

## How to Drop Happily Ever After and Do Relationships Better – John Kim, LMFT – #973

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. I promised that I was going to tell you what you get out of an episode before you listen to it, so you can decide whether you want to invest the next hour of your life with me and with the hundreds of thousands of other people who are listening to this. So here's what you're going to get out of this one. This episode's going to help you learn how to recognize your own shit and be a better partner in relationships. It's going to teach you how to let go of complete fairytale, unrealistic ideals of how you've probably been programmed to think love and relationships ought to be. So you can live in the present. Because when you talk about biohacking, we've got these three major F words: fear, food, and the other F word, we'll call it fertility, or the four-letter version of that word.

If you are in a state of fear, you won't do food or love. But if you have all these stories about love that aren't real and you feel like you're not getting it, you'll go right back into fear, and all this stuff hijacks energy so you want to be better at making energy and better at allocating energy across your emotions about your work in the world. That would be biohacking 101. That's why you've got to pay attention to relationships as part of the environment around you that you are consciously controlling so you could show up the way you want to show up. It also means, in this episode, you might learn how to be a little bit more emotionally responsible to people you love.

With no further ado, you're wondering, "Who's it going to be?" This guy who got a tattoo and a Harley to find his way. He talks about the great divide of his divorce about seven years ago, went to therapy school, became a life coach, looked at technology, created online communities, built a name as an unconventional therapist who would take meetings with clients at coffee shops or at a CrossFit box. His name is John Kim. He's a licensed marriage and family therapist, and he kind of pulls no punches. He's really funny on TikTok. Almost half a million people are tuning in for his shot glass bits of life wisdom. I think you'll have a lot to learn from him on the show. John, welcome.

John Kim:

Thank you for having me. What an honor. Also, what a refreshing angle into relationships. I love that you're talking about relationships on your podcast because the whole going into the door of biohacking, which is really interesting. So, thank you.

Dave:

Oh, you're so welcome.

Dave:

This element of wanting control of our own biology is so universal. It happens at all ages.

John:

Sure.

Dave:

We want it for different things. And the hook in was changing the environment around you and relationships are such a big part of. But your tribe, your friends and your primary partner or partners...

well, those are big variables. If those are wrong and you're like, "I wonder why I'm not happy all the time. And I have all these other issues," well, maybe you could look there.

John:

Yeah.

Dave:

But that's when, like you say in a lot of your content, you've got to look at yourself without flinching and just realize, is it you or is it them? And that's the title of your book, It's Not Me, It's You: Break the Blame Cycle, which is a great name.

John:

Right. Yep.

Dave:

It sort of flips it on head, "Oh, it's not you, it's me." And you're like, "No, it's you." So what is the blame cycle that it says break the blame cycle relationship better?

John:

Yeah. I've written many books; this is my first one that I co-authored it with my partner who is also a therapist. This was the most terrifying book to write because now I had someone to check me on my own shit. It's easy for me to write a book by myself because it's my point of view, my head, my stories, but when you have someone who's going to hit the ball back or not, it's terrifying. So we really pull the curtain back, and we wanted to also show that therapists are just as fucked up as everyone else. It doesn't matter if you have letters after your name, relationships are really hard. So we talk about a lot of our struggles, our wiring, the stuff that we're going to talk about today, the misconception of happily ever after, and the one, and all of that stuff. We have fallen into the trap as well.

Dave:

I can't imagine writing a book with your romantic partner as a therapist. How did you guys do this? So you didn't fight over the name of chapter one or the past and present tense or whatever the heck? Just walk me through as a working relationship. Okay, you're dating a therapist, so you're both psychoanalyzing each other, and you're collaborating on a book which is hard work. How does it work?

John:

If I'm a shot glass, she's a wine glass. So it really works in that I'm kind of potent, punchy, she's long-winded. So we weren't stepping on each other's toes. And then also, we had a conversation before we started writing this book. We wanted to be therapists who showed themselves. And this is a flag I've been waving for 12 years. One of the reasons or one of the things I think is kind of problematic in the clinical world is a lot of therapists being cardboard cutouts, and we're trained to, we're not supposed to show our own personal life. We're supposed to be neutral. And all of that, I think, is changing because of social media and stuff. So I really wanted this to be a book that comes with you instead of at you. So since we were on the same page with that, the writing was just writing, the writing was easy. It's like, "You handle that chapter. I handle this chapter. You write this part of your story. I write this." So it really flowed well.

Dave:

Do you have a therapist of your own?

John:

Yeah, of course. I will be honest, I haven't seen my therapist in a while. I feel like, "Do as I say, not as I do." But I think it's important for every therapist to have his or her own therapist to process their client stuff and what gets activated in the room. It would be hypocritical if you don't have your own therapist as a therapist.

Dave:

What's the difference between a life coach and a therapist? Because you do both.

John:

Yeah. I think a therapist... There is an overlap. I wear two hats. I called myself a coach because with therapy, there's a lot of rules and guidelines. So when I wanted to work in a way that was honest to me, like meeting people in CrossFit boxes, going on a hike. In Los Angeles, I was living at Silver Lake, and there's this lake where if you walk around the lake, it's exactly 50 minutes. So I'd meet a client there and we would walk and talk. All of these things you're not really supposed to do as a therapist, even use the internet. Back in the Google Hangout days, when people were on AOL and dial-up, I was running groups, and that was a big no-no. So I said, "Man, if I want to really work in a way that felt honest to me, I got to hop the fence." I have a clinical background. I am a therapist, I don't deny that, but I can wear a coaching hat. I think over the years, coaching has exploded. Coaching was a joke in the beginning. Right?

Dave:

Yeah.

John:

I mean, there were a few like Tony Robbins and stuff, but if you called yourself a coach, there was a lot of eye-rolling and "What are you talking about?" unless you were a fitness coach or a nutritionist or a nutritional coach. But relationship coach, life coach, "What are you talking about? And also, who are you to tell me how to live my life?" But now, I think it's become popular because people are more interested in who you are instead of what you know. I didn't answer your question. I'm going to answer it right now.

The difference is, therapy is more like from suffering to baseline, a lot of processing. You are being treated for something, whether it's depression or personality disorder. And then coaching is more about from baseline to thriving, accountability, homework, pushing the needle forward. So it's more present-focused and more goal-oriented. Therapy can be ongoing forever.

Dave:

I'm a huge fan of transpersonal psychology. And I've done work with lots of therapists, so not to denigrate at all, but the guidelines are very strong.

So, it's cool that you, because you're a licensed therapist, you can put on a therapist hat and have a couch and all the stuff a therapist does and then say, "You know what, let's switch over." But certifications cost thousands of dollars per life coach. So not many life coaches are certified.

John:

Yep.

Dave:

There's a whole broad thing there, but you got to click with the person and they have to have enough life experience to help you.

John:

Yes. Yes.

Dave:

I get a little concerned when I see someone who's in their early 20s hanging up a life coach shingle.

John:

Yeah. Yeah.

Dave:

What's your take on that?

John:

I think social media has made it where if you have a lot of followers or you're attractive or popular or clever or funny, then you think you could call yourself a coach. A lot of people think coaching is about giving advice. And it's not. I love that you had a training program, as I do too, because it makes coaches legit. It's like, just because you do a lot of fitness, doesn't mean that you should be coaching people with fitness.

Dave:

There's so much noise in the market that I'm very supportive of people being highly qualified, highly experienced coaches who've done a lot of their own therapy as opposed to just being coached-

John:

Right.

Dave:

... because I think you have to have your shit together. And I'm focusing more on neurofeedback as the primary way to do it. Do you ever do medicine ceremonies, neurofeedback, hypnotism, electrical shocks of the brain, dilating eyedrops, whatever, other kinds of stuff?

John:

Yeah. I've done a lot of wall balls and eyes tests. No, but I'm interested in what's happening now with the EMDR, not EMDR, the MDMA. They're using-

Dave:

Psilocybin?

John:

Yeah, all that stuff, and then having three-hour sessions and just going somewhere, all that stuff, microdosing. It's really fascinating to me, and it seems like it's really blowing up as a new way to get into the unconscious.

Dave:

I'm a supporter of cognitive and biological freedom. So, you should be able to put whatever substance you want in your body.

John:

Sure, sure.

Dave:

Maybe there's some things you might not want to do, and there are some people who are maybe overdoing it. I have another set of friends, so we've done more than 400 ayahuasca ceremonies.

John:

Oh, wow.

Dave:

I'm like, "At what point do you say it's not working?" Because I did one in Peru in 1999, and that was it.

John:

Wait, how was that for you? Because I've always wanted to do it, and I hear a lot of stories about puking and all that. Was it life changing for you, or no?

Dave:

It was part of my path, but I mean, I've studied in Nepal into bed and with a lot of different disciplines over the years, and most of what I've had the most transformational experiences from has been more neurofeedback and breath work like holotropic breathing.

John:

Mm-hmm. That's worthy. Yeah.

Dave:

So, I think ayahuasca should be at the very last step, and that before you do that, you should have done therapeutic work with energy therapeutic types with all of the other substances and that you probably should start with ketamine and then look at MDMA, assuming we're talking about trauma resolution, and then go to psilocybin or LSD and then DMT and then 5-MeO-DMT.

John:

Mm-hmm. Yeah. I also feel like these days, because those things have become so popular and commercialized, people are skipping, in my field, called the work, meaning holding up a mirror, looking at your own shit. They're skipping all that because this other stuff is fun and sexy, because you get to go

on an adventure or all the pretty people are doing it or it's all over Instagram. So I think there is a lot of people avoiding therapy or the couch or avoiding the hard conversations because they could just go take some drugs and then come back a changed person.

Dave:

Well said. Well, they think you come back a changed person, but I think some of it's actually going to strengthen the ego versus weaken its control when it's not done the right way.

John:

Yeah.

Dave:

And like you said, the work, you open the door, you go through it, and then you spend months picking apart what you found and talking about it with your therapist, your coach, and understanding it and journaling. It's just a lot of work to it that way. You might learn holotropic breathing, which is free and was a replacement for LSD and also has very similar effects to those things. So I feel like people should learn tantric sex, breathwork, EMDR, and do neurofeedback, which is, one of my companies does neurofeedback. But you should do those things before you start getting into the drugs and maybe ketamine because it's well understood and very safe.

John:

So I'm interested in why you said tantric sex, which I haven't learned anything about, which I'm very curious about. Why does that fall also in that category? That's really interesting to me.

Dave:

If you want to meet God-

John:

Yeah? You could do it in the bedroom?

Dave:

About 20% of people in studies talk about having these profound spiritual experiences during really... Well, it's not just good sex, but it's during very... Their partner has no idea what's going on. They're just laying there twitching and making sounds. But they're like, "I just met God. I just had the most profound... I saw my past lives. The world opened up. I let go of trauma." There's tears coming out. And if you measure the tears, the tears actually are something called emerita. They're not tears of just passion. There's glands in women that ayurvedic people and traditional Chinese medicine practitioners from the old school will teach you about. There's glands under the tongue. There's special glands in eyes and in the vagina where women will secrete these substances that smell like perfume. You're like, "What the hell is going on? I just thought I was having a good time."

John:

Mm-hmm.

Dave:

That stuff's all real. So there are some people, when they get the right partner and they learn techniques like that, where it is as healing as profoundly healing as doing plant medicine. I think it belongs in the world of therapy. And I don't think people talk about sex with their therapists enough. Not that I'm a therapist or that, but from what I know, a lot of therapists don't go too far into that. Or is that just an old-fashioned view of therapy?

John:

If they do talk about sex, it's not definitely through that door. It's through non-communication, frustrated. I don't want to generalize, but it's usually women being touched out, men not having enough. And then you throw children into the mix and there's just no time. So people are scheduling sex, and sex becomes a thing that is something that they need to do more than people enjoy, I think.

Dave:

Isn't it better to schedule it than to just not do it?

John:

Well, it is now, because I have a two and a half year old. When I grew up, I was thinking, "Oh yeah, I'm never going to schedule sex. I'm a hopeless romantic. That's so stupid. It's so magical." Now, if you look on my Google calendar, there it is, Tuesday 12:00, 30 minutes, afternoon delight, before we pick up our child,

Dave:

I think that if people have younger kids and you don't schedule a day, night in sex, you will probably get divorced.

John:

I agree. I agree. I think that is crucial. Especially things like what John Gottman talks about, the six-second kiss, something as simple as kissing for six seconds, because life happens and we don't do that. Six seconds can be a long time when we talk about a kiss, threaded through your day really can change the trajectory for sure. I think that's more important than the long weekend to Greece. I think it's more important in the mundane, the day-to-day routines, that are going to build a closeness and connection more than not doing that and say, you're going to go to some exotic vacation for a week.

Dave:

What happens quite often is, a woman will say, "Well, we had this romantic vacation. We did this thing. Why are you pestering me? Let's wait till next year," sort of thing. Because you have young kids, you have maybe nursing, all the responsibilities, sleep deprivation, multiple careers, all that stuff. And like you said, it feels like a chore. And then guy's like, "Well, once a year isn't going to cut it for me." Of course, there's other little things, but then it feels like it drives a wedge in. I've seen very successful people just decide after, enough of that, the spark is gone.

John:

Yeah, absolutely. The spark doesn't happen naturally because of chemistry. It is something that requires work. It's part of it. It's part of building a relationship, is fanning the flames, which I talk about in the book. Yeah.

Dave:

Oh, absolutely. That's why I'm asking all this stuff, because you just wrote a book on it. Right? You talk about, in the book, chiseling away a childhood protection mechanisms, which is such good language. The idea that your automated things you take credit for are actually part of what your child learned how to do. Walk me through your thinking about that and the words you use for it.

John:

Yeah. So by that language, I could tell, Vanessa probably wrote it, not me, but I know what you're talking about. I think a lot of our patterns come from childhood and upbringing, especially attachment styles. Right?

Dave:

Yeah.

John:

I'm an anxious attachment. I hold onto her leg. She's an avoidant attachment, meaning she runs the other way. All of those things stem from early on. So we have to be aware of our story, open the hood, see how we're wired, and then actively try to become securely attached, actively rewire yourself, which is like changing your body. It's so hard to do. It's a daily thing. A lot of people think they just go to a seminar or watch a video course and then it's all good. And it's not. It has to be a lifestyle.

Dave:

I believe it does. What's emerging from the work I've done on the brain in mitochondrial biology, and 40 Years [of Zen] is in the neurofeedback performance stuff, there's a lot of stuff that happens, I think, in the tissues of the body before it even gets up into the brain. And most of that is programmed in the womb and in early childhood. You talk about attachment styles, and that goes right down to birth and what happened in the womb, pre and prenatal psychology. And if someone's listening to this going, "What the heck are you guys talking about? You've got this angry therapist," that was name of one of your other books, "and you're wearing a Thrasher t-shirt with the sleeves cut off and some weird biohacker up in Canada. And you're saying attachment styles?"

Well yeah, everyone learns how to attach to a parent. Because if you don't, you end up being a sociopath or a psychopath or maybe just a deeply wounded narcissist who walks around blaming everyone else for your life. So yeah, you kind of did that even if no one ever told you did that and even if you don't remember it. And what that means is that you will do stuff automatically and then take credit for it. What I believe therapists are doing is, they're making you aware that you're doing it for those reasons instead of just because you're a bad person.

John:

Yeah. Yes.

Dave:

Is that an accurate assessment?

John:

A hundred percent. Awareness is the key, right? I mean, everything in life, everything starts at awareness. There's also a spectrum. Just because I'm anxiously attached, doesn't mean that I am as anxiously attached as I was in my 20s where I was very controlling and jealous and grabbing instead of holding love. So there is a spectrum and sometimes we snap back, but just to be aware, follow the string down where does it come from. Getting curious about your behavior, it's the beginning, it's the beginning of breaking patterns.

Dave:

You go back to that definition of biohacking, you're going to have full control of your biology. You might want awareness of what you're doing so that you could gain control of it. Because if you don't have awareness, if you can't measure it, you can't improve it. Right?

John:

Yes.

Dave:

You'll just flop around thinking that, "Oh, well, they did this to me because I feel this." But the reality is, you felt that, and you didn't have to feel that when they did this.

John:

And this is why a lot of people say, "Yeah, I keep dating the same people. And the only thing that changes is faces."

Dave:

Yeah.

John:

Well yeah, because you are repeating the same patterns. Whether we're talking about attachment styles or other unhealthy behaviors, you're repeating that relationship dynamic just with different people.

Dave:

You're saying they should change hair color too or-

John:

Well, sure if you want to change hair color, but you should change your relationship with yourself, which then changes the relationship dynamic with others. You can't change the relationship with yourself until you open the hood and become aware of how you function.

Dave:

So how does that work?

John:

I don't really like the word self-love. I like self-like. After my divorce 12 years ago, I... Because love is a choice and we love people that we don't really like, family members and whatnot, but like is earned. And I remember after my divorce at 35, I had nothing, broke. I was halfway through therapy school. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I was very alone, no friends. And I started there, I said, "Do I like myself? If not, how do I get to a place where I actually like myself?" And then enter Harleys, CrossFit, exploration, tattoos, just living more in my solid self as Marty Bowen. Oh, there you go. Yep. What is that? I have a hummingbird on my bicep. What do you have?

Dave:

I got the caffeine molecule on my bicep.

John:

Oh, nice. Nice. Wait, do you have one tattoo? Do you have many?

Dave:

Just one.

John:

Okay. I use them as bookmarks, their dog year pages of my life. And I went on a three, four-year journey of liking myself, learning to like myself, spending a lot of time alone. And that was the birth of this book, *Single on Purpose*, which I'm currently trying to turn into an app. But I realized that before you build something with someone else, you got to build something with you, or else, what are you bringing to the table other than desperation and clingyness?

John:

And then enter codependency and all that. Yeah.

Dave:

I got divorced when I was 30 or 31. I got divorced a little bit earlier in life than you did. I was married for five or six long, dark years back then. Just a completely codependent broken relationship in both directions. And when I finished that, that was when I went to Nepal and did all kinds of personal development stuff, including the first time I'd ever seen a therapist. I did a 10-day intense personal development thing.

John:

At this point, how old were you?

Dave:

I must have been about 31, 32.

John:

Yeah. Yeah.

Dave:

Something like that.

John:

Yeah. I was 35, but yeah.

Dave:

Yeah. Maybe you had a little bit more wisdom than I did, but I did go through a period because that's what the people I was working with recommended, that you need to not go get in a relationship. You need to just be alone and maybe date casually, which was like, "What?" But I did that for a good year or two, and it was the best thing I ever did. And you had the same experience, it sounds like, but you were by yourself for four or five years.

John:

Yeah. Mine, no one wanted to do with me. No one wanted to be with me. I tell people I found myself through donuts, motorcycles and barbells, and I kind of did. I was in Los Angeles. I've been here since I was three. Went through a divorce, didn't have any money or any means to do anything, like go into jungles or fancy places. So, I just took what I had in front of me, which was just Styrofoam and coffee, a little Wayne Dyer in my ear, the CrossFit box. I had smart Fit. I just had to get there. And I knew if I was there, I would get a workout in. And then I just got into this whole hero's journey, man, called to action.

I think it's Ryan Reynolds, who said once that when he was struggling in Hollywood, his motorcycle saved his life because he just got on the bike when he was stressed out and just would ride the streets of LA. I did the same in Malibu. I got on my Harley and I would hug canyons in Malibu and hit flow states, connecting me to that 12-year-old spirit that I had locked away in the '80s who felt so like break dancing. And that spirit appeared when I was skating. And then after my divorce, it was gone. So I had to reunite with that spirit. And for me, that was motorcycles and CrossFit.

Dave:

Were you abused as a child?

John:

I was not abused, but I did not get a lot of emotional milk. My parents were always working. So I tell people I was just raised by pulp culture. And my parents, I get it, they came here with \$500 and didn't speak English. Well, they were born in poverty and war-stricken. The idea of emotional intelligence for them doesn't... They're just in permanent fight or flight survival mode. They just want to pay the bills and make sure that we stay alive. They were never home.

Dave:

They came over from Korea?

John:

South Korea. Came here in the... Man, '73 I was born, they came here at '76.

Dave:

Oh, okay. Got it.

John:

Their focus was trying to make me American so I fit in. They wanted to make sure I had Levi's and designer clothes, but I didn't get a lot of I-love-yous or "You're valuable" or all the stuff that we now know is just emotional milk and so important when it comes to raising children.

Dave:

Now, one of the things I loved about your newest book is, you talk about happily ever after is bullshit.

John:

Yeah.

Dave:

What does that mean to you when you say notion of the one is BS and happily ever after? Just walk me through your thinking about that.

John:

Yeah. I think we've been programmed by Disney movies. I think Disney movies should start after the wedding, and now the dirty socks are on the floor and the dishes aren't done, and everything that a real relationship struggles with. So this idea of happily ever after means that you just have to find your soul mate, you just have to find the person you're supposed to be with, and then everything's going to be good. I think a lot of people, especially women in their 30s because they have that whole clock thing, they're not happy until they find "the one." I also have a problem with the one because there's more than one person for you in this. I mean, there's billions of people in this world.

Dave:

I hope everyone under 40 listening to this, and there are quite a few people, even in their early 20s who listen to the show. The idea of there being a single soulmate for you, there was no evidence. It's just a dumb assumption that you picked up somewhere. Anyone who's been around and can sense that stuff, you're going to find people in life and you have an instant connection with them.

John:

Yes.

Dave:

And you talk to one group of people, "Oh, that's a karmic thing. It's a past life thing. In my life, I think it's past life things. I know because sometimes I meet people and I can remember how I know them. And it just pops into my head." I'm like, "This world is still freaking weird." But you will meet a substantial number of people in your life who've been around you before.

John:

Yes.

Dave:

Whether you believe what I'm saying or not, you want to interpret it a different way, but there's a spark and a snap, and it's fascinating. You probably could be happy with any one of them. Maybe they're all soulmates. But to say there's only one of those, you have no evidence there's only one.

John:

If you also believe in the one, there's pressure and if your relationship isn't doing well, you're going to think you're with the wrong one. So now you're looking over the fence without doing any work. My definition is, the one is the one in front of you. That's it.

Dave:

Well, what if the one in front of you is codependent and abusive?

John:

Well, abusive is one thing. Most people are codependent, but then you have to see if he or she wants to work on this. Right?

Dave:

Willingness to evolve. Right.

John:

Yeah. And if they're not willing to evolve, then you're only 50% of any relationship so it's not going to have legs. If they are, then now both of you can grow together. And that process is only going to produce more relationship glue. So I also think that fighting is okay because it's not about how many times we fight, it's about how we fight. And most people don't know how to fight. Most people are reactive, defensive, throwing chairs, and the fights are destructive. Fights can actually bring us together. You know?

Dave:

Mm-hmm. They really can when you realize you're resolving something versus just spinning it around. Right?

John:

Right, right. And in order to resolve, you have to come in open, trying to understand before trying to be understood, compassionate, empathetic, and all that, which is all hard to do.

Dave:

It is hard to do. I realize I've been dropping a term here. I'm codependent. As a therapist, what is codependence?

John:

Yeah. I love my partner's definition because she really simplifies it. Vanessa Bennett, that's her go-to, is codependency. That's the work she does. She says, "I describe it like this: If I'm okay, you're okay. If I'm not okay, you're not okay. Or vice versa." So basically, if you're okay then I'm okay. But if you're not okay, then I am not okay either. And there's an enmeshment there, there's codependency. There's two

people who are kind of melted together instead of two individuals sharing life together. And the way that I see it is-

Dave:

It's sticky.

John:

It's sticky. You're right. And I say, "You know what? I'll give you my hand but not my life." Because I used to think, if we're going to be together, and maybe this is old-school Korean in me, we're in it together. I go down, you go down. You go down, I go down. It's like us against the world. In high school, that's very romantic, but that's unhealthy. That's sticky. That is codependency. And if someone goes down, you should give them your hand but not your life. They should not take you as hostage.

Dave:

That's such a healthy thing, but you've got some other advice that I wish I would've had that when I was in my 20s and learning how to date, learning how to pick a partner. And you talk about red flags versus differences in a partner. What's up with that?

John:

So with Vanessa and I, we are very different, in the beginning, was rocky and I was ambivalent. So I had to really try to find the beauty and the contrast in our differences. I almost saw them as red flags, but they weren't red flags. They were opportunities for me to grow. They were differences that can be healthy as long as you're willing to swim past them, to sit with them. A lot of times we see differences, we flash it as a red flag, and then we run the other way, and we strip ourselves of growth. I think growth evolution comes from what is difficult, what is uncomfortable, and us looking at that.

You got to know what is a red flag. If you're getting punched in the face, that's a red flag. But if you have different erotic with blueprints, that may not be a red flag. That may be a chance for trying something different or stretching. And then through that process, you grow, your partner grows, the relationship grows. Or it doesn't. And if that doesn't, then it's also telling as well, but that's not really a red flag. It sets you on a journey.

Dave:

I have one friend in particular I'm thinking of who's been on the show. For her, her non-negotiable list, which is what you talk about in the book, like there's things I have to have in a partner, she's like, "I need a hundred percent monogamous relationship." So she's super clear on that. I have another friend who's, these are both women, under no circumstances would I ever have a fully monogamous relationship because I know I'd be unhappy. I was unhappy in my last one. I won't do it.

John:

Yep.

Dave:

Different people can have very different non-negotiable lists. So, your list is your list. But the idea that I certainly had when I was much younger was, "Oh, I want to date someone like me." There's no growth

in that. And there's probably just a lot of repulsion. And then from David Dida's work, then there's no polarity either. You need someone who's different than you. Right?

John:

Yes, definitely. Definitely. And also, the stuff that you said you wish you would've known in your 20s, I don't think you're supposed to because if you knew, it would've stripped you of that journey. I think our 20s are all about heartache and exploration and falling and getting up.

Dave:

That's a good point. Your 20s are largely still training wheels. You just can't see them. It's nice though to be like, "Okay, I'm dating someone. Should I go on some more dates? Maybe this is getting serious." If someone would've just told you, take a look at their parents and their family dynamic and see how much of a problem that is, and if it's completely wrecked, then you're like, "Okay, how's the person done their work?" And if not, "Okay, you had six weeks of super-hot sex, and that's great, but it's probably not a longer term thing."

John:

Right, right.

Dave:

What I've been teaching my kids, and I wanted to get your feedback on this, you can tell me it's totally the wrong thing to teach them, is I teach them, look, attraction is a biological thing. You wouldn't know this, but it's driven by your nose, by pheromones or a thing, and your eyes. There's all these automated systems that are going to make some person look absolutely irresistible, like the best looking chocolate cake ever. Now the question is, should you eat the chocolate cake? Well, might you want to look at the list of ingredients and see what's in there? Is it made with butter or is it made with canola oil and all sorts of other artificial shit? I know that it looks good. It kind of smells good. You're attracted to it. Attraction doesn't mean relationship, but what we're taught is, "Oh my God, they're so attractive," and just to divorce the two. So attractive means, "I think I want to take a bite to that. Let's go on a date, but do I want to buy the cake?"

John:

Build the relationship.

Dave:

Then you got to look at the family and how the behavior patterns are, almost like you would interview someone for a job interview. I was horrified if someone had told me this advice in my 20s. Talk about love. Love is not attraction. And that's what I was missing.

John:

Yeah. Yeah. So, here's interesting. My answer to you is that I love what you're saying.

Dave:

It's good advice? I'd say I could be wrong. I'm an expert parent. Right?

John:

It's the kind of advice I think that we should be telling our kids, instead of saying, "You're going to find the one, and that one's going to come on a horse and sweep you off your feet. You have to be with that person for the rest of your life and make beautiful children," or whatever message that they're getting. I think that's a lot more damaging. I love what you're saying, which is, there's a difference between attraction and building a relationship. Building a relationship requires a lot more than skin hunger or attraction. Because it's truth, it's real. It's what you've learned in your life. And so to pass that on to your children is a gift. And then when they get older, they're going to be like, "Fuck, my dad told me this back in the day, and he was so right." So I applaud that, man. When my daughter grows up, I'm going to tell her the same thing. I'm going to tell her what I believe is true.

Dave:

The question is whether our kids will listen to us, because the other thing I tell the kids, I've been telling them since they were little, is that, "When you turn about 13, I'm going to become the dumbest human on earth." They're like, "Daddy, that could never happen." I'm like, "No, trust me it's going to happen. I'll be here when you turn 23 and I'm smart again."

John:

You will come back. Yeah. They'd be embarrassed of you for a while, and then they'll come back. Man, that's so interesting. Yeah. I'm not excited about those years with my child.

Dave:

Every age is different with it but there's phases. But I don't know, teenagers are pretty cool as far as I can tell, even though they don't think I am, but that's just more fun for embarrassing them.

John:

Sure, sure. I'm still going to roll up at our high school with Vans in my Harley and her friends are going to be like, "Dude, your grandpa's here." Because when she's in high school, I'm going to be old as fuck.

Dave:

Let's get some more advice from your book for listeners here. Let's see, I've taken a bunch of notes on this. Let me find some good notes. All right, let's talk about communication. You have a part in your book where it says, "That's not what I'm saying." You talk about healthy communication versus communicating from reactivity and emotions. Walk me through what people do and what they can do to change that.

John:

Yeah. Sure. Simply put, people think communication is the words coming out of your mouth, and I think especially men who tend to be more logic based, "Yeah, but this is what you said." Communication is so much more than that. It's body language. It's mannerism. It's eye contact. It's stuff what's happening underneath. There's that movie where it's like, "I don't want you to do the dishes. I want you to want to do the dishes," or that whole fight with, I think it was Jennifer Aniston. I don't know, but that's an example of, there's stuff happening underneath, and that's what you should listen to, not what's on the surface. So if we could train ourselves to read the subtext, what is this person-

Dave:

Hold on a second here. Okay, you're 49, you're a therapist, you studied how to do this, you're a dude, and you still struggle to do that in your relationship. I'm not a therapist. I'm not going to see any of that shit. No dude listening to this is, "Oh, you should just read your woman's mind." And no woman is like, "Well, my guy, I don't know what the hell he's thinking. He keeps doing weird video gaming stuff."

John:

Yes.

Dave:

How realistic is this?

John:

Not read the woman's mind. I don't think that's possible. But subtext, meaning... And it is hard. Right. Yeah, you're not going to just listen to this podcast and then tomorrow try to... But I think you can learn how to read what the person is saying if you know them well, not based just on the word. It's putting less weight on actual words and more weight on all the other ways that we communicate, whether it is body language through the eyes and through what's happening underneath the stuff that they're really trying to say. Someone may say, "I don't want pizza," but what they really mean is, "I miss you and I want to connect to you." But what comes out is, "I don't fucking want pizza."

Dave:

Man, I don't think I'm particularly gifted at that type of intuition because I... We're both authors. We live in the world of words, although you live in the world of emotion and body language because you're a therapist.

John:

Yeah.

Dave:

I have a hard time with that one because you say you wanted a taco, well then I'll get you a goddamn taco, but what if you wanted was a hug.

John:

That's not what she wanted. She wanted to be-

Dave:

If she wanted a hug, she could just ask me for a hug. Jesus Christ.

John:

Right, right. Why didn't you just say you wanted a hug? Well, people aren't wired that way and they expect you to read in between all that. But yeah, it's an art. It takes time, but it would save a lot of fights if we could understand each other better in that way.

Dave:

One of the guys, a friend who I just adore, is John Gray from Mars and Venus. He has an older book about relationships that's not the Men are Mars, Venus one. I think it's called Relationships, or has the word relationships in the title. But he talks about how women and men use language differently. And that women quite often, they're using talking to think, so they don't know what they're going to say when they start talking. This is on average, not everyone's the same clearly. And that's particularly frustrating for guys who can be more linear in it. And that someone's just sitting there and letting a woman talk while she figures out what she's thinking, because talking is a part of the thinking, I found that to be really intriguing. I wonder, does that jive with anything that you've learned or what you've seen in your practice? There's just a fundamental difference in cognitive styles between men and women.

John:

I don't know about cognitive styles. I know, and everyone knows this, it's a generalization, but I know that men tend to be more logic-driven, reading the surface. Women tend to be more emotional-driven and have difficulty expressing how they feel, what they need.

Dave:

Or even knowing what they feel. When I was 30, I didn't even know of the names of half the feelings in my body. I truly didn't.

John:

Yeah. Yeah. And that's because of locker rooms and because men were kind of programmed to perform, achieve. We're about the scoreboard. So dropping into your body and actually noticing, putting names to feelings, I mean that stuff is all new, I mean, as far as in the world and what we believe is going to help with relationships. And if two people are doing it, now we have two pistons pumping and we have vulnerability. We have a nice bridge and soil for growth. But if people aren't doing that, the magnet flips, and then there's anger, resentment. Sometimes you swim too far from back, and then people just have now drift and then there's cheating and all that stuff.

Dave:

Well, I feel like we could talk for hours about this stuff, John. Your book is fascinating. It's called, It's Not Me, It's You: Break the Blame Cycle. Relationship better. And your URL is epic, [theangrytherapist.com](http://theangrytherapist.com).

John:

Dave, it's been a pleasure.

Dave:

And the Biohacking Conference. Come and spend three days learning from 70 plus speakers and looking at all the latest toys for changing your brain, changing your biology. All the vendors are going to be there. It's right down the street from you, Beverly Hilton, [biohackingconference.com](http://biohackingconference.com).

John:

Awesome.

Dave:

The book is It's Not Me, It's You: Break the Blame Cycle by John Kim and Vanessa Bennett.

John:

Thank you so much and thank you for having me on your show, and also creating just amazing conversations and dialogue, challenging people.

Dave:

Ah, you got it, my friend.