

Lee: This is Stay Happily Married, Episode No. 196, All Aboard the Love Odyssey

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

Lee: I'm Lee Rosen, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. Could a week long couple's cruise be the key to saving your marriage? Interesting question, maybe, Gilligan had it all wrong. It takes more than a three hour tour. In fact, maybe it takes seven days, a simple, relaxing seven days on the water could be the solution you've been searching for to save your drowning marriage from ending up like the Titanic. When a marriage is in danger, lots of couples go to couple's counseling as a possible solution, but what if there was an option that would allow you deeper discovery and understanding, without the constraint of a one hour time limit?

In addition to being an experienced sailor, Dr. Bryce Kaye received his Bachelor's degree from Columbia University and his Masterate and Doctorate in Psychology from the University of Illinois. He's a published author. He wrote "The Marriage First Aid Kit" and now he's working on "When Love and Anger Got Married: Human Paradox and Spiritual Growth." Now, Bryce has two private practices. He has the Cary Counseling Center in Cary, North Carolina, and he has the Oriental Counseling Center in New Bern, North Carolina. Near New Bern and Oriental is a port where there are boats, and Bryce runs a company called Love Odyssey Charters and that's what we're going to focus on today.

Love Odyssey Charters offers week long cruises where you stop at different ports along the rivers and sounds of North Carolina, and while you're on the cruise, Bryce and his wife, Helen, intensely coach you and your spouse on how to save your troubled marriage. Instead of an hour, it's a week of working on your relationship. Bryce, welcome back to the show. I am so glad you could join us.

Bryce: Well thank you, Lee. It's good seeing you again. Actually, I'm seeing you for the first time. I heard you the first time.

Lee: It's good to be doing this by video for a change. I wish we could broadcast the video so everyone could see you. It's not very often that I have a guest wearing a ship's captain's hat.

Bryce: [laughs] That's a lie, I'm not wearing a ship's captain's hat, but it's interesting to see how old we are anyway. I want to ask you, since we last talked, if you found any other therapists, counselor types, who believe that communication is not really very key to turning around a relationship?

Lee: You know, I feel like I've done a lot of these episodes and communication comes up in every single one of them, and apparently, you're supposed to talk to your spouse, according to you experts.

Bryce: The answer is yes, but if you focus on teaching how to communicate with your spouse, it's kind of like teaching someone on how to address the blemishes that come with smallpox. If you focus on the symptom, you're not going to get to the cure, and so we take a radically different approach, both in the Love Odysseys and in doing the marital interventions I do on land. We use a different model than the traditional therapists, which have by the way, very poor statistics, so I'm not ashamed to depart.

Lee: Well, I want to dig into the Love Odyssey thing because I'm fascinated by that, but before we do it, give me a feel for your model. What is it you are doing that's different than what you think is the model so many others are using?

Bryce: OK, we focus on the management of emotions that are coming mostly from the unconscious, and we focus on teaching the science of cultivating emotions, and to do that, we actually have to teach the science of how to manage one's own emotions and managing one's self, because a lot of what happens is that, even when people know what they need to be doing, they momentarily lose the ability for self-discipline to protect the relationship or nurture the relationship. And so, it comes down to emotional self-management which, of course, you don't control, but you can learn to cultivate, so not too many counselors, therapists, really take it from the standpoint of cultivating emotions over time.

So, if you do many more of these, Lee, I suggest a little experiment. You can try asking the therapists each time, "What is a feeling?" And what they'll usually give you is some circular answer like, "Well, it's an emotion," and if you ask them, "What is an emotion?" They'll be a little bit non-plussed and they won't usually be able to answer that very intelligently. When you get right down to it, very few will actually say an emotion or a feeling is a brain/body reflex, and if you take it from that standpoint, now we're into a whole science that has existed for about a century on how feelings or reflexes get cultivated over time.

Now, you're in the ballpark of being able to do something about it, so you can teach that science, you can train people in that science, you can train people on emotional modulation. Mindfulness training is now an emerging science, a neuro-science in therapies. It just hasn't quite yet merged up with couple's therapy, so a lot of the therapists are using the archaic model of teaching communication theory or analyzing and understanding your template and your transferences from long ago. So, we do something very different on the Love Odyssey.

Lee: OK, so Love Odyssey, you're taking that science out to the seas. Tell me about that. What got you interested in that, and how did that all come to be?

Bryce: Well, about four years ago, I was approached by a screen writer, a Hollywood screen writer with a number of films and Emmy's and whatnot, very heady to be approached like that. He wanted me to be a consultant, then he wanted me, after we talked, he stayed on my boat for a day or two, he wanted me to be a co-writer, be his partner and wanted to write a script for a TV series, so this originally was baked up as a

TV script. I won't mention names, but we made some passes with some prominent actors and production companies. It may still sell, but my wife and I turned to each other at one point and said, "We're telling this guy how to do it, we can do it."

We had the boat. We had very effective intervention strategies, and it just made so much sense to remove people from their old stuck roles, get them into an explorative mental state where they actually have to rely on each other, keep changing their environment and that way, it's different than your usual retreat. So, we get their brains in a very flexible, explorative state in which they're being mutually supportive, we change their ego state. Now, we've got them in a learning mode where we can work with them.

Lee: Wow, yeah, so what goes on out there?

Bryce: Well, we made jokes about taking \$500 to keel haul the partner, but we don't do any of that, no walking the plank. We haven't had any mutinies. What we do is first is we do a very thorough assessment of where the problems are occurring. We don't do the same old for every couple. It's kind of like an engine and you take an engine to a shop, why won't it run? Well, it could be a spark plug, it could be a cracked cylinder, and so you can have relationships knocked out of whack because of any number of problems, so we do a very thorough assessment in the very early part, a number of hours of surveys, interviews, checking templates.

From there, we design an intervention strategy and then we start the training. We teach them about the basic model, of course, about the due diligence demands that they need to be doing to run a relationship. We do an assessment on where they're breaking down, and then we design different strategies. Those strategies can involve a lot of weird kinds of exercises used in semantics, practice saying things to your partner that you don't habitually say, pushing yourself through different forms of inhibition to free yourself up.

We teach auto-hypnotic technique so you can actually train yourself using trance and memory. We do resentment burial in the sand at sunrise to bury old resentments and get a resolution on old issues. We have holding exercises, different forms of meditation, letter writing to each other. We have one interesting exercise where people practice doing repair technique on intrusions, and so we have one partner purposely throw insults periodically at the other that are agreed upon, and the other confronts and then the first partner does repairs.

It's like a dance, like a three step dance that they learn to do. I can tell you that on land, I've had couples living apart, nauseous in approaching each other, wind up becoming passionately attracted, moving back in together, merely by doing six weeks of that practice, of essentially getting their boundaries back. So, it's all about learning emotional management and training people to do that. Some of that is rather paradoxical.

For example, Lee, I actually measure people's anxiety at refusing their partner. What's interesting is that over the last several years the pattern is very clear. People who do real well have minimal anxiety at coming out with saying no or refusing. People who are very

nice and don't like to say no or refuse, do horrible in relationships, go figure. Boundaries promote intimacy. Isn't that interesting?

Lee: That is fascinating, yeah.

Bryce: Autonomy, and you asked me about the model. The basic model I use is not just attachment, it's also autonomy. It's the ability to switch states, not be stuck in one state. There are times you need to be close. There are other times you need to turn your brain off to your partner and actually connect to your own battery inside, and we actually train people to do that in trance, and so the ability to go back and forth helps a relationship.

Lee: OK, it's a practical matter. You know, if I'm going to a marriage counselor and I have a tough session and I need a break, I'm done for the week. I'm not going to be back in that session again for seven days, but if I'm out there on the boat with you guys, I'm trapped. There's no way to get away. I mean that, it sounds sort of...

Bryce: Oh, there is, there is, and so let me dispel that. We've built exactly what you're talking about. We built that into the Odyssey. They don't stay on the boat. We use the boat to transport to different locations, to create a sense of distance from the old life and the old roles. It feels different coming into port than arriving by automobile, very different. You're really dependent on each other going by foot and going by boat, but we use the boat as like a classroom, but at other times they're out in the different ports of call, exploring. They're staying in different bed and breakfasts, so we usually meet for two hours in the morning, we meet for two hours in the afternoon, we may take a dinghy going to a deserted beach someplace at other times, but we keep changing the environment and they are not stuck in that intense mode. We've had couples ask for a break midway. They say, "God, this is so intense," or "We need a day off just to explore and hang out," and that's fine, and so we take our cue as to what they need.

Lee: Right, right.

Bryce: So, it's not stuck in...we don't get canned heat on a boat.

Lee: Yeah, now tell me about the boat. I'm just curious now as we talk about it. What kind of boat are we talking about?

Bryce: It's a 40 foot Pilot House ketch, has two masts. It is all teak down below, furniture grade, has kind of a little bit of an upstairs and a downstairs, a very heavy boat built in Finland for the North Sea, very comfortable. We have AC, we have heating. Going across the sound, Helen usually serves up breakfast and we sit in the Pilot House and talk. Other times we're up on the upper deck, and then if we do trance work, I'm down in the lower salon where it's a little bit more insulated from distraction.

Lee: Right, do you put the couple to work on the boat?

Bryce: No. We let the couple attend the steering or lines, but they're usually pretty occupied. They're there to really learn from us, so as we're doing things, we're still educating them, even outside of those two sessions. Helen and I are sharing from our own lives. We're aware that we're constantly modeling how to do this. We have to dispel a certain model, Lee, that the West has. You know, we're incredibly dumb in many ways, the West. You know, we're killing ourselves with fast food and terrible diet, diabetes and whatnot, so we don't do some things very well. We have this model of falling in love and it doesn't fair very well. If you look at the statistics, what percent get divorced? About half.

Lee: Right.

Bryce: And do you think the other half are living in bliss? A lot of them are hanging on out of desperation, so only a minority know how to get the juice from the squeeze, which is how to get the spiritual benefits that we all want. Now, we have this model of falling in love, and I want to bring out another model. It was researched by Gupta Singh in India in 1982. They compared two groups. One group married because they were in love. The other group married because they were pre-arranged, and they compared those two groups on the Rubin Love-Scale over ten years, and measured attraction, affection, different dimensions of love. You want to guess how it turned out?

Lee: You tell me.

Bryce: In love starts real high, arranged, real low. At five years, they cross. At ten years, the arranged are up in the 60's on the Rubin Love-Scale, the in love are in the toilet in the 40's.

Lee: Fascinating.

Bryce: Why, why? I'll tell you my take on it, and I think it will make sense. Expectation weighs very heavily in on emotion. When you have expectations that are unrealistic and they are dashed, it creates an emotion studied by people like in the Tomkins Institute that's known as shame. That shame in a relationship ricochets around inside, it gets projected because you don't blame yourself, you blame your partner for the betrayal that they're not going to save your life like you thought, and that shame ricochets around in the form of blame, tearing everybody apart.

When you start a relationship with realistically low expectations, the maximum sense of responsibility is what we make. Now, after the emotion, the positive emotion builds over time. Gee, this is getting good, look what we're doing, and you are more than likely to take responsibility for cultivating the emotion in a relationship.

The model we have in the West, if you look at the syntax we use, we fall into love. What is that? It's outside of us, we're not responsible for it, even the media tells us that. It's magical, so when we're not delivered, when the in love phase ends within one to four years for most couples, not too many people make the transition to sentimental loving of

knowing that they can cultivate emotion. You can't control it, you can cultivate it over time, and that's the best model for a relationship.

There are four domains that we teach and we assess, and we see where people are breaking down in their relationships, and we assess this in the Love Odysseys. The first domain is you have to nurture attachment, it's an instinct that we need, ultimately we want to grow a crop of Oxytocin, Vasopressin and Dopamine associated with our partner. Those are the reflexes we need to grow; we need to feed it with nurturing experiences. If we don't feed it, it dies. If you don't water and irrigate and fertilize a garden, it dies. So, you've got your secret garden down there in your unconscious, and you need to nurture it in each other.

The second is you need, and this is like health, you need to exercise your own hedonic identity. That is, if you do not express what you want, what you love, and feed your own soul, you will depersonalize in a relationship. How many women have you heard, or even men for that matter, say, "I don't know who I am anymore, I don't know what I want, I'm numb." That is the sign of a person depersonalizing because the inhibitory system is taking over, so if you don't exercise your body, you die. If you don't exercise your wants and your desires, which is the core of who you are, your soul dies, so that's the second, and there are people who avoid doing that in a relationship. "Oh, I have to be nice, I have to self-sacrifice," and then they lose it.

The third domain is you need to defend yourself from shame. This is like, not just having your skin, it's like having your immune system, and so when the little pin pricks occur, when you get commands from your partner, when your partner talks down, gives you should statements, if you suck it in and you hide from conflict, it will kill your relationship. Gottman's research, the research shows that good relationships involve good conflict, healthy conflict and that clears out your system and keeps you from accumulating the shame that is like kudzu overgrowing your garden.

Then the fourth dimension is you need to protect your partner from your own clumsiness. It's kind of like you don't want to trample the seedlings, and so you don't take off your partner's head, you don't make threats, and you have enough respect that you don't throw salt on their garden, so those are the four domains.

Three of them are protective, three of them are really protective, one is nurturing, and if people do this with skill, can really cultivate affection that is very passionate over time.

Lee: I really like that framework. That really works for me, it makes a lot of sense. Let me ask you this. Back to the water, you've had some couples out there, you've done this, you've taken this approach with them, what are you seeing as an outcome? What kind of results are you seeing from a week on the water with you guys at Love Odyssey?

Bryce: What we see is, first of all, a freeing up and the development of hope, so when they get a vision that there is a way that they can move forward, then they're willing to get back to work. Are they all done? Absolutely not, absolutely not, and they will call

sometimes for a Skype session to do some retooling or how do we do this or that, but they learn that the ball game is really an extended project over time, but now it makes sense to them, instead of it just being the train has left the station and it's gone, they've fallen out of love and the magic has moved on and it wasn't meant to be. So, it's a different perspective. We changed their expectations. They have information, they know that there's work to do, and we've seen good results.

Lee: Fantastic. Well, I hope that you will be seeing some of our listeners out there on the boat with you, exploring the coast of North Carolina. It sounds like a great way to work on your marriage and I really appreciate, Bryce, you taking the time to share it with us.

Bryce: Thank you, Lee. It's a lot of fun. We're going out next week with another couple from Boston, and this is our third year and we'll be doing this until we stroke out. It's our spiritual quest.

Lee: To find out more about Bryce Kaye and Love Odyssey Charters, you can visit the website at www.loveodyssey.net. I'll put a link to that in the show notes. You can also call at 919-460-2516. Thank you so much for being with us today, and I hope you will join us again next week. We would love to hear your feedback, your comments, your suggestions. You can reach our comment line at 919-256-3083, or you can email us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com. I'm Lee Rosen, until next time, stay happily married.

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