

Anna: Thirty-one days to a happy husband! This is Stay Happily Married episode number 231.

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

Anna: I'm Anna Riley, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. What have you done for ME lately? Sound familiar? Chances are that question does sound vaguely familiar, and it's often right out of the mouths of wives who also might ask, "Why should I be nice to you if you're not nice to me?" But what if those aren't the questions to be asking? More often than not, kids and careers take priority over the marriage, and husbands and wives end up becoming more like roommates instead of best friends and lovers.

When couples get overwhelmed with daily life tasks and when the little things turn into big things, they might feel like they have no time to nurture their marriage and each other. Sometimes, they even feel hopeless about rekindling their original flame. Our guest today is author and public speaker, Arlene Pellicane. Arlene has been featured on shows like "The Hour of Power", "The 700 Club" and TLC's "Home Made Simple". She's joining us today to talk about her book, "31 Days to a Happy Husband", and to give us all a few pointers and tips on improving marriages that are just going through the motions. Welcome to the show, Arlene. I'm so glad you could join us today.

Arlene: Nice to be with you, Anna.

Anna: Thank you. All right. First of all, congratulations on the success of your book.

Arlene: Thank you.

Anna: So, why a happy husband? Why not say 31 days to a happy wife? Do you find that it's generally the wives that are becoming demanding and expecting in these marriages?

Arlene: Yeah. The wives always look at the book and they say, "What? What is this about? He's supposed to make me happy." So we get a lot of that at the book table, but the idea behind the book is you can't change your husband, but you can certainly change yourself. The idea is that when you first said I do, you weren't thinking in your mind, "Man, what are you going to do for me, you better do everything for me and I got a long list of things to do for you." You are thinking, "I cannot believe I married this man and I am going to make him the happiest man alive and we're going to have a great life."

So this book is really going back to having the same behavior that you used to have when you were courting, when you were first married, and why is it that those behaviors stopped through the years and what can you do to stop that. So it's really about saying, "What can I do to bless you as my husband because most of culture and society, it turns us inwards that we say, "This isn't working for me, this isn't working for me," so this is asking the question "What did Linda Dillow have a book called, "What's It Like Being Married to Me?" So it's turning it more like that, how am I doing as a wife and how can I focus on you as a husband?

What will happen beautifully, is that as a wife turns towards her husband to either, one woman who read the book, it used to bug her so much that her husband would leave these coffee cups on the nightstand and they would just pile up and it would just drive her crazy like, "Why can't you take this cup

and put it in the kitchen” and I mean it was a huge source of tension in their home. And she finally said to herself, she was reading the book, and she said, “You know what, I’m just going to let this go. It’s not going to be a big deal, this is how he is, and I’m going to be OK with this and once in a while I’ll bring it back to the kitchen, I’m going to be OK.” And she said, “I felt so much happier because I felt free,” free from the worry and anxiety every time she looked at that cup. So a lot of what we’ll find is we give some flack to our husbands in some areas and some respect to them in others, we’ll find that we are happier ourselves because we’re letting go of some of the false expectations or unrealistic expectations that we have about the marriage.

Anna: All right. So we’re talking about maybe adjusting some expectations, and you think that also kind of follows along the path of just that there are certain things about this person that you’re with that you have to learn to accept and not change but just kind of accept, like you’re talking about the coffee mugs or whatever. It drives her crazy and it never changed, because maybe for him, it doesn’t drive him crazy so he doesn’t see the problem. And so for her it would just be like learning and maybe that is the key right there. She said that it took a weight off her shoulders, something seemingly small like that, but you think that’s a good way to start, maybe?

Arlene: I think a great thing for a couple to do is decide what are the big issues and what are the small issues, because the big issues, they do have to be taken care of. You can’t just sweep them under the rug and say, “Well, I’m not going to forgive you for that.” You can’t do that. But there are smaller issues that may be a source of daily tension that you guys can talk through and say, “What is the solution to these mugs” Who’s going to take care of them and I’m going to leave you alone and it’s going to be your responsibility”and whatever.

So, it is. You’re right that when you’re engaged, you’re really attracted to these differences (Wow, he’s so talkative and I’m so quiet so you feel like wow I really love that. And then later you’re just like why won’t he be quiet?) So it is going back to appreciating differences and communicating needs and the thing that we wives I think is a huge thing is many times our husband may communicate a need to us but we write it off like that’s impossible, I can’t do that. The need might be a sexual need. It might be, “Could we have dinner at home once in a while instead of having take out all the time?” It could be, “Honey, if you could just praise me for my work instead of criticizing me all the time.”

Whatever it is when your husband speaks that need, our first attitude should be, “God please help me to hear this, to be able to see what is true about that statement and then to act on it in kind because a lot of times we just say, ‘Oh honey, that’s impossible.’ We have all these kids, there’s no way, I’ve been out all day I can’t make a home cooked meal - forget it.” But we’ll be creative in other areas of our life, but many times our husbands get the last crumbs at the end of the day.

Anna: Right. Do you think that that’s sort of these wives or women in general think maybe, once they get to a stage in their marriage, they kind of start slacking on those things because they’re just kind of like, “Well, that’s just my husband. He’s going to be around forever. He’ll be by my side. It doesn’t really matter.”

Arlene: Isn’t that funny? And then you think about that, and you think, “That’s means that everyone else that I’m bending over backwards to please is not going to be here.”

Anna: Right. Exactly.

Arlene: My children are not going to be here. My co-workers are not going to be here. My neighbors would have moved away. We would have changed churches. All of these things are going to change, but the only person who I'm going to be with until the grave, I'm going to give him the leftovers. It is funny how a woman will dress up for her friends, but if she's just going to see her husband, it will be no makeup, sweats, straggly hair.

Anna: Very true.

Arlene: It's the just that thought of... He really is, if you think about it, who is the most important person that you want to impress and love in your life, and most likely if you're true to yourself, if you married a decent man, you say, "That is my husband." And so, the idea is to treat him the way you'd want to be treated. In the same way, no wife wants her husband to just be like, "Oh, she's always going to be around. Why bother appreciating and cherishing and protecting her? She's going to be here, the old bag." We wouldn't want that!

Anna: No. Right.

Arlene: So we hold him to a certain standard, but then we don't want to do the standard as well. So this is kind of to help women say, "You know what? I really want to focus in on my husband and give him the respect and the nurture that he's longing for but that he's too proud or embarrassed to ask for."

Anna: Yeah. So it definitely seems like just maybe a little transition in how we think, just a little change in how we act and how we perceive the husbands and stuff would make a huge difference it seems.

Arlene: Yes. I think so.

Anna: Yeah. Now, here we get to the interesting part. What do you think? What would you say husbands' biggest complaints are about their wives and marriages?

Arlene: What I have heard, and it makes sense to me, is that it's in the physical arena because men just receive that love. If we talk, we just feel like, "Oh, we're so connected. We feel so loved." And we have this heart connection and your husband, it's this body connection. And not only is it the physical act of intimacy, but for us to realize that's a physical connection to him. That's an emotional connection to him, and that's a spiritual connection to him. It's all wrapped up in that physical act of lovemaking. So I think if women would embrace that and just say, "This is a part of how my man was created, how he was wired," and we need to celebrate this in marriage and make time for it because the average couple with careers and with children, they look at their schedule and they think, "Man, we used to have time for sex, but we don't have time for that anymore."

What it says to the husband is, "This is really important, but we just don't have time for this." So a big thing that the husbands wish that their wives did is talk about sex more often, for us to be more interested in sex, for us to not just be there but actually, really looking forward to it, anticipating, enjoying it so that he feels like he's really wanted.

Anna: Yeah. That's interesting.

Arlene: ...on her list that, "Oh, we connected this week, honey. Got to check this off." But for him to really feel like, "She anticipates it in the same way or in a similar way as I do." So physically, that

connection. Another complaint that men have is that we women can be too vocal and too strong and too muscular in the home so that we're not always sharing our opinions but letting our husbands know that his opinion is far inferior to ours.

Anna: Yeah. Right.

Arlene: And that we're much smarter when it comes to different decision making things than he is. And so for us to get back in that position of saying, "I don't think women today have a problem with getting stepped on by men." I don't think that's generally true. So I think it's very appropriate for a woman once she has said, "OK, honey. This is what I think about the matter" and your husband's heard that. And then your husband makes the decision and he says something perhaps you don't like or agree with. For you, instead of saying, "I will control this, and I will get it done my way anyway. I'll go around him. I'll go over him." That's a complaint that men have. For a man to be able to say, "I am the leader of this house, and my wife actually respects me." That's a huge thing.

It comes in little things. I have three kids. They're three, six, and eight, and I wanted to take them to an amusement park. I loved going to amusement parks growing up, and believe me, we have gone to our share of amusement parks. It's not like the kids are deprived.

Anna: Right.

Arlene: He said, "You know what? You guys don't constantly need to be entertained. I think we should hold off." In my heart I just thought, "Oh, I got this deal, and it's a school break, but I thought to myself, "You know what? He's right. I don't constantly ever break and you can trot off and bring my children somewhere." It's the same thing of saying, "You know what? I can see his point of view, and I'll back down." Even if you can't see his point of view, that you say, "I respect you enough as a leader and as a man of the home that I will back down." You'll find as a woman God will protect you as you submit under that leadership of your husband. God will protect you and make sure that all these desired of your heart will eventually become fulfilled and probably in a greater way that you would have had if you just really had exerted your way – my way or the highway. So for women, we need to back down and allow our men to lead. We have taken that role away from many men.

Anna: Now, just so we're clear, of course, you're not saying that men are the greatest things that ever walked the earth and they have to be in charge or everything and they have to control everything and lead everything. You're not saying that, of course. You're just saying that there are definitely situations where it is natural for a man to feel like the leader and the powerful force in the family and, of course, the woman has her own role, but it is important for a man to know his roles, too, and to feel comfortable in those roles and feel like he has a say and something like that. Am I getting that right?

Arlene: Sure. Basically, what you want to look at are the instances in the Bible, in the New Testament, where the wife and husband are addressed. And so, over and over, you see that the wife is to respect or submit to her husband as to God, and the husband is to love the wife as Christ loved the church. And so you look at this, for a woman it's natural for us to love. Like that's easy, we love to love but to respect, it's kind of like, "You've got to earn that, brother."

Anna: Right.

Arlene: But for a wife to be able to say, "I respect my husband." That means a lot to him. And then for a husband, it's not natural to be all loving, affectionate, and kind, forgiving, gentle, soft. That's sacrificial. That's not natural for him towards his wife and then the husband is to love. And so, when the husband loves and when the wife respects, you have a very happy and well balanced and abundant life and home. Of course, I'm not saying that... It's funny. People look at the Bible and they'll say, "Oh, that's so antiquated. It puts women down." It's the utter opposite. It was the Bible that in a time where women did not have equal stature with men by any means, and it's in the Bible that it says that there's no race, no Jew, no Greek, no male, no female, but they're all equal. There's, of course, an equality in marriage, of worth and of ability, all those things, but there are not roles that we are to take. And if both the spouses say, "I'm the leader. I'm the leader." It gets a bit confusing. It's that two-headed monster.

And so, when you understand that the husband, he's the leader, and you're the team. If you look at a platoon, just because someone is a leader, it doesn't mean that the person following is an idiot and can't make decisions. See what I mean?

Anna: Of course.

Arlene: When it comes to who is going to talk here, you've got to have one person that's ready to guide the team, and that's the husband.

Anna: I see. That makes sense. I just want to go back and address what you were talking about before with the complaints that they might have. You were talking about the physical connection versus the emotional connection. I think it's really interesting because it just makes perfect sense. As women we want that emotional connection. We want the "Tell me you love me. Let's talk it out. Let's have this long conversation. Let's feel emotionally connected." And then in many ways she feels satisfied from that, but it's like what you were talking about, the wiring, I guess, between genders really...

Arlene: True.

Anna: Men get more of a satisfaction, I guess you could say, from the physical connection with their wives. So that's an interesting point for sure. Now, on the flip side, what do you think wives' biggest complaints are about their husbands and marriages?

Arlene: I think sometimes wives think, "Oh, he's not doing enough. I'm doing so much. I work. I do the kids. I do the laundry. I do the things in the house." So a lot of it is domestic support of who does what, the roles. Some of it is he's not affectionate towards me. Even on the flip side, a lot of wives saying, "My husband is not affectionate towards me," and a lot of that, I think, comes from him feeling not respected, so when he feels unrespected and when he doesn't want to be close to her physically. So the wife, we're very good at finding things that are wrong.

Anna: Yeah.

Arlene: So wives can have all sorts of lists and complaints. I don't like to focus on that. Instead, I like to encourage the wife to say, "Well, what in the world is a man doing right?" And focus on that because the truth is if any of us just focus on the things that our spouse is doing wrong, including us... Many times if I see a fault in my husband, I'll think to myself, "Well, gee, I wonder what he sees in me." And then it gets sobering and then you think like, "Well, he probably sees why does she hug and kiss me? Why does she smile really broadly when she sees someone at church, but when she sees me, she

doesn't do the same? You know what I mean? There are lots of things that we do that are unattractive as well for us to have that attitude. So I think that it's important for a wife...

One of the counselors that I interviewed, Dr. David Clark, he said that women have to learn how to praise mediocre. We only praise it when it's perfect. And so when one of our husbands do something, it's like, oh, he gets criticized. "You picked out the wrong size. I asked for the medium, and you brought me the large" or whatever he does, we criticize it. What it shows him is that whatever you do it isn't right. And then after a while he stops doing those things, and then we complain and say, "My husband is so lazy. He won't do anything" where the truth of the matter is he won't do anything because he knows he's going to get criticized, and who would sign up for that?

Anna: Right. Exactly.

Arlene: Many of our complaints as women are rooted in our own misjudgment of saying, "You know what? When your husband goes to the store and he brings something back and it's wrong, for you to say, 'Honey, I really appreciate that you went to the store. It wasn't exactly the right thing, but we'll get it right next time and that really was very kind of you to go.'" And so what Dr. Clark would say is you just praise mediocre so he feels like *atta boy, atta boy*, and then in time you can say, "Honey, the next time we're at the store, let me show you what I'm really looking for."

Anna: Right. Yeah.

Arlene: You don't have to have stuff go wrong all the time, but we just have to not be so quick to criticize, and then he will be more anxious to help out. I think a big complain that women have is, "My husband won't help out around the house or with the kids."

Anna: Yeah. To get back to your book, "31 Days to a Happy Husband," what exactly does this involve?

Arlene: If I said to you, a lifetime of making your husband happy, you'd be like, "Well, that sounds like a big job."

Anna: I know. Right.

Arlene: Which is a great job, but there's 31 days. Maybe, it's his birthday month. Maybe, it's January. Maybe, you're going to do it over a longer period of time than 31 days. You can do it however you want, but for a set period of time you are going to focus for five to ten minutes a day on your husband, and you're going to, at the end of each chapter, each day, there's something that you are encouraged to notice about him. And then you're encouraged to nurture him about. It gives you an action set so that your husband throughout the 31 days is going to feel like, "Wow, she's kissing me." And "Wow, she just praised me about my work. And "Oh, she just left a note about how she thinks I'm so handsome" or whatever. So he's going to be seeing things, not just that you're reading something", but your attitude is changing but also your behaviors are changing towards your husband. You're softening towards him, and as a result he's going to soften towards you.

It's fun for a set period of time to say, "You know what? You're going to be the star this month. You can decide if you want to do that [inaudible 20:24] or you want to hide your book somewhere, or some

women have just put it on the nightstand and they don't even read it, and their husband just feels better that there's a book like that out there.

Anna: Just leave it sitting there – cleverly placed.

Arlene: Exactly.

Anna: Very nice. To wrap it up, what do you think is the most important thing or things that wives can do?

Arlene: One thing that has been very effective that's so easy is all the experts said that kissing really is like such a magic ingredient in a marriage. It doesn't cost any money, and it doesn't take much time. So they said, "If you want to spend five to 30 seconds of passionate kissing every day with your husband, that he will certainly be happier. That what it does is what Joyce Penner, the sex therapist, said is, "It keeps the pilot light lighted between you" so that you have that constant closeness because you have been kissing. I will tell you it's something that's so short, but it's very easy for the day to go by and you lay in bed and you realize, "I did not kiss my husband passionately today."

Anna: Yeah.

Arlene: So it really is something to think about every day, like, can I steal a kiss somewhere throughout this day with my husband?" And so I think that is a great thing because it just says it's the idea of turning towards your husband and considering him, thinking of him, and then being playful and affectionate with him like you used to be that he will just love. And it's something that if you have the book and as a life rule that you start kissing again every day, that's a huge life change even though it's something so small, that both of you will remember and it will really impact you. Because I had a lot of women say, when you ask them, "What does your husband like about the book?" They'll say, "Oh, he liked that five second kiss." You have to talk with your husband, and you have to let him know, I want to be more affectionate towards you, and not every time that I kiss you does it mean, "Honey, I want to go behind locked doors with you right now" because that's what we're afraid it's going to mean and that's why we don't kiss him because we don't have time for that right now.

So if he knows that's all that is, and that it's just to keep the pilot light lighted between you so when we are physical it's not like going from zero to a hundred. You're like a 50 and then you go to 100. So husbands love that. I think it's the idea of being physically warm and affectionate and loving towards your husband, and the idea of respecting him and saying, "Honey, when you say something, it matters to me. I will put you first." I think a lot of women put their kids first instead of their husbands. So if women can get those things straight, I think it will make a big difference.

Anna: And they'll probably end up happier, too.

Arlene: They will because your husband will, all of a sudden, come home to cooked meals. For me I've come home to notes in my pocket, in my clothes, all sorts of things. I figure like, this is crazy. We went on a date. I got butterflies, and we've been married for 14 years. So there are all sorts of great behaviors that will start coming your way as well.

Anna: Wonderful. Arlene, thank you so much for talking with us and being on the show today.

Arlene: It's a pleasure to talk with you, Anna.

Anna: Thanks so much. To find out more about Arlene as well as her books, her speaking events, and her blog, you can visit her website at www.ArlenePellicane.com. That's A-R-L-E-N-E-P-E-L-L-I-C-A-N-E.com. Thank you so much for joining us today, and I hope you'll join us again next week. For more information about this show and future episodes, visit us at StayHappilyMarried.com. I'm Anna Riley. Until next time, Stay Happily Married.

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