

Episode 53:

Healthy Relationships

Welcome to ConneXions Classroom Podcast. We are so excited to introduce to you the opportunity for you to join us in a classroom setting where you will be taught the principles of connection. For those of you who have already joined us on the podcasts, and for those for you who have not, you are now ready to step into an extensive, hands-on, all-star classroom experience to better understand why you are experiencing and interpreting life the way that you do.

You will be introduced to the foundational principles of personal integrity, which are: how to live impeccable honesty, rigorous personal responsibility, humility, vulnerability, openness, willingness, transparency, and boundaries.

This is a 12-week intensive course that consists of meeting one time a week for two hours. You will be given six workbooks. In each workbook, instruction will be given to you on core concepts of how to live your life from a position of emotional honesty, Reality, Truth, boundaries, validation, being able to recognize your distortions, and how choice plays a central role in all of your experiences and emotional outcomes.

Some of the concepts covered inside of the classroom include: what validation and vulnerability are and how to animate those principles your life; how to live in Truth rather than distortion; how to recognize your distraction and your controlling behavior in your relationships; and how to live a life of peace rather than pain. Powerful concepts that change lives, beginning with yours.

Hundreds of people have participated already, and have drastically transformed their lives by living and being in Truthful, emotionally honest relationships. They report experiences of personal empowerment and emotional and mental sophistication being introduced into their relationships.

So, now it's your turn to come and participate. This classroom experience will change the way you interact with yourself and others in powerful ways, giving you the tools and emotional sophistication to connect deeply inside yourself and invite other in your life to do the same.

Come and experience connection. Go to www.connexionsclassroom.com, and hit the "Go to Academy" button and sign up. I look forward to meeting you and connecting.

[00:02:48]

Good morning and welcome to ConneXions Classroom Podcast for the week of April 4th, 2015. We are talking this morning about boundaries, drama, codependency, addiction, and how to stay in Reality—or another way to say that, The Truth—how to do that as you live your life and have your life's experiences, which is really a challenge, versus going into drama which is the lack of Reality.

So, the first question we have here this morning is *how do you become comfortable with speaking up when you don't know for sure if it's healthy or in drama?*

That question, that statement right there where it says *don't know if "it's" healthy*, you've got to realize that there's two components to that "it's." There's what's going on with the other person and there's also what's going on with you. So, you have to know primarily and at the beginning you have to know about you—if I'm in health or if I'm in drama. Because if I'm not aware of myself, then I will be in drama. If I'm not conscious of where I am, I will be in drama because the only way to **not** go into drama is to be conscious. And so, I am responsible to recognize in me where I am at all times, and if I'm not aware of where I am, it involves a very simple question which is, *where am I? Where am I in that drama cycle? Am I in a victim position?* And assessing why and what I'm perceiving.

So, how do I become comfortable speaking up if I don't know if I'm in drama? We can change that question to that angle. So, yes, it would not be wise for you to speak up if you're coming from a place of drama to anything or anyone. And if you don't know what drama means, I would encourage you to listen to the drama podcast so you can get a more full picture of what drama looks like, sounds like, acts like. And so, it's your responsibility to assess if you're in drama first. If you are in drama, get out, make a choice, get out and get into Reality, and then you'll know you're in a place where there's Reality. And then, you'll know that you're in a place where there's health.

Now, health and Reality don't always have happy, and positive, and enjoyable feelings that come with it. Reality could be really uncomfortable, like you were climbing up a ladder and you missed one of the rungs and you fell and you hit your head. And you don't know if you have some kind of permanent brain damage or not and so you're sitting there in the hospital getting assessed, and the Reality is not looking well, it's not looking positive—that maybe something permanent has happened. And so, being in Reality is really uncomfortable. In those moments, you'd probably want to go into drama. But even in the Reality where there's experiences that are not pleasant for you, it still is our responsibility to do all that we can to stay in Reality.

Now, there is a place that we as humans go which is like a suspended place of Reality, it's like emotional shock—a place where I can go that has some denial in it, that feels good for the moment such as let's say I fell off the ladder and I'm waiting for the medical reports to come back to see if I have done something permanent, like my vision is blurry or something. It's appropriate and understandable to be in some kind of emotional shock. And that is a temporary position where I just refuse to acknowledge the Reality.

And as I continue to move through this experience, at some point I will have to acknowledge that the Reality is thus, which is, I do have some kind of issue with my brain now that I've fallen off this ladder, and I need to acknowledge it.

So, that's how I become comfortable with speaking up, is I have to acknowledge where I am first and then acknowledge if I'm in drama or not. And then, if I can see that I'm not in drama, then I have to assess my motives, like why would I go and talk to someone else? What is my purpose? What is my agenda? How is this going to be helpful? Is this someone I have responsibility to or for?

Those questions are really important as well because sometimes people want to give unsolicited feedback, and if I don't have responsibility for that particular person, then my feedback needs to stay with me unless I ask if they would like it. And so, I've got to get really conscious about why I'm doing the things I'm doing, and stay in health because health would suggest that I have appropriate motives, which means I'm not being selfish or self-serving, and the information I have is going to be helpful for them (according to me). And I ask them if they want it, because a lot of times, people won't want my feedback. And so, unless I have responsibility for this person or this experience, this event, I don't just give my feedback to them.

So, that's how you learn to become comfortable, is you have all those kind of checkpoints that you look at and make sure that what you're doing is non-dramatic, in Truth, and that there really is something that you need to share that would be important.

Another question that the viewers had is, *what's the difference between codependency and addiction? I feel like I don't quite understand the difference between those two.*

There is a difference in that, depending on what type of vice you choose to be addicted to, so whether you are interested in a work addiction, or a gambling addiction, or a drug addiction, or a food addiction, or an anger addiction—depending on what you attach to, to be addicted to, that is what differentiates one from another.

Codependency is an addictive pattern, and so I am addicted to it... could be anything. It could be a person, it typically is a person that I'm addicted to, but I can be addicted to anything if I'm codependent, which means I have a dependency on something or someone. So, "co" just means to, there's me and something else or someone else. And I have a dependency on it.

Now, saying that makes it sound like dependency is bad. And the Truth is, is that I can have a very healthy dependency, an *interdependency* with something or someone, where I am very conscientious, and thoughtful ways, and dependent on that.

So, for example, if I need to have a breathing machine, I can have a very healthy dependency with that breathing machine. I know why I need it, I know how to use it, I know that it sustains my life, I'm very grateful for it, I am appreciative of how I came to be with it. And I use it appropriately, I don't have an emotional reaction to it, I'm very conscientious about why I need it and how I need it. And I use it in a way that is very aware and conscious.

I can have a dependency on a person. In order to have a very healthy relationship, I need to learn how to take care of myself, and to be self-supportive, and sustaining—and that's in every area of me. And as I learn how to do that, then I share with that another person. I share this understanding that I've acquired over the years, of me. So I have boundaries around myself, I know how I feel, I know how I think, I am conscientious of what affects me, and I'm willing to share in honesty and emotional Truth how things or people are affecting me.

And so, I have this beautiful connection with myself, and then I share myself in health with another person, and they're doing the same thing. And so we have this dependency with each other where we can feel safe, we feel vulnerable, we are trusting with each other, we can rely on each other. It's like, when I think of that person, I know how they're going to respond because that's how they responded so many hundreds if not thousands of times in the past. They are constant. And so, I have this healthy dependency with them.

One of the most obvious dependencies that many of us have is a dependency with God or a Higher Power, where we look towards God and we know that God will show up really consistent with us, that you won't be punished, if you will, if you do something that upsets Him. Or that the universe is not going to conspire against you because of something that you've chosen. So, that's a real dependency for many, many people in the world.

Another healthy dependency could be with your partner. Learning how to be first and primarily connected to self, and aware and awake with self, and know who you are, and know how you feel, and be able to articulate that to another person. And then, you can share you with someone else and create a very healthy interdependency.

So, being *codependent*—that word is kind of a pop psyche word that's been around since the 70's or 80's—suggests that there is some kind of drama inside it. So, when I'm codependent, I will be in drama. So, I like to say that drama acts out on the stage of codependency, because if I'm in codependency, I'm in drama and vice versa. And so, because codependency is a dramatic response to life or to a person, and if I go there as a pattern, then I am in an addiction.

I like to separate addiction like this. There's addictive thinking, there's addictive behavior, and then there's **addiction**. So it's kind of like this path that I walk along. I can think addictively and not be addicted. I can behave addictively at times and not be addicted. Or I can think and behave addictively and it becomes a pattern, it's like something I go to. It's something that I keep returning to in my thoughts and in my behaviors, and that will lead me into addiction.

So, addiction is the outcomes of how I think and how I behave. And that I start doing that as a pattern-like experience in my life. And it's the same thing with codependency. So, when I have an addiction, let's say I have an addiction to working out—like I **have to** work out, it's a need, it's a must, everything comes in front of it, I would rather do that than take care of my primary responsibilities. And not even *I'd rather do it*, it's **I have to** do it. It's I have a compulsion to do it. And there's many other characteristics that describe addiction and if you want to know more about addiction, we have a podcast on addiction, please listen to that. That's how I show up in my exercise addiction.

Well, if I'm showing up that way addictively, then I will primarily be codependent. That will be my first addiction because I cannot have an addiction to something else and **not** be codependent. And I can't be addicted to something and continue in my addiction unless someone is codependent with me. Someone in my life, or maybe several people, will be enabling my addictive behavior whether I know that or not. When people start getting into recovery, that's one of the places that we as therapists try to help them understand is, who has been enabling me? Who in my life has inadvertently supported me to continue to stay in this behavioral pattern of addictive behavior? And usually, you're both unconscious of how that's happening, but it is happening.

So, codependency and addiction are one and the same, and the only difference between the two of them is how I act it out. So, codependency is an addiction, it's just another way to say addiction.

Now, can I behave codependently? Yeah. And it's the same way that I can behave addictively. It's like an occurrence. But if I am a codependent, that means I have an addiction to something or someone. I might be codependent on chocolate, or I might be codependent on this person

telling me that I am worthy, or worthwhile, or important, or I'm enough. And so, I have to really look at what's driving me to want that kind of feedback from someone and see if I am dependent on it and therefore being codependent.

It's kind of tricky, it says what are the differences—there are some slight differences in language as far as what constitutes being codependent and what constitutes being addicted. So, hopefully that clears up those confusing points.

Another question. *How do I help children—my children—understand these concepts? For example, drama. I tried to explain drama to them, however I felt like the content was a bit heavy. Would you please discuss how to give vocabulary and ideas that will be easier for kids to understand?*

Here's what I'd say with children. At any age, kids are quite brilliant. So, whatever the age is of your child, I would start using this language. For example, we will start children very early in learning different languages. Why? Because the brain is so elastic and so open to suggestion that they learn really quickly. And it's only when we become older and we become more rigid, or more inflexible, or you could even say prideful, we just say, "I can't." Because the brain has a capacity to do all sorts of things and all of us I think have heard that we use such a small percentage of our brain, and so the ability to learn at any age is still available to us.

So, whatever the age, even if you have grown children, I would continue to teach these principles to them. And I would use the language, I would say, "That looks like drama." And then, I'd give examples that are conducive to their world. I wouldn't change the language—for example, you have a perception and you get to have empathy for So-and-so, or you're going into this rescuing position. I'd teach them the concepts and what they mean, and then I would give them some experiences that they relate to as a child, depending on what age they are. Because if they're really young, then they don't have the capacity to be in drama. It's just part of their world, they're very dramatic beings and so they don't have the brain capacity to recognize how to empathize and how to take responsibility for themselves. But they can learn that and so you just point it out to them.

And so, you don't want to accuse them of being in drama, you want to invite these principle into their lives so they start learning them. And when, they're little little, like you know, 1 to probably 5, you want to just teach them the principles and direct them into an appropriate response, like *it's not appropriate to stick your tongue out at So-and-so, it hurts them.* And they're like, *well they were mean to me.* And to them, it seems like that's an absolute. If they did this, then they deserve to have my tongue stuck out at them. And so, you gently want to teach them that, "I understand," so you teach them validation, you say, "I'm going to validate you now. You ready?"

I understand that that hurts your feelings and it's still not appropriate to stick your tongue out at them." And that's really hard for a 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 year old kid to learn. And as they mature and they develop, their brain can hold more complexities.

Now, the brain—the frontal lobe—is not fully developed until about 24, 25 years old and so there's a lot that they can't grasp until they are full adults. And they can learn these principles, and they can practice them, and they can be guided and directed how to use them. And so, I would encourage that you are constantly teaching these principles.

If you start teaching your children and they're more into the teenage years, they have a much better capacity to 1) understand and 2) follow through with the behavior than someone who's 6, 7, 8 years old, but still teach them.

So, again, don't change the language, just give them examples that are appropriate for their life experience of what drama looks like.

Next question. *What's the difference between setting boundaries versus lowering your expectations?*

So, setting boundaries for myself is about me. I get to choose where I want my boundaries to be. Now, if I move my boundary because I'm showing up in a codependent way with another person, like I'm lowering my expectations because I don't believe or I don't think that they can meet them, then I'm showing up in, like I said, a codependent, dramatic way with that person.

Now, if I lower my expectations because they have said something to me and they really **can't** meet my expectations, then I'm not being codependent, I'm just staying in Reality and saying, "I'm going to change these expectations that I have—you can say lowering if you want—I'm going to change these expectations so that you are successful in accomplishing them." Or maybe even, **I'm** successful, I'm going to change my expectations so that **I** succeed in meeting them. It's not a matter of *I'm going to do this for you, I'm going to lower my expectations for you*, it's *I'm going to assess in Reality what is possible and then I will change them according to what's appropriate*. That's a healthy way to do it.

So, expectations will come with boundaries. Now, you may not be conscious that you're setting boundaries, but if you have an expectation, that is your boundary.

For example, I have an expectation that I'm going to go out and my car is going to start. So, I feel really confident that that's going to happen, and what that does for me is it allows me to feel somewhat safe in my life, that I can depend on certain things.

Now, there is going to be the day, and there has been several times in my life, where I've gone out and my car hasn't started. And so, me holding those kinds of expectations and being inflexible around those sets me up to go into drama. So, I want to be aware that sometimes my boundaries need to flex, need to move. My expectations need to flex and move. And so, I don't want to have rigid expectations, probably, around my car is going to start.

I do get to have, if I choose, more rigid expectations—and it doesn't mean like everything in my life *has to happen this way*—but there are some dynamics where I want to have more stringent expectations, like my spouse is going to be faithful to me. I want to have an absolute surety that that will happen; that that is my expectation and it will be honored.

Now, let's say I figuratively wake up one day and find out that he or she has *not* been faithful. It doesn't mean I lower my expectation, it means I keep my expectation where it is and I get curious about why they behaved and showed up outside of the marriage in that way. So, it's not that they did this to *me*, they actually did this to *them*. Is it affecting me? Yes. But it was not done unto me. And so, I don't change my expectation like, “Okay, well I'll lower my expectation so that you can still be unfaithful to me and I'll just tolerate that. I'll change my boundary.”

So, the goal here is to know who you are, know what you need, know what you believe in. And that's a big task.

Another question on here is saying *how do you start knowing yourself?* And so, if you don't know yourself, you're really going to struggle to know what your boundaries are. You're not just going to struggle, you won't be able to do it. And so, the way you start beginning to know yourself is you start recognizing, what do you like, what do you not like, what do you believe in, what do you agree with, what do you feel passionately around, what bothers you? And notice those things and start putting boundaries around those areas in your life. Or like I said, creating an expectation around those things. So, I'm not okay with my spouse being unfaithful inside of a marriage commitment. And so, I have verbalized that, and he or she has verbalized that, and so when one of us chooses to not follow the commitment or break the commitment, I don't change my boundary or my expectation to accommodate him or her, I keep it exactly where it's at and get curious about why *they* lowered their expectation, why *they* crossed their boundary. That's how you recognize those two components of boundaries versus expectations.

Last question for this morning. *How do you tell if your perception is the Truth versus your truth?*

Great question. Great, great question. So, the way you tell whether your perception is the Truth or your truth (true) is you have to first realize that it's your perception. And you scrutinize your perception. So, I can perceive all sorts of things, I can perceive how I feel, I can perceive what I think, I can perceive what you think and feel. Remember, I have no control over anything but my own thoughts, feelings, and choices. And so, I have to recognize all these different angles are my perception of what's going on.

So, once I start understanding that, then I can bring in The Truth which is the Reality, like facts. So, if I'm driving and I run into a red light and the light is red—this happened to me yesterday actually—I was coming up to stop at a red light and because of the angle of the intersection, I could see that the other light dictating if the other cars could go was red as well and my light was getting ready to turn green, and someone ran right through the stop light, which scared me because they were going so fast and it was clearly red before they entered. And so, that wasn't my perception. I saw that the light was red and then I saw the car enter into the intersection going quite fast.

Now, it was my perception how fast they were going—so when I said they were going quite fast, that's a perception because I don't know how fast they were going, but I perceived that they were going pretty quick. But I did see, it was the Reality that the light was red. And I did see that they came into the intersection after the light was red. Those are all facts. Those were the Truth versus my *true*. The stuff that was not The Truth and it was my *true* is the speed of how fast they were going, their intentions, that could be another thing that I interpret (my *true*) like they were being really selfish, or maybe they were late for work, or maybe they just thought that everybody should wait for them to go through and that they'd be safe flying through that light—which fortunately they were this time. But maybe my perception is, next time they won't be so lucky. So, all those other things were my *true* or what was true to me, versus The Truth, which was the red light and that they entered into the intersection after the light had turned red.

So, probably the fastest way to find The Truth versus my *true* is to look for the Reality first. Like, what is factual, what is something that's irrefutable that can be known by a third party? There were other people that were sitting in that stop light waiting to go and so maybe they did not recognize that the light had already turned red. Maybe they did. But that was something that was factual.

And so, that's what I want to look for first, is The Reality. Find the facts. And then understand that everything in addition to the facts is your *true*—it's how you perceived it. So, I don't remember the color of the car because it was early in the morning and it wasn't quite light, and so I didn't see the color. But is there a color on that car? Yes, there is. And so, that would be the facts but I didn't see it. I just saw an object go flying through the intersection, I didn't really

notice what the color was. So, The Truth is that the car did have a color, and my *true* is that I didn't see it. My perception is, it was a dark-colored car. But I don't know that because I really didn't pay attention, 1) because it was dark, and 2) because it took me by surprise.

So, that's how you differentiate those things between the Truth and your own individual *true*.

Alright, well good to speak with you this morning. Please keep sending in your questions, I love to answer them. If you'll just go onto www.ConneXionsClassroom.com and click the Podcast tab, you'll go right to the page and it'll say, "Ask your question." Just type it in there and I will answer it on upcoming podcasts.

Have an enjoyable day, an enjoyable week and we will connect with each other in a few days. Thank you. Bye bye.

-

Thank you so much for listening to ConneXions Classroom Podcast. If this episode has been insightful or meaningful to you, don't forget to leave a comment on this episode's podcast page or like, share and tweet about it on social media.

Emotional honesty and personal responsibility are the only ways to create true connection inside your relationships and we need your help to share this vital message. Please sign up to be a part of our social media team. Go to www.connexionsclassroom.com/smteam and find out there how you can be a part of connecting.