

**0:00:02.3 Nicole Antoinette:** Welcome to the Pop-up Pod, a new podcast that's similar to a pop-up shop or a pop-up restaurant in that it's sporadic. Sometimes it's here and sometimes it's not. Each 12-episode season dives deep into a single question, and our question for season one is this: Should I get married?

**0:00:22.1 NA:** I'm your host, Nicole Antoinette. 36 years old, divorced, close friends with my former spouse, child-free by choice, self-employed, almost three years into a committed romantic relationship with a guy I love, and I'm genuinely unsure of how I feel about marriage, at least for myself. This uncertainty got me thinking, "How do other people really feel about their own relationships? What's working, what's not working?" Let's find out. 12 episodes, 12 different people, honest conversations about the joys and struggles of long-term romantic relationships. In today's episode, you'll get to meet Caitlin Bannan. Caitlin, whose pronouns are she/her lives in Southern California with her husband of 11 years and their two young sons. In this conversation, we dig into all the minutia of cohabitation and long-term relationships. We talk about money, we talk about sex, we talk about chores, resentment, and so much more. Here we go. Okay, my dear, we are good to go. Caitlin, welcome to the show.

**0:01:35.9 Caitlin Bannan:** Thank you, thank you, thank you for having me.

**0:01:38.4 NA:** I cannot remember the last time that I saw you, but it has been quite a while.

**0:01:42.5 CB:** I know, I was like, it's gotta be what? Six years or something? Maybe?

**0:01:45.1 NA:** Some, some... What is time these days?

**0:01:47.1 CB:** I know, I know. Like, wasn't 2020 like yesterday? I don't know. Yeah.

**0:01:51.3 NA:** Maybe, possibly, right? We're in the future, we're in the past, I was... Knowing that we were gonna have this conversation today, I was reflecting this morning on, I think the first time that we met was at a bloggers' spa night in 2008. Does that sound true to you?

**0:02:05.9 CB:** Oh my gosh, yeah, that is... Yeah, it was you, Andrea, and I think we'd been reading each other's blogs, but we were all invited to go to the same thing.

**0:02:14.2 NA:** And we got pedicures and talked about blogging. I don't know, I have... My only memory of it was that I met people that I really liked, so I was like, "Okay, the beginning of our relationship, it was like February 2008. So it's February now at the time of this recording." That was many many years ago.

**0:02:30.3 CB:** Yeah. Oh my God, I think that sounds right. Oh my gosh.

**0:02:33.9 NA:** That was another lifetime ago. Because then, my other memory of the beginning of our friendship was you and me and your then boyfriend, now husband, drunk together in Las Vegas, and I've now been sober for almost 11 years, so I'm like, "Okay, yeah, that was another lifetime

ago."

**0:02:50.5 CB:** Yeah, that's been a life. Yeah, I joke that Vegas has never been the same since going...

**0:02:56.3 NA:** Oh man, we did have a good time, I will say.

**0:03:00.3 CB:** Yeah, I definitely had a good time, but also very much a different lifetime, like what?

**0:03:05.2 NA:** I was also... It's funny, now I'm just telling you, here's all the things I reflected on this morning. Eventually, we will get into our interview. But I was also thinking that, especially at the time, because I essentially met you and met your partner at the same time, and became friends with both of you at the same time, and I have this really strong memory of... Oh, it has to have been like 2009, maybe 2010. Matt, your partner, was traveling through San Francisco where I was living at the time, and he and I went out to dinner, and I don't know if you remember this, but...

**0:03:36.5 CB:** I do, 'cause I think I saw you the next day...

**0:03:39.0 NA:** Yeah, but he and I went out to dinner alone, and I remember at that time, I was still really steeped in a lot of the normative relationship culture that it's like... It's really weird for a single woman to go out with a partnered male, that it felt like this like, "Oh my God, this is so cool that I get to be friends with someone that has a girlfriend," which, saying that now makes me feel... I don't know, a lot of tenderness for my past self who thought that was a radical thing that I'm like, "Wait, I can be friends with a dude who's partnered?" It was such a small view of relationships that I remember thinking like, "Wow, Caitlin's so cool that she's like okay with me being friends with her partner," and now I'm just like, "Oh my God," if you're looking at how all of my relationships have turned out... But that sticks out in my mind as something where I was like, "I want that." I wanna be in partnership where I feel totally cool with whoever his friends are, of any gender and... I don't know, so that's my memory to share with you.

**0:04:33.3 CB:** Oh my God, I totally forgot about that, because yeah, I think he went up to San Francisco and I came up the next day. We were going for something and he was like, "I'm gonna see Nicole when I'm there, and I was like, "Oh, that's so fun. I'll see her the next day." And I think you got to see both of us separately, but it was so fun because he was like, "Oh my God, I love Nicole." I'm like, "Yeah, me too." That was so fun.

**0:04:51.6 NA:** Great. Mutual love fest for everyone. Okay, okay, so I guess, let's back up. Introductions, I'm gonna ask you to share a relationship bio. Think of this as less what do you do and more who and how do you love.

**0:05:05.7 CB:** My relationship bio, I love that question, but I will say my relationship bio is I joke that I was single my whole life. I had crushes, I was a crusher, I just had crushes on celebrities, on other boys all the time, but I met my husband when I was 16, and we immediately became best

friends. We didn't go to the same high school, we were introduced by a mutual friend, but we were inseparable, talked all the time. We were friends for, I guess, till... For two years later, and just friends, and then Matt, our senior year, goes, "I think I like you more than that," and it's senior year, and I was like, "I'm going to Ohio, you're going to Arizona. You don't like me." So, somehow he took that in stride and we stayed friends, and through college, we stayed connected. And then I think senior year of college, something just kind of switched and he came out and surprised me to visit, and we kissed and we were like, "Oh, is this the beginning of something?" And essentially, we've been together ever since. In 2006, we started dating officially, and in 2009, we got engaged and we've been married since 2010. So, I joke we've seen each other through a lot.

**0:06:16.2 NA:** I love that story. Yeah, right? At the beginning, and you and I were talking about a lot has happened since we met, a lot has happened over the course of you being in some kind of relationship with Matt.

**0:06:24.2 CB:** Yeah.

**0:06:25.0 NA:** Yeah. That's really wild. I love what you said about that you were someone who always had a lot of crushes, crush energy is so fun.

**0:06:30.7 CB:** Oh my gosh, I joke... I was having crushes on boys when I was six years old, like New Kids On The Block, they were my jam, and I think that was one of the best things about... When I met Matt, I was 16, so yeah, I had crushes on other boys and I was telling him about all this, and different celebrities. He knew all my crushes and he was like, "Oh yeah, that's just who she is." Even to this day, we still talk about it, of like, "Oh yeah, that guy is super hot," [chuckle] like...

**0:06:56.4 NA:** Okay, well, that's what I was gonna ask is, tell me how crush energy shows up in your relationship now?

**0:07:01.5 CB:** Well, now I joke that he... There's a running joke. We all love the Avengers in our family, and Matt loves Captain America, and my kids love the Hulk and... I'm trying to blink... [chuckle] Spider-Man. And they're like, "Who's mommy's favorite?" And they're both like, "Oh, it's Thor." And they'll be like, "Maybe not for the same reason as everybody else," [chuckle] so it's like... It's a very known fact, "Yeah, mommy likes Thor," 'cause he's super attractive, and... I don't know, we just joke about it all the time, but I still have my celebrity crushes, and Matt's got his celebrity crushes and there's no subtlety, but we accept it, we know it.

**0:07:39.2 NA:** Mommy likes Thor. That's a great one-liner. [laughter]

**0:07:40.8 CB:** "Mommy likes Thor. Thor is her favorite."

**0:07:45.6 NA:** "Mommy needs to go to her bedroom and think about Thor... [laughter] Is this the part where you tell me about your Avengers sexual roleplay? Because..."

**0:07:53.0 NA:** We joke that we actually do have the hammer of Thor that I got from my job, but no,

there's no Avengers sexual roleplay, although everyone jokes... [laughter]

**0:08:04.5 NA:** Not yet, I think the end of that sentence is, not yet.

**0:08:06.0 NA:** Can you clarify for people why because of your job you have the Thor hammer?

**0:08:10.2 NA:** Oh, it literally was like the actual Hammer, and it's signed by Stanley, and it's up in our house that it was like a prize given. And there was three of them and one wasn't claimed, so I just took it.

**0:08:22.6 NA:** Great.

**0:08:23.0 NA:** Yeah, so now we have it and it's on full display and it's... Yeah, so we do have Thor's hammer.

**0:08:25.6 CB:** So, your side hustle now, if anyone listening does wanna do Thor roleplay, you can rent out your hammer for other people's sexual escapades. [laughter] You didn't realize you were coming on this podcast to get business ideas, right?

**0:08:38.9 NA:** Exactly, yeah. That's a new business venture. Who's ready, guys? [chuckle]

**0:08:42.6 NA:** Oh my God. Tell me why you decided to change your last name when you got married?

**0:08:46.2 NA:** Oh, I don't actually know, but literally, I don't think I ever thought not to do it, for some reason. I love my maiden name, so much so that I gave it to my youngest son, it's his middle name. And I think in my brain, I was thinking, You know what? Maybe one day I'll pass it on to my kids. But for me, I was like, No, I don't wanna hyphenate, I just wanna be Bannan. I like my husband's name. I maybe would have thought about it differently if it was a really complicated ass name or something, and I was like, No, I don't wanna have to spell that all the time. But for me, I don't know. I think maybe because society, I feel like it's kind of ingrained in your brain anyway to be like, oh yeah, let me join my spouse. But for me, I don't even know... I don't think it even came off that way, but I was really happy to switch, so I was like, Yeah, this is easy enough, I could be Caitlin Bannan, it works. We Bannons.

**0:09:36.3 CB:** Yeah, we're the Bannons with our hammer. [laughter] I've been thinking about this more because... So when I got married, I also changed my last name, and I obviously am now divorced and I'm like, Oh... And I kept it because just logistical paperwork and whatever, maybe I'll switch it at some point. But I too, like you, I didn't really think about it much beforehand, it was sort of just like, that's what you do, and my thoughts on relationships in general have changed so much since whenever it was that I got married, 2014, and I'm now so curious and picking apart the things that we just do because we accept that we're supposed to do them versus the things that we actually are choosing on purpose. And I don't know, I was just curious if that was something that you had really thought about beforehand or if it was just a very easy yes.

**0:10:28.8 NA:** Yeah, that was just a really very easy yes. I don't even think Matt and I talked about it. It's not like he was pressuring me like, oh, you're definitely gonna change your name, right? Or anything like that. It just was like, oh, one more thing to do after we're married, I'm like, Let me just write it down on the marriage license. Like, yeah, I don't even think we thought about it.

**0:10:44.3 CB:** Have you at any point since wished you wouldn't have done it?

**0:10:48.9 NA:** No, 'cause I think... Especially now that we have kids too, I've realized it makes it a lot easier. It just sounds like... I don't know, I feel like I don't have super ties to it, but although I do find myself still saying like my maiden name every now and then, or other people that are married and have changed their name, occasionally, I will default to their maiden name. And it's just so weird, I'm like, oh yeah, 'cause I've known you for 20 years and now that you're married, like, oh yeah, it changes. So no, I don't think I've ever... I think I would do it again if I had to go back and be like... Yeah, I'd still change it.

**0:11:22.2 NA:** Did you feel like it was a big identity change for you to... Obviously, there's a name change inherent in it, but going from a single person to a married person?

**0:11:31.6 NA:** A little bit. I feel like it was kind of like... I did like my name, especially... I joked the random nicknames that came from it, of like, "Hey, red, red," all these different things, and being a single person to a married person, although I kind of feel like maybe not because we were together for so long, that it just kind of like morphed, like it not didn't feel like we were already married, but we kind of just became... People knew us... Togetherness for so long, that it wasn't that big of a change.

**0:12:02.3 NA:** Yeah, I guess while we're talking about language, I'm interested in your relationship to the title or the role of being someone's wife. I ask because it always felt strange to me that even after I got married, there was something about... I don't know, being introduced as someone's wife, or maybe the expectations that I thought went along with what it means to be a wife. And I'm sure we could spend hours unpacking all of this, but it always felt odd to me and a little bit uncomfortable, almost like playing dress up in someone else's clothes that don't really fit, and I know for sure that's not how everyone feels, and so I'm curious like, A, How it feels to you now, and/or if there was any sort of evolution for you of being a wife and having a husband and sort of the centuries of expectations that can be placed on those words.

**0:12:56.9 CB:** Yeah, well, and I feel like too, it was such a novelty at first, when you're like, Oh, this is my fiance. Everyone goes around like, this is my fiance, and it was fun. And then same with like, Oh my gosh, this is my husband. But no, I think there definitely was a period where it felt like dress up. I still kind of feel that... I'm almost 38, and even now, I'm like, wait, I'm the adult here. It still feels like I'm playing dress up as like not just being like, oh, it's my husband. But also like, Wait, I'm responsible for other people. Wait, I'm supposed to be the one reporting to me, I'm the adult here? I feel like I've hit that wall more than wife, I've hit more of the like... I don't care, I don't mind aging, we age, it's part of life, but it's just still the part of my brain not totally catching up, you

know what I mean? That I'm like, Wait, I'm just such in that mentality. We've talked about how long we've known each other, and obviously that was a different lifetime ago, and I don't necessarily feel like I'm stuck in that life, but I still don't feel like quite like the grown up that my parents are, kind of thing. Like, wait, you guys are the grown-ups, and they're like, no, actually, you were the grown up with your husband, and like... [chuckle]

**0:14:01.3 NA:** Right, with your husband and your multiple children...

**0:14:04.4 CB:** Yeah, your children...

**0:14:06.5 NA:** Exactly, like... [chuckle]

**0:14:06.5 CB:** You're the one here.

**0:14:08.5 NA:** Yeah, I feel that too, where I'm like, Okay, well, when are the grown-ups gonna come in and fix things? Or exactly what you said, like, Who do I have to report to, and then realizing, Oh no, wait. That's just me.

**0:14:18.9 CB:** It's me.

**0:14:20.2 NA:** Like, I am grown-up, it me. [laughter]

**0:14:21.5 CB:** I'm the one. Oh my gosh, yeah, husband.

**0:14:27.2 NA:** Do you feel like there's a difference between you, Caitlin, the person, and like you as a wife?

**0:14:36.9 CB:** I think so, and funny enough, Matt and I've been talking about this a little bit lately, that we were talking about when we first started dating, even since we've known each other so long, we kind of knew a lot of each other's personality traits, and he was saying... He was like, one thing I always knew about you is that you were super independent. And I'm like, yeah, I'm the kind of person that I could go eat out to dinner by myself, or I could walk up to a group of people and talk to them, or like I could go on a trip and not feel the need to check in with him all the time. And he was like, yeah, that's something I've known about you and adjusted over the course of time, and he was like, yeah, that's you. And I feel like we've adjusted of learning each other's traits, similar to like that.

**0:15:18.6 NA:** Do you think that's more true about you than it is about him?

**0:15:21.6 CB:** I think so. I think I'm starting to... After being together for so long too, that we've figured out of like... I've been listening more to the love languages kind of thing, and I feel like that kind of was more of a game changer of, who's... What we like and how we function as people, because he's not like... He was independent, but he wasn't like, I'm just gonna go talk to these people over here by myself, or I am gonna check in with you all the time, and I'd be like, okay, cool,

but you don't have to. [chuckle] And I feel like we were just kind of different in that way, and it's been adjusting our relationship that way. I kinda forgot where that question started, but that... [laughter]

**0:16:02.4 NA:** Yeah, I also forgot where that question start... Oh, it was about the role as a wife and what that feels like.

**0:16:09.7 CB:** Oh yeah.

**0:16:09.8 NA:** Yeah, I don't know, it's just... Do you feel... Obviously, you've been married for what? 11 years now, so maybe this isn't as relevant, but do you still feel like that there's weight around that? Like, now you're married, this is... You're somebody's wife. Is there anything around that that you're like, okay, yeah, that's a big deal.

**0:16:29.0 CB:** I don't know if I feel like that as much as I feel like, Oh, we should be doing these things together. I think lately, I've been getting in my head more of like, Oh, we should be better about budgeting, or we should be better about meal planning. I think I've gotten in my brain of more of these things I feel like we should do, because... Like kind of going back to, we're the adults, we're the married couple, and like, I'm the wife, and I feel like I kind of take on some of these things too, of like, oh, we need to get this taken care of, like here, let me make a list. And I feel like that has kind of happened more often lately, of just like the things we should be doing, and I don't even know where I'm getting these from, but I feel like that has been more of the weight of the husband and wife, and like the...

**0:17:16.0 NA:** Yeah, that's interesting, so you mentioned under the list of shoulds, budgeting, meal planning, what else has come up as like, these are things we should be doing?

**0:17:23.9 CB:** I feel like some of it is traveling or... Granted, obviously, not lately as much. But I think budgeting and meal planning is in the biggest... Or just kind of sitting down and talking about what we're gonna do lately more, 'cause I kind of feel like for a while we were not necessarily living off the seat of our pants, but just kind of having more structure, because I realize I kind of thrive more with structure, of like, okay, what is our plan for the next few weeks? And so, one thing that's helped is I got one of those wall calendars and put... Matt has kind of a not structured work schedule, and neither do I, so I'm like, oh, kind of seeing this out, that's helped me. That was something to do. So I feel like... Yeah, so one of those shoulds is just like, get your shit together. That's a should.

**0:18:13.4 NA:** And it's funny because the things that we think are shoulds, it doesn't necessarily mean that we don't want them, or that there isn't a benefit there, but is this... So using the meal planning and budgeting as an example, are these things that weren't really part of your relationship, that now all of a sudden, you're like, we need to do this.

**0:18:30.8 CB:** Yeah, I joke that they never really were, because before with budgeting, we've both always kept separate checking accounts, and so I think somehow it just kind of morphed in our

relationship that I handled a lot of the bill paying and stuff, and we've kind of always had a loose budget, but lately, I think, especially once kids came into the picture too, I was like, oh, this is something we maybe should be doing also just for my sanity, so I'm not always like, wait, do we need to have this? Maybe we shouldn't be spending this. And I think just kind of keeping it leveled out. Same with meal planning, although I joke that it's also, I think for sanity sake, instead of the every night of, what the fuck are we gonna have for dinner? [chuckle] Like, what are our kids gonna eat? Do you mind if I just have a potato for dinner? Because, great, I don't feel like making anything.

**0:19:15.0 NA:** So that's incredibly relatable.

**0:19:16.0 CB:** We try. Yeah.

**0:19:18.7 NA:** Yeah. I wanna talk about the money thing more. So you said that you have always had separate accounts, is that in addition to a joint account, or has all of your money always been separate?

**0:19:26.0 CB:** We had a joint account briefly, I think right after we got married, especially because we had... People had written us checks together, and so it was really easy to like, "Okay, let's just open this joint account with these checks." And then we realized... I don't know, I think for us, it's just always been easier to keep our money separate instead. So I think after a few years, we realized we weren't even using that account. We use it like we would withdraw money to pay for something or whatever, and then didn't... Really, like we weren't finding any benefit from it, because it just kind of would be like I was kind of handling... We had separate phones, I think, 'cause at the time we got together, he was still on a plan with somebody and I had my own plan, and I don't remember when we actually cancelled our joint account, but so now we just have separate accounts. And we do have separate accounts at the same bank now, so if we do get checks together, we can just cash it together. But I don't know, I think it's just made it a lot easier because I kinda just tend to handle all the bill paying and occasionally he'll Venmo me or I'll be like, "Oh hey okay, we need to cover this for rent."

**0:20:29.8 CB:** How are you working? Yeah, there's really no structure. So I'm like, yeah, when I talk about budgeting I'm like, I really do need to figure this out eventually, but right now, every month we're just like, "Okay, okay, this, this and this, and you pay this," and it's kind of just like a pretty down-the-middle trade-off.

**0:20:44.2 NA:** Okay, more specific questions. We're going in on this. I'm fascinated by the fact, I've never heard of someone being in a partnership, I've either heard, it's either you have the joint money and maybe also separate accounts, or you keep everything separate. I've never heard of someone having a joint account and then cancelling it because it didn't work, so that's really interesting. Okay, so obviously you do have a lot of what I would consider joint expenses, like living expenses, things for the kids. So what is the actual tangible process that you go through to have it feel equitable between the two of you? Like you said, you're mostly in charge of all of the bill paying, so is that just you're paying for that and he's paying for other stuff or... Talk to me about that.



**0:21:24.4 CB:** Yeah, it kinda comes down to the... I think a lot of the bills come out of my account that I've set them up as automatic withdrawal or whatever, and then he will just, yeah, pay for other stuff of whatever major expenses we have. I forget, I think sometimes one was linked to his account, so at one point he was paying for Netflix, so not even all that big. But I switched it all over to mine because that was another thing too, I think my credit card that I was getting points or whatever, and I was like, "Let's just switch it all to mine." And then occasionally like, yeah, he would just like either Venmo me or he would withdraw money and give me cash for things and stuff with the kids, we signed Riley up for baseball, and I was like, "Okay, I did the registration fee," and he went in and did the other free. So I feel like it's not always like I don't always keep track of like tit-for-tat, 'cause it's always just like...

**0:22:12.3 NA:** That's what I was gonna ask. Do you keep track of it?

**0:22:13.4 CB:** No. Surprisingly, not always, and it kind of works because I think we just kind of loosely figure out, "Okay, what's covering what?" and if I need like, "Hey, I need some more money to add to my account because a client didn't pay me yet," and he'll be like, "Oh, okay, I'll send you some," or what have you. I know it's very...

**0:22:31.1 NA:** Okay, I'm so... No, I'm so grateful you're being honest about that because I will tell you the feeling that I'm having in my body as someone who like, I budget, it's like my... I love personal finance. I love budgeting. It's like my... I love it, I love it so much. And the kind of like loosey-goosey nature of what you're describing makes me... I feel anxious. I drag my hands down my face. It's like what you're describing makes me so uncomfortable, which is... But obviously, it works for you, and I love that. This is why I love having these conversations because hearing how other people actually make things work on the day-to-day is incredibly interesting.

**0:23:09.6 CB:** Well, and it's funny to me because I love reading about people's budgeting. And I think it was like Jen Bollenbacher that had her budgeting spreadsheets, and I was like, "This is amazing. I would love to do this." And then it just was like, "No, that's not for me. That's not gonna work." And so, yeah, we've kind of... I always say I want to be a budgeter. And we budget. We're like, "Okay, we've got enough money to pay for all these things. Here's what we're doing, if we wanna stay for something, we save for something, like..." "It took me a long time to reason to buy a plane ticket at one point too, that I was like, "Oh yeah, this is what I should do." But we've been talking about it more recently about just being more like, I don't know, like you're saying, structured with it, like having something to look at.

**0:23:55.4 NA:** It's certainly not that there's a right way to do it.

**0:23:57.6 CB:** Yeah.

**0:23:57.7 NA:** My partner has no interest in the line item specific budgeting. He's tried it, He hates it, he has more of a big picture approach, it totally works for him, that's great. I think more what I'm responding to is the loose nature of the shared finances. That would make me so uncomfortable. So

from the emotional side, do you, in your mind, think of your money as shared money even though it's like, account-wise, kept separate?

**0:24:24.5 CB:** I think so. I think especially because we've been together for so long, I feel like I do think of it as our shared money, but at the same time, I don't feel bad when I buy myself, not that I would feel that that's the wrong word, but I don't feel like I'm diving into our money when I go to Target. [chuckle] You know what I mean, that I'm like essentially, I think of it is all of our shared money because I'm paying for several bills and he's paying for bills. But I'm not gonna get upset when I'm like, "Oh yeah, I needed three more candles from Target," or he bought something off Amazon, I'm like, "Okay, yeah." But at the same time, part of me is like, maybe I should be budgeting better to not do that kind of stuff because it's shared, shared separately, I guess, yeah.

**0:25:06.0 NA:** Is there a dollar amount above which you will consult with each other before you buy it, if it's like an individual purchase? If it's something that's just for you, for example, that you wanted to buy, is there a... What is the level of which you would feel uncomfortable if there is one, just doing it without talking to him first?

**0:25:24.0 CB:** Yeah, I don't even know one. I think because I handle most of the finances, I don't even know if I would. [chuckle]

**0:25:30.2 NA:** Okay.

**0:25:30.4 CB:** But I feel like it would probably have to be a big item or something, and honestly though, I'm a pretty frugal person, that for me, it'd be more like, "Oh my god, I accidentally spent \$150 at Target," like, "Oh, that's probably more than one big purchase," and like, "Oh, that was an accident, 'cause I went in there for toothpaste." [chuckle]

**0:25:49.6 NA:** But you got caught in the Target trap.

**0:25:50.2 CB:** Yeah, I got caught in the Target trap and went in.

**0:25:52.9 NA:** But you didn't even buy the thing you went there for, and all of a sudden you have \$150 of other things. Yeah.

**0:25:56.3 CB:** Yeah.

**0:25:56.4 NA:** No, that's interesting, 'cause when I was married, Paul and I shared finances and I was the one who was mostly in charge of all of it. And again, the sharing finances, we didn't even really think about it that much beforehand, it was just sort of like, "Well, you're married, so that's what you're supposed to do." I didn't really turn over a lot of these stones, and now it's funny 'cause I'm so deeply looking into all of this. But I think it was... I think our agreement was, to my memory, was about \$200 that we would check in with each other if we were gonna spend more on that.

**0:26:23.2 CB:** Yeah, I know. Yeah, I don't think either of us really do... I think that would probably

be something, yeah, like if Matt was... But I honestly like... The biggest thing we bought lately was me buying a plane ticket and he was just like, "Go, do it. That is the thing I am full-forcing you to do is buy this plane ticket," 'cause I was just so wishy-washy on [0:26:42.6] in the state of the world and the price, and I was like, "Do I wanna do this?"

**0:26:47.8 NA:** Tell me about a time where money was a point of friction for you two.

**0:26:54.4 CB:** I would say a few years ago, it really was because I've been doing freelance for eight years now of social media consulting, and so it's always up and down, if I've got clients, yes or no, how often I'm getting paid, how much I'm getting paid. And Matt even, several years ago too, didn't really have a steady job. He was a handyman. And so for a while, that was really a big piece of friction. Now it's a little better as he's got more of a steady job, more in the past couple of months actually. But I feel like for us both being freelancers that that was just really...

**0:27:30.6 CB:** It was hard because it was more like, not necessarily budgeting, but I felt like I'm not splurging on anything, like you don't know what's gonna happen next, and... I don't know, I feel like... Yeah.

**0:27:42.4 NA:** So the friction was that you didn't feel like there was enough money coming in?

**0:27:47.6 CB:** Yeah, I think that was kind of what it was. It wasn't necessarily that we were even overspending or doing anything outside of our means, it was just kind of like one of those like, "Oh, there's not as much coming in as there should be," or for what we're putting out. Well, and I would say too, not necessarily a point of friction, but when I was trying to get pregnant with our first son, we had to go through fertility treatments, and that was not something we had planned for originally. And so we were married for three and a half years, I think before we started to try for a kid, and obviously you spend years trying not to have a baby, and then by the time I was like, "Oh, let's do it," and I'm like, Oh, just kidding," and had to pour so much money into a doctor and I was like... I mean, luckily, we had some savings and we had family help, people that were willing to step in, like not willing to step in, but offered to step in because that ended up being way more than we had anticipated.

**0:28:42.8 NA:** Do you remember approximately how much you spent?

**0:28:45.1 CB:** I think we spent 10K is what it ended up being. And I felt grateful because we could do that, but at the same time, I was worried if it didn't work, like how much would we willingly pour into this? And we had talked about that too, because we had two failed IUIs before the third one...

**0:29:05.1 NA:** For someone who doesn't know what that is, will you... Yeah.

**0:29:06.0 CB:** Yeah, for someone who doesn't know, I joke it's like the turkey baster method, but intra-uterine... I'm blanking on the last word. But it's like the step below IVF. IVF is much more invasive than an IUI. But that was still like, I think \$600 or something just for the IUI and that

wasn't including all the medication, ultrasounds. 'Cause all of it was out-of-pocket, nothing was covered by insurance. And so doing two failed of those, and I'll never forget that, and I think we were like, "So how many times are we actually gonna try and do this before we either give up or like really have to think about IVF and save up again because that's a whole other beast of money to put through?" So I feel like trying to have a kid really tested our finances both before and then after the kid got here, [chuckle] that you were like, "Oh, wait. Yeah, we've budgeted for this and..." However, you're still never fully prepared for how much money, I feel like, a kid is gonna cost, [chuckle] and adding another body to your family.

**0:30:06.8 NA:** So back at the time where you said that you had two failed experiences of it, and you were having the conversations of, "Okay, how many more times are we willing to do this?" Both kind of emotionally and financially, were you on the same page about that, or was there a time where what you were willing to do was different than what he was willing to do?

**0:30:23.5 CB:** Luckily, I think we were on the same page. Because I think he was more concerned for me emotionally. I think in his brain though, he was like, "Financially, we'll make it work. I don't care what..." He's kind of like, "We'll do it. We'll find the money, we'll do something, we can keep going." But he was more concerned of like, "What kind of toll is this gonna take on you to keep going?" And luckily, the third IUI ended up being the one that worked, and so we didn't really have to have that conversation again. And then even more fortunately with my second child, we didn't have to do fertility treatments at all. So that was just a whole lot of, both emotional and financial strain, but I feel like, yeah, that was one of the big first challenges that we've dealt with financially in our marriage.

**0:31:03.4 NA:** Yeah, I know, I appreciate the honesty, around that, especially the dollar amount too. It's... I mean, you know me, I'm very interested in talking about the specifics of money, I think that there's something that's really freeing about just being willing to be honest about that. And then even that conversation of what you are and are not willing to do and not creating any sort of narrative around that, it would have been really fine if at any point you two were like, "You know what, we're not gonna continue doing this, or going for this." And obviously, this is one specific example, but it comes up in lots of different things.

**0:31:34.4 CB:** Oh, definitely. Yeah I feel like you have to be on the same page, or at least someone get on someone else's page of like, "Okay, I'm ready to do what's best for you, even if I am willing to keep doing this forever, you're the one who physically has to go through it. And if it's straining our relationship too, is that truly worth it?" And I feel like, yeah, you're right, that comes up with a lot of different scenarios, not just like trying to have a baby. [chuckle]

**0:31:57.8 NA:** Yeah, yeah. I have so many questions, I'm sorry. I'm slowing myself down for a minute to be like, "Where do I wanna go next?" I guess kind of maybe sticking on the money theme, and then we can move on to something else, I know it sounds like you're not doing the line item by item budget, which, awesome, great, totally fine, you don't have to. I am curious though, do you feel like, either individually or as a couple, that you have any financial goals that you're working toward? Or how do you think about, I don't know, the balance of taking care of your

current selves and the things that you want, and then also saving for your future family?

**0:32:35.7 CB:** Yeah, I feel like we've been talking about this more also because I joke that we were both kind of just raised differently too, with money, whereas my mom got me a credit card when I was 18 and was like, "Use this, but make sure you could pay it off" kind of thing. Whereas now, admittedly like Matt and I do have credit card debt, and I think my biggest thing is to pay that down. [chuckle] That I think is like my number one goal is to pay that down, and then kind of like you said, of like work towards saving for our future, that I think that's been something more with my goals ultimately, is that... And eventually, maybe not necessarily of doing line-by-line budgeting, but at least having a more general idea. And I feel like that will help to. I've been toying with the idea of going back to a full-time job or getting another solid freelance client, but having a better idea of what your income is will also help you for what you're gonna save for.

**0:33:29.9 NA:** Yeah, totally. Did either or both of you have debt coming into the marriage?

**0:33:36.2 CB:** No, we did not.

**0:33:37.4 NA:** Okay. So it's the... When you said that you have credit card debt, it's debt that you've accrued together as a couple.

**0:33:41.9 CB:** Yeah, that we've accrued together. And like... Yeah. And I'm trying to think. The first big purchase we did together, granted, I think I paid it off because it was my car, was like, I bought a car, I think in our first year of marriage, because mine got totaled, so I had to buy a car, and that was a big one. But that was paid off. But then the credit card debt has just slowly accrued over the years, so just kind of, I think paying that down, and I think, yeah, maybe saving for more whatever [chuckle] in the future would probably be my goal.

**0:34:11.0 NA:** I'm interested in the emotional side of debt for you, and then within the marriage, because I think it's like on the surface, debt is neutral, it just is what it is, and then we can make it mean so many different things about us, depending upon how we were raised or what our money scarcity is, or if we feel like we got into debt on purpose and by choice, or if it was forced on us. I don't know the details of your situation, but I would love if you could speak a little bit too how you feel about the credit card debt, and if you and Matt feel the same about it.

**0:34:47.7 CB:** Well, yeah, admittedly, I don't love it. And I had always been one to always pay the credit card off 100% all the time, but we saw it differently 'cause we were sharing the credit card, and I think it did start to accrue that sometimes we would pay for something or add a bill to it and not pay it down all the way, and then slowly but only... And I think that only just really started though, because we didn't have solid incomes for both of us for a while. And so I think that it was stressful, I think more on me than it was on Matt, but only... I feel like that's just 'cause the kind of person I was, that I had always paid off anything, like I had no debt, I have no student debt from college, I was really fortunate in that. And luckily, Matt doesn't have any student debt either. We were both really fortunate with that. So all of a sudden I was like, "Wait, I have debt? I've never had debt." And so to have that now, I feel like it's just kind of been like a slow uphill battle because

there's been obviously things to pay off first before paying this.

**0:35:45.9 CB:** You know what I mean? So it's like, yeah, I'd rather pay to have my electricity on and pay for gas and pay for rent and do those things before paying down this credit card that was...

**0:35:55.9 NA:** Totally.

**0:35:56.9 CB:** Used for paying other things. So I'm like, I'm not as stressed about it as I first was. Because for me, it was like this whole new concept of like, "Wait what? I've never had debt ever. This is a horrible thing," and I'm like, "Yeah, obviously it's not ideal, but it's not like the world is ending, oh my gosh, it's the worst thing ever."

**0:36:15.0 NA:** Right, if you could take some of that emotional conditioning out of it and look at it as like, "Well, this was a thing that was necessary and..."

**0:36:20.2 CB:** Yeah, like we needed this to live like... [chuckle]

**0:36:22.6 NA:** Yeah, totally, which is very real and very relatable.

**0:36:27.3 CB:** Yeah.

**0:36:27.9 NA:** Has one of you always been the higher earner?

**0:36:30.5 CB:** I think for a while it was me. Now I would say it's Matt because he's got more steady job. But at the same time, I think we flip-flopped, but... I mean I was at an agency when we first met, so I was like at a standard 9:00 to 5:00, had a solid income. So for a few years in our marriage, I definitely was making more money because he was like working job-to-job and... Yeah. So I think that might have even been how bills first fell to me being the one to pay them and organize them, just because that was my nature anyway, and I was the one dealing with like a paycheck and health insurance and all that stuff.

**0:37:07.2 NA:** How does it feel when you are the one who is earning more, and how does it feel when you were the one who's earning less?

**0:37:15.5 CB:** I feel like when I was earning more, it just felt natural. And now that I am earning less because I've kind of just hit a bit of a slump, as I joked that the winter kind of always is with social media, that it's just more frustrating than anything else. I don't feel like, "Oh, my husband's like... He's the one doing everything," and I'm like, "No, I'm trying. I'm not just sitting here doing nothing." And he also has told me too of like, "Don't freak out about it. It's not gonna help anything."

**0:37:42.8 CB:** He's like, "And you're also raising our two kids." He's like, "I'm not doing that." I mean he is, but he's like, "You are home with our youngest. You're trying to work at the same time." I've been doing freelance work while having two kids at home for the past eight years, and only this

past year have I had one kid in school, so it's like the whole time I had two kids with me. So I feel like even when I wasn't making as much or whatever, I still feel like, "You know what, I'm doing a pretty good job contributing and I'm doing enough."

**0:38:13.5 NA:** Yeah. Kind of pivoting off of that, talk to me about the division of chores or division of labor. I mean I feel like as we've been talking about money, it's almost like setting the scene for us to talk about sort of daily life in your relationship, which I think is fun and interesting. Can you give some specifics on what the expectations are in your marriage on who does what?

**0:38:38.0 CB:** Yeah, yeah, I mean, it's really funny because I am a super neat person and always have been, and so for me, I tend to do a lot of the cleaning, like just general tidiness and cleaning, or if I see a clean something that's dirty... I'll wipe it down. Whereas Matt too, although he's really good at like, he'll do the dishes, we don't ever say like, oh, it's your turn to do dishes, or it's this, or occasionally, sometimes we'll be like, hey, can you do this before you come to bed 'cause he's fine, leave stuff overnight whereas I'm like, no, I want a clean sink for the morning... That is my persona, but I just don't feel like doing them. So I feel like we kind of do just like a random trade-off, and even today that I was like, Oh, look at all those fingerprints on the window, I guess one of us should clean it, and I thought that... And then he went and just did it, and I was like, oh cool, thanks. I would maybe do that later, like that one's not important to me as important it is to vacuum on occasion and make our bed and...

**0:39:38.5 CB:** So yeah, I feel like there really is no solid division that we kind of just both have an even hand in everything, however, I feel like since I'm home more, I may tend to do more of it, if that makes sense, that we do the same things, but I just may do more of it because I'm like, oh, there's crumbs, let me use my little hand vacuum and clean them up.

**0:39:57.1 NA:** Yeah, is it something that you have check-ins about as far, or has there ever been a period of time where you felt resentful that if you were doing more?

**0:40:08.4 CB:** I don't know that I've ever felt resentful, but occasionally I've gotten really good lately, not lately, but in the past few years of just vocalizing what I want instead of just assuming that he would clean the bathroom while I was gone, when really I'd be like, hey, when I take the boys out, do you mind cleaning up their bathroom because it's gross and I don't wanna do it. And he's like, oh yeah, totally. And I feel like instead of assuming he would do it or dropping hints that I really just have to be like, Hey, could you do it? 'cause for him, it doesn't always bother him and he's like, oh yeah, it's not that dirty...

**0:40:39.3 CB:** Whereas for me, it would be like, Please do that. And one thing that's great is that he knows this about me also, and so sometimes like, Yeah, I'll come home and he would have just vacuumed, I was like, Oh cool, thanks. I would maybe have done that later or that was on my to-do list, and so... Yeah, I don't think I've been resentful or anything because he's gotten... Not gotten, but he's just super hands-on, and I feel like that is years of evolution of our relationship of finally... Not finally being even, but just like being vocal about what we want or what is clean to us and like what is chores to you of like, Oh, here I'm gonna take out the trash. Okay, great. I also think that it helps

that we rent, I joke lately, because so many times lately, even though I'm super clean, I was like, oh, our kids spilled crap on the floor... Yeah, it's okay. We rent. Just bat it. It's fine.

**0:41:34.2 NA:** What changed for you... 'Cause you said that you, in the last couple of years have been vocalizing your needs for maybe help with chores or these things, what changed to make that... To make you change?

**0:41:48.0 CB:** Well, I think I was starting to get resentful that if things weren't getting done or I was stressed, and I wanna say part of that may have just started when we had kids, that there was an added level of responsibility and an added level of exhaustion. That I kind of realized, oh, maybe I am doing more than I should, and why the hell don't I just say something, and he would gladly do it, he's not gonna resent me for being like, hey, do you mind vacuuming under the table... It's really gross. I can see it from here, but I'm holding this baby and he was like, Oh yeah, so I honestly think that having a kid kind of pivoted how I went about things because I was like, There's no point just like, uh... Yeah, but at the same time I realized there's things that like Matt sometimes will leave his clothes on the floor by the bed, and it's just like his habit, he does it.

**0:42:34.5 CB:** But for me, it drives me crazy. But instead of asking him to pick them up, it's one of those things I'm like, you know what, I'm just gonna pick them up and put them in dirty clothes, there's no point making an argument, and if that's just how he's always been, it's not gonna change, and it's also not totally devastating to me, But I hear you.

**0:42:51.1 NA:** You bring up an interesting point of what are the things that we... Like if we're living with someone... And this could be in a romantic relationship, or it could be a roommate or whatever, if you're cohabiting with someone, what are the things where you just have different preferences or different habits that you're sort of choosing to accept about each other. And then what are the things that you're actually trying to make change or come to some kind of compromise around...

**0:43:15.4 CB:** Exactly, yeah, I joked with Matt then I was like, the clothes thing is definitely one of those things that I'm just like, Whatever I don't care, and I kind of do it with my kids sometimes too... But I'm trying not to because I'm like, No, please don't do this. Put your clothes in the dirty clothes like you have a place... Our house is not that big, and it's just like I think one of those things that I've come to accept, whereas wiping down like the sink after doing dishes, it's one of those things I'm like, oh, hey, can you mind wiping that down? Oh yeah. If that's not on your radar. You're not gonna think about it, but for me, I'm like, oh yeah. That is a thing.

**0:43:48.3 NA:** What would you say, keeping on this theme of day-to-day life, what do you think are the most common points of friction in a relationship?

**0:43:57.2 CB:** I would say now it's been more... I don't even know what our friction has been about, I think maybe more with our kids, I feel like as much as I love them, it has kind of created just a higher sense of stress of between having kids and I joke, and having kids in the middle of a pandemic with one at school. And a kid that's acting out, that that's kind of caused more friction that sometimes I think we argue over how to respond to our kid of... Whereas I sometimes will be like,



just a let him. Let him do it, send him to his room, he can get his energy out.

**0:44:32.4 CB:** Where Matt's more like, No, that's not okay. So I feel like our friction has come more in terms of how to parent lately that that has been where we've had friction. But I think before where it would have been like an argument between us, we've gotten a lot better at talking it through or not holding on to the grudge. You know what I mean? Of like, I'm not gonna say this to you, but I'm just gonna hold on to it, and I feel like for a while early in our relationship, we did that sometimes because honestly, we never really fought because I'm not a conflict person and we just kind of didn't really have much to fight about. And I think we realized too that we just needed to talk more, but if we had something to say, say it. That was my big thing. So I feel like that's been getting a lot of whatever friction had been there, especially with parenting, like talking through it, either with our kids or with Not our kid there of like, Hey, how do you wanna handle this? Or talking about it afterwards of like, Hey, I don't like how you did that, because I feel like...

**0:45:35.5 CB:** I don't remember as an example, like something happened like a few weeks ago, and Riley lashed out and Matt said something and I stepped in and I was like, hey, Matt, don't say that. And he was like, Don't do that right in front of Riley. That shows that we're not on the same page. And I was like, fuck, you're right. I'm sorry, even though I really hated how you handled that. That's something that we should do. Not in front of him. My bad.

**0:46:01.9 NA:** A continual learning experience, I imagine.

**0:46:05.0 CB:** Yes, yes, it really is. It's one of those wait where's the adult to tell me what to do? Going back to that.

**0:46:10.1 NA:** Where is the adult?

**0:46:12.4 CB:** Where is the adult to handle the situation?

**0:46:13.8 NA:** Where is the adult to parent your kids?

**0:46:17.4 CB:** Yeah, come on, you're like grandma, come take your grandkids, because clearly you know what you're doing.

**0:46:21.3 NA:** Oh my God, yeah. So you mentioned that one of the things that you had to learn was to just talk more, maybe before it gets to a point of an argument, has there been a particular topic that for you, maybe you used to have a hard time... Particularly hard time talking to him about... Or did you really had to grow into being able to talk about it with more ease.

**0:46:46.4 CB:** I feel like one thing that he had a hard time talking about was just like how he was feeling, literally, it just sounds so hokey, but it was so true that it was like... I could tell sometimes if he was just shutting down and I'm like, what is wrong? What happened? Did I say something? Did something happen like, you gotta talk to me, I'm not a mind reader. And I feel like that is definitely one thing that he's gotten so much better at because I joke, I've always been an open book, like

hell... I had a blog for 15 years, and I literally put my life out there all the time, and you ask anybody who knows me, like I'm very open and I will talk about everything. And he has not always been like that, despite us knowing each other for half our lives that...

**0:47:28.7 CB:** He wasn't always open, and I was like, okay, for this to work, I can't just guess why you're mopey and hope you're gonna get over it, like I need to know, so either like, it doesn't happen again or I help you work through it. And I think going back, like I said before that when we first got together, I've always been an independent person, and so if I went on a trip to visit my best friend, I would text them to be like, hi, I'm here, but it wouldn't be my natural instinct to call and have a check-in and let's chat. Whereas for him, that was like, oh my God, I need that. I need... That's just the kind of person he is. And he was like, no, I'd rather like, you have some downtime. Let's talk and chat, and I'm like, No, that's not me. But then I feel like eventually we've gotten on that level field of like, okay, this is what works for you, what works for me, if one of us are away, because obviously we don't need to be together all the time, and when we do do separate things like what level of check in in a healthy way and like, oh, this is what works so cool, so not one of us is mad that the other is off having fun.

**0:48:29.5 NA:** Figuring out what the expectations are around checking in when you're doing separate things and not assuming that the other person's on the same page. Yeah, okay, so this makes me wanna ask you... I have a listener question from someone in our community, from a new mom, like since you are a less new mom than this person, right. So I'm gonna... It's a big question that I'm gonna read you her question, and then we can talk about it. So she says, "How can someone in a long-term partnership that includes kids prioritize their individual needs and wants, especially if what feels true is to have extended or regular time away and alone. How to even set up this conversation, how to honor each person and their pursuits but also have to continue raising your kid and having a life as a family, which is also important and desired, so how?" So first of all, I think that's a great question.

**0:49:18.4 CB:** Yeah, that's awesome.

**0:49:20.6 NA:** And that first part, how can someone in a long-term partnership that includes kids prioritize their individual needs and wants, especially if those needs and wants include extended or regular time away, and I feel like that's like there's a real struggle in that, and I'm interested A, in your thoughts and then B, if there's any stories you can share of times where this came up for you too.

**0:49:38.3 CB:** Yes, I mean, I feel like it's so important that Matt and I were literally just talking about this the other day because he got home from work and I was like, Hey, do you mind if I like, I'm gonna go out with my cousin. It was a very last minute thing, and he was like, yeah, go do it. You need to go do things just for you, and I feel like... Well, right now, I feel like having small kids, it is just a challenge on its own because of what's going on in the world, and so just trying to get away is hard. And I feel like that's been a thing for me too, that I've like... I was a person who was going on a trip once a year pre-kids and even post kids, I feel like I would just occasionally jet off to visit 'cause my best friend lives in North Carolina, and I have other friends on the East Coast, and

it was one of those things that Matt was like, yeah, you need this.

**0:50:38.8 CB:** These are your people, you're a better human when you come back because you need that time together, and I feel like even if you need stuff just for you, for me, I said The past three years has been reading that that has been my thing. Like I will sometimes just ignore my kids and sit there reading a book or I'll go outside while they play inside, and I will say as a new mom, it's probably harder because if you've got a newborn with you or something, it's harder to just leave a newborn and walk off and detach your kid, like peace out. But I feel like approaching that with your partner is really important and hopefully they understand that, especially I feel like if you're the person that's home with a kid all the time, because you do kind of feel like, wait, where am I like where is that person that existed before having a kid... I think, hopefully that answered it at least a little bit, but...

**0:51:25.0 NA:** Yeah, that last thing you said about where is that person that existed before having a kid, do you feel like you lost that part of yourself when you became a mom?

**0:51:34.9 CB:** I feel like a little bit, but I also feel like, Matt and I have talked about it since we've known each other since we were 16, and I'm like, yeah, I obviously... I'm a much different person now than I was at 16, but I'm also a much different person than I was at 26 when we got married, that we were doing big things and big trips, and we did a lot of that too, with the intention of hopefully knowing that we were gonna have kids one day and probably wouldn't wanna jet off and travel with them all the time and do all these crazy things. And I'm even a different person, I think than I was... What Riley's now seven so, yeah, I would say like seven and a half years ago that I think... I don't know if I necessarily lost myself, but I've realized what I like more...

**0:52:17.3 CB:** I've prioritized different things in my life than I had before, like going out all the time for me is not all that important, but spending quality time with good people that... I have a book club every month, I try and do a dinner with some of my friends once a month and try and see my sister outside of being with my kids all the time, and I feel like too, especially with my oldest now in school, as much as I love him and seeing him after school, that having that time away is also, I think helping me regain a little of myself back with just having one kid here who can self... Be a little self-sufficient. While I can do things just for me, I'm like... And it is nice too with Matt's schedule is flexible. For example, today he doesn't go into work until later this afternoon, so the morning, if I need to, I can go do things on my own without a child that I don't always feel like I have to be mom. You know that I'm like, oh, let me go run this errand. Let me just go grab a coffee by myself for a little bit...

**0:53:14.9 NA:** Yeah, I was gonna ask, how important do you think it is to you to have alone time and like how much alone time do you ideally want or need versus what you're able to realistically get?

**0:53:24.6 CB:** Yeah, I think it's important for me to have alone time. Although I joke, I was raised in a really noisy household, I'm the oldest of four, and I've thrived around people and noise, and honestly... And I've... Since I've been with Matt forever, I've never lived alone. I had roommates in

college. I've always shared a room with somebody growing up, I think I had my own room for maybe three months in college. I think I had my room, but I shared it a place with four other girls or three other girls. But I've come to realize lately that not necessarily even alone time, but sometimes just quiet time that that is important to me and that's kind of become more of my thing at night time, but luckily my kids, I joke, go to bed relatively earlier at like 7:30...

**0:54:22.4 CB:** And so that those nights were like if Matt's working late, to like, oh, I've got an hour and a half to just myself, sometimes I'll literally just sit there scrolling my phone or putting it down, or I'll read or I'll paint my nails or I'll just clean up the place because I'm the kind of person too that having a clean living room like makes me feel better and organizing what I need to do. And even sometimes I feel like as much as I wanna spend time with Matt and we're like, We should spend time together, that some nights I'll be like, I'm super tired I'm gonna go to bed, you stay up and enjoy whatever show you're watching at the moment. 'Cause he also was like for me to be like, Yeah, stay up and watch your show. I'm like, yeah, I'm going to... I may even stay up too late and watch the show, because I'm like, oh, this is the kind of thing that's good for me.

**0:54:54.1 NA:** Yeah, again, so I know that we talked about language at the very beginning of the conversation, when you were just giving those examples, I think you said last minute you were gonna go out with... I think it was your cousin, and then the way you phrased it was kind of asking Matt if that was okay, and maybe that was just the way you told the story, but I'm interested in the communication in your partnership. Do you feel like you're asking each other for permission, do you feel like you're just notifying them of what you're doing, and this might seem like a small nit picking thing. I am asking because I feel like I have... I, like you, I have lived alone very little, I did once for a little bit of time, but I have co-habitated with multiple partners and roommates, and I feel like I have in the last few years, almost to break myself of the habit of asking other people's permission to have my own time when my time should be mine by default. So yeah, you say stuff...

**0:55:53.4 CB:** No, no, no, I feel like... I think it's a combination that I'm not necessarily asking permission. But I'm kind of asking like, hey, are you good? You're not too tired. You don't care. I know you just got home, do you mind taking over bed time? And he was like, no, really, get out leave. Why are you asking me? But at the same time, it was also notifying and like we talked about it literally the next day too, 'cause I was like, thanks again. I was like it sounds weird to be like, oh, thanks for letting me go out, he's not my boss, but... He was like, no, that's the kind of stuff. Like we've talked about this, and I think it may be some ingrained feeling of like, that I feel like I have to ask because I feel like some sort of guilt that... Well, one that maybe I should be spending time at home with him or guilt that I'm leaving him with the two boys to deal with the bedtime chaos when really, he's like, no, we need to do shit for ourselves, he's like, he'll say... He's going golfing with friends and he'll ask me, but also be like I'm kind of telling me, but I also asking just to make sure we don't have anything else planned. Kind of thing, and I'm like...

**0:56:55.6 CB:** Oh yeah, it's like... Yeah, those are the kind of things where he's like, stop feeling guilty, like You need to do this shit for yourself, that's why... Yeah, you could tell him like, oh yeah, I'm gonna go to dinner with my friends. And he's like, go.

**0:57:09.9 NA:** Yeah, a question that I really love that has made its way into my life and into my partnership to the extent that... Now, he'll give me a hard time about it, like in a gym, he'll tease me about it, but I will ask some version of what would need to be true for you in order for X to feel good? Like any time I start the like what would need to be true, he always kinda teases me about it, but it's almost like my transitional version of not saying like I wanna go on a little solo retreat this weekend. Or go on a writing retreat, or do whatever it is, is that, okay. Or as opposed to like, this is what I'm planning, what would have to be true in order for that to feel good for you, and obviously, we don't have kids, so there's a whole... We don't have the same degree of shared responsibilities that you two have, but it's like I wanna reclaim whatever that socialized urge is to ask someone else for permission to do what it is that I wanna do, which is a hard... It feels very uncomfortable.

**0:58:05.9 CB:** It is. They're like, "Yeah, I'm sorry, I'm doing this," it's like, wait, why are... Don't be sorry...

**0:58:09.9 NA:** Don't be sorry. Yeah, right, right.

**0:58:10.9 CB:** Just do it. Yeah, and that's essentially when he was like, "Yeah, you haven't seen him in a while. Go to dinner, it's not even that big of a thing." [chuckle] I'm like, I'm going to visit my best friend in April, hopefully, nothing gets canceled or whatever, and he was like, "I was going back and forth on it for so long, because it's like five days away", and he essentially was just like, "What is wrong with you? Merry Christmas, I'm getting this ticket for you, your mom and your sister are here to help, I will be fine. Just go, you need this." So...

**0:58:45.8 NA:** Yeah. Yeah, very, very real. So when I was thinking about how long the two of you have been together, I feel like one of the tropes or most common questions that really long-term couples get is like the question of how do you keep it exciting for so many years, right. Or like some version of that question, but I feel like I'd rather ask you, do you care if your relationship feels exciting? Is excitement something that's important to you?

**0:59:12.9 CB:** I don't think it is actually. I think it's more important to me that I feel like... Not necessarily that we're the same in love as like when we met, obviously, I feel like our love is, we're not... I guess, when we first got together, like 22-year-old kids that can just skirt all responsibility and like, "Go do this, go do that", and be fun together, and for me, I was like, that was never really it. It was more of like... I feel like it's more important for me now to still find things that we love to do together and things we love to talk to each other about, that's not all about our kids kind of thing. I joke too that sometimes we'll still say things and I'm like, "I have known you for how long and I've never heard that story."

**0:59:55.0 CB:** To me, that kind of stuff is more exciting and like, "Wait, you used to work where? How have I never heard this?" [chuckle] Or just also too of like, being more... Not necessarily like, not exciting, not more in love, I don't really know the word I'm looking for, but just kind of being more like we don't even have to care necessarily about what the other person cares about as much. But just also be like, "Oh, I watch way more television than Matt. And I have no one here to talk about it with." I'm not gonna talk to my kids about Euphoria, so I'll talk to Matt about it, and he's

like, "I don't care about this, but I'm glad that you do." And so I'm like, "Listen, remember that guy, I just have to get this off my chest," and so I feel like that kind of small, crazy stuff is more important to me of being there for each other more than the... Keep it exciting or whatever.

**1:00:45.5 NA:** Yeah. What helps you to feel connected to him?

**1:00:49.4 CB:** I feel like I keep coming back to this, but I feel like talking. And then also, the times where we do go to bed together at night, it's basically just become this thing that I will just, I laid on him and he will just rub my back for half an hour, I guess, before we go to sleep. And we'll talk either like, stuff about the day that we didn't talk about, or he will just scroll TikTok on his phone together and we'll watch it or I'll close my eyes and he'll watch it, and it's just kind of like spending that time together where it's just quiet and us. That is nice when we do it, 'cause it's not every night, like I said, 'cause sometimes I'll stay up later or even like if he does go to bed earlier than me, he won't even necessarily be asleep. So we do tend to do that more often than not, and that is one of my favorite things of staying connected.

**1:01:40.4 CB:** And I think too of checking in with each other of like, "How was your day," and him telling me about his job and his co-workers, I may not necessarily know or understand all of it, but I'm like, "yeah, Tell me about it," and he'll ask me the same. Or when I tell him like, "Oh, you won't believe what so and so texted me." And he's like, "Okay, cool, that's cool to know." Or like, "Yeah, remember this friend that I had way back when." I feel like checking in with that kind of stuff and making sure we're not just talking about stuff with our kids and family all the time too.

**1:02:12.6 NA:** Yeah, that's something else that I was gonna ask you. What boundaries have you put in place or conversations that you've had, or decisions that you've made to ensure that you're not making it all about the kids? 'Cause it sounds like that's something that's important to you guys.

**1:02:28.6 CB:** Yeah, I mean, I feel like that is definitely it, and I think it's become easier as our kids are older now because they're seven and almost four. And granted now I think it's starting to get more into the time of like, "Oh, they've got more activities, so stuff is kind of becoming a little more about them." But it's also been kind of nice for us because we're meeting some of these parents of the other kids that these kids are friends with. And so I feel like our lives are kind of morphing a little bit in that direction, but it's also like, we have stuff to talk about that's not just like, "Okay, what happened at his school today? What did Reese and I do in class?" I don't know, I feel like it's just finding a good balance, and I think so far we're doing a decent job of it, and even when we've gone on dates or whatever, that we make sure it's not just...

**1:03:11.9 CB:** "Well, remember when Riley did this, remember when Reese did this... How hard was your day? Oh my God, I can't believe our kids blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," that it's more like, "Oh, what are we gonna watch tonight?" Or like, "Oh, how's your friend doing? And how are you doing? Wait what are our plans this weekend," that kind of stuff.

**1:03:29.2 NA:** Yeah, my point of relation to this is, it can be very easy for me to talk about work all of the time, and compounded by the fact that I really love my work a lot. And there is some

crossover with people between like, is it work or are we friends, there's some more grey area there, and I find that I really enjoy talking about it. And it's not that he's not happy to listen or anything like that, but there will be times we're like, "Okay, we're intentionally not gonna talk about work during this dinner," or it's the same thing of like, "Okay, we're gonna have intentionally, there's no phones in the room during dinner." And just some of those either habits or things that it's really easy to slip into, to just... For me, it's been important to almost name in advance, like, "This is not a space to talk about that."

**1:04:16.7 CB:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, I feel like sometimes we just have to be like, "Okay, we don't wanna talk about this anymore", we've had issues with both sides of our family sometimes, and it's like, sometimes it's like knowing that boundary of like, how much do we wanna keep talking about this before it drags us both down and like taking a break from that?

**1:04:35.2 NA:** Oh my God, that's so real.

**1:04:36.1 CB:** Yeah. Then you just have to be like, "You know what, we're gonna just put a halt on this tonight, or let's talk about it more in the morning." Or you can vent about it and then, okay. We're done for tonight." That's it. Yeah.

**1:04:48.7 NA:** Yeah. We also have both had some more... It's like, I don't wanna be too dramatic, but we had both had a heightened amount of family stuff in the last year, let's call it that, with each of our individual families of origin and a not cute habit that my partner and I share is... It's very easy for us to just kind of like downward spiral off each, right, where it's like we're both on the same side of the issue. Like if the venting has already happened, there's literally no nothing productive happening from continuing to... And this and this and this. And it's like the pile on. And you just keep doing it and we always feel worse after, and we'll notice it sometimes in the afternoon, or in the evening when we walk the dog, that we spend half the walk going deeper and deeper into this righteous indignation or rage cycle, and then one of us stopping and being like, "Hang on. Is there anything else that you actually need to be heard about or need to say or need to brainstorm? Is there a point to this anymore, and if not, can we just... Can we be done?" Right? And it's...

**1:05:52.6 CB:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah, we just gotta draw the line of like, "Okay, let's be done with this for tonight, and be done with this for now, let's get it out and be done." [chuckle]

**1:06:04.0 NA:** Yeah, and that's... It's like being honest with yourself about what your communication black holes are almost, where it's like we can fall into that so deeply and for what? It doesn't help.

**1:06:14.5 CB:** No. Yeah, it just lets you rage, but nothing is changing here, so...

**1:06:18.5 NA:** And I also find that, and this has been a learning lesson for me, that I used to think that venting about stuff was really cathartic and really productive, and I think it can be to a very small degree. But the tipping point at which it goes from being a cathartic outlet to being something

that just makes me feel worse...

**1:06:40.1 CB:** Yeah just like...

**1:06:41.1 NA:** It's so much smaller than I thought.

**1:06:41.7 CB:** Yes. I know. We were talking about that 'cause I was like, I'm just feeling weighed down the more we talk about this, or the more I think about it, I was like, "This is dumb. Like why I can't..." No. [chuckle]

**1:06:56.5 NA:** We've talked about so many good things already, so you mentioned you've be married for 11 years, obviously a long-term commitment. I would love for you to share a couple of the specific things that you are committed to within your marriage. What actually are some of the most important commitments that you feel like you have made and keep making to Matt and what are his commitments to you?

**1:07:17.8 CB:** That's a good one. I think some of our commitments have been to like... I know that we are really committed to each other, that is one thing too, that we have been super committed to being honest too. Because we obviously as all couples, especially in such long-term that we've had issues with honesty and trust for a while, and I feel like being very vocal about that. I feel like I keep coming back to just talking, but I feel like committing to being open with each other, I feel like has been one of our big things lately, that not holding it in. Because it doesn't help anybody. And I feel like, be committed to asking for help too, when you need it, because I think for a long time, and I think especially when Riley was first born, I think there was like a day, I'll never forget.

**1:08:12.7 CB:** I think it was Matt's first day back at a job, and so it was just me and the baby home all day, and I like he came home and I was just sitting there sobbing. And he was like, "Are you okay?" And I was like, "I'm fine." And he was like, "No, you are not. Ask for help." Obviously, new mom, that's a whole beast on its own, and I think from that day on too, I realized I was like, "Oh, I have such a good partner here who wants to help me and wants me to be okay." I think that day, he literally was like, "I've got the baby, like go on a walk, get out of here, go do something," and was just kind of realizing what the other person needs without always knowing. And I feel like those kind of things are something we've committed to too, not like grand gestures all the time, but just kind of doing things for each other and not necessarily always expecting something in return too. You know what I mean?

**1:09:06.8 CB:** And I feel like we both benefit from that too. Like I'm not a big gift giver, I feel like Matt is more of a gift giver, whereas I'm more of a doer or an act of something or a...

**1:09:21.7 NA:** Acts of service, yeah, in the love languages.

**1:09:22.1 CB:** Acts of services, yeah, in the love languages, that's more of my thing, and he is more like a person of gift giving. And so I feel like switching what we expect too, that I'm like, "Oh, you know what, I think you would like it if I bought him that Three Musketeers today," just something



little and fun and committing to, I think doing that kind of stuff and just kind of... I feel like being open has been a good thing for us.

**1:09:45.1 NA:** Yeah, that's a beautiful list of commitments. Where is monogamy factor into that for you guys?

**1:09:51.3 CB:** I think monogamy, yeah, is like at the top of the list.

**1:09:54.9 NA:** Okay. So was that an explicit commitment? Talk to me and tell me everything, is this something you feel like you decided on, is it something you checked in about?

**1:10:01.1 CB:** It's not something we check in about, because I think it's just expected that we know...

**1:10:04.0 NA:** Okay.

**1:10:06.7 CB:** It's like I joke, it's like this really corny story and feeling, but so like I said, I was pretty much a single person my whole life until Matt pretty much, and I will never forget when we kissed when I was in college and he went back home and I looked at my roommate and I was like, "I have a feeling if I start dating Matt, we're never breaking up." That I was like, "I think he is the one, and I don't see any reason why I would ever break up with him or why I would ever wanna be with anybody else." And I think from his side of it too, his parents relationship kind of split and partially like due to infidelity, and I feel like that was a big thing for him too, that he was like, "I would never cheat on you, I wanna be with you and you only." And so I feel like from the get-go, like when we first started dating, that that was just talked about and has never been brought up again, because we're like, "Yep, we're it for each other, we're in. That's just who we are. With the occasional Thor." [chuckle]

**1:11:10.3 NA:** Right, right, right. All joking aside, 'cause you started out, this out talking about crushes, and obviously, so I'm projecting onto you, feel free to be like, "No, this is incorrect," but I can't... So you've been married for 11 years, you've been together for a lot, for a longer than that...

**1:11:22.0 CB:** Yeah, for 16 years, yeah.

**1:11:25.8 NA:** I can't see a scenario in which one of you has not had a crush on somebody else, and so maybe that's not true, but if so, have you talked about it? What is... Tell me about that.

**1:11:35.4 CB:** Yeah, well, I mean, literally, the only crushes I've had have been on celebrities, and it has been like, "Oh... "

**1:11:39.7 NA:** That's fascinating to me.

**1:11:41.2 CB:** And it's so open too that I... But the funny thing is that there was a point in my life where people always joke of my cheat list, like these five celebrities I would meet, at one point I

had met my entire list...

**1:11:52.1 NA:** Oh, I remember that, I remember that.

**1:11:52.1 CB:** And everyone was like, "Oh my God, Caitlin." I was like... And it wasn't my list to cheat, it was just like, "here's my top 10" and I had met them all, and it was so funny because everyone was, and they were like, "Well, who's on Matt's list?" And he's got a few on there, but... And I will never forget, we always joke about this to this day, that we had run into this girl that we knew, and we said, "Oh what movie are we going to see?" And I was... I don't even remember the movie, but I was like, "Oh, with Ryan Reynolds." And her friend was like, "Oh, he's so hot." And I was like, "Yeah, he is super hot," and then the girl said like, "Oh, she can't find him attractive, she's with Matt," and Matt was there with me, and Matt was like, "I find Ryan Reynolds attractive. Yeah, of course, my wife could find him attractive."

**1:12:35.8 CB:** So yeah, so as for being a girl with crushes, I literally... Yeah, I honestly can't say that there's anybody real in my life, that I've had a crush on only. Only I joke fictional, I'm like celebrities are not fictional, they are real people, but literally they definitely are really people, especially that I've met them and I like... But, no. Yeah, somehow I joke that... I don't know, I feel like too I've been more intentional too with even Matt that I'm like, I find him more attractive, I think today, than even maybe when we first even got together, and I don't even know... I think sometimes...

**1:13:10.6 NA:** What do you attribute that too?

**1:13:13.0 CB:** I don't even know that I'm just like... Maybe it's because we're just growing older together, and I'm like, Cool. Yeah, you're a good looking older dude. I like this. [laughter] I like this. I like what I'm in for.

**1:13:24.3 NA:** One of my favorite things is to go is for when Jack and I go to the gym together, and I'm just, I feel like very... Like if we weren't together and if this wasn't contextual, I would feel very pervy about it, but I'm like, I just love watching him work out and in my mind, I'm just like, "You're so hot, what's happening?" He'll look over and he knows that that's what I'm thinking, and he's just like trying to lift his weights and meanwhile I'm having a whole experience at the gym where I'm like... [laughter] So, has it ever come up the other way where Matt has had a crush on someone else that he's brought up to you?

**1:13:55.4 CB:** Nope. No, I mean...

**1:13:57.0 NA:** Fascinating. I'm fascinated by this Caitlin.

**1:14:00.5 CB:** Yeah. Well, we joke. We've watched... What were we washing? We joke He has such a type. And I joke that I pretty much, we joke that I have a type too that, it's like the Charlie Harlem, Chris Hemsworth. That is my type. And it's funny 'cause some people are like, your husband kind of looks like that, I'm like, "Yeah, that's true." And his type will be like... For a while, it was like, well,

Mila Kunis and like some other... I'm drawing blank on what her name is, but literally it was a girl who looks like me, it was like I was a light skin black girl with curly hair, and he was like, "Oh yeah." We'd watch something and he was like, "Oh yeah, she's pretty hot", and I was like, yeah, she is like... 'cause she literally looks like...

**1:14:35.1 NA:** You're like, "thank you."

**1:14:36.9 CB:** Thank you. Yeah, he was like, "yeah obviously. Of course, I'm gonna find her attractive. That's my type", I was like, oh yeah.

**1:14:42.4 NA:** Okay, so should this change in the future where you do have a crush on a non-celebrity person or this does come up... Would you feel comfortable bringing that to Matt?

**1:14:53.8 CB:** I think I would... Well, I feel like even if it wasn't a crush, but... Well, it's funny how you talk about how when you went to dinner with Matt that I think for a while, if I went out to dinner with another person, like a guy or something... I feel like that would be different. You know what I mean? Of like, Oh, I have this work friend, granted I joke, I don't really have office mates anymore, more friends like.

**1:15:15.2 NA:** Oh, so like being a solo self employed person, right, you don't...

**1:15:17.5 CB:** I was like, yeah, I don't have co-workers to go hang out and have lunch with anymore, so I feel like that is...

**1:15:21.7 NA:** That my really hot coworker, It me. I the hot coworker, Yeah.

**1:15:23.3 CB:** It's me, I'm bringing them here, to the light.

[laughter]

**1:15:27.6 NA:** My self-esteem is doing great.

**1:15:30.5 CB:** Yeah, so I feel like if that did ever happen, I would tell him, but I'm like... I honestly, I don't foresee that happening. I feel like too my brain is just so wired that like... Yeah, you're it.

**1:15:40.3 NA:** No it's great. Obviously, I would have been happy with any answer that you gave, right? All I want is honesty, but I know that you've listened to other episodes in the series so far, and that there is a huge spectrum in terms of monogamy or how people feel about this or sexuality spectrum, and it's one of the reasons that I'm so... I feel really honored and grateful to be having these conversations because there's something that's really comforting and permission-giving for me to hear about all the different ways to do things, right. It's throughout these conversations, I... 'Cause what you just shared, I can't relate to that. That's not my experience of, This is my one person, and I never have feelings for anybody else, and that's never a thing that has to be dealt with, that's not my experience, and yet I find it really both mind-expanding to hear that we're different in that way. And

then also it makes me more confident that what I feel is true for me somehow, I don't know, it's just really nice hearing other people be honest, even if that honesty is different.

**1:16:39.6 CB:** Yeah, well, and I feel like too, that were such... Not an odd story, but it's like you don't hear that every day of someone like you meet the person you're gonna marry when you're 16. Obviously, we didn't know that at the time, and I think part of me was even a little hesitant when we first started dating because I was like...

**1:16:54.6 CB:** How I told my friend that I was like, If I get with him, I don't think we would ever have a reason to not be together, and I think a little part of me was like, should I go out there and date other people. But then the other part of me is like, what are you doing? There's this great guy here who you've known for years and you know everything about each other or everything you can in four years time or what have you. Or six years time, I guess, and... Yeah.

**1:17:19.3 NA:** So especially given your situation, something that I've been thinking about, which to be honest, I hardly ever see talked about in any moon surface level way is, and this may be too strong of a word, but the regret or maybe not regret, but the curiosity or even just the internal wondering about what other lives you could have led if you hadn't gotten married, right?

**1:17:39.0 CB:** Yes.

**1:17:39.4 NA:** If you weren't in that partnership. Is that something that comes up for you?

**1:17:42.2 CB:** It's definitely come up for me because what I say too, that when Matt first told me he liked me, like our senior year of high school, I was like... I told him honest to God, I was like, I don't think we would have stayed together if we had started dating then and our lives would have been totally different. I was like, "Me telling you, No, I think was the best thing that could have happened." Because he went off to college, he had a serious girlfriend for a year or two, I went up to college and I had four years of flying away, and I was like... And I needed that, I think, to be like... Not necessarily be on my own, but not be tied to someone who wasn't even with me in that same area, and being able to make out with other boys or do whatever, and test that out as a 20-something on her own for the first time. And so I have looked back on that, but then I think the second time around, yeah, when we finally did start to date, I was like, "Okay, yeah. This was the good choice." I think this is what it was meant to be.

**1:18:36.0 CB:** And I think too, because it did help that we had so much history that we... Our friends used to joke that we'd gone on the longest first date ever. [chuckle] Because it was one of those, I get to know you and there was none of that because by the time we started dating, like we already knew our families, we had a lot of the same friends. We kind of knew what the other wanted in life kind of thing. We both knew that eventually we would wanna get married and wanna have kids, because I think somehow that had come up in our years of just being friends.

**1:19:05.9 NA:** Right. So you just used the phrase, Oh, you know that maybe it was meant to be an earlier when you said, Okay, I met Matt, he's the one. It's interesting, those phrases. I wanna dig into

that a little bit because I have realized that I... For me, personally, don't believe that that's true. I don't believe that there is a one for me, I think that I could... I think there's lots of different people that I could be happy with. I think I could be happy on my own. I think that there's lots of different paths that would be fulfilling for me, and I don't believe that any of it or any relationships necessarily are meant to be, and I'm curious how you... If those were just phrases you use or do you... Do you believe that Matt is like the... [laughter] Do you live in kind of soulmates to that degree?

**1:19:50.9 CB:** I don't know, because one part of me is like, I think we met, I think, at the perfect time, kind of thing too. That your teen years are so formative and we spent literally so much time together, we had a big friend group and we were all together, and part of me does think that we came into each other's lives for a reason. And over those years, obviously, and those feelings developed and how we worked out our friendship, and I do think like... I would say, yeah, maybe he is my soulmate, but at the same time too, I'm like, God forbid that if he died before me or something like when I was young, do I think there would be no one else out there for me? I hope not, but I hope if something like a [1:20:31.5] [redacted] that I would maybe not find the same kind of connection that I have to Matt, because obviously you can't really replicate years and years and years of a relationship over again like that. So I feel like in a way, he is my soul mate, but at the same time, I feel like maybe not the only one.

**1:20:48.0 NA:** Right. That it doesn't have that scarcity feeling of like, "This is my only chance to be happy."

**1:20:51.1 CB:** Exactly, but if something did happen to him, I would never be happy again, I would never find love again. I don't think that part's true, but I do think that he is my love for... Not my love for now, my love for, yeah.

**1:21:04.8 NA:** For however long.

**1:21:06.7 CB:** For however long. [chuckle] Forever and ever. There.

**1:21:09.1 NA:** So I know you just mentioned that as a worst case scenario of he dies earlier, that kind of thing, how often do you two talk about death?

**1:21:17.4 CB:** [chuckle] This is a terrible say that we joke. The movie Ps. I love you, I joke. Just wrecked me because spoiler alert, if you read it like the husband dies in the beginning and then the woman is just like a wreck, and I'm like, Oh my God, that would be me. I'm like, I would be a horrible person if the side... And I feel like the past year or two, I feel like we've had to talk about it more, obviously, as I think everyone has had to talk about it more, been exposed to it more. But it got really real for us and we had to write our trust and will, like what would happen if we died for our kids, but I don't think we talk about death all that often between if one of us were to die, but... Yeah, I don't know, I just know that when I do see things of like movies or shows and a spouse dies that I get this ache of like oh my God, that would be horrible. And then I think sometimes I'll spiral and be like, Oh my God, do [1:22:11.0] [redacted]. What is wrong with me? Why do I go down that

path?

**1:22:14.9 NA:** Well, I mean, we are all gonna die, right?

**1:22:18.9 CB:** Although I joke like they all die when they're young or something horrible happens. Some tragic event, I'm like, "Oh yeah."

**1:22:23.5 NA:** I can't watch shit like that, that's not... You know that that's wonderful but cool... So we've talked about money. We've talked about death let's talk about sex. [laughter] Is that what's next? Yes?

**1:22:32.9 CB:** Yeah.

**1:22:33.8 NA:** So you mentioned that you are... You feel almost more attracted to Matt now than you did at the beginning, which I think is really interesting, but backing up from that a little bit, when it comes to sex in long-term relationships, what do you wish that people were more open and honest about? What do you find yourself being curious about?

**1:22:52.6 CB:** I feel like people would be more honest that... I don't know, I joke for a while that it felt like people have to be so physical all the time and having sex all the time, You're newly wed, you must be getting it on all the time, and I feel like that's not the case for everyone. Kind of thing but, anyone.

**1:23:12.0 NA:** It's definitely not the case for everyone.

**1:23:13.3 CB:** Yeah, and also acknowledging that your libido changes over years and you don't always want to have sex, but like I said, how we lay in bed at night together sometimes to me that is not necessarily... Obviously, that's not sex, but it's just like. Yeah, I'm okay just doing this. You know what I mean?

**1:23:32.2 NA:** Yeah, so for you, you're craving more honesty around the changes in sex over time?

**1:23:38.4 CB:** Yeah, yeah. Oh, I think... Yeah, that'd be a good way to put it. Exactly. Well, no, and I was just gonna say too, that being together so long and then we were together in our early 20s and then introducing kids too, I feel like was a different thing too. Because I think we had to have a lot of conversations about sex after kids, because honestly, that took a toll on me and my body and even wanting to have sex. It took me a while to get back to it of finally even not necessarily feeling good in my body, but being like, "I don't wanna be touched anymore," like, "Stop touching me." And I feel like I went through that with both kids too, and we've kind of just had to navigate what is your sex life look like now with kids, and how you feel in general. And I feel like you as a person, you both just kind of change on your desires of what you want, with sex too.

**1:24:32.4 NA:** Oh yeah, I'm really interested in the evolution of this, if you are open to it, like talking a little bit more specifically about... If you compare where you are as a sexual couple now

versus maybe 11 years ago when you first got married, what has changed and maybe what has not changed?

**1:24:53.4 CB:** Yeah, I would say right now, I feel really good because I feel like what's changed is like we both are on the same page of like we're not keeping tabs like, oh, we've only... We have sex like five days ago, we gotta do it again, and I feel like we kind of went through that phase, that I feel like a lot of couples do it, they were like, oh no, we haven't had sex in a while something's wrong with us, because I think there was a while, right after our kids that I find that we're like I was keeping a tab in my brain of like, oh my God, we haven't had sex and so long and then I was like, "Wait, why am I doing this?" We're fine. I'm just not ready there. Matt's body is worn down to from his job, he had a very physical job, and I was like, "Yeah, it's okay." And so I feel like my expectations of what we do together and how we do it has definitely evolved more and adjustment and well, I think two you're... Sex at 22 was way different than 38 too of like... I am 32 and you're 22, and even then. We weren't even living together, I think for the first two years of our relationship. So I feel like that too, that sex was more like craved and like do it when you can and whereas now, you're adults, you live together, you can have sex whenever you want... Oh, I guess not whenever you want on you of two kids, but you gotta have sex and make it work.

**1:26:16.5 NA:** Yeah, you're bringing up some really interesting and I would assume really widely relatable points of the keeping track and wondering what does that mean, right? Like weighing what you feel in your body and what you want, what your partner wants, what's actually present in the relationship. Versus whatever story you're carrying around about what you should be doing or the frequency that you should be doing it, there's something very real there of having to navigate what's true for me versus what expectation am I placing on myself to perform in a certain way sexually.

**1:26:53.3 CB:** Exactly that. I'm like, Oh my God, we only had sex once this month, but I'm like who was keeping tabs? Like I'm keeping tabs. And for what? For who? This isn't a competition with other married couples like...

[laughter]

**1:27:03.6 CB:** Like, hey guys, give me your tally [laughter]

**1:27:06.9 NA:** Although I could watch that watch that reality show, I'll tell you right now, I would watch that. [laughter] Something... Speaking of sex is something that has come up for us for my partner and I in the last... I was gonna say couple months, but over a year at the time that we're recording right now, we're in the process of renovating this house that we're gonna move into, and we're still living with his dad, which we have been on and off since fall of 2020. And for anyone who's ever done like the multi-generational living or living with... Not sexy, and especially during a pandemic where everybody's home all the time, there's just not privacy and it started to feel like, "Okay, his dad's out for an hour. This is our chance. We should have sex now," I felt like I was in high school like this... And not in a cute way, and I was feeling like I was putting so much pressure on it.

**1:27:50.1 NA:** And we finally got to the point where we had a couple of instances where either we went away for the weekend and stayed in Airbnb. Or this past holiday season, we were down in Florida visiting my parents and we were staying at a hotel, and when the circumstances changed, our sexual connection was really strong and really easy and so joyful. And it was like these couple of times were big reminders for me that I'm so hard on myself and my default is to make myself the problem to be fixed. Like, what's wrong with me that this isn't happening when actually sometimes the situation is the problem.

**1:28:24.1 CB:** Yeah.

**1:28:24.2 NA:** And what you said about like, you've just had kids, right?

**1:28:28.1 CB:** Yeah.

**1:28:28.2 NA:** You don't need to be different, this... You need to give enough time and space for the circumstances to be different, and then trust that things will kind of come back. And that's been hugely freeing that we were just kind of like, you know what, we're not gonna pressure this right now, our relationship is great and strong, there's other ways to be connected, when we live alone together, I'm sure we will resume having lots of sex or not, but it's...

**1:28:48.8 CB:** Or you'll be having sex not at like a forced time of like, "Oh, and go."

**1:28:54.7 NA:** Yeah, then that it just wasn't feeling good to me and I wasn't feeling good to him either, and it was just so pressure-y and realizing there's nothing wrong with us, we're just in a hard situation. Cool, can we take the pressure off?

**1:29:06.4 CB:** Yeah, exactly, I feel like we've kind of gone through those waves as well. Of like, "Oh yeah, it's fine. We are fine."

**1:29:16.2 NA:** When you mentioned libido changes over time, will you talk about that a little bit?

**1:29:19.2 CB:** Yeah, well, I'll say what I feel like in my 20s and living apart, it was kind of like one of those things, they're like, "Oh, we're together finally like, okay, let's have sex, let's have sex." And whereas, I think over the years, it kind of became a little more like, "Okay, we live together now, we don't have to try and take opportunities all the time. But I feel like too, as I've gotten older and between both of us working and having... Matt have a really physical job and just having children that like... Yeah, I feel like our libido comes and goes, you know what I mean? That it's like also just depending on how the week is like, oh, you know what, yeah, maybe let's try and have some morning sex or whatever, or how about not like, get off with me, I'm so tired. I didn't sleep. [laughter] No, maybe another day, but I feel like it's just kind of changed over the years of coming in waves, and I even remember talking to my doctor about that too, of like, "Wait, will, I feel like this is normal?" And she was like, "Yeah," they would say, your women's libido is different than men's anyway, but I feel like to even have for having kids for a long time, it just took me a while to be like, What? You wanna touch me? Didn't we do that? Isn't that how we have two kids like no.



[laughter] No. But yeah, I feel like it's finally that we're kind of on the same page recently, which has been nice, and...

**1:30:42.9 CB:** We'll bring it back to the talking about it too, of just like... And I feel like two of being more physical throughout the day has helped too with our sex life. I've just like a pat on the shoulder or like grabbing each others ass even if it's just to be funny, it's still something and not necessarily like cuddling on the couch. But like, oh, hey, like physical activity throughout the day, I've realized too, has definitely helped us be closer sexually at night too, of just like...

**1:31:09.6 NA:** That makes complete sense to me. Where if it's I'm not someone who can just light switch, turn it on and off, and that's part of what has been so pressuring of like, okay, we've got this one 45-minute chunk of time where I'm like, No, I'm like just I'm working. I'm not in that ground space but yeah have...

**1:31:23.8 CB:** Fuck my brain there.

**1:31:23.9 NA:** Right. And expanding what intimacy and sensuality and physical touch, it can incorporate so many different things, and really expanding my own definition of sex and what a sexual connection is over the last couple of years has really helped also.

**1:31:38.6 CB:** Yeah, differently...

**1:31:40.6 NA:** Anything else about this that you wanna talk about or anything we haven't talked about so far that you're burning to mention.

**1:31:45.8 CB:** Oh my God, I know, I feel like we've covered everything. Which I love, and I know it's just been really funny to think about and look back on everything, especially because I feel like it's... Like you said, the beginning it's fun for you because you know both me and Matt really well, that...

**1:32:01.2 NA:** I know.

**1:32:02.2 CB:** And Matt was like can I just join it and add to this too, and I was like no you cannot but...

**1:32:07.1 NA:** Oh my God. That would have been fun also.

**1:32:09.3 CB:** I know.

**1:32:09.8 NA:** That would have been fun. [laughter] Awesome, that is a good place, I think to start to wrap up the last couple of things I will ask you, if you could leave folks with one affirmation of sorts based on our conversation, what would it be? What is your little wish or pep talk for everyone listening.

**1:32:26.1 CB:** I think my pep top would be, although I feel like it's kind of hard for some people, and I feel like I just keep driving this home of just being open instead of making assumptions in your relationship. Just be open and be front because I feel like that's been just the biggest game changer for our relationship, is just like talking things through and talking about them and not just assuming the other person's gonna do something or assuming that the other person meant to something else. But of actually just talking about it. And I feel like that has just... Especially in such a long-term relationship that you think you know what the other person's gonna do and we're like, no, you don't always know. So don't act like that. Just talk. [laughter]

**1:33:07.6 NA:** It's a great reminder, like taking the responsibility of being an open communicator and being clear and being clear is such a generous thing to do, I think.

**1:33:17.5 CB:** Yeah, and I think too... I feel like for some people, it is hard because they're used to keeping it all in. You could ask Matt too that even it was probably hard for him for a long time to open up because he was really used to just kind of... Matt's always suppressing his feelings, but he was not always vocal about everything, whereas like I said, that I'm like, What? Just tell me everything. I'm so open, like, tell me all your things, I will tell you all of mine, tell me all of yours, and I feel like that is... Yeah, that's just a big... That would be my piece of advice is to be open.

**1:33:49.3 NA:** Yeah, I love it. What is the best place for people to find you and say hi, if somebody wants to do that, do you have a way to connect with new folks?

**1:33:57.2 CB:** I know, I joke, I used to live on the internet, but my blog is no more. However, I... My Instagram is public, so I always tell people my Instagram is @CaitlinB and on Twitter, I'm still on Twitter, and it's @Caitlin. So that's pretty easy.

**1:34:11.6 NA:** I can put links in the show notes. But yeah, that's a whole other conversation of living publicly online through a blog or through whatever for so long and then stopping and stepping back from that.

**1:34:22.5 CB:** Yeah.

**1:34:25.8 NA:** Yeah. Good for you. [laughter] Yeah, I was gonna say You got out, but no, I love it.

**1:34:29.8 CB:** I joke, I got out, but I'm still pretty open on Instagram and Twitter, but not to the same degree of like, here's an entire rundown of what I did this weekend.

**1:34:37.6 NA:** Totally, yes. Caitlin, this was such a treat. Thank you so much.

**1:34:42.0 CB:** I know, thank you so much. This was so fun.

[music]

**1:34:53.6 NA:** Thanks so much for listening to this very first season of the Pop-up Pod, all of the

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