



The Millennial Life

podcast
with Liz Higgins

Episode 18: Why You Shouldn't Be Focused on Compatibility

Liz Higgins (00:00:02): Hey, y'all! Liz Higgins here, and welcome to the Millennial Life Podcast, where my main goal is to share conversations that will inspire you and drive you toward the life and relationship you desire. I'm here to share what I've learned as a licensed therapist and relationship coach specializing in millennial relationships and wellness, as well as transformative conversations with other professionals. Thanks for listening and enjoy today's episode!

Liz Higgins (00:00:33) Hi guys! Well, I pod faded, and I'm sad about it. BUT, I decided to make a turnaround and return to the podcast. So... hello! To recap, since I fell off in December (and I think it was mid-December that I released my latest episode which was part two of a wonderful conversation with Laura Pierce, who is a marriage and family therapist and registered play therapist, about parenting and building secure, emotional, healthy relationships with your kids - even when they are feisty, challenging toddlers.

Liz Higgins (00:01:16) So, if that resonates with you and the phase of life that you're in, I highly recommend going back and listening to that conversation because it was really great. BUT, just an update from my end: I took the holiday to spend time with the limited family that we did see. Still being cautious through the Winter months with COVID and everything, so I was home a lot with my little ones. And I'm not sad about it. Although for me, spending many days after days after days with two toddlers gets completely draining. (I'll probably do a another podcast about all that later.) But, you know, I think that years from now, I'll be really grateful that I had that time and took that time.

Liz Higgins (00:02:06) I'll also share that we just came out of Snowmageddon 2021, so... as if we didn't get enough from 2020, what a way to start out this year. There was a ton of snow and ice, and so many people, so many families have been impacted throughout Texas and, know, throughout the country, but our poor state was just not equipped for the kind of cold temperatures that it got down to. I mean, it was like, zero and below. And less than 10 degrees during the day for a few days last week. So... Gratefully, my family is fine and we made it through with minimal consequences. But, yeah. Here we are...Monday morning! It was white as snow, literally as far as my eyes could see last Friday and today it's going to be nearing the 70s. Yesterday, it was in the 70's. That is Texas, ya'll.

Liz Higgins (00:03:05) But, okay. So I've decided to return to the podcasting! And this time, I want the next few episodes to really just be me sharing thoughts with you. There's so much stuff out there about relationships, finding the right person, being the right person, however you want to look at it. And I want you to get a sense of what I believe, and know, about these things. And I want you to hear from me how I've been able to pull together from research, ideas, books, trainings, and my own clinical experience as a therapist.

Liz Higgins (00:03:44) So today, I want to check out the topic of compatibility. I hear clients bring up compatibility as an important ingredient of their relationship. I think for some people it's a marker of your relationship's ability to succeed; of it's longevity. When I think about the definition of compatibility - so many things come up. Like... agreeing on values that you simply cannot

compromise on. For example, one person wanting kids, and the other being adamant that they don't. That sounds pretty incompatible from the start. Perhaps one person is religious and the other is not and has openly voiced no desire to change that. I think something that we can struggle with a lot of times, especially at the beginning of a relationship, is receiving the information we are hearing a person share about themselves. And especially when there's that strong, emotional, physical infatuation phase it can be really hard to hear those words. Um, Terry Real calls that phase "love without knowledge". So we've got that love-feeling experience blossoming and happening, and it's really hard to blend that in with the rational knowing and hearing what is being said.

Liz Higgins (00:05:21) Um, so, compatibility (I think) represents the areas of your life where you don't have to push and pull, or fight, to change your partner's stance about something. It's easy. Or there's a default understanding that doesn't require a whole lot of conflict. Okay, so I'm game with calling that 'compatibility' for the sake of this conversation. So why should we not be focused on compatibility? Well, are we ever really TRULY compatible with someone? Like, how do you measure that? At a certain point, you WILL hit the places of your relationship where you simply don't see eye to eye. Or...even better, one or both of you will change. And I think that's one of the hardest parts of a relationship to navigate, too. When someone changes. They change their beliefs, they might change what they wanted, they grow and they want explore and expand... and the other person may not be on the same playing field. That can be really hard.

Liz Higgins (00:06:34) So you can start out in a relationship thinking you're really compatible. And so many times during that infatuation phase, we see that and it feels so valid. We're like 'Oh my God, we're so compatible! We like all the same things and we have so much fun together!' And that is real, that's true that that's happening. But that's also "love without knowledge". You're also in the "blind love" phase where you don't know everything about each other. You couldn't possibly! So perhaps that's true - starting out in the relationship thinking you're really compatible. But compatibility as a precursor to long-term commitment, or as an indicator of your relational success and level of intimacy... not so much. That's like putting yourselves inside a box and saying "Okay, as long as we both stay this way and don't venture outside of the agreements we've made with each other about ourselves, our values, our interests, we're good". Like no.

Liz Higgins (00:07:38) People WILL change. You WILL change. Your partner WILL change. We are giving compatibility way too much power in our culture today. Choice paradox and the plethora of people in the palm of your phone in the apps (right now this very second) make it so incredibly easy to swipe people who don't appear to have what you need to feel happy or secure in a relationship. Key word - appear! Appear to have that. So, I'd rather change the conversation. And, instead of saying "So rather than focus on compatibility, what do we focus on?" How about this? Let's collectively accept that "All marriages are incompatible".

Liz Higgins (00:08:29) Now, I don't want you to hear that as me saying 'You should just go be with anyone'. Of course, let yourself feel drawn to certain people for certain reasons. I'm simply deconstructing this idea that we should use compatibility as a way to determine something about ourselves or our partner. And certainly something as large as, "We're gonna make it. We're gonna succeed. We will be happily ever after because of these things." Like, there's too many other moving parts; other factors and we are not that linear. Really, what I'm saying here too, is that... When I hear clients bring up not feeling compatible - I want to know about that! I want to hear specifically what is giving them this anxiety, or this experience, that they aren't

meant for each other. Or, that this detail of their relationship means that their 'picker' was off. What it usually boils down to is that - whatever the subject is, which it almost doesn't even matter what the subject is - it brings up an area of insecurity, feeling unsafe, unheard, or that they are not accepted. THAT is the work that incompatibility can bring up for couples.

Liz Higgins (00:09:46) Our culture is so stuck on this pattern of: Incompatibility? Leave. Incompatibility? I'm bouncing. When really, that's the invitation to do the deeper work of being in a committed relationship. There's actually a decent little black book called "Why You Will Marry The Wrong Person". It stemmed from a viral Ted Talk a few years back. I should know the guy's name - it was some British guy. But it was really good! I'll link it in the Show Notes. I highly recommend it. It talks about the transition from marriage being the old traditional institution, to the romantic phase where we married for love and happily ever after, (a romanticized emotion all decision), to the marriage of today, which is a blend of the fierce intimacy and psychological understanding of ourselves. It will really change the way you view relationship and marriage - I can almost promise you that, but I'm not supposed to, ethically, make promises.

Liz Higgins (00:11:00) So, I'd like to put some of these more thoughtful questions out there to you: Like, "What do you think it will take for you to handle giving love to someone different than you?" "What do you think it will take for you to receive love from someone different than you?" "How can you navigate your differences?" And "What do your differences, especially the ones that bring you the most emotional reactivity, bring up from your childhood?" "How are these unhealed wounds an invitation for you to grow and develop?" Yeah. This also shifts me into the topic of compromise. I'll quickly talk about that. When people feel like they're hitting a wall of incompatibility on some things, or wanting different things, it then becomes a conversation of compromise. Like, "Well, how do we make a compromise here? You want this, but I want that, so who gets what they want?" And this is where we enter the murky waters because I don't consider compromise a healthy success when someone feels like they came out losing. When they came out "giving up" something important to them. Egh, you've both lost.

Liz Higgins (00:12:25) Where compromise IS a healthy outcome, is when couples can learn to negotiate like mature adults. And I just wanna say, too, y'all - we're not supposed to know how to do all this. I mean, it's not (yet) embedded into our society and our culture as much as learning how to do math is, or learning how to read and write is. We are not given these skills, and very few of us are given a healthy model for what this stuff looked like when we were growing up. So I can almost guarantee that every single person listening to this conversation (including me!) has things to learn about their own experience of compatibility, how to compromise, and how to be in a healthy relationship.

Liz Higgins (00:13:14) So that's the hope, right? We're all in this together. But like, healthy compromise, that would look like willingness, open dialogue, both partners feeling seen and understood for what they need, both partners being willing to continue taking each other on through difficult decisions in life. Like, you keep choosing each other through the hard stuff. You don't give up because of the hard stuff. And believe it or not, a curiosity and openness to your partner changing - that's another ingredient. You don't stop paying attention to each other. THAT is the road to growth and a real aliveness in your relationships And if you do the work, then the good feels, and the good vibes, are sure to follow.

Liz Higgins (00:14:07) Okay, so, I've shared my thoughts. So let's sit on this. And please feel free to DM me on Instagram! You can find me @lizhiggins. Or email me thru my website if you

have thoughts or questions. I would love to hear what's on your mind about all this. Where did this land? What is missing from this conversation? What do you want to hear more of? Alright? Stay tuned for more stuff, and I look forward to talking to you all later!

Thanks again for listening to the podcast. If you like the show, leave us five stars or write a review. If you're interested in learning more, sign up for my free ebook "The One Barrier to Commitment All Millennials Face" at millennialrelationships.com.



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