

Scott: Married with Luggage, this is Stay Happily Married, episode number 278.

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

Scott: I'm Scott Blair and I'm your host today, welcome to the show. Does your relationship have what it takes to be with one another 24/7? Relationships are difficult and require a significant amount of work from both partners to maintain a working relationship. With hectic schedules, careers, and responsibilities to your children, there may not be enough time in the day to focus solely on your relationship. When this happens, the relationship is no longer the first priority in your life. What can you do to keep your relationship strong and healthy? Mr. Warren Talbot and his wife Mrs. Betsy Talbot have written three books that are focused on helping people define and go after what they crave in life. Mr. and Mrs. Talbot live an unconventional life of traveling the world full-time. They spend 24 hours a day living together, working, and traveling. Welcome to the show, Warren and Betsy. I am so glad that you could join us today.

Betsy: We're excited to be here.

Warren: We're looking forward to it.

Scott: Well, you guys have a very unique story and it is incredible, I love it. We've already kind of talked about it in the introduction, you two travel the world and spend each and every day with each other. Tell us a little bit about that and how you got to where you are.

Betsy: First of all, I have to say when you said that we spend every day together, it sounded almost like a prison sentence.

Warren: Yeah, I'm feeling a little concerned with how this is coming across. Yeah. Now I'm rethinking it just based on this podcast. Well, it began with us several years ago, we were living a life that was traditional for us. We both had jobs, Betsy had her own company and I was working in corporate America, and enjoying ourselves as much as we could. But something was missing, we kind of loved our lives, but weren't completely in love with every aspect of it.

Betsy: We were working like crazy like most people do and really just trying to fit our relationship into the empty spaces that were left, and as you know there were not a lot of empty spaces left in a busy American life these days.

Warren: And so what happened was over time we became more aware that we need to change something. We had health scares in two people extremely close to us that made us stop and question a number of things about the life that we wanted, and what we realized the most important thing was to follow our dream and our dreams together. And we started making plans for that back in 2008.

Betsy: And then in 2010 we left to travel the world after selling our house and every single thing we owned, and it wasn't until we actually got on this journey that we realized that we were going to be spending every moment together.

Warren: Possibly, yeah. We should have done a little more thinking of that in advance.

Betsy: Yeah, we planned for everything except that.

Scott: Oh wow. So, let me ask you, was this one of your plans that the other one was kind of coerced into? Or did you guys actually come up with this idea together and you both were very excited about this? Because I know with a lot of relationships you will have one person who, let's say, has a really outlandish idea that they want to do. They want to, you know, they're 30 years old and they still want to, or 40 years old, and still want to pursue a music career, or a sports career, or live in a foreign country. And the other spouse may not be so on board. Was that the experience for you guys? You both wanted to do this? Or one of you kind of coerced the other?

Betsy: We both actually wanted to do this. We bonded early on, before we even started dating, on our love of travel. And it's something that we always said we were going to do in our retirement and those health scares in the people that were close to us kind of woke us up to the fact that that's not really guaranteed that you get to do all of that.

Warren: Yeah, so one evening we were out with some friends and the question came up, "If you weren't going to live until 40," we were 37 at the time, "what would you do in those three years you have left?"

Betsy: "How would you change your life?" And we both looked at each other and instantly said we would travel the world. Again, this is a dream that we already had.

Warren: We had talked about it extensively, we knew what we wanted, we knew what was most important to each other, and we had built our entire partnership and relationship upon that.

Scott: You guys have done interviews before, I can tell. Just the way your conversation volleys.

Betsy: Or maybe we just spend all of our time together.

Warren: Yeah. Maybe we have merged. We're just one person with two voices.

Scott: Finishing each other's sentences, this is great. So, tell us, what have you gained from your experience so far?

Betsy: Oh my gosh, I don't know how much time we have.

Warren: I think that most importantly we have learned what the word "partnership" means in every aspect. And it was the basis of how we started our relationship, but it's now become more than that. We rely upon each other in the very difficult times. So if I'm having a bad day, Betsy comes in and she steps up and responds immediately to that. Whether it be emotionally or if there's something that I need, she steps in and we just understand it intrinsically because of this experience.

Betsy: I think for me it's been a "back to the basics" kind of a thing. A lot of times in life we take advantage of our partner, you know, they're always going to be there or they're the

last one on the list. But when you're together like we are all the time living, working, and traveling together, you really have to do the "please" and the "thank you's" and you have to think about the kind of things that are easy for us to gloss over, I think, in everyday traditional life.

Warren: And I think that for me, when you look at it overall, what we've gained is the, we've gained this scenario where the two of us are like one now. And you mentioned it earlier, when we speak that's how we actually are, we don't operate well independently anymore. And I don't know if that's good or bad yet, but I know that I feel like something's missing when Betsy's not near me. And so that has been so great for our relationship and now we are able to talk, and to consider, and to exchange those looks across a party and know what each other is thinking at a moment's glance.

Betsy: But you know, I'll add to that, that even though we are very much intertwined right now, I think part of the strength of that is that we're both individually strong. We've been able to pursue things that interest us and we do definitely have different ideas about a lot of things. So it's that strength of being an individual that I think makes our couple-hood so strong.

Warren: Yeah.

Scott: Well, in most, you know, western, I guess, Christian based marriages you hear a lot of times the minister during the ceremony talking about from the Bible where the two become one flesh. And that really reminds me of, you guys paint a really beautiful picture when you talk about how you've merged like that.

Betsy: Well, I appreciate you saying that, especially since we were married by a clerk in a courthouse in Rockville, Maryland, probably the least romantic ceremony you can imagine. But we did go out for hamburgers and champagne afterward and then got on a plane to Paris, so I'll take it.

Scott: He did the paperwork between between dog licenses, right?

Warren: That's right, yeah. It was not that concerning one way or another.

Scott: So what problems do you see couples facing today that maybe your lessons, your experiences, you might be able to lend to them to help them out if they're not in your situation? And it's a very unique situation so almost all of our listeners probably won't be. But what could you lend to them from this experience that you think they could apply to their life, like right here and what they're doing now?

Betsy: Well, it's interesting that you say that because our situation may be unique from the outside, but from the inside it's the same as everyone else. I mean, we're trying to make a living, we're trying to get along, we're trying to pay the bills. All the things that everyone else does, we're just doing it from places like Morocco. So, there's a lot that we can share and this 24/7 nature of living together and working together, it just forces us to resolve these things faster, maybe, than other people do.

Warren: Yeah, and I think that if you go back to how we began, back, you know, many, many,

years ago, we were on the path to divorce and that path began, our realization began when we understood that we had made our relationship the last priority. We were traveling and we were working and we were doing everything else with everyone else without putting our relationship first. So what we learned was, number one priority when we wake up in the morning is asking each other, "What do you need? What's going on today and what do you need from me?" Because I think that is the thing that reminds you each and every day, as you create it as a habit, that your partner needs something from you and you need to find out what that is and the only way to do that, I think, and I think we've learned over our time period together, is by asking.

- Betsy: It's like going to work and you have these meetings with your coworkers and you talk about, you know, the projects, things that are coming down the pipe, problems that you have. And then you go back to your house and you never have those conversations with your mate. So, you're thinking one thing, your mate's thinking something else. Problems never get discussed, you know, goals never get discussed, and then we wonder why things don't go the way we want them to do. And we're not even giving our relationships as much attention as we give the coworkers that we can't even stand.
- Warren: And the other thing is I think that couples tend to drift apart over time and a lot of that is because they are not communicating. But that drift is like, you know, you put two twigs in a river and you expect them to kind of bounce along that river for mile after mile and stick together. But if you aren't making the effort in reaching out and lashing those two sticks together, there's no chance. So you need to, so a lot of what we see and a lot of the problems that we help people with is that drifting and how do you connect and reconnect on a consistent basis so that you understand what your partner needs, you are able to articulate what you need in a very open, and honest, and safe environment.
- Betsy: In other words, we teach people how to make twine.
- Warren: Yes.
- Scott: So you guys said you kind of started on this path and it was challenging at times for you, and I'm sure it still is, but can you elaborate on some of, maybe, what you've learned along the way that's going to help these couples who, maybe, who have already started to drift from their spouse? Or maybe they're not communicating as well as they once did?
- Warren: Well, I think that one of the best things that you can understand is that your partner is not like you. No matter what you think, there are differences in your partner and that is in how you approach each situation. So as an example, I recently wrote about the idea that there are thinkers and there are talkers. There are people who need to talk out their problems, that's me, I need to constantly speak about what's going on.
- Betsy: No, you need to constantly speak.
- Warren: Nice. And that is part of my personality. And Betsy, when she's approaching a problem, she wants to take in all the inputs and think about it and then come back maybe in a day or two. That difference and recognizing that difference is so critical, it took us years to find this information out.

- Betsy: Before we figured that out I thought that he was just always on my case and always nagging and he thought that I was always avoiding problems. And we were both making the situation worse by not just simply understanding how we process information. And now that we've done that it has completely revolutionized the way we fight. As a matter of fact, we're really, really good at it now.
- Warren: And that's important, you're going to fight. We fight and, as does every other, you know, interrelationship. You're going to have disagreements, it's how you approach those and stepping back and recognizing where your partner comes from. And that's what we spend a lot of time talk with people about, is just recognize and know that there are differences. Whether you're an introvert and she's an extrovert, whether you're a talker and she's a thinker, whatever that might be, knowing that will completely change your relationship and how you approach other.
- Betsy: And there's also the caveat that goes along with all of this in every scenario with your mate, is always assume the best intentions. Even if you've taken it the wrong way or you think that, you know, maybe they didn't say it the right way, your mate loves you and is not out to get you. Despite how you might think sometimes.
- Scott: Spending this time together and, you guys obviously build these goals together and you talk about putting your relationship first, getting up first thing in the morning and thinking, or asking, "What do you need from me?" How did you guys get over this communication hump that a lot of us deal with, first of all, what would you advise for us in learning each other's communication styles? Do we need to talk to a therapist, is there an online test we can take, is there a book you would recommend? And just some other steps, exactly, that would entail how we might start down this path of mutual goals and communication.
- Betsy: Well, in my of thinking the reason that we came to this so quickly is because we had no escape hatch, we had no way of leaving, we had to resolve our problems in the moment because often times we were in a stressful situation, maybe in a country where we didn't speak the language, and we just had to resolve it to just get going. We couldn't leave, and that's what forced it for us.
- Warren: But to the more specific point, what we found was that what has worked for us in all the disagreements, and arguments, and the revelations we've had is there really wasn't a manual that existed which is why we started creating the 24/7 relationship ourselves, is in order to answer that question, is to help with that realization, is to create the test that you just mentioned, Scott, which is that idea that we need to be able to identify these different styles of communication, these different approaches that we have, and then communicate it. And that's what we write about all the time. We wish that there had been something when we set out because it probably would have shortcut a lot of disagreements, but I think that at the end of the day what we find is there's one thing that, if there's one thing you could do which is to recognize and accept the fact that you are different from your mate and then sit down and identify one situation. And I will use this example, "How do you fight? How do you approach fighting?" Are you the person that sits there, because this is the hardest one, are you the person that sits there and tries to bring up everything that's ever happened in your relationship? Are you the fighter? Or

are you the one that really stays laser focused and wants to resolve it as fast as possible? That is probably the one thing, the one tip that I could provide that would help the most amount of people. To speed up their fights, to fight fair, and to really focus on that difference between you and your partner.

Betsy: The one thing that I would add to that is you were talking about seeing a therapist, and counseling, and all that. While I'm not opposed to those kinds of things, we are big, big advocates of taking action and doing what it takes to improve a situation yourselves. Certainly you can analyze later, but the thing that works the fastest in every situation in life is to take positive steps forward. Even if you aren't quite sure how it's going to work out yet, what the result's going to be, how long it's going to take, it's taking that action forward with each other in the hopes that your relationship is going to improve.

Scott: Since you're talking about the positive take action steps, what are the positive effects that couple are able to achieve when they set goals like you have mentioned? So here you guys have designed this life together, set these goals together, and took off and went after and took action. What are the positive effects that your experiencing that maybe you kind of, when you see a lot of other couples who aren't doing this maybe is lacking in their life?

Warren: I think first and foremost we listen. We find that, now I find that I am always listening to what she's says. Not just hearing the words, but actually listening to what's behind them and understanding it because I know that what she's telling me, we've communicated enough to know, is what she's telling me is what's on her mind. I don't need to really read into it anymore, I don't need to worry that she's got some deep hidden meaning. I just listen to what she says and respond accordingly.

Betsy: For me it's that whole idea of partnership, we've gone way past the point of husband and wife, you know, boyfriend, girlfriend. Whatever we were before we are down the road to partnership and it doesn't matter what we're doing, whether it's something with our business, whether it's, like, we just recently finished a 300 mile hike in Turkey that was pretty physically strenuous. It doesn't matter what we're doing together, I know he has my back and I know we can do things together. I never, ever, ever doubt his commitment to me or to our relationship. And I have to say, before, I didn't always feel so strongly about that.

Warren: Yeah, and I think that you'll find that the communication that you have together improves so dramatically. It's not, I mean, it's one thing to finish each other's sentences, that's kind of the outward representation. But what we're looking for with couples is to make sure that they understand each other's sentences, they understand what each other needs, and are responding accordingly. There's none of that little disconnect that constantly exists between couples that are moving in different directions, instead they understand each other, they're able to respond immediately, and the communication will be so drastically improved.

Betsy: There's also the great benefit of boosting your own individual self-esteem because, you now, we each encourage the other to go after what they want to do and to know that that person is there for you and they're supporting you all the way is just an incredible feeling. And I think it adds to the richness of our relationship, but also to the richness of

our own individual lives.

- Scott: Wow, those are some great points. And I know that a lot of our listeners are going to be checking out your guys' podcast, and your website, and your books, and they're going to be very curious to hear more and to learn more about your guys' great story. But before we go, is there anything else that, kind of on an end note, that you think our listeners should know or you'd really like to relay to them?
- Betsy: You got married for a reason, you love that person, that person loves you, and it would be a damn shame, a darn shame maybe to let it go. So, you know, do the work that it takes to make your relationship good, put in as much work to your relationship as you do your job and the other things that you have going because it is going to pay off far more than your weekly paycheck or anything else you've got going, I can promise you that.
- Warren: And if every day, if you start your day by asking your partner what they need, that is a habit that will change your relationship and, honestly, it'll change your life. So, please just get started tomorrow.
- Betsy: And hey, they're not out to get you, I promise.
- Scott: Well, Warren, Betsy, thank you so much for talking with us today and being on the show.
- Betsy: Thank you so much.
- Warren: Thank you so much, Scott. It was great.
- Scott: To find out more about Mr. and Mrs. Talbot and their experience in publications, you can visit their website at WWW.MARRIEDWITHLUGGAGE.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 previous episodes, visit us at STAYHAPPILYMARRIED.COM. I'm Scott Blair, until next time, stay happily married.
- Woman: Thank you for joining us today on Stay Happily Married. If you'd like more information, please visit us on the web at STAYHAPPILYMARRIED.COM. We would love to hear your feedback or comments. Please email us at COMMENTS@STAYHAPPILYMARRIED.COM or call us at (919) 256-3083. Until next time, best wishes.