

Rachel: My name is Rachel Rofe. I created this show because I wanted to help you see that if you have a choice, you can choose a better life. If you're listening to this podcast, you're in a pretty fortunate position; you have free will, ability to connect to the Internet, and access to all kinds of new education. This podcast is meant to help you make of the most of your good fortune. We talk to all kinds of people here, from all walks of life, because I want you to see that no matter what the situation, there's always a way to create a life that you're proud of. Hello everyone.

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Rachel: Today we're here with Doctor Lee Baucom of [SaveTheMarriage.com](http://www.SaveTheMarriage.com). Doctor Lee Baucom became disenchanted with the efficiency of traditional psychotherapy just as he was finishing his PhD in training. He began to expand his approach at that time, 25 years ago, to include coaching, paradigm theory, community building, and mindfulness. Doctor Baucom expanded his expertise into the new fields of resilience and positive psychology; since then, he's worked to help couples and individuals have thriving lives and relationships. Now Doctor Baucom refers to himself as a thriveologist, admitting he could also do a better job of thriving. After suffering a life-threatening illness, he realized they needed to make important shifts in his own life.

Now he's the creator of several online programs designed to save marriages and relationships, has authored the best-selling book on marriage, has created several videos on dealing with stress, and shares two podcasts each week; one on relationships, and one on thriving. He's married with two children, and in his spare time he trail runs, paddle boards, and scuba dives. Thank you so much for being here, I'm so, so excited that you're here and I think this is going to be really fun.

Dr. Baucom: Thanks for having me, I'm excited to be here too.

Rachel: [laughs] Awesome. So the intention behind A Better Life is to show people that if they have a choice, that they can choose a better life. So in that spirit, can you take a minute to share with us some of the things that you're most proud of in your life?

Dr. Baucom: There are lot of things that I [laughs] think, they're not throwaways, but they're just kind of the world stuff. What I'm most proud of, I guess, is the relationships we have in our family. The most part of watching my kids grow up, I'm most proud of the relationship with my wife, I am proud of [laughs] the bestseller stuff and things like that, but that for me, is kind of the background noise to really having a thriving life. You've got to do these things to get through life, but what I'm really proud of are the relationships.

Rachel: Mm, yeah, that's great. I mean, connection is what all of is about, so I love that. I'm curious now; I mean, we hadn't talked before this, [laughs] so we're kind of starting [inaudible 00:02:36] and fresh, and I'm really excited about it. Twenty years ago is when you began to kind of get into the relationship world realized that what was being taught, you thought that maybe there could be some new kind of things added. So you marry now. I'm curious, how is your marriage is as far as, like, do you guys fight at all? [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: [laughs] My wife is a therapist, also. A lot of people go, "Oh, a few therapists. You must be doing the, "Oh, I hear what you're saying," kind of stuff."

Rachel: [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: But the reality is that it's a lot easier to be a kind of dispassionate person when you're dealing with other people than when it's your own life. People would come into my office and say, "You know what? I've decided to quit my job," and I had no bearing. You know, nothing mattered what they said, and I was able to say, "Sure. If that's good for you, that's great," but . . .

Rachel: [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: . . . it's little different within a marriage, so I think we have a great marriage, but every marriage has its struggles. One of the things that I often tell people is, "One hundred percent of marriages are going to have difficult times." One hundred percent. About 50% are going to figure out some way to work through them. I've never said, "Oh, you're going to have a perfect marriage." Every marriage has its struggles and that's where you learn, so I think we have an outstanding marriage, but we always have the places where we've got to figure out a new way to find that smooth surface when we're rubbing each other a little bit raw. How to use that more like smoothing down would with sandpaper, and I think that's just kind of the nature of marriage. I think that's where you learn about each other, and more than that I think that's where you learn about yourself.

Rachel: Absolutely. I've heard so many different things about relationships, one of them being that we usually attract partners that I like our opposite sex parents. Have you heard that and do you believe that?

Dr. Baucom: There's some research about that. I think a lot of the research that really holds some water is, the spouse we find is usually a combination of both the good and bad elements, really of both parents. Certainly there's influence from the opposite sex parent; research shows that there's actually more influence for women and their fathers than for men and their mothers. But I do think we tend to find somebody that has some of those pieces there, unfinished from childhood, and some of those places where we felt most loved from childhood. I get a little worried when people boil it down to being that simple, kind of a parent issue, because there are also sibling issues and a lot of life experience issues that affect that also.

Rachel: Interesting. Okay, okay, so you kind of have lots of different, I guess, theories that you've . . . not theories, but just probably from your 25 years you've just probably seen patterns [inaudible 00:05:07].

Dr. Baucom: My fear always is when somebody says, "Oh, this is what happens in a marriage," then that's always the fall back, so people are always going, "Oh, here's the easy answer; I'll marry someone just like my dad, I just married someone just like my mom." Instead of having to go, "What are the real issues between us that are the solvable pieces? How can we move forward with this? How can we learn from each other?" One of my essential theories, and we talked about that connection - you talked how important is - is that that's really kind of the fuel of marriage, and really the fuel of

any relationship, but it's most potent in a marriage, and that need for connection usually overpowers wherever loose ends come from in our lives.

Rachel: Okay, so not to completely switch gears, but I'm just having these questions pop in my head now. [laughs] Something else I'm curious about is, do you feel like, with marriages, that all of them can be saved, or do you believe in throwing in the towel sometimes?

Dr. Baucom: Let's be clear, I don't ever think that every marriage can be saved. I do think a lot more could be saved than are saved, so let me draw an early distinction. If there is abuse in a relationship, and here, right off the bat, physical abuse is kind of like a . . . you know, there's no-go at that point . And so we rule out those which I always kind of say is responsible and say, "If it's abusive relationship, you've got to take care of yourself and be safe." So we rule those out, and then we have a whole other group of marriages that can be saved, but at some point, both people have to be willing. When I'm working with people, a lot of times they come to me with a spouse that doesn't want to work on their relationship; the spouse has kind of said, "I'm done with this."

And my tagline, for a long time has been, "Even if you're only one who wants to save it," and a lot of people go, "Oh well, my spouse doesn't want to so I'm out of luck." My response is, "You're not out of luck, but at some point we've got to draw your spouse back in." And if a spouse just flat out refuses, kind of like in politics; to stay married it takes two votes, yes, but to not stay married, it only takes one vote, no. It's kind of that half and half . . . majority to negative, only takes 50%, so at some point we've got to pull that other person in. Sometimes it much more possible than people think when they're in the midst of the struggle.

Rachel: How do you pull people in?

Dr. Baucom: Well one of the big things is, when there's a broken connection, and that really is often when somebody finds themselves in a marriage crisis, they've become disconnected, and lots of reason. I usually find [laughs] that couples don't mean for that to happen, but as the disconnection grows, the anger and the frustration and the resentment build on themselves, and you do a cascade all the way down to this point of disdainment. The problem is that we all still have those need for connection, and so while you might have an angry spouse, the first piece to understand is that anger is really hurt. The anger is always kind of an external representation of an internal hurt or threat, and so you see all this anger and you're, like, "Oh, I can't get there that," but if you can begin to address the hurt, we all wired to desire that connection. And so it's a matter of getting back to offering, finding some ways of creating those small connection points, and growing those into bigger connections.

The metaphor I often use is, "If you're going to build a bridge," . . . long ago they'd find a river, now they have big cranes and stuff, but the first thing they would do is they'd throw a little string across it with a rock attached. They wanted to cross that river and they wanted to build a bridge, so they'd throw something that was easily tossed over there. It would land, and they would pull it over, and then they would attach a rope to it, and then pull a cable to it, and slowly pull bigger and bigger pieces over until they built the bridge,

so when the marriage is really disconnected, we start looking for those small little connection points. Little things that aren't going to be rejected because they're too strong, but that the person who's trying to build the connection isn't just responding to the anger; they're trying to move to the underlying hurt and begin to address that. And over time, they begin to build a connection; as you build a connection, then the other person begins to be a little open to the possibilities of what might happen after that.

Rachel: Interesting. Do you have any examples of how someone used to this?

Dr. Baucom: Let's say this a couple of the little . . . and they're not tricks, but they're ways of building those small connections that I've suggested. Let's say a couple is just completely disconnected, so one way of doing that little string, you know, with the rock, so I call one-way texts. And a one-way text is one where you don't ask for any response, you don't want any response; all you're trying to do is let them know that you're thinking about them. So somebody who's really disconnected can often send a text that says, "Hey, was thinking about you, hope your day goes well," or, "Hey, was thinking about you. I know you had that big project. Hope it went well." By doing that there's no pressure on the other person to respond, there's no question mark at the end of it that says, "Send me something back." All it's doing is letting them know that you're thinking fondly of them; that their on your heart, on your mind, and that can begin to build an awareness that there's connection there.

Rachel: What else? Are the other things that you recommend? I'm curious [laughs] that's because it's really helpful.

Dr. Baucom: I always try to say, "Where is the connection now?" Because that often tells us what we can kind of get away with building that connection. So a couple of other things; one is, people can do the same with an email, "Hey, I saw this article, thought you might be interested," which lets them know that you kind of understand what they think about. As long as the article is not a, "How To Save Your Marriage" . . .

Rachel: [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: . . . kind of article, you know, [laughs] some marriage advice, that a lot of times that can help. You know, if it's about their hobby or something they would be interested in; you want it to be about what they're interested in, not something that you're interested in. So that one-way email is, "Hey, just saw this, thought you might be interested," and another way of just kind of saying, "I know what's going on." Another one that I really like, I call them the tag-a-long dates, this is because if somebody is really at a struggle point, a spouse might go, "No," to a date. You know, you say, "Hey, can we have a date night?" "Absolutely not. I don't want to date you," but there's a difference if you say, for instance, "Hey, I'm going to go grab a cup of coffee, would you like to go with me?" "Mm." The difference is subtle, but it's big enough that the person is not being asked on a date; they're just going along, and there are a couple of things about that.

So you say that and they say, "No," you say, "Okay, that's fine, maybe another time," and you go get a cup of coffee. You don't want to go, "Okay, well I'm not either," which

really proves that it was a date, and if they say, "Yes," which is more frequent than people expect, then you go and have just a very light conversation, no relationship talk. In fact, one of the rules I say for people when they are in the midst of a marriage crisis is, don't try to have that big relationship [laughs] talk because it's not going to work. You've got a script in your mind about how it's going to go, but so do they and they're not reading your script. So don't have the big relationship talk; just go have a light conversation for 20 to 40 minutes, and you leave before it stretches into further than that.

Rachel: So how do you teach people to just keep that energy of being okay and not going into the relationship, or not going into what they really want to go into, because that's hard?

Dr. Baucom: It is hard, so part of that is talking about has ever worked in the past, because by the time they talk to me, they've already tried that. They've already tried date night, they've already tried the big, romantic getaway, they've already tried the big gifts, they've already tried to have that relationship talk, and so the big pieces getting very clear about the fact that it hasn't worked so far; [laughs] it's not likely to turn around the next time you have that conversation. And that at least gives them a thought steppingstone to say, "Okay, I've got to resist," and so sometimes they have to kind of think through what they're going to talk about, how they're going to interact when they have that chance.

For instance, have "The Top Five Things Not To Do When Your Marriage Is in Trouble." I want it printed out so that they can review that and remind themselves not to those things, instead of just being, like, if they heard it on my podcast, that's great, but what I really want is it in writing in front of them they can look at that and go, "Oh, I've got to remember not to do that."

Rachel: Hmm, would you mind sharing what one or all five of the things not to do are?

Dr. Baucom: Well I don't want to go too far just in time element. Well, let's go with a couple of them. One is to not talk about the relationship; and what I mean by that is, if the spouse says, "Hey, I want to talk about the relationship," you don't say, "Oh no, no, no, I'm not supposed to," but you don't come in expecting to have that big relationship talk, and that's a really big one because it's so common. We all have this scriptwriter in our head that's worthy of Hollywood; if just everybody would just get [laughs] on our script with us, life would be wonderful, and everybody's doing it, so we miss it. So as they script it in their own head and then they start having the conversation, and their spouse is immediately off script, then they're lost in the woods, and it goes down fast, you know, it goes down. Part of what happens is, the spouse starts reinforcing the fact that there's nothing that can happen, and that's what we're trying to stop. You don't want a spouse constantly saying, "Oh, this can't work out. Here's proof of it."

So not having a relationship talk is one. Another was, don't tell everybody about your problems. A lot of people would go to all their friends; day tell all their friends, they tell all the family, and then what they've created is, everybody else's expectation that things are going bad. Not only that - but people feel the need to choose sides. No matter what

you tell them, they're going to feel the need to choose sides, and then you get back together, they don't know what to do with that. My rule is, don't tell everybody. There is another one that is, but find somebody to share it with. Somebody safe, but somebody who's going to be neutral; not somebody who's going to pat you on the back and say, "Oh, you're so right, you need to get out of here," but someone who's going to be a good sounding-block. Sometimes that's a friend, sometimes that's a therapist, sometimes that's a coach, it might be a minister. Somebody who's safe, who is able to listen, so that's two of them, but there are several others that might do better to kind of search other questions.

Rachel: Yeah, absolutely, those are really good points. I mean I could definitely see both of them being really helpful. Okay, I think that makes a lot of sense, not talking to the friends and family. I mean when you start talking to other people, it then just becomes like a self-fulfilling prophecy that you're having problems over and over, and you get so married to that kind of thought process, so that makes a lot of sense. Do you find that it's usually the only one person wants to work on it and the other doesn't?

Dr. Baucom: Well there are plenty of times when both people want to, but those are fairly easy to solve. I've often said, back when I was doing just kind of normal therapy in the office, I often said, "If a couple wants to get together, they want to work on it, the worst therapist isn't going to stop them, but if they do not want to get together, the best therapist isn't going to help them." So if they really both wanted to work on it, that usually is a pretty easy, pretty quick fix. No, let's say a simple, quick fix. Sometimes it's not so easy, but it's simple, it's pretty straightforward. So a lot of times by the time I see them, they've gone through a couple of therapists and I had good experiences, [laughs] and their spouse has kind of given up, or they promised to change for the umpteenth time and not changed, so their spouse is not thinking it's going to happen, a lot of times there is infidelity. So in those cases, yeah, it's one person really just trying to fight to hang on to that commitment.

Rachel: Do you find that there's a pattern in relationships? I have another friend who does relationship coaching, he said he sees a lot of people come in the beginning, there's, like, a power struggle when you first get married after the honeymoon phase in a relationship; that's one big one for him. Do you find any patterns or is it usually just all the different stages of relationships that people are really struggling?

Dr. Baucom: It's an interesting question. Yeah, there are a lot of different stages, however, I would say that the central . . . You know, if you're looking for what is the root cause of marriage problems, it's the fact that a marriage is about becoming a "we, a team, a unit." I call it being a "we." We're in this together, and have each other's back. Now that's not about saying you just kind of be this gelatinous mass of two people, but in fact I would say the opposite; it's bringing the best of two people together, but you've got to get to that point. And the problem is, there's no other relationship where that happens in life in life; it's the only place it happens, so we have no training for it, and so the power struggle comes there's something pulling you towards the "we," and then there's another part of you that doesn't know how to do it, that's kind of scary about that.

So instead of getting to that place of "we," you struggle with "you versus me," so I agree with the pattern of power struggle. What I'm trying to do is create the place where they can move towards being a "we."

Rachel: One thing that I had wanted to ask you was, I was doing this podcast and someone said they had done a bunch of studying, and he studied facial patterns and he studied marriages over a very long period of time. For 30 years he would go and he would look at all these different relationships, and he said, "The number one predictor of divorce is if people had the micro-expression of contempt on their face." Have you heard this?

Dr. Baucom: John Gottman is a researcher in California, he does the Love Lab, and that sounds like some of the stuff he's talked about. His [inaudible 00:18:40] predictor and micro-expressions, I hear a good bit about that. So I think with the micro-expressions are showing [laughs] is, it may not be that the spouse is even registering the micro-expressions, but underneath it, that feeling certainly is dangerous. His thing, when he looked at it was, really there are two predictors; one is, how quickly the man calmed down after a conflict, and the other was, he called it a soft startup for women. When there is an issue, they had a soft startup. Now, a lot of people, what I've said that they've gone, "Well that's sexist. Why not a soft startup for men?"

And the reason was [laughs] because in his research, men didn't bring up problems enough [laughs] to register it on a statistical analysis; it was the women [laughs] who were bringing up the problems. So while it was important for the men to kind of do a soft startup too, it was just statistically insignificant because men just didn't bring up problems very often.

Rachel: So what is a soft startup?

Dr. Baucom: Soft startup is, for instance, you could say, "Sit down, I need to talk with you," that's kind of a harsh startup. Instead of saying, "Honey, you know what, there's something I'd really like to talk with you about." That's a soft startup.

Rachel: Got it, and so the findings were that the soft startups, and men, who I imagine, get over things quickly?

Dr. Baucom: Non-arousal is the scientific term. They don't have adrenaline coursing through their system, and part of that is indication of how quickly they, the couple, can resolve their conflict. Men tend to have a lot more adrenaline running through their system, and when that happens, men tend to express that with anger and with push away, and so the quicker that he returned was . . . it wasn't like these men were special. It wasn't like they somehow were chemically gifted. It was kind of a way of watching the couple resolve themselves for the man to be able to move to a different place, a different posture, than the argument started with.

Rachel: I know this is just putting you on the spot, but do you have any idea what the percentages are of people who are better at that that ended up having more successful relationships? Like, with the contempt thing, I heard it's 94% of relationships that showed that micro-expression of contempt, ended up not staying together.

Dr. Baucom: I mean I haven't seen that data, but when John was doing his research, what he was really trying to determine was observationally is this particular couple more likely or less likely to stay together? So it really wasn't kind of the numbers thing like the contempt piece, where they were counting that. It was just, what were the markers that led to couples lasting longer or not lasting?

Rachel: This makes me think about just, like, unlikely couples that ended up staying together [laughs] even through statistics and stuff like that and maybe they don't have the soft startups and things. Do you have any examples of people who totally didn't think that they were going to end up saving the marriage, and then ended up did, and maybe some of the things that they did in order to get it to work?

Dr. Baucom: I guess the most extreme example was [laughs] I was in my office one day, this has been a number of years back now, and the couple literally stopped by; they saw my sign hanging view and they stopped and came in on the way to sign the divorce papers.

Rachel: Wow.

Dr. Baucom: They walked in and said, "We're headed to sign, what can you do? Is there anything that we need to think about?" And we sat down and we talked about it, both kind of on a rational, what's going to happen when this goes down, and in emotional. What happened to get you here? How did you get stuck? What are you both wanting? And that was a big one; they both wanted to be loved. You know, that's a universal; everybody wants to be loved. As they started, when they came in, they both were saying they wanted to be divorce, and yet here they were in my office, and I said, "Okay, zero to 100, where are you on that commitment?" And both of them were trying to come up with a fair number that represented the fact that they were headed to the attorney's [laughs] office . . .

Rachel: [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: . . . and yet they were in my office. They both kind of fudged a little bit and finally decided that they both were roughly at 60% - 60% committed to divorce. So as we talked it through, they began to realize that they were really more, like, 60% committed to working on it, they just were hopeless. And what I've discovered is, not when a couple is together; I've got a couple together and they're both saying, or one of them is saying, "I am done, I'm through, there's nothing that can happen." But if I can get them by themselves and really talk about, "Is it 100%?" Rarely is it 100% - there's always a bit of ambiguity. That's what I'm looking for. If somebody says, "Well, I'm 95%," "Okay, let's take that 5%. Why that 5%? Why didn't you choose 100%? What's this space?" And we begin to try to enlarge that space until they're at a comfortable place that they could entertain the possibility of continuing the marriage.

Rachel: Hmm, and how would you go through if someone says, "I'm 5%," and you say, "Why do you have 5%?" "Well, maybe understand at one point were in love." What would you say to that?

Dr. Baucom: That's part of what I start pushing for, that 5%. Let's say it's, "Well, because one time it was good." "If it could get back to that, would that be what you want?" And my suggestion is that when couples are in trouble, they don't try to get back to the old relationship. They need something new because the old relationship got them to where they are . . .

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Baucom: . . . and we've got to come up with something new. "But if you've had that feeling again, then would that make it worthwhile?" "Oh yeah, it could make it worthwhile," okay, so then we start to enlarge on what has to happen for that to take place, and a lot of that is a very rational discussion. Some people would say, "Well, that 5% is because of my kids." Kids are an okay reason to delay a divorce if you're willing to work on the relationship to make it a better relationship. It's not okay, I don't think it's ever okay, and I always tell people they kind of have three options. You can just live with the way things are; so if they're miserable, you can just continue that way, [laughs] or you can just bail, get completely out, and there are a lot of consequences to that. Especially in our country, there are just a lot of consequences to a divorce that people don't really think through.

Then the last option is to transform what you've already got into something you really want, so that's what I'm pushing for is, okay, it's okay for the kids to be keeping you there. That's not a stopping point, that's just a starting point. Can we go to the next level of making this really a marriage worthwhile? I really do think that there are some very deep psychological reasons that people find their spouse, that is not about pathology and bad stuff that some people would say. I think there's a lot of cement there that people kind of miss. So that's what I'm trying to get to is, how can we find a place where this stuff is working? Where the good stuff is there and where you're both getting the good stuff?

Rachel: One thing you said that got me curious was you said that when people come in and you say, "The old relationship got you to where you are right now, so obviously you don't want to get back into that. You want to do something new." Now for people that are married for lots of years and they kind of have these fixed expectations and somebody, what are some practical action steps that they can do to just get out of that mindset? I guess before you answer one thing I'll say is, I have a friend who does love coaching who said that every morning she wakes up and tells herself about her husband, "I don't know this man, I don't know this man, I don't know this man," so that she can be completely open [laughs] to seeing him with fresh eyes every day. What do you think about that and then also the other action steps?

Dr. Baucom: Yeah, I think anything where can break the assumption that you know the other person in every way, it's a good thing. You know, to always been curious about what's really going on because whatever was happening was true for that person even months ago, is no longer true. We're always in a state of change. One of my favorite quotes is, "You're either green and growing, or ripe and rotting," that's a [laughs] Ray Kroc quote, and I think that's true about all of us, that we have a natural growth place. The problem with all of us is that we notice our own growth. We know that we're trying

to learn new things and grow, and we think that our spouse is static; we miss their change. And she's right, every day is a new person, not entirely, but there are thoughts and perceptions that have changed for that person, and there are shifts in meaning and purpose that happen through life.

So in each stage in life, to stay focused on getting to know each other all over again isn't just the people who lost contact; it's for any couple to have that natural curiosity. I just find that natural curiosity to be an important part of life, period, if you're going to have a thriving life.

Rachel: Do you find it to be one of the most important qualities in relationships?

Dr. Baucom: The most important quality in a relationship is the willingness to connect, but behind that willingness to connect has to be some curiosity about what's going on and how does the other person see the world. When I talk with couples and they're stuck in that pattern of arguing, sometimes [laughs] I'll say, "Okay, we've got to stop arguing," and a few times some have said, "If we stop arguing, I don't know we'll communicate [laughs] with each other, and there's got to be another alternative." So my definition of that argument, it's two different people with two different opinions trying to convince the other person to see it their way, and it's a no-go, be it both of them are pulling and it's a tug-of-war. So the turnaround is to say . . . pretend it's kind of like a research project. Now I remember back in school, this really made a mark on me when I had to write a paper, and the paper assigned to me was about understanding Adolf Hitler.

Now, there's no way to nicely understand all that happened, but I went back and looked at all the dynamics that were happening in his family when he was growing up in Germany at that time that kind of made him, him. And while I saw no place to relieve responsibility for actions, it gave me a new understanding of what made that so if I could have a new understanding of Hitler, I think I could do that with pretty much anyone. Certainly a couple could do that where they look for a new understanding of where somebody's coming from of how do they see the world. And so to ask that question, "How do you see it that way?" in the middle of a discussion that's become an argument. To be able to stop for a minute and instead of saying, "Well, I think," to be able to say, "Hmm, that's interesting. Could you help me understand how you see it that way?" can transform a relationship, and certainly transform that conversation, depending on how you deliver it. I could say, "Wow, that's interesting. How could you possibly see it that way?"

That's not going to get very far, but to be able to say, "Wow, that's kind of interesting. Can you help me understand how you see it that way?" is a curiosity question and is an openness to understand, and I always help people join this distinction between agreeing with somebody, and understanding where they're coming from. Most of us just want to be understood; we don't need everybody to agree, but we want to be understood.

Rachel: Yeah, that's a great point. And the with my boyfriend sometimes, if we're having an argument one of us would just say, "You know what? Can you just be a rock for me for five minutes or hold space?" However we say it, but basically one of us is just

completely quiet while the other person gets out all their feelings, and it's very, very helpful.

Dr. Baucom: And at the end what you want is somebody to be able to say, "Okay, is that what I'm hearing? Do I understand that?"

Rachel: Totally.

Dr. Baucom: And if you've been understood, then usually you can move on. I talked to couples [laughs] about what they argue about, maybe 10% of the time there is even a decision to be made. They're arguing about a car, or a school to go to, or something like that but 90% of the time, it has nothing that needs to be solved [inaudible 00:30:10] opinion.

Rachel: Sometimes people ask the question, "If you had 30 seconds and you had a microphone and you could say one thing to the world, what would it be?" What would yours be?

Dr. Baucom: Oh gosh.

Rachel: [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: All these questions, I keep taking away more than 30 [laughs] seconds.

Rachel: [laughs] Maybe you have one core belief about marriages.

Dr. Baucom: I do have a belief about people, and that is, that people are doing the best they can, where they are. That's not that people are doing optimal performance, but people are doing the best they can, where they are, right now.

Rachel: Mm, I love that. I love that. And I know I've asked just kind of a bunch of random different questions, [laughs] and I think it's going to be really helpful for people, because depending on where they are, I think there's been a lot of really great, practical kind of action steps. I'm curious, is there anything that I haven't asked that you think would be good for people to know? That maybe you've just been kind of thinking about that you'd like to say?

Dr. Baucom: One of the core elements to my thriving stuff - I talk about thriveology, the science of thriving - and one of the core pieces of that is that I watch people really try to avoid difficult times. They're always asking for some way around difficulties, and for me the thriving part of life, whether it's relationships or just a life, is seeing that those difficult points, let me say it so [laughs] that it's not like those a put upon us, but they're going to happen to all of us. The question is, are we going to learn from them? Are we going to take whatever struggles that we have and learn and grow? Or are we going to take it on not as a challenge, but as a struggle? And I think that's important for couples to recognize that if there is no struggle between them, they're probably not stretching a lot. If there's no challenge in their relationship, they probably are stagnant.

You're looking for those places where, what's the new growth of that? Where is my new place of becoming? You've read my bio about me being sick. One of my realizations

after I was sick was that I have neglected my body for a long time and I was out of shape, and I used that analogy getting in shape. If I were to use that and say, "Well, if I was meant to be in shape, I would just have the muscles." Everybody knows that's ludicrous. That you actually have to exercise [laughs] and do something to build that, and yet when other struggles in life come, they go, "Well, it must be wrong that we're having these struggles. It must be wrong that I'm having a difficult time." When all that might be true is that it's a learning opportunity, a place to grow - some new place to become.

Rachel: Mm, I love that. So reframing tension as a great thing.

Dr. Baucom: It's a challenge. It's a challenge that brings you an opportunity for growth. You don't have to go looking for it, it'll come to you. [laughs]

Rachel: [laughs]

Dr. Baucom: You have the option of either growing from it, or retreating from it.

Rachel: I love that. That's great. Where can people go to learn more about you?

Dr. Baucom: Marriage stuff, I've got the podcast that you talked about; I think we just a 60 episodes plus there's several extras. The easiest way to get there is go to SaveTheMarriageBlog.com, and that delivers them right to that page. If people who are listening and they're not married and they're just kind of, like, "Well, that's a thriving thing," Thriveology.com, and that's T-H-R-I-V-E ology dot com.

Rachel: You've got some great domain names. [laughs] Awesome. Well thank you so much, I feel like you've given some really great, practical steps. And for those of you listening, definitely go over to Lee's sites because I think there's so much more that we could have gone over that we just didn't to keep this kind of short and succinct. . . .

[music]

. . . but it's obvious that you really know what you're talking about and it must be really helpful, so thank you so much.

Dr. Baucom: Thank you, Rachel.

Rachel: Thank you so much for listening to A Better Life. You can find all show notes this episode at RachelRofe.com. If you enjoyed this episode, subscribe so you can automatically get access to all new shows. Let's also connect; just go on to Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram slash Rachel Rofe, and we can talk there. The opinions of all guests here are their own, and I'm not necessarily endorsing any of them. I do want to give you a perspective, though. And always remember, if you have a choice, choose a better life.

[end of music]

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With love,

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