

THRIVING RELATIONSHIPS

A Guide to Move from
Fighting to Freedom

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Part One: You Don't Have to Settle

I'm Tripp Lanier, men's coach and host of The New Man Podcast.

Some of the most popular interviews I've done have been about relationships, and it makes sense.

Beyond money, material stuff, and achievements — relationships are the most important things in our lives, and they're also the most challenging.

But here's the weird thing. Very few of us take the time to learn how to actually relate. There's very little training or understanding about how to create and navigate the relationship territory. Most of us are just blindly figuring it out as we go along. We spend more time on our phones than we do investing in the most valuable part of our lives — our relationships.

Instead we take cues from our parents. But they were just learning from their parents. We take cues from the junk

we see in movies and on TV. We watch what our friends do, but really they're just bumbling around, too. Most of us are.

If *The New Man* is about what is beyond the norms and structures that limit what we want, then we've got to face the facts — we're going to have to spend some time learning how to create an amazing relationship. We can't just expect or hope it will happen.

And we can't simply blame our partner if things aren't going the way we want them to. Having the relationships you truly want depends squarely upon you.

If you're listening to me right now. Congratulations. It means you're already taking the most critical first step. You're curious about what is possible. You're curious about considering some new ways to approach relating. Without this curiosity we stay stuck in the past. Without this curiosity we play small.

I don't want you to play small in your relationships.

And that's the whole point of this program you're reading now. We've pulled together all of the best stuff from the relationship therapists, experts, and coaches we've had on The New Man to make this simple, concise guide for creating a solid relationship. Consider it a doorway into other offerings we'll be creating to help you have the relationships you truly want.

By the end of this program, you'll have some very basic tools to experiment with in your own relationships. You'll have a sense that so much more is possible for you and the relationships you want in your life.

I want you to feel optimistic about your future.

I want you to realize that relationships don't have to be so mysterious or messy or difficult — that like anything in your life, if you're willing to take responsibility and learn and grow then anything is possible.

Here are some of the topics we're going to cover:

- What to do if your relationship feels hard.
- What to do if you're one of those guys who is doing everything you can to avoid a fight or some conflict.
- What to do if you're tired of tip-toeing around her because she might blow up or get mad.
- What to do if you're looking for the "right way" to talk to her so she doesn't get upset.
- What to do if you're feeling trapped in a place where you're always fighting or not communicating with your partner at all.
- What to do if you know you want to be with her but you just don't know how to handle a specific sticking point.

- What to do if you're thinking that your relationship problems are all her fault.
- What to do if you feel like no matter what you do she's still unhappy and difficult to be with.

There's a lot more we'll cover, but basically, we're focusing on ways to help guys who are ready to stop complaining and are ready to do the work to make a change for the better.

So Let's Dive In

One of the big obstacles on this path is the false belief that we're the only ones facing a relationship challenge.

Relationship expert and author Marcus Ambrester says most couples are in a pretty common place when they step into his office to get some help with their relationship.

Marcus: Most of them really have no idea what challenges they are facing. They're in this sort of "blah" zone where they're incredibly frustrated, but they can't pinpoint anything that's going on that's really troublesome. They know they're fighting too much. They know that they're not happy in their relationship. They also know that they love their woman incredibly.

They're either facing a breakup or facing a divorce, just because they don't know what to do.

Tripp: Okay, so there's love there, but there's something breaking down in how to communicate or maybe how to navigate some of the challenges. But there's really no question, "Look, I like her. I love her. I want this to work out, but there's something that I'm doing. There is something about how we're working together that is not working."

Marcus: One of the biggest things... If your listeners don't get anything else, I want them to get this point: Problems come up to point out the places where we aren't showing up, to point out the places where we can grow, where our

partners can grow, and problems come up wherever we're shut down a little bit in some way.

So any time those problems come up in the relationship, we need to get curious about them, because that's the place that we can grow in our own lives, not just in our relationships.

Tripp: That's a big point, to get curious in that place instead of what we usually do, which is get defensive, or we go into, "I am this way because she is this way," then we get into a blame game. But you're saying to be curious about that. So here's this challenge. She's complaining or here's the rub.

There is some friction here, and you're saying to get curious. What does that look like?

Marcus: The first piece is acceptance. Accepting that what's going on is coming up for a reason and having the Mindset of Awesome Relationships, what I call the Mindset of Awesome Relationships, is there to give people hope. To say there is a way out. To say, "There is a way to

solve this problem that's coming up." And by getting curious, we're in that place of acceptance. Not freaking out, not being defensive, and just taking a look both within us, and deeper into our partners, to find out, "What's the problem that needs to be solved?"

Tripp: I don't think guys get how valuable it is that we get curious in that place because a lot of times, we're like, "What do I gotta do to get out of this place? I don't want to be here. I don't want there to be any friction. I don't want there to be a problem." Some guys get to this place, "Well, if there's a problem, does this mean I'm with the wrong girl? Am I going down the wrong road?"

So they get "Oh my G-d!!!" They get feeling trapped, and that kind of thing, and so you're saying put all of that aside and just listen. Hear what's going on, put the agenda aside, put aside anything that you've got to do any fixing, and just listen and just get curious.

Marcus: Yeah, and my focus is always, "What is the piece they're wanting to avoid?" What's getting in the way of

them being curious and wanting to know this woman better? What's getting in the way?

If their woman is just b--ching or complaining, or saying, "You bastard," or essentially saying, "You're not doing good enough, you're not good enough, you're not doing this, you're not doing that," then that is the time to really get curious, to find out what she's really upset about.

I guarantee you it's not because the trash didn't get taken out. There's something else going on. The reason most guys, in my experience, don't want to hear it is because at some level, they're battling, they're facing their own demon that's got them feeling like they're not good enough.

Tripp: So when they hear this from their woman, "Hey, you're not doing good enough," that's a hot spot. That's a hot button. He doesn't want to hear it, so he's pushing that away.

"I'm not going to go down that road because if I don't do it well, I don't want to get the message that I'm not good

enough." I just see where I'm playing defense. If it's unconscious, right?

And so if I'm navigating a relationship, I'm not going to be with a woman that's going to challenge me to be a better version of me, I'm going to design my relationships, I'm going to design my work life, I'm going to design everything to basically help me stick my head in the sand.

Marcus: If that's what's going on, then the results you get from that are not going to be the best version of ourselves. They're not going to keep our awareness focused on our growth areas to help us move forward, to help us achieve bigger and better things in life.

Tripp: Okay. Well, I want to address something that... Maybe this feels a little bit like a tangent, but, if she's bitching and complaining, could it also just be that we're not good partners for each other? I get that it's going to help me be a better guy, but isn't there a point where it's just like, "You know what? This isn't the girl for me. I don't want to hear this b—ching and complaining." Do you help

guys identify when it's time to move on, versus, “This relationship's going to help me grow?”

Marcus: Yeah, and I hear that a lot. I hear that from men and women. It's like, "What if this just isn't the right person?"

I've very, very rarely seen a couple at a point where they can make that decision with all of the information they truly need to make a good decision about whether or not they're with the right person.

Most of the time, there is so much more that we can do to make a relationship better. So much more that we can do to show up in a good way. To give the relationship a real, honest chance at working.

To take the gifts that we both bring and to take the natural chemistry that we have together and to really make it flourish.

Most people aren't doing the things they need to do to give the relationship a chance. Having that discussion

about, "Am I with the right person or not?" is really premature.

Marcus: Yeah, and most of the time, and by most, I mean, all of the time, it comes down to, there is something that drew those people together in the first place. Every couple that comes to me started off with a great connection with each other.

They had the feeling like, the heavens opened up, and G-d put this angel in their life, just for them. Over time, they feel like that connection has been lost and buried under a mountain of hurt, frustration, anger and resentment.

That happens because we don't have the relationship skills, we don't have the emotional skills, we don't have the communication skills, to be able to resolve the problems as they come up. When we have those skills, we have what I'm calling "the Mindset of Awesome Relationships," and the emotional and communication skills to be able to resolve those problems so that they don't pile up, and we're able to enjoy that natural chemistry that brought us together, to enjoy that

connection we started off with, and we're able to grow from there together.

Tripp: Sounds like they started out in this place. Things were good. They had this magical time together. Hopefully it wasn't too alcohol-induced. And then, life starts to happen. We don't have the tools to relate. There are some skills that we need to learn.

There is a mindset that we maybe didn't step into, and this creates a lot of hurt, it creates a lot of baggage. Then it's hard for us to reconnect again and find that place where we really are connected, and we really do give a s--t about one another, because there is all this stuff there! There is all this hurt and history and baggage in the way.

Marcus: Absolutely.

Part Two: What You Can Do to Improve the Relationship

So as Marcus just pointed out — even if your relationship feels toxic and beyond repair, consider that it's time to get curious and hone in on why it's feeling this way before you start making decisions about the future.

Is it possible to get back on track? To get back to that mutual place of respect and attraction? Regardless, it's going to take both of you to step up and claim your part in this dynamic.

Here's relationship coach Mark Michael Lewis to show us the way.

Mark: First step is, if you want to have better relationships, if you want to have what I call Thriving Partnerships, you have to decide that you're going to do something about it. You have to take responsibility. You have to say, "I want to make this happen."

Tripp: Yeah. You know, I love that "take responsibility" part, because when I talk to... And I did this too! It's like, "Well, she needs to do this or she needs to fix that, or she's this, or she's that," and it's about them. Like, "If she would just change, we'd been fine!" (laughs)

Mark: Exactly!

Tripp: But you're saying, "No, hold on. You take responsibility. There's your part in this dynamic. You've got an ability to respond." We talked about responsibility. You have an ability to respond to what's happening, instead of just placing it all on your partner.

Mark: Absolutely. I think about when I started in relationships. Right? From my teens into my early twenties, my relationships "happened to me." Right? I was alone. I was lonely. I'd go out and I'd try to meet people. I'd meet some woman, and next thing I know, I would be in a relationship. I would be hanging on for dear life to try to not have it end.

Tripp: (laughs)

Mark: Right? I never stopped to ask the question, "What do I want?" Right? I just wanted to save the relationship. I just wanted to be in relationship. "Oh please, please, don't leave!" Right? "Let's make this work. I don't want to have wasted the time we were together."

Tripp: Mm-hm.

Mark: So, I just really sat down and said, "So, what do I want?" What do I want? Not, "What am I supposed to want?" Right?

My grandparents had a view of relationships that worked well for them, but that was then. What do I want?

Tripp: Right.

Mark: That's when I started saying, "Hmm... Well, what I want is to have powerful relationships with women." Where I was eye-to-eye, soul-to-soul, vulnerable, but I wasn't selling myself out. And I wasn't expecting them to change.

What would happen if I said, "I am going to bring my truth." What I think, what I feel and what I want? I am going to bring that, and I am going to be authentic with this woman. She is going to respond however she responds, and then I'm going to learn to deal with that. So that I am always bringing myself. So I never sell myself out. But I am also not just demanding that they change.

That's when things really started to change for me.

Tripp: I get this, like, that's a co-creative process. Like, "I'm clear on what I want. She's taking responsibility for herself. Now, we're going to come together, and both of us speak up about what we want." We both talk about it. We both co-create something. One person's not the domineering person. One person's not the submissive type.

It's about both of us showing up and both of us really speaking up. I think that's a big deal because a lot of people don't speak up in relationships. They have this assumption, "If I play this role," or, "If I do this thing, then

you're going to take care of me! You'll make sure that I am happy." Does that resonate?

Mark: Yeah, absolutely. I prefer the word "partnership" to the word "relationship." Because "relationship" is, you happen to be relating. But a partnership is that both of you are working together towards a common goal, a common purpose, a common structure. Right? Where you are a part of a greater whole.

The central insight, if there is one thing that I would like your audience to go away with, if there is one thing I want my clients to go away with, if there is one thing I want to remember more in my daily life, it is that the more you bring yourself to the partnership, the more the partnership is an expression of who you are.

Tripp: So, let's talk about that. What does that mean, to "bring yourself to the partnership?"

Mark: Excellent. So, talk about "authenticity" as a word that sometimes people use. Or, "integrity". Or, "bringing your truth". I try to simplify it.

I am into taking precise ideas and bringing them down into simple words. So. What you think. What you feel. What you want. Right?

When you bring what you feel and what you think and what you want to the partnership, and you tell the truth about, "Well, here's what I think. Here's what I feel. Here's what I want," and you honor that in yourself, that's what I call authenticity and integrity.

Tripp: I think a lot of guys are scared that, "Well, if I speak up for it, I could get shot down." How do we deal with that kind of vulnerability of, she may say "No", or "Go to H--l" or whatever. When we own something, that's a really vulnerable place. Right?

Mark: Yes. I like to say that your authenticity is a function of your integrity. Right? If you don't know what you think and feel and want, and you're not willing to make a stand and say, "I'm going to honor what I think and feel and want," then I can't be authentic with my partner. I can't tell her the truth.

But, the good thing about that is that I'm not vulnerable. If I never expose who I am then I can't be judged. Is that how you want to live?

Tripp: That seems like the fork in the road. Either I am vulnerable and I go for what I want, or I play it safe and just live in this little suitcase, basically.

Mark: Right. And that's why it comes back to, "Do you want it to be better?" Are you willing to take responsibility? To step up and decide what you want, and actually create it? Because it is true. When you're authentic, you're putting yourself on the line.

But that's where relationship comes from. That's where partnership comes from. If you want a partnership where you can really bring yourself and be yourself, then you got to bring yourself. You gotta risk it.

Mark: My job is to honor myself and listen to and understand my partner so I can honor them so we can create a win/win agreement. So that I can honor who I am

and they can honor who they are. We can do it together. We create a partnership built in right/right thinking.

Tripp: This is so big because so many guys feel trapped in their relationship. It's like, either we do what she wants and there is kind of this dismissal of what I want.

Mark: Or we stick to our guns and she just gets more and more upset.

Tripp: Right. Right. It's just this trap. To me it's just like, how do I know if we end it? This is the path of thriving, as you say, or flourishing in relationship.

It's also the path to, when we both know what we want and we both have the right to know what we want, it's not about being right or wrong.

We also see when maybe it's time to end the relationship. When our relationship is no longer in service of both of us, because it's not empowering each of us to have what we really want in our lives, so this seems like it's a great way to just get that clarity, instead of fighting for, "It's about the relationship."

It's about each other. Are we in service of each other?
When I know what you want, and I know what I want, does that jive?

Mark: Absolutely. And, in fact, a lot of times when people come to me, one of the questions I ask them in coaching, they'll come to me and I'll ask them, "So, here's the question. Are you here to save your relationship? To see if it's possible to save it? To see if you can get to thriving? To have it work? To bring back the love, so that you look in your partner's eyes and you're glad to be there, and you think, 'I am so lucky.' Is that why you're here? Are you here to save it?

Or, are you here to get permission to bail?"

Tripp: Wow.

Mark: Right? I like to ask my clients that question. Because, again, until you decide that you're going to try to make it work, you're basically wasting your time.

Tripp: Mm-hm.

Mark: Until you decide, "Okay. I'm going to make myself right. I'm going to allow my partner to be right." And, I am going to shift from right/wrong into, "Does this work for us?" Is there a way that we can come together so that we can both be honored?

Until you do that, it's hard to say goodbye because you know in your heart that you haven't really tried.

Tripp: Yeah, you don't really know what's possible because you've just been stuck in this pissing match.

Mark: Yeah! And I'll say. Probably ninety, ninety-five, ninety-eight percent of the clients who come see me are stuck in that pissing match. They're digging a hole. Both of them are so pissed off at their partner and feel that their partner is being a pain in the ass. That their partner's not trying. And that they've tried.

So they've given up. They're no longer saying, "Okay, well what does my partner want?" It's, "My partner is wrong!"

Let's Bottom Line What Mark Just Said:

#1 -- Take responsibility and get clear on what you think, feel, and want for your life and partnership.

This takes effort. It's no one's job to do this for you.

#2 -- Get honest with yourself. This is the foundation for truth, honesty, and integrity. This is where trust is built. No trust equals a lousy relationship. We can't expect our partner to trust us if we don't believe and trust ourselves.

#3 -- Share what's true for you with your partner.

Now, your partner may not be ready for your truth. She's going to react... you may rock the relationship boat with your new "truth."

Here's Mark again...

Mark: The great thing about that is that you can make that choice on your own. Right? Then you bring it. Then she is going to respond differently. Your partner is going to respond differently. If it's a business partner, they're going to respond differently. Because you're bringing a different self.

Then the question is, "How do you manage the conversation?"

Tripp: Mm.

Mark: If you have not been bringing your truth. If you haven't been telling the truth about what you think or what you feel or what you want, and you start bringing it, you could pretty much guarantee that it's going to knock your partner off balance.

Tripp: Mm.

Mark: They're going to be going, "Woah! What's this?" Now, when people get knocked off balance, they're at a choice-point. When my partner does something that

surprises me, I get to a choice-point. Most likely it's going to be something that catches my attention and raises my hackles.

Tripp: Mm-hm.

Mark: "Well, what do you mean you feel this way?" Right? I'm going to tend to get upset when my partner brings something new and surprises me. When that happens, your partner has a choice-point. Are they going to make you wrong for it? Or, are they going to open up themselves and say, "Well, here's what I want."

Tripp: Mm-hm.

Mark: In my experience, if you don't know how to manage that conversation, if you don't know how to help your partner choose to partner with you, rather than getting pissed off at you... If you don't know how to manage that conversation, it will often go bad.

Tripp: Absolutely.

Mark: One of the challenges with the transformational movement, I've been involved for a long time, is that sometimes people get this "authenticity" piece. They go, "You know what? I have been hiding myself, and I have been putting myself away, and selling myself out, and I'm not going to do that anymore.

"So I'm going to come and I'm going to say what I want, and I'm going to say what I think, and I'm going to say what I feel." But they don't know how to do it with any artistry! They end up just pissing off their partner, and things explode. You go from being dug in a hole where you're stuck in the rut to having things blow up on you.

We don't want that.

Tripp: Yeah! I love that you're naming this, because there's this thing, "Well, I'm working with my coach. I'm reading this book. I'm in this place.

Therefore, you should be, too! You should just be able to kind of hang with me." (Laughs)

Mark: Somehow, you should adapt yourself to my new stuff!

Tripp: Yes. So, I'm going to s--t the bed, and you'll just go along with it! You're going to know exactly what's happening here. (laughs)

Mark: Exactly. "By the way, I'm going to start asking things from you which are huge!" When you move from right/wrong to right/right, and you bring yourself, then you need to take responsibility for managing the conversation that comes when you bring yourself. The better you get at that conversation, then the more you can bring yourself.

You know that no matter what happens, you bring your truth. The other person might get upset. If you know that you can handle that conversation in a way that you get closer and tighter in partnership, where you resolve the conflict, where you set up a right/right context, where you can build a relationship where you bring what you think and feel and want, they bring what they think and feel and want, and you're going to come together.

When you have confidence of that, it's amazing, the courage that you can bring to a partnership.

Part Three: Setting Up Successful Conversations

Although it will most certainly be challenging, it is entirely possible to get grounded in what you want and share it with your partner in a way that actually brings you closer and strengthens your relationship.

A large part of how that conversation turns out is based on how *you* show up.

Most guys fall into two camps when it comes to owning what we want with our partner.

The first is the collapse. We figure out what we want, we imagine it will rock the boat or create friction and so we dump it. We don't own it. We bury it. We collapse. This leads to resentment and toxicity. This is part of the nice guy syndrome. This is the spineless wimp. We need to go beyond this pattern.

The good news here is that this guy is sensitive to his partner, he's open to her and how this will impact her. But the problem is, he loses his spine and balls in the process. He's open but he's not firm, and this is what kills trust.

The other popular route is to be the macho jerk. This guy is domineering. It's his way or the highway. He's firm in what he wants — which is good — but he's disconnected or closed off to his partner. He's not connecting to her or how his choice will impact her. He's not open to her. We need to go beyond this pattern, too.

As The New Man, we want to be open and considerate to our partner while also being firm with what we want. We want to create an invitation — not an ultimatum — for her to join us in what we want, and also request that she be a support and partner in that place. We want to hear from her about what she wants and how this will impact her.

A big part of this means we need to let go of trying to control or manipulate how she is going to react.

Remember — you are only half of that conversation. And consider the idea that you are not responsible for how she reacts. She is.

When I had my wife, Alyson Lanier, a therapist, and her therapist friend Christiane Pelmas on the show, we talked about navigating sensitive conversations and dealing with emotional reactions.

Alyson and Christiane described the big emotional energy some women express as a “storm” – it’s powerful but not necessarily something to be feared or avoided.

Tripp: Don't be afraid of the storm. Can you speak about the storm, like, as a woman in your experience? Here comes the shit storm, you get thrown off-guard. What's underneath that? What's on the other side of that? Because I think some guys think, if we have this storm it's always going to be a storm.

Christiane: Right. So when you say, "What's on the other side of that?" You mean what happens after the wave

crashes and there's utter disaster cast around the beach?
Dismemberment?

Alyson: Well, I think also, you're talking about how to go through something hard and come out okay. I think most people don't go through that thing that's hard because they don't know that they're going to come out okay.

Christiane: Yeah, and I think one of the bottom lines of this is, "Why am I in this relationship in the first place? Is it to feel good? To feel like the story I have about myself is being supported and mirrored back to me? Or am I actually in this relationship so that I can actually see who I really am?"

"I have chosen this woman because she has this mainline right into who I am as a man, even if what I'm doing in the world doesn't even speak to that."

So if we're looking to constantly feel comfortable and cool, and "the water is flat", and "we're okay", then... Woah. Then just fasten your seatbelt. I don't know. It's just a

rough road, and the storm is going to constantly represent the end of time. But life with a woman is about storm.

Tripp: Oh, great.

Christiane: Women storm. And we storm. We storm in bed... My definition of storming is that we are passionate. We are feeling. We are moving. We are moving through life and death and life. Most of the time when I talk to men, I say, "What kind of a woman... Do you want this flat line woman? Do you want this sort of stepford-wife woman who is like, 'Yeah, sure, honey, whatever you want!'"

Oh my God no, I mean I love her fire, I love her unpredictability. And there is this double-edged sword. There is this real inconsistency of like... "Not when it comes to me! I love it when she yells at the neighbor because they left their outside light on at four in the morning, but it's too hurtful to get it from her toward me."

And it just gets back to, bringing it home. Really coming down to, "What is true for you as a man?" And then you stand in that. And a lot of times, and I will speak from my

own experience as a really powerful woman, when I storm it is to test that man. It's to see if my fist will just go right through his... Metaphorically through his chest. Like, "Where is he? Is he gone?" Or does he stand and say, "No, baby, this is where I stand." And if that's the case? Woah, holy hell...

Tripp: But the storm is not wrong. The storm is not wrong. And so many guys are like, "Man, if I get the storm I think I'm doing something wrong."

Alyson: You're being rejected, and-

Tripp: And I just want to throw it out there, the guy is like, "Yeah, bring up the subject, whatever subject it might be and you may receive a storm, but it's a test, but it doesn't mean what you're saying is wrong just because you get that storm in the moment."

Christiane: Not at all, and it's very complex.

Tripp: You gotta stick with it!

Christiane: You gotta stick with it. Then he can wait and he can say, "Whoa, thanks for that. Now, where are we?"

Tripp: "I get that you're freaking upset and pissed and all that stuff, and we're going to talk about this."

Christiane: And maybe even if he really wants to pull the trump card he can say, "Thank you for that. Wow. I feel how important this is to you. This is one of the reasons I love you, because this stuff moves through you."

Tripp: If he were to buckle in that moment... "I'm sorry. I screwed up."-

Alyson: That's so not trustable.

Christiane: Deadly

Tripp: -"I'm not going to bring it up anymore, honey"-

Christiane: Like Alyson said, she might not be able to speak to that, like they can go to the most fabulous therapist in the world and she might not bring that

moment up as a defining moment in their relationship, in which she realized he was not her man.

Alyson: Yes. That's right.

Tripp: Whoa.

Christiane: But she might not ever really know that. Maybe she'll stop having sex with him. She might just stop altogether.

Alyson: She might go find a man somewhere else.

Christiane: Maybe she'll start picking on him... Pulling him down further... Because, "When is this man going to stand up?" Like, she'll just figure out ways. Even if it's really still lodged in her subconscious.

Tripp: Guys, are you listening to this s--t? This is gold. You got to listen to this stuff.

Alyson: Well, and this part... Might not be gold. But, um, the other piece with women is, when that happens, also, not only does the testing come, but often

times, if that occurs and the woman stops being able to trust her man, then she takes over. So not only will she test him, but then she's all of a sudden, as they say, wearing the pants in the family.

Christiane: Exactly.

Alyson: Which, what is that about? I think this is what that's about. Which is so devastating to a woman, and her ability to just be feminine! Be divinely her!

Tripp: So I just want to lay the context again for guys. I mean, we've gotten kind far a long in this topic. Guys, when you don't own what it is that you want. When you've got something in your relationship that you... "Man, it would really be cool if we could do this!" Even if it's just like, "Man, I want to talk about the money. I want to talk about where I want to go for a vacation," or anything like that, and your fear is that if you bring it up with her that she's going to have a s--t storm, that is devastating your relationship.

You holding back is what is devastating the relationship.
Not the storm, or the fit she may throw.

Alyson: I would say holding back, and/or speaking and then collapsing, or all of a sudden giving way to her storm. Like, all of a sudden that's right.

Tripp: Well, let's model about, like... It doesn't need to be a fight. What I'm getting is, it doesn't need to be this, like, "I need to dominate this scenario and kind of like, pin her down in this argument because I'm right"

Alyson: That's not going to work.

Alyson: I have a personal story.

Tripp: Oh, great.

Tripp: Show just gets better by the minute.

Alyson: (laughing) So this was one of our first... I think this was one of our first real exchanges around like, a taboo topic. Actually, I think it was the first or second time

you came back from an AMP weekend. You were sharing with me how you had been struggling because you have attraction to other women. And you want to be able to be attracted to other women, and have that part of you just be free flowing. You love women. You weren't this articulate back then, but (laughing) essentially-

Tripp: I didn't want it to be wrong that I was attracted to other women.

Alyson: -Didn't want it to be wrong and I remember so distinctly, you were standing in the kitchen and you were fiddling with your fingers, you were pacing back and forth, your voice was shaking, you were having a hard time breathing. What my experience of you was, that your heart and your integrity, your truth, were so open with me about what was absolutely true for you, that you really truly wanted this, that I was completely endeared to you. I didn't feel threatened at all. I found myself wanting to support you going after, I don't know how to say it, allowing this part of you to exist.

Tripp: My pain at that time was that I had made myself wrong. That if I'm in a relationship and if I love somebody this much, and I'm still finding myself attracted to other women, it was a tragedy, there was something wrong with me-

Alyson: Or, something wrong with me.

Tripp: Yeah. And I was just like, "Oh my God." I didn't want to look down that hole. It was so scary.

Alyson: Correct. And, the whole side door thing that had been happening with us before you had done these AMP weekends. You were joking. When we would go to a party, I would sort of witness that you would have a crush on somebody and all of a sudden I didn't exist in the room. You couldn't have me and the other woman exist in the same room.

It was very difficult for you, and that made our connection difficult, because I couldn't connect with what was going on and neither could you with me.

Alyson: Before you came home from those weekends, you were side-dooring it. So what got you to that place that day in the kitchen?

Tripp: I just got really clear for myself that this was something that I wanted in my life. Like, to be in my mid-thirties and to think that I was going to bury this part of myself, that was such a source of vitality, fun and appreciation for life, and all the juiciness and love, that I was going to somehow make it wrong and put it in the basement for the rest of my life. I just knew. I knew it was going to kill our relationship, and I knew I would end up killing a part of myself to do it, too.

Alyson: And that's the bottom line.

Christiane: Yes. Actually that's bringing it home, actually figuring out what's the particular request... Why am I having this particular request? Why is it so important to me that I have this need? And that's beautiful. That process that you both just talked about.

Because you came up with the fact that, this is actually important to my well-being. So my woman is going to, if the relationship is sound and based on solidity, then she's going to say okay, I get that, and within reason, if you stay true, she's going to feel safe.

Alyson: What occurred that day in the kitchen was when you came to me, straight with you, I all of a sudden felt blessed in our relationship. I felt, "Thank God, I can trust this man." What you helped me realize in being straight with what was going on was that you were cutting off a part of yourself. You were shutting a part of yourself into the basement. That's not trustable.

I might not know that that's occurring, if I'm just any woman Jane in a relationship, I might not know what's going on. I might just know that there's a part of me deeply that doesn't know if I can trust this man.

Tripp: And what I found, in my experience... I remember that day when we had that conversation was in that moment when you accepted me it was hard. But when I really felt like you accepted me and who I was in that

moment, I didn't want to be with anyone else. Like, I was so grateful to be with you and to have you as my wife that in that moment I was just like... All the pressure went away. All the stories in my mind. I was like, "Thank God I have this woman in my life."

Point being is that, get it out there, have a chance to really connect on this because it could be just this gnat in your ear that just gets louder and louder.

Alyson: I know this show is for men, and I also know that a lot of women listen to this show. I want to say something for the women about this story with my husband. I'm not saying what we talk about is easy. Okay. It's not necessarily easy for me. I was clear with him that I still can't stand the idea of him ever being with anybody else. I'm not in a place where I'm okay with open relationship or that kind of thing in our marriage. That's a closed deal, ladies. My value. What's priority, and what's valuable to me above all else is that I am in relationship with a whole person. That I get to honor whomever I'm with, and this happens to be Tripp. Wholly. All of you. That's my value above everything else is that I want that

for me. I want to experience all of you. That in turn gives me permission to experience all of me.

What I'm saying is that, it doesn't mean that I'm not going to flip my shit if you want to go hook up with somebody. Or I'm not going to freak out if some woman comes along and pursues you.

What that means is that I am willing to endure, and I am willing to trust and make agreements with you, whatever those are, for my safety, but in the name of honoring you as a whole person, what you want, and how you need to be expressed.

Tripp: And I think the key part there is that it's not easy. I think a lot of guys are looking for the easy route. And right now it's easier to cut something off and not talk about it.

Christiane: Yeah. And kind of the most important thing for a man to have, even if he has to put it on post-it notes and take it with him into the room is, "She is entitled to her response, and it has virtually nothing to do with me." She can have her response-

Tripp: Wow! Say that again.

Christiane: "I am not allowed to take her response personally. That's not fair to her." And that's another way we collapse, is by taking on somebody else's feelings. So, she can have her response-

Tripp: Huge.

Christiane: -And by saying, "it doesn't have anything to do with me," she freaks! Tapped a nerve, and she's off.

Tripp: "You make me feel this way! You make me feel!" She's throwing those kinds of things at him, and he's just like, "Oh, that's not."

Alyson: "I can't believe you're doing this to me."

Tripp: -Yeah! And it's like, "I'm not responsible for how she is actually responding."

Christiane: Not responsible. Not responsible.

Part Four: The Three Functions of a Woman's Storm

So what if we stop trying to avoid her storm? What if we stop contorting ourselves so that she doesn't get emotional?

Consider that the storm itself doesn't mean you're bad or wrong, it doesn't mean you're with the wrong woman or that what you're asking for isn't valid or true for you.

Well then, what does all of that giant emotion hurling at you actually mean? What are women trying to communicate when they storm?

My wife, Alyson, gave me a little insight when she was on the podcast. Let's look at what she had to say.

Tripp: That's why I wanted to bring you in today. So many of the guys that I talk to, there's this thing underneath it where it's like, "What do I say to my girlfriend? What do I say to my wife so she doesn't get upset?" And I'm like,

"Wow, okay. Stop right there." Because we don't want to do that.

But many guys are navigating their lives. They are navigating their relationships. They're trying to avoid an upset, instead of doing or speaking the truth. Instead of being honest.

And a lot of guys are like, "Well, if I'm honest with her, it's gonna be a shitstorm. It's going to be... She's gonna blow up. She's gonna get hurt. It's just going to be worse off than it was before, so I should just be quiet about this stuff."

Or maybe he's just in a place where when she gets emotional, he turns into feeling like he's gotta be the rescuer. He's gotta be the guy that fixes things. That's an exhausting place to be.

Maybe if there's an emotional dynamic in the relationship... Maybe he's heard, "Okay, don't fix her, just listen to her." But she's attacking him.

And he's like, "Well, I'm just supposed to sit here." Or maybe he's been reading David Deida stuff, and he's like, "Okay, I'm just supposed to sit here while she puts knives in me! I'm just supposed to sit there and take it, because that's what a 'Superior Man' does."

So I just wanted to help this guy navigate. Have a better understanding of what's going on emotionally for women. Yeah! That's where I wanted to dive in. Let's just dive in. What's happening for a woman when she is emotional?

Alyson: There are roughly three different things that could be happening at any given time. To keep it simple. One is just simple emotional expression. Just expression. I like to think of women like the ocean. There is just always something.

Tripp: This is true for guys, too.

Alyson: Absolutely.

Tripp: But, guys, we tend to kinda clamp it up. But, okay.

Alyson: Everything that you initiated around... They want to not shut down... They want to not upset the boat... That's sort of... We're looking at trying to control the situation or trying not to feel something. Or trying to manage or control. Trying to have everything be okay.

Tripp: Keep the lid on it. Right.

Alyson: Right? And so, women are notorious for wanting that, ultimately. But that's not the way that many women get there. The healthiest way that people get there is through expression. We are expressive beings. We're expressive animals. We have to move our energy. Our emotion is simply energy in motion.

Tripp: I think of that as kind of like a teakettle.

Alyson: Yes.

Tripp: Like, you're on the stove, and if you clamp that off, it's just gonna blow. So, you're saying that she needs to express.

Alyson: She just needs to express! Yeah! Absolutely. Even a big breath. Any of it. One piece. Simple emotional expression. A woman needs to express. Just like we need to breathe. Just like we need to move our bodies.

The second piece is actually more about connection and contact. All of them. But the second one is actually a release in the name of connecting into, as a woman, my wholeness and my fullness. And, wanting you to meet me there. Wanting to experience you meeting me in my wholeness.

Tripp: So, what does that mean? Because I'm getting a little lost here.

Alyson: So, what that means is, you and I as a husband and wife, we know that we make a good team just in terms of getting s--t done in the day. We can unload the dishwasher, we can move-

Tripp: You do.

Alyson: (laughs) Right. We can move from point A... You get out of the way, so that's a good team. You get out of the way when I cook. We know how to sort of just function. That's sort of like baseline, normal.

Tripp: Good teamwork.

Alyson: Nothing' really is majorly going on here.

Tripp: I think it's just, we're allies.

Alyson: The point is that there is nothing really emotional happening there. Right? It's just, we're coasting. We're cruising.

Tripp: Just getting stuff done.

Alyson: Just getting stuff done!

Tripp: Right.

Alyson: Now, you and I can hang there really nicely for long periods of time, and that's generally where most

people like to be, because that's the most comfortable place. Nothing is getting upset. Nobody's getting twitter pated about anything.

Tripp: There is no real depth.

Alyson: Exactly. So it's also flat. Right? So there's no real depth.

So in order for me to know that I can trust you with all of me, I need not necessarily to test... People throw out, "Oh, she's testing me." I don't think this is really about testing. I think this is the human experience. In order for me to know that you can hang with me in the places where I go, and the places where I need to go in me: Emotionally. Sadness. Anger. Frustration. Despair. Hopelessness. Whatever. Joy! Exuberance! Ecstasy! I need to be able to express that to you. I need to fully be in my expression of whatever's going on with me, and I need to know that you can stay. I need to know that you can be there with me, that you're not gonna get thrown off, or try to control me, or try to shut me down, or try to make me small, or you're

not gonna get smaller. You're not gonna try to manipulate the situation. You're just gonna stick around.

Tripp: So she's got one gear that she can hang in to just kind of run the house, so that she can kind of hang in and do that kind of thing. But there's a hunger underneath of saying, "Well, I live in a big house. My emotional life is more than just this one gear, this one way of being." And so a lot of it is, "Can he meet me there? Can he also be with me in my joy, my anger, my sadness, my turn-on?" All of those things.

So what if she gets a sense that he can't meet her? Is that where the guy is like, "Why are you worried about that? Da da da. Just get back into that one gear where you're manageable or controllable." Is that what the guy's doing'?

Alyson: (laughs) Sorry. I immediately went to my own reaction. If you did that with me, I would just immediately feel angry. (laughs)

Tripp: "Don't cry."

Alyson: Yeah, "Don't cry." What we're told so young.

Tripp: "Don't be big. Be small."

Alyson: Right.

Tripp: "Be manageable. Be predictable."

Alyson: "Don't scare me. Don't be loud. Don't be obnoxious. Don't laugh too hard. Don't be so big that I don't know what to do with you."

Tripp: Alright. So we're talking about, what's going on here is that she has a drive to get out of that. She wants to be her big self.

Alyson: Her whole self!

Tripp: Her whole self! All of herself.

Alyson: And a guy is the same way! We are made up of thousands of parts. And it's... All of us... Think of a mosaic. That's the easiest way to think of it. Think of a mosaic. All

those little pieces of tile. Those are parts of us. Each part can carry a charge of emotion. It could be big or small or-

Tripp: I think what I'm getting' from this is that she wants to know, "If I go there, you can go with me. You can hang with me there. If I go there it doesn't mean that we've broken connection."

Alyson: If you go there with me, if you're able to stay with me there, stay present with me there, basically, that builds trust for me.

That helps me stay connected to you through staying connected to myself and you, which is what most people are hungry for in the world. It builds intimacy. It builds... That over time... It builds all our connection-

Tripp: She's seeking that. If she wants to know that-

Alyson: Yeah!-

Tripp: "I am not alone in this place."

Alyson: Yeah, and that's why I think girlfriends are such good girlfriends most of the time. It's because girlfriends have room for it. We know. We experience. Like, "Oh, girlfriend. Just talk to me."

Tripp: "Go ahead and be a mess."

Alyson: Right. Yes-

Tripp: "Hot mess."

Alyson: It's okay.

Alyson: The first piece we talked about in what's going on is just simply emotional expression, right? It's great. My support here for these men is, it's great. It's almost all the same. The first thing you do? Get present. Get there. Don't leave. Don't go off into your head. Even mind your physicalness. Are you looking up at the sky? Are you leaving?

Tripp: Are you taking off into your mind? Are you worrying about the future, what's going to happen? Are you in the past, trying to think of what she said before?

Alyson: Are you worried about what happened to you last time when you felt a big expression? When you were growing up? All those things!

Tripp: Just come right down.

Alyson: Just get there. Get present to what's happening. It's literally like being in a storm outside. If a storm is coming, what happens? The wind blows. You might start to see leaves blowing. You might feel it on your skin. Your hair. Feel it on your hair. All of those things. Just getting present. Just noticing what's happening.

Tripp: I would say for some guys. I would say some of them will actually dissociate. They get out of their body. They might be there, but their eyes are glazed over-

Alyson: Which is exactly what I am saying. You're not present if you do that.

Tripp: Right. It's not that you arm up and just, kind of, "Okay, I'm not gonna say anything," but, "I'm going to dissociate. I'm going to leave my body now." Guys, I would invite you to feel your feet on the ground. Feel your ass on the chair.

Come back to the most fundamental sensations in your body and see if you can just stay with that, and what's going on with her. That's going to help you so much. Keep breathing. Keep focusing on, "Okay, I'm here. I'm still here. I have sensations in my body." Stay with her.

Alyson: Yeah! And even to bring a little Sarah Ingier style, imagine you're a tree! Put roots down! Through your feet. Through your butt. Like, wherever. Through the ground! Ground yourself. Be a tree! So, feel that, yes, absolutely.
Step Two-

Tripp: Instead of building a case. Instead of trying to fix. Instead of trying to come up with a solution.

Alyson: When you do all of those things, you've just left me. If I'm expressing myself, and you start doing that, you're out. You're not here anymore.

Tripp: A lot of women just want you to be present with her while she's having her storm.

Alyson: I gotta tell you, I think ninety percent of the population just wants presence. Period.

Tripp: Man, if guys could just get that. You don't have to fix. You don't have to be the solution. Just be there.

Alyson: Absolutely. Just be there! So, Step One, get there. Get present. Step Two, stay! Stick around! You might like what you see!

Tripp: I think, for guys, their fear is, "If I actually stay here, it might always be this way." Well, it's not. It's like a storm. It just blows through.

Alyson: That's right. Absolutely. They're just waves of energy. They come and go, just like the ocean.

Tripp: If you stick there... That's the resisting part. "I gotta fight. I gotta do something about it. I gotta fix." So we don't stay here. Instead, just stay there. That's when it blows through.

Alyson: Those are your two basic steps. Baby steps. If you've never done this before and you're scared to death, those are the two things you work on.

Alyson: In the name of connection. Step One and Step Two are the same. You get present. You stay present.

Tripp: If you're not feeling very connected, expect the shitstorm. Expect the test. Expect the kind of weird, whacky behavior that you don't seem to understand, and you're getting lost in this thing where she's making it about this, or the grocery store, or some of this random stuff. It's not about that. It's about connection.

Alyson: And then the third, as you mentioned, is aggression. I want to be clear that aggression is not fundamentally a bad thing. There's good aggression and

there's bad aggression. To be a little, sort of, psychobabble about it, we would call that exclusive and inclusive aggression.

Alyson: You were asking about, sort of like, "What happens when you're supposed to do some David Deida thing and she's actually throwing daggers at you?" So there's two pieces of aggression here. I want to speak to it in terms of inclusive and exclusive aggression.

Inclusive aggression is often self-directed. It's actually a good thing. Inclusive aggression is the good, healthy aggression

Tripp: What's an example of that?

Alyson: Biting an apple. It takes aggression to bite an apple.

Tripp: I'm talking about in a relationship.

Alyson: In a relationship-

Tripp: Back and forth.

Alyson: In relationship, it might look like a challenge. Me challenging you. What it looks like for me with you, is I challenge... Like, we talked about it in a podcast. (laughs) We talked about it already in a former podcast many, many, many, many years ago. There was a part of you that you were cutting off from yourself. From our relationship. You didn't think it was okay. You were afraid of the storm-

Tripp: My attraction for other women.

Alyson: -Your attraction for other women. You were afraid that that would break us up. Like, that that would cause everything that you're talking about here, you were going through then.

Tripp: Exactly.

Alyson: So-

Tripp: I'll just specify. I was afraid you were going to get upset, you were going to get hurt, you were going to get mad. I didn't want any of that!

Alyson: You were scared that it was gonna mess with our relationship. Like, the actual foundation of our being together.

Tripp: Right. There was something wrong with me if I felt this way.

Alyson: Right. And so, my using my aggression - inclusive, healthy aggression - was to actually deepen our connection. To challenge you. To absolutely bring all of you. Bring your fullness. Your whole expression. To me. Actually give me the chance to stay in relationship with you, through that, so we can deepen.

So the ultimate outcome of inclusive aggression. It promotes your agency. It promotes your clarity with your life. It promotes autonomy with you and me. It deepens our connection. It builds community. It built your community and the greater AMP community. It builds us

and the community that we have together. Our relationship. It deepened our connection.

Tripp: Alright, so-

Alyson: So, that's-

Tripp: Instead of you shaming me, like, "How could you do this? What's wrong with you? You pervert. Da da da da."

Alyson: I love you too much to let you cut this piece off from us.

Tripp: Right.

Alyson: And yourself.

Tripp: Right. In my head, I was in this place of, like, "I don't want to deal with this. This is a pain in the butt." Also, I can see where, and we'll talk about this a little later, this is where a lot of guys get into a trap where they make their partner an authority. "Oh, my wife would never let

me do that. Oh, she would never go for..." It's like, there's this thing-

Alyson: Yeah! And-

Tripp: -that she's the villain, or that she's this kind of-

Alyson: Right. Right.

Tripp: -external authority, instead of, I'm going to bring this. We can work on this together. But I noticed that in that process, I was kind of pushing you into that place, and you rejected that. Like, "I'm not going' there. I'm not-

Alyson: "The bad guy."

Tripp: "-gonna be this authority, bad guy. You're gonna show up and own this yourself."

Alyson: I think I remember saying to you. You used the analogy of locking this part of yourself in the basement. I remember the way that you worded it. It hooked me. Into that drama triangle that you're speaking to right now. It

hooked me and I remember getting really angry. Feeling my anger. But more in terms of my passion. My desire to not have that dysfunction. To not want to be villain-ized.

I remember challenging you and saying, "Absolutely not. I will not be responsible for this." You are responsible for bringing all of you. I am not locking him in the basement. You are.

Tripp: That was big. I think every other relationship that I had been in up to that point, and everything I had seen modeled in other relationships was the girl, or the woman, was the bad guy, the authority, and the one that decided whether it was cool or not. That was the dynamic. "H-ell hath no fury" kind of thing, like, don't piss her off... Don't be honest, basically.

Alyson: Yes. I want to speak to this, for men and women. There is a reason that that happens. That's sort of the mainstream culture right now. That's been the conventional culture. There's a lot of shame around this stuff. Women are not... What I am talking about. What I did with you. That's not the norm.

Women are not normally comfortable saying, "Oh, honey, please, bring it! Bring all of your attraction for other women into our relationship!"

Tripp: You were not excited about it.

Alyson: That's what I want to speak to. That is normal. Of course, it's normal to be scared that your woman is going to have a reaction because she probably will have a reaction. It's vulnerable to put me in the place of knowing that you're looking around.

You're appreciating other beauty, other than me. I'm not the only... I'm not your queen!

I might be your queen, but I am not her in that moment when you're appreciating other women. And I might be her. But I don't trust that I am her. I don't trust that I am that. In that moment.

Tripp: 'Kay.

Alyson: So, that's part of what I want to say. The difference is that I was willing to trust that you and I could come out on the other side with a deeper connection.

I was willing to trust, and put enough stock in the solidity of our personhood and our relationship. I actually trusted that we could come out the other side of that hard moment.

Tripp: That's the lynchpin of this whole conversation. 'Cause if you don't trust that conflict, or her emotional storm, is going to open the door to something deeper in the relationship, then your world just gets smaller, and smaller, and smaller. Like, "Okay, she's going to get pissed off about that? Don't do that. She gets pissed off about that? Don't do that."

We just get smaller and smaller.

Versus, "Okay. She might have a hard time with this emotionally, or whatever, but I trust we can deepen as a

result." The guy's not willing to go through that fire with her.

Alyson: Yes. How is he willing to be actually in a relationship?

Tripp: Right. He's running away from her.

Alyson: That's right. And so every time he says, "Oh, I don't want to go there. I want to shut that door," or "not go through that door," that's creating distance.

Alyson: I do want to come back around... We were talking about healthy and unhealthy aggression, and we never actually talked about the unhealthy piece, which I think most guys are probably listening for.

Tripp: That was the healthy thing. That was the challenge.

Alyson: That was the healthy thing. Challenge, like, "Come on." Inclusive. Promotes deeper connection. It builds that clarity of other agency and autonomy. It promotes goodness. Like, good stuff.

Tripp: It's basically saying' "Step into your bigger self. Come on, bring it."

Alyson: Yes. I want to love you into your best self.

Tripp: Right. That's whole.

Alyson: That love can be challenging! That love can carry a flaming sword, but it is love. For sure. So then there's the aggression which is actually exclusive aggression.

Tripp: This is the unhealthy version.

Alyson: This is the unhealthy version.

Tripp: This is what most of us know. And fear.

Alyson: Well, and I think where many men and women get confused. They don't know that there is a difference between healthy and unhealthy. They see aggression and they immediately think that it's unhealthy. They immediately think that it's bad.

Tripp: Right.

Alyson: That's why I wanted to speak to the good aggression.

Tripp: There's a difference between anger and aggression. We talked about that on *The New Man* before. I think Robert Augustus Masters was really good at that.

Alyson: Right. It kind of carries a similar tone, right? The healthy aggression is bonding, promotes passion and connection and that sort of thing, connection even to whatever you're angry about. And then there's like the divisive anger, right? The power-over and control, and that sort of crap.

Tripp: Name-calling. The "I am going to make you smaller." Shame you.

Alyson: Right! And so, we can lump aggression and the negative anger sort of into that, and that's exclusive. That's really other-directed. That's where it's oppressive.

That's where it diminishes and negates the other person. It basically promotes disconnection.

Tripp: "You're wrong. You're stupid."

Alyson: "You're wrong. I'm right. You need to do this. Not that." Yeah. "You're wrong. You're stupid. You should. Should." Should-ing all over people. Right?

Tripp: There is so much of this in relationships.

Alyson: This is-

Tripp: Guys that I talk to, this is how they navigate. It's a right-wrong situation, instead of a, "Hey, let me hear what's going on for you. Let me hear what's going on for me. Let's see what we can do here." It's a, "I've got to be able to win a court case here."

Looking back over the conversations we've had on The New Man about relationships, this aggression point—and especially unhealthy aggression—has been a hot topic we've hit on several times.

Now we know how to recognize unhealthy aggression when it's blasting us like a firehose, but what can we *do* in those situations? Are we just supposed to let her walk all over us?

Appreciating what's happening for her emotionally is good. But that doesn't mean you have to be a doormat either.

You'll hear from Alyson again as well as Marcus Ambrester and Mark Michael Lewis on why setting healthy boundaries for yourself is a critical component to diffusing these situations.

Alyson: So, Step Two is, know your boundaries and set them. This is especially with the unhealthy aggression. Know what your boundaries are. Then, set them.

Tripp: What do you mean by that?

Alyson: So, an example of that is... This doesn't happen... But let's just say you're yelling and screaming at me. We

can trade roles here. I can be the guy, you can be the girl. Whatever. She's yelling and screaming. I'm noticing that in her yelling and screaming, the impact on me- What this is like for me- is, I'm having a hard time staying present.

Just the volume, the sheer volume. I am actually struggling with staying present, just with the volume that's going on. There's also a lot of energy coming my way. I am feeling like something is being thrown at me, invisibly.

So, my boundaries, personally, for my own self-care is this. I want to stay connected with you through this, but I can't. When you are hurling that level of volume, and that level of whatever you're throwing at me invisibly at me, I can't stay connected to you.

So, my boundary is, I can't connect with you when you're screaming at me like that. If you're in a rage at me, and you're not looking at me, but you're throwing s--t at me, whatever it is, literally or figuratively, I can't stay connected with you.

Tripp: Okay.

Alyson: So, either, "Let's take a break." Time out and come reconnect when you can let me know what's going on with you without raging. Without screaming. Without throwing things at me. Or, let me let you know that I need to step over here.

Literally, turn my body sideways and let whatever is coming at me literally go right past me physically. And let you know that, "I'm here. I don't understand what you're saying. You're yelling so loud that I don't understand what you're saying. I can tell you're really angry at something I can't get. Are you really angry at me? Do you need something? What are you needing right now?"

Tripp: Mm-hm.

Alyson: So, that's the place where you're setting a boundary. I can't connect with you when you're raging. I can't connect with you when you're yelling and screaming, whatever it is. I believe that's different than trying to control or manage her expression. I could still have a

passionate, loud expression with you, or a firm voice. My decibels could go up some. But I'm still not yelling.

Tripp: 'Kay.

Here's what Mark Michael Lewis has to say about handling aggression.

Mark: So, a guy is in partnership. He sees his partner and his partner is being a pain. Being a b--ch let's say. Alright? And he is like, "Ah, I just want you to stop!" Right? "I want you to be nice to me. That's what I want."

But he doesn't say that, because he's not gonna... But if he's being authentic, he can say, "You know what I want? I want this to work for us. I want us to have a conversation that really works for both of us. I want you to treat me nice. I want to treat you nice."

Now, most of the time you think, "Well, that's too simple." Right? "I can't say that." You know, she's upset. I'm not going to ask for what I want when she's upset. Then she's just going to get upset more.

Tripp: Right.

Mark: But if you say, "This is what I want," now you've established it. Now you've got some place to work from.

And here's Marcus Ambrester with some tips on how to communicate your boundaries while still creating connection.

Marcus: What I want guys to focus on.

That everything that comes out of our mouth, and I realize I am setting a really fricking high bar right here, but everything that comes out of our mouths needs to be supportive and loving. In order to do that, we've got to remove any obstacles to doing that.

The number one problem I see with people doing that is... Well, when I say that everything out of your mouth has to be loving, they will say, "I can't do that." Or, "But she did... This." They'll come up with some kind of place where they can't. That's the place where I get curious.

What's getting in the way of you being able to speak lovingly and supportingly to her? And-

Tripp: We're not talking' about being an a-- kisser, though. There is a way to be firm and loving.

Marcus: Absolutely, yeah, and-

Tripp: I just want to put that out there, that this isn't all rainbows and flowers and stuff... Okay.

Marcus: No. That's where, in Pillars of Awesome Relationships, I've got an entire chapter dedicated to setting boundaries.

Tripp: Good.

Marcus: I'm not talking about just kissing her a--. I'm talking about saying, "Hey, I love you so f--king much. I am crazy about you. I want this to work. And when you talk to me this way, I can't hear you. Like, I shut off and I don't want to stay in that conversation."

"I want to hear what you're upset about, but if you're just telling me that I'm an a--hole, that I'm always f--king up, then I can't stay with you with that."

Tripp: "Don't expect me to hang around in that environment." It's not constructive. It's not going to move forward.

Marcus: And then follow that up with, "I want to hear." Just say it again. "I want to hear what you're upset about. I want this to work. I want to be with you. And I want us to be awesome together." So you're giving her three or four messages that say, "You're important to me. I want to hear what's going on. I'm crazy about you. When you say this, I can't hear it. And I am telling you this because you are that important to me. I want us to make our relationship awesome."

That's a whole lot to say, but what you're doing is... You're saying it in a way that she will probably be able to hear you.

And rather than her saying, "You're an a--hole! You didn't do this! You didn't take our the garbage!" And you saying, "But you didn't make this phone call that I needed you to make," or-

Tripp: "You haven't had sex with me all week!" Right?

Marcus: Yeah. Exactly. And the sex piece is huge. Let's make sure we save time to get to that in a second. The Prime Directive basically says to stay in touch with your passion, your desire for her, your desire to be with her no matter what's going on and communicate that.

It's okay to confront her about stuff that doesn't feel good. In fact, it's necessary, but in doing it, you have to communicate that you want to be close to her, and how important she is to you. That means staying in touch with your own heart. Your own desire. When you do that, ladies hear it.

Tripp: Okay.

Marcus: Because they're hearing your desire to be with her, there's something inside of her that's going to relax and soften. It's not a battle, a push and pull thing. It a, "Hey, let's go to this place together that feels... better."

Tripp: Right

Marcus: We hear so many complaints from guys that they're not as sexual with their woman, that their women aren't as sexual with them as they want. The irony is that women store a magnitude more sexual energy and sexual fire than men do. It's up to us to unlock it. How we do that is by needing them on every level.

When we are met physically, emotionally and spiritually, that's when sexuality is at its best. Women seem more highly attuned than men for the most part in picking up on the subtleties of being met on all of those levels. They not only want us physically...

Tripp: 'Kay.

Marcus: Guys, if you're thinking your woman doesn't want you, guess again. She does. She just wants all of you. Not just your c--k.

Tripp: She wants to be wanted in a certain way.

Marcus: Absolutely. She wants to be wanted fully. Wholly. That means her emotionality and her physicality too, but also, she wants to be known on every level.

Tripp: 'Kay. This is some high-level stuff.

So I'm imagining the guy out there is like, "Well, what do I do?" Where does he just start? Because this could be a whole other series of discussions. What would you give the guy who is listening'? He's got a new awareness here. He's got some ideas to start to play with, but how could he start to practice this?

Marcus: The first piece is listening. And listen. There is an old exercise in therapy where you get a couple to sit in each other's seats and imitate each other. It usually turns into a laughing, jovial thing pretty quickly. People really play up how the other is acting.

We take that same skill, and apply it to our relationships. I want guys to know what's going on with their women so well that they could make their woman's case for them. It can be as simple as paraphrasing what your partner is upset about. Saying, "Okay. When I left this morning, I hadn't taken the trash out. I had said that I was gonna do that, and you felt like it was yet another example of, 'I don't care and you can't depend on me.'"

It may be that simple in some cases. What happens? When women hear, and all of us for that matter, their own thoughts and feelings reflected back to them, something inside them relaxes. They don't feel like it's an adversarial thing. When they relax in that way, then they're going to be more open to hearing what we have to say.

Tripp: Yeah. Well, I just want to say that it's not just listening. It's that reflecting part. 'Cause I could just be sitting here listening to you, and I could be like, "Hey, thanks, Marcus, bye bye." And you would be like, "Well, I don't know, was that good? Did he get the point," or whatever. These podcasts go out and I don't know if

anybody's listening until they e-mail me back and say it was a great show.

Reflect it back. What are you hearing? And what does it mean? Not just, "Okay, I get that you're mad that I didn't take out the trash," but what does that really mean? I think that's the bigger part. This is the impact. This is why it really matters to you.

Marcus: That's what we are not trained to listen for in our culture. At all. I guarantee you, she's making an assumption about what it means when you don't take the trash out, or what it means when you stayed out longer than you said you would with your friends. She's got some kind of meaning that she's associating with it, and if you're going to make peace with her, you've got to understand what it means to her.

Once she gets to express that, and feels heard in expressing it, then you can talk about whether or not that's actually true. But the first crucial piece, before you can start talking about, "Well, it's not that I don't care

about you, it's actually that this happened and I wound up staying late. I ran into this person."

Before you can talk about whether or not her assumption is true, she needs a guy to express and know that you have heard what it means to her.

Tripp: Yeah. Make sure that, before you go into the "Why?" or the explanation, or any of that kind of stuff, make sure that you guys are on the same page about what her assumption is. It's not that it's the truth! Just make sure that you guys are on the same page. "Is this your story?" "Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying'." "Okay, great." "Now, are you curious about what's really going on?"

Here's what Alyson had to say about listening and reflecting your partner's emotions.

Alyson: Again, we're reflecting here. But inside this reflection, you say what you see about what she cares about. Again, not about the batteries. Not about the co-worker. Not about the whatever. But, what is it that matters to her? What is she so "up" about?

Tripp: "You really care about... Da da da da."

Alyson: Yeah! "You really don't want to lose this friendship," or, "You really want to be seen as an important person in your workplace." Or, "You really want me to think about you through the day." Like, "You really want to make sure that I didn't forget your needs." Or, whatever it is. "This really matters to you, that I think about you." Whatever it is!

Tripp: That level of reflection, like, "Oh, you're waving your arms around, you're doing this and that," but then that ability to perceive what's really going on and saying, "You really... Here's this underlying drive"-

Alyson: Speak to the need. The desire. The drive.

Tripp: -"driving need or motive." That's usually when she goes, "Yes!"

Alyson: Yes. Exactly. That's when it's an aphrodisiac! Because it's, "I'm feeling seen. I'm feeling more deeply

connected to you." You're not fixing me. You're not trying to do anything or manage me in any way. All you're doing is hanging out with me in this big place.

Tripp: And just reflecting back. There's nothing like, "Oh, you really need to do this," or, "You really should do that." I think a lot of us are like, "Okay, she's in this place. She just needs to do this or that." That's just, "Oh, you really want to have this thing handled." Or, "Oh, you really..." Just getting that she wants.

Alyson: It is so easy to do that

Tripp: I don't know if it's that easy for guys.

Alyson: But I'm saying, no, I'm saying it's so easy for guys to fall into that trap.

Tripp: Oh, to fall into the fixing and should?

Alyson: Because most of the things that we have big emotion about are problems that are unresolved.

Tripp: Right.

Alyson: There is some sort of issue, or unfinished business. It could be family crap. It could be a work scenario. It could be something like, "You didn't bring the batteries so now I can't fix my phone." Or whatever it is, right?

Tripp: So the guy's looking at, "What problem do I need to fix?" naturally.

Alyson: You think that you're supposed to go for that bait! But that's not it at all. Unless she says, "I have a problem and I want your help with this."

Tripp: "I want six AA batteries mother f—ker"

Alyson: Like, "I need you to help me fix this f—king problem! Yeah! Like, I actually need your coaching skills on this." You know? Versus... And, you and I have learned, with both being in the helping profession, we actually have to start some of our conversations by saying, "Alright,

am I just listening here, or do you actually want my feedback, or my coaching?"

Tripp: Right.

Alyson: "Do you want me to help you fix this or navigate this?"

Tripp: I think that would be helpful if a guy said that.

Alyson: It's great!

Tripp: "Would you just like me to listen to you?"

Alyson: Sure! It's great, and some women aren't, some people aren't skilled enough to know. They won't respond to the question. They'll just keep talking, like "That's a yes!" They just keep launching into it.

Tripp: Fire-hydrant mode, sputtering off.

Alyson: Assume, unless they say, I think your default safety here is assume that they don't need you to fix s--t. Unless they ask you to fix something.

Tripp: Right.

Alyson: They don't need your help managing anything unless they ask your help managing.

Tripp: Mm-hm.

Alyson: They don't need your help controlling anything unless they ask your help controlling.

So that's the default, right? Don't. Do. Anything. If you feel inclined to manage, control or fix, step back.

Part Five: Calling in the Reinforcements

So we've heard all about the storm. Your partner's big emotions are completely natural and we can learn how to navigate our way through them to a stronger, deeper connection.

We don't need to avoid the storm. But we do want to make sure we are clear and grounded in our wants and needs. We need to set firm, healthy boundaries for ourselves and then allow ourselves to simply listen to our partner. The challenge here is to really listen and not get swept up in the storm.

It will be tempting to want to check out or numb out. This will pour gas on the fire. Instead, stay present and reflect the emotion that's underneath all of the stuff she's saying. Don't get lost in the content — the stuff on the surface. Dive deeper. Connect with what she's really saying.

If it seems like she's overreacting to XYZ — it's most likely not about XYZ. Get curious. What is she really reacting to? Ask her.

Sure — she may be upset about the trash, but the hurt and anger may be rooted in fear that she's with a guy who doesn't listen to her.

Her hurt is rooted in the fear that she's with a guy that doesn't care about what is important to her. This is where she's feeling a disconnection.

Reflect the emotion you hear and check to make sure it's true for your partner. Is what you're reflecting accurate? Don't assume anything. Assumptions break connection — and the broken connection is the root of the storm. Clearing the assumption is the pathway to rebuilding connection. It communicates that you're paying attention. It demonstrates that you're connected.

Then completely resist the urge to fix, suggest or manage her emotional world. Seriously. It's just not your job. Your desires to fix or control her emotions are about you

— it's not about her. This desire to fix or change her breaks connection.

Instead let go of the need to fix or change and just listen and let her know what you're hearing. Unless you're specifically asked for your opinion or assistance, stay out of the business of fixing and just listen and reflect.

If you stop making suggestions and start giving accurate reflections, she may eventually open up and even ask for your input. Before she can be open to your input, she needs to feel the connection.

She needs to feel that you understand her perspective and care.

Simple? Yes. Easy. Not without practice. But most importantly we have to drop the expectation that we should simply know how to do this stuff. Chances are that we never saw this way of relating modeled by our parents. We never saw it on TV or in the movies. So cut yourself some slack on the expectations and consider that if you want to have an extraordinary relationship, it'll require

you to learn some basic skills that are beyond the ordinary.

And it'll require you to consider that we can't get better at our relationships all alone.

Tripp: We're not alone, and... Relationship is the most freaking hard thing you could do in this lifetime. Whether it's relationship with your kids, relationship with your parents or relationship with your lover.

Christiane: Or yourself.

Tripp: The hardest thing to take on. So, why do we stick our heads in the sand and act like we've got it all figured out? Or, "I'm going to go figure it out by myself?" So, alright. Pull your head outta your a--. Go get some help. Talk to your friends. "How do you deal with this? How did you deal with that?"

Christiane: And it's risky, right? It's really risky behavior. Perhaps... Because it's the same as being in a sales job! You might get nine no's, before you get one yes! You might

get nine, like, who the- No, even if that person is filled with that problem, even if that person's house is falling apart because of that problem. There is just tons of denial, and there's tons of defensiveness.

You might get that, but you know, actually, this is pretty important.

Tripp: I just want to challenge - tough shit, keep doing it. This is the path-

Christiane: Keep speaking-

Tripp: -Yeah. Don't puss out to that. Get really clear about, you want help, and just keep charging along and you'll get it.

Tripp: So what is one thing, because we talked about a lot of stuff today, what is one thing that a guy can do today - that he can actually do - to start getting some traction in this area?

Alyson: Practice. Being. Okay. With. Yourself.

Alyson: You're going to sit in a chair. Imagine you have a foot fetish. You are going to sit in a chair and you are going to practice being okay with the fact that you have a foot fetish.

Tripp: And being okay with it means, like, thinking about, "I have a foot fetish!" And not making... Watching these thoughts come in like, "Oh, you're a f--king..."

Alyson: Imagine that you're in a room with all the people that you care about. You are getting ready to admit that you have a foot fetish. Practice admitting it and being perfectly alright with it.

Practice Being Okay With Yourself.

Another reminder that the quality of our relationships with others depends upon on the quality of the relationship we have with ourselves.

Next Steps to Take

How will you use these ideas to strengthen your relationship with yourself or your relationships with others?

If you're looking for more of a deep dive then consider contacting my wife, Alyson Lanier:

Alyson Lanier

alyson@alysonlanier.com

303-800-4391

She's been helping folks in this arena for well over a decade, and her approach is quick, effective, and focused on what will actually create the thriving relationships you want.

We know this is a huge topic so we've got more relationship tools and offerings on the way. In the meantime [email us](#) any ideas you may have.

Thank you for reading, and I wish you the best in creating the relationships you truly want.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a large, looped 'L'.

Tripp Lanier
*Men's Coach and Host of The New
Man Podcast*



More Resources

[Click here to learn more about Alyson Lanier.](#)

[Click here to learn more about Marcus Ambrester.](#)

[Click here to learn more about Mark Michael Lewis.](#)

[Click here to learn more about Christiane Pelmas.](#)

And below are links to the full interviews that were the basis for this program.

[Alyson Lanier – Understanding Women’s Emotions](#)

[Marcus Ambrester – How to Stop Fighting with Your Wife or Girlfriend](#)

[Mark Michael Lewis – Get Your Relationship Out of the Ditch](#)

[Alyson Schwabe Lanier & Christiane Pelmas Pt 1 – How to Navigate a Woman’s Emotional Minefield](#)

[Alyson Schwabe Lanier & Christiane Pelmas Pt 2 – How to Navigate a Woman’s Emotional Minefield](#)

All content for *Thriving Relationships: A Guide to Move from Fighting to Freedom* created and owned by Tripp Lanier.

Thriving Relationships: A Guide to Move from Fighting to Freedom Audiobook and eBook Produced by [Meagen Gibson](#) (meagenc@gmail.com) and [Alex Gibson](#).