



226: When Someone You Love is Indecisive

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 226. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful, but also distracting hum of entertainment, well, you're in the right place for discerning your next right thing. Today's question, what if you are not the one who struggles with chronic hesitation, but someone you love does? What's the best way to help the indecisive along? How can we help them move forward in the midst of their hesitation? Great question. Listen in.

I believe one of our roles as humans among humans is to help one another along the way. When you can't see your belovedness, I hope someone reminds you that you're loved and lovable. When you experience loneliness, I hope someone shows up in witness. When you can't go any further, I hope someone holds up your arms. When you fear your own anger, I hope someone sees you and tells you that you're not the only one. That's what I hope we do for one another when we are feeling stuck in all kinds of ways. So when someone you love is indecisive, especially if they're standing in a threshold of a decision that has to be made, we can show up for them in the same way, because here's what doesn't work. Impatience, shame, blame, superiority, judgment, indignation, spiritualizing, or pressure. Does a decision have to be made? Yep. Do they need to find a way to move forward? Absolutely, they do. Do you know what's best for them? Maybe, maybe not.

Over the years, I've heard from many listeners who say they don't personally have a lot of trouble making decisions, but their sister, son, parent, partner, somebody who they love does have trouble, and they would love to know how to help. So if that's you, this episode is for you. And the first thing I would offer is this. Number one, be honest. Who is the help really for? Is it for you or is it really for them? That's the first thing, because if they don't want your help, then the conversation's kind of over, or at least it's paused for now. When someone isn't naturally skilled at something that comes easy for you, it can be tempting to want to find ways to help them become more like you. It's just kind of in us. That's what we want to do. So if their indecision is just something that kind of bothers you and is an inconvenience, well, I don't know if I can help you so much with that part.

But if you've determined that they want your help or your assistance, or they're at least open to it, then you can move on to number two, which is be curious. In other words, ask the second question, which is simply to say, maybe be willing to ask the question beneath the question. Because the first question is, what are you going to do? Or what's your decision? Or when are you going to make it? Those are first questions and they might cause pressure though they do need to be asked. I have an entire episode about asking the second question. That's episode 94. So being curious or asking the second question isn't technically about the number of questions that you ask, but it is more to encourage you as their companion and discernment, to be a person who asks questions rather than make statements.

Depending on the kind of indecision they're facing, you could ask if this decision is one that they have to make at a certain time. In other words, does this decision have a deadline? And if it does, what is it? That's a good thing to know, because it could be that this decision is a later decision and they're making it a now decision. Do they need more information? If so, like what? What do they know for sure today? What would they love to do? What is the worst thing that could happen? And what's the best? These aren't meant for you to ask in a fire hose kind of way, but it could be helpful to have some of these questions in your pocket. Another simple phrase that could go a really long way, tell me more.

Number three, something to do for someone you love, who is indecisive, is to be in their corner. In other words, remember that the decision is rarely the point. The point is who we are becoming. There are many reasons why someone might be indecisive or hesitant, but one of them might possibly be because they never learned how to trust themselves. Maybe we all struggle with that in one way or another, but it comes out for different ones of us in different ways. For your loved one, it shows itself when they have decisions to make. So your invitation as their friend, parent, or loved one is not to tell them what to do or to push them in a particular direction. Instead, it's to help them learn, to listen and to trust their own voice that they'll always have with them, even if they make a mistake. They don't need someone to make the decision for them. They need to learn how to do their own next right thing.

And if they do, and if this decision turns out differently than they thought or poorly, or has a disappointing outcome, we can be rememberers on their behalf, saying out loud that, hey, their movement was in a direction. And it was a good thing that they moved, even if it turned out, not as good as they hoped. The point is the person who they are becoming. And look at that. They're a person who makes decisions. They're becoming a person who moves, who doesn't just think about moving. So it didn't turn out the way they wanted. Well, now they have more information and the next time they can factor that in. So be honest, be curious and be in their corner. But mostly if you love someone who's indecisive, the best thing you can do is focus on the love rather than the indecision.

You have a superpower. And that superpower is to be all the way there for the people you love. You may not think you have it, but as a person made in the image of God, you do have it if you want it. And the light of God is bright enough, and warm enough, and strong enough to hold space for the doubt your person might be feeling. It's not all up to you to fix them, or hurry them up, or to do anything really. But it is your privilege and your invitation to love them, and to be in community with them, and to not project your timeline onto them. So let yourself off the hook if you're feeling the pressure to persuade. Trust that you have what it takes, and so do they, to do the next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 226 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of holding space for our indecisive loved ones can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because while it's true, this is a podcast about making those decisions, the bigger truth is our daily decisions are actually making our lives, including the decisions we help others to make. As always, you can find me online at emilypfreeman.com and on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman, where I often find ideas for episodes and inspiration from readers and listeners like you. A shout out to the folks at Unmutable, especially Cam who helps to edit these episodes. Also, Leah Jarvis, who does the show notes. I'm always grateful for this small, but mighty team who helps make these episodes possible.

Well, in closing, here are a few words from that episode I mentioned earlier, episode 94, where I ended with a prayer that I'll read part of for you now. May we swiftly and fiercely refuse to try to fix, one up, rescue, entertain, poke fun, scold, or compete. Forgive us when we rush to fill the quiet spaces with so many words. Instead, let us be listeners. Remind us to be quiet enough to ask the first question and wise

enough to ask the second. With our curious presence, we are honored to bear witness to the work you are doing in the people we love. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.