

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

00:00:09

Heather: Welcome to That's A Hard No the podcast about saying no and setting boundaries.

00:00:15

Sarah: So you can become the authentic and empowered you that this world needs.

00:00:21

Heather: I'm Heather Drago.

00:00:22

Heather: And I'm Sarah Saunders.

00:00:25

Heather: Before we start, a quick reminder.

00:00:28

Sarah: While I am a licensed professional clinical counselor, this podcast is in no way a replacement for one-on-one therapy with a mental health professional. If you notice the content of this podcast triggers some big feelings. Visit our website Hardnopodcast.com for mental health resources and other helpful links.

00:00:52

Heather: Thanks, Sarah. Ready to get started?

00:00:55

Sarah: I am.

00:01:08

Heather: Well, hello all and welcome to Alex Mellor-Brooke, Co founder and matchmaker at Select Personal Introductions, a high end matchmaking and Dating Service based in the UK.

00:01:21

Alex: Hello, ladies.

00:01:23

Heather: Hello. And Alex, did I pronounce your name correctly?

00:01:26

Alex: You certainly did extremely well.

00:01:28

Heather: First try. First try.

00:01:31

Sarah: Alex, I am so excited to be talking with you as someone who also works with couples. I just I love hearing different perspectives and understanding, and especially you being in the UK. You know why? What it's like working with couples.

00:01:47

Alex: You know, it is absolutely fascinating dealing with couples, also dealing with with singles in the sense as they want to form a couple and some people are actually coming out of that partnership. So of course that rediscovering of themselves, that's quite an incredible, incredible moment, especially when somebody you can see the client suddenly realizing

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

that, wow, I'm not me anymore, am I? And it's like, well, that's the point. You never you stopped being you, especially if you're if you're a mum, right? You become mum, you become mum, you become maybe boss at work, maybe a few other taxi driver issues and things like that. But then you come out and you go, Oh, actually, who am I? What do I like? What music do I like, what food do I like? What do I like to dress? You know, what do I like to dress for me? Not just to get the kids from A to B or do this or go to work. So it's absolutely fascinating. And when when you find a couple that maybe are just starting a relationship, maybe they've been in that relationship for a while. I mean, I was talking to a lady 17 years married, got beautiful children, my three beautiful children. How really after our conversation, she really, really highlighted the fact that they were missing them. They were missing each other. They were running around doing so many. And there isn't a lot of time. You do fill your time and you obviously say hello and the niceties and you try to acknowledge and show the interest. But just having that moment of somebody going, do you ever do this? And that realization on the face and then going, Oh my God, no. I said, Well, when was the last? So for instance, when was the last time you and your husband went out and didn't talk about the kids, didn't take your phones or put your phone to one side on on vibrate and really, really, really went back to dating, you know, when we first met teens, twenties and you kind of paid the compliments you you asked about the day and how they felt and what they were thinking or what they wanted to achieve. And it all stops. And it's it was very recently, it just brought it home, you know, that kind of eureka moment of somebody going, oh, my Lord, yeah, I've missed that. I haven't done that. So then drawing them along and saying, How about this? How about that? So, so many different couples that kind of find themselves in that situation. And some realize and sometimes that's why they'll reach out and some don't. They go, What's wrong? Why is this? Why is this not working? But I think catch catch a relationship at that point is fantastic because there's been so much investment up to that point. And if it's working well and if you can bring that relationship back together to work well again and keep working and and give, it's that thing of not giving the fish, teaching somebody how to how to actually fish yourself rather than just giving the food. Mm hmm. Being able to take those skills and use them through that relationships. Absolutely fascinating. And the feedback you get, it's. It's incredible.

00:04:57

Heather: If you don't mind me picking up on a couple of things you just said, we have this list of questions, but now I'm already fascinated by what you said.

00:05:02

Sarah: Yeah.

00:05:03

Heather: So I love that you talked about an investment because I've started thinking about my 25 plus almost 30 year relationship in terms of investment. And so, you know, over 25 plus years, things get rocky sometimes. We've had some tough times. We've gone to see a counselor to kind of help negotiate and learn how to communicate better. And I grew up with no example of marriage in my family. So my grandmother was divorced. My mother was divorced. I'm learning it as I go. And so I hit a point where I was trying to decide what

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

was on the fork in the road, and I was trying to decide what I wanted to do with my life. And I just thought, I've invested so much time in him and he's invested so much time in me. And so there's a lot of value there. And why throw that all the way? Like there's a way we can figure this out so that that was one thing. And then the part about losing a sense of who you are, I'm finding I'm kind of realizing that about myself because like, you know, as, as a couple you watch things on television or you read things or you listen to certain music or whatever the things are that you like. I've often being the people pleaser that I am.

00:06:19

Sarah: Recovering, recovering people.

00:06:21

Heather: Pleaser. I just in order to like minimize the what do you want to do? I don't know. What do you want to do? I just go with whatever and we watch Doctor Who and all those things and whatever he likes. And it hit me not that long ago. Like, I don't even really know what I'm interested in. And so I'm starting to purposely make like a date night for myself to just watch what I want to watch or read what I want to read or go somewhere I want to go. And just to kind of like rediscover who I am at this point.

00:06:52

Alex: I literally have had a conversation with a lady about 3 hours ago. And we were talking about things and we were going around in circles a little bit, and then I kind of just stopped. And, you know, as a coach, there are certain things you have to. You have to create a little bit of friction. And I just stopped the conversation, said I asked her a question and that is when. It all. It all kind of made sense in the sense that she'd been in a 30 odd year relationship. Her husband had cut all ties and communication with friends, relatives. So she'd become isolated.

00:07:38

Heather: Oh, no.

00:07:39

Alex: She works long hours in a job that changes because of the shift patterns. She has grandchildren. She looks after them. So when she goes out, she hasn't got a particular day. So what I said to her is you need to discover yourself. And I said, the first thing that you can do is take one hour of that week for you. That's your time and discover yourself just whatever you want to do, whether it's join that group, meet people because you need you need to build that confidence up. You know, you need confidence in yourself and you need to feel good about yourself because as that grows, that will come back to you.

00:08:23

Sarah: Absolutely. And one of the things that I talk a lot about in my work is that research shows the most important relationship that you will ever have in this lifetime is the relationship that you have with yourself. And so really being mindful of that and I know, you know, the season of motherhood that I'm in, there is a quote and it says, You wait nine months to meet someone new. You think it's your baby and it's actually you. And I think that that applies to so many different seasons of our life because we are growing in so many

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

different ways. We're learning and and we're parenting ourselves. And so to really find, you know, what is it in the season I'm in that that makes me feel whole. That makes me feel my best because especially in relational work, you want to be with someone that enhances your happiness, but not someone that you depend on for to be happy. Because then, you know, you kind of flirt with some of those codependency, you know, type behaviors. So I think it's beautiful. And I'm noticing in the work that I'm doing, couples are getting married later than what they were, you know, generations before us. They're having kids later and really taking that time to create a foundation and figure out what it is that they want is so important.

00:09:52

Alex: Just thinking about what you were saying there in the sense of having family, I know I can think back sixteen years walking through that front door with us, bundle of joy, closing the door, looking at my wife and we both turned to each other and went, What do we do now? What do we do now? Yes, there's no there is no book.

00:10:12

Sarah: Yeah.

00:10:13

Alex: And I suppose that is where you kind of strip down yourself because this person becomes the most important thing in your life. You have to do everything for it apart from sleep and and fill nappies and everything else. The feeding, the changing. It's you, it's on you. And sometimes that is a timed issue as well, depending on how big the lungs of that child child is. So I think that's the starting point with which you kind of strip down your needs and take on the children's needs. And that grows and grows and grows. And if you don't claw that back, once they get to a particular age, you keep doing it.

00:10:54

Heather: It's like the frog and the boiling pot of water. Like you don't even know it's happening until it's too late.

00:11:00

Sarah: Yes. And Alex, and I'm curious for you, because so often I feel like we lose sight of our intuition and kind of like what it is. I mean, you are the expert of you. Everyone is the expert of them. And I feel like because of the world that we're in with so much social media, we are just bogged down with so much information, you know, and especially when it comes to, you know, dating apps and things like that. I'm curious, you know, what your take is on all of that.

00:11:34

Alex: Interestingly, I think we'll lose sight of us being experts of us. And I think that's where where we struggle. And with regards to dating apps. Dating apps are great if you use them for the purpose you're using them for, if that makes sense. So I have clients that I will speak to. And I've got friends that I speak to and I always say what you have to remember. It isn't the app, it's the user. Who are you communicating with? That will determine how that experience is and how successful it is for you? Because I don't know whether it's we use it differently in the UK, it's the US, but there are people who just want to date and that is fine.

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

You know, we can identify that pretty quick and whether that's just the thought process, whether they've come out of a long term relationship and they go, look, I don't want that kind of that tie of having that relationship, all those boundaries and everything, having to rework all that I want them to. Simple and easy, which is fine. Then you've got a multitude of other things that are going on with apps as well, and you have to kind of get through that. So I think you have to be it takes a lot of time. You have to get a good eye to spot certain things, what is, what isn't, and you have to put yourself in the best light you can. Be truthful and then work your way through and weed out what isn't true. I mean, I did an article recently we were talking about zero dating from matchmakers point of view. I think if one of my clients did this, I would be on the phone to them straight away going, Why are you doing this? This is not needed. But for zero, if you're online, this is really it's a really good technique in the sense of because you don't know who that person is with that profile. It could be somebody genuine. It might not be. This is this is the problem we have. What zero dating allows you to do is communicate with that person if you get some communication back. And then if you're thinking, yeah, I'd like to meet this person before you physically do go to FaceTime, go to something that you can talk to, WhatsApp, whatever, talk to this person, make sure you can see them so that you get an idea. Yes, they do look like their image. You can ask them some questions about the profile you do. Things fall into place. Yes, they do. Organise a date, go meet because that online is great. It's like telephone conversations and texts. I always say it's 7% communication. That is not the full picture. You I always revert back to to to work for a lot of clients that we have because they're so they've got professional background. So how many people have you dealt with through work that two or three months down the line you actually physically meet and they're going, oh, you know, quite how I expected from the emails and the conversations we've had. So zero dating point of view, you can have that visual so that when you go to that physical date, you know they are what they say they are in the sense of how they look. Then you have to take that caution of going through making sure that you're safe, you're comfortable, keep it very, very separate and do it. I always say do it in bite size. You know, we talk about investing in relationships. This is that first investment. And I always say it should be a small investment. It should never be a big investment. Sure. Because three meets in. If it's not working, you haven't overinvested. You should be able to walk away and go, He knows or she knows enough about me that I don't feel uncomfortable. But I also have learned enough about them that maybe that's not right for me.

00:15:28

Heather: Mm hmm.

00:15:29

Sarah: Well, and there's two things that I wanted to circle back on that you, you know, had shared, because having, you know, one appropriate boundaries, like how do we know setting those types of boundaries when it comes to what we feel comfortable sharing? Are we oversharing? But then also going back to almost like red flags and being able to have that understanding of our self, those core values. So I'm kind of curious for you as you are working with someone who is searching for love, how do you set that foundation to help

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

them understand what are their core values in regards to a relationship and where do they feel they need to be setting certain boundaries to protect that?

00:16:20

Alex: Those boundaries that you have are naturally there. And I think if you force those boundaries, you almost create a shopping list.

00:16:29

Heather: Mm hmm.

00:16:29

Alex: There are going to be boundaries. And it's I think that's where that goes back to being truthful in your profile, if you're going to go that way so that people understand that. I get told by clients sometimes that they will know instantly in first 10 minutes they'll know. And that's that's fine. I've I've got friends who met and they kind of instantly knew. But it's not a majority. That's a minority. And the amount of weddings and children that we have from people who have met and they've gone, oh, I don't know, I'm not sure. Should I see them again? Should I not see them? For me, I always say You need to meet two or three times because the first person you meet normally is a bit of a curve ball because you're nervous. They're nervous. If you have a bad day, you will bring it with you. There's nothing you can do. If you've struggled to find a place to park or find the venue, you bring it with you. If the kids have played up, you bring it with you. So you have all this and then you're meeting somebody you've never, ever, ever met before in your life. So you're going to be nervous.

00:17:35

Heather: I hear you talk about your clients and what you do. I'd like to know a little more about what you do with your clients and how you got into this in the first place. But also, you know, I always hear the term deal breaker. And so, you know, I like that you were talking about meet someone a few times to really get a sense of who they are and that, you know, this checklist or shopping list in our brain is maybe, you know, maybe two sets, too many rigid boundaries where we should be a little more open minded. So yeah, so I was curious about kind of your business and then where you see people making mistakes. I have tons more questions, but let's start there.

00:18:12

Alex: Yeah, I agree. I think so.

00:18:14

Heather: Yeah, right.

00:18:15

Alex: Right. Just think about the dealbreakers immediately that it's interesting because and I don't know whether Sarah has found this in the sense that sometimes you could almost call it baggage, in the sense that sometimes people might bring a deal breaker with them. But actually it's not it's just baggage from past experience. And yeah, that is a learning process, but all you're doing is you're going well, he, he or she did that. So you must do that. Well, no, that's not that's not how it works, you know. Yes. That's your experience. That's something you need to bring with you. But you need to keep it in the bag. You don't need to put it on

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

the table. What you do need to do is go, who is this person I'm now meeting? What do they provide? Do they do I need to bring this kind of this past experience and kind of look at it and reevaluate and, oh, you're doing the same thing, right? Does that mean I covered it or do you go? Actually, he hasn't presented any of those features from my past relationship with that person doesn't present any of those features from my past relationship. So what do they present? And we there are so many variants. So you could meet somebody and they offer this, this and this, but they might lack something in another area of traits or personality. And then the next person you really enjoy meeting completely different traits, a completely different variety, but that also works for you. I always say to clients, you will meet somebody, you will get to know them. You will get to a point where you want to be exclusive with them. You don't want to meet anybody else. You'll know you get there because if we try to introduce you to somebody else, you will get knot in your stomach. And the term that you will use to me is I feel like I am cheating.

00:20:13

Heather: Mm hmm.

00:20:14

Alex: And that's fantastic because I always say that shows you have an emotional connection with this person. The next stage is where you do start to evaluate your boundaries. You look at your morals, you look at your ethics, look at your goals. And part of that is when you start to introduce people into this relationship you have so you introduce your friends, you introduce your family. There will be moments where some some people will go. I didn't like the way they were with that person or how they tackled this situation that really that didn't sit well with me, that went against my morals and values. And these are the moments where you kind of realize, is there anything in that relationship is the longevity? And that's why go back to our very beginning of our conversation. You have already if you've already in the relationship, when you found this guy that provides all this or this woman who provides all this information, all this kind of support, and they know about you and you know about them. You have a lot of feelings and you've invested. It may be losing a little bit traction or a bit of aim. Just it just takes a gentle nudge sometimes to bring that back and make as fantastic as it used to be rather than thinking, oh, I'm going to get rid, give me a new one.

00:21:37

Sarah: Right? And I like to use this visual when I'm working with couples of, you know, just just a vehicle, you know, the two of you are in the car together. You are you know, you're you're on a journey. And because we're human and because a lot of us do have chapters that have led us to where we are, there's baggage there. What's important is to recognize how often are we focusing just on the rearview mirror and how much are we focusing on the windshield? Because both serve us. But if we are in the car with someone and all we're doing is driving forward, but just looking at the rearview mirror, we're going to crash. However, there's times that we do recognize, you know, we have to look in it. And that is a it's a trigger. It's something to just bring your awareness to. But then, okay, how do we get our our windshield wiper fluid going? How do we, you know, get our wipers going? What do we need to do? And I think that this this can equate, no matter if it's the beginning of a

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

dating relationship, maybe even later in a dating or even marriage. But to just recognize, okay, I am feeling triggered. There is something from my past that maybe hasn't been processed. Just call it for what it is. And you know, that's the time that you can do that deeper work. But also, you know, communicating that this is a trigger for me. I'm working through it, but not allowing that to then, you know, kick them out of the car. Right.

00:23:20

Heather: I've also heard you talk about recalculating. You know, if marriage was a journey, you know, we'd constantly be hearing. Recalculating. Recalculating.

00:23:28

Sarah: Yes.

00:23:29

Heather: Because sometimes you make the wrong turn and you have to you've got to go back and rethink it.

00:23:34

Sarah: And it's also how and and again, I think it was a beautiful thing, Alex, that you shared. And what Heather and I are on a mission to share is this idea that all of this is skills. It's all skill building. You know, some of us, yes, have had a beautiful upbringing that has allowed us to be a little bit more seasoned or skillful. But the reality is that recalculating, working together as a couple, those are skills that you have to learn. And so how when those things do happen, instead of butting heads, getting defensive, whatever our go to response is, how can we work together to keep going on that journey together?

00:24:19

Alex: And I think both of you have brought this up in the conversation in the sense of the word communication. And I think where sometimes it can fail is you can get a couple that communicate. What people forget to do is they need to remember, did the other person understand my communication? So just because I've said something doesn't mean it's understood. And again, I was speaking to somebody today about this and she said, you know, how many times do you have to tell a guy? And I said, Well, if you've told him once because of course she thought we'd turn off. I said, Well, if you've told him once and he hasn't understood you and you keep telling him he's going to turn off because he just doesn't understand what you're saying. You're telling him the language is not there. So it's about making sure that there are no butting heads because trying to explain something and somebody not understanding is, is one of those moments in life. And but when you're saying to them, make sure that they understand and you do that calmly, you know, and I go back to when my my son was learning and the tutors invited us in and we could see that what they were doing in the class and how they were learning. And what she did is she said they present one topic, but they do it in five or six different ways because they realize that not every child will understand one specific way. So once they've taught it in a specific way, they move on and teach it in a different way. And then once they've gone through that full cycle of those teaching skills, every single child in that class understands. And that's the same with us. We are very, very different and it's just making sure that what you say is understood. And then reciprocated and then worked on so that you can move forward.

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

00:26:14

Sarah: Well, we're going to take a short break. And I want to share just a really small exercise that I do with couples to kind of help with this. What did you hear me say? Ah, delivery and how we receive it. And so we'll be right back.

00:26:53

Heather: Okay. We're back with Alex Mellor Brook, co-founder and matchmaker at Select Personal Introductions. Sarah, so tell us about this exercise.

00:27:04

Sarah: So one of the things that I will do with couples is I will have them whatever they're discussing, that they seem to be butting heads, they're not in agreement. It feels like they're not understanding one another. I have them turn towards each other. Body language is really important and so I just have them use a script which at first it kind of seems this is annoying or frustrating, but it's getting back to the basics. We can provide the script on our show notes, so be sure to go back to our website. But I have, I feel whatever it is that they feel, insert the feeling because the reason they feel that way, what they need from the other person and then how that will make them feel. And then I have their partner repeat it back to them. What did you hear me say? Because I cannot tell you how many times I have couples come into my office and they'll explain to me, you know, we call them hiccups that happen. This hiccup occurred. And I would say, okay, what was your response? So I'll use the dishwasher, for example. You know, he is loading the dishwasher and she says to him, you can save so much more room if you do it this way. And then he immediately is huffing and puffing and is just like, fine, then you do it. And so I say, Well, what did you hear her say? And he said, I heard her say that I never do anything right. I'm incompetent. You know, I, I'm just ruining everything. And that's not at all what she had said. But it's the way that it was received. And so, so many times with communication, yes, we're using words, but we're not doing it effectively. So being very mindful, even as a trained professional in this, I have to catch myself how we deliver information and how we receive information. It's really important to make sure that we feel heard, seen, validated and understood. And that's only through this idea of What did you hear me say?

00:29:19

Heather: I actually started using that script. It's on our website right now. You can it's the I Feel worksheet or the I statement worksheet and I was laughing along. Sarah But because that dishwasher thing that's happened in my marriage, I am, I am the dishwasher Tetris queen. And so I have strong opinions. I'm also the refrigerator Tetris queen. So I had to learn. When to stop controlling everything and letting things go and not worrying about things being perfect. Quote unquote, perfect. But the other thing I found, you know, I would trip up and, like, say things that would trigger emotions I didn't mean to trigger. So that's why those statements those I statements are so helpful. The other thing, I'm laughing along with you, Alex. My guy is an incredibly intelligent person. He's in in the IT field like genius level, smart, right? So he kind of talks in code, like he'll say something and he almost like expects me to translate and understand what he really means. And I used to just try to like figure it out. And then I've gotten to the point where I'm like, Well, what does that mean? And then he'll say it another way and they'll say, Well, what does that mean? And he'll say it

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

another way. And like I basically what you were saying with the teachers in the five different ways, it's like even now we're still trying to figure each other out and understand how to communicate. I think it's an it's a never ending process.

00:30:45

Alex: I'm guilty. You know, who is the great translator? My son.

00:30:53

Heather: Really?

00:30:53

Alex: My son. My son can literally sit there and he understands what I say and they'll translate it to his mom and vice versa.

00:31:00

Heather: Oh, that's funny.

00:31:01

Alex: It's quite phenomenal.

00:31:02

Heather: Well, he's had to navigate both of you so he knows both your languages.

00:31:06

Alex: That's interesting.

00:31:09

Sarah: Well, into both of your guys's point. You know, I feel like it's so difficult because communication, again, we're all communicating. We think that we're making sense in our own head, like, oh, this makes sense to me. Or that's just, you know, the ticker in my head. Like as a mom when I'm packing the diaper bag, like I just know to do these things. But that doesn't come naturally for everyone. What I will say is through my work, you know, can be a trigger for a lot of people because they feel like they have to defend themselves. They feel like they have to explain themselves. So just again, that reframe of help me understand also kind of externalizing things because I am a deep processer and I am an overthinker and so I will, you know, maybe my husband, his name's Justin, maybe he'll be doing something and I'm interpreting it a certain way. And I have to pause and I have to say, you know, babe, what my brain is thinking right now, can you help me understand? Is this what's happening or am I, like, totally overthinking that? Again, it's gotten to a place where I didn't feel safe doing that in the beginning. But now, as we've continued to progress in our relationship, I am able to do that. So I do think it's important to use that language of like, here's what I'm hearing you say, help me understand. And then also remembering that when something like the dishwasher or laundry or the gas tank, whatever it is oftentimes and I use this language of like that's the check engine light going off sometimes it's not necessarily about the dishwasher or, you know, whatever it is. But to say I'm feeling, you know, triggered right now, I'm feeling upset. It actually doesn't have to do with this. And that's a time, like to open up the hood and see what else is underneath the surface.

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

00:33:13

Alex: Sometimes you don't even know that's going on. And that's the point. And for each couple, it will be a different language and and the way the process to get around that will be different for each couple. You were talking about something else before. I call them speed bumps of life. And the the pandemic was a big speed bump. There's a lot of a lot of clients that we kind of found who kind of suddenly were locked up with somebody going, who's this person?

00:33:44

Sarah: Yeah.

00:33:45

Alex: I don't I don't know who this I know them that weekend or I know them so many days a week. But I don't know who this person is because they're with me 24/7 And I think that goes back to, oh, hold on, they do this, they think this, their attitude to this is this. I don't like that. And you get the full thing. I always say to clients. When you get to a point where you've met somebody enough times that you know that they're the one you've got to work out. Friendship and relationship are very similar, but they're very different. And the question I always ask is the person you can live with for the rest of your life is the person you can spend 24/7 with. Friend you'll have with the rest of your life. You will not be able to live with a 24/7 because it's amazing when they ask How many people could you live with 24/7? All your friends. People struggle. People really struggle to find one person they could do that with. So it's and again, we speak a different language to you. So there's all these little things going on that really we shouldn't survive as a species. We do. We kind of get around it.

00:34:55

Heather: So we've talked about relationships, long term relationships, sort of new relationships, intermediate. But I want to take advantage of you being a matchmaker here for our listeners who are looking for love or looking to meet people. And I'd be interested to know kind of your advice for putting your best foot forward when you're putting yourself out there, maybe for the first time in a long time. And you and you want to find somebody, you know, we've already talked about don't have a rigid checklist shopping list, you know. But what other words of advice might you have about, you know, making the best effort.

00:35:32

Alex: Exactly that making your best effort in the sense of not overdoing it, but being positive about yourself. Again, men and women are different about this. And you've got to get a sense of feeling good about yourself, whether you're this is kind of you're just in finding the relationship or you're coming out of the relationship. There are different things that we I know I go through with with with clients, but it's. It's about. Don't put pressure on yourself. Don't put pressure on the other person. That's I mean, those are two two big things. Sometimes people come with this checklist and these expectations. And as a matchmaker, I would always say, well, if we stripped everything away, I mean, both moms, if I turn around and said, tomorrow you will have nothing, but you can keep one thing, what would you choose? And I know that you'd say your children above everything else, it would be your kids. So if you take a relationship and said, Hey, let's strip absolutely everything away and

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

say you're allowed three things, what are those three things? I think it really makes you focus on what's important. And then it's about not making too big of an emotional. Kind of moment for that meeting. So, for instance, if I've got somebody going into the city to meet somebody for a meeting or a meet up, I will always say, no, no, no, you're actually going to go and do something else first, whether it's you're going to go to a shop to pick something up or you're going to have a look at something. That's the reason for you going into the city. Oh, by the way, you're going to pop in for a coffee and have a drink with such and such a body. And I always say, I know people go, oh, go for a meal and things. No, no, no, no. Too hard, too difficult. You go for a drink. You keep it really simple. Interestingly enough, what happened out of the pandemic was because we weren't allowed to sit in coffee shops and have coffee, people would get takeout coffees and go for walks. And I saw the time that people spent with each other doubled.

00:37:40

Heather: Really?

00:37:41

Alex: Yeah. Because you weren't sitting in front of somebody going, okay, talk. What you were doing is you were walking, so you might take the dogs for a walk or some have out or walking around a particular place. You have things to interact. There were distractions.

00:37:55

Sarah: It takes the pressure off.

00:37:57

Alex: Absolutely. Takes the pressure off. That person sat in front of the other person. So there are distractions you can talk about. Oh, did you see that? What's also happening? You're building up an experience together. That's a bond that then creates trust, that then develops the relationship. So go keep it really simple. Never, ever overcomplicate when you're meeting up. If that coffee goes well or the drink goes well and you want to go and get something to eat, go and get something to eat. You're obviously enjoying each other's time, but also don't spend too long because of the adrenaline that will be pumping around your body. It will eventually dissipate and you will come and crash and burn. So it's about getting the timings right. Go meet be positive always going on about this don't about anything negative this is the first impression that you will have with this person and usually find that impression stays with you through the relationship.

00:38:58

Heather: So don't talk about all your former disastrous relationships or your exes.

00:39:03

Alex: Or you know, we've had them. Somebody might ask, goes back to the car. Are you driving along, looking in the rear mirror? Right. Are you looking forward? Yes. I have a past. Yes, I have a history. That's it. This is where I'm heading. Do you see yourself in the same direction?

00:39:21

Sarah: I think you bring up such a good point, though, to just this like simplicity, because I

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

think for women especially and because of, you know, the highlight reels, you know, the movies that we've been exposed to with like Prince Charming and the romantics, you know, that that are constantly within us. We play out this movie, whether it is in just like the first date or even expectations that we have, whether it's a new job or a new season we're in like this idea of playing out the movie of, okay, I'm going to meet this person, and then they already have like a Pinterest board of like what their wedding is going to look like and, you know, all of this stuff. And so I really do think that it's important to just acknowledge if you are someone that oftentimes lives in this fantasy, there's nothing wrong with that. However, honor that, acknowledge it, but then park that and be able to say, okay, I am going to ground myself. I am a huge, huge advocate of fresh air movement being outdoors. So I love hearing you say that you in your work have noticed people the time doubled just by engaging in that outdoor experience together. I, I just think it's a beautiful reminder of be where your feet are. Allow yourself to be present again. Don't shame or blame or criticize yourself for the possibility of you playing out that movie, but also recognizing how can I show up as myself and see where this takes me.

00:41:14

Alex: from a kind of psychological mental situation. If you are walking in the sun, you've got the sunshine that is going to help your mood. The movement body, the chemicals released. It all helps all creates that euphoria.

00:41:30

Heather: You know, we talked about being positive and meeting someone and kind of communication, all that, talking about the fantasy in I feel comfortable saying women's heads mostly. Primarily we're conditioned to have these these fantasies. You know, I see women I know who are trying to date who get really depressed and really disappointed when they're you know, they're finding frog after frog after frog. And and so I wondered if you had words of advice about, you know, maybe that's just a process of elimination. Maybe you're making your figuring out what you like and what you don't like so that you find the right person.

00:42:05

Alex: Interestingly, I actually think it crosses both genders.

00:42:10

Heather: Okay.

00:42:10

Alex: And part of the problem we have is social media.

00:42:13

Heather: Yeah.

00:42:13

Alex: Because what you are shown is a perfect image that's created. Yeah. It's something that is put together, filtered tweets, snaps, put out there with some, some message. What you don't see is the mess and the carnage of whatever.

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

00:42:31

Heather: Right, right, right.

00:42:33

Alex: Right. And that's the same with life, guys. Get it. So they go, that's that's what women look like. The images that we're seeing are unrealistic, right? There are ladies that will try and or girls that will try and recreate that, which is impossible. So there is a real conundrum on people expectations and what they see. What is reality and what isn't reality.

00:42:59

Sarah: And Heather, you know what you were kind of alluding to in regards to like finding love later in life. What's really interesting is as we've been talking about the baggage and things like that is that more times than not, people they got married at a young age. It was almost this expectation of what they thought they were supposed to do without truly discovering who it is that they are and then finding out that maybe they're not compatible, whether it, you know, addiction or affairs or whatever, you know, has happened. But I think what I'm noticing in the work that I do is as women, women specifically, that are struggling with being confident, not allowing their paths to define them, going into these new relationships. So being able to acknowledge, yes, this is my history, yes, I have kids, yes, I am co-parenting. But then being able to come as they are, but also finding a partner that also is at that same emotional level, because when they go through the divorce, they're doing a lot of that soul searching. They're doing more of that, figuring out who they are and wanting to find someone who is at that same level.

00:44:23

Heather: That stage, that season.

00:44:25

Sarah: Yeah. And that can be really difficult as you're merging to, you know, different, very intricate and detailed histories.

00:44:35

Alex: It was research that I did and and that's been done over the years. I've been matchmaking in the sense that I do find a lot of couples were divorced at the stage. Their last child was about eight, five and under. So whether they had one child, three children, there was that commonality. There was that throughline that when you look at how long somebody has been separated, divorced, always tallied up with that age grouping.

00:45:05

Sarah: I'm also seeing in my work, you know, this is where intimacy can be a big you know, they can plateau because we don't feel good about ourself and the external. And so then internally, you know, we're not doing the things that we were doing in the beginning of our relationship. And so this is a time, you know, whether it's postpartum, whether it's post menopause, you know, whatever we're going through, it's really important, you know, that we're continuing to just be honest with ourself, recognize what's going on and communicating those things together.

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

00:45:43

Alex: And I think it's I kind of describe it as you've got to start dating each other again. Even though I don't like the word dating, you have to go through that process of finding out about from a guy, what does she like? What does she find interesting? What do I do that attracts her to me? You know what makes her feel good? You have to you have to rediscover that

00:46:13

Heather: Wonderful advice. Thank you so much for your time and your expertise. This has been a wonderful conversation. I could go on and on.

00:46:23

Sarah: Thank you so much. We will definitely have all of your links in our show notes so that people can find you. But thank you for taking this time and being with us today.

00:46:35

Alex: Pleasure, wonderful meeting you.

00:46:52

Heather: So, Sarah, you're so great on social media. You've been putting out these polls with people and saying, hey, send us your questions. And we've gotten some great ones and I know you have one you want to talk about, so let's hear it.

00:47:04

Sarah: Absolutely. And if listeners you do have a question, please let us know because we would love to hear it. The most recent question that I had gotten was How do I approach my husband to ask him to spend more time at home with the kids? Yeah.

00:47:27

Heather: Oh, boy. I'm remembering when my kids were young and getting all hot and bothered just thinking about this question.

00:47:33

Sarah: Yes. Well, and it's interesting because even though this is a specific question, but this theme comes up a lot. And one thing that I think is important to just acknowledge is, again, checking in with yourself, you know, really thinking about what do I need more of? Am I feeling very suffocated? Am I feeling like, you know, this invisible load and that, you know, our partnership is not equal? I think that there's often times when it comes to a question or frustration with our partner. There's more underneath the surface. So really taking some time to think about and reflect yourself. Hmm. If my husband were to stay home with the kids and I were to not be there, what is it that I would want to be doing? And so when it comes to gender, oftentimes women fall in to a certain role. Whether that was generational patterns, they were taught that or, you know, societal messaging. We women operate a certain way. And so it's also important to be gentle with our husbands or with our partners and recognize it's not necessarily their fault. But this is a great time for us to to bring our curiosity to it. You know, conflict often times I like to frame to reframe conflict is a way to reconnect. It's a way to be curious about what's going on. And so I would encourage you and with Alex, we had talked about using eye statements and using a script to kind of share how we were feeling. So, you know, you could approach your husband and just share. You know,

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

I'm feeling touched out. I'm feeling overwhelmed because I have not had much time to myself. What I really need is a night out or a few hours to myself that would really help me to recharge, you know, making sure that we're sensitive to the timing in which we're presenting this information, but also really making it about us.

00:50:00

Heather: Yeah. Not setting up an attack of you never do this and you never do that.

00:50:05

Sarah: And yeah, bingo. Because those use statements can be very triggering. Mm hmm. Often times when this question is ask, were also at at a breaking point, because it comes when we're realizing tired. Yeah. Yeah. And so I, I think it's a really important conversation to have and also asking our our partner, how do you feel about having some time with the kids? Maybe they don't feel fully confident in their ability to hold down, you know, the home while mom is gone, maybe even asking, hey, you know, having them spend more time with the kids, too, explaining how important that dynamic is. And it doesn't have to always be an astronomical amount of time. But a lot of research does suggest that even 5 minutes of one on one quality time can make such an impact in our child's development. And so finding things in common, you know, maybe if your husband he likes to be outside, you know, having him in your child go outside together or reading together or cooking a meal together or whatever it is. But really, I think the biggest thing is just having that honest and open conversation. Feeling safe enough in the relationship to be able to communicate those things. Mm hmm. And then there's an exercise that I do, you know, in therapy, you know, having each of the partners sit down and they write a list of, like, what do I need more of? What do I need less of? And just sharing that without judgment, without criticism, shame or blame, but just saying, in order for me to feel more like myself, you know, I, I need less of, you know, doing the laundry all the time, right? As silly as it is. But then I need more quality time with my girlfriends or I need, you know, to be moving my body more. So again, just identifying those things and then together talking about how can we together problem solve? Evolve and make those things happen.

00:52:29

Heather: Two things that pop in my mind as you're talking is those AI statements are so important. And I'm remembering back when my children were young and I needed to have a creative outlet. And so, you know, John and I negotiated time. He would be the primary parent and I would go off to my studio and come back and but we figured out a way to do it in a way that wasn't too hard for him. But the thing that I remember as a young mom, I the he said at one time, and that was he was going to babysit the kids. And I was like, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. Now, these are your children. You are not a babysitter. You are a parent. And so it was one of those you know, those hot button conversations. I think a lot of I think you're right, society dictates sort of our attitudes sometimes and has sort of given us some of the wrong messages. And I think there are some men out there who don't feel it's their responsibility to watch the kids. And so that honest conversation has to happen about we're both in this together, buddy, and but in a positive way like you're talking about. And the other thing that pops to mind, something Counselor told me once, is that in any

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

relationship, it's not always 50/50. It's not you can't always there are times when you give more and there are times when the other person gives more. And that's just the way it is. And you hope over time you work together to make it balance out, but it's not always going to be perfectly even. Steven So and you have to be okay with that and know that this is my turn now and this is your turn later or whatever.

00:54:10

Sarah: Right? Well, and you bring up a good point, you know, just in regards to we think everything needs to be balanced. And more times than not, it's about counter balance. Right.

00:54:21

Heather: And so that's a good way. Yeah, yeah. That's a good way to say it.

00:54:24

Sarah: And, and the other thing is there is a great book by Eve Brodsky called Fair Play, and she talks about this dynamic and how equal partnerships and she actually has a card game that goes with this that is actually this this deck of cards. And it has anything that you could think of from your domestic responsibilities to also parenting and what this card game does. And I actually will do this in my office using index cards. So this is something you could do with index cards. Again, when I do this exercise and you're going to hear me say this time and time again, it's not about blaming or shaming or judging or criticizing. It's just about acknowledging because we can't change what we don't acknowledge. Right. And so just having each partner write a list of kind of their daily tasks, their weekly tasks, their monthly tasks, everything from car maintenance to house maintenance to taking their kids places, all of that. Really think about all of the things that they're doing. And then you write each one on an index card or that you can buy this card system. Amazon has it, and you just hold the card that you are oftentimes responsible for. And what this does is it visually allows you to see how many cards is one partner carrying versus the other, and then also being able to delegate to say, okay, I notice that you have more cards in your deck than mine. What are some cards that you would be you would feel safe enough to delegate, you know, talking about that, because sometimes we do get overwhelmed with these tasks and responsibilities when really I say this respectfully and gently, but we're doing it to ourselves because we just sure we we don't want to give up that control or they can't do it the same way that I do. Or if I have to remind him, it's just so much easier for me to do it. And so these false narratives create resentment, right? And so if we can just and again, to your point, it's not always about perfect balance, but if we can start to see and go week by week, this week, here are the cards that I'm going to take care of here. The cards that you are going to take care of. It allows for everyone to feel like they're playing a part to provide that foundation that's needed.

00:57:11

Heather: That's fascinating. I've never heard of that game or that book, so I'll have to look into that.

00:57:16

Sarah: Yes.

That's A Hard No Podcast

S2 E5: Dealbreakers in Love with Alex Mellor-Brook Transcript

00:57:16

Heather: Well, thanks, Sarah. I think that was pretty helpful. I'm sure more people will have follow up questions. Yes. And can relate to the situation. So, again, we want to hear it. So please. Visit our website and send us a message or messages on social media. That's it for today. Thank you so much for listening. Visit our website. Hard No podcast for this episode's show. Notes, past episodes, downloadable URLs and links to resources. Also, you'll find links to each of our websites. CleverGirlMarketing.com and PurposefulGrowthandWellness.com.

00:57:57

Sarah: Make sure to follow and get in touch with us on social. We're @HardNoPodcast on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

00:58:07

Heather: And please do us a huge favour. If you liked what you heard here, please subscribe, rate and review our podcast wherever you listen so others can find us too.

00:58:17

Sarah: Thanks to our friends and family, our villagers for listening and for all your continued support.

00:58:25

Heather: That's a hard no as a joint production of Clever Girl Marketing and Purposeful Growth and Wellness.

00:58:31

Sarah: Marketing and Production Coordinator Maura Del Rosario.

00:58:36

Heather: Production Support. Evergreen Podcasts. Noah Foutz Producer.

00:58:41

Sarah: Music by GG Riggs.

00:58:44

Heather: Until next time, thanks for listening.

00:58:46

Sarah: And remember saying no isn't just okay.

00:58:50

Heather: Saying no is the key to living an authentic, fulfilling life.

00:58:55

Sarah: So do it. Find your no, then say it unapologetically. That's a hard no.