

# Loving on Purpose Podcast

## with Bonnie Lyman

### Episode 74 Autonomy: What Your Adult Child Craves

Welcome to the podcast. Loving on purpose. I'm your host, Bonnie Lyman. If you're having trouble navigating through your relationships with your adult Children, if you are struggling to connect with them or having specific challenges, you're in the right place. I'm Bonnie Lyman. And you're listening to episode number 74. Autonomy. What your adult Children crave?

Welcome back, everyone. I hope you're doing fantastically. I have been going through a lot of my closets, a lot of cupboards and just trying to get rid of stuff that I haven't used in a year. I have a really good place where I take clothes to a consignment store and they give me either credit or money right away. Sometimes I take the money most time I take the credit because then I feel like I can go shopping for free. But I remember somebody saying that one of the worst things that your Children have to go through after you die. I don't anticipate dying anytime soon, but they don't want your stuff. So let's just make it easy on them and get rid of it. I read somebody, there was a stat that this one daughter, her mother had passed away and she felt terrible. She gave 99% of her mother's stuff, she gave it away or gave it to goodwill or threw it out. Kids just don't have the sentimentality that they used to. I've had friends say, well, don't they want one of those quilts you made? No, but that doesn't mean they don't love me. They, you know, maybe their memories are in their mind. I don't know what, what they would want. I know the only thing I have of my mom's is my, is her wedding ring. And I'm really glad I have that. But I don't know if my kids even want that. And it, I don't know, I guess it could go to a daughter. I actually got the stone of my husband's grandmother.

I think so. That was nice. But anyway, I hope you've had a good week and this is something I've kind of been studying about is, you know, what, what do our Children want from us? Why are so many of my client's Children? They're not really including them in their lives. They feel like they're not a priority. They feel like they're unimportant. And I don't know if that goes as far to say they, they feel like because of their behavior that their Children don't love them. But I, I think there's a way that we can be more accepting of their behavior, but also there's something we can do that might not for positive, not a guarantee if we acted differently toward them, they just may want to be around us more. So I'm gonna talk about three things. They're not gonna be necessarily separate, some of it's gonna be combined. But our Children crave autonomy. Let's to be able to govern themselves, to choose for themselves, what values they want to believe in what they want to do. What they wanna say. If, if they wanna get a tattoo or not, if they want to be a bus driver, rather than a physio, a chemist or you know, a doctor, even though they've gone to four years of college, they want to decide for themselves what they want to do. The other thing is our kids don't like to be told what to do, but I don't think anybody likes to be told what to do. And then the third thing is they want us to respect their agency.

So I'm gonna start out by talking about agency and just what agency is in my church, in my religion, the faith I belong to is the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints. We talk quite a bit about agency and that it was a gift from our heavenly father when he sent us to earth and he gave us the ability to make our own decisions and to make our own choices. And we believe that is a God given gift to everyone. And so because of that gift. We, we don't have a right to control our Children, especially, our Children when they become adults. Now, there may be times when it is necessary that we physically pick their little bodies up and perhaps take them to a rehab center. But even that if they don't go willingly, a lot of times it's not as effective and they kind of rebel and just the idea that their agency was taken from them out of spitefulness, they go back to taking those drugs or they, it just wasn't effective at that time in their life. And so agency is an essential part of coming to earth and it, it's essential to us because it means that we create the life we want to live. We're not dependent on

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somebody else telling us what's best for us. And I'm not gonna tell you how to parent, you can guide your Children as to, you know, what you feel might be an interesting career for them depending on their, aptitudes and interests.

But it's, people don't like to be told what to do. You don't like to be told what to do. Your husband probably doesn't like to be told what to do by you and our Children, especially when they first become adults. They're breaking away from that pattern of you pretty much guiding and restricting or allowing kind of controlling their life of what, as long as they're living in your house, what you'll allow or not allow them to do. So, agency is kind of a universal law that basically said people can do whatever they want. And so that that is a gift, no one can take away our agency. And so it's important that we respect that in our Children just as we want, it respected in us agency. like I said, it was a gift given to us by the Lord and he wants us to choose what we will do and who we will be. He wants us to experience that growth and sometimes there'll be some mistakes made, but he wants us to create our own lives and because we are unique, it may, our adult Children may choose to go a path that we don't necessarily approve of, but it's still their right.

An example is when my son about a year and a half ago, bought a house that was built in 1910 and there was going to have to be a lot of updating. I mean, I really was surprised when the electrician said, no, the all the electrical work did not have to be redone and that was not because it had been redone once before. He just said it's safe, just leave it. But there was a lot of updating this crazy wallpaper pink carpet up the stairs with underneath this nice hardwood floor. But they went in and did a lot of remodeling to accommodate them. I maybe wouldn't have been willing to put that much money into an older home, knowing that perhaps there were other things eventually down the road that were going to need repair. And so I wouldn't have bought it. But even to suggest to him that this maybe wasn't the wisest choice was kind of implying that he wasn't using his agency very wisely or it, it was implying that I thought he wasn't making a good decision, but my son will learn more and he will learn how to adapt to things that come up that maybe even need more money put into keeping this house functioning than what he anticipated. But for him to learn that by himself, it has a far greater effect on lessons he learns in life than if we had implied. We didn't think it was a very good decision. But the greater benefit of our just being excited for him because he was so excited about this house, it really did help develop a better relationship between the two of us because regardless of our opinion, he was going to buy that house anyway there, it's a much more rich experience and learning experience that comes from them, figuring out, you know, whether they'd made a good decision or not, they will learn more from making mistakes than they could learn from any other way. So sometimes when they make mistakes and we kind of get out of the way of that, that's what really causes them to grow and what causes them to develop, which is really the whole point of why we're here.

Sometimes that may even mean that our kids make some serious mistakes, a serious sin. But I can remember standing in a place in her garage and it came to me that my daughter who got pregnant and she wasn't married, ended up placing these two babies for adoption that this needed to happen in order for her not to marry this young man. And she will tell you now she was as heartbroken about placing those babies for adoption, but she was also heartbroken over. She wasn't gonna marry this person, which she thought eventually she would.

And yet now she could see that that would have been just the worst mistake she had ever made in her life and would have had far greater consequences than you could ever imagine even worse than what had happened. And so I remember standing in the garage thinking this is what it took to keep her from having a well lived life that she enjoys now. So when we can let go of focusing on trying to control our children's agency, we, we

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allow ourselves, we free up a lot of space then to just focus on our own agency and what we need to do to improve our lives as parents to these, to these adult Children, how to be a greater contributor to the world. We, it frees up space to focus on learning to love my kids, my adult Children when they sin differently than I do and focus on learning to forgive them when they don't deserve to be forgiven. I know that there's a lot of you out there listening that are in a lot of pain because of your Children not allowing you to see their grand, your, your grandkids their Children. And so if we can focus on learning to forgive them because they don't know what they're doing, they don't know, realize the harm that they're causing to themselves and their Children and for you to be heartbroken but not completely broken.

So this agency is a gift and as we know, we can't control anything that, anybody else does. So one, of the things that our Children really want, they want their agency to be respected, they want to choose for themselves, how they're going to live their lives and when they feel threatened or they feel like you're trying to control them, maybe it's by giving them all the downside of a decision that they're making or we're trying to make them feel guilty that they don't call us enough or text us enough or don't include us enough. What ends up happening when we try to control them is they don't want to be around us or they don't want to talk to us. It's easier to just not be around you than to try to be understanding now. I realize they are adults and I realize you may have the thought I would never treat my parents that way, but it's a different time and a different age. I'm not trying to justify their, their behavior. I'm just trying to show you how you can have a better relationship and one of the things they feel most threatened by. And I think it's, it's a natural thing for all of us is that when somebody is trying to take our autonomy away from us or our agency away from us, that we get to govern ourselves and our actions, we get to choose what we want to do. And when we feel threatened by that, they don't like that.

And so instead of rationally trying to figure it out how they can still be kind and respectful, it's not that they want to be disrespectful. It's just, it's easier just not to be around with you, around you and not have to think about it. So nobody wants to be told what to do. My son, Ben, the one who bought the house, we were discussing family vacations and we like to have a family vacation and we decided years ago every year, it may be a different date and different time. But we're gonna set it up where we feel it's conducive to as many of the, of our five Children coming, but we're not gonna make a big deal out of it if they can't come, we're gonna set it up and whoever wants to come and can come, we're gonna just enjoy whoever does come. So we were talking to Ben and he said he feels like everybody is pulling at him. His wife and his wife's family has a couple of trips. They want them to go with them on. We have,, a vacation time that we want them to join us on.

They have friends, they want to that are pulling them and pretty soon every weekend and they both work is taken up and they just want some time to have down time and to just do some things with their own family. So they kind of felt bombarded. So, you know how it worked out. We were the family. They're not doing anything else. But I know that my son respects us and loves us for understanding on that. Is it fair? Probably not. But I'm not gonna waste one second of, hey, judging my son, which causes me not to feel good. I'm going to a void if I can, having different thoughts about him not being able to join us if I can, if it brings me peace and it helps me love him. Would I like him to join us? Of course, but it's his decision. And so I'm not gonna make it mean that he loves us less. In fact, he probably loves us more because we're so understanding our kids don't like to be told what to do and they just wanna be accepted for who they are.

The other thing we need to start doing is putting their desi desires above ours. Let's not tell them what to do. Let's not jeopardize their agency. Let's be the adult in this situation. And yeah, I can be kind of sad that they're

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not joining, joining us on our family vacation, but I'm not going to allow my thoughts to take me to a place that ruins my whole vacation. I'm just gonna enjoy everybody that came. What our Children tend to do when we become demanding or we make them feel guilty for them not answering our texts, calling us more when they feel threatened or infringed upon about it, somebody else, their parents controlling them, they run and yet even when they run, it doesn't mean anything about how much they love us. They just don't want to be around us because they feel threatened that we're trying to control them. We humans have a need to be autonomous.

We want to be self directing in our actions and we want to be morally independent. We want to enjoy the freedom to govern our own actions. That's just on our kids that goes for us also when this is threatened or being taken from us, oftentimes our Children will rebel and they just do the opposite. They, they include us less, they answer our texts and our phone calls less. It's our brain's response to a threat that our freedom is being taken away and threats can come in the form of suggesting even that they do things differently. Again, I am not trying to tell you how to be a parent to your adult Children and there are times that you need to intervene. One I can think of is say a daughter is being physically abused by her husband and she, she doesn't have the courage to leave that. Perhaps you need to go in and remove her from that situation. When we feel threatened of losing our autonomy, our, our right to govern ourselves, we feel powerless and we don't like losing our agency or our power to decide how we're going to live our life.

Let me give you an example of this. My husband one time, he's a very nice looking man. He, he always looks sharp, but when he goes to his closet, he just doesn't pick out the right shirt with the right pants. For instance, he'll pick a blue shirt and a blue pair of pants and I really like monochromatic, but these aren't even monochromatic. It's almost like they're the exact same color but not quite. Or there are two colors of blue that don't go together. So, you know, I kind of mentioned this to him and so he said, OK, this week, why don't you try you go and pick out my clothes and I'll wear what you pick out. So when he went to work. All the women that he was working with were commenting. Wow. Did you get new clothes that you just look really sharp? You just look that shirt and pants just really look nice together. But after three days, he said I can't stand it any longer. I can't stand the control that you have over me that I should be wearing this. I would rather wear mismatched clothes, which really doesn't matter than looking nice but me not making.

So when they feel when our adult Children feel that you are taking or their parents are taking the power away from them to make decisions for themselves, they can resist this by not being around you or controlling what they do have control over as in not answering their texts, not answering your phone calls and they kind of do this subconsciously, but it's a way that they reclaim they're controlled when we're told what to do. It makes us feel like a child, especially when it's coming from our parents and that they're governing our lives just as they did when we were younger and growing up in, in under their care. And so they feel like I was a child. So they respond like a child and have an adult version of a tantrum. And so they may go as far to say because it feels like they're reclaiming their control. I don't want you in my life anymore and you can't see my Children, you can't see your grandchildren. I'm not saying that's the only reason but it could cause your Children to make such a drastic decision. You are the circumstance in your child's life. If you say or do things that if you give too many opinions about their choices, they may, yeah, they may retreat, they may get out of your life and maybe they take their whole family with them.

It's the easiest way for them to get back their control and this feeling of autonomy to be able to govern ourselves, this feeling or this gift of agency that was given to all of us. It's been disrespected to be able to choose what we want to say and do when that becomes threatened. They, they do things that are not necessarily

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acting like a loving person even though they could still love you. They just want to get rid, they want to be away from the circumstance that is triggering them to have thoughts of that cause him to feel out of control when someone else tells us what to do. It implies criticism of the way they were choosing to do things. It implies that you're not capable of making good decision. They feel people feel that it robs them of their individualism and that is part of finding their identity. For instance, if your child wanted to get a tattoo and you say you're gonna regret it when you're older, there's no guarantees they're gonna regret it, first of all.

And second of all right, then they don't care, they just don't like you trying to control them. They want, they want to make their own decisions. They want to stand out as an individual in the crowd and they want to feel that they're capable of making their own decisions. When they can do that, it increases their self confidence and when they're threatened, they,, can have a very strong reaction. So, bottom line, we have our agency and we all kind of have the same feelings as these adult Children. We don't want somebody interfering with that agency. We don't want to be told what to do, we want to feel and we want to be recognized that we do make good decisions. So what's the antidote? First of all, you have two responsibilities as a parent to an adult child. It's to love your child just the way they are and tell them as often as you can. Why you think they are great and wonderful. Don't voice your opinion about them, their decisions, let them make their own mistakes, don't rob them of the growth that comes from making their own mistakes, have faith that things are going to work out exactly as they're supposed to. And in the meantime reap the benefit of the reward that only love can give you when you choose to love another person that might be difficult to love.

Love will always win you will never have regret for your decision. I hope you have a fantastic week. I hope this gave you something to think about in a different way you had never thought about. I love talking to you and like I said, I can feel you out there. And I thank you for listening to my podcast for any feedback you've ever given me, if you want to write a review that helps more people find my podcast and share it with somebody. And I'll talk to you next week if you like this, be this episode and you felt it was of benefit to you. I ask you to share it with somebody that perhaps it could also benefit.

But if you're still feeling kind of stuck in that you don't know how to apply what was talked about or where to start on, on changing your thoughts on changing your perspective on bettering your relationship. Get on a call with me and we can have a discussion and I can tell you how to apply it and where we start and then you get to decide what you want to do about this relationship that maybe you're struggling with, with your adult Children. There is no reason to go on the rest of our lives, struggling with our relationships with our adult Children. Let's assume the best. Let's assume that we all love each other and we're just trying to figure out how to maintain our own boundaries and respect another ones, but I can help you with everything. So just go to Bonnie Lyman dot com and book a call. I can't wait to hear from you.