

Episode 015 Transcript

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How To Get Your Partner To Support Your Life's Dreams

Meredith: Hey there, and welcome to episode fifteen of the Simply Great Relationships podcast. We're so glad you could join us today. I'm Meredith Silversmith and this is Marina Voron. And today, we are talking about "How To Get Your Partner To Support Your Life's Dreams".

Marina: Good topic.

Meredith: Definitely. So today, we'll be covering why this is such an important topic, how it feels to have your partner support your goals and dreams, how it feels when your dreams are not being supported (not super good), the best ways to support one another and sharing your dreams and then how to create shared goals and dreams. That's really one of our favorites, to co-create it together. So, make sure you stay with us until the very end because we've got a great bonus for you and we'll tell you how to get it.

Marina: So, why is this such an important topic?

Meredith: Good question. Good question. When we think about dreams, goals and dreams are sort of interchangeable. Dreams are more the vision then goal is sort of the paths to get there but they're a part of who we are. So when you think of your dreams, that's probably one of the most core pieces of ourselves. It ties into our beliefs, into our values, into what's important to us. So having your partner know that about you, know what your dreams are and know why they are and what they are is a really big piece of that knowing who you are.

Marina: Yeah. I think your partner knowing who you are is, we've talked about this a bunch of times, so so so essential. And a part of showing love to your partner, I think, is also supporting, showing love through supporting their dreams. It's kind of validating that all this stuff that's really important to them, this vision that they've created that's so tied to such core components of them, that it's also important to you and that you understand and recognize where it comes from so I think knowing and supporting is really a part of loving.



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Marina: Yeah.

Meredith: Like not reconcilable.

Marina: Mhmm.

Meredith: And that's super sad.

Marina: Yeah and I think it's almost like preventable damage. It's just that conversation didn't happen early enough and I think it always sucks when it happens like twelve years in and twelve years of compounding frustration and feelings and I think that's so, so tied to dreams. So, how does it feel to have your partner support your dreams?

Meredith: I feel pretty good!

Marina: I feel pretty good about it also! I have to say, both George and Tom are definite goldstar earners here.

Meredith: Yes, yes. They definitely support us. I know I feel super supported by Tom and my dreams, you'd feel like you could do anything. So when that person, the most important person in your life, you feel confident that they're behind you and they understand what your dreams are and they understand why and how and sort of all those little pieces of intricacies of it and they have your back, you just feel amazing! You feel like you could do anything. You've got all the support you need. You feel understood, you feel heard. How do you feel in those moment?

Marina: Yeah! I just feel like it gives me a jolt of energy. Sometimes, we have really, really long days and we have long recording days and it's just so nice that if I wake up and I'm kind of frustrated or annoyed because I know I'm gonna be in traffic and blah blah blah and then the day's gonna be so long and I'll be in traffic coming home. When George is like "Babe, this is your dream and you're living it and that's so awesome". It's just such a wonderful reminder and it's just so energizing for me. I'm just like "Yes, I do get to do that and I do have a really supportive partner" and it's almost like changing the attitude from "Blah" to gratitude and energy and motivation and impetus. So it feels great. It just feels energizing. I guess it's like the word that comes to mind for me.

Meredith: That's a really great point because I'm just thinking as you're saying that if you had a partner who do not and you woke up that way and they said "Well, why are you even doing it then? Why don't you just stop? Nobody's telling you you have to do that. No one comes to our house and says 'kay, you gotta be there by this time or else you're gonna be in trouble'. This is all on us".

Marina: I wish.

Meredith: I don't wish! I don't wish that. But imagine your partner, the most important person to you said "So, don't go! Cancel! Why would you go? It's silly anyway! You're wasting your time!". I could think of a million non-supportive statements which may not be coming from a place of malice. Those could be coming from not knowing the underlying dream here.



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Marina: Yeah and not knowing the value of that dream and how important it may be to your personal bigger picture. Yeah, of course! If I didn't have that and I woke up and maybe the weather was bad and the traffic was bad, you'd be likely to get that text. It's like "Ahh...". On a scale of 1-10, I start a lot of texts to Meredith when I wanna ease her into something when the "On a scale of 1-10, how upset would you be if ...". But I think it would be easy to go there if you don't have a motivating partner.

Meredith: Yeah! Absolutely! And this is probably a part of that when you do have a motivated partner and someone who understands your dreams, they see the strengths in you. So, because you've shared your dreams with them, they will highlight and pull out your strengths. I know, Tom does this with me all the time which I really appreciate and helps me a lot like if I'm struggling with a decision or I'm not sure if I'm doing the right thing or I'm feeling overwhelmed. He's like "You got this! You're good at this! You're good at that! You know you make the right decision". You're very quick to be able to pull the things out that he sees in me that a lot of it from my goals and dreams and just super helpful.

Marina: And I wonder if that helps you kind of see those in yourself. Sometimes when you forget to see those in yourself, it's almost like does he act like a mirror to some things that maybe need to come to the foreground but maybe behind all the to-do lists, all the busy stuff?

Meredith: For sure!

Marina: Okay. So, yeah! That's another really great thing. It's like that our partners can help us recognize strengths we forget to recognize in ourselves. I think a really, really big part of having your dreams work and I think this really ties into what we're talking about with Tom and George is having your dreams supported, I think, really helps turn dreams into goals and turn goals into action steps and turn action steps into reality.

Meredith: Yeah!

Marina: I just see it as that kind of flow.

Meredith: Yeah, definitely! And I think even in a non-romantic relationship, even for us because we're doing this together, so we happened to have a shared dream and we threw a lot of talking and thinking and writing and we came to goals to achieve that dream and with the support that we have from one another, we're able to work that into reality like we are right now. So I think this is true of any relationship but the most important is of your life partner having it from them. Tom knows there are certain things that if he does X and Y, that contributes to me being able to achieve my goals and I'm sure the same goes for you guys.



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Marina: Yeah! Definitely. And even with George, George started his own architectural firm which was like a really big step towards his dreams and it's not a big adjustment for me to say "Hey, I know you're gonna be busy to do this. Let me pick up this... I'll do some of your cleaning tasks or I'll take our dog out" or something like that. Just the tiny things to help him feel supported because I know when you're on... it's always the transitions that are the hardest. The transitioning dreams into goals is where our partners need extra support and a lot of times, we can chill that support in such tiny actions but they are so meaningful and they communicate such a powerful message in the relationship. That's like "I'm your cheerleader".

Meredith: Yeah. Absolutely! Tom made me breakfast this morning.

Marina: Awesome!

Meredith: And it was like the deal in the world. I feel like you just mentioned that a couple of episodes ago but it totally happened this morning and I was like "Oh my gosh! Just to not have to expend the energy and the brain power in the time of like getting the things out and making your breakfast and then eating and then cleaning up" and like just one thing off the list was so helpful to me to me today. So thanks!

Marina: Tom, two thumbs up!

Meredith: I mean, we're very lucky. And I mean, that's certainly not to say that we just fell into our relationships being this way.

Marina: Not at all!

Meredith: We do a lot of work. We take our own advice. We don't just talk about it. We really do the things that we recommend on a regular basis. How would it feel if our dreams were not being supported? How would you feel if George was not supportive?

Marina: Ugh. I'd feel like really unimportant and not significant, maybe even stupid.

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: Not worthy.

Meredith: Yeah. Not seen. That's the big one I can think of, like not seen. When your partner acts in a way that is not congruent with who you are or who you feel you are, you feel very like "Oh my gosh! Does he even know me at all?".

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: So that's really an uncomfortable feeling. And you can start to doubt yourself. Sort of like what if your partner, instead of boosting you up to reach it, was like "Oh, yeah. You shouldn't go. You shouldn't bother". That's a really easy way to start doubting yourself and your decisions and whether or not it's important.



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Marina: Yeah! And I think that ties into this sense of hopelessness. I think dreams really give us a lot of hope. When we have dreams, we feel like “Oh, there’s a light at the end of the tunnel. There’s hope for me to feel and achieve the things I want to feel and achieve”, and without somebody cheerleading us, if we have partners who are dream-crushers, and unfortunately, I see quite a bit of this. I see in individual sessions, this tends to come out. Sometimes later on in couple sessions this will come out where people will talk about how much it has sucked to feel like their partner is a dream-crusher and it’s almost like this person took away from me. It’s a sense of “I could have and now I can’t” and it’s a real loss. It’s almost like this morning process that people have to go through and I’m actually thinking of a couple of times when I’ve worked with women who felt like they gave up their careers and they had big careers and aspirations and dreams tied to that in order to stay at home or cut back and didn’t quite pursue what they wanted and that discussion was never had. It’s not like their partners were these bad guys who were like “No, you stay at home and be a housewife!”. No. It’s just like those talks never got to the level of like “Well, what are your dreams? What is important to you?” and they fell into this routine that the little seed of resentment grew into a big resentment tree especially when their kids got older and it’s a lot of damage to undo and it’s a lot of hard work to see couples like that where there is a sort of resentment of “My partner is my dream-crusher”. I’m sure you’ve seen it also and...

Meredith: Yeah, I’ve definitely seen the same thing and as you’re describing that, that’s exactly the word I was thinking. It was resentment. If you feel whether it’s intentional or completely unintentional that your partner somehow stopped you from achieving your dreams and your goals, most people wouldn’t, you know, you can’t feel anything about resentment. That’s a really big deal so we wanna help you today to not go down that path and to be able to have the conversations you need to have now to prevent things from going in that direction because all the reality is all of that resentment building up, it just discloses disconnect and pulls people apart. And overtime, that spirals and spirals and it kind of leads to the other negative things that we’ve talked about in previous episodes so this is a big one.

Marina: Yeah, for sure.

Meredith: Let’s shift to the positive. Let’s talk about some ways that we can be supportive of one another in sharing our dreams.

Marina: So, I think the step number one for me always is to get clear on what your own individual dreams and goals are.

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: It’s really hard to share what your dream and vision is if you’re not clear on it and you don’t know and you’re like “Ah. Well”.

Meredith: Yeah. Not easy.

Marina: Yeah! And I think it’s something people undermine/underestimate the work that goes into getting clear on your dreams.



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Meredith: Yeah! Absolutely! You really have to devote some time to it. You have to sit and really think about it like “What do I want out of life? What do I want my future to look like? What do I want it to feel like?”. As an individual, as a couple, as a family and look at all areas of your life, I think journaling is really helpful for this to just be able to get your thoughts out on paper and see what resonates with you. But you really do need to devote your time and energy to this as an individual first before taking the next steps.

Marina: Yeah and when I talk to people about doing this, I always say “Connect with that part of yourself that believes anything is possible. Dream big”. It’s a little bit of my pet peeve when people are like “Oh, my dream is to move out of my one bedroom rental and to my two bedroom rental” and like, “Is that your dream?”.

Meredith: That’s it? That’s all you got?

Marina: You know, I think dream big! It’s a dream!

Meredith: Yeah! Absolutely! So once you’ve done that and once you have clarity and I would suggest to think about it on multiple occasions. Don’t just sit down one time and journal and be like “That’s my dream!”, you know. You wanna kind of do it, leave it, come back to it another day, read it, see if that still resonates. It’s a process. But once you’ve done that, then you can talk about it with your partner and share with them what your dream is. So the best way to start that is by getting clued into the communication tips that we shared in episode one. We will put a link to that below but definitely download the communication tip sheet because this is an important conversation and we wanna set you up for success. Another thing, I know, I always recommend this scheduling, the conversation because it’s so important. So actually, setting a date and a time to talk about it so that it feels significant, you know it’s gonna happen and both people are on the same page.

Marina: And I also think a really good tip here is to have your partner listen to this episode so that they could get clear on their dreams so it’s not really a one-way conversation. So it’s a two-way conversation. My only kind of to be aware of here would be just make sure that when you talk about your dream, you’re not putting contingencies in your dream.

Meredith: What do you mean by that?

Marina: So I mean, “My dream is to do this when you do this. I’ll be happy WHEN you are promoted”. You know what I mean? And I think this is why the communication tip sheet is really, really important and can be really helpful here to not put any of those contingencies or “buts” in the dream because this is really a very nice and bonding activity. This is a really nice date night activity.

Meredith: Yeah! I mean, this is not a problem conversation, right? This isn’t like talking about what you don’t like that the other person did or resolving a conflict. This is a positive future-focused energizing as Marina said. This should be a good experience. So, I agree. This would be a good date night activity.



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Marina: Yeah.

Meredith: Another important thing once you start having the conversation is to really be an active listener and that means a lot of this and not a lot of this while the other person is sharing. I just had the funniest conversation with a couple that I've been seeing where it was like the light bulb went on, you know, those moments where like you've been talking about something and talking about something and talking about something and the light bulb went off and it was like "Well, I just said to myself like, 'Don't say anything. Just listen.'" And I did it and it went great and I was like "Yes!"

Marina: This is when therapists do their happy dance. This is like the equivalent to a touchdown.

Meredith: Yeah, which I did! I did do the happy dance. It's like "Yes!" because it's so significant. Like "That's right! Just listen. Listen and take in the other person's information. Don't put your agenda on them. Don't evaluate their dream. Don't judge it. Don't think about what's possible or what's not. Just take it in. You're just learning. You're just understanding". So that's what it means to be an active listener. And then when you flip flop, when it's your turn to share, you would want the same from them. So, that was exciting.

Marina: Yeah. That's a great moment. And yeah! Along with being an active listener, it's being like lovingly curious. So being lovingly curious is the "Tell me more about that. What makes that so significant to you? What makes that important to you? What values or beliefs does that tie to for you" to really show your partner like "I'm interested, I'm curious and I wanna know more about your dream and where it comes from"; again, not evaluating, not assessing, not bringing it down to reality and strategizing even. I think that's a really common and easy "Well, okay. Well, we'll get this, this, this together and we'll...". It's just really about learning what the dream looks like and what kind of core values, beliefs, visions it's tied to. So, being curious.

Meredith: Mhmm. That's very important and I can't stress enough, do not give feedback unless you are asked for a feedback. Don't give feedback unless you are asked for feedback. Feedback can be positive, feedback can be advise, feedback can be a solution to a problem, feedback is anything that you swish it around in your head and you're saying "Ooh, let me say this". No. Hold that in, give your partner their space because this is just an exploratory conversation. No one's gonna die if you don't tell them nothing that day.

Marina: Exactly. Sharing your dreams is very vulnerable.

Meredith: Mhmm.

Marina: It's exposing a part of yourself and if you haven't had these conversations in your relationship, you're really introducing a new part of yourself into it and there's a lot of vulnerability in that so getting unsolicited advice even if it may come from the most loving, good, well-intentioned place can really feel like criticism.

Meredith: Yeah! Absolutely!



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Marina: Even with the good intentions. Even with the best intentions. It can still feel like “Well, you’re not listening to me. This is my dream and now, you’re making it yours.”

Meredith: Yeah!

Marina: So, again, do not give advice unless you’re specifically asked for it.

Meredith: Yeah. And that is definitely something that I’m guilty of.

Marina: Me too.

Meredith: Just thinking back, “Oh, yeah. I did that”. So we do it too. I totally did too. We have to breathe and just say “We can have that part of the conversation on another day! But this day is about sharing and learning and understanding”. So, very difficult to do. Can be difficult to do. Instead, if you feel the urge to say something, replace your advice with supportive statements and compliments. “Oh! That sounds great!”, “Wow! That’s really interesting!”, “I love that you wanna do that!”, “That would really help people!”. Just be positive and supportive.

Marina: I think you’d be great at that!

Meredith: Mhmm! Definitely!

Marina: So, here’s the million dollar question. “How do we create shared goals and shared dreams in our relationship?”.

Meredith: That’s really important because it’s great to know my individual dreams and my partner’s individual dreams. You certainly don’t have to match up on everything. You can pursue your own dreams but there are certain ones that it’s really important to being aligned if you’re going through life together. So, I think, obviously, what we’ve talked about so far comes first and getting clarity on your own stuff than sharing with each other but how do you now co-create joint dreams? So the first step is talking about and figuring out “how do you want your relationship to feel”, right? How do you want your relationship to feel and how do you want your life to feel in the day to day? We kind of touch on all of those things like “How do we wanna spend our leisure time? How do we raise our children? How do we wanna involve extended family in our lives?”. All those areas you have to almost visualize what you want it to be like, feel like. Use your senses.

Marina: Mhmm! And I always tell people, if we’re chasing a feeling, I think people’s automatic response is like, “Happy! I wanna feel happy!”. We don’t live in a Pharrell song. Go deeper than happy. Really identify “what are these feelings?”. George and I, the shared dream we have is to travel and a feeling that we are really chasing when we are travelling together is sharing new experiences, a sense of adventure, a sense of newness, a sense of being able to explore. Yeah, we’re happy when we travel but it goes so much deeper than we wanna travel the world just to feel happy. We wanna travel the world to create these shared experiences that are new and amazing together.



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Meredith: Yeah! Makes a lot of sense! Once you get that clarity on your vision, you're gonna wanna brainstorm together so throw anything out there. Talk it out, "I wanna see this, I wanna do this, I wanna travel, I wanna have Sunday dinner or I wanna have something...", you know. All these things and then the feelings. If you go beyond emotion even and you think, you're brainstorming, "Okay, how do I want my relationship to feel?". You might go to supportive, warm, comfortable, relaxed. There's so much more than even just the emotion words for it. It's almost like describing almost a place.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: That's me when I think about it.

Marina: Definitely, and the nice thing is there are no wrong answers here. It's like a brainstorm. It's like building a mind map together of all the ways you want to share meaning and share dreams in your relationship. Again, it's like a really fun, positive thing, great date night activity.

Meredith: Mhmm!

Marina: Our favorite question is "What do we have in common?".

Meredith: Right!

Marina: "What feelings do we both want to share? What experiences do we both want to share? What visions do we both share? What do we have in common?", that's always such a nice template to work from.

Meredith: Yeah! Absolutely! And you can go back to your individual dreams. Whatever you wrote down and listed for yourself, you can go back there and you can share those with each other and you could even highlight. I'm a big highlighter and color coder so if you're making your own list or if you're putting them in a joint list, highlight! "Oh, we both have this, we both have this, we both have that". Get really tangible about it because then, what you're gonna do is you're gonna take those shared dreams and you're going to shift them into goals because when you set a goal, you're working towards it. You have something more concrete, more doable, something tangible that you can achieve and work towards whereas a dream is of like a vision, less specific.

Marina: Yeah and I think this is something where people think "Oh, it has to be so big and the steps are so big" and this where I think a lot of the negative self talk and couples talk comes and this is where dreams kind of have potential to go to die. But really, it's about picking things that are meaningful to both of you like the things that really resonate and are gonna really enrich your relationship. Figuring out why they are so important and then breaking down into almost integrating them into your rituals. Integrating them into really... breaking them down into such small steps that you feel like you're working towards them everyday. A really easy example I have of this is, again, George and I had a dream to travel together, travel to some specific places together and a way we



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work towards that dream everyday is we broke it down into goals and we knew we wanted to use credit card points so we did a lot of research on what card would give us the most points and the most benefits and we said "We're only gonna spend on this card so that we rack up as many points as we can so that that goes to our airline tickets and our hotels". And that was a really small way that both of us knew that we were working towards living life but also working towards a really awesome dream everyday.

Meredith: Mhmm. That's a great one.

Marina: Yeah! It's so simple. It doesn't have to be a big thing. And then we check our monthly balance and we'd be like "Awesome! Now, we can use these points to get airfare" and that's what we ended up doing. Our airfare was covered by points because we did research and we were really diligent about only using credit cards, not using the debit card or cash and then paying off the balance and it made us feel like "Here's our dream that we're kind of easily making come true and we're committing to it everyday in our little way".

Meredith: Yeah! That's a great example! That's a very tangible goal, concrete goal. I love that. That's a way you could team up on it and work towards it. I would say maybe an example of a more feelings or like how you want your relationship to be kind of goal. If you want your relationship to feel really private, I don't know, picking a random one. We wanna feel really connected and private and we wanna feel like this is our space and we have time together and we're important. You might decide that every Sunday morning is your time. And from the time you wake up until noon or 1 o'clock is protected time between the two of you. So we put our phones on airplane mode and we turn down plans that are asked of us during the time that we don't run errands. We spend that time together alone for us to enrich our relationship. That's one way you can create a concrete ritual to achieve the goal of how you want your relationship to feel.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: You could really get creative with it.

Marina: Yeah. And I think the breaking it down into small things that you're doing consistently is really what makes you feel, like the cliché, "It's not the destination, it's the journey". That really makes the journal really enriching and you're not just measuring like "Did I achieve my goal?" Check mark only that is a marker of success. You're creating that feeling so in that way, you're already successful in achieving that dream or that goal.

Meredith: Yeah! That's a good point! That's probably the most... if you take away one thing from this whole process is to pull those pieces and put them into your relationship as rituals of connection. We talked a lot about rituals of connection. We talked about it in a recent episode. I will put it in the show notes below a link to that. But rituals of connection are some of the most powerful things you have at your disposal to affect change in your relationship and in your life so if you can tie your goals and your dreams into those, you're set. It's gonna become a habit and you're gonna achieve it just like you and George did.



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Marina: Yes!

Meredith: It's a good feeling.

Marina: And if we can do it...

Meredith: Then you can do it, too. So, look, as always, we don't want you to just listen. We want you to listen and integrate these tips into your relationship. So we have created a really great bonus for you. It is the co-creation of dreams mind map so you can get the process started a little easier. I think it's great. You can print it out and it really guides you through the steps of identifying your own, sharing it with your partner, finding your common ground and then working it into a goal. So I think it's a great tool for brainstorming and you can get it at our website at www.simplygreatrelationships.com/015.

Marina: It's also an awesome date night activity.

Meredith: Also a good date night activity, yes.

Marina: As you can tell, I'm a little obsessed with date nights. So, let's talk takeaways. What would you say your big takeaway is from today is?

Meredith: I think the importance of scheduling time for this process. Like actually sitting down. And I think I'm pretty, I think I spend probably more time than your average person thinking about my goals and dreams and working towards them. But to specifically sit down with my partner and share them and co-create dreams of ours and really identify the steps to get there, it feels very empowering to think about that as a possibility and I think the fact that that should be done is my takeaway.

Marina: Awesome! Yeah!

Meredith: What about for you?

Marina: For me, it's what you said in terms of a dream can be just a feeling. It doesn't always have to be travel or this side or this thing. It's like that protected time is our dream because it's gonna make us feel really connected in our relationship and we're living that dream by having protected time. I love that because that is a dream. That is such a wonderful and big picture feeling to feel like your relationship is sacred and protected and lives in almost like this space that its own bubble from the world and to really not just think of dreams and the conventional sense but also just the creation of a feeling. I love that.



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Meredith: Yeah. Cool! So, guys, we gave you a lot today. I feel like this was a bit of a doozy. I don't think I expected it to be as much, to have as much to say about this topic as we did but that's great! That means it's important. So that's all for today. We hope you take these tips and start using them right away. We would love to continue the conversation with you in our Facebook group where we'll be sharing tips, tricks and live streams exclusively for our members. You can find the group at www.facebook.com/groups/simplygreatrelationships or you can click the link on our website www.simplygreatrelationships.com. Definitely get in there. Yeah! So until next time!

Marina & Meredith: Bye!

