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Good morning and happy Sunday. I hope you're having a beautiful weekend. So today is part two, following up to last week's video about how we have hard conversations and tell hard truths to people we care about. Last week was discussing likes, wants and needs, essentially requesting.

Today let's talk about revealing something that is not necessarily even asking the recipient to do anything. It's just a hard reality that I need you to know about, either. This is what action I took that is shameful or a really traumatic event that I don't want to relive, but my partner needs to know about it. All the way to this is my identity. It's not up for debate, there's so many tailor made unique answers, depending on the information itself.

Now, the very first thing that I'm going to consider is safety, not comfort, but safety. Am I materially safe to reveal this information whether the person is an abuser, right, it might not be safe to disclose that to them? If the person has power over my employment or my housing, right? Is that at risk with them knowing this? There are myriad reasons that it can be hard to say something to someone. But tangible material safety is probably the most critical to at least know if that's on the chopping block, if it were to be received in a bad way, can we secure other options to fall back on and land safely with other resources and other people, sometimes revealing a hard truth does not lead to a total rejection.

But there could be consequences. There could be short and long term low and high stakes consequences. And so I think it's really helpful to really break that down, what is that risk? Will it feel potentially awkward if I go to a rope tying class and this person is there? Is the friendship itself at risk if they know this about me? any range of stakes and severity, let's acknowledge to ourselves – what is maybe at risk by being transparent. I'm definitely an advocate of speaking to our support system, because one, it can help to sort of do a test run of the language that we use, as well as troubleshoot solutions to consequences. And then that way, it also holds us accountable. Because when we are unpacking all of the things that could be risked, it's easy to say, well, maybe I don't need to say it, then.

And look, we don't have to have hard conversations with anyone, right? It's just a matter of what is the long term goal. But yeah, first and foremost, understanding what is at stake, safety, but also short and long term consequences. I will add that if our disclosure includes another person – oh, that person I've been living with for years, well I'm gay, and we're partners, right. does that out them? Would the person

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you're telling, tell other people? Or for the cheating example – I cheated with this person. Do we want to tell that person that we're about to disclose it so that they can also consider their consequences? And it's not that I asked their permission, it's just like, I need to do this. How would you prefer, I handle the topic of you? Because it's inherent to what I'm saying. Of course, if you're on bad terms with the person or the person abused you, right, there's all of these caveats. But, it is possible to not feel like you need to talk to them. And that's fine, too. Just go with what feels the most appropriate for the situation.

And we'll get into some more specifics soon. I know that this is kind of an abstract overview, but I will have anecdotes to illustrate. But another factor I consider before approaching a conversation is how time sensitive is it? Is it that I just cheated with someone and they're about to be at a birthday party with my partner? I should tell them immediately right? Or is it that this is something that I've known about myself for a long time, but I'll disclose it on my terms? And when I feel ready, if I wait versus if I tell them soon, what are the differences to the consequences, if any?

So I'm not really of the opinion that there is a universal right way to do this. I don't even know that disclosure is always the move. It's really a matter of – Will there be harm cause? not will people feel hurt, Not will there be pain, But will it cause harm? Let's break down some real world examples just to kind of illustrate what I mean, and to show the differences between all these different kinds of scenarios.

So, if we're going to start with, we need to reveal a regretful action, a shameful behavior, that is necessary for someone close to us to know... A smaller stakes version of this that I did once is – After becoming financially integrated to a degree with a partner, I felt rebellious about that and made an expensive purchase without asking, how will this impact us as a duo? Now, I felt like no, I don't want to lose my freedom and my autonomy. So I'm just going to go out and buy this \$1,000 thing, which I couldn't afford, either. It was the acting out moment. And I came back and was like, can we talk about big purchases and money? I like to be broad enough that it's not just dumping the specific situation on them. I want to give them the option to decide when they want to have that conversation. So I want it to be broad enough that we're not just jumping right in, that I want it to be specific enough to the niche that they know, oh, this is about money. I'm not just saying, I need to talk, which they could project anything onto.

And yeah, I owned it, right. I think that's the main thing – are we owning it? I did this, I realized this was my motivation. How does that now impact us? And how can I make it right? The atonement comes afterwards, the expression of this happened, and you need to know about it, or you're gonna find out eventually, and it's better

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that I disclose it upfront. It was I mean, it was fine, we figured out a way to cut back here, cut back there, I took on the brunt of that sacrifice and compromise, because I was the one who weakened our income that month. But if I had come and said, I didn't want to ask you permission, I don't want you to control what I buy. That would be starting off on an aggressive note. Right? That would be, I guess, true, too. But it would be creating this adversarial, putting him on the defensive, and not really, totally owning. I did this because I acted out. And I was scared or I felt rebellious. That is the more emotionally honest thing. If I were to notice that simultaneously, there were controlling behaviors happening, I would address that as well. But there weren't right, it was just my fear.

And it's all too easy for the ego to figure out why it's somebody else's fault, or why it's justifiable or why we're not a bad person. And we're not a bad person, we did a thing we regret. Humble Pie, let's talk. It does front load the discomfort, right? We're not running away from it in the moment. But it's the easier way, it is the least upsetting and smallest amount of conflict if we do it up front and deal with it as soon as it needs to be dealt with.

So an example of a higher stakes revealing of a regretful or shameful behavior back in 2017, I had a crush on somebody that I was working on a project with. And then we had to fly to another country with a group. And so my existing partners felt a little tense because even though it was for work, it was like I have a crush on someone and now we're going on vacation together. We were in another country exploring another country together. And that could feel like an escalation that could make other partners feel this is moving so fast, right? Even though the motivation wasn't to build our relationship, Our relationship did get closer. All that to say, my partners understood that we were all staying in a hotel together, they inferred that we were all staying in separate rooms. But that was not true. I wasn't staying in this person's bed. But we were in beds in a similar living quarter with just a hall between us. And so there was this intimacy of basically sharing a room. And I felt like I didn't want to say that because they were already scared of us traveling together. And of us getting close working on this project. I didn't want to also say, we're walking to the shower with towels over us. And there's that level of physical intimacy, even if we're not hooking up.

And so yeah, I thought, Okay, well, that would hurt them. I told myself that. And the thing is, I suppose there's an argument for them not needing to know, but I knew, and I felt uncomfortable withholding that information. I think that's the key is – what is their business necessarily, that can vary story to story, relationship to relationship, but that feeling of hiding something, or that feeling of getting away with something, that is good information. And that is what I was experiencing. I was experiencing this

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kind of rush adjacent to cheating, this taboo, these secrets. And that was concerning to me. Because when I'm in that space, it could be all too easy to push other boundaries, because you've already sort of acclimated yourself to tolerating a lie of some fashion. I can rationalize all day long of how it's not a big deal, and we weren't sleeping together, but I felt ways about it.

And so I very much did not want to have that conversation. During the trip. I didn't want those consequences. As I was scared to tell them, I was trying to rationalize myself I didn't need to. So I didn't until I got home. And that is when it became a bigger fight. Because if I were to call them right away at the hotel, they might feel tense, they might exacerbate their existing feelings of insecurity. And I wouldn't be demonstrating proactive transparency, I would be showing them I'm thinking of you, your emotional safety matters to me, here's the situation. And trust can be maintained. If I'm transparent, right away and go right into, how can I take care of you in this? If this is what's happening.

But I didn't, I withheld that. And that was the problem. Why would you not tell me, what else might you be hiding? What other secrets? Might you finally feel ready to tell me in a week or in a month or in a few months, and me demonstrating the ability to withhold I had talked to them during the trip and didn't say a word about that, me demonstrating that I was capable of that is what made them feel fundamentally unsafe. And, I was scared. And that led to me doing something that hurt you. And I'm really sorry. And I want to make it right. And I want to prove to you that proactive transparency is a priority for me. And that this is an anomaly, not a pattern.

But if I had said, Well, I didn't want to hurt you, that is a loaded thing. to say the existence of your feelings. That is why you did not have your needs met. That is why you were not taken care of. And it can be true that I was dreading your reaction. I was saddened because I figured it would cause you pain. And I couldn't do anything about that. That's different, right? That's me owning my motivation for withholding, without blaming anybody. Me saying I felt avoidant, I wanted to delay the potential consequences. I didn't want to have a hard conversation yet, that is all true. And that was included in the atonement, addressing the root of what happened, all of that together, is how we rebuild trust, right? I showed proactive transparency in future interactions, and nothing like that happened again. And eventually they felt safe. And it's, it's a non issue, I'm sure they've even forgotten that person's name.

But if I had tried to protect my ego, if I had tried to defend my actions, or say it's justifiable – and critically, if I had done it again, then it becomes a problem. then it becomes I can't trust you, because you're not taking it seriously, I can't trust you because you hurt me. And then were willing to hurt me again, right? that juncture

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point is when we have the opportunity to make it right, or dig a deeper hole. And the longer we go, digging a deeper hole, the harder the conversation is going to be.

Okay, so we talked about revealing a regretful or shameful action, what if we want to or feel we need to reveal a history, that is important, maybe we're not proud of it. Maybe it was significant but we fear the implications. if you were to say, you should know I was married before, that is not anything we can change, that might not even impact what we're doing. But if you didn't know I was married for months and months and months or years of our relationship. And that was a surprise. It could feel like a massive betrayal of, how did you keep this huge part of your history secret? You know what I mean?

For example, I'm getting to know a person who, I want to keep it light on the first dates, I don't want to just go into our whole trauma histories. But what can make me feel really uneasy sometimes is being in a cohesive, tight knit group. Because I was in a cult, and I just get heightened, I feel defensive. I feel I want to get the fuck out of there. I don't trust people suddenly, now that they're in a group, whereas on an individual one to one, I might have a more relaxed interaction. So this person was inviting me somewhere that it was going to be this close knit friend group. And I kind of had to explain the context of why I wanted to say no. so how I usually prime someone for that, because I don't want to just trauma dump, if they're inviting me somewhere casually, I don't want to be like, you need to know that I have a trauma trigger around this. That can be a huge left turn that maybe they aren't prepared, or even have the energy in that moment to hold space for you.

So yeah, we were on the train. And I said, Can I tell you something kind of heavy about my past? prepping for getting consent to switch gears from light friendly planning into a heavier conversation? But you know, they said absolutely, I can do heavy. what's up? and then they were now prepared emotionally to be present for me in that moment. which is what I want if I'm revealing something vulnerable and upsetting. And so I said, Yeah, here's my history, I don't know that I want to do this thing. And this is why I don't want you to misunderstand it or misinterpret it as lack of interest, or even a disliking of them. That is not what's happening here. And so it's just context of my history that I want you to know. And it was just maybe a one minute conversation, it was really straightforward. They held space for that. And later on in the evening, I was starting to feel a little bit insecure, that vulnerability hangover of Oh, my God, I shared this with somebody, do they think I have a lot of issues that I can't be with several people in a room? I don't, I was starting to spiral a little bit. So I had to adjust it again. And I was like, Hey, it's okay. That I told you that thing about the cult, right? That's how I reentered the conversation. I asked a question, I wanted to verify again, yes, you agreed to have a heavy talk. But then do

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you have your own reaction to that? Do you pity me? this was what was going in my head? So rather than assigning some sort of reaction in the subtext of what they're saying, or in their facial expression, I just want to check in. I just want to see, are you thinking things about it? And they were really sweet. And they were like, no, actually, I just, I had a lot of questions, but I didn't want to pressure you. And that was just so relieving.

And so that is one thing that comes to mind of higher stakes, revealing of history in a vulnerable way, that doesn't just disconnect from it, list off facts, without any tie to it emotionally because other people will receive traumatic shit emotionally. And if we're just robotic about it, and dissociative, that's not vulnerable.

So sort of a subcategory of revealing an important history could be revealing a significant event, sometimes a traumatic event. If you need to, for example, reveal to a sexual partner that you have been sexually assaulted, if there is a moment that you might suddenly relive by telling them right. Sometimes if we're talking about I have a history of doing this, or that, it can be a bit broader. But if we are recounting a specific event, we probably we'll need more care around that we probably will need more sensitivity around when we share it right? I don't want to just share that on the train. I don't want to share that with someone who can't stay and talk about it, they're on the go right? Because I know that I would need them to be thoughtful and carrying and hold space for me and not abandon me literally by having to go. and of course we can choose when we share it, I don't think anyone would fault us for withholding that until we felt like we were safe to share it.

And if we get a lot of green flags, if we have a lot of signals – I have a good educated guess, right? That they might be a safe person to tell. We can take that leap of faith like hey, can I tell you something really heavy that happened to me that I want you to know, just lightly preparing them for the gravity of what I'm going to reveal, depending on how severe the stakes are depending on how transformative it was for us. And depending on how that event might color reactions or interactions with the person in front of me. disclosing that significant event, when we are not activated can be a self care move of just, I might be activated. This is what activation looks like for me, these are what I know to be what sets it off, just heads up. And that can be a lovely way to equip a person with the tools to take care of us in those moments. Because disclosing why we're activated during activation can be really, really hard.

If they recoil, that's heartbreaking. And also, I'm glad I know now rather than later that they aren't able to be there for me with real shit. If they have questions, great. Let me tell you all the ways that you can avoid upsetting me around this. And if they have empathy and love like that reinforces that they're a safe person. So any kind of

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reaction will be informative. And usually if I'm disclosing something that significant or that potentially activating, I will have a plan in place of, who I could talk to after and what self soothing, I could do after even if it goes well. Self aftercare can make it a little bit easier in my experience to disclose it because we have a soft landing pad already prepared.

Okay, so we discussed individual events and we discussed patterns that are significant for disclosure, let's talk about non normative orientations or non normative ways of life essentially coming out. There is a wide range of experiences. Sometimes we all have multiple coming outs – comings out, like Attorneys General? I don't know.

Let's talk about when to disclose when to reveal, this is how I live, this is who I am. So in coming out more than ever, I revisit safety consequences, you know, what is at stake, especially material consequences, because there are a lot of identities, there are a lot of practices of life, that are not a protected class. And in some nations, they could be illegal, right?

So what are the stakes, and that can vary for each person. And to an extent, if we choose to stay closeted, it may even extend to asking for extra discretion from anybody that we're with. But if we decide, I need to share this, or I want to share this, this time, I revisit safety and consequences, and what are my backup plans? And who's my people? Where can I safely land? And then I have basically a loose script, I'm wanting to share a part of my identity, a part of my life that I've really been keeping from you, but I don't like that feeling. So it's time for me to rip the band aid off and share with you that not only am I queer, but I'm polyamorous.

So I experienced three different general types of reaction, sometimes from the same person over different periods as they thought about it, or as they digested it, it would either be understanding and compassion, even if they don't understand just I want you to be happy confusion and worry, or rejection, and condemnation. If they're understanding, I can choose to keep that vulnerability open, be prepared to say thank you so much and express gratitude. this was really difficult for me to share. And sometimes they might say, I don't get it, but I love you. And Okay, I accept it. Same thing, I say, thank you. And I'm not asking you to try to understand you don't have to be curious about it. we don't even really have to talk much about it if you don't want to. But I do want you to know that.

If that goes more the confusion, or worry route, I might say, I'm still discovering this myself, I don't have all the answers, I might have resources on deck, I'm so happy that you're curious, or I understand your worry is coming from a loving place. Either of

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those could be a transition into providing resources, so that we are not instantly educator on top of vulnerable person coming out. And it's not that we can't, you know, explain things. If we feel really secure, then maybe we do. But I think it can help to be prepared in case we are elevated or in case we are feeling very raw to engage with their confusion, acknowledge it and be able to reroute it. If they are concerned, especially if they have a specific concern, we can come equipped with premeditated sentences or responses.

Someone I came out to was really worried for me professionally, especially when I created a public profile. They were like, I love you. I want you to live how you want to live. And I worry that you're limiting yourself, aren't you cutting off options, any employer could see that and I had already considered that consequence. And I came equipped with a response, I feel comfortable with that risk. And here are my backup plans financially. And, again, you can go the route of I really hear your concern, and I know it's coming from a place of love. I'm a little overwhelmed right now. But I'd love to actually do logistical problem solving with you if that's something that you'd be open to or I'd love to touch base with you later because I do have some ideas on that. And I want to ease your concern, so a lot can be decided in the moment about which premeditated track we go, how elevated or lack thereof we are. But I personally feel more reassured having my own paths for what I say next, kind of loosely prepared, we can't anticipate every way that the interaction will go. But if I can streamline my self advocacy afterwards, it becomes that much easier and simpler for me to self advocate.

Then there's always the possibility that they react really poorly. And none of us are strangers to that. It is most hurtful when it's coming. At least in my experience, it was most hurtful when it was coming from people who appeared to accept me in a lot of other ways. I had a stepmom who was really into my hair and my tattoos and, seemed to be really accepting. But she was raised Catholic, very traditional when it came to relationality. She even was accepting of queerness because she her brother was gay. Haha conservatives, they're like, Oh, now that I have someone in my life that is experiencing it, somehow I can now feel compassion. But she even – I knew she would be accepting and even maybe excited for me that I had found that out about myself, but the polyamory was the sticking point. It clashed with her idea of morality. Right, she thought I was going down a path of harm to myself debasing myself, devaluing myself, right, in an attempt to express care or concern, she was actually condemning me, and shaming me and jumping to a lot of wrong conclusions without asking a single question. And that was hurtful, because the people in my life who are homophobic or who are consistently cold or reactive to me, I felt a little prepared for because I'm already guarded around those people. But there absolutely

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is a chance that someone who seems understanding about one aspect that's non normative in our identity, will be intolerant of another.

So yeah, even though I was surprised and disappointed by who's doing the shaming, I did come prepared with some responses that could make it maybe a little bit easier for me to just say a thing that I already know, I can say, and then move on, I see that as a self protective move, I don't have to stay vulnerable, the minute that it is clear that they will put harmful rhetoric on me or worse, I can plan to shut off my vulnerability, I can go into a more diplomatic, even dissociative, cold response that's premeditated, and then get the fuck out of there. Because I've done what I wanted to do. And it's on you that you're reacting this way, do it when you have a clear exit plan that can make it a bit smoother to leave if leaving is necessary. But of course, there will be a very specific way that feels true to your communication style is true to your relationship with this person.

And from there, it's a matter of acceptance that we cannot control how they respond. But regardless of how they act, we are building character. We are strengthening this ability to say hard things, we are much more likely to respect who we see in the mirror at the end of the day, and that is my driving force. If I was watching a movie about me, what would I be rooting for me to do? That sort of thing.

So anyway, that's what comes to mind on this topic. But I'd love to know your reaction, what I could expand upon what else I could discuss. I think it is a rich topic, hard conversations. It's quite a broad one. So maybe there can be more niche subtopics in future resources. I love you. Thank you so much for your support. I hope you have a beautiful week and I'll see you later.

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