

Marriage Startup Podcast - Episode 62

- Leslie: Welcome to the *Marriage Startup* podcast, your invitation to love deeply and grow successfully. This is Episode 62: Emotional Labor, Part 2 - The Great Divide: what makes the division of labor difficult for entrepreneurs.
- Laura: In this episode we're talking about our experience as an entrepreneur household and why division of emotional and physical labor is difficult for us.
- Leslie: I'm your co-host, Leslie Camacho. I'm the Chief Customer Officer at Pixel & Tonic, makers of the Craft Content management system and Craft Commerce. I'm also the Espresso King of the Camacho household.
- Laura: I'm your co-host, Laura Camacho. I'm the founder of Wild Goose Guidance where I write words of life and encouragement.
- Leslie: We don't have any announcements this week.
- Laura: No.
- Leslie: No. Well, I guess we're recording on time [laughter]. That's an announcement. Hooray! We'll actually have two consistent episodes in a row. That's exciting. But we're not actually recording on Friday afternoon like we thought we were going to, because you're taking the kids and going to visit our wonderful - well, your parents, my in-laws, and having a trip down there. I'm staying here to finish up some work stuff and have a mini-sabbatical, which - I know we're both looking forward to that. But it means we both just finished a very long day, because of course the kids are sick right before a trip.
- Laura: [chuckles].
- Leslie: I'm trying to pack in all the things workwise. Sophia is so amazing, I'm so proud of her. Won an award for her invention project and got invited to participate in a winners' award luncheon, along with 26 other students, and got to present to a room full of 130 business men and women. It was a really awesome experience and she won one of the most creative invention awards for her cool project called Handicaps. Man, I was just all sorts of proud but it took up 2 hours of my day, and I had a call this morning that went terrible. It was the worst business call I've had in years.
- Laura: Oh no! I didn't hear about this [chuckles].
- Leslie: Yeah. It was like a cascade of errors. Fortunately, the people we're talking to were very gracious about it and rescheduled, but I feel really bad for all involved. It was no one's fault, it was just technology gone wrong, in a bad way.
- Laura: Oh no.
- Leslie: But still, it left the day frazzled. I then came home and just never quite recovered, so I was very thankful for the break but I'm also feeling like, "Man, I haven't done the work." I got caught up on some emails but - so I've got that overhead of just things I'm thinking about in the midst of trying to even talk about this. I wanted to share all that before we get started because that's exactly the problem [laughter].

Laura: Right. My day was actually really similar because I decided to keep the two little kids home today. This is usually a work day for me. I just really wanted to give them extra rest today, and so I kept them home, which meant that I was interrupted between every 30 to 90 seconds, every time I tried to work on anything that wasn't related to focusing on them.

Leslie: Right, time confetti.

Laura: Yeah, time confetti to the max today. I literally was sitting in front of this trying to script out an outline for - over the course of the whole day and I would just - I would get a sentence or maybe one tiny thought. I think I only ended up with a paragraph for the whole day, because I was literally interrupted every single time I even started to get into the zone. Plus, I also needed to pack and catch up on laundry so we have things to pack, and do the cooking that I promised I would do for you and all the food prep stuff. So I actually missed the luncheon - thank you so much for handling that. But yeah, I feel super frazzled and like I have so much to do still tonight before we get ready to go tomorrow.

Leslie: Yeah, I do too. I still want to go to my RPG group tonight. I don't want to feel guilty about the work I - I use 'missed' in quotes because nothing was due, I didn't miss any deadlines, but it's one of those things where it'll just continue -

Laura: It snowballs.

Leslie: It will continue to pile up. But I did the critical things and I know that I will make space. I already have a plan for how to make up the rest of it. That's just part of the course, I think, for how things work.

So before we dig into Part Two here, in case this is a first-time listener or someone who's not caught up with Part One, I want to very briefly describe the term 'emotional labor' and why we're even doing this series, just recap that really quick. 'Emotional labor' is a term that was coined by Arlie Hochschild from her 1983 book called *The Managed Heart*, where she studies flight attendants and bill collectors. Her initial study was to examine what happens to people when private emotional labor gets commercialized and commoditized.

The actual term 'emotional labor' - and this is a quote here from a site called MindTools, and we'll like to this in the Show Notes, and I found this to be a really good description. *"Emotional labor describes the things that service workers do that go beyond physical or mental duties. Showing a genuine concern for customers' needs, smiling and making positive eye contact are all critical to a customer's perception of service quality. These types of activities, when they're essential to worker performance, are emotional labor. When you face angry clients or people who are generally unpleasant, emotional labor can be particularly challenging. A large part of that challenge comes from the need to hide your real emotions and continue to smile and nod your head, even when receiving negative or critical feedback."*

Long story short, emotional labor is when you are paid to suppress your emotions and instead show other ones so that the person you're serving has a better experience. Which a lot of jobs have, but service - I would say service and leadership -

Laura: The service industry.

Leslie: - have in particular. We wanted to - the reason that we're doing this series is because we have had a really hard time trying to even pinpoint why it seems so natural and fluid for us to work together on businesses, on the business side of things to work together, but why that has never translated into how we run our household; what that even means, my role and your role, who's leading that. That's something that's haunted us for a long time and in starting our second careers here, this is something that we really want to figure out.

When we discovered this term through Love Languages, really, and discovering how important acts of service were to you, and words of encouragement and time are to me, this term gave a voice to something that we do all the time. We discovered that we don't really take a break from emotional labor, either on the professional side and then when we 'get home'. We're still doing that 24/7 and it's exhausting.

This really gave voice and put a spotlight to the fact that we are stuck in the 1950s when it comes to running our household, even though we're very much - feel like we're modern practitioners and thinkers when it comes to the business, and I would say even social side of things.

Laura: Mm-hmm.

Leslie: So this is our exploration into that. In Part One we went deep into what the problem even is, and our problems even talking about it. Today we're going to talk about - a little bit more about why this has been difficult to figure out how to divide it, and that's why it's called The Great Divide [chuckles].

Before we actually dig into the talking points here, though, you wanted to give a disclaimer that I think is pretty important.

Laura: Yes. As with all of our podcast episodes, we are speaking from our own hearts and our own experience. You're probably going to think it's really cute that we think this is just what we experience and maybe because we're entrepreneurs, because it's very likely a much more widespread human condition, cultural issue. I know that patriarchy and feminism play a role. I am sure there are 1,001 flavors of this exact scenario that we're playing out, but we are only qualified to talk about our own experience and invite you to start a conversation with your partner about your experience.

So, it's going to be a little heavy-handed about entrepreneurs - please don't go away with the idea that we think that only entrepreneurs encounter this issue. This is the flavor in which we have been introduced to the problem and it's the way that we're going to be working it out with this understanding, kind of the story of - we're entrepreneurs so how do we - how has that been our downfall in this area, and how can we use that to be our strength.

Leslie: Right. I think a good example is that originally, our context was entrepreneurs versus 9-to-5ers, and then we realized that's really dumb.

Laura: Yeah [chuckles].

Leslie: There's plenty of 9-to-5ers who have these exact same issues. A lot of entrepreneurs are also 9-to-5ers. It doesn't - that's me. I technically - my job is technically a '9-to-5 job'. It is not a 9-to-5 job, not in any sort of old-fashioned sense. I don't even think about it as a job in that sense; I think about it as this is the thing that I'm devoted to doing and bringing to life, and

creating these new things, and I've got partners to work with. So when I think of - I don't - I think of a job, my shoulders slump. It's like, "Is it a job? Really? No, no." [chuckles] It's -

Laura: It's this other magical thing.

Leslie: But technically it's a job, and there's side projects. Well, just one, *Marriage Startup* is the side project. So yeah, I thought that was a really good point. This is the language we use but we think that this experience is much more universal. If someone has a better way of phrasing this, please tell us. We would love to know.

Laura: Yeah, exactly. I think it goes back to - it's one of our taglines somewhere, 'When what you do becomes who you are', and that can define so many different areas. It can even be the dedication to which someone does the typical 9-to-5. You should be able to clock out at the end of the day but you don't, because you have this passion and you're bring the fullness of your being to bear on this job that some people might just leave at the end of the day.

There's also, of course, a lot of crossover between what you do emotionally at your non-job, and what I do as a parent, the primary parent of the house. It's very intangible. On a day-to-day basis, it's kind of hard to see the progress sometimes and it can be very messy and emotional in the moment, and it requires the fullness of both right and left brain thinking the same time. It can be very mentally exhausting. It is.

It feels like it's invisible work sometimes, and I think our conversation on our last episode really helped me understand that you feel so similarly about the work that you do, as I do about the work that I do; having it be very emotionally heavy and intangible, invisible, blood, sweat and tears. And what's the outcome? Nobody knows yet.

Leslie: Right.

Laura: Will the children grow up to be sociopaths or will they - you know? [laughter] Will the business crash and burn? We don't know! We're just going to pour everything we have into it until something happens. So I felt like that last-time conversation was really good for my heart to feel like we're connected on that level. Then we can have this conversation without feeling like it's one-upmanship or - there's no combative feelings between us about who's doing more work. I felt like that for a while. In our initial conversations, I felt like no one understands how much I do to make everything run. You said the exact same words about what you do, and it really gave me pause.

Leslie: Right, and I think maybe that's a good set-up for the discussion, because basically over the last several days of really spending a lot of time thinking and talking through this, our takeaway has been that what we've essentially done is been successful separately for the same cause. We want a life together and we have a family, and you have been super successful at running the household but it has thoroughly burned you out, so a lot of this podcast has been helping you make the transition from stay-at-home mom to work-at-home, and having that be meaningful.

You were already burned out from the household stuff, so what you have asked me to do is become a partner in that, and that's been really challenging. Trying to figure out how to divide the emotional and physical labor in that

scenario has been tough, because we didn't even know that that's what we were talking about.

Laura: Right [chuckles].

Leslie: It's taken us a long time to even realize that's been the issue. But the truth is that you have been amazingly successful at running our house and being the lead parent, and making sure that our kids have way beyond the basics, but that they're in the right school, that there's an approach we take to their medical needs, to their values, their education, their interaction with our family.

I have done - I've had an amazing career on the professional side, providing the money, making sure that we have a roof over our heads, making sure that - I think that overall we're living in a way that we enjoy and that is in line with how you and I have talked about it, even if it's kind of in an esoteric sense, and making sure that I have a continued career path and growth path that's exciting and that - and that can include you. That's something we've talked about from the very beginning of our marriage, to do that.

Now I am wanting to also share equal - I want to take you up on the challenge of being a true, equal partner in the household. Now that you are starting your own business and generating your own income, you are also wanting to contribute to the financial side. You gave the analogy of Venn diagram of where we're overlapping, and I think that you said we're overlapping 10% maybe. So there's a very real sense in where we have successfully grown these two things and now we're living separate lives under the same roof, and I think that is a very common experience. We're realizing this and we're thinking about how did we suddenly fall into this 1950s stereotype when we're not like that on the business side of things.

What we are attempting to do in this discussion is dissect what is it about us being - having - running and starting our own businesses and pitching in with other people's businesses - we are driven to do that and that's part of what gives us an entrepreneur mindset, but what is it about that very thing that we're great at that has made it very challenging for us to really be equal partners in a more holistic sense that includes the house, that includes you contributing to the business and financial side of things.

[sighs] All right. [laughter] Let's dive in. Why don't you start with the first thing on the list here?

Laura: Okay. We talked today about how the emotional weight of the emotional labor that an entrepreneur or a founder or an owner experiences very well could be heavier than in other types of work. There's a lot more managing relationships at much higher stakes. Usually when you're a founder, you're starting something new so every relationship, you're getting propped up on and your connections really matter. If one thing goes sour with one person, word can spread, whatever, whatever. So it feels like the relationships are so much of a foundation of what you're building that the managing of them is just - that takes up a lot of emotional energy.

There's simply more relationships too. It's not just your cubicle mates or the water cooler moments or whatever. You're making deals and you're building relationships so that you can continue building your company, and there's really - it's unlimited how many relationships you could have as an entrepreneur that feed into the growth of your business. So the stakes are

higher, it feels heavier, and it also really is pretty unending. It's not something that you just ever walk away from.

Leslie: Right. I think too that you will have the one or two relationships where you do feel completely yourself, but even there you're really probably not disclosing the whole of what you're experiencing in your life. So even in a really good partnership - business partnership - it's pretty rare that you have a total insight into what the other person is going through, and feeling like you can share that.

I'm in a pretty good position again where I feel like that's possible, but even when that's possible there's always the overhead to it; knowing that you're part of a business and this is also a business relationship, it's not just a friendship, though it most certainly is that at this point.

I think the biggest thing is that there's a very real need to keep the whole picture. We use the word 'empire'. You have to keep the entire thing in mind. It's not just my role in it but how it affects everything else, including the areas and values that I'm trying to create for the business and what you're doing with Wild Goose. So there's just so many moving parts to be aware of.

One of the things that helped us understand is the difference between the actor in a play and the producer of it. What the actor does, especially the lead actor, can have a huge impact on the success or failure of the play, but the actor is not the one writing the paychecks, paying the bills, putting up the poster. I know that there're some actors in your family that will very much rail against what I just said.

Laura: [chuckles] Okay, no, but I - as a member of my family who has acted -

Leslie: But it -

Laura: - I have also produced, so I know both sides of the story. I would far rather be the actor. I hated being the producer [chuckles]. It was so hard.

Leslie: Yeah. At the end of the day, the producer is responsible for all the bills -

Laura: Everything, yes.

Leslie: If the play goes bad or goes into bankruptcy, it will be the producer that is sued.

Laura: It's more than that too. It's really the entire cohesion of the production. It's not - it's a thankless job and yeah, you don't sleep.

Leslie: Basically, when you're running a business, especially with partners, you effectively have multiple producers, each producing their own play, and you're hoping that there's this cohesiveness that brings it all together in a beautiful way for your customers, but especially in the early days. It's tough, because sometimes you also are the lead actor and the producer.

Laura: Right. I've been there too [laughter]. I wasn't lead actor but I was - yes, I was both at one point, and I was a very bad producer. My apologies, guys.

Leslie: I'm a bad actor so it'll all work out that way.

Why don't you take this next one?

Laura: Okay. Entrepreneur personalities tend to be very self-sufficient, very effective, very independent. They like to get an idea and charge, and then

maybe wait for people to catch up, maybe not. I think - I sometimes question how much of an entrepreneur I actually am because there's a huge part of me that just wants to lie down and not do anything. I don't get super excited about building stuff, like the way I see you doing it, but I do know that I was instilled with an amazing work ethic and I was taught to "get 'er done". So whether or not it comes from an entrepreneur personality or just my own upbringing, I have instilled in me "just do it, and don't bother anyone else about it". Just get it done.

Leslie: I think it's important to understand that an entrepreneur is someone that holds a vision in their head of how something should be but currently isn't, and then does the work to make that vision a reality. There's all sorts of obstacles and challenges along the way, but ultimately they keep this vision in mind. It maybe alters somewhat based on reality, but that is where I very much think that you are an entrepreneur. You have this thing in your head, even if it's not crystal clear, that this is supposed to be this way, and I can make it this way. Then before you know it, you're way down the road to making that a reality.

Laura: [chuckles] Okay. I don't see it. I just feel like I'm stumbling around in the dark most of the time.

Leslie: Most of us feel that way, which brings us to our next point. This is the ironic counterpoint to that. Most entrepreneurs - including both of us - devalue our own work. We don't devalue our vision but we devalue our own work and we wonder about it. Even when we think - there are times when the output we know is good but then there's always something that counterbalances that, where we're feeling lost in it and we're not sure about it. There are some things that we do well, we know that they're good. We might create something there but on a whole, we don't value our common wisdom, which is actually what other people value the most about us.

Laura: So how does that differ from the imposter syndrome, which pretty much everyone has?

Leslie: I think that they feed off each other. It's there quite a bit. I think this is especially good for people who know that they are really good in one area but know that it doesn't necessarily translate into another, but they're put into a position where people assume that it is. Like, "Hey, you're a great UX person so therefore you're also really great at running a UX company," even though there's lots of parts that aren't directly related.

You may feel like someone has put you on a pedestal in one area and you know that it's appropriate - because there's usually a sense of ego involved too - but then knowing, "Man, I'm so good here but how do I negotiate a contract? I don't really know how that works," or, "How do I hire an employee? How does this work?" There's a whole bunch of things where that can come in but you have to do the emotional labor pretending like you know that. Hopefully you're not that way with a partner or investors or other stakeholders and you're building a team to fill that need.

But that's how it works in with imposter syndrome. You walk into a room and you assume this person is great at doing this, they must know - they must really have it together. We have met enough entrepreneurs to know that's not true. Everyone has this thing that they're awesome at and then they have these huge gaping holes as well [chuckles].

Laura: Yeah. That's true.

Leslie: But this goes back into - I wanted to bring this up in particular because it came into the comment I made about standards last week, and you rightly pointed out that you've never said that I don't meet your standards. I've been thinking about that and this goes back to - the thing is that you have set such a high bar for running our household.

I have no real concept, because my household was very different in that I think my mom ran a good household and I know my dad contributed but I always felt so broken in there, especially once I hit my pre-teen and teenage years where things really began to fall apart. I don't really have a concept of a standard of what that means to even do it, so when I see you do something I think of it as this really high bar and I don't know how to even reach that or come close to it, because I've never had a role model for that.

What you told me today in our conversation was that you don't see yourself that way at all. You feel like you're just flailing around half the time and that's very typical for how an entrepreneur feels versus how an outsider perceives what they do. I deal with these in calls all the time at work where - like today we got an email from a 65-person agency who said really, really nice things about us and I know they're making an assumption that we have some things together where we just don't; we're starting out with it and they're way ahead of that game. Yet they respect us so much and rightly so.

The work that we do is amazing. But then in these new areas, we're just at the very beginning and it's exciting, but then I always have this trepidation where I don't know if they're expecting this to match that, because it's not there yet. We have this bar, we're not exactly sure how we're going to raise that bar in there, but we are doing our best to get there. That's where I feel like in managing the household, and I'm not even sure what that encompasses.

Laura: No [chuckles].

Leslie: We'll get there, but that's how I feel coming into it. Regardless of how you feel about it, what you have done that I've experienced is so far and beyond what I grew up with that I want - I don't even know how to approach it sometimes. That says a lot about what you just consider to be no-brainers versus what I consider. That's not a no-brainer. I don't - teach me that.

Laura: Right, and that's because my parents' standards were so explicitly clear and so high. Seriously. I somewhat aspire to that and somewhat don't, and so I think that's why I feel the dissonance. I have fallen so far from my origins [chuckles] but I also know I have to make the way that works for our family, and I don't think that the way I was raised as far as householding would work.

I want to raise our standards together, collectively, higher and differently than the way they are now, but I have no intention of trying to totally copy exactly what I was given, even though I - the reason why I can even do what I am capable of is because of how my parents trained us. But we were most certainly trained in the art of householding. I was, probably a little bit more than my brother, but he was pretty - he had to do a lot of it too.

Leslie: This idea also played out in another way because we were talking about what does it even mean to participate as a partner. You wanted to jump straight to here's all the menial tasks I need you to help with, and yes to that, but my response was, "But I also want to participate in the kids' stuff, the family stuff. I want to have input into what the big picture looks like," and you

didn't even think of it as a picture. You include that as just drudgery you don't want to participate in, or you wanted to protect me from.

Laura: Yeah, because, I mean, the big picture of - really what it breaks down to - I understand, yes, we need to be on the same page as parenting partners for what values we're passing to our children, but there's so much of the big picture that involves knowing everyone's shoe size and clothes, where they are, what needs to come out next, doctors' appointments, what's in the medicine cabinet, what to give them when, and cleaning up puke off the floor.

It just boggles my mind you really want to know, you want to have to know that? I already know I'm probably not going to be able to not know it, so why can't I just be the keeper of that knowledge, and then you don't have to fuss with it and put - try to find room in your brain for more stupid information that is vital every now and then but [chuckles] - that's where I'm coming from.

Leslie: Right, and that goes back to we may value and have a positive experience with different things. This is part of the challenge, is you - if we want a partnership, we can't just arbitrarily decide that the other person won't be interested in these things.

Laura: Right, and that was very unfair of me. It was super-unthinking, and when you explained it to me I was like, "Oh, really? I wonder what you will enjoy. How fascinating! I want to find out."

Leslie: But that's a common experience for an entrepreneur, having to delegate that stuff, because it goes back to - we don't even know half the things that we do or how we do them, or why they're valuable, or how others might feel about doing that same work. I go back to the idea of a business partnership. My role that I have right now I have because the other two people understand its value and they value it, but they don't want to do that work. They have no interest in it, it's not where their passion is. They want to stay in the code. For me, I love those problems. I want to be involved that way.

That's going to be the same when we come to the household stuff, but that's going to require us to define what that even means. It's going to require a brain dump from you in a bunch of different areas over time. It's going to be me being okay humbling myself and realizing I am years behind you in some much of this, just being okay with that gap and having to close it.

We are often going so fast that it's hard to bring the other person up to speed, and it's hard to change course when we're wrong. One of the things I know about both of us is that we are both right the majority of the time, and that has built in an amazing trust over our relationship, but it also prevents a barrier in two ways - when I am right but I've left you behind, I have left you out of one of the values that we're creating together, one of the positive experiences.

It's great being up to speed in these things but if I've charged ahead so fast and I've left you behind, because you are doing other just as important things, if I'm not taking the time or if we don't have a structure where we can provide education for each other, encouragement, or keep other people in the loop, we isolate ourselves because we're good at what we do and because we're right. When we're wrong it's even - it's very challenging because we have been really effective at going fast in the wrong direction, so then we have to go and turn around and limp back, which if we've broken something it makes the trip back much longer than it did to get out there.

I know that we've had that here. There's decisions that you make about our kids that are great decisions, but I feel like I've never had the opportunity to even catch up. You've already done hours and hours of research, which you're really good at, and so for me to have an opinion at your level is just about impossible, unless we're waiting a couple weeks which is really hard for you, or if there's something else that - there just may not be the time to wait. I do that too on the business side of some of the things that we do.

Laura: I need to be aware of how much I like being right and in control -

Leslie: [chuckles]

Laura: - with how much I love you and want to partner with you. Because I am very confident in many decisions that I've made, and places where I don't feel confident is definitely where I come to you. I think there's - the tricky balance is how much do we work through - how do we decide what are the decisions we want to make together versus what are the decisions that it's just going to bog us both down if we have to plod along at the same rate, and both of us doing the same work. For instance, researching something. I am really good at that and I can scan and assimilate and whatnot, and -

Leslie: Well, I'm really good at that too, I just don't apply it in the same areas.

Laura: Right, exactly. So I'm wondering, do we both have to do that exact same work? At what point does that break down because the replication is just a huge overload of labor?

Leslie: Consensus is a terrible way to make anything great, most of the time.

Laura: Right.

Leslie: Consensus is not the same as collaboration.

Laura: Yeah, and I am pretty sure I could easily convince you that I'm right of any of the things that - decisions I've made without you, and I think you're probably pretty sure that I'm right too, or - I don't know. I won't speak for you [laughter]. I'm looking at your face. But what I'm saying is it's - I think this might be one of the areas where it will be harder for me to partner with you because I have spent a lot of thought in the way that I want to parent our children, the time and effort that I've put into looking into parenting styles. We've done trial and error on poor Sophia over the years. I feel like we've both come to a place where I think we're on the same page. I don't know that you know it as well as I do because you haven't -

Leslie: I don't.

Laura: You haven't read all the things that I've read, but I feel like you're following my lead if I'm showing a lead. I don't know that, though.

Leslie: I think the big difference here is that we don't have a structure for the home in the way that we do for when we work together, because when we work together there are clear areas of responsibility where keeping you in the loop and giving you a voice doesn't require you to do the same work; it just requires you to give your wisdom and input. If you have a disagreement with a decision, you have the opportunity to speak to it, and then we work it out from there.

That's something where at this point in my professional life I have learned the hard way that if I am way ahead of someone's thinking that I have to get to know them, I have to give them the opportunity to catch up and take ownership of something too so that they're at least at that level, and to really build in alignment on specific decisions versus just a sense of trust.

In my new role, there is huge amounts of trust but there isn't necessarily alignment across the board. That's not a criticism by any means, it's just that's what happens when you start a new gig. So a lot of what I do is to make allowances for catching up to where I'm already at in some of the things that I want us to do, but it's also the humility to know that one of the reasons I want to partner with these guys is that they will bring new thinking into what I'm proposing. That is really difficult for me. There are some things where I'm like, this is the way to do it.

Laura: [chuckles] "I don't want to hear other people's thoughts."

Leslie: They'll come in and say, what about this or that? I'm thinking, "Man, I just need to give them a week and then they'll come around to my way of thinking."

Laura: [chuckles] That's exactly how I feel!

Leslie: Sometimes that happens but more often what happens is my ego sits down and it says, "Right. These guys are just as capable as me. They already have some amazing thoughts and they just needed a voice, and they needed someone to help be a sounding board. Now I'm able to bring my best thinking and that's given them a structure to even voice what they didn't know that they wanted to contribute." The result has been something better than what I originally imagined, and that's very, very exciting to work in that.

That's also what happens to you and I when we talk about Glimmering, when we talk about *Marriage Startup*, but when we actually go into the house, it gets muddled and it doesn't happen like that -

Laura: Yeah, it sure does. Here's the thing. I said last week I think it's because we are to forge our own way in our marriage partnership and our business partnership as a couple. When we get into the house, all the messy stuff from our own families of origin and the relationships and marriages that we witnessed growing up come to play. When we get into survival mode, we will just revert to what we know.

I think that is what trapped us, because we went directly into survival mode from the moment Sophia was born. I feel like we're only just now starting to crawl out of it, in many ways. I think that we got so blindsided and we really did just revert to what we knew. Thankfully our love for each other and our ability to partner well helped us along with those broken things that don't fit us very well.

Leslie: Right.

Laura: Now, I think we have the wherewithal to say, "Time to do something that is actually Leslie and Laura now," instead of all the stuff that we just leaned on and limped along with because we didn't have the internal resources at the moment to create something new for ourselves.

Leslie: Yeah. We don't give each other the opportunity when it comes to the house. This is something that we talked about before the show and I want to make

clear. I'm not putting our lack of partnership on you. We share equal responsibility for where we're at, because we both don't give ourselves the opportunity to get the other person's best thinking into it, because we are - I think the way you put it; we are in survival mode. We went into that.

When I think about my new work, the part where I have to let the ego go so that other people can speak into it, that was hard the first time and that was before I was even full-time, when they were clients. Now that they're peers, it's actually really fun, because I know that - "Man, I just had this great idea for the thing and I can't wait to get in the office on Tuesday and run it past Brandon," and then Brad will say something and I know that at the end of that discussion, even if the main plan that I presented doesn't change, it will be better in some way because of their contribution. It's an exciting place to be.

That's how I feel about working with you when we're talking about *Glimmering* or *Marriage Startup* or *Wild Goose*. I feel like we have that same synergy where, "Man, I had this *Marriage Startup* idea and I can't wait to talk to you about it and give you a voice." Not because I expect you to match the 50 hours I put into thinking about it but because your common wisdom, your experience and your intelligence I just know are going to make it better.

So I think part of our challenge is how do we do that in our blind spots now that we have the opportunity to just not be in survivor mode?

Laura: Yeah. I think part of my issue with that is I am just so fricking burnt out that I don't want to even think about it anymore. I think that's why I went straight to, "Here are the menial chores that you can do," because [laughter] I don't want to think about it anymore. I just want it to be done. So I think we're going to have to have more conversations about that and find a balance, and maybe you'll have to unquestionably do some chores for a while so that I can get to a headspace where I can think big picture. Because I'm not sure that I'm quite there yet.

Leslie: Yeah, and that may be the way to do it. I am not opposed to that at all.

Laura: But I totally value and respect your need for the big picture in order to be able to do with passion and integrity the menial stuff.

Leslie: Well, it's not a partnership unless I'm participating in that, and that was one of the things you really helped me see, especially in our discussion today, was you don't have to earn your equal status as a parent - you are. Now, are you doing it?

Laura: Yeah. That was interesting, because we had this disconnect because you want me to invite you into that partnership, as the co-parent and whatever, and I'm just waiting for you to participate because I know that's who you are, so there was that divide. You're waiting, I'm waiting, we're not talking about it for whatever reason, mainly because I'm really busy just doing [chuckles] and you I think have felt really insecure in that area, and you see me doing and doing it well, so you don't know how to step into that flow.

Leslie: Well, I think it speaks to our next couple points, and I'm going to combine them, or talk to one quickly so we get to the second one. One of the things that happens, I think, when we have an entrepreneur mindset is that we miss the big picture of our primary partnership, which is you and I, in favor of the business big picture, or whatever the thing of significance that we're trying to create.

Laura: Yes.

Leslie: We get so involved in that because it's so clear in our heads in a way that our partnership isn't, and because it's so much easier to live there in some ways or sometimes it's necessary to pay bills or keep moving forward, or whatever the case may be, that it's easy to neglect what we want our lives to look like in favor of doing the things we're successful at.

This is something I saw in my consulting clients a lot. They had a great vision for what it meant to be a world class design company, for example, and they could talk my ear off about all the things that they do best when it comes to design, but they could never articulate then how to turn that into a hiring policy, for example, because they didn't have the writing skills or they weren't willing to do the work to divest that information out of their heads in a way that they were able to communicate with a new hire and invite them into the culture so that they could learn the system and participate.

It's like, "How come you can't just be as good as I am?" Oftentimes, "Well, I am just as good as you but I don't understand that extra culture you bring to a client relationship that results in this great design work that has our flavor and tone that I really admire." That actually is a really tricky thing to do. I think same thing or a very similar thing in our relationship.

That kind of goes into the last part, the last talking point here. We don't really have role models and mentors when it comes to our marriage in the way that we want. Last week you gave major respect to your parents for the job that they did do, and I concur. I love your parents. Hi, Earl and Gail [chuckles].

Laura: Our biggest fans.

Leslie: But I would not have those - I don't have that. I come from a divorced home. I love my mom and dad dearly but I don't go to them for marriage advice or life advice. They don't play that role in my life and they haven't for decades at this point. Unlikely that they ever will again. Even though I have good relationships with them, it's not that relationship. It's not the same relationship as you still have with your parents.

Laura: Even though I have a great relationship with my parents, I still don't want to replicate their relationship because it wouldn't fit for us. We are two totally different people. So as much as the great foundation they gave me, I still feel stuck without a role model in a similar way.

Leslie: This goes back to where do we find those role models or mentors. If I want a business mentor, I know who to talk to. For example, part of my role is starting up services. I have some really, I think, good ideas for doing that and some concrete plans but man, I don't know. Is this great, is this not? So I went down my Rolodex and looked for people that I really admire that had done it, and people introduced me to some amazing folks that have done amazing things in the services world, especially when it's combined with software.

Over the course of the last little bit, I've gotten to talk to some people that've just openly said, "Man, the first two years that we did this, it was a total disaster. Here's what we learned, here's what we do now. Make sure you get a heads-up in this because that's going to be - that was really critical for us." That was awesome. There are more of those conversations to be had in a whole bunch of areas.

We're a small company now, I have taken the company to 17, 18 people, but if it's successful as we want it to be over the course of the next 5, 10 years, we're going to far outstrip that. But I have that community. We have Owner Camp. I now know the CEO of a 500-person company who would take my phone call, and he knows people at larger companies, and I have other friends - the ability to go out and find business mentors now, while difficult, I feel like I have crossed that career path in the relationship building.

Now ask me who do I - whose marriage would I want to replicate. Who is so great at being a husband that I want to be like them. How do I even find those people? What does that even look like? Who has - the book giveaway, *Living Forward*, that's the closest thing I have. I love the outward appearance. I don't know Michael Hyatt at all, maybe he's a disaster behind the scenes. I doubt it, because I know people who know him and they say he's the real deal, and I trust them.

But most of the mentors and role models I have are arm's length. They're book authors, they're other podcast hosts. In the business world, we often don't cross over into those things. In the few relationships that we have, the idea of growing our marriages together or getting better at that stuff is totally appropriate. We have that kind of friendship with some people now, but not mentors in that sense.

Laura: It's like mastermind peer groups maybe, which - not bad.

Leslie: So that's been really challenging and I think that's one of the - looking back on it, I think that's one of the reasons that we wanted to present this podcast as an invitation; not because we're necessarily role models but because we're figuring it out and I think that this is a really hard challenge. What are the relationships that you want to look like?

There's a lot of advice out of that but that's different than being able to have those wizened old conversations from people who have earned your trust for some reason. Because how would you even validate that? Some people, you meet them in person and you see how their wife or spouse, partner, talk about them, and you can get a feel for it, but how often are we in situations where that's an outcome of a conversation? It's almost never.

Laura: Yeah.

Leslie: [sighs] So I think that's where we're going to leave it [laughter] for Part Two. This is not a scientific research list and I want to re-emphasize the disclaimer. My guess is that we've been using entrepreneurial language because this has been our experience, but I have a feeling this is a much more universal experience than just entrepreneurs. We just don't have the language to do someone else's experience justice, and I sincerely apologize for that because it's not my intention to be offputting if you don't think of yourself that way. If that's you, please let us know how you do think of yourself and if this is a shared experience, because we love that. We love that and it helps other listeners too.

So, where do we go from here? Part Three is going to be - I think we have tentatively titled the script 'What does success look like?' This is something we've started talking about and we have a game plan for, and I'm actually really optimistic about it.

Laura: Mm-hmm.

Leslie: The thing I continue to be so happy with is that we can even do this at all without fighting, without -

Laura: Yeah. I cry every time but it's not -

Leslie: There's genuine pain experienced.

Laura: Yeah. It's existential stuff for me. It's not anything to do with our relationship, or our conversation.

Leslie: I feel a little bit about this moment like I did when I discovered John Eldredge at a young age, where I remember reading *Wild at Heart* and thinking, "Oh my goodness, I am so glad I'm reading this when I am 25, 26." It did legitimately give me a head start and I am feeling like oh my goodness, I'm so glad I'm discovering this when I'm 40 and Sophia's only 9, Alana's 6, and Ethan's only 3, and we're at the beginning of two beautiful career paths.

I'm not five years into my next career having made the mistakes again because we didn't take the time. I'm so thankful we took the year-and-a-half off, that I did consulting for two years, and the decision to join Pixel & Tonic versus the other opportunities that you and I sat down and made that decision together and it was a very intentional what's this going to look like for our family. We really talked and prayed that through in partnership together. So I am actually really optimistic about what the next 10 years looks like for us.

I think back to our original marriage vows, for richer and for poorer, and I can make that same statement again. The physical outcome of this is important in a pragmatic sense, but it's almost beside the point in that you and I really get to have this adventure together. So I'm excited for Part Three - what does this look like, and going through that exercise with you.

All right [sighs]. We're going to take a short break and be right back to close the show out with Heart Loop.

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Leslie: And we're back to close the show out with Heart Loop, which is our implementation of the Japanese philosophy of Kaizen which we've talked about before on the show. It's basically a simple way for us to think about improving our marriage on a regular basis, and we love it. This is recorded Tuesday evening so I'm actually in the midst of doing the work that I promised you when we recorded on Friday.

To reiterate, I am thinking hard about Heart Loop itself because there's a lot in that. We have some big plans for that this year. I was able to share with you this afternoon, bring you up to speed on the thinking behind it, and get your input on that a little bit. I'm looking forward to writing more of that down and fleshing it out, but I feel like I'm in such a good space there with doing it. So yeah, I'm very much doing the work there.

Also taking seriously - I think especially after our follow-up conversations and today's episode - the real need for me to take a sabbatical and make sure that I'm using the time that you guys are gone wisely to take care of the daily routines and to figure out how this translates into my new role, my new job, the things that we're trying to do here. I'm really excited about doing that and I feel I understand its importance. I can feel like the intersection of opportunity and excitement just hitting me just right, so I'm really looking forward to that.

Laura: I'm probably not going to be able to do a whole lot while I'm gone, but I want to put on my To Do List to begin a brain dump knowledge vault for us to share of all the things [chuckles], all the things that I as knower of the things take for granted of knowing, and that you probably need to know, because what if something happened to me? There's probably a lot of things, like you had to ask me where your passport was the other day.

Leslie: Yep. I didn't know.

Laura: You need to know that, and where the key is kept for the place in which it is stored and all that [chuckles]. So yeah, there's probably a lot of processes in this house that you have no idea of the inner workings.

Leslie: No, I readily admit that and I'm actually really looking forward to doing that, because I love that stuff.

Laura: It's super-overwhelming to me because I am a doer by gut, not a doer by brain, and so having to think it and put it into words on paper sounds overwhelming to me, but I know this is necessary. Even if it was not something that you need emotionally, it is necessary just for the safety of our family, and I would encourage other families to take a long hard look at who's the knower and where the information is also going to be stored, so that should the knower suddenly be brain dead [chuckles] or absent in some way, life could still continue for everyone else in some semblance of normalcy.

Leslie: Yep. I know we have all those things, I just don't know where they are [chuckles].

Laura: Exactly. So we've done the big thing like having the Will and the Trust and all of that, and now this is the nitty-gritty daily things where the stakes are slightly lower but still really important.

Leslie: Yes. Yes, please. I can help organize that. That's kind of my -

Laura: Yeah, you can tell me where to put it.

Leslie: My bread and butter.

Laura: Yes, please [chuckles].

Leslie: Yeah, we'll talk about that because I have an appointment here in a few minutes to run to. But yes, we can talk about that tomorrow morning over breakfast.

That's going to do it for us. As another reminder, this show's an invitation. We really want to know what this has inspired in you and how this is encouraging you to take action in your own relationship, your own partnership, and what you're doing to improve that.

If you would like to let us know, there are three great ways to do that. The first, if you like being brief, is Twitter. You can let us know @marriagestartup on Twitter. If you like longer feedback in a public place, you can do that on Facebook at facebook.com/marriagestartup, or as a comment to this episode. You can get to this episode by going to marriagestartup.com/62 - that's the shortcut to get to any episode that we've done.

Finally, if you have more of a private story that you would like to share with us, you can email us at hello@marriagestartup.com. Anything you email us is

always confidential, we treat it with sacred trust and we won't share it on this show without your permission. We promise.

That's it. Until next week, be kind to each other.