

Ep #280: The Secret to Improving Your Relationship (Without Changing Your Partner)



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Amanda Hess

[How to Love Yourself No Matter What](#) with Amanda Hess

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Most women think the way to have a better relationship is to change their partner. But what if the real shift happens when you change the relationship you have with yourself? Today's episode is going to show you how to get more love, more connection, and more peace in romance without waiting for anyone else to change. Let's dive in.

This show is for women who've been labeled, misdiagnosed, or misunderstood. Whether you have a diagnosis or just know deep down that you experience life differently, this is your space to stop fixing yourself and start trusting who you already are. My name is Amanda Hess. Let's go.

Hey my friend. How are you? I have had the most incredible day. I had an in-person session with one of my one-to-one clients, and I don't get to have in-person sessions often because the work that I do is usually virtual because a lot of the people that I work with don't live where I live. They don't live necessarily in Canada. They might not even live on this continent. So to be able to have an in-person session was such a beautiful gift. But that isn't what today's episode is all about.

Today, what we're going to be talking about is creating more love, more connection, improving your romantic relationship, or creating, even creating a romantic relationship, and looking at how you can use self-love to get there. Because a lot of times what I find, especially in romantic relationships that you are currently having, is that you believe that what needs to happen is the other person needs to change, and that the way to having a great relationship is dependent on the other person changing the way that they approach you and the way that they approach the relationship.

And when I offer that we have the power to make a lot of change without the other person needing to be different, it can be difficult to hear. Because what I hear from a lot of my clients and from a lot of women is that they feel that they are already doing too much, that they are the ones that are always trying to make things better, and that their partner isn't doing anything to do that. And so they feel very stuck and very immersed in this

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relationship where they are, as they see it, overgiving, and that their partner is undergiving. And this is something that I see all the time.

And I can relate, because I used to think that if my husband really loved me, he would listen to me and he would care about me and he would know what I needed, and he would understand that I don't want to be the one that has to juggle all the responsibilities and know when everybody's birthday is and make sure that we're doing the right birthday celebrations for our kids and for my parents and for his parents, and that I'm the one that has to make sure that the dog still goes to the vet if they ever go, or the kids go to the dentist. And if this sounds like a voice inside of your own head, I can help you, okay? I can help you build a relationship that is better.

Now, if you feel like your partner is not meeting your needs, if you feel like you're doing the lion's share of the work in your relationship, if you feel like you already do too much, you are already too tired, too burnt out, too exhausted to put any work into them because ultimately you don't even have time for yourself, this episode is 100% for you, okay? And we're going to really get into it.

What I didn't know when I was feeling the way that I was feeling about my husband, when I was having the experience that I was having, is that I was actually directing it to be that way, that unwittingly, the way that I had set up my relationship was because the foundation, which is me, was missing really big pieces. The analogy that I gave my client today when I was doing her one-to-one session is that I like to, sometimes when I'm coaching a client, draw a boat. And so I like using a boat because there's a significant portion of the boat that is under the water, and that part that goes under the water gets bigger and bigger as the boat above gets bigger and bigger.

So, if you think about yourself being the boat, okay, you're the boat, and the foundation of you is your self-worth, your lovability, your needs being met, that is the foundation of the boat. That is the hull. So, if you consider the hull as being your foundation, right, in this boat, and then you exist on the outside of the boat, when we're young, the hull doesn't have to be very

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big because our life isn't very big on the other side. But as we get older, as we age, as we become adults and our lives start to create a lot of complexity, and so we have more going on, thinking about having more responsibility, a mortgage, having to pay property taxes, having to save money for your retirement, having aging parents, having children, having children that grow up and that are going to university and that you're supporting in that regard.

When you think about the complexity of the friendships that you have and how your work responsibilities increase, what ends up happening is that the hull needs to get bigger because the boat's getting bigger, right? And so what ends up happening for most women that I coach and what was happening for me before I found these tools, is that there were holes in the hull. And those holes in the hull are a big deal still when the boat is small, but become an even bigger deal when the boat is big because as the hull grows, so do the holes. So if you have holes in your self-worth, if you have holes in your lovability, if you have holes in your self-care, if you have holes in meeting your needs, right? If you have holes in even creating fun and excitement and enjoyment, if you have those holes, what ends up happening, what we tend to do without meaning to, is we plug the holes with people.

So we plug the hole with maybe your partner, maybe friends, maybe work is plugging some holes. Like there are a lot of holes being plugged. But when the relationship is really not working, when it feels like the relationship is just the problem, what I typically see is women trying to plug the hole with their partner. They're trying to plug multiple holes with their partner. That is what they're doing. They're trying to solve the problem of what's going on for them personally with another person. And this is unsolvable. And so what happens is the person doesn't work as a really good seal. They're not always there. They're not there the way they need to be to block the water from coming in. So we have constant flooding. So it's a perpetual emergency.

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So if you just use this analogy and think about like the flooding is your nervous system being flooded, then you can see how you would be moving into fight, flight, freeze, fawn all the time. And that would be the way that you are staying afloat. And what I'm going to offer to you today is that we need to start repairing the holes. We can't repair them with another person. So your partner cannot be the thing that repairs the hole. You have to be the thing that repairs the hole. Now, does that mean that we don't have needs that we need our husband to fill or our wife or our boyfriend or our girlfriend? No, it doesn't mean that. They still are a part of the solution, but the repair of the hole doesn't get filled with them. They're a part of the solution, but they're not the whole solution because the solution actually comes from you.

Now, this is like pretty meta, and I get it, and I'm going to work you through it, okay? And the first thing I just want to talk about is really thinking about the emotion of self-love. So, self-love is a feeling that you feel in your body when you're thinking thoughts that create love, right? So if you think about the feeling of love, we went through this on the episode before now, but just in case you haven't listened to it, it's a vibration in your body. Love is something you feel. Imagine yourself experiencing that feeling, thinking about a person, an animal, an experience where love was there. You know the kind of love that fills you up. You feel it in your chest. It's huge. It's warm. It feels like a hug. It's just so beautiful, that feeling. That is the feeling of love.

And when we talk about self-love, it's having that feeling directed at yourself. One thing that my marriage coach, Maggie, said to me once that has stuck with me forever is finding that feeling inside of yourself and that if you think about a Care Bear, so if you're old enough to have watched the Care Bears, right, if you think about a Care Bear and when they would do their Care Bear stare, that's sort of how we aim love, like the feeling of love around. We can aim it at any other human being or animal, but also we can aim it at ourselves. We can aim it internally.

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Now, when you consider that is what you're doing, that is the experience of love, self-love is that experience, okay? And self-love is a standard. And I want you to think about setting a standard for yourself. So you're going to set the standard of having self-love. Like the standard in my relationship with my romantic partner is self-loving. That is the standard. That is where we start. That is where we begin. This is healing that hole, repairing that hole in your hull where it's looking for love in all the wrong places, right, like the song. But truly, expecting another person to love you more than you can actually love yourself is a losing game. It's a losing game. You won't win it because inevitably that person won't show up the way you need them to sometimes, maybe a lot of times, maybe it even feels like all the time.

But we can learn the skill of self-love. And it is a skill, right? It's skill. Learning how to feel your feelings is a skill. Learning how to navigate emotion, it's a skill. But if you set self-love as the standard, then you will know your worth, and you will stop settling for crumbs. And what do I mean by that? What I mean is that you're going to go to your partner knowing that you have lovability, that you are already loved by you. And so when you show up, you're going to ask differently. It's not going to be graspy, it's not going to be needy. It's going to be totally different. You're going to walk in your power and say, "This is what I need from you, and we need to talk about it." Now you might come back to me and say, "Amanda, I've said those words." And I get it, except that you have to remember that the feeling that you are feeling is being the fuel for how you act and other people sense it. They know it. If you say those words and the thought behind it is, I'm not good enough, nobody's ever going to love me. I have to fight for my worth. I have to fight for you to love me, then the way that you're going to say it is going to be different.

Now, moving forward from that also and what you want to know is that you're going to have to ask more than one time. In order to stand up for something, you have to stand up for something. Okay? If you're going to set the standard, if you're going to stand up for self-love, for you deserving love from another human being, then you have to own that all the way. You

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have to take it all the way through. We don't ask once and go, "Well, I guess that's it. I don't deserve it." That's not self-loving. You just dropped the standard. And we don't want you to drop the standard. That's the last thing that we want you to do. We want to keep the standard high. The self-love standard, not the standard of like what they say or what they do. The loving of yourself, we keep up high. We keep it as the standard. We hold it as this is always true for me. I love myself. So everything that comes out of me, everything that I internalize, I'm going to use self-love to direct.

When you start to expect respect and kindness, not because you demand it, because you model it, your relationship will have the opportunity to shift. Now, does it always work? Maybe not. But at least you know you've done everything that can be done to create it. And the added benefit is you get to love yourself because you've done this, because you've set this stage, because you've set the standard. If you think about being in conflict in your relationship, I want you to consider how you show up when you feel defensive. What do you do? What do you say? How do you act?

I'll tell you how I act. You never do this for me. You don't love me at all. You did this to be a jerk to me. I always ask you and you never do it. That is how we show up to that when we're defensive. When we're defensive, we are going to be aggressing without noticing that we're aggressing. So if you can tap into self-love, if you think about raising the bar and using self-love as the driver, right, then what happens is we don't have to be defensive, because we don't have to keep you in place. If we go back to the example of the ship with the hull, we don't need you to stay in the hole. That's not needed. You're part of the solution, but you're not the whole solution. I can repair the hole myself. I've got this. But I need you to know these are my boundaries, and I need you to understand that's never going to be different for me.

You also are going to be more open to hearing what the other person has to say because if you love yourself and you don't have to defend yourself and they're not aggressing at you and telling you that you're unlovable because you already know that you're not, you already know you're lovable

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as fuck, right, then you don't need to show up and prove that to anybody, least of all your partner. You can come with confidence with a calm demeanor. You have the ability to be uncomfortable when they might tell you what they're thinking or what they're feeling or what they're experiencing. However, you have the confidence in you that you know what's true for you and you know what's not true for you.

And so if somebody expresses their truth and it's not in alignment with yours, you don't take that in. You don't internalize that because you don't have to. Because this isn't even true for you. It allows you to create less friction. You're going to start less fights, and you're going to approach them differently. Do I think fighting is a problem in relationships? No, I think that you're going to fight. You're going to disagree. However you want to say it, you're not always going to be on the same page. This is normal. Conflict in relationships is normal and we need to normalize it because it's actually just a part of being a human in a relationship with another human. Conflict is normal.

But if we consider that we don't need him to be different or her to be different, but that I can be different, what happens is we get more clarity. We understand better what's really going on for the other person, and we can decide what we want to do with that information. Now it might be that you might want to meet them halfway or that you might see their point of view or it might be that this is just a boundary for you that you place. And now this is in place. When you do X, I'll do Y. You get to decide, but the decision-making doesn't come from a panic of I need to fight for my worth. I need this person to see me, because you have to see yourself in order to be seen. You must see yourself. Now, I don't tell you that for you to go beat yourself up when you listen to this. I tell you that because it's actually going to make you more empowered because then you have the ability to create that for yourself. You can start addressing that immediately. You can have that if you just start working on it. It is available to you.

The other part of self-love when it comes to relationships that I think is really important to discuss is the overgiving. So overgiving is a really

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interesting phenomena. We give because of what we want in return, and this is always true. And listen, stay with me, okay? You might think, "No, I just give it because I love them and I just want to do nice things for people and then they never do them back." But notice that. The reason why we give is because of how it makes us feel. We are feelings-driven creatures. So it isn't selfish to give, but it is for us to give, if we see it that way.

And what I notice in overgiving is if we're not self-loving, if we're not tending to our self-love, if we're not taking care of ourselves and making sure that we are telling ourselves that we are worthy, that we are telling ourselves that we are lovable, if we are not ensuring that our worth and lovability is something that we create with the words we say to ourselves, with the way that we treat ourselves, if we're not doing that, then what happens is we overgive so that other people can help us feel loved. So if I do all these things for you, then I can feel like I'm worthy of love. And this isn't just a you problem.

This is a societal problem. This is something that goes on in our society where women are trained and taught that overgiving is the path to happiness and love, but it is not the truth. Overgiving is the path to resentment and dissatisfaction, and that is always true because we're not giving because we want to give, we're giving because we feel like we have to give, and that's the only way that we can have our needs met and that's the only way that we can feel that we are worthy of love and that we are worthy of that person being in our life. And it just gets so muddy and turned around.

So when we start loving ourselves, when we start doing that work where we're taking time for ourselves, where we are making our needs matter, where we are putting ourselves in positions where we get to grow what feels important to us and that we get to define our self-worth, when we put ourselves in that position, what happens is that we don't feel the need to overgive. Now, you might still feel guilty. It's something that I talked about with my client today when I talked about her earlier in this session, right,

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earlier in this podcast, is guilt is something that we experience because of the culture that we live in.

We are socialized to feel guilty as women. We really are. Now, we can coach a lot on guilt, and we can work on the thoughts and the beliefs that you have about guilt. But at the same time, what I want to offer you is that in your relationship, you are going to have to grow your capacity for feeling guilty. And what I mean by that is that you are going to feel guilty and it's not a problem because it's just a feeling. And a feeling is just a vibration in your body, and we can grow capacity for that. And the way that we grow capacity for that is regulating your nervous system, learning how to allow that emotion in your body, and changing the thoughts and beliefs that you have about it, about having guilt. You don't have to react to guilt. You don't have to respond to guilt. If you are feeling guilty, it's because of what's going on for you. The other person can't make you feel guilty. You make you feel guilty by deciding that every single thought that comes up in your brain that society has given you is the truth. And it's not the truth.

So for me, what I'm really looking at when I'm coaching someone is how do we get the result you want? So, for instance, in your romantic relationship, how do we get a better relationship? Well, if we start growing your self-love and growing your self-worth and ensuring that when you see a problem where it's not there, that you meet it yourself, you start to have more confidence in yourself. And then what will happen is you'll be with your partner and maybe you've set a boundary and guilt shows up. Or maybe you decide to take time to do something for yourself, and you're not going to do something with your partner with somebody else in your family, guilt is going to show up.

We can look at guilt as just being a vibration that we can allow. I'm going to regulate my nervous system and I'm going to remind myself that two things can be true, that I can feel guilty and know that it comes from programming, and also I can grow my belief in me being able to take time for myself and that having value. Two things can be true. Over time, what we want to do is we want to grow the other belief so that it has, it takes up more space. So if

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I think about growing a belief, trying to create a thought that's also true, holding two things true at the same time, growing the belief that I'm not doing anything wrong and it's important and valuable for me to do things for myself, and my experience of my life is my responsibility, so I'm sure as hell going to prioritize it.

We grow that belief. And we don't have to necessarily get rid of the other belief. We can poke a few holes in it. We can allow the feeling of guilt, but we don't have to completely obliterate it for you to do things for yourself. And I think that's an important point and something that sometimes gets missed because so many times I hear people talking about this and I'm in total disagreement because there's this belief that you have to get rid of that forever and always and that the guilt is something that you're somehow wrong for experiencing. You're not wrong. It's normal. It's okay.

As you're looking at your romantic relationship, we want to be able to give to our partner because we want to, because it feels good for us to do it, because it's something that we are consciously choosing, not doing because we think we have to do it, not doing it because we think that's the right thing to do, not doing it because we want something in return, but actually just because we really deeply want to do that for them. The more times that you can do this, the better your relationship is going to get, and also, you open the space for your partner to do the same for you. Self-love is the driver. Self-love is the fuel. You must use it to create what you want, because that's what will create the experience of your relationship right now that might feel like you're lacking.

So this is a big topic, right? This is a meaty topic. There are full podcasts, books, all kinds of things about relationships. But today, I just want to plant the seed that you could use self-love to change your relationship without your partner needing to be different at all. And the cool side effect could be that your partner is able to show up in a different way for you. And if not, you still have filled all the holes yourself, so now you know that you are lovable, that you are worthy, that you are allowed to have needs and have

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them taken care of, and then you can make a decision about your relationship from that place.

A journaling prompt that you could use that might help you is, "When I feel disappointed or rejected in my relationship, what am I making it mean about me? And how can I show myself love in that moment instead of waiting for them to fix it?" It's such a good journaling prompt. If you are struggling in your relationship, use it. See what comes up. Set a five-minute timer and write whatever comes to mind. There's no right or wrong way to do it.

Another thing that I can offer is the next time a conflict arises in your relationship, take 60 seconds to breathe and say to yourself, "I can love myself through this," and then reengage. These two small tools are just the tip of the iceberg, right? But every day if you think about approaching self-love as a practice, then we can just do one small thing of self-love every day for ourselves and see what shakes out. If you think about brushing your teeth in the morning and brushing your teeth before bed, what if during that time you decided to engage in this type of thinking? How could I show love to myself today? At the beginning of your day, how could I be loving to myself this evening as you reflect on the day? Small things, small changes can have really big results.

So listen, if you're ready to stop waiting for your partner to change and create the love you actually want, it starts with you. This is the work of self-love, and it's how you build relationships that feel safe. It's how you build relationships that feel connected, and it's how you build relationships that are full of possibility. Now, if you want to take this deeper with me, I want to invite you to join the Self-Trust Shift. It is my free live coaching call. The link is in the show notes to sign up or you can just head to amandahess.ca/freecall. Okay, my friend? That's what I've got. I'll see you here next time. Bye for now.

Thanks so much for listening today. If this podcast is helping you, please follow wherever you listen and consider leaving a review. It truly helps this

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community grow and allows me to support more women like you. I'm excited to see you back here next week with a brand new episode. Until then, take care, friend.