

Episode 019 Transcript

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How To Fight-Proof Your Next Big Event

Marina: Hey there and welcome to episode nineteen of the Simply Great Relationships podcast. We're so glad you could join us today. We're talking about a really relevant topic especially for this time of year. I'm Marina Voron, this is Meredith Silversmith and today, we're talking about how to fight-proof your next big event.

Meredith: Hmm.

Marina: The holiday's coming up, I'm sure you're hosting at least something. So, we've got you covered for your next big hosting gig. What we're gonna be talking about today is how hosting a big event can affect us as individuals and how it can affect us as couples, why they can be triggering and lead to fights, how to plan for these events in a relationship-preserving way, and how to stay connected and keep your sanity during the big event. So, make sure you stay with us until the very end because we've got a really great bonus for you and we'll tell you how to get it.

Meredith: Awesome! So, let's jump right into that! How does hosting a big event affect us? There's the individual piece as you said and the couples piece. As individuals, what do you think?

Marina: Well, the first word that comes to mind is stress, right? Stress that comes from expectations, our own expectations, partner expectations, family expectations, what we feel friends may expect of us. I feel like at least for me, when I host, I feel like it's a production and the stress comes from like "Oh, well, these ones expect this and these ones expect this and I want it to be this" and I'm really far from a perfectionist but I feel like this part of me comes out that's unexpected and I feel like there's a lot of stress around that.

Meredith: Sure!

Marina: What about for you?



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Meredith: Yeah! I would say the same thing. Definitely, stress is the first word that comes to mind. And you're right, expectations. And what's tough is there are conflicting expectations from different people or especially if it's between you and your partner if there are conflicting expectations. And then when we have expectations thrown at us, it creates pressure. So the sense of pressure to meet them in how things go, I mean there's a million things you could pick "How was the food? When is the food happening? How clean is your house? What's it gonna be like? Who's gonna have fun? Who's not gonna talk to each other? How am I supposed to act? Am I friendly enough? Am I greeting people enough?". There's a lot of pieces that I think fall into that for individuals.

Marina: Yeah and I think for us individually when it comes down to is we feel like this event that we're hosting is like a reflection of us in a way and we always want to put our best foot forward and be so put together and so "I have all of this covered". All of a sudden, we all turn into like 1950's housewives. It's like a little unrealistic. What about how do big events affect us as couples?

Meredith: So, that's what where we get into the good stuff. Anytime there's something that's gonna be stressful for two people as individuals, it is for sure going to be stressful for the couple.

Marina: It's like a stress synergy.

Meredith: Yes! Stress synergy; they're definitely going to play off each other because when both of us are stressed, it's hard not to let that kinda seep into the relationship. So I think again, stress weighing on the couple, there's a lot of logistical issues. So, when you're co-hosting an event, you're responsible for everything. Cooking, cleaning, shopping, greeting, pulling off the whole thing. And instead of it being on one person, it's on two so there's a lot of conflict going around who's doing what and who's not doing what and what are my expectations vs. the other person's expectations, stuff like that.

Marina: Yeah! I think it comes down to where couples really tend to butt heads is when there's kind of role ambiguity and not clear role allocation or not fair role allocation because if George and I are planning a dinner party and I have a menu and cocktails and this in mind and he has that in mind and I think that I'm gonna do this and he's gonna do that and he has the same but we're not talking about it, I just expect him to be a psychic and know what I expect him to do. We're setting each other up for failure and I don't think that's ever intentional but I see a lot of couples falling into that. And again, your partner's not a psychic. You are not a psychic.

Meredith: No, not possible.

Marina: No Madame Cleo's hotline here.

Meredith: No.

Marina: And that's where the role ambiguity comes from is because there's these unvoiced expectations and that creates so much room for conflict.



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Meredith: Yeah. Absolutely! And then, you get that experience of feeling like you're not on the same page so even just that, having the realization that "Hey, my expectations and your expectations were different. Feeling like we're disconnected. If you couldn't read my mind, what does that mean?". It sort of rolls into that whole spiral of "What does that mean about us? Does that mean we shouldn't be together?", you know, it can really go down the rabbit hole with that.

Marina: Yeah. It's really easy to spiral and I feel like in times of stress, going down that spiral is even easier like this is where our bodies are little not intuitive and tend to work against us is when we're stressed us. What our bodies wanna actually do is make more stress hormones so it's really easy when we're already stressed to then really get caught up and not stress and yeah, you shouldn't be questioning the merits of your relationship based on if you're able to co-host a dinner party. But people do go there.

Meredith: Yeah! And we have an episode and I can't remember the name... the number I should say right now but we'll put it in the show notes where we go in deeper about that topic because I think it can definitely come up this time of year.

Marina: Yeah! So, why too big events trigger and lead to fights?

Meredith: Aside from everything we already said.

Marina: Aside from everything we just talked about. What is it about them that, not just the stress piece but that actually leads to fights that all know what exactly those fights look like and what they feel like that come up only around when we're hosting big events?

Meredith: Yeah! I think where one person feels unsupported, that's probably really triggering in the moment so you feel like you are doing everything and the other person's doing nothing and that's really frustrating so you're feeling unsupported, you're feeling not on the same page and that's, I think, a really big trigger for some people.

Marina: Yeah! I think a lack of organization just on a practical level. I think organization is one of the greatest combatants of anxiety and stress and people don't tend to place enough emphasis on how important organization is and managing stress and if couples have no game plan, if they're unsure of who's doing what, there's that role ambiguity, there's lot of room for blame, finger-pointing, stress and fates because you didn't sit down and take a piece of paper and pen out and write "This is what Marina does. This is what George does. This is what we do together."

Meredith: Right. Mhmm!

Marina: Embrace the Venn Diagram.



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Meredith: Yeah! That's a great point! Yeah! Organization can really help combat, as you said, these triggers. You know, I think another thing that can happen especially in the moment is if someone's feeling overwhelmed because fifty people just showed up to their house and everyone wants something right away and there's not an outlet, right? Like you can't freak out. Maybe your retreat is going in the living room, watching T.V. for twenty minutes and you can't do that because it's packed with people. You can't really pull your partner aside and say "Stay with me and meditate for ten minutes because I'm really overwhelmed." So, what do you do? You're overwhelmed.

Marina: Chug wine in the bathroom.

Meredith: Yeah! That's one outlet. So, you're stuck, you're overwhelmed, you don't really have your typical outlets, you can't really pull your partner because there's guests there so you just kinda have to deal with it. But I think that in it of itself can be a trigger because it's setting you up for potentially an unmanageable amount of stress.

Marina: Mhmm! Yeah! And that's a really scary feeling to go into an event knowing like "My go-to coping skills are not available to me" but I think you can still have some little ones. I think there's a lot of value to just having a little signal with your partner and then being able to sit together for two minutes.

Meredith: Yeah!

Marina: Embracing some kind of like hand-holding or touch not necessarily hugging 'til relaxed right in front of your guests but we'll talk about that a little more. But yeah, I think that having that totally makes sense and again, it's like the feeling unheard, not feeling understood and you're feelings and needs are not being met because you're engulfed in another situation. So, how do we plan for big events in a relationship-preserving way?

Meredith: That's an excellent question, Marina! So, this is the good stuff. These are the tips for you. So, number one, strategize and organize. You have to do it. That's the way to avoid many of the triggers that we just mentioned. Just to have a plan, who's doing what, what are my expectations, what are your expectations, what's my family's expectations, what's your family's expectations, which of these expectations will we honor and which will we discard. This is one of my favorite questions. So, it's like yes, there's a whole mess of expectations but that doesn't necessarily mean you have to meet them. You are in control when you're hosting and you can decide what we're gonna do. "Do we have to have table cloths on every table or can we have placemats? Do we have to have a full bar or can we have a couple of bottles of wine? Do we have to...", you know. All of these little nuances make them clear and talk about them with each other so you've got something to work with and then you can actually work out a plan where you're both on the same page.



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Marina: Mhmm! And I think just going off of that, you're hosting an event because at the end of the day, it's supposed to be fun for you also. And I think if you go into it as like "This is supposed to be fun for me first and I'm meeting my expectations and our after expectations first and then everybody else's expectations." We rank kinda hierarchy and pick and choose what we like. I think that makes working together creating a game plan much better and it almost allows you to gamify it and couple it with some rewards like have a glass of wine while cooking and turn on some music and make it a little bit more about what you're gonna enjoy and how you're internalize reward from it than like "Oh my God, my in-laws are coming. They expect this, they expect white tablecloths, they expect.." whatever! Great! They expect that. That may not be your jam! World war III is not gonna start because there aren't white tablecloths. If you really make it about like "This is what makes us happy. This is a dish we really wanted to cook. This is a cocktail recipe and wine we really wanted to try. This is what brought us joy in creating this experience.", I think, provides much smoother sailing and allows you as a couple to actually enjoy an event that's supposed to be enjoyable.

Meredith: Yeah! Definitely! That's a great point! Very good point. Another really important piece is to be prepared to emotionally support each other throughout the day. So, this doesn't end when the guests get there. This doesn't end when dinner is served. This is before, during and after. What do you think? What's the way that a couple could plan to support each other before the event?

Marina: So, before, I think it's about managing expectations and managing that anticipatory anxiety. So, you know, tons of strategies we've talked about before; talking it out, hugging 'til relaxed, throwing on a head space and doing a quick little meditation together, taking breaks. I think that's really important. I know for me and George, when we're hosting a big event or have a lot of people over for dinner, that preparation starts in the morning and I notice if we don't take breaks like we get a little crazy. So now, we plan that. I will literally schedule in little breaks for us to go take a walk, for us to sit and chill and maybe watch a show. I think that's a really good way for us to decompress and support each other before the event.

Meredith: Yeah! That's a great one! During the event. So, during the event, I think what's really important, and I think you've mentioned this before, is to have some signal. So, you may not be able to say "Tom, I need you right now! Crisis! Everything's gone! Everything's gone to shit!" No, you can't say that. So, you might have to just have some sort of signal. I know for us, it's probably, I didn't even realize we had one but I'm thinking about it now and if I was like "Babe. Babe!" Like very clear-toned...

Marina: The blunt "Babe".

Meredith: "Babe, time to come over here". But you can have anything. You can have a physical gesture like "If I come over and tap your shoulder three times, it means meet me in the kitchen or in the bathroom or in the backyard.", or you can have an agreement where you're gonna text each other if you need something so both people are being mindful of their phones, anything like that. I think it's really helpful and it could mean different things. So, once you've done the first step and talked about what you need, "Okay, I really need to know you're there for me and if you just come over and rub my back for thirty seconds or give me a really quick hug or a kiss, that'll really make me feel better". So, your signals...



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Marina: Or “Just check in with me”.

Meredith: Or just check in! Yeah! I do it! So your signals can mean different things! It could mean “meet me in the bathroom so we could talk for five minutes” or it could mean “give me a hug” or “give me a kiss”, you know, “connect with me in some way”. So, it’s really gonna depend on what’s important to you each as individuals going into it:

Marina: Mhmm! What about after?

Meredith: After. Once everybody’s left and you shut the door. Ugh! Then, it’s like cleaning up and all of that so it doesn’t end, right? Once everybody leaves, you still got clean up and decompress and all of these things so, I mean, I think a really important piece of step one is getting clear on how you wanna handle that time.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: Do you both want to tackle the kitchen right away? Or do you both need to relax and have a glass of wine and lay down and just kinda decompress and deal with it in the morning. Everybody’s different so I think having clarity on around that and agreeing to stick to the plan is really important.

Marina: Mhmm!

Meredith: What do you think?

Marina: For me, this makes me think of Michael Phelps, there’s been a lot of kind of talk and research and he talks a lot about his routine and the actual swimming part of his routine is only a part of it and it’s actually not the end like what he’s done swimming. It’s not the end part. It’s just the middle part.

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: So, it’s almost like the actual of event is just the middle part and the game plan includes the after part also and like you said, it’s about figuring out what’s gonna work best for you. Are you the kind of people that are gonna have anxiety if there are dishes in the sink and you just need to kind of make some espressos and tackle it and go to sleep or are you the kind of people that don’t mind and actually just need to be able to decompress afterwards and then you have a tackle plan for the morning? And it’s about integrating that into your game plan as opposed to saying our game plan ends with when the last guest leaves and we’ll figure it out later.

Meredith: Yeah, not a good idea. That’s another trigger point for stress and conflict especially if one person wants to get on it and start cleaning everything and the other person wants to decompress. That’s a really good setup for not a good situation.

Marina: Yeah. So, think of the main event as only the middle of the game plan, not as the endpoint of the game plan and the after plan is a part of the plan.



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Meredith: Yeah! That's a great one! And again, communicating your needs. We can't stress that enough. It's so important ahead of time to communicate what you need to each other and then respect what the other person needs. You don't have to judge it, you don't have to say "Well, that's silly" or "That's dumb" or "I don't get that". No, that's what they need? That's what they need. You wanna provide it to the best of your ability. What about staying connected and maintaining your sanity during the event? What do you think would be helpful? I know I've touched some of these but to just highlight a few.

Marina: I think going in prepared but emotionally and mentally going in prepared, knowing that with the empathy that you're going into a stressful situation, that has a lot of moving parts, a lot of logistics, a lot of potential triggers. So, going in with a mindset of self-empathy and empathy for your partner that they may get snappy at some point during the day and to meet that with empathy as supposed to with more snappiness.

Meredith: Yes.

Marina: And if you get snappy to also acknowledge that, realize that and try to have your partner meet that with empathy as opposed to snappiness. So, going in prepared is not just going in logistically prepared. It's also going in emotionally prepared to give extra empathy and extra benefit of the doubt because you are going into a more stressful situation than usual.

Meredith: Yeah! That makes sense. And we did touch on checking in periodically throughout the day using a code word or a gesture to grab your partner's attention really quickly but just keeping in mind that it can be really overwhelming to feel left alone by your partner so you're managing this party. I mean, really on either end. so either you feel like you're managing the event and your partner is nowhere to be found and they're out socializing or the opposite. You feel like your partner's managing at the event and you're left alone with the group of people trying to host and be friendly and manage that. So, again, it goes back to feeling disconnected, feeling left alone, not feeling like a team and it's also overwhelming to be in the opposite role of feeling like your partner really needs a lot from you and you're trying to balance 100% of their needs with 100% of your needs.

Marina: Mhmm. Yeah. So, I think going in, knowing what your partner's needs and expectations are in terms of, you know, is your partner somebody who does get a bit of anxiety if they're left alone especially if you're having people over that maybe more like your friends than their friends or your family than their family? What do they need and what do you need and how to balance that so that you're not babysitter but that your partner also doesn't feel like they're drowning and vice versa. This one I think is really, you brought this up while we were talking on this and I think this is the most genius thing, but to have a get them out strategy.

Meredith: Yeah.

Marina: I think this is where George and I maybe fall short. We don't necessarily always have one of these so share your wise words.



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Meredith: Get them out. Yeah. So, get them out strategy. I'm just thinking of what stories to share. So, my husband is from a big Italian family and there's a joke about the way this family says goodbye because people start to leave an event and they'll say goodbye. There's maybe thirty people there and they'll kinda make the rounds but by saying goodbye to everybody, they end up being there for another hour or two. It's hilarious because I don't understand and I didn't have that experience growing up. We said goodbye, we left. For them, goodbye could be an hour or two process. So, for me, I think the get them out strategy is really important. A couple of things that I've learned through these experiences are the pace of the event. So, when you're hosting, you can determine the pace. So, if you're saving some snacks or appetizers and then some sort of meal and then dessert, you can control the fact that if people are getting there at 2:00, maybe you have the appetizers out as they arrive and maybe dinner's at 3:30 and maybe dessert's at 5 and that's it. And once it's coffee and dessert, people are more likely to leave soon after that than if you're pacing like "Okay, 3:00, apps. 5:00, dinner. Maybe 7:30, we'll have coffee and dessert." You're gonna have people there 'til 10:00 at night. So, I think controlling the pace is really important. And really, you know, you have to decide with your partner how long are you comfortable having people there? This is a joint conversation. "Do we wanna be in bed by 9, watching T.V.?" Then, you better count backwards and figure out the formula for that. And then, what do we do... I'm curious what your thoughts are on this. So, you can plan to the best of your ability to pace the event and have it setup that way, but what are we gonna do if one or two people overstay?

Marina: George and I are very bad at this.

Meredith: Yeah? Marina: I feel like when we have overstayers, that's like when the extra bottle of wine comes out and we feel that fire even though both of us maybe like super tired.

Meredith: So, that's... yeah! That's a good point! So, be aware of your behavior. If you have someone overstaying and you'd like them to leave, opening up that next bottle of wine is probably not gonna send the right message.

Marina: Yeah. Not at all. Not at all.

Meredith: I mean, it depends who it is. So, if it's your parents or your in-laws or someone who is close to you, you might feel comfortable being like "Okay, listen. We've been up since 7 in the morning. We're so tired.", you know, and sort of dropping hints like that. If it's someone a little more distant, I don't know. I feel like I'm gonna get some negative feedback for this, but I don't think there's anything wrong with... if it's been a blatant overstay like it's an hour or two past dessert, everybody's gone and these people are just lingering and lingering, start to clean up. Start to do dishes, start to clean up, start to put things away as much as you can. Again, depending on who it is, I think you can say "Oh boy, we're super tired. What are you doing tomorrow? What are you..." trying to focus that conversation on later and tomorrow, "Yeah, we're probably gonna take a shower and go to bed pretty soon". Just sort of pushing the conversation towards the future rather than staying in the present and sort of friendly talk because that does not communicate that you are ready to be done.



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Marina: Mhmm.

Meredith: I don't know. Do you think the idea of that is too harsh?

Marina: Not at all. Not at all. I definitely... no, I don't think that's too harsh. I definitely think that's a really effective and really, you know, kind of mindful strategy to get people out in a timely manner.

Meredith: We're all busy people with busy lives. I think we forget that. I know when I go to someone else's event, I don't always keep in mind the before, the during, the after that they're facing because we're human but when you're choosing to host, you do have the ability to control somewhat a timeline.

Marina: Mhmm.

Meredith: So, those are our tips. Hopefully you're hosting something this year and you can put them to good use. We don't want you to just listen, we want you to use them and integrate them into your relationship. So, we have created a really great bonus for this one. It's called the "Couple's Prep Guide for Hosting Events". It basically takes everything we talked about today and puts it on this really easy guide that you can go through with your partner and write down your expectations and your shared expectations and create a plan and a schedule for your event. So, definitely go download it. You can get it at www.simplygreatrelationships.com/019.

Marina: Let's talk about takeaways.

Meredith: What's your big takeaway today?

Marina: Well, my big takeaway is that when there are stragglers, I don't need to whip out another bottle of wine.

Meredith: No.

Marina: I think that's just the mentality that I'm in charge and I get to pace the event and that it's okay to set those boundaries and communicate in a considerate, mindful way like "And now, it's over."

Meredith: Yeah! That's a really good way to put it, "And now, we're done". That's good. I don't know what my takeaway is. I think probably the importance of having a very clear plan because I'll say I'm guilty. I'm more of a "planning myself, charge ahead, plan it all out" and then if someone tries to change my plan, it throws me for a little like "No, no. I already planned it. It's good." So, collaborating from the beginning so it feels like a joint plan with your partner and then going in from a place of being on the same page. I think that's my big takeaway.

Marina: Awesome!



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Meredith: Yeah!

Marina: I think these are tips that don't just apply now. These are tips that are kind of, I mean, we host events. This applies to birthdays, showers. I think we talk about it more in the context of holidays but I know there are so many summer events and birthdays and all that kind of stuff and I think this is just a really good emotionally preserving stuff...

Meredith: That you can use all year round! Marina: Yeah

Meredith: Awesome! So, that's all for today! We hope you take these tips and start using them. We'd love for you to join the conversation with us in our private Facebook group where we'll hook you up with more tips, tricks and live streams exclusively for our members. If you are hosting a big event, we'd love to hear about it. Definitely pop in there and let us know what you're hosting and what your plan is and you can hear other strategies and tips from our members so it's a great place to be. You can join us at www.facebook.com/groups/simplygreatrelationships or you can go on our website, www.simplygreatrelationships.com and click the link. That's all! Happy hosting!

Marina: Happy hosting!

Meredith: Happy hosting to you all and to us!

Marina: Yes!

Meredith: And we'll see you soon! 'Til next week!

Marina and Meredith: Bye!

