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## Building Strong Relationships Heather Garbutt - Part 2

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**Pat:** Hi, I'm Pat Iyer with Legal Nurse Podcast. Before we start today's show, I'm excited to share the news that I've got a virtual conference for legal nurse consultants all planned for next month, July 2020. It is as easy to attend as clicking on a link.

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Get all the details at this link: [LNC.tips/July 2020virtual](https://LNC.tips/July2020virtual). Sign up for all for 4 days, or 1 or 2. I look forward to seeing you at the virtual conference.

Today I'm so pleased to bring back to you a guest by the name of Heather Garbutt, who is in Great Britain. We spoke in our previous podcast together about some of the signs of happy and unhappy couples, and this is a subject that is of key interest to legal nurse consultants. Perhaps you're in a relationship, or you want to be in a relationship, or you see the effects of trauma and dislocation on the couples that you're involved with as you're helping attorneys as your clients.

Heather is an expert in the creation of positive dynamics in relationships. She's a psychotherapist and we both became certified as professional speakers by going through the Women's Prosperity

Network Business of Speaking course, which we completed. I thought that she would have valuable information to bring to you about some of the dynamics associated with relationships.

Heather, welcome back to the show.

**Heather:** Thank you so much, Pat. It's lovely to be here again.

**Pat:** We talked last time about some of the cues that are visible when couples are unhappy and some of the cues that are visible when couples are very happy with each other. And I remember we talked about my experience. And I'm sure people in this audience can relate of going into a restaurant and watching the complete absence of communication taking place between a couple at a table near us who are just eating but not speaking to each other. Or maybe they're eating and they're looking at each other's phones or their own phones, which is something that we see increasingly.

So, as we think about what causes happiness or unhappiness in relationships, you and I talked last time about the concept of "The Little Self." And I thought we should start there with an exploration of what is the little self and how does that influence what we're talking about in terms of our ability to relate happily to another person.

**Heather:** Yes, it's remarkably simple, but it's not necessarily known in the mainstream. Our little self is where we get our blueprint for relationships. So, maybe I can give an example.

I have a client. I've asked her permission to talk about this, and I've disguised her a little bit so that it's not obvious who she is. And she had a very narcissistic mother. Now being narcissistic, I mean self-centered, very self-defensive, she could not take any criticism or challenge because she was so fragile in herself. So, any sort of challenge at all, any opinion from her daughter made her feel insecure, and she'd come down with a heavy hand. And I mean, literally, a heavy hand.

And so, my client has grown up in fear of being put down and humiliated in public and of being hit. And that set up the blueprint for her choosing partners who were dominant and who were quite manipulative. Some of the things that we know about manipulative behavior include shaming, not allowing a voice, not allowing a

choice, making the other person responsible for everything, but not giving them or allowing them any power to do anything about it. So, always in the wrong. So, she chose people like that, and that was very painful for her. She was living from her little self, thinking she was choosing with her adult self, but living from her little self.

Does that make sense, Pat?

**Pat:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Yeah, so when that's alive in a relationship, it can really come up in trauma. Because when we're traumatized, we often will go back to what early traumas we've had. Some of which may not even be conscious. Dr. Ian Palmer was adopted, so he works in adoption but also trauma from military action. He's a specialist in London, in England, and he said that the people who get most harmed by those sorts of actions are people who have had early trauma themselves. So, if anybody has PTSD, there is likely a precursor of some description way back when. And he cites his adoption as one of those early traumas, the early separation.

**Pat:** I know that legal nurse consultants work on cases involving people who have post-traumatic stress disorder, often after a sexual assault or a traumatic accident of some kind. People who've been in car accidents, for example, and have stopped at a light and they look in their rearview mirror and they see a car barreling down on them, and they can't move. And they can end up with PTSD from that experience. And legal nurse consultants are summarizing medical records of the therapists to whom they are sent, so that they can summarize the symptoms and the treatment that the patient receives because of that.

**Heather:** I just want to check if it's really known in your field too about secondary trauma. Because when policemen look at sexual abuse, childhood sexual abuse, they must assess videos and things and try and trace the children in them. They suffer secondary trauma just by witnessing. So, I'm imagining that your nurses hear and see an awful lot of very painful stuff, and I would really encourage them to have some sort of outlet for that just to dilute it. Because you know the best ones in the world, some of your nurses, may have trauma in

themselves that can get triggered and take them back into their little self.

So, maybe I can say what the sort of symptoms being in your little self is. It's when you become less rational, when you become emotive, you go into fight and flight. I'll go back to me as an example.

You know it's only recently I'm able to go into hospitals. I'm sorry, I don't mean to be mean to nurses. I know I've had some lovely people take care of me. It's the stuff that I bring to it that causes the trouble. I seem to have a problem with dislocation. I dislocated my knee and I got it back into place myself, and I don't quite know how. But I had a Tubigrip bandage on it, and I went to the hospital to have it looked at. And the nurse came to see me, and she wanted to take the bandage off. And just instantly my fight and flight came in because I was terrified of having something bad happen, and I just gripped her wrist. Now that is not like me. I'm quite a mild-mannered lady.

I gripped her wrist and we really looked each other in the eyes, and she said, "You don't trust me, do you?" I just said, "No." And we got on well once that was established. I've grown since then, fortunately, so if I go to hospitals now, I'll have better relationships because I'm going from my grownup self. But in that moment, I was very little. And I think this is probably why in hospitals in A&E departments, there is abuse of staff. It's not anything to do with them. It's to do with what people bring and what gets triggered by that trauma.

If we think about relationships, if there's a breakup, you can be in your little self easily. Because it brings up loss and absence, that pain, the real heartbreak. And it doesn't take much for that to happen when you're a baby or when you're a youngster. There may have been a couple of occasions your mom didn't pick you up from school. She could have been a perfect mom the rest of the time but the sense you could make of that is, "They don't really want me." "I'm alone." "I'm not safe."

Generally, if the rest of your life is better than that, then that can be soothed. But if that's a regular occurrence, then you will take that blueprint into your life: expecting to be left. And if you're living from that little self, it's actually a very powerful thing. It almost is that you

train other people to treat you that way because that's what's normal to you.

**Pat:** How can we heal that?

**Heather:** It's good if you can learn how to have a conversation with your inner self. One of the ways to do that is with feelings and needs meditation. I've got one on my website that's, I don't know, £15, I think. I don't know how much that is in dollars. That's easy. It's called the Foundation to Love. All you must do is listen to it and it helps you converse with your feeling self, which can quite often be your little self. And learning as well through that to discern what is my little self.

You know I could go with the, "I don't trust the nurse. That's what my gut is saying," but that's old fear. My higher feelings will say, "This woman is here to help me," and so I can calm that down. So, you can have a gut reaction to somebody that says, "You know this person isn't safe" and that might be a really healthy gut reaction, or it can be old fear and your task is to discern.

So, when you're entering relationships, your task is to discern if this person is trustworthy, if they walk their talk. Sometimes their talk is good, and therefore we can come unstuck in Internet relationships, because you only see the talk forever, and you can get quite deeply involved. If their talk is all there is, you can't really discern. When you meet them, and you can see how they treat somebody else, your gut reaction will tell you if they are who they say they are. So, entering a relationship, that's important.

**Pat:** Yeah, it is a great point because when a legal nurse consultant is interacting with an attorney for the first time, the nurse has to have a level of trust in that client and believe that client is going to pay invoices, is going to supply the necessary material, is going to respond to phone calls.

And when the trust gets broken, for example, the attorney doesn't pay the invoices when they are due and starts quibbling and arguing, which is an unfortunate consequence of working with a small population of attorneys, that experience can spill over to reactions to other attorneys to say, "Hey, wait a minute, is this person really going to be trustworthy"?

And you need to be protective of yourself in taking on an attorney, learning to watch for signs that that person is not going to be reliable, is not going to be upstanding, is not going to practice with integrity. You know, from a business perspective, that's an important skill to be able to discern that. And maybe what you're bringing out, Heather, is that we sort of instinctively put in a level of evaluation when we're interacting with other people.

Can I be vulnerable with this person?

Can I trust this person, or do I have to stay on my guard?

**Heather:** Yeah, and I'm also guessing something which is important to touch on with your little self is authority figures. Because we may defer to them whether they're trustworthy enough to defer to.

I'm going to put you on the spot, Pat. Because I'm not familiar with attorneys particularly, what would you say are the warning signs that they might be somebody that's not going to pay their bills or respond to phone calls?

**Pat:** They start quibbling about hours. They may ask for a guarantee you will not exceed x-number of hours. They may say things like, "Well, I think your rate is too high. Can you reduce that rate?" They may try to negotiate terms that the legal nurse consultant has in his or her contract that should not be negotiated.

Occasionally, and it's uncommon, but occasionally they ask nurses to do things that frankly are unethical, improper warning signs that the attorney is trying to do something shady. And it's very uncommon, but it creates a worm of anxiety in the nurse. There's a reason why nurses are the most trustworthy profession in the polls of the public over and over and repeatedly. We practice with integrity, and attorneys sometimes don't, which is why in some states they must have mandatory continuing legal education.

Many states put in a mandatory ethics hour or two hours because attorneys have gotten caught thing doing things like stealing money from their client's trust accounts or hiding evidence. So, it raises concerns about their integrity.

**Heather:** Yeah, I'm glad that you've enumerated that, and that's important. Quite often when we are feeling with our gut, with our grownup gut, we get a physical sensation. And I got shivers down my arms when you were talking about the shady bit particularly. That phrase, "The worm of anxiety." Yes, I can really feel that, "Well, I don't like the sound of him at all."

So, this is good. So, we can do the feelings and needs meditation, so we can listen to our feelings and learn to tune into our gut but also listen into the little self. The little self can be quite informative about what we need. So, the little self sometimes when you're asking it, will come back with a little voice, "I'm really tired. Can we just stop now please?" Or it will come with a stronger emotion than is appropriate to the setting and that's because it's a trigger. But if you can tune and keep tuning... I mean, the meditation I've done is 15 minutes long, so you know, if you do that two or three times a week, listening to that, it will get it into your system so that you can really feel what's good and what isn't.

And going back to relationships, we really don't want to be falling in love from a point of little self-desperation. Like there was my vice-like grip out of fear, there can be a vice-like grip out of longing. And if you fall in love before there is enough trust built, before you really know that person, and particularly if there's any sex involved, you get all the oxytocin coming in and the attachment starting then you are off balance to begin with.

And I think really that mirrors back in any relationship if you allow the person to get too close to you, and you get too involved on any sort of emotional level. And I'm sure that can happen with attorneys as well. I don't mean love relationship there, I mean a sense of trusting before you really know. Then you can really come unstuck and then get emotionally wounded in your little self, and you'll feel irrational. Those huge dramatic love affairs that you see are quite often too little selves falling in love from a position of longing.

And they're dramatic. You know, they're characterized by quite a high sexual charge. That drama, "Are we together? Aren't we together? He's got somebody else. I'm going to get somebody else." You know it has that sort of infantile nursery age thing about it. You know, "What's mine is mine. What's yours is mine." You know all of those.

You know what little kids are like in nurseries about fighting over things and snatching. It can be as emotive as that.

**Pat:** I immediately thought of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton who were married twice and there was a lot of drama in their relationships. That just went through my head. I got her face and her beautiful violet eyes, and his dark stormy looks and drinking and lots of carrying on. I know some people listening may not have heard of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. So, they're actors, and they had a tumultuous relationship.

**Heather:** Yeah, if you think about Princess Diana and Charles, they were two other people, I think. Although, I'm not sure they fell in love the same way, I think they probably had something akin going on, on an infant level, infant deprivations.

**Pat:** When I went to England with my husband and my brother and my mother, a year before she died, the man who drove us had been the personal driver of Charles before he got married. And he described Diana as being immature and Charles as being older than his age, and they were like a generation apart. She wanted to go on parties and have fun. He wanted to stay home. They were incompatible in fundamental ways.

**Heather:** Yeah, yes.

**Pat:** But let's focus on healthy relationships because I could talk with you about Princess Diana and Charles for the rest of our time, and that may not get our audiences excited as it is exciting to me to talk about their relationship.

You're in a relationship, you feel like it's starting to lose its sparkle. Maybe the oxytocin levels are a little bit lower, and you're not enjoying each other as much. Is there anything that we can do to rejuvenate that relationship?

**Heather:** Yeah, I think there are lots of reasons how that can happen. You know the common one is both people having to work too hard. Earning money needs a double income to run a family, so there's exhaustion as part of it. And there can be the thing of becoming co-parents and coworkers and losing that sense of couple in that busyness. You forget

who you were that you know drew each other to each other in the first place.

So, when you think about some ways of restoring that—It always surprises me how much people plan. You know they may plan their finances. They may plan their holidays. They may plan where they're going to live, but they don't plan their relationship, meaning what is important for each of them and how they can make sure their needs are met.

So, I think it's good if you can make an agreement together to start off with. "Let's take stock. We want our relationship to be the best we can be. Are we both in for this for the long haul? If we are, if we really want to do that, then let's get on with it and do it properly."

So, really find out what the future would look like to each of you. Review your aspirations together. If she wants to live in New York and he wants to live in China, there's going to be some major negotiation going on. It could be that there are convergent things. I mean, what you may have started off 15 years ago with as your dreams may not be the same now. Some of them may have been achieved and so, you're looking at a different vista from the height that you've achieved. And then you want to think about what you want from each other in that and what quality of relationship.

Some couples don't live together. Would you prefer to have your own space and be together in that way? It doesn't have to be traditional. You can think out of the box what would really suit you. And it can be as nuts and bolts as, "Well, actually I want to have dinner with you three times every week and I need to go out on a Friday night. I need to have sex twice a week." You know it can be as concrete as that. Obviously, all those things need to be negotiated. It's not, "I want, I get."

**Pat:** I'm envisioning somebody going, "Check. Okay, Tuesday and Friday, check sex. Dinner Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. You met all the performance criteria for the week, honey, good job. You get an 'A' next to your name."

**Heather:** That's nice, but the key thing is to generate closeness and understanding. And if you get those, you're much more likely to get

good sex. Because there's the affection, there's the emotional connection that makes sex much more pleasurable and passionate and pleasing. You know each person pleasing the other, and that loop getting generated again is just so lovely, and that can happen. You know, you have respect, you have empathy and the will to understand. If you start off with that, you can go further.

I'm not sure if it was Alison Armstrong that said, "If you give a man 15-minutes attention every day, you've got him. Because that's all he really wants from you, your attention and sex. But on an emotional level, he will be happy because he's had attention and being cared for." And how little time do we set aside to listen to each other? That's the fundamental.

**Pat:** Is there any similar number for women that anyone has defined?

**Heather:** Well, for women, we like to be broadly protected and provided for. So, acts of service go a long way for women. You know just the things like being told you're looking good. I mean, that goes a long way for me. Really, I think for men is it's a good idea to button your lip if you think your wife is putting on weight. You don't say that because that ain't going to go well.

**Pat:** So that question, "Do you think this dress makes my butt look big?" is a dangerous one?

**Heather:** Oh god, yeah. You can hear them quaking if you've ever asked that. "Oh God, which is the right answer?" And to be honest, that's why they lie because they're so frightened of getting it wrong. Because fundamentally, they want to please us and make us feel good too. And there's honesty and there's brutal honesty. But if you get enough closeness and connection, those sorts of conversations you know could go much easier. He could say, "Well, yeah, your butt does look quite large, darling, but, god, doesn't it look good" and then stroke it.

**Pat:** Yeah, and there's a whole subset of women who go to surgery to make their butts look larger, which I've never understood. I want mine to be smaller, not larger.

**Heather:** Absolutely. My tummy is a different thing.

**Pat:** That's another part of the anatomy that should be as flat as possible.

**Heather:** But it's strange. This is an aside, but you know that's what a nubile woman's body is like. A mature woman's body is rounded, has curves, a layer of subcutaneous fat because that's what we need. That's our natural body. And for some reason, we've got into a paradigm of having people as thin as lovely Keira Knightley.

**Pat:** Well, and then the other issue we run into as we age, which all our listeners know, is that you're at risk for osteoporosis and osteopenia. And if you've got a little layer of subcutaneous fat on your hip bones, then you're protecting yourself from hip fractures. So, don't get rail thin.

**Heather:** No, I'm good with that.

**Pat:** Chocolate and wine. Good, we're good.

**Heather:** I'm coming around to see you. That's what we're going to eat and drink. So, let's hang on. We're about to get back to the point. I can... See, I can take you off anywhere.

**Pat:** That's all right. I'm happily going on the chocolate and wine. I'm sniffing that chocolate right now.

**Heather:** The thing to do really, and this comes from the Gottman's work. It is drawn lots of influence, as well as my own experience, and I always really want to cite people. Because if you can read or YouTube as many people as possible that speak to you, that really generates good for you. So, I'm not going to be precious and say this is all my knowledge because it isn't. It's what I've accumulated and what I've processed and used in my experience as a couples' therapist over time and now as a coach.

So, I would suggest that you have weekly date nights and that's not going to the cinema. You know, how close can you be if you're watching Harrison Ford in "The Fugitive" or some sort of James Bond film? I mean, I'm guessing some rom-coms can be quite helpful, but you don't just want to be sitting beside each other in silence, watching something.

Date nights are where you really review how things are. You review your week. You review what's gone well for you. You listen to each other and you talk about whether you're feeling connected, and what would have been better. It could involve requests for change. But I would do that only after you've done a little process of really looking at what you appreciate about each other.

To give an example, my lovely Ian. If I was to say the things I appreciate about him, "He is just such a sweetheart." If I say, "There's a hole in my fence, the fence is mended." "He cooks the most beautiful food. He's very affectionate and kind. He's got the most beautiful heart, such a loving heart, so gentle" and "He really puts a lot of effort into understanding me and to communicate with me." So, those would be the things I would say to him that I'd appreciate.

The second stage of that sort of communication would be to give and receive information. And we've come across with this over Christmas because I thought he was having the 23rd off, so I moved all my appointments to the Saturday so that my Monday would be free to be with him. And he thought I've got all my appointments on Monday, so it wasn't worth taking the day off. We needed to reevaluate that one and fortunately we done it in time to change things you know, so that's good. But that sort of exchange, that means that you're in harmony, so you don't have foiled expectations or disappointments arising because you haven't communicated about what's happening.

Then you can go with the request for change. This is a very delicate one. If I was to say to Ian, the one thing that really bugs me. He leaves doors open all the time, so I have been that woman who walked into cupboard doors because he leaves them open when he's cooking. I walk into the kitchen, clunk. It's not good, so I would say to him, "I would really like it if you would close the cupboard doors as you're cooking." I don't know how he ducks them himself. I really don't. He would have no obligation to do anything about it, but in that sincere conversation he would have heard that that matters to me.

Do you see that doesn't give him a sort of, "You must do what I tell you" sort of angle? It gives, "Please, will you do that because it would make a big difference to me."

**Pat:** And it's not accusatory either. "You're so inconsiderate" or "You're oblivious" or "You never think about me." It has none of those messages.

**Heather:** No, and that's the thing about men. I mean, we talked about whether we talk about male focus and women's focus. And men, if they're doing a thing, they're doing a thing. So, he won't notice things are just going behind him. Like he's fixing the fence and you needed a drill the other day. My lovely extension lead that I have in my work room, which is a nice curly one, and it's nice and clean. He couldn't find the other one, so he was just on his mission, plugs that in and takes that down to the garden. It comes back covered in mud. He's on a mission. He is not thinking, "What will Heather say about this?"

It's not that he doesn't love me, he's just, "I'm fixing the fence" and that's the mistake that we can make as women. We lay that on top, "He doesn't love me because he hasn't remembered I wouldn't like that. He hasn't remembered to close the doors. He hasn't thought that that would influence me." So, that's our piece in it and that's where little self comes in, "He can't love me because he didn't hear."

**Pat:** Well, that is a great place for us to end, Heather. We started with little self and we're back again to little self and 35 minutes... almost 35 minutes later. I appreciate your perspective and thank you for being on the show. First of all, if you have not heard Part 1 of my conversation with Heather, go back and listen to that after you finish this podcast because we laid some foundation, as we say in the legal world, for what we talked about today. And Heather, how can people find out more about the services that you offer?

**Heather:** My website is [www.heathergarbutt.com](http://www.heathergarbutt.com) and my email is [heather@heathergarbutt.com](mailto:heather@heathergarbutt.com). You're very welcome to contact me through that.

**Pat:** And for our listeners who are taking notes, that's G-A-R-B-U-T-T, Heather Garbutt. Heather, thank you for being on the show. I appreciate that. And thank you to you who is listening to this, who's getting some value out of this.

I just talked to a legal nurse consultant last week who told me she always listens to a podcast when she's got a pen and paper, so she can

take some notes and put down the key points that she wants to remember. So, what I got out of this is to be very aware that we have a little self who is influencing our actions, is kind of keeping track, maybe keeping his or her own little notes, and can emerge during times of stress or trouble and start influencing the dynamics. Like Heather grabbing the hand of the nurse when she was brought back to when she was a child, a small child, and was subject to a lot of medical treatment because of her hip dysplasia.

And to maintain that harmony in your relationship. Have some time together on a routine basis to do things that are fun. As Heather said, you don't have to sit side by side, not talking. You could be taking a walk or a hike or having dinner and going to a play and then talking about what you concluded from that. Or as my husband did last month with me, we went to a symphony and we felt like it restored our souls, listening to that beautiful classic music from all that full orchestra. It was just a magical experience.

Take time for yourself to refill yourself because also, as Heather pointed out, that the secondary trauma that comes along with being in this field, reading medical records of people who have experienced horrible pain and suffering. That can get under your skin. I know for me it has led to having trouble sleeping at night after going through some detailed records of high pain levels. Recognize that that has an impact on you, and you need to have some break time. You need to recognize the need to restore your own soul and not just keep giving and giving and giving as we love to do as healthcare professionals.

Heather, again, thank you for sharing your insight. You can see that Heather and I could talk for a long time, and we're not going to do that today. We're closing off this program and I appreciate you being here and being part of our show.

**Heather:** Thank you very much.

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