

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff For Moms

with Kristine Carlson

FEATURING



Passionate Parents in Love with Ed and Betty Coda

Ed and Betty Coda are dedicated to helping couples achieve romance, fulfillment and happiness in their marriages. Married over 40 years, Ed and Betty's commitment to both their children and each other has stood the test of time. After four years of marriage they welcomed the birth of their first child wanting to be the very best parents. Then they began to enhance their couple relationship by presenting as a team couple for Worldwide Marriage Encounter. After having their 6th child, it became obvious that the skills they learned from Marriage Encounter needed a counterpart for their parenting. In 1984, they began taking Ho'ala Educational Philosophy Parenting Classes which created a thriving environment for their children's learning, while creating unifying family values in their home.

With six children and nine grandchildren, Ed and Betty have shown that love, communication and patience are core ingredients for a happy marriage and successful parenting. Through both triumphs and tragedies, the Codas have witnessed their marriage transform into one of genuine love, respect and renewable passion. Today, four of their six children and two of their spouses work side by side with them in their financial planning business - their dream come true. Ed and Betty's inspirational words can help empower any couple to rekindle the romance and enhance it through what they have titled Couple 1st Parenting. They love to share their vast knowledge through retreats and enrichment experiences especially, Living in Love, in addition to webinars and presentations. The Codas reside in Hawaii where they enjoy the beach and spending time with their family and friends who strive for the same relationship values. Ed has also co-authored another bestselling book, *Your Dream Machine*, which is available as a Media Book on Amazon. For free gifts from Ed and Betty go here, <http://passionateparentcouple.com/giveaway/>

In this talk you'll learn about:

- › Your partner relationship comes first
- › How to nurture a loving connection for 40 plus years
- › How to have healthy conflict that results in a stronger bond

Kristine: Hello, I'm Kristine Carlson. Welcome to our virtual conference *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff for Moms*. Nobody gets an instruction booklet on how to do this parenting thing. Let's face it, it gets really exhausting. Our intention for this series is to bring you experts who have sweat all the answers to the questions you have surrounding conscious parenting, self-care, how to balance being a woman with your role of being a mom, so that you can stress less and enjoy your family more. Isn't that a novel idea?

Now I know all of you are out buzzing around and you are managing so much but I'd like invite you to get a cup of tea, a cup of coffee, a glass of water. Wherever you are, just sit and listen in complete presence. One of the things I speak on most is accessing our peaceful sanctuary inside and finding your peaceful center so that no matter what chaos is going on around you, you can return to this place at any time.

Let's take a moment, if you will, to just breathe. Take a deep breath in and on the exhale, let go of all of your responsibilities, tension, and any fear or anxiety you might be holding onto in your body. Let go and bring your attention right here, right now. Everything you do in nourishing your spirit will spill over into your family life and affect your parenting in a positive way. The next hour will inspire you.

You know, we have our kids from love. Yet, it seems more difficult than ever after we have them to stay connected and in love while raising a family. It's so busy and it's so tiring. I know often times, my late husband and I would fall in bed at night and we would just look at each other and laugh because we were so exhausted. We'd be like, "Okay, time to go to sleep and get up and do it all over again!"

Yet, there's still tremendous joy in parenting. It is difficult to keep that loving connection alive. My late husband and I, Richard, wrote a book called *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff in Love*. I also wrote a chapter in *Moms* called, "Put Him First Not Last on Your List." We kind of will be talking about what that's about in a minute here. Our dedication to our daughters in *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff in Love* was to Jas and Kenna: The greatest gift we have to give you is the love we have for each other.

I also wrote a chapter in the *Moms* book about the Gift of Belonging. The reason we will be speaking on this today, I'm so happy to be talking to our wonderful guests today. They are two very special people, Ed and Betty Coda. They are dedicated to helping couples achieve romance, fulfillment, and happiness in their marriages.

Married over 40 years, Ed and Betty's commitment to both their children and each other has stood the test of time. After four years of marriage, they welcomed the birth of their first child, wanting to be the very best parents that they could be. Then they began to enhance their couples relationship by presenting as a team for couples, Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

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Welcome, Ed and Betty. I'm so honored and so happy to be speaking with you today.

Ed: Kristine, thank you so much.

Betty: Thanks.

Kristine: For our listeners, we've got them both on the line here. We are going to have a triple call today. I especially was eager to invite the Coda's on because they have what's very rare in today's world. They have a long and lasting love connection.

For those of you who are listening, maybe you have been married a little while, maybe you have been married seven to ten years. When you meet people like the Coda's that have been married for 40 years and they still act like they are in love, you know that's a feat, right?

Betty: Exactly.

Kristine: It is challenging, especially after raising a family. Let's get right into your personal journey. I like to start every call by really allowing our listeners to get to know you. If you guys could just speak one at a time and share a little bit about your story, that would be awesome. You can take turns. That would be great. We would love to hear about you and your journey as a married couple and having your family.

Betty: Thank you, Kristine. As you said, the name of our book is *Passionate Parent, Passionate Couple*. The subtitle is exactly what you are talking about because it's *Keeping the Passion Alive After the Children Arrive*. Actually, Ed and I met in 1965. May 21 was our first real date. We met at a backstop of a baseball game. In the spring, a man's fancy turns to romance and love.

That's what happened. The love bug bit us at a baseball game. We have loved watching baseball ever since. Actually, one of our passions is sports. That's one of the things that keeps our passion alive is our love of sports and being great fans. That's what we are.

Kristine: You guys met when you were how old?

Ed: We were dating for four years before we got married.

Kristine: Okay.

Ed: We were trying not to have children for a couple of years to really see what married life was like for us as a couple. All that time of dating and before children was very huge in our background as we look back at it. It really taught us that we could be friends, lovers, work through things, have some downs, actually split up in the middle of it, come back together, and know that we could make something permanent happen.

Then, we tried to have a child for over a year and a half before we actually conceived our first child. That really taught us the yearning and longing for people who are having trouble having children. It's been a great journey because within ten years, all six children came into our life. They are very close and overwhelming with that many to deal with all at one time.

Kristine: I'll bet. Tell me, initially, how did you guys? There's that famous quote. I don't know who said it. I wish I could remember. I always say it's unknown. I don't know it.

Betty: Right.

Kristine: There's that quote that says, "I had eight theories about raising children. Then, I had eight children and I had none."

Betty: Exactly. That was one of the funny experiences that we had because my sister was, her major was in child development. She was just telling us what we should do with our children constantly, until she had her own. Then she asked for our forgiveness profusely.

Kristine: Yes, it's one of those gigs that is definitely a parenting club. You can only belong after you have your kids!

Betty: Exactly, yes.

Kristine: Tell me, initially, how was it? Did you feel like everything was pretty cool until you had the third one? Where did you—did you have any struggles in those early years?

Betty: The backbreaker was number four. That's when I stopped sewing, actually stopped being the really domestic goddess that I thought I was. Number four was the backbreaker. He was a

delightful child. He never even went into his terrible twos. It definitely was not his fault. It was just the number.

Kristine: Yes.

Betty: Then we found, after four, that the older ones took care of the younger ones. That's how. People say, "I don't know how you did it." That's how we did it. The older kids took care of the younger ones and Ed and I, that's when we said we'll work on our own relationship so much.

Kristine: Don't the older kids just love to help? Isn't it our nature as people and children, to just love to help? You have to kind of give them the opportunity to, right?

Betty: Right.

Ed: Exactly.

Betty: If you talk to our oldest child, she doesn't think that we should have written this book on parenting. She says she raised our children.

Kristine: Does she have children of her own now?

Betty: Yes, she does. She has two. She's an excellent mother.

Kristine: That's great.

Betty: Yes. We did train her well, whether she knows it or not.

Kristine: Of course. We all see things from our own set of eyeglasses in reality. I'm wondering, what would you—I'd love for you to talk about some of the things that you talk about with couples and how they can keep their loving connection alive. First, I want to ask you, how important is it for the family, do you think, for you to keep your relationship connection strong and alive?

Ed: Just look at the headlines today with the high profile divorces. Ugly custody battles are just making so much of the news. Who is thinking about the children? This is so unbelievable. Early on in

our marriage, some really close friends of ours that we thought would be like us, together forever, got divorced.

We saw the impact on their children. We were like, “Oh my gosh. Where are we going? What’s going on with our relationship?” Truly, the best gift we can give our children is our strong relationship. We just kind of intuitively figured that out.

Neither of us were unfortunate enough to come from separated parents. We had a model of that permanence in marriage. Yet, the way we were kind of going through life in the ‘60s and ‘70s was not really supporting that.

Betty: No.

Ed: There was just so much turmoil and so many distractions to our couple relationship. When we started having children, that did not help. It actually started putting more stress on our relationship. We decided we have got to change.

We want our kids to have a loving couple as parents. We came up with a lot of different coin phrases like, “the couple is the heart of the family,” and things that kept us going. It was really a critical turnaround where we finally decided, we have to put our relationship above the relationship we have with our children if we really want this to work.

Betty: Yes.

Ed: It was really difficult in the beginning. It was like, “Wow, are we going to be considered bad parents? Are people going to judge us that we actually spend time in our room together with the kids locked out in a sense.” Things that we did to turn the tide and really live what we wanted for our family.

Kristine: That is true. Sometimes, people have been criticized for putting their relationship first because it has not been the model of what we have always said that the kids come first. If it’s true that the kids should come first, then why are so many people losing their connection and getting divorced?

That's what Richard and I said, too. We felt really strongly that we were the united front and that our kids were next to that because we were in love first. They came from our love. We needed—if there was not a strong family unit in the home that started with us, there was not going to be anything for them to belong to.

A lot of the struggles that you see today with teens and with kids, they feel isolated and lonely. It's truly because their family unit is not strong. It often is not strong because the parents have let their loving connection go. I applaud you both for knowing that and giving that gift to your children. Hopefully, they are passing that onto their children.

Betty: That's why it's so important. The kids need to see us modeling the good relationship. That means they see us fight, we fight in front of them but they also see us make up. They see us, you know we don't run to the bedroom to make up. We want to have the full-on discussion in front of them so they know that people—there's no such thing, like you said, as a perfect marriage.

It's something that we have to show them the whole gamut of, yes we fight, we have discussions, we don't run away from each other. We stay with each other until we have worked it all out. Then, we ask forgiveness and we do the healing. Everything so they could see it happening.

We did not sit them down and say, watch us fight or anything but they were catching it in a natural way. Not something that was phony or acted out for them but they saw the real thing. That was one of the ways that we modeled for them.

Kristine: That's awesome. I'd like to talk about that for a moment because I feel like there's a really healthy way to do conflict in front of kids.

Betty: Yes.

Kristine: Even in your marriage just in general, whether your kids are present or not. There's a way in which you can have conflict if

you are in agreement with your partner about this which is loving, where the conflict actually, as you discuss what you are disagreeing about and you are listening to each other back and forth. Then you are actually, what you are doing is, reaching a deeper understanding.

No two people, no matter how close you are, see the world through the same set of lenses. We all see the world through our own set of lenses. Sometimes those lenses don't match up. The expectations you have about something or your parenting styles. There's no way that any two people can discuss all the ten million trillion things they need to in order to agree on everything.

That's, to me, what a healthy conflict looks like. I think when people get into unhealthy fighting where they are yelling and screaming and they have just lost their whole sense of heart, that is probably not, I'm sure, very healthy to be in front of the kids.

It's not healthy when you are not with the kids. That's the time to step back and take ten deep breaths or ten minutes or an hour and walk away and come back, right?

Ed: Yes, absolutely. One of our things was to hold hands while fighting so that we had to stay there and face each other. Of course, holding hands really puts a crimp on anything that would really get too far out of hand.

Kristine: You sure can't hit each other when you are holding each other's hands. That's for sure.

Ed: Exactly.

Kristine: I'm kidding.

Betty: I even suggest you need to be naked while you are holding hands and fighting. That might not be too cool in front of the kids.

Ed: No.

Kristine: No, but that's really lovely because that's a way you can stay connected. It's very difficult to be super angry or say really mean things when you are actually holding someone's hand. I really

like that. I really like that idea for our listeners, to sit and hold hands when they are having a conflict.

Make that the rule. You kind of have to set the container for these things ahead of time. At the time, it's not always the best. If you have guidelines in your relationship that you follow.

Ed: Yes.

Kristine: One of the techniques that Richard and I learned really early on in our marriage, more as an experiment than anything because we kind of came on the cusp of that whole new age movement. We were really kind of into the touchy-feely, and tell each other everything.

Ed: Yes.

Kristine: We would hold a heart stone early in our marriage. We would talk. We would have these meetings once a week. Each one of us would have our turn to talk. It was like having a talking stick but it was a heart stone we held. We would share the things that bothered us, the things we were pleased about.

The only rule was, we could not interrupt each other. We could respond to what was said on our turn but we could not interrupt each other. We just had to listen. Then we would practice that technique of repeating back what we heard.

We did this for a while, like a couple of months. Then, we just started giggling. We really were just like, there was not much that was bothering us anymore!

Ed: Right.

Kristine: I always say that technique that we learned taught us how to talk to each other and listen. I don't think we ever really interrupted each other after we practiced that for a few months, in the rest of our marriage, for 22 years. We were really good about really listening. I always tell couples, too, and you are going to understand this.

When you are in a conflict, the most important thing, I think is to listen to the feeling of what someone is saying, not so much the content. Do you find that to be true with the two of you, as well?

Ed: That is so absolutely one of the huge changes that I made, especially in my parenting style. That was, really starting to understand and sit long enough with feelings. Betty and I could be sitting out on the North Shore watching a gorgeous sunset. A lot of couples do this where they say, "We were just united feeling the same thing."

Yet, if you look deep inside, that sunset may have given me the exhilaration of feeling close to God. She could be sitting there being reminded of the death of her dad and feeling melancholy and just tally different than you would expect. Unless you share the feelings, you don't know the person. Especially when it came to our kids, they do everything to push the button to get your feelings going when they want attention, positive or negative.

Once I started to understand that if a kid said, "You are the worst parent in the world," they did not know how to express that they were feeling anger and frustration and hurt. They just say the words to, in a way, make that feeling come back at you.

When I could sit there and say, "Kelly, I can see that you are really hurt and angry right now. I can really understand that frustration. I know I have felt it before, myself." Instead of, "You have to respect me. I deserve respect because I'm the parent." That's just transformational to get in touch with feelings.

The only way we were able to do that was for Betty and I, literally every day, we write a love letter to each other. In that letter, we express feelings about a topic. We don't do it for a long time but 20 minutes. We practiced expressing our feelings with each other so that we could then do that with our kids.

Kristine: Now that's really cute. How many years have you been doing those love letters?

Betty: That was a technique that we learned in Marriage Encounter. We went to our Marriage Encounter weekend in 1976. Off and on,

we have written these love letters. Right now, we are doing it every day, acutely for Lent. We are making our relationship number one for Lent.

Every day, we write on a question like Eddy said. We write for ten minutes and then we read our letters to each other for ten minutes. It's really awesome. Sometimes we just use generic questions. What was our question today, do you remember? I can't even remember.

Ed: It was just what do you I want to share about you about the situation in our office?

Betty: Okay.

Ed: How does my answer make me feel? It can be almost anything on a daily basis in your life. Always include the feeling. That's really the person.

Betty: Right. Like you were saying, that gives us a chance to listen to what the other person is feeling inside. It also gives us a chance to speak to each other. To speak to each other, so each other can listen, and to listen so the other person can really speak and say what's inside of them. That's really an awesome technique that we use.

Kristine: How important is listening, guys?

Betty: Number one.

Kristine: Very important, isn't it? Don't you think? I always think that, too. I always say, well Richard told me. From the very start of our relationship he said he loved me, he adored everything about me. There were two things that he would alter right away.

I was like, "What are those? I've never heard of that before!" He said, "One, you are a little disrespectful of other people's time because you are late, you are often late. Two, I think if we are going to be together you are going to have to turn into a world-class listener." I remember going, "Huh? What's that? What is a world-class listener?"

Betty: I thought I was a good listener. Then I realized I listen so that I can know what to say next. That's not being a good listener.

Kristine: That's right. I was only 18 years old. He was only 20 but he was further along on the path than I was at that point. It was very powerful that he said that because then of course, I started to pay attention to what listening was. That became—I had this really great guy. I was not going to lose him because I was late and a bad listener.

Betty: It's nice to know there were only two things, right?

Kristine: That was pretty much it. Later in our married life, I heard that I leave my closet light on too many times.

Betty: Right, or the toothpaste cap off or whatever those other things are.

Kristine: It was the small stuff but it was not any deal breaker.

Betty: Exactly.

Ed: Yes.

Kristine: I look around and often I speak to moms in groups and things. I look around and I often think when I'm standing up there, I often think dears in my mind. If you only knew that how you treat your spouse today and how you treat your partner today is going to make the difference or not in your marriage in the next five years. You look at these young couples and they are sort of in that five to ten year range. They have got little kids.

They feel this sort of level of comfort that is probably not necessarily a good thing. What happens, I think, when you stop paying attention to your relationship and you stop knowing that it's important to still court each other and still just make really special effort at stating appreciation and not taking each other for granted and things. When you don't know that, you can get a little complacent. In that space of complacency, I think is where a lot of couples have problems.

Ed: Absolutely. We learned early on that all relationships, whether it's with us or with our kids or even in your spiritual life, are either growing or dying. There's no such thing as standing still.

Kristine: Right.

Ed: The minute you start standing still, you are really dying in that relationship. It's something that we figured out. We even did a webinar called, *The Leading Cause of Divorce is a Good Marriage*. So many couples work towards getting a good marriage and once they feel like they've reached this plateau, they just settle in and say, "Well, this is great. I love it the way it is. I hope it just stays here forever."

Immediately, it's deteriorating. It's very insidious because most couples don't even see it happening. They just all of the sudden wake up one day and the secretary looks way different than she did the day before. They don't even know what's driving them, this wedge in their marriage. It's so sad.

Kristine: Yes. I wonder, just listening to the two of you, and how cute you are together, isn't it just so important that throughout your marriage you just become more than anything, the best of friends and that you treat each other with that same respect, that same high level of respect that you would treat your friend?

It's like, you would never talk to your friend with a negative connotation or with an ownership or an entitlement. That's another thing, that if I were to offer any advice. I was wondering if you would agree with that? You should be the best of friends in your marriage relationship.

Betty: Yes, that's what I just wanted to say. I really want to bring it out. So many people say, you've got to work at your marriage. I hate to hear people say that.

Kristine: Yes.

Betty: "We are going to settle down and get married now." It all sounds so negative because really, our relationship is about being happy and having fun together. One of the things that helps so much.

Just two things. They are like praising each other. My number one love language is being affirmed. I tell Eddy that all the time.

Kristine: Yes.

Betty: I really love being affirmed. Then, also, he loves being thanked for things. His love language for me is doing things for me. He is the best vacuumer and dish loader and unloader there is in the world. It's really important to me, to not take that for granted and really thank him all of the time. That is what makes our relationship fun and what keeps us happy. We have had times when we were not in the greatest relationship but when we get back to these basics, that's what makes our life the best and the most fun it can be.

Kristine: I think it's the commitment. The word commitment is maybe not taken as seriously as it should. It's the being committed to the marriage and to each other but also to the partnership, the marriage. No matter, these ups and downs are just a natural ebb and flow. Everyone has a natural ebb and flow in their day-to-day life in their moods and how they feel about today verses yesterday.

Your marriage is no different. It's like a living entity, really. To be able to be graceful when you are in this space where it's maybe really busy. Maybe it's just where you are but be graceful during that time and really grateful when things are going really well.

Also, to be able to notice when things are not—when you are not as connected. Practice some things. Tell us about some things that the two of you have practiced over the years to create those sparks between you again when you feel a little more disconnected.

Betty: One of the things that you mentioned before Ed and I do. We call it the "I resent." We will sit down like you and Richard did and just really share what are the things that are bugging me right now?

Kristine: That's great.

Betty: Clearing of the air is so important.

Kristine: That's great.

Betty: I think that's one thing, Eddy. What other things would you say?

Ed: We also meditate. We meditate to listen to our inner selves. That we virtual do every day, about 20 minutes. There are so many things that come out of that besides just the physical relaxation, the physical being-ness. It just gives you an opportunity to realize where you are at.

I'll sit there sometimes in meditation and say, "You know, I feel like running away, like watching TV. Something is really going on in my relationship with Betty that I don't want to be with her. What's going on with that?"

I would not do that in real life. Real life is just meeting people and go, go, go, go. In meditation, the opportunity comes up to see those things that would escape us otherwise. I think everybody needs some still time. Some time to really connect with their inner selves.

Betty: It's funny because you talk about well I have children, I don't have time to do that. Ed and I would find that, when the kids were little, we were having to get up earlier and earlier and earlier to beat them waking up sometimes.

Kristine: That's what we did, too.

Betty: Yes. Maybe we would be at 4:00 in the morning meditating and then we would go back to sleep.

Kristine: We did the same thing.

Betty: We had to make that a priority before the kids woke up.

Kristine: We did that, too.

Ed: I think one of the other things that we did to show the commitment we had to our couple relationship was that we actually got away for a directed retreat--

Betty: --or seminars.

Ed: --or seminar, at least once a year. This was not a vacation weekend at a resort. That's fine, too. We know that for us anyway to grow, we needed some outside stimulation, mentorship challenge.

Kristine: Yes.

Ed: We would find things at Esalen or other places that looked like, "Okay, this is a great couples thing." Some of them were even for singles. One that we just experienced was, oh what is her name at Esalen?

Betty: Byron Katie.

Ed: Byron Katie, yes.

Kristine: Oh, you got to hang out with Byron Katie at Esalen? How cool is that?

Ed: Yes. We go as a couple to derive couple stimulation, stuff that we know we can use in our relationship.

Betty: It's really fun, too, because we have another couple that always goes with us all the time. It's good to have them for our accountability. They keep us on track after we have gone together. We keep them on track afterwards. That helps a lot.

Kristine: That's funny that you say that. The man that I'm seeing, I say, "If we end up together we have to do a retreat at least once a year."

Betty: Excellent!

Kristine: Either a yoga retreat or some sort of couples' growth orientated retreat. He is going to have to sign up for that.

Betty: That's right.

Ed: We have found, other couples that we would encourage to do the same, when we had all our little six kids. They would watch our kids for a weekend and we would watch theirs on another weekend. There's no excuse. It's absolutely possible to put your relationship first.

It doesn't matter how big or small your kids are, you can make it happen if it's a priority for you and your life. We don't take people's excuses about this. It's too sacred. It's too important in our estimation because we see the families falling apart around us all over the world. It doesn't have to be that way.

Our belief is that you can have a close, loving family and keep it that way. Here we are with our oldest daughter, 40 years old now, and four of our six children and two of their spouses all work in our business with us every day.

Kristine: Wow, that's awesome.

Ed: We love—they are all part of our very best friends. It's all stemmed from what we know we started when they were young. They see what it takes to have commitment and to make it work.

Kristine: I want you both to talk about the gift of belonging. When we were doing our gathering in the beginning of this call before all of our listeners were on, we talked about how we both had a chapter called that in our book. I'd love to hear your take on the gift of belonging.

Betty: What we really know is that—how do we say it? We are the focal point for our children. They want our attention. They will get that attention from us in very positive ways or in very negative ways. Every time I say that, I think of one of our children whom we say taught us to be great parents. She would test us negatively constantly.

Now she is our greatest supporter as an adult. It's so important to our children to belong, to know that we are giving them attention. What we have found, especially one phrase that helped us so much is that we need to catch our kids doing things right. So many people think the opposite is true.

Kristine: That's nice.

Betty: That's the way our parents raised us. They were always trying to catch us doing something wrong and correcting us. We believe in

catching our kids doing things right and praising them, and then what we found is that keeps the belonging really high.

We call it a belonging tank. That keeps their tank filled up so they don't have to maybe do some of those negative behaviors to get our attention.

Kristine: That's beautiful.

Ed: In our book, *Passionate Parent, Passionate Couple*, have a chart in one area of the book. It's called the Belonging Chart where you can see the behavior that a child has when they are at 100% belonging, the whole cooperation and how they are just flowing and everything is just so wonderful.

Then when they start losing that sense of belonging they may drop down to 75%. You as a parent start feeling a little bit annoyed or irritated by some of the things you see the kid do. That's what we would look for. Why are we feeling annoyed and irritated? Ah-ha, it's because Danny or Kelly, or Tony, or one of them isn't feeling that sense of belonging.

Very simple things like, "Tony, you know it was so great today the way you helped Chrissy find her shoes." Just a little complement like that shows that we saw them, that we knew they did something special, and that little quick acknowledgement could fill that belonging tank right back up so that they went right back into total cooperation.

It's not always that easy but it's just a fun way to keep the sense of belonging for everyone in the family full, including ourselves.

Kristine: That's awesome. Did you guys have family dinners as a priority in your household, too?

Betty: Sometimes in reality that's pretty difficult with all the kids' activities, especially nowadays. We dedicated Sunday to our family day.

Kristine: That's what we did, too.

Betty: Wow, that's awesome. Yes, family days were totally scared because we found, Ed would be taking appointments on Sunday and then kids would have baseball games and blah, blah, blah. We were just getting splintered. It started as something that we all realized we had to do. It was amazing.

We have family meetings. In the family meeting, we realized we all had to commit to this special day. Ed and I committed, back in that day, it was \$100 for Sunday. We would do things that tourists do in Hawaii. We would do those things. It became so much fun. Everybody was totally committed. Somebody would invite something to do with them on Sunday, and they are like, "Oh no. We are having family day."

Kristine: Nice.

Betty: It was something we all enjoyed.

Ed: Even when they got older in their teens and started having boyfriends can girlfriends, the discussion came up about whether boyfriends or girlfriends would be invited. The answer was, absolutely no. Nobody got to come to our family meetings until they actually became fiancés.

Kristine: Oh, boy! You can't belong to this club until you really belong.

Ed: Exactly.

Kristine: It's a special club.

Betty: We just had a family meeting this past Sunday with the children that live here in Hawaii.

Ed: Some of the grandchildren were in on that one.

Betty: --and the spouses.

Kristine: That's really sweet. That's so sweet. I would like to ask you both what your greatest struggle of being a parent was and what your greatest joy of being a parent was? Did you want to start first, Betty? What your greatest struggle was of being a mom and then what your greatest joy was?

Betty: I guess expectations can become a real struggle. As a young child, I played with my dolls and had this expectation of what being a mommy would be like. It definitely was not what my mom was.

Kristine: Yes.

Betty: My mom worked outside our home and everything and I really wanted to be home for our children. Then I just saw how demanding that was on me and how I was not perfect all the time and how I lost my temper and did things that I just really regretted so much. I think getting over the expectation that everything was going to be perfect. That is not a good expectation.

We can continually strive to be the best that we can be. It might not be our best. At that moment, it was the best way we had of handling things. When we did start going to the parenting classes and began to know how to handle certain situations, that gave us a lot of joy.

Kristine: That is beautiful. Ed?

Ed: Yes, I think for me it has to do with expectations as well to some extent. I was kind of a drill sergeant and I found myself parenting in a very authoritarian way in the beginning. It was just a grind for me. It was like this constant battle of wills with the kids and myself. I think that, again, attending parenting classes and realizing that the kids were not a direct reflection of me.

They were not my responsibility in this area but to realize that they were going to make mistakes. They were going to look bad or good on their own, whether I did anything right or not. To separate in a sense, myself from this whole what did other people think, or what will they think about me was so huge and such a relief.

It was just like a giant burden coming off my back when I could just step back and watch our kids live their life, watch them do things with the consequence that they had to live with, and realize that it's just a journey. They are on their journey and I'm

on my journey. It was just so much more fun and such a joy to be connected to our kids with that viewpoint instead of trying to run their lives.

Kristine: I hear you on that, for sure. When you feel like your kids are your report card, that they are a direct reflection of your success as a parent or your failure as a parent, that's a whole lot of pressure for you to put on yourself. It's a whole lot of pressure for you to put on them, too.

The truth is, like you said, they are just going to make plenty of mistakes just like you did. It's not personal to you, even though it might feel that way. That's huge. I know that our listeners will feel those same pressures, if they don't already, as their kids grow. I hope that you are listening to this because this can be a shortcut to a lot of pain and suffering for you all. It really can.

Ed: Absolutely.

Betty: A joy I'd like to share was just something that happened a week ago. I'm watching our 4-year-old granddaughter right now while her mommy works in our business.

Kristine: Fun.

Betty: I was with Jada and we had just done something. I said, "Oh, Jada, we are just best friends." She said, "No, we are lovers."

Kristine: Awe, so cute!

Betty: My heart burst at that point with happiness.

Kristine: Oh my gosh, that is adorable.

Betty: Yes.

Kristine: Ed, what about your greatest joy?

Ed: I think it was just being able to actually have kids come to me because in the beginning it was Betty who was the nurturer. Betty was the one that really knew what was going on in the family and it was more that I was the last to know kind of a thing.

When I first of all started learning to listen to feelings instead of words, it just changed the whole dynamic with our kids because they knew I was not going to react. I was going to be able to really listen--

Betty: --and respond.

Ed: --and respond instead of react. It was so awesome when I got to experience kids coming to me with an unplanned pregnancy and having me express joy at the thought of having a grandson and saying that it was the best day of my life instead of being all upset.

Things like that are just—gosh, I wish fathers could only get a little glimpse of the kind of joy it is to be able to have that as your legacy with your kids. It's just so awesome.

Kristine: It's such a contribution to their lives to be able to support them in the tough times as well as the good times, to be able to really hold space for them when they are going through difficult times. That's beautiful. I feel very much the same way.

Ed: Thank you.

Kristine: Would you like to leave our listeners with anything, your last piece of wisdom, your last piece of anything? I would just love to make sure that you have said everything you would like to say today before we end our call.

Betty: Thank you. I guess just getting back to the most important thing is to be passionate lovers with each other. That's the ground, the foundation for your children to know it's possible. I think, like you are saying nowadays it's just so hard for our children to believe that you can live happily ever after. They see a lot of disappointment, a lot of disappointing marriages.

I think even when they see the movies nowadays and see how people take love so flippantly. It's not love anymore. It's like infatuation and then okay now we've fallen out of love so it's over. I think they get—it's not real. It's not real to have a committed love relationship for the rest of your life.

For us to be able to show them yes, it is. We can fall in love over and over and over again, and that's really the truth and the groundedness that we can give to our next generation.

Kristine: That's beautiful.

Ed: I think for me, it's the concept of couple-first parenting. It's the adage of putting on your own oxygen mask before you can help anyone else. Everyone that has ever flown in an airplane has heard that so many times. Yet, why doesn't that apply in our everyday life with our own family?

Betty: It sounds selfish, yes.

Ed: It's so amazing that if you look at the dynamics in the family and you say, "We have way too much yelling going on around here. We really need to get more peace and harmony." Then, you catch a kid fighting and you just start yelling, "Tony, stop that!"

It's so ridiculous that you want peace and harmony yet you, as the grownup and the married couple can't make that real. The kids catch way more of what you do than anything you say. You've got to make things real in your life.

Taking these opportunities of things that you want from your children and parenting and making them real between you as a couple first so that you can say, "Yes, we can calmly talk to each other without raising our voices. We can work at our relationship in a way that we don't have to do that." Then, it flows out that we don't have to yell when we see a kid doing something.

We can calmly walk up to them and say, point out, or timeout or whatever the case might be, without getting—it makes it real. It's something that you know as the grownup, as the adult, as the couple, that it can be done. Then it helps you get way clearer with what you want from your family.

Kristine: Yes, it's like you become the reflection of the behavior that you want to see. You take the leadership role as the parents and the couple and the marriage becomes a reflection of what you would like your children to reflect back to you.

Ed: There it is. That's so, so direct and a beautiful way to put it. That's what I was trying to say. Thank you so much.

Kristine: You did a lovely job. You painted that picture for me. That's the only reason I could say it. Ed and Betty, it's been so wonderful talking with you. This is probably one of my most favorite topics is to speak on love and relationship.

Of course, you both know that I lost my beloved Richard and we had just a really amazing marriage. I love to hear your stories, I love to hear your connection. It reminds me so much of our journey as a married couple. You just serve and hold out space and hope for people that yes, your love can last a lifetime and beyond.

I just thank you so much for being on this call and for being in this series and holding that space in the series. It's a blessed, blessed journey. I'm just so happy to share you with our listeners as well.

Ed: Thank you so much.

Betty: I would like to say that it's so amazing for you to keep Richard alive the way you are doing, to keep *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* alive because it's so important for people to hear all these messages. He is still with you so much in what you are doing and the way that you have kept his legacy going. That is so, so, so important. We really thank you for that.

Kristine: Thank you. Sometimes I say that the happiness that I felt in my marriage with Richard is enough. It really is, it's enough. Not that I'm not going to have an amazing relationship again or whatever but if I didn't, I would have had a very fulfilling past life with a very wonderful man.

I thank you for acknowledging that. I'm blessed to have such a strong purpose to carry on because it's given me something massive to do, which in the beginning of my grief, I really needed so thank you.

Betty: So true.

Ed: By the way, tell all your couples not to forget how to be young lovers all the time. In church two weeks ago, somebody came up after the Mass and said, "Are you guys recently married? Newlyweds?" We said, "No, we've been married 44 years."

Kristine: That's wonderful!

Ed: Absolutely. Why can't people hold hands? I saw this horrible survey that said something like 72% of people married more than 20 years don't hold hands anymore.

Kristine: Awe.

Ed: It's so sad. It is so sad. You have this person for such a short time on this earth. You have got to take advantage of every minute. Be real lovers. Remember what it's like and never grow old.

Kristine: That's lovely. I want to thank you so much for joining us this amazing hour. There's more to come as we continue to explore the art of happy parenting and being the best mom you can be with the greatest joy in our continued series *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* so you can live in really big joy.

You can find me at www.dontsweatmoms.com or www.kristinecarlson.com or www.dontsweat.com. Remember to treasure the gifts of life and love. It's all unimaginably precious. Thank you, Ed and Betty!

Betty: Thank you, Kristine!

Ed: You are welcome! Thank you!