being this wild party girl? And she needs to get serious and get married."

My kid's father, my ex-husband, while he is the most amazing soul in the world, he was just the person that was able to contain some of that energy at the time in a really beautiful way. But it was like, "This is the next logical step." I guess, is my point, versus like, "I have this real vision of what it is we want to build together and this is what our life and our family and our marriage will look like." I had none of that. It was just like, "Everybody's telling me I should get married." I think at the time a ring sounded exciting to a young girl.

**Yeah, that seems to be it right. I know people who have been divorced because they were like, "The only reason I got married in the first place is because we've been together for a while and this is the societal expectation that that is the next step, and if we don't do that, then we're not part of the community in the right way."**

Yeah, a friend of mine calls it the relationship ladder and it's like, "We've been dating for a certain amount of time, and so it's time that we move in together and then it's time that we get married and then it's time that we have kids." Then it's like, "This is the next logical step." Versus what feels good. I can't tell you how many people live together for so many years and then they make the decision to get married and all of a sudden they really struggle in their relationship because there's something that happens within the human psyche I have found once we sign that contract, and this is forever. And it doesn't have to be a negative thing at all, but a lot of times it's like there's an expectation of what I should feel once we get married that inevitably it just feels like a little bit of a letdown if we aren't really thinking about consciously, why is that something that I want for myself?

**I think it's so funny that two people who are in a committed relationship, everything's going really well. They say, "Let's spend the rest of our lives together. We're going to start that commitment by organizing an event." Anyone... I've organized events, you've organized events. It's very stressful to organize an event and most people go into credit card debt at a very high interest rate for one day as well. I feel like that's a horrible foundation to continue your relationship on or start that new chapter**

That's so real and it goes by in a flash. I think it's one of the few rites of passage that we have left in our culture. It's like one of these initiatory things. That's as good as it gets in terms of a process of initiation for us, especially, I think, as women. But I think that a lot of times when we've been raised with fairytales that tell us the minute I get married and my Prince Charming comes and chooses me, my life will really begin. First of all, that's a whole lot of pressure to put on a relational dynamic, but also it just feels like, "What now?" I've had the glass slipper put on my foot and I'm sitting in this house with the slipper on, and now what? I think we start to project a lot of that disappointment and that experience of let down onto our partner. But was that really their job to fill that role for us?

**And having kids seems to be... I've got a four-year-old and a two-year-old, that just-**

Dené Logan:            You're in it.

**Yeah, exactly. I think it was in your book you mentioned that if you've got kids under the age of two, it's just a very difficult and a bit of a crazy time for your family and everyone that I know who is in that similar position, it's like a tightrope every single day. How often do you feel like people should think about whether or not kids are something they want to introduce into their relationship? Because that's another one of those things that seems to be like a societal expectation. We get married to create a secure environment for raising kids, and then we have kids and I've seen that tear very happy people apart. It's destroyed careers, all of these different things. I really feel like to experience the real highs in terms of positive emotions, kids are probably the only way to do that, at least in my experience. But it also brings so much pressure and stress and chaos. I really just don't know if it's necessarily the right path for everyone to go down.**

Yeah, that's real. And I think it's important for us to talk about that a little bit more openly. This is one of those things as parents that you never are allowed to say like, "I made this decision to have this child that, of course, I love more than anything in the world." And there's a tremendous amount of grief that comes from the life that I cannot have again. That so much of myself is now focused on this other person who needs me. And for relationships, there is a tremendous amount of... Not even just pressure but it really takes a toll on relationships. And I often tell couples those first two years of parenthood are tough, and if you get through those first two years, it speaks volumes, and that is one of the most common places where relationships dissolve.

I have my theories in terms of masculine and feminine dynamics about why that is, but I think one thing that I wasn't aware of until I had a child was how much the role of motherhood is a woman so deep in her masculine energy. It's so like, "Task and contained and I've got this and get out of my way and I'm keeping this kid alive." And it can feel very much for new couples... Not new couples, but new parents, like a battle of the alphas a lot of times. And I feel especially in those early days, fathers are in the space of like, "What do you want from me? There's nothing I can do that you're not uber critical of."

It feels like I'm grieving the fact that I was with this woman and she's gone. She's different. She's not the maiden that I married, she's now this mother who is very laser focused on this child and keeping this child okay. Of course, rightfully so, but also we used to do all of this with a village of people supporting us. The nuclear family structure just really puts a lot of taxing energy on a couple to figure out how to do this with just the two of us. We're exhausted and we're not sleeping and all the things that come when we have young kiddos.

It's really a lot. And I think what I've been so struck by over the last couple of years is how much we've almost had like a black light put on why this nuclear family structure is so taxing. If there's a global pandemic and all of a sudden the world shuts down, but we all still have to work, what are we doing with our kids? And I've been so inspired seeing how some of my clients would finally reach out to their neighbors and be like, "I've got kiddos. You've got kiddos. Can we support one another and split the day in half? Or maybe we hire one of these college kids that's home and ask if they can help us with watching the kids?" Or whatever it is. I feel like that's how we're meant to be living anyway, and we'd gotten away from that for a while.

**Yeah, especially if people are having kids when they're older. If you're having kids at the age of 40 as opposed to 23, 24.**

It's real.

**Your parents are going to be almost 20 years older and they're like, "My kids are finally out of the house. I want to enjoy a bit of freedom. I don't want to then go and look after the grandkids as a full-time role."**

Yeah, absolutely. More and more people aren't living in the same place where their parents live. We're figuring out that we've got to get a little bit creative with how we do this because there's so much about the way that we've been doing it that isn't sustainable. I find that it's like, "Of course, we're not experiencing a lot of relational fulfillment." We're exhausted, first of all.

**For sure.**

Yeah, but we're just doing something that it's really impossible for us to try to do.

**You're so open in your new book, which again is an incredible read. I've got the link in the show notes, so make sure you go and grab a copy of the book. You're so open about the marriage that you had that ended after 11 and a half years. In your role as a marriage and family therapist, I imagine that would've been a little bit of an interesting mental journey to come to terms, which, of course, you've been able to leverage as such a powerful strength to teach you so much or so many things that you didn't know. What was that inner battle that you went through on the back of that marriage reaching a bit of a natural conclusion?**

Yeah, it was definitely one of those confronting moments when my child's father, who is still one of my best friends, and I say, I think soulmates come in so many different forms, and to this day he's one of my life's soulmates. But we realized our relationship needs to change form and loving one another really means honoring that. What it meant as our relationship changed form was that I was really confronted with walking my walk on some of the things that I've held to be true up to this point. I think one of the earliest things that my mentor who you mentioned earlier, Esther Perel, talks about is so often she's been married to her husband for a very long time and people will say, "Oh my gosh, congratulations on the success of your beautiful marriage. It's amazing. Tell us how you've made it work all these years."

And she'll say, "You don't know anything about my marriage." You have no idea that I've been happily married. We just assume because people have been together a long time, that equates to success. And I remember when I first heard her say that, I was like, "Huh, never really thought about that." Because it's so much of the narrative that we're raised with that longevity equates success in a marriage. I think the biggest thing that I see people struggle with when a relationship ends in any form is that I failed somehow, but I just don't hold that to be true. My kid's father and I brought the most incredible little boy into the world together. Our little boy was two when we separated. He just thinks some parents are just best friends. He thinks it's funny that we were ever married.

He's like, "You married daddy? Did you kiss him?" He thinks it's so funny, but he's never known anything different and we get along really well. But I had to say, I think there's an opportunity here. One, to say we never promised another person, that is a gift to have someone in our life. I have clients who've been single for a lifetime, who go on the dating apps and really struggle to find someone to connect to and to build a life with. Having that is always a gift from my perspective that we're not promised. Also, I think when a relationship needs to change form,

how can we say, what was this person in my life for the amount of time that they were in my life to teach me? And how do we allow this relationship to change form while still holding all of the beautiful things that we've taken away from one another and how we maybe can love one another better as friends versus in this relationship container that's not working anymore.

**And your new book, Sovereign Love, who did you write that for and who do you want someone to be once they've finished reading it?**

Oh, love that question. I wrote that for all of the people asking the question that you are asking. What does fulfillment in relationships moving forward look like? I think we are entering what will be a postpatriarchy society. I think the world is shifting rapidly, and I don't think that's shifting into a matriarchal society. I think it's a more integrated society in that we are coming to a space where all of us are taking responsibility for healing the masculine and feminine energetics within ourselves so that we're able to be really present with other people in whatever form that is. Whether it's love, whether it's just relationships of all kinds. I think ultimately my book is a guide to taking a lot of personal responsibility for the way that you're showing up in the world and the energy that you bring into every room. I wrote the book because I started working with couples and we would be talking about these energetics, and I studied Jungian psychology. I would see the dots of what I understood about masculine and feminine energetics playing out with the couples.

I would be working with them and supporting them with like, "Here's how to take responsibility for your own energy." And they would be like, "This is amazing and it's really shifting our dynamic. Is there a book we can read about this? Where can we learn more?" And I would say like, "No." Because I'm making it up as I go along, but not really. I understood that something was working through me and what I was seeing, so I decided I would write the book that I didn't have to offer them.

**I think it's incredible, and you did such a great job with it too. You wrote in your book, and I've written this down because I think this is really interesting: "The narrative of the husband begging his completely disinterested wife for sex is literally the most common conversation I have with the couples I see. And I can't tell you the number of times I've heard women dismissively talk about the fact that sexual desire is just something they no longer experience at all." Obviously, the most common thing that you have heard. As a marriage therapist, how do you assist couples who have such strong but opposing needs?**

Yeah, I really like to first normalize why I believe that is, I think we live in a society that teaches men that their only outlets for emotions are through anger and sex, and because we have created a society of men where men just don't have the same emotional intimacy a lot of times in their other relationships outside of their marriage containers. I'll hear men often talk about how like, "I just don't have those conversations with my guys. We'll watch football together. We'll maybe play a couple of rounds of golf, but we don't go deep. We don't talk about this stuff." That wasn't always the case. In collectivist societies men used to spend a lot of really deep, close,



intimate time with one another. They would be tender with one another. They would tell one another. They loved one another, and hold space for one another in a way that, of course, men need and are hungry to experience and feel.

And a lot of times their marital container is the only space, the only outlet that men have for feeling feelings. We've normalized that as you want to have as many conquests as possible, and that where your power lies and where your self-worth lies is how you are being experienced sexually. Then it's like we, one, either make that a predatory thing in men or we assume that that will just shut down once you get into a relationship, and that's just not real. But for core feminine women, they are aroused in the experience of being seen. And when I say being seen, it's not like slap your behind, you're hot. It's like, actually, I see you James. I see you as a person. I'm connected with the truth of who you are and I reflect that back to you, which is why women connect through the deeper layers of intimacy.

You'll hear a lot of times if one of you has been out of town in heteronormative dynamic, the man will be like, "Yes. I just want you." The minute that his wife walks in the door and she's like, "You got to give me a minute. We got to connect. I got to feel safe and contained in your energy again." And that just doesn't happen. I'm not right there with you, but because so often women feel that this sex is just a place that you're self-regulating. It's almost like any other thing that I might do to self-regulate, like stress release.

Men start to use sex as a form of stress release a lot of times. And because a woman knows that's not actually about her, she feels deeply resentful of the desire for sex, so it starts to become power dynamics. And I withhold sex because, one, I know how much you want it, and it's like the way that I channel all my resentment about all of the other things that are happening in our dynamic, I put it into our sex life. Also, I'm not actually enjoying sex when I know that it's not about me, it's just a way that you're self-soothing.

**It seems to me in the conversations that I've had with a lot of people of various ages is that the women are thinking that the man needs to be more emotionally present and to stop being so lazy. And from the man's perspective, it's like they want to stop being nagged or controlled and for their partner, their wife to be more active sexually. What are some conversations that people can start to have? Is there anything in terms of insights to help with some of those to help find a bit more middle ground perhaps?**

Yeah. Well, first of all, I think what's important is I actually don't agree with a lot of the ways that women will talk about wanting their partner to be just like their girlfriends. And that's not to say that you shouldn't have a fair amount of emotional intimacy with your partner, but I think we just put too much pressure on this marital container to be everything. I actually don't want my masculine partner to be in the space of girl talk and listening to me vent and all of those things. I think that it's okay to filter some of that in some other areas. But that being said, I think men also need other outlets for connection and intimacy. I would like to see men have more outlets with their brothers for that type of thing. But what you said about women are always feeling like men

are lazy and they're not doing enough, that is because a core feminine and feminine energy is always focused on the space of expansion.

A lot of times you'll notice that women are really into like, "I see this man's potential. I see who he could be." We fall in love with potential versus the man who's sitting in front of us, right? With men, a lot of times what happens is they'll say, "Oh, she was amazing in the beginning. She was so lighthearted and all of this playful sexual energy and go with the flow." And now it's just like, "Where did that woman go? I want her back. I want her to be who she was." Because the masculine energy is fixed energy and wants things to be what they have been. That structure stays the same, right? A lot of it is understanding the ways that we're different. I like to play with the interplay of these energetics because it's like if we understand what is different about us versus attempting to make the other process the world in the same way that I do, which they never will.

So often a man will fall in love with a woman's radiance and her playfulness and her expansive energy and like, "Oh, she sees the world so differently than I do." But then he'll want her to be structured and make sense and be logical about this and stop being all of this wild feminine energy. And then a woman will just feel like, "He doesn't do all of these things, but I could see if he just did this and if he just shaved the beard, then he'd be the perfect guy for me." Versus he is who he is. That's the structure that you fell in love with. Like, "Can I see that that's what makes sense to him? That's who he wants to be."

Again, it's not like we're not going to continue to grow in our relationships, but I think there's a lot of ways that our society has just normalized, like you get to mold someone into someone that you could love. I actually don't think that's love. I think that's projects, right? And it makes that other person, if we look at it from the psychology of what's happening, a lot of times feel the way they felt when they were criticized by a parent. When a parent was telling them like, "Here's what you need to do different. Here's where you're falling short or not enough." Our inner teenager just wants to rebel and like, "No, you're not going to make me change."

**Gabby Reece had mentioned that when she was on the podcast, she was talking about how women, especially when they become mothers, then have a tendency to mother their husbands.**

Big.

**Their husbands don't want to be mothered. I picked up on a similar theme in your book as well.**

Yeah. Again, that thing of masculine energy comes up in the feminine, especially after we have babies. But in general, when we look at a man as a project versus like, "I trust who he is right now and I deeply respect who he is right now." It becomes maternal energy. I believe there's a lot of reasons why, and this is historic reasons why in a patriarchal society, women have really generationally not had trust in the masculine, but ultimately at some point to heal that we have

to say, if I don't trust who this man is, if I don't have a deep level of respect for who he is showing up as today, then I shouldn't be partnering with him. It's not like, "Someday I believe that he'll be worthy of me." That's like raising a child and it's not that hot relationally.

**Yeah, for sure. Where does the conversation need to start? Is it a good look in the mirror or is it with conversation with your partner?**

I'm always going to say let's start inward, and I think whenever I sit down with a couple, I love to say... Everybody comes to couples therapy and it's like, "Fix him." Right? Each person is like, "They're not meeting my needs. And you need to tell them when they need to do this." And the only way couples therapy is ever effective is if each person takes 100% responsibility for what they're bringing to the dynamic. And if each person does that, then we can find some harmony, but it never works as long as we're pointing the finger at the other person.

**Even if one of the people in that relationship might've experienced some trauma from when they were young, it requires both the parties to be there present so they can understand exactly what's going on with a third-party facilitator like yourself, who can perhaps balance some of those emotions and provide a better action plan with everyone together on the same page.**

Yeah, because it's always a system, right? And the system is functioning the way that it is for a reason. If I change the way that I'm showing up, even if my partner has been through really significant trauma, and that is what is causing them to be resistant to whatever changes I would like them to make. If I change the dynamic between us is going to change and it will either rise to meet me in the space that I am evolving into or it will fall away as it's meant to. But my work is really to get curious about why I am with someone constantly in the space of attempting to change them like, "What was I attracted to in this person to begin with?"

**Interesting. We know that the connection, obviously the union is very strong, especially when you have kids because that is the example of marriage and relationships that they are going to hold and model in their own relationships when they get older. But how do you also balance that connection together with the individual need to be who you are and have time alone and have your own thriving career, especially when you need to figure out all of these decisions for your kids along the way.**

That's the big dilemma of life for all of us, right? Because we need security, the masculine, the stability, the sense of something that we are tethered to, but we also need adventure, the feminine, the aliveness, the eros. All human animals need both. Most of the couple therapy modalities from my perspective up to this point have put a tremendous emphasis on the masculine, but not that feminine, like eros, aliveness, life force, sensuality, all of those things. Couples also need that to really feel like they're thriving in their lives. I love to play with tricks to cultivate that over time because there's ways that we can always bring that stuff back in. We're most drawn to our partner when they radiate and when they're unknown to us sometimes when

they're traveling, and I get to miss them a little bit, but really it comes down to seeing my partner as the autonomous other.

We're not in this meshed space of what is it like, "We join and we become one." I actually don't think that's the best thing for aliveness in a partnership. It certainly could create a form of stability, but I think that that stability is actually an illusion. I think if I'm constantly in the space that this person doesn't belong to me. Having them in my life is a gift and I need to really do mindfulness work around like, "How do I hold it as that? How do I continuously bring myself back to the space of curiosity about my partner?" There's always things I promise you that you don't know about your partner that you can discover, but it requires that we do a little bit more work to stay in that space of curiosity.

Then I love to tell couples to divide and conquer a lot more than we do, because the real thing is that we all have really busy lives. We are all exhausted, but we all need time to be a self aside from the family that we're involved in, and it becomes like maybe we divide Saturday in half and if this were you and your wife, you're with the kids in the morning, she's with the kids in the evening, but each of you get time to be by yourselves and then maybe Sunday we do family day and we do stuff together. But all of this like we're always together time, I find is really taxing on couples over time.

**In episode 101, John Gray, who wrote Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus, he came on the show. That episode was like 104,000 views. Obviously, things like we're talking about today, it's very, very important. It's high emotional stakes for people. People's lives are literally at stake. We were talking about Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages, and what John believed was that it's not enough to figure out what the other person's love language is because we need all of those things. That's what he thinks. There's other ways that we can express all of those love languages rather than focusing on one. How do you feel about The Five Love Languages?**

I have thoughts on the languages, James. Here's the thing. What I have found is that almost everyone's love language has to do with the way that they weren't parented. If I really love words of affirmation, it's because I didn't hear that as a child, right?. Someone who is really parentified and always had to be the parent for their parent really loves acts of service because no one was doing those acts of service for them when they were young. A lot of times what ends up happening is, one, we start to love our partner in the way that feels like love to us, but it's not so much about what actually feels like love to them.

We can certainly be in the space of curiosity around what feels like love to you. And you're right, I do think we need all five of those elements, but some of those desires might be a little stronger than others, but the flag that I will never stop waving and never shut up about is that I think so much of what we have learned about couples work and about relationships is that it's our job to reparent our partner.

I don't think that's true. I think it's really important that some of that will happen naturally, organically in an authentic connection between two people. But if I'm parenting you, you can imagine what happens to the desire between us. Some of that is really communicating about what feels like love to me, but really not feeling shortchanged when my partner is not loving me in that way. If I really love words of affirmation, what am I doing to affirm myself? What am I doing to really remind myself of where I'm proud of myself and where I'm thriving in this life all of those things. The more that I can do that for me and I fill my own cup, I love to say, then I can pour into my partner from the overflow versus I need my partner to constantly be pouring into me for me to feel like I'm enough. It's like a cup with a hole in the bottom. They can keep pouring it in, but we just can't feel it.

**It's so important to lead by example as well, isn't it? You can't just be dictating terms of what the other person should be doing or who they should be. You got to lead by example, because a lot of... We had Jeff Spencer on the show. He's an amazing guy. Do you know Jeff? He's another good friend of Nick Sonnenberg, and shout out Nick for connecting Dené and I. Jeff was talking about this idea that every 10 years, basically we become different people through the sort of phases of life that we go in, especially if you're an entrepreneur or if you're married, all of these different things are happening. If someone is in a completely different phase or just happens to enter a different phase where perhaps they're pursuing excitement or they're frustrated about the situation they're in and their partner is at a different phase, how can people manage some of those times?**

Yeah, I think that that's another one of those places where I really love to normalize that. That's another thing that my mentor talks about is if we're in the relationship with the same person for a lifetime, we will be in a relationship with at least six different people with that same person. Again, I think that's why I put so much of an emphasis on I think we have put too much on one person to be our entire world, and it can feel really destabilizing if this person is my entire world and then they're changing as they're meant to. But if I have a group of girlfriends and close family ties and all of these other people, then I can be in the space of curiosity about where and how you're evolving versus feeling threatened by it. I think it's natural and we are inevitably going to evolve and change. If I feel like somehow you changing and evolving is a threat to our connection, I'm going to be a little bit more resistant to that.

**Makes sense. Is there an act of love or kindness that you've heard from some of the clients that you've worked with that has made a significant change in their relationship?**

Is there a what?

**A act of love or kindness, perhaps just an action or a behavior or a surprise or an occasion, just something over and beyond that had a bit of a significant impact on their relationship? And the reason I ask that is because I feel like when you're in that, not necessarily a trap but when you're in business as usual mode, I literally have a calendar notification every three weeks to do an act of kindness for my wife because it never**

**ceases to amaze me how quick that calendar note comes up and I'm like, "Wow, that would be almost a month that would've passed without me doing anything above and beyond what is normal." And it's a really interesting thing.**

Yeah, I love that you do that. That's beautiful. I think something that I really love to encourage couples to do is to understand what feels like love and support to the other person. If we're speaking heteronormatively with the man and the relationship, I will say, if you can maybe make a note as you were saying, to figure out a way to show your wife that you see her. Really stop, be present and say, "You know, that thing that you did with the kids' school, I'm just in awe of you." You spend so much time getting to know the other moms and you're so great with people, really seeing her not like you look great, but who you are I deeply value. Then for the woman in that dynamic, making a note to tell the man in your life how much you trust him, how much you need him, how much you believe in him is really what is that feel good chemicals rush over the masculine.

It's really understanding what feels good to another person in partnership. And if we can go to those core longings that that person has, I find that it can just give each person that little jolt of like, "My partner sees me." Or, "My partner believes in me." And that feels so good to be in this relationship because of that.

**How does someone know that it's time to call an end of their marriage?**

I think that's such an individual thing. I think if I'm in the space of constantly questioning... I heard Meryl Streep say something once that I thought was so smart about the longevity of her relationship, and she was saying, "Every time I felt really disappointed or I wasn't finding fulfillment in my partnership, inevitably there was a way that I wasn't feeling fulfilled within myself. I wasn't happy about what I was doing in my career or with my work or something." I find that is often the case.

It's funny as someone who's very much advocating for, I don't think the worst thing in the world at all is for relationships to dissolve. I think a lot of times we give up too quickly without really bringing the focus on what is it about me that I'm so resistant to that I'm projecting onto my partner a lot of times? That being said, I think there are ways that we can just be showing up as the lowest version of ourselves in our relationship. It makes a lot of sense. It's the same way that... I don't know, you have a four-year-old and a two-year-old?

**Yeah.**

Are either in preschool yet?

**Yes. Our daughter, Sophie, is in... It's called JK. I'm from Australia. I don't even know... I get very confused about the education systems in both countries now because they're changing so much. But yeah, she's four and our son's two.**

Okay. You'll notice sometimes she'll go to school and the teachers will be like, "She was such a little angel all day, so helpful, so amazing with all the other kids." And you'll be like, "Oh, that's great to hear." And then you'll take her home and it'll be like, "ARGHH!." And you'll be like, "What happened to the little angel they were describing?"

**Not my daughter! Not at all. Yes, we've experienced... Last night we experienced that actually.**

Right. That happens because the minute she's back home with mom and dad, she's safe. All of the big emotions that she's been holding out in the world all day, it's flooding at you guys the minute that she comes in the door. But we do that in our romantic partnerships too. We show the best version of ourselves at work and out in the world, and then we come home and our partners become our emotional release valve and they get the worst version of us a lot of times, right? That's why I really love to emphasize, we do have to bring our inner adult to the table in our relationships and take responsibility for "how am I showing up?"

I think every relationship from my perspective to thrive needs three elements which are respect, inspiration, and a shared mission. If I feel like those components aren't there anymore, then it might be time to say like, "Are we changing? Do we need to let this relationship change form or evolve into something different?" If it really feels like we can't get back there with those three elements, then it might be a good time to ask ourselves those questions.

**Those three elements are great, and I cannot imagine how frustrating it would be to be in a relationship with someone who just doesn't want to try. Obviously, if you're in a relationship with them, you want to try and help them as much as you can, but sometimes when you try and pull someone up, they inadvertently end up pulling you down and then that's not good either.**

Yeah, that's real. I think that there's something in... I do believe that I want to be in a relationship with not only someone who I have such a deep level of respect for who they are and the way that they show up in the world, but that I want to rise and be better because of who they are. I think that's a really important component of relationships because I think as the nuclear family structure shifts and as some of these patriarchal dynamics shift, I think people are just going to partner for different reasons.

Women maybe don't need to be in relationship with men to survive anymore the way that they did in the past. Now it becomes a real conscious choice. Also, just across the board, I think, we have too many outlets for instant gratification. There are too many ways that we can get our needs met in all kinds of different ways, and so if we're going to make the decision to partner, I think it's going to have to be a little bit more of a conscious decision in like, "I'm coming into this because of how I see myself expanding and becoming a better version of myself because we're together."

**You shared a little bit about your own experiences at the very start of this episode. Should a couple ever stay together for the sake of the kids?**

Oh, absolutely not. Yeah, that one I can say pretty confidently because of what you said. We are our children's first experience of love and respect and belonging, and I think that so often we get in these really adversarial positions where it almost feels like our kids could conceivably be living in the midst of a war zone, and it's just not necessary. I think we can say the North Star that we want to hold, and I say this to couples a lot because what ended up happening in COVID and everything that year brought to the surface when we were all together in our homes for the first time in a very different way, was that a lot of relationships did break up.

I was seeing a lot of couples that I was supporting them like, "What does it look like to successfully co-parent with a little bit more grace and love and respect?" If we hold the North Star is that we want this child to have a vision of what love can be that is beyond any of the fear that comes to the surface that maybe keeps us holding on for something after it's expired. I think it's absolutely possible to say, "We created this child in love and we can find a different way of loving one another, but no, not staying together just for this child. That's a burden that they didn't ask to carry for us."

**A healthy single co-parenting arrangement would be better than a distressed high conflict marriage under the same roof?**

From my perspective, absolutely.

**Yeah. We know that persistence is one of the most important attributes in success. How do you raise kids on the importance of persistence when they feel like you've given up on the marriage?**

I love that. I think normalizing that families look like so many different things, especially in today's world. I have never given up on my kid's father. He is one of the men that has been, I feel emotional just talking about it, one of the most supportive forces in my life. He has been my champion and all of the things that I have could have never happened without him, but that's true of how I feel about him too. We need to reframe what it is to fail and what it is to win, what success looks like, because a lot of times we're just not really being honest. Our kids feel it. I felt it when my parents were holding onto something that maybe should have been let go of, and I didn't want that for either of them. I would've felt so much happier for the two of them if they could have gracefully let one another go on and live lives that made both of them a little bit happier.

**You stay together, that resentment can build, and then it can be much harder through that divorce process, right?**

Absolutely.



**Yeah. A big thing that I'm getting from all the things that you're talking about today is just the unrealistic expectations that we might have related to definitions that don't suit us and they don't suit the world that we're in today, creates so much pressure and so much heartache when just normalizing that every relationship is unique and special. And as long as we have that mutual respect and focus on love and growth and development and safety for everyone, then things should unfold as they're meant to unfold.**

Yeah. Well, from my perspective, James, that is the rise of the feminine energetic within all of us that is like we can be creative and we can be collaborative, and we can design something for ourselves that as we co-create, it feels really beautiful and true. And I think more and more we are giving ourselves and the people we love permission to do that and saying, "It's okay. Nothing serious is going on. All of this continues." But it can continue in a way that feels a little bit more true for all of us.

**And when someone's divorced, how do they develop the confidence to get back out there and meet people who might be a good fit for them potentially, not that they need anyone, but in the event that they want to just find someone else to share some life experiences with. How do they develop the confidence to be able to have faith that there is someone else out there?**

Well, I do think we need connection. I definitely think I don't want to give the impression that I am suggesting that we don't need one another because we absolutely do need connection and we need love. Love is one of the most euphoric, beautiful aspects of what it is to be in this human body. There are always ways for us to get back in the space of connecting with other humans. What I love to normalize, I ran a singlehood group for a really long time, and so many of the people in the group would talk about how they'd lost themselves after their marriage ended or after their relationship dissolved and just feeling really self-conscious and it was hard to get back out into the world. I think we can take some of the pressure off by not making this need to be 'the one.'

What if I were just out in the world getting to know people, maybe going on dates, but with an open heart for getting to know people just for the sake of knowing people. So often we're like, "This is the mission. I'm out here to find my next person." And it can be, "Well, maybe." But maybe I meet this person, we have an amazing connection, and it's meant to be a friendship, but their friend who I meet because we're friends is the love of my life. But if I'd been like, "Oh, nope, not my person. Not even going to entertain this." I might miss out on that. One of my favorite spiritual teachers, Wayne Dyer, used to say, "Our work is to live a life where we're open to everything, attached to nothing." If we're in the space of, "I'm open to whatever life has to serve up for me on a silver platter. What is it going to be? I love it." We'll just be blown away by the things that can catch us by surprise

**100%. Do you ever have high performing couples who come to you and they just say, "Cool, I just want to get ahead of any potential issues before they arise." And how would your approach be different with those people?**

Those are my dream couples. I think a lot of times people come to me for premarital counseling, which I love because it's like this is going to be our business and we're going to be the CEO and CFO, "What do we want the ethos of our company to be? What do we want our mission statement to be?" I love couples that not only come to approach the thing of being together a little bit more consciously. That's just such a beautiful intention to set. It's so funny, people, when I'm sitting on a plane and they're like, "What do you do?" And I'm like, "I'm a couples therapist." They're like, "Oh God, you must sit with people fighting all the time." And I'm like, "That's not actually my experience at all. I find the people that come in for couple's work are the most committed to loving one another well."

And certainly people will come see a couples therapist in the midst of crisis, but most of them just really want to work on their communication and try to be a little bit more deep in their level of intimacy with one another. I think that's the best case scenario for our relationships possible.

**How does someone find a good couples or marriage therapist? Is there a few things people need to look for or look out for?**

Yeah, well, that's a little bit like dating, right? You just got to get in there and meet some people and you know when it's a good fit or not. I love to say, let's normalize talking about this with our friends as much as possible. I think some of the best couples therapists I've seen have been referrals from a friend who was seeing a couples therapist. But yeah, I think it's just asking around and then trying on for size, a couple different couples therapists, but it's one of those things you just know when you know.

**Esther Perel has been a huge mentor for you. Is there any particular lesson that you still think about every day?**

Esther is probably the most curious, leaving it all on the dance floor in this life person that I've ever met. We were just in Costa Rica together, and it's like she will go from 5:00 AM playing tennis to workshops all day. She's constantly doing and going, and she's never tired. I've never met anyone with as much energy as she has. More than anything, what I've taken from Esther is the way that she just is so present with people. She's so curious about every single person that she comes in contact with. She's so curious about what her blind spots are and what she might be able to learn. That's really taught me not only about the type of therapist I want to be, but just the type of human that I want to be.

**Presence allows you to listen properly, then you can ask the right questions, open vulnerability loops, and so many great things can come from that connection.**

Yeah, absolutely.

**How important is effective communication in a relationship? And is there anything in particular that a couple could be doing to improve that communication they're having with each other?**

I often say it's never the thing that's going on between us that's really causing the issue. It's always the narrative or the story I'm telling myself about what it is. I'm trying to think of examples. But let's say my husband storms out of the room and slams the door, and I start to panic because it makes me feel really abandoned. It makes me feel like we're always going to fight like this, and he's never going to come back to me. And whatever the story is that I start to tell myself, a lot of times saying that story out loud to my partner when we come back together and saying, "The story I tell myself when you storm out of the room is that you don't love me or that you're going to leave me in the same way that my dad did." Like you shut down and you don't have the ability to be present with me.

What I love about the phrase "the story I'm telling myself", and that's something I stole from Brené Brown, got to give her a shout on that, is that it's like I'm open to the possibility that this is just a narrative in my head, and it makes the other person a lot less defensive than if I say, "Whenever you storm out, you're just like my father and you're just a terrible person." Or whatever the thing is. That person can hold space for your fear. And a lot of times that's what we're not communicating is the fear underneath the thing. Can I be still for a moment with myself and say I'm clearly activated, I'm clearly afraid of something. What is the worst-case scenario in my head? What is the story I'm telling myself about my partner? And then can I bring them in on that narrative versus that accusatory space of this is who you are based on the story I'm telling myself?

**That makes sense. Yeah, absolutely. The context and perspective just changes everything. It's like if someone cut you off in traffic and you're like, "Oh, wow, what an asshole." And then it's like, "Well, what if that person's rushing to get their wife to hospital who's about to have a baby?" There's just so many different things like that where a bit of context, a bit of perspective can make all the difference in terms of how you interpret those events.**

Exactly.

**Obviously, our own emotional state as well.**

Yeah, a lot of this stuff's like, "Yeah, that's really easy to say outside of the moment." Yeah. A lot of times it is us doing the work to slow down our process a little bit. I love the pause, I love the like, "Can we talk about this in an hour? I need a minute." Because a lot of the stuff that comes up in relationships is like a dysregulated nervous system, and that actually isn't the space that we want to do a whole lot of communicating from. We want to give ourselves a moment to come back in our bodies and self-regulate a little bit, and then attempt to have the conversation with my partner.

**The people who have young kids, as you mentioned, it's just such a difficult, challenging time. Sleep deprivation, you've got financial pressures, career pressures. In many cases you've lost sense with who you are as an individual. Your marriage can be in a little bit of a difficult place. That physical intimacy might not be there. Men in particular feel like they**

**maybe aren't receiving the attention they used to receive, whereas the women, like you mentioned, are more in their masculine energy. How important is it to talk to other people on the journey to perhaps normalize that that is what almost everyone is experiencing rather than thinking that you are in a uniquely difficult situation?**

Yes, so important. Something I wrote about in the book was that I'm an extremely introverted person. I remember after I had a baby having just such a strong innate desire come up within me to be around other women and other mamas. I think that is something primal that kicks in when we come into that space of parenthood. Women a lot of times have a lot more support around that, but men don't. I think our brothers need way more connection to other men and other fathers to normalize, "This is hard and this is the strategy I'm using with my wife, and this is why I feel like I don't know what to do with this time. What are you doing with this time that's giving you a little bit of an outlet to make you feel better?" The more that we get back into a village mentality with all the things that we're doing, we can just find so much more fulfillment in our relationships because we're just not putting so much pressure on them.

**Yeah, we've got to remove a little bit of ego to open up to some of those conversations.**

Yeah, I think that's a really important part that you're speaking to because a lot of why we don't talk to people is we feel like there's shame in our experience of suffering, but everybody's suffering. That's why I love to share the real real, because I think the gift of being a therapist for me is everybody's going through the same stuff and everybody's got stuff, but nobody's talking about their stuff. They're just keeping it to themselves or feeling like we're the only ones who are really struggling with this. Even that thing we were talking about in the beginning of how much there's grief in early parenthood of like, "I've lost myself and I feel like I don't know who I am anymore." But we feel like we can't say that because people will interpret that somehow as me saying, I don't love my child, or I don't love being a parent. And it's this thing of multiple truths can exist at the same time. I can be so in love with this child and with being a parent and also really struggling with how big the responsibility of this is.

**How do you feel about polarity, not just in initial attraction but also in a long-term relationship?**

Polarity is a dance. It's like a dance of aliveness. It's not a fixed state. We have to work to identify where we are in our energetics. I talk a lot about energy in the book. The thing that's been missing for me in the conversations around relationships is that we are energetic beings and we are impacted by one another's energy. You'll hear people talk a lot about attachment styles now and like, "I'm anxiously attached" or "I'm avoidantly attached." Those aren't fixed states. They're not identities. They're energetic ways of being based on what's happening between us relationally. If I tend to run a lot more avoidant in my relationships, which I have in the past, if I meet someone and have a deep attraction to someone who is also avoidant, energetically, we will create polarity.

That person will either activate within me a lot of anxious energy or vice versa. But polarity is a funny thing because we will cultivate it. But that space of coming back into a healthier polarity, we have to do a lot of conscious inquiry within ourselves to say like, "Ooh, this person is really making me feel anxious. What's happening here?" And if I'm in that anxious energy, which I would say is my more wounded feminine energy, then it's my responsibility to bring myself in a healthy masculine space of containment. I have to be my own bounded fierce protector and say, "Hey, Dené, you got you. This person is a person, and if it works out, that's beautiful, but you will be okay regardless." I need to do some of that inner self-talk to bring myself back into that healthier space with my own polarity.

**Last question now before the Rocket Round. On your best day, what's an affirmation that you would write on a flashcard that you could show yourself on your worst day?**

I love these questions. I would say I'm so proud of the woman you're becoming, Dené.

**So good. I love that. Well, it's time to move into the Win the Day Rocket Round. 10 questions for some quick answers. You up for this one, Dené!?**

Yes.

**Number one, what quote inspires you the most? You have a lot of great quotes in your book, but is there one that stands out the most?**

Yeah, I think I mentioned this one in the book, Wayne Dyer, who I was talking about. I heard him say in an interview once, "The mantra of the lower self is I need more. The mantra of the higher self is how do I serve?" Comes up in every occasion of life, certainly in our relationships, so often in that space of like, "I need more, I need more validation, attention." Whatever the thing is. If we shift into the energetic of how do I serve, it starts to shift the energy of our relationships, but also how we feel about ourselves.

**Game changer. It's so true. Number two, morning coffee or evening wine.**

Oh, morning coffee.

**Number three. What's one bit of advice you would give your 18-year-old self?**

I would say, Dené, put a little less energy into the boys and a little bit more energy into who you want to become. Maybe travel. Focus a little less on the guys, Dené. They'll be there.

**Number four, what book do you gift the most apart from your own?**

It used to be *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. Am I saying his last name right? But now I feel like *The Celestine Prophecy* has become a book that I just tell everyone they should read, and it has a lot to do with energy as well, so I love it.

**Nice. Any particular lesson from that or insight?**

Oh my gosh. It's all about how we're energetic beings and we're competing with energy with one another for energy. I think reading that book, first of all, gave me such inspiration of where we're headed as a human race, even though it's a fictional book, but it's based on these fundamental spiritual principles, but also that this is what's happening in our relationships. We're just competing for energy because we're attempting to get these inner child wounds and needs met by another person, versus how do I take responsibility for my own energy?

**Number five, was there a vulnerability you once had within that became your superpower?**

Let's see. I love that question too. I think I used to really feel like I needed to be perfect, and I used to really hide behind that model minority template we were talking about. And just this thing like I needed the world to experience me in a certain way, for me to feel like I was enough or I was worthy. And I think today what has become my superpower is that I'm like, "I'll tell you anything. I don't care." And I do just normalize like, "Yeah, I'm a hot mess, and I'm sure you are too behind closed doors, right?" And it's all good.

**Exactly. Especially when kids are involved, you're like, "Wow." Kids are the great equalizer. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from.**

Oh my God. So true.

**Yeah, like we spoke about with the holiday cards.**

I love that holiday card.

**Yeah, all the perfect family. We know exactly what's going on behind the scenes. Number six, what's one thing you've learned about failure?**

No such thing.

**Number seven, if you could sit on a park bench and have a conversation with someone alive or dead, who would it be?**

Maya Angelou. I love her.

**Number eight, what tool or resource best helps you run your life or your business?**

Meditation. My spiritual practices.

**Is there a quick insight you can give us into that or a particular activity or something as part of your daily routine?**

Yeah, I tell all my clients that I think it's important to be still every day and move every day in some way. They'll ask me like, "Well, what is your routine around stillness?" I wake up every day and I get up pretty early. I've become an earlier riser as a mom, because as you know, got to fit it in where you can. I try to meditate for at least 15 minutes every morning, and then I pull a tarot card. I've really gotten into tarot and oracle cards over the last four years, and they're just a way that I really connect with spirit in a tangible way. It's like it gives me my inspiration and my connection to my highest version of self for the day.

**Interesting. That's awesome. Number nine, share one thing on your bucket list.**

I would love to meet Oprah and I want to travel. I feel like there's so many places that I want to travel and people that I want to meet. I don't know, it's hard to narrow it down to one.

**For sure. And final question, number 10, what's one thing you do to Win the Day?**

I try to just find gratitude for this day, knowing that tomorrow isn't promised.

**So good. Well, there are a bunch of ways to connect with Dené and we'll link to all of these in the show notes. You can follow her on Instagram @dene.logan. Visit her website denelogan.com and grab a copy of her amazing new book, Sovereign Love on Amazon. Again, all that and more will be linked in the show notes. Dené, this has been incredible. Thank you so much for coming on the show.**

Thank you so much, James.