

## #182 - Loving People You Disagree With

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 182 - loving people you disagree with. So if you're listening to this on the Monday it comes out, tomorrow is election day, and I don't think anyone would argue that it's a pretty tense situation in our country. There's a lot of division, confusion, hurt feelings, and we all kind of just want it to be over. I can't remember an election in my lifetime that was this contentious and would leave so many people devastated no matter the result. It's just a lot. And you are a unicorn if you do not know and love someone who is voting differently than you are. Or maybe you're a different kind of unicorn and you're the only one in your family or friend group voting a certain way and are really scared to even say it out loud for fear of being attacked or rejected or just seen differently at all. We're all really tender right now, and to top it all off in terms of timing, we're about to enter the most family/friend-centric two months of the year with all the winter holidays. So I think it's time for a little conversation on loving people you disagree with.

First off a couple of quick recent resources that have given me a lot of hope. Number one is the podcast Pantsuit Politics and their book I Think You're Wrong But I'm Listening. Their podcast talks about all that's going on in our country from a very nuanced, human perspective. They break down the history of certain policies and laws, and since the hosts, Sarah and Beth, both went to law school, they know what they're talking about. It's just the most hopeful, real, consistent resource when it comes to knowing how to understand our own feelings about what is going on so that we can better listen to our people about their feelings.

Next is a recent episode from Emily P. Freeman on The Next Right Thing Podcast, an episode called How to Stay Grounded During Election Season. There are some really good words in that episode.

Another is an IGTV conversation I had with Scott Erickson a week or so ago about this very topic, and he shared some lovely thoughts on connection and the humanity in others. It's about 25 minutes long and worth a listen if you haven't seen it yet. And if you don't follow me on Instagram, I'm @thelazygenius.

And finally, there's an episode I did here on this podcast ages ago called The Lazy Genius Navigates Family Tension. It's not about politics specifically but just about how to be around people you love when things feel tense. I think that's such a great episode to revisit whenever you're about to encounter friends or family where you feel a little unsure of how to be.

Okay, I have a handful of thoughts that can help you love the people you disagree with.

Number one: remember what matters. Always always always remember what matters. And almost certainly, what matters between you and this person you disagree with is the love that you have for each other. Love and connection and the preservation of that love is what matters. Now does that mean you can't disagree? Of course not. We too often conflate arguments with

broken relationships. If we're in conflict then things are going badly. But that's just not true. We're going to have conflict with each other. It's part of being human, so don't expect that if you're in an argument with a parent or sibling or spouse or friend that the relationship is just doomed because you're disagreeing. The beauty of putting the connection under the lens of what matters is that you know that your relationship can survive seeing things differently. That's why it's the relationship it is, not because you get it right or the same every single time but you make it a point to still connect even when you're different.

Number two, choose narration over narratives. I've mentioned this a few times in random places since I heard it from Hillary McBride, and frankly, I don't even remember where I heard her say it in the first place. Probably an episode of The Liturgists podcast, but I can't be sure. Anyway, she shared this idea which has been so valuable in my life since I heard it. Choose narration over narratives. When you are in a conversation or a situation with someone where you're starting to feel that rise of discomfort or anger or frustration or despair run up your spine or make your head hurt or your hands shake or your breath quicken, whatever that looks for you, when you feel yourself experiencing that, pause. Notice that you're having a reaction, and rather than letting that reaction fuel the narratives that already run through your head, narratives like "he just doesn't get it" or "how can she say she loves me when she's talking to me like this" or "I said that all wrong I knew I should have kept my mouth shut," rather than letting those narratives run the show, choose narration instead. Actually narrate out loud to the person how you're feeling. So instead of saying to yourself "I said that all wrong I knew I should have kept my mouth shut," you say out loud to the person you love "This is really hard to talk about, and I don't think I said that the way I hoped to. But you are too important and having this conversation is too important for me to hide, even though that's what I'd really like to do now. So even though I'm feeling a little vulnerable to keep talking, I will, and I appreciate that you're still listening to me." You narrate what is happening within you so that your narrative doesn't take you down a path of protection rather than connection. Thank you, Dr. Hillary McBride, for that paradigm.

Number three, remember the point of government. Like for real. Since we're talking about politics, I want to remind you of this. Our government is obviously for the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, hopefully eventually in an equitable way for all, unlike when how our country was founded. But in that pursuit, we have different groups of people with different opinions and perspectives and life experiences and values coming together as one to make decisions that serve our country the best it can. Our government, on principle, is based on disagreement and discussion and compromise. There is literally no way we're going to make every single person happy with every single elected official, and we shouldn't. We need all interests represented and brought to the table when it comes to what happens in our cities and states and countries, but I think we often assume that there is one single way to run the government based on our own opinions, but that's just not, to me, a helpful way to think about it. We need to disagree. We need to have different perspectives and opinions. Otherwise, we're not working together to find ways to compromise and meet needs that serve the collective, not just the individual.

Think about it in your own personal life. Think about your spouse or your roommate or your coworker. You will never agree on doing everything the same way. Ever. It's just not how

humanity works. You will disagree with people on all kinds of things, but being in relationship means compromise, listening, and understanding. It's true in our families and should be true in our country.

Now you might think, "Well yeah, but there are some things that should be universal that I'm not willing to compromise on." I get that and affirm it. We need people who are passionate about things to that level. Which leads me to point number four: we don't have to take other people's passion personally. We all feel pretty passionate about something in this election. Maybe it's about a certain candidate or issue. Maybe it's about broader issues of racism and redeeming civil liberties for those who have truly never fully had them. Maybe it's just that you're totally over all of this political talk and are very passionate about it going away so you can breathe. The point is that we're all passionate about something. Your family member or friend is passionate about something, and when someone else's passion bumps up against our own, when those passions are in conflict, it is so easy to take that personally, that if your dad is voting for a different presidential candidate than you are and you're both equally passionate about your choices that you can't possibly be in any kind of real relationship. It's just too personal. That's a real thing, and it's so hard and I'm so so sorry it's happening. But we don't have to take other people's passions personally. They do not have to be an indictment on us. Someone else's passions do not have to be an indictment on them. Now it's easy to take this to the extreme of if someone is passionate about killing people who look differently than them then that is an indictment on them. Yes, it is in terms of their choices. But if you had a family member who was held accountable for a choice like that and was in prison, if you were the cousin of the shooter who opened fire in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church or the daughter of the man who opened fire during the music festival in Las Vegas, I'd like to just invite you to imagine what that would be like. What if someone you deeply love did something egregious. Take it to the extreme. I believe you would still love them. You would not excuse their choice. You would not condone their belief system. You would not ignore the situation. But you would love them. You would visit them in prison. You would probably cry when you got a letter from them and have to force yourself to open it and read it, but you would still open it and read it. Even the worst offense cannot dismantle love. It will absolutely change the dynamic of the relationship, but we can sustain love in a relationship that often feels unsustainable. I'm not saying it's easy, but I think that remembering that we can be passionate and see things differently, even things that feel fundamentally opposed, and still love each other is an important hallmark of relationship. We don't have to take each other's passions so personally that the relationship is doomed. Love always wins. Always always always wins.

This actually reminds me of my own experience from a couple of weeks ago. You might have seen a post I shared on my Instagram feed about who I'm voting for and why. It definitely caused some tension and turmoil which I expected for many of the reasons I've shared in this episode already. We have our narratives and our passions, and when those come into opposition with someone we care about, even a stranger Internet person, it's really unsettling. But I want to say here in this context because it feels just on the money is that some of my favorite interactions during that week weren't with people who agreed with me. They were with people who didn't but who approached the conversation the way we've been talking about

today. There was love and curiosity and a posture of kindness and understanding. They were conversations with people who understand the tension and the nuance and were seeking to hear and be heard and see and be seen through a lens of what really matters - connection, humanity, honesty, and love. I saw that modeled by people like LeeAnna, Kate, Aimee, Jessica, and Merideth. We will vote differently, but we, even as Internet strangers, are more connected than we were before our conversations. That is the goal here with our families and loved ones and even with sort of strangers if the situation presents itself. We have an opportunity to love each other in deeper ways, drawing closer to each other as we face tough situations together, and realizing that if we can love our enemies, oh my goodness of course we can love our families and our people even more in our disagreements. We get a chance to demonstrate that a political decision or a vote is never enough to wreck a relationship, that our relationships with each other are strong enough and beautiful enough to continue to love despite disagreements.

And one final thought here as we end. Number five, you are allowed to walk away. If you're in a conversation that feels dangerous or too hurtful for your emotional capacity or you feel yourself getting so angry that you're going to say something you know you'll regret, you are allowed to walk away. Again, choose narration over narratives. You can say out loud to that uncle or brother or mom or friend: "I love you, and I care about you and your right to care about what you want to care about. Right now, I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_ and need a break. You matter to me more than my being right or finishing the conversation right now. So I'm going to go somewhere else for a minute and get to a place where I can remember what matters most, which is you and me staying connected to each other." And then you leave. You also get to set boundaries. If someone in your life is talking inappropriately or inhumanely about another person, you can leave. Or you can say, "This conversation would benefit from speaking about people in a way that reflects their humanity, so please speak that way for the sake of all of us." And if it continues, you leave. I think we all anticipate in our heads and hearts that that's how all disagreements will end: with someone leaving. Everyone will just immediately start yelling and talking over each other and disagreeing rather than remembering that relationships can survive and even grow deeper when there are disagreements discussed in a loving, curious, honest way. We assume the worst and therefore avoid it altogether. And I get that. But as you attempt to love people you disagree with, remember that a way to do that is to walk away when you need to walk away.

Such a light episode, isn't it? But no matter what happens tomorrow on Election Day and how things shake out for our country in the weeks that follow, we all belong here and we all belong together. In her beautiful book *The Very Good Gospel*, Lisa Sharon Harper says, "We are well aware that there are only two kinds of beings, creature and Creator. We are creature. God is God; we are not. Therefore, we are not free to do as we please with creation. Our dominion must bow to the will of God. And if it is to be in the image of God's dominion, then it must be grounded in love. Love binds all creation together." And even if you do not believe in the God of the Bible, I think we all recognize the power of love to redeem and heal and bring us together. So no matter what happens tomorrow, we can all continue to fight for justice and what sparks our passion while being sparked on an even deeper level by love and compassion for the humanity in the soul sitting across from us at the table or next to us in line at the store or on the

other side of the telephone in a tense conversation. It's love. I hate to quote a Beatles song here, but love is all you need. So we can indeed love, deeply love even, the people we disagree with. Remember what matters, choose narration over narratives, remember the point of government and of relationship and how it can actually thrive and become better when we all bring our thoughts to the table, we don't have to take other people's passions personally, and in the midst of all this, you're allowed to walk away. You can still deeply love and walk away. The two are not mutually exclusive.

I hope this episode gives you a little bit of hope as we go into these next few weeks of uncertainty. Remember what is certain, remember who you are, remember the humanity in others, and always remember love. Thanks for being here with me today. I appreciate each and every one of you. Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week.