

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Michael: Hey everyone, and welcome to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Thanks so much for joining us today, and of course, welcome as always, to my co-host, Arpita. How are you?

Arpita: I am swell, Dr. Hersh. How are you doing today?

Michael: I'm doing great.

Arpita: I say that every time. Do you realize that?

Michael: I'm, I'm good with it. I'm good with it. So I thought maybe you could help me with a problem that I have. I commute to work every single day and I am constantly frustrated by the other drivers on the road. I like to get places, you know, I don't wanna spend any more time in my car than I absolutely have to, and I always find that there is somebody driving slow in the left lane, people are constantly kind of just cutting in front of me without their signal, and I just feel like all of these people should know how to drive better. In in Chicago, we actually have these electronic signs that tell people how to drive better, and yet they still don't drive better. And so I thought maybe we could take this podcast episode, you could coach me around how I can, you know, be better about not getting so frustrated when I drive to and from work every day.

Arpita: So how you can no longer be a closet road rager? Is what you're saying?

Michael: If there's anything closet about that, just ask anybody that's ever driven in the car with me.

Arpita: Yeah. I mean I will say it sounds like you have a lot of expectations of other people in your life, or not necessarily directly in your life, but around you in the world.

Michael: That's probably a fair statement in, in both, in both ways. How about you, do you find that expectations of other people kind of get in the way of things for you?

Arpita: Oh my gosh. I mean, it's funny that you say that cuz the first thing that comes to my mind is like celebrating birthdays, right? I can think back to like in seventh grade where all these little teeny bopper girls would go around and when it was somebody's birthday, they would come to school with this bouquet of stuffed animals and flowers and balloons and the person would walk around all her classes all day long and just feel all the love, right? That was the way of feeling love. And I had these expectations that other people better do that for me too. And so when that didn't happen or it was like didn't look the same, I was kind of disappointed and quite frankly ticked off. Right? And I think it still extends to even now, right? When I have wanting to do plans with girlfriends, wanting to go on girls trips or wanting to celebrate birthdays and having these expectations that they should remember the birthday, they should text, they should call, they should do whatever. I would make it an attack on me if they didn't do that or behave in the way that I was expecting. So totally feel this pain of these expectations, these manuals per se, that we have for other people, that they should behave in a certain way. These are these rule books that we've created for them.

Michael: Yeah, so you just used a term that maybe a lot of people aren't familiar with. So what's a manual?

Arpita: So a manual is essentially a rule book that we have for other people. These expectations that are sometimes said, sometimes not said for how we want other people to behave in order to honestly stay in

control of certain situations. To have these situations happen in a way that we want them to so that we can ultimately feel good. Right? And that's essentially what a manual is. Do you have anything to, I guess add to that? What would you say is a manual?

Michael: Yeah, I think it's when we tie our emotional happiness to how somebody else does things right? So a any time that, you know, you think I will feel a certain way if you... that is a manual. And I think it's important to just lay out from the beginning that having a manual is not good or bad, but I think recognizing that you have a manual is incredibly important, right? So I know I have a manual for other drivers on the road, and what I do with that manual will control whether I get to work frustrated and annoyed, or if I just get to work and feel calm and ready to start the day. So I think just being aware that it exists is very important.

Arpita: Yeah, it's funny that you said that cause this just came to my mind. Cause I was thinking as you were talking, oh my gosh, that seventh grade birthday incident is why I was still ticked off in my forties when people wouldn't remember my birthday. Right? So it's almost like, it's like a little microtrauma from there that I've carried forward. So can you think of like an episode in your childhood where you just didn't get to where you needed to get to because somebody was prohibiting you on the road? Like, is there anything that comes to your mind? Cause I just was like, oh wow, that's what happened to me. That's what I realized.

Michael: I wish it was as high level as that. I just, I, I blame it on my New York impatient upbringing, which I blame a lot of things on actually.

Arpita: Well, I would say, you know, when we think about it, I think these manuals that we have are really kind of sneaky. Sometimes we don't even realize that we have them, right? So anytime we're saying they should have done this, or he should have behaved this way, or why didn't they act like this? That's kind of a manual, right? When we say, who does that? Like when we're irritated, who does that? Who cut me off? Like, I mean, seriously, who does that? That's a manual, right? Or when we say, I'm not judging. I mean, she's like not really showing up the way I would expect, but you know, I'm not judging her. You kind of are judging her. Sometimes we don't pick up on these manuals that are there because they've kind of become so ingrained and underlying in our thought patterns. And also when we expect people to like read our minds, right? And this happens honestly, I think with people that we're the closest to in our life because the expectation is they should know us. So they should be able to read our minds. They should know exactly what I'm thinking. And these are all essentially manuals that we have for people.

Michael: Yeah, and so we were talking about whether or not manuals are good or bad, but let's talk about what the problems with having a manual can be. And that is when you have these expectations of other people, you are essentially welcoming into the relationship suffering, a lot of times there's some manipulation that can go on because you are trying to get the person to react in a way that they wouldn't naturally respond. There could be some controlling aspects and all of that and at the end of the day, it ends up putting distance between you and the other person because they're not showing up the way that you want them to. And so in trying to manipulate and control them, you're actually moving yourself further away in that relationship.

Arpita: Right, because we think that these rules, or these expectations, or these tendencies to wanna control, seem very logical, seem very reasonable to us, because that's what we are wanting. But ultimately, we are the only ones who can meet our own needs, right? And so when we know what our needs are, we can meet them and satisfy them for ourselves. However, when we're expecting other people to do that, that's when we're

essentially giving away our power. We're expecting them to behave a certain way in order for us to feel happy or content or at peace, and that just very rarely, if ever, actually happens, right? We know we cannot control what other people think, say or do, how they behave. And so we have to start to learn to satisfy that for ourselves, satisfy what we want for ourselves, ourselves, and anything else that they do or don't do that is positive for us is just gravy. And that requires a little bit of a reset for how we want to think about things.

Michael: Yeah. How do you suggest people go about this? Like what recommendations do you have for, cuz we all have manuals, right? I mean, this is not a, do you have them? We all do. So what do you recommend to people to help them overcome or work through this?

Arpita: So I think it depends on who we're talking about here, right? So if we're talking about like our employees, obviously that's different because we have certain expectations that have been outlined for them, hopefully, that they're having to perform a certain way. So that's not what we're talking about. Same thing with children. We're not expecting this of our kids because there are rules that you've set in the house, there are expectations that are verbalized and communicated. So this is really applying to other people in our life, our spouses, our friends, our colleagues, just people in our environment, the person driving on the road next to you, et cetera, et cetera. Right? So I would say we need to start with really kind of maybe building the awareness around where do we have these manuals? And sometimes that starts with where am I unhappy? Like, where am I getting activated or or set off to be irritated, pissed off you know, disappointed. Where am I having these emotions come up for me? And then why? What are my expectations in that situation that are they actually manuals for other people? Are they realistic? And have I even communicated them in the first place? So I think I would start with that as the first step of figuring out where are my actual manuals.

Michael: Yeah and then I think kind of the next piece here is, you know, one thing that we talk about in coaching is this concept of unconditional love, right? Allowing people to be who they are. And you know, we have all of these expectations of people. They should be on time, they should be kind, they should always tell the truth. And at the end of the day, they don't. Right? So people don't do all of those things and you get to choose to love them anyway. And that at its core is what unconditional love is.

Arpita: Yeah, I think this comes up the most with relationships, romantic relationship, partners, you know, whatever the relationship looks like. And it's this expectation that A. They've known me so well, we've been together for so long, why can't they figure this out? You know, a lot of the lack of completing tasks or chores being a personal attack on me. I think the first thing I really try to drive home with clients and friends and everybody with teaching this whenever people are just kind of complaining about their partners, is how can you shift your mindset so that you are just thinking of your spouse or partner as a puppy and loving them unconditionally. And it sounds so crazy, but if you think about it, when we have dogs and these little fur balls, all we do is love them. They can shit on our floor, and we clean it up and we still love them, right? And so it might be a little frustrating in the minute, but it doesn't last very long. So why can't we do that with our partners? Right? So it's having this unconditional love. So even if you have to just intentionally shift your mindset to say, my partner is here for me to love unconditionally just like a puppy. And it sounds silly, but it works, right? How can I love him just like a puppy? How can I love her just like a puppy? Because ultimately I am the one that gets to feel that sensation of love. I am the one that gets to feel good. If I am frustrated because they didn't take the trash out today, I am making that an attack on myself, ie; they don't care about me. They're too busy doing whatever they wanna do. I am the only one that's feeling that frustration and anger. I'm the only one that's suffering from that. So you get to pick with intention how you wanna show up, can you consider a

different perspective? And that situation, oh, he didn't take out the trash, but you know what? He didn't get home till nine o'clock last night. He had a really long day at work. It makes sense why. How can we pick on a different perspective that makes us feel better? Because ultimately we are the ones that get to feel the emotion that we're creating.

Michael: Yeah. And I think the perspective here is so key because do you really want taking out the trash to create a distance in the relationship with your spouse? Right? So you get to decide. This is what we were started talking about at the beginning, is how vital trash day is within the grand scheme of your marriage. And do you want it to be the thing that allows you to have, you know, a great day with your spouse or, you know, ruin the next couple of days as you see that each other for the things you do and don't do for each other?

Arpita: Yeah, and a lot of times it's just having that awareness. Oh yeah, right, I can choose to be pissed off and ruin the entire weekend, and we've all done this right, where we're at odds. And then you feel like, I just wasted this one weekend. We finally had a peaceful weekend and we got pissed off at each other about something silly, and now we're angry all weekend. Or I can say, you know what? I'm upset. I can choose to feel love. I can choose to be vulnerable and say I'm sorry, and then move on so that I can actually enjoy the time right? When we have these expectations of others, and we hang our emotions on the outcome of what they do, that's when we set ourselves up for failure. So the key is if you want to have expectations, maybe verbalizing them. So we have something called a want match where, hey, this is what I need to do. This is what do you need to do this weekend? This is what I need to do, for example, this weekend. How can we make it happen for both of us? When you create that want match, you're having the ability or creating the ability for it to be more peaceful and in, you know, agreement so that you're creating what you want. But when we don't have that open communication with those expectations in advance, the likelihood for failure is higher, and that's what causes the issue in the beginning.

Michael: Yeah, and what I wanna highlight from what you were just saying is that, it's okay to have expectations, right? This is not to say that you can't expect things from your partner, from your friends. It just means that you don't hang your happiness on whether or not they do that thing. And so you get to show up in that expectation as calm, cool, and collected to say, Hey, you know, I really wish you had texted me on my birthday. Like I really wanted to talk to you and catch up with you. It's been a minute, but not make it mean something about the relationship itself. Not make it mean something about the other person. Allowing people to understand that you had the expectation and that you wished they had shown up in a different way. And allowing the relationship to continue on if you choose to. Right? And it gets a little bit into the boundaries work that we've talked about before. I know we had that episode with Dr. Sasha Shilcutt. I think that was episode five. We can highlight that in the show notes where we talked a lot about boundaries and there is a, a pretty big interplay between manuals and boundaries.

Arpita: There sure is. And I think that's funny that you said that. For example, this this year is a big one for me. I'm turning the big five- oh, right? And I had decided in my mind that I don't wanna have a birthday party. I don't wanna do the traditional thing because quite frankly, when I have a birthday party with the hundreds of people, we don't get to talk intermingle and really connect the way I want to. So I chose to do a girls weekend or a girls trip away. The whole point of this is, is that was my boundary, that this is what I want to do and whoever can come is great. They can come and the people that can't come in the beginning I was a little bit upset and then I realized, you know what? This is my manual that I'm expecting people to come. And I was like, you know what? I'm gonna step back. I can't expect this I can or, and be upset about it, or I can realize

that everybody's got their own thing going on. And this is not an attack on me. This isn't a reflection on how they feel about me. This is, everybody has their own life and that's okay. So as you mentioned, like, I really wish you had called me for my birthday. Another way could be, you know what I love that my birthday is coming up and I recognize that you're not gonna be able to do this. Why don't we go out to dinner instead? Why don't we do something else instead? You get to decide how you wanna show up for that situation. And, and that's kind of key where you're growing essentially with your relationships with people.

Michael: Yeah. Because at the end of the day, if you choose to hang on to that strict manual, you, you were alluding to this earlier, people with very strict manuals tend to be very unhappy. Because other people don't do what we want them to. Right? Like not everybody has, you know, they have their own manuals that they are working within, and so learning how to be okay with other people being who they are, yeah, really it, it sets you free.

Arpita: It sets you free. And I think one of the biggest little takeaways, the one-liners that I have in my brain when things happen is, of course, this person did this, right? This is exactly how they, I would've expected them to behave because that drops the negative emotion, the rage, the resentment, whatever that's coming with the other thought of like, I can't believe they did this. Right? Of course they did this and I love them for who they are. This used to come up a lot with me. I don't know if you wanna speak about it from Father's Day perspective or with regards to your wife, but for Mother's Day, when the kids were little, when I was a new mom, I had these expectations for how Mother's Day should look. Right? I recognize that I am expecting these little minions and my husband to like read my mind for what's gonna make my mother's day amazing. And it took me time to recognize that I can create it for myself. You know, I want to go out for breakfast or brunch cuz I don't wanna cook. I can you know, set up a spa appointment or a nail appointment for myself because I want to, we can do what we want for ourselves to make that day, whatever occasion it is, super special for us, and whatever anybody else does is the gravy on top. That's an extra bonus. And so when we can shift our mind to start thinking about it that way, rather than they should have done this for me, it really puts us in a place of power and we get a lot more reward out of it, personally, I think.

Michael: Yeah, I think this is where communication becomes so important. As a rookie dad you know, when we were first beginning to celebrate Mother's Day in my home, I kind of thought that what you just outlined as Mother's Day, was what my wife wanted. She wanted to have like a day with the family where we spend all day together and do everything together. And my wife was like, that is my every day. I want a day away from everybody. I want a day for me. And I never would've known that because in my mind I had this, the kind of the same idea that you have about Mother's Day and what she was picturing she wanted, and that wasn't what she wanted at all. And so she had this kind of manual about what her Mother's Day should look like, and I had no idea. And so this gets at the very core of every relationship and at the core of boundaries as well, is that it starts with effective communication, it starts by talking with one another and allowing people to be who they are. And then, you know, again, not making it mean something about me that my wife would rather spend Mother's Day, you know, getting a massage than going out to brunch with us, right? And now, you know, years, later my daughter's nine, and so we've kind of figured this out over time. We get to do a little bit of both. And it's great, but it took time. And I guess the point here is, is that sometimes these things don't go away overnight. My desire to, you know, drive past the person driving slow in the left lane. And that doesn't go away overnight, but it gets a little bit better as we start to recognize those expectations.

Arpita: Yeah. I mean, and it shifts, like you said, like when she was little it looked one way, and now that she's nine, it might look a little different. So these phases of, Hey, this is how I used to love to celebrate and I wanna do it this way, and I'm gonna create that for myself. It's okay. You reminded me of a story when you were talking about your wife. I remember when my husband and I, he was in was in fellowship and so I was home with newborn Sarina by myself and it was chaos. We were in this little mini apartment, probably the size of like my office right now for the entire family and a dog. And it was chaos and I, he was gone 15 hours a day and I remember him coming home and one weekend us getting in an argument cuz I'm like, I can't even make an appointment for myself to get my hair cut. And he was like, why not? And that's when I realized I was waiting for him to offer to take care of the child, to allow me to go get a haircut. And I was like, I'm creating all this mind drama and chaos for myself around this. I need to say I'm going to do this, what works for you so that you can watch the baby while I go? Right? So we sometimes don't even recognize that we're doing it. It's the point that we have these manuals, these expectations. My expectation was he needs to say, Hey sweetie, you need to get a haircut, when can I watch the baby for you? I'm like, that's never gonna happen. Right? We have to pick up on that. Sometimes our brains are so crappy like that.

And I think the other thing is that in that scenario, I was making his lack of asking me when I wanted to get a haircut be an attack on me, right? That this guy doesn't care about me. So be very mindful of what you're making their behaviors or lack of behaving the way you want them to mean. Because a lot of times we make that mean that they don't care about us. They're not thinking about us, or whatever it is. And that's not really true. They're just living in their own world, doing their own things. And 99% of the time people are not even thinking about us in a good way or a bad way. Everybody's doing their own thing. It just is so freeing and relaxing when we can kind let that go.

Michael: I feel like one of the other things, and I think this was a little mind blowing for me when I was learning about manuals, is how the, the, is the person that we have the biggest manual for. And for audience members who think that this is scripted Arpita and I, we, this is not scripted. And so I wanna ask Arpita and I ask clients this during coaching sessions frequently, who is the person that you have the biggest manual for?

Arpita: Of course, it's always ourselves, right?

Michael: Yeah.

Arpita: It's always ourselves that I should have done this. I didn't show up well here. I could have done better here or beating ourselves up later after the fact. So that's, I think for me, one of the biggest ones. They're two top for me, but that's one of the biggest ones. How about you?

Michael: Yeah that was actually the, for me, a hundred percent the manual I have for myself is volumes. It's like Encyclopedia Britannica, is what my man owner's manual looks like for myself. And you know, I, again, coming back to awareness, I think for people that have big manuals for other people, it starts because we have such large manuals for ourselves and the expectations that we have of ourselves. You know, we've talked a lot about perfectionism and fear of failure and all of this does come back to the idea of a manual. And when you can start to take a closer look at what your manual is for yourself, it actually helps to improve your relationships with other people because as you unravel your own manual, you're helping to release other people from the expectations you have for them as well.

Arpita: Yeah, and I think there, again, we've kind of touched on this, there's different categories like of people, like when we are talking about our partners or our spouses, right? There's so many different ways to approach it. Like, so for example, you know, one thing I work with my clients on a lot when they're having the strife with their husbands or their partners is acknowledging what manuals they have and helping them see that that's actually a manual for them. And then actually sharing it out loud with each other. Like I will have clients go to their partner and say, okay, this weekend this is what I want to do. Tell me what you want to do. Right? Because I was expecting for this to happen. We don't communicate that, again especially when we've been in these relationships for so long, we just expect the other person to know. So if we can take 30 minutes in advance and plan, what do you need to do? This is what I wanna do. How do we make this both happen? That kind of clears up a lot of the strife and the struggle, right?

And then another piece of that is just like really being willing to let go of some things. Like what can you just not worry about and not have the other person need to do? Are there things on your list that is not really a big deal if in the grand scheme of things, if you think about it, right? While doing this, you also wanna set your boundaries for what is really gonna not be okay if they violate. Like with regards to an expectation you have. So I am not going to stay with my husband if he decides to go on dates with other women. That's pretty clear, right? So what boundaries do you have in place and verbalizing them, making sure it's pretty crystal clear that this is something I cannot live with. This is something I cannot tolerate. And then, I think again, just making those healthy agreements and planning in advance for things that you want to clearly maintain with your spouse. Hey, you know what? I love doing dinner on Friday nights, but I realize that we are scrambling on Friday nights trying to find a reservation in town because everything's booked up. Why don't we spend 30 minutes at the beginning of the month booking out our dinners for the next four Friday nights? So we just have to just show up. It makes life so much easier, but that takes intentionality with planning in advance. So, we both want to go to dinner Friday night, but we also don't wanna be pissed off and screaming at each other on the way, trying to figure out where we're gonna go. So how do we mitigate that problem completely from our life? So those are just some tips that I give with regards to manuals with our partners. So,

Michael: And this translates to the boundaries that we have for ourselves also, right? If you have big goals, if you have big dreams, if there are things that you wanna accomplish, you know, you can set a boundary up for yourself that I am going to try new things. I'm going to do the things that I need to do to get myself to my goal. And the boundary is, I'm not gonna beat myself up if something doesn't work out. I'm gonna learn from that and then keep moving forward. Because if you have this expectation that you're just gonna do everything correctly the first time and never fail, it's gonna keep you from moving forward and achieving your goals. And so recognizing that you have that manual for yourself and how it is holding you back I think is so important in this work.

Arpita: Yeah. I think the other area that I like to talk about is like we mentioned, separating your kids and the employees for these manuals, because that's different, right? For both the reasons we've discussed. But I think the hardest part when we're interacting with kids and employees is not bringing the emotion into it, right? So if you've been clear with the expectations of this is what the job description is, these are your tasks and deadlines for employees, or these are the chores that you have to get completed in order to go out with your friends this weekend, buddy you're gonna have to get this done if you've clearly expressed that and they don't do it, it doesn't happen, this is where, hey, help me understand why this didn't happen today. Because our understanding what we discussed was that this was going to happen. So what do I need to do to support you? That's more for the employees, but the kids, I'm sorry buddy. I'm sorry that didn't happened, and I guess we're

gonna end up spending Saturday night doing this instead. Right? So there's different ways to approach it. The hard part here is leaving the emotion out of it. Right? How do you respond to the content, not the tone with the kids? How do you respond to the employees in a way that's fact-based and, and that's hard. I'm not gonna lie about it. It's very hard. And it's not necessarily because the employees are making it, I'm that, I'm making it a personal attack. But we're looking at the big picture here. How is this gonna impact the business for me? And I'm talking obviously about employees with businesses. This is what happens. And so how do we notice if we have shown up in a way that might be more emotionally driven than we wanted to, and then go back and kind of correct our actions there. That's also part of being vulnerable and growing for our own sake.

And I think it's important to notice that when we do make this shift and we show up in a way that's more calm, more at peace, how much more impactfully it does land. Right? And again, I'm not saying that we're perfect and that it's easy to do, but when we are able to do it, the impact it has is so much more greater. We think that when we show up with the emotion, that it makes us feel like we're in power, that we are having more of an impact. But that's not really always the case and necessarily true.

Also just one little piece that I wanna touch upon is the manuals that people have for us, right? Because a lot of times as physicians, we feel like we have to meet other people's expectations to be able to be perceived in a positive manner. And so, how we choose to respond to other people's manuals for us is really a hundred percent up to us. We are in control there, and we have to remember that no matter what we do, we're never gonna be able to control how they're thinking about us with the actions that we're taking. So we are the neutral circumstances in their life no matter what we do. So we can try, we can do what we want, but we need to ultimately remember to do it for our own sake. What feels right for us, and whatever happens with regards to what they do or what they think about us is really out of our control. Now that doesn't mean that I'm not gonna show up for work, right? Or that I'm gonna do a crappy job. But if you know you're truly showing up in your best way for whatever situation or whatever's been asked of you, whatever's required of you or expected of you, that's all you can do. And that's okay. So I think that's a big piece of it too, cuz a lot of times we spend so much time trying to people please, meet other people's expectations, fill the manual according to what they have set for us.

So yeah, I guess other tips? I would just say with my kids, the biggest one that I took away was responding to the content and not the tone. That was from Bev Aron, I heard her say that in one of her sessions, and that really resonated with me because it's hard to not get emotional with our kids. Again, we're making it a personal attack. Right? And so that is a big one. And just being curious about who they are and what they're thinking, and being able to be curious with them with love, because they are just trying to do their best and leaning in on that. When it comes to like employees and other people, one of the things that I've really adopted is how are they 10% right in what they're saying? Right? That's made a big shift. Also, just truly wanting to believe that people are truly trying to do their best and yeah, occasionally there are some times that you're gonna have a bad seed that they aren't doing their best or maybe their best just isn't meeting the standards that you need. And you have to make decisions around that and that's okay. But you are showing up knowing that you are doing your best for what you're wanting in that relationship. And just staying outta other people's minds when it comes to the manuals for other people having on us, just staying outta their minds, cuz we're never gonna be able to control that. So

Michael: That's great. Respond to the content, not the tone. I love that because that can show up in so many different aspects of our day. It can show up at home with our spouses, it can show up in the office with patients

or with managers. So just wanted to highlight that cuz that's, I think a super important way of thinking about this and expectations.

Arpita: Yes. Awesome. Well thanks. I love talking about this and I think you mentioned it, this ties in hand in hand with the boundaries. So definitely go back to listen to episode five, I think, with Dr. Sasha Shilcutt because she has an excellent summary of that and that ties right in with this. So,

Michael: Excellent. Well, thanks so much for this discussion. Really appreciate it. And thanks to our listeners and we will see everybody next time on Doctor's Living Deliberately. Take Care.

Arpita: See you later.