

Stephanie: This is Episode number 177 for Stay Happily Married: The Simple Truth.

Announcer: Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Stephanie: I'm Stephanie Lockwood, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. Relationships aren't destroyed by cataclysmic arguments. They're eroded by the little things that happen over time. We're all excited when a relationship starts. We watch what we do. We edit our actions and mind our words.

We gloss over the details because we love the dream of what could be. We sacrifice for now for what we want in the future. As our relationship grows, we get comfortable. We stop editing ourselves and return to our old habits.

Respect is eroded through the forgetful actions that make you feel as if you don't matter like you once did. Yes, relationships usually do end in cataclysmic fights, but it's not where they're torn apart. This insider view of the deterioration of a relationship comes from author, Jeff Cannon, who believes that meditation is the solution to resolving this age-old dilemma.

Jeff Cannon is the author of the book, "The Simple Truth". Jeff was a fast track entrepreneur with a portfolio of successful businesses, multiple businesses, multiple book publishings, produced documentaries and ran his own public relations agency. Then, it all came to a crashing halt at the end of 2009. That day he woke up on the hospital bed recovering from a ten hour surgery that removed six of the seven brain tumors that he had.

A long time devotee of the martial arts and yoga, Jeff used meditation to reboot and retrain his brain. He learned firsthand how the brain is hard wired, just as it has been in the past 40,000 years. More important, he learned how it could be reprogrammed with such practices as meditation and mindfulness.

Welcome to the show, Jeff. I'm glad you could join us.

Jeff: Thank you. It's great to be here.

Stephanie: Good. When people think of resolving issues and conflicts in the relationships, they often look to counseling or self-help routines, but this is honestly the first time I've ever seen meditation listed as a solution. How exactly does the meditation process work?

Jeff: It's interesting you say that. Meditation is a very simple process of placing your attention on something, on any object. We often use the breath because it's something we have to do. We do it hundreds of times each minute. It's always with us. The problem has been most people think the fact or the act of medication is closely connected with Eastern religions, Buddhism, for instance.

Modern science is really changing that paradigm. It shows that meditation actually creates physical changes in the brain. By meditating, what you're actually doing is helping the brain rewire itself. Neuroscience, which is a fairly new field, shows that mindfulness meditation stimulates and develops wiring changes in the brain, and these can change the pattern of thinking, of feeling and behaving.

In simple terms, it helps you change the way you respond to a situation and to a relationship. It can give you a very stable foundation so that you stop responding out of

habit and start responding out of you own desires in a more thoughtful manner. It basically gives you control over how you act.

What that means in a relationship is that instead of auto responding to the way your spouse or significant other acted, you can hit a pause button. You can think; you can stop, and then you can decide how you want to respond to that rather than escalating a situation, you can de-escalate it. And so that people can get back to the compassionate side, the giving side of the relationship.

Stephanie: Now, what kind of issues are couples dealing with that you think meditation would resolve these issues?

Jeff: Basically, many of the issues that we have as people, especially in a relationship, come out of the fact that our bodies were hard wired more than 40,000 years ago when we became modern humans. At that point, we were hard wired for survival and for competition. Our automatic response is fight or flight to any situation there. When we get stressed, what happened is we automatically go into this fight or flight response which is why, very often, people escalated an argument, and then they look back and they say, "How did it even get there?"

We're basically living in a 21st century world in a Neolithic body. And so, what meditation does is, again, it gives you a pause button on our automatic response. Instead of just acting out of a false sense of survival, you can actually stop yourself and start acting out of your own best interest, which is usually, not necessarily the instinctive way to react.

Stephanie: How are these issues manifesting themselves within the relationship?

Jeff: In a lot of ways, we all know. We've all been there when a simple comment escalates into a full blown argument.

Stephanie: Yes.

Jeff: One person says something; the next person responds. Then, the other person responds, each of them trying to top the other person. They want to get the last word in because that's the way we're wired and again, that's not always in our best interest. In fact, it's rarely in our best interest these days. Again, we were wired for survival 40,000 years ago, but not for living in a 24/1 world with mobile phones and internet connectivity and hot water and comfortable housing.

What we end up doing is nitpicking these small little elements that don't really mean anything or that really don't mean that much in our lives. What meditation really helps you do is step back a little bit. It helps you look at the bigger picture and say, "Is this really important?" What I've often seen is that defuses the argument because one or two or both people all of a sudden look at each other and realize that it doesn't matter how much milk we put in the coffee. Does it really matter if we didn't buy fresh lettuce the other day?

These are the little things that we start picking apart because they don't really matter in the bigger relationship, in the context of things. It allows us to start looking at compassion, at love, at the elements that originally brought us together as a couple, as husband and wife, as partners in whatever context that is.

Stephanie: How is it that meditation can break that cycle of fighting over those little

things that just don't seem to matter?

Jeff: Sure. Meditation helps in two ways. First, as an ongoing practice, it lowers your overall stress level so that when you are going into a situation, even if it's a loving situation, your body is stressed because you're not necessarily comfortable with everything. It lowers your overall stress level so you can avoid disagreements, so that you can start backing away from escalating things out of control.

Second, there are little elements that I call mini meditations, and these are things that some clients use in business situations before they've got to give a speech. They stop for two or three, maybe five minutes and do a little meditation, and that helps them take control of the situation over their own emotions in that situation.

And so, in terms of couples, it's a wonderful thing that if they're going to be discussing finances, if they're going to be discussing their child's education, if they're going to be discussing topics that they know could potentially be stressful, to take a little break, ground themselves, balance themselves out so that then they can start talking from a somewhat dispassionate position. It reduces the overall emotional impact of a situation so that you can start to separate from an act rationally, act out of love instead of out of fear.

Stephanie: That was my next question to you, if it was a one-time thing, but obviously it's something that can be beneficial, especially if you're doing it on a daily or weekly basis. How long does it take to see results from this method if you apply it to a situation where you're in a relationship and you're always fighting? The little fights are causing the bigger ones.

Jeff: Certainly. Meditation is very much like going to the gym. If you think of the brain as another muscle, going into the gym once or twice is great. There's not wrong with that. It's going to help you, but going to the gym three times a week, week after week, that's going to get you into incredible shape.

With meditation, it's no different. Doing it once or twice it's definitely going to help you, and there are studies, endless studies at this point, about it lowering blood pressure, lowering the risk of heart disease, improving your ability to heal. So, meditating on an ongoing basis, in as little as ten minutes a day, neuroscientists have already seen physical changes in the brain.

Trying to meditate even a couple of minutes a day, you're going to start seeing results within a week. You're going to start seeing an overall calm. In a month, you're definitely going to notice the differences. It does have immediate effects. It's not the quick pill. It's not a shot in the arm.

It is a life change, a life decision, and if you can do it on a consistent basis, you will see some pretty incredible results, in terms of in your relationships but also in your work life, in your general life, in terms of just overall calming and having more control. Really taking your life by the horns and start being able to guide it in the direction you want it to go.

Stephanie: Obviously, this all sounds very good, but are there any negative side effects to practicing meditation, just in case?

Jeff: You may start to question why you do some of the senseless things that you do in life. You may start to question what you've done in the past. You may start having

realizations that much of the decisions you've made have not really been in your best favor, and you start wondering why you've made them. It may start you on a path of self-discovery, of self-change and self-evolution.

Stephanie: And so, obviously, we think of meditation, like you said, we sit on the floor in nothingness, but is there a certain way that people should go about doing this, or should they be doing it with their partner? Should they be doing it on their own first?

Jeff: Sure. In terms of meditation, it's a very simple process. It's a process of sitting, of breathing slowly, of focusing your awareness on your breath. When thoughts come into your head and they will, it means acknowledging those thoughts and returning to your breath. And so, you get this feeling, this kind of emptiness. You get to a place of emptiness where your thoughts are just pure thoughts. They aren't influenced by distractions. They aren't influenced by outside opinions. It really is your own.

And so, even if just one person starts to meditate, it only takes one person to defuse an argument. It only takes one person to step back and say, "Let's look at the bigger picture here." If two people are meditating together, that's even better because one person can stop an argument, but two people are needed to change a relationship.

Stephanie: That's a good transition to my next question there. If only one partner is willing to do this, maybe, they sat the other one down and said, "Look, I want to try this method. I think it would be really beneficial" and the other person is just kind of, they won't move on the issue, they don't want to try it. What can one person do to either convince the other person or just on their own, maybe, work their magic?

Jeff: This gets into a touchy subject that I've seen again and again. If one person is willing to change and the other person is not, then there are obviously other questions that need to be asked and discussed. Meditation is such a harmless activity. It doesn't take that long. It takes a couple of minutes a day. Some people are just uncomfortable with it. They are afraid of what other things might bubble up.

This is, again, like working out in a gym. Once you start working out and you start seeing some changes, the next thing you start saying is, "I should probably change my diet. What if I didn't do this? What if I didn't drink so much? This is one of these healthy things in your life that it does snowball. Once your brain starts saying, "Oh, wait a minute, I don't need to live in fear I don't need to respond out of habit. I can take control of my life. Then, they might start questioning, well, how else can I change my life so that I enjoy what I'm doing? How do I build a life that I want?"

This goes back to the negative impact that meditation is. Yes, it's scary for some people because they don't want to change; change is scary. It's why I more often use the word, evolve, and what you're doing is you're evolving into a better person. You're evolving into the next stage of your life, and part of your relationship is a key element to that.

And so, in terms of what if only one person wants to do it, what I would recommend often is have that one person do it. The second person will probably start seeing the change in the first person, and then they've got a choice to either say, "You know what? I want to evolve with you. I want to change my relationship with you or I don't." And that's the bigger question.

Stephanie: Meditation, obviously, is nothing new. It's something that's been around for thousands of years. Your book, "The Simple Truth: Meditation and Mindfulness for the Modern World" is actually designed to show how meditation can positively influence your

life, your entire life not just the romantic aspects of it. Can you tell us a little bit about your book and what it has to offer, and can it be useful in other aspects of someone's life?

Jeff: Certainly. I wrote this book after surviving a ten hour brain surgery to remove six of seven tumors. The seventh tumor is still in my head. I call it my own simple truth, but what this did is it created a life change in me. I was completely stressed out. It was literally killing me, my work and everything else. I started meditating. I changed my lifestyle. That seventh tumor has stopped growing, and that was over two years ago.

Stephanie: Wow!

Jeff: The doctors were amazed at that. And so, I started doing more and more research into the science behind meditation just to see how it actually works and the real results it can get. The result is this book. What really makes this book different is my effort to bring meditation into the modern world, to make it applicable to the realities of the 21st century world we all live in.

Two thousand years ago, they didn't have the 24/7 pace we have today. Life was a lot slower. So, I combine a lot of the latest signs of findings from Western science, neuroscience in particular, with the time honored practice of meditation to give people real life changing tools that they can grow and evolve with. It has nothing to do with religion. It has nothing to do with flowing robes and smoking incense. It has everything to do with real results.

That's what I wanted to do is focus the book on how to create the work-life balance that we've all been hearing about. How do we talk about wiring the brain and the need to find and live by our own simple truths in order to be happy? In effect, what this is it's a very ground book that tells you how to be happy, how to find your own simple truths and how to peel back all of those issues that are layered over it in order to be the person that you want to be.

Stephanie: Jeff, thank you so much for taking the time and being with us on the show today.

Jeff: Thank you so much for having me. It's been a real pleasure.

Stephanie: Jeff's book, "The Simple Truth: Meditation and Mindfulness for the Modern World" is now available on Amazon.com. To find out more about this book, you can visit [www.simple-truth.com](http://www.simple-truth.com), and to find out more about the author, Jeff Cannon, you can visit his website at [www.jeff-cannon - that's C-A-N-N-O-N - dotcom](http://www.jeff-cannon-that's-C-A-N-N-O-N-dotcom).

Thank you so much for joining us today, and I hope you'll join us again next week. We always enjoy hearing from you. To comment on this or any other episode, you can always call our listener comment line at 919-256-3083, or you can e-mail your comments to [comments@stayhappilymarried.com](mailto:comments@stayhappilymarried.com). I'm Stephanie Lockwood. Until next time, Stay Happily Married.

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