



Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 18
“Are Great Expectations Killing Your Relationships?”
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Do you swipe left so much you give yourself tendonitis as you look for the perfect person? Or do you date a lot, but no one meets your needs? Sexperts discuss relationship expectations and how to get better at dating. Plus a Sermon on the Pubic Mound on resentments.

Host: Karen Yates

Guests: Tazima Parris, Matthew Amador, Peter Navarro

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Tazima Parris

So, you've got to take a look at: what is it that I'm looking for? Is it more important that the person is hot, or is it more important that I'm getting my needs met?

Karen Yates

Welcome to Wild & Sublime, a sexy spin on infotainment®, no matter your preferences, orientation, or relationship style, based on the popular live Chicago show. Each week, I'll chat about sex and relationships with citizens from the world of sex positivity. You'll hear meaningful conversation, dialogues that go deeper, and information that can help you become more free in your sexual expression. I'm sex educator Karen Yates. Today, our panel discusses the expectations we place on new partners, and even the tiny pictures in our dating apps. Plus my Sermon on the Pubic Mound® on resentment. Keep listening.

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month. Don't miss this very cool offer from an eminent sex educator and yoga therapist. More info is in the show notes.

Are you an online dating power-swiper, swiping right at a rate that would outpace Speed Racer's mach five? But then on the first couple of dates, things go sour. Or maybe you're a southpaw, so much left swiping that you never connect, because folks just aren't good enough. Or maybe you're in a new relationship, and you just don't know how to gauge it. Is it working? Is it not working? Well, we have a delightful panel today, who hopefully can cut through some of the mental gymnastics that go into new relationships. I'll be talking with recurring guests sex coach and pleasure mentor Tazima Parris; and Matthew Amador, a psychotherapist for love, sex, and gender rebels. And a new guest, sex-positive therapist specializing in embodiment, Peter Navarro. This panel is from the February 2020 show at Constellation in Chicago. Enjoy.

[in front of live audience] So, tonight, we're talking about expectations and standards. Too high? Too low? Just right? It is like the three bears. When in a new relationship can you — this is something I always grapple with — when can you tell if your expectation is way too high? What are some signals?

Matthew Amador

I'm glad you brought up the three bears, by the way, because I feel like this whole thing is gonna be about who's Goldilocks? You know, I think it's kind of the same, if it's with a new relationship, or one you've had for a little while. One sign might be if that expectation hasn't been met time and time again. This is not to say you should not have that expectation. But maybe the way you're looking at it is a little bit askew. Like, let's say one thing you really, really are looking for is, why can't they complete me? for instance. That could be a really lofty expectation for some people. But if you look at it a little differently, what are you actually going after when you're saying "why can't they complete me?" Are you looking for security? Are you looking for comfort? Are you looking for safety? And instead of thinking hey, why can't they complete me? Think, oh, are they giving me comfort? Are they giving me safety?

Karen Yates

Mmm. Yeah.

Tazima Parris

And I like to have people actually articulate: what is it that you're looking for? What do you want? Similar to what you're saying, like, what are those things that are the key pieces? And sometimes we get kind of excited, because the person's really hot. And

like, we'll erode our standards in order to spend time with this person. Been there, done that. It sucks!

Karen Yates

I don't know what you're talking about! [laughter]

Tazima Parris

So you've got to take a look at: what is it that I'm looking for? Is it more important that the person is hot? Or is it more important that I'm getting my needs met? And having those needs be identified, and be clearly articulated? Like, I really need for the person to text me back the day after we have sex, or else I'm going to freak out and get like, really neurotic. If you know that's you, that is a need for you, and you can actually articulate — you can literally ask for that. And you might get it! So I don't think that there's necessarily a "too high." But being unarticulated, as you were saying, or noticing where you are eroding your standards, because there's something that you like in the situation, and you're willing to erode your standards in order to have that.

Karen Yates

You have to be pretty aware, though.

Tazima Parris

Exactly. It takes some consciousness, for sure.

Karen Yates

Yeah, it takes consciousness, and maybe a period of time where you're like, "Wow..."

Tazima Parris

Indeed, self reflection. Check it out. How do you feel when you're on a date? How do you feel when you're not on the date?

Karen Yates

Yeah. Do you have anything to say, Peter?

Peter Navarro

I do. You know, I think we've lost the art of — you two are kind of speaking to it — communication. Just, you know, a lot of the clients that I see, they ask, "What am I doing wrong? What am I not doing? What can I do better?" And typically, what I'm finding is asking, "Well, did you ask?" That tends to be something that people aren't doing. They're not asking the questions. Whether or not they're not feeling as though

they're confident enough to ask the question, or they're embarrassed, or their shame, or their guilt surrounding — you know, we don't know the history of the person that's in front of us. And we're in a society right now that's very product-oriented. So we have this expectation to create outcomes that we see fit. So, I want this to happen, I'm going to make it happen. If it doesn't happen, then what's happening around me is wrong. And if we can shift that paradigm, we can start to get into a dialogue about what we can do.

Karen Yates

Yeah, there's something also that I think sort of comes off of texting culture. Taking that statement on the phone as fact, as like, 100%. I don't know — you can just project so much onto a text conversation, and not go beyond it. Like, this person wouldn't be willing to talk about these things. I don't know. I sometimes get into that headspace, I think.

Tazima Parris

Either that, or talking to friends. Like hours and hours and hours of discussion of what happened, and analyzing, and not word one has happened with partner.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Yeah. [audience chatter]

Tazima Parris

Might want to bring that up!

Karen Yates

Yeah.

Matthew Amador

I was gonna say, it's one of the great things of literature is that you can interpret these words in different ways. And it's one of the terrible things about texts.

Peter Navarro

Yeah, there's just too much room, there's too much too much room to create your whole story.

Matthew Amador

If you get a text from me, please do not count it as great literature!

Karen Yates

So let's talk about people who always swipe left on dating apps. What's up with that? Like, wading in. Like, just always, it's a left swipe, it's a left swipe, I'm going to — and in case people aren't on dating apps, you know, the swipe left is not engaging. Like, no, this person isn't good enough, nope, not my thing. Nope, nope, nope. What do we have to say about people that are always swiping left? Is there a point when you have to swipe right? Or, just, let's discuss.

Tazima Parris

No, you don't ever have to swipe right. But you might be complaining about it. Either way, you can either swipe left and be happy, or you can swipe left and be cranky. Like, you pick. But one thing that I always tell my clients who are dating is, hey, dates equal data. Like, you're gonna go on a date, the person is going to be late or on time, they're going to do a thing you like, or you don't like. This is data. It doesn't mean — it's not a tryout. Like, it's not an audition for partnership. If you look at it as data, you can actually gather a bunch of information. So if you're always swiping left, you're missing out on an opportunity to gather data. I'm pretty scientific about this. And I'm about, hey, here's how you can get some experience. And then if you find out, oh, this kind of person doesn't work for me, or this kind of experience doesn't work for me, then you can try again.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Yeah.

Matthew Amador

I love that concept of getting data. Like, it's really just experiential data, like you're really getting this evidence presented before you. Because one of the things that we can fall into traps with on apps is that people get relegated to just data points. Like people are an age, they are a race, they are a sexual position. They are a weight. And it really takes away from the fact that these are human beings. We're trying to have a connection with a human being. And one thing that while, yes, you never have to swipe right if you do not want to, keep in mind that they're human beings, and have some empathy towards the people who you might be swiping left. Like yeah, okay, maybe if I just scan through this, scanning through it, it's not passing my test. I know that I have — for photos, for instance, I have like, one angle where it might look like Adrian Brody. I have about 30 angles where I look like Shrek, and I have like four that look like k.d. lang. [audience laughter] And I know I'm going to use those five good angles till they run out! Even though I may not look like that when I show up. But so, as an example, to please have compassion for yourself, like you know what? Cool. If it's not the best

angle, that's fine. Remember that other person who's there that you might swipe left on, it might not be their best angle either. Give them compassion if you choose to.

Peter Navarro

I think too, before swiping left — and this might seem a little silly — but when you're looking at someone's photo, really look into their eyes in the photo. I think we're so quick to snap our judgments. We just come to do this thing, and we're on this autopilot. We don't take that moment to just breathe into the person that we're witnessing, that they took the chance to post this photo for you to see them. So see them. Allow yourself to see them.

Karen Yates

Yeah.

Tazima Parris

I think what you're speaking to is that it's vulnerable, to put yourself out there. It's vulnerable to say yes, it's vulnerable to say no. It's extremely vulnerable for us to allow ourselves to be known, or at least try to allow ourselves to be known. So that compassion that you have for yourself, make sure you recognize how tough this is. It's not easy shit. It's challenging. And so, be soft and gentle with yourself as you're trying things, as things are not working, as they're crashing and burning, as you're succeeding. Whatever is the result.

Matthew Amador

Trial and error.

Tazima Parris

Yeah, trial and error, check it out.

Karen Yates

Right. So there's a study that shows that lower expectations actually lead to more unhappy relationships, rather than the common wisdom of accepting what you have. And that higher standards lead to happier relationships. When are higher standards just right? What are the signs that you could notch up your standards?

Peter Navarro

If you are someone who likes to please the other person, if you're a people pleaser, that's definitely a sign where you can up your own internal game, that you are worth time, you are worth space, you can take up space. And that's okay.

Tazima Parris

If you're spending — similar to the people pleaser — but if you're spending time making sure that other people are happy, or pleased, like you're working hard and you want your sex game, for example, to be the best ever, you want to make sure they're coming. Take the time, even before you go on the date, or before you're with your partner, whether you're long-term or new, please yourself. Have that high priority. That takes us from a place of like, are your standards too low, to, hey, here are my standards for myself, now I can deal with someone else. The other thing I wanted to say is that in our society, there's like a gender difference between expectations on relationships. Girl children are sold the fairy tale of the knight in shining armor is going to come rescue me. And boy children are, generally speaking, told that you're going to end up with a ball and chain. So if you end up with kind of an okay relationship, the people who are looking for the hero are going to be disappointed. And the person that's looking for the ball and chain, or the terrible situation, if it's okay, they'll end up being like, oh, this is not as bad as I thought. And so, you end up with the people in the same relationship having a totally different experience of the relationship. I see this a lot in my practice. And it's evening out the standard, and actually having the conversation about what is it that you desire? What does your partner desire? What do your partners desire? And how can you come to a place where we can have some win-win, and a little bit of everyone's stuff gets handled?

Karen Yates

So the final question I want to ask is — and I think this is tricky — when do you know that things are actually okay with a relationship? [silence] No, I'm serious. A new relationship. You know when you're like, Is this okay? Is this going okay? What are the signs you're dealing with an emotionally intelligent person?

Matthew Amador

Well in my 20s, I would have known, because I would have run far, far away from that relationship. [laughter] Today, though, I would say, the way you can tell that you're with someone who's emotionally intelligent — if it goes away from the sense, like, kind of going to what you were saying about how, you know, if we kind of come to the middle then, okay, it's not that bad. The sense of compromise. Yes, there is going to be compromise when you're with any group of people. But that's what you're shooting for. That's what you're aiming for. No, no, no! If you find that you're with someone where there's actually collaboration, there's something new — it's not "if you do this, then maybe we can do this also." You know what, it's the brainchild that gave us like, Mexican pizza. Like we get a taco and we get a pizza at the same time. Amazing!

Atheists are wrong. There is clearly a God, and he made taco pizza... [laughter] But no, in the sense that you can actually collaborate with your partner. So you can make something new. And it can be something like, okay, a child, a collateral thing like that. But it can also be like... [laughter] That little thing... Kids are beautiful, I love them. But it can also be something like, okay, it's not "If you spank me, then we'll get a three-way." It can be "Let's get someone else here, and we'll both paddle you." COLLABORATION.

Karen Yates

Collaboration! [laughter]

Peter Navarro

Just to piggyback off the collaboration—

Matthew Amador

Piggyback off that, sure.

Peter Navarro

Sometimes we have to give permission. Sometimes people need to be given permission, they need that to say, like, this is what I want to do, this is what I need, this is what I'm interested in doing. And if we're on the other side, and we say, go ahead and just tell me. That's an invitation, and to provide those is healing.

Karen Yates

Great.

Tazima Parris

And that this person actually wants to be there present with you. Like, even in the ugly stuff, even when you do the ugly cry, are they pointing and laughing at you? Or are they like, oh, okay, this is welcome here. So that level of emotional intelligence, it may be at the intense emotional times, but it's also at the kind of mundane — like, oh, we're just chopping onions, or somebody is cleaning the bathroom. There's this space of, are we working toward the same thing? Are we going in the same direction? As I'm grinding and hustling and doing my thing, to do my work, are you there with me? Are you moving in the same direction? Are you thwarting me? Or are you supporting me? And are we moving in the same direction together? Are we facilitating growth? Are we facilitating work? Are we facilitating each other's lives?

Karen Yates

Great.

Matthew Amador

Yeah, if you have an anchor partner, are they supporting you? Are they holding you down? Are they weighing you down? If you can't handle me at my Shrek, you don't deserve me at my k.d. lang. [laughter]

Karen Yates

We gotta talk more over a taco pizza. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Woo!

[to podcast audience] For more information on Tazima, Matthew and Peter, go to our show notes. Wild & Sublime is also sponsored in part by our Sublime Supporter, Chicago-based Full Color Life Therapy, therapy for all of you, at fullcolorlifetherapy.com. If you would like to be a Sublime Supporter, showcasing you and your business and supporting us at the same time, contact us at info@wildandsublime.com. And now it's time for my Sermon on the Pubic Mound.

There's a saying: "An expectation is a resentment waiting to happen." What does that mean, exactly? It means that in having an expectation of someone to behave in a particular way, you are certain to get pissed off if they don't behave in the manner you want them to. In the context of relationships, it could mean you are expecting someone to give you what you need. This is understandable. Culture tells us it is the job, the duty of a romantic partner to make us feel better, give us joy, lick our wounds. And I'm not talking about the very real benefit of connection with others, or the importance of community to enliven our lives and support us. No, I'm simply talking about the belief that someone else is going to come in and be the puzzle piece that makes us whole. That's one belief of many that can trip us up when we are in relationships. The problem with this idea is that it takes all the agency from us, and automatically puts us into a victimhood mindset. Most resentments erupt when we start thinking we don't have any choices. If you're expecting someone else to do all the work, even down to choosing the restaurant, then you're in a pretty passive position. Being able to learn how to communicate, even though it can feel vulnerable, puts you in a powerful place, where you're able to locate your center, instead of always looking to the other person. And returning to the idea of expectations, especially sexually, even frontloading a few of your desires or intentions before getting into bed with someone can be really freeing, and give you a sense of agency. It breaks some of the walls of expectation, and lets the other person in. And then you get to have less chatter in your brain as the encounter unfolds, and be more free to enjoy yourself. And isn't that the name of the game?

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