

Between the Pages Podcast: [How to Fight Better](#)

Caitlin

(intro music plays) Hello everyone and welcome to Between the Pages, a podcast on books and sexuality hosted by yours truly, Caitlin Viccora. *(music fades)* Okay, well, super excited to have repeat guest Ariella Serur back on the show with us today. Hi, Ariella! How are you?

Ariella

So good. I'm so happy to be back here.

Caitlin

Yay! We're so happy to have you back. And honestly, I think it's been almost exactly six months since we last chatted. So it feels like a very good bookend to everything.

Ariella

Totally. I can't believe that it's been six months actually. That's alarming. *(laughing)*

Caitlin

What is time?

Ariella

Mhmm!

Caitlin

But yeah, so it's been, I guess, six months? Question mark? How have you been since we last kind of had you on the show? What have you been up to?

Ariella

So I ran a boot camp called Date Better Boot Camp where I helped-- I did a four week intensive where I helped people learn how to date or date better. So that was my first group program, which was really fun, where folks got to really learn from each other. So that was an exciting thing that happened in the past six months. Yeah, I just got back from Chicago where I was visiting my best friend who also just came out. So that's been obviously the thrill of my whole entire life. And so we were with her and her partner, and me and my partner. So the four of us had the best, most chemistry-filled friendship time

of my whole life. I think we should all move in together and raise children together. (laughing) But that's to be discussed down the line. But yeah, that's been a real highlight. And I'm getting back in the swing of things post travel and happy to be here.

Caitlin

Amazing. Yes, no. And for folks who haven't listened to Ariella's first episode, I highly recommend going back and listening to that. We go into all of the awesome work that you do as a queer dating coach, and including boot camps, and just amazing social media presence in general. So if folks want to deep dive on that, absolutely recommend. And today I've invited you on the show--I'm cringing internally as I say this--but we're gonna talk about The Bachelorette. I've done Bachelor franchise episodes before. We have an awesome one with Katie from Katie's Book Recs where we talk about just the reckoning that happened on Matt's season of The Bachelor. And so--and yeah, so that was an interesting conversation. And today I want to specifically talk about the moment in season seventeen of The Bachelorette where Katie and one of the finalists, Greg, have this really emotional, intense, intense fight where it's just they are just not communicating at all. And we're gonna get into kind of the

specifics of what that looks like and how it could be better and Ariella had this awesome post on it. And so I was like, "I need to have her on the show." Because I think there's so much to dig into when it comes to how these people talk to each other, how they are, you know, representing their needs, how the needs are kind of just completely like ships in the night crossing.

[Ariella](#)

Yep.

[Caitlin](#)

And so yeah, I'm really excited to kind of hear what you to say about that.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah, it was really difficult to watch. And I think part of the reason why I write about the Bachelor franchise is because it's so--so many people watch it and so many things are being modeled there that I just totally disagree with or find it to be important that if that's what we're getting represented in media, we need to understand why that's not right. Or why that's not working in the way that it's being

shown on the show and, for a personal reason, I find that writing about it helps me kind of process my own emotions as a viewer because I'm new to watching Bachelor and Bachelorette and it is such a ride. (laughs) It's a lot and it's a lot to take, especially when moments like this happened.

Caitlin

Ride is a perfect way to describe it. You're just weirdly invested in these people that you don't know--

Ariella

Oh, I'm in it. I'm so in it.

Caitlin

(laughing)

Ariella

I'm in it deep.

Caitlin

Same! Same. But no and it's just so--it is funny because I think on a side note from the outside people are very confused by why Bachelor fans are invested in this.

Ariella

I mean, Tayshia's was my first season.

Caitlin

Me too!

Ariella

Oh my god, fun! Quarantine projects. Yeah, I always felt that way. I was like "This is trash." And now I'm like "It is trash and yet...it's my trash."

Caitlin

No, it is my trash. Yeah, you feel a certain ownership over the trash. It is--yeah, it is such a thing. And you're newish to the Bachelor franchise. Tayshia's was your first season and you kind of touched on this a little bit before but have you been seeing some kind of dating

and communication trends as you've been watching? And I'm wondering if there are particular things that are popping up frequently as you kind of get more into the franchise.

[Ariella](#)

What I'm seeing is trope after trope. I'm seeing nothing creative. One of my followers recently messaged me about something--I'm forgetting what--or maybe this happened in a comment of one of my posts--and they called it rom com dating advice. And I thought that was so smart. So what I'm seeing is the perfect execution of everything I'm trying to rally against in what it is that I do. So I'm seeing a lot of tropes and a lot of poor communication and a lot of comparing one's experience to everybody else's experience, a lot of assessing outside instead of assessing inside. I mean, on Bachelor in Paradise we were seeing in the first episode, a really poor example of using what is usually good communication phrases completely in a bad communication way--that felt new and interesting! Where I think it was one of the Victorias that was like, "I'm working on this in therapy" or "I'm gonna use my therapy skills, but using it as a complete weapon and not as a means to connect or actually engaged in a meaningful conversation." So I'm seeing dangerous

communication (laughing), to say the least, and violent communication as well, which I think is what I want to help kind of change the narrative of.

Caitlin

Totally. And it's almost--I always think about how the show's structure in itself inhibits communication in that way. And it also provides these scripts that contestants feel like they have to uphold. And I think we can get into this a little bit with Katie and Greg's fight, because, you know, one of their major pieces of miscommunication was that Katie was using the language of the show, right? She was saying, you know, "You're gonna be here next week, you're my number one. You know you're gonna have a rose." And he's like "Fuck the rose, I don't care about the rose. Why are you throwing this language in my face when I'm trying to be, you know, quote, unquote, "real" and vulnerable with you?"

Ariella

Totally.

Caitlin

And for Katie, she's like, "No, but that is real, because that's real within the confines of the show."

Ariella

Exactly, exactly. But it's--I don't know if we're going back and recapping it all, but the other thing that I found really interesting about that particular moment was the fact that we, as viewers, knew that she had decided she wouldn't say I love you to any of the contestants. And she told other people, maybe other guys or Greg's family, I'm not quite remembering. So it was us as the viewers that had that information, it was some people on the show, but it was not Greg. So it--yes, if Katie wasn't operating within the confines of the language of the show, probably within the rules of the show that people often break, whatnot. Or if Katie had just communicated to Greg that she was choosing this option, to not say I love you to anybody but the person that she wants to end up with, then all of this would be different. There are so many points in their story and their arguments that the ship could have been turned around, and that this huge iceberg of a conflict could have been avoided. And yet no one knew how to grab the wheel and turn it at any of the

moments where it happened, which is just kind of a wild train wreck that's very triggering to watch.

Caitlin

Totally. Yeah. And I think that was the frustrating part as a viewer. I mean, I think it was also--it was triggering for a number of reasons. And we can kind of touch on the gaslighting thing in a second. I do want to caveat with, we're not gonna be really kind of going into whether or not it's gaslighting. That's not really kind of the purpose of this particular conversation. But I think it's important to believe folks when they say that they're being gaslit, like a hundred percent. And if Katie experienced that, that is true, right?

Ariella

Right.

Caitlin

And so, you know, I'm not here to kind of be the judge on whether or not it's gaslighting, whatever. And I think it's more--it's actually more important and interesting to kind of dive into sort of the communication and the miscommunication parts of it, too.

[Ariella](#)

Totally, totally.

[Caitlin](#)

But yeah--kind of going back to what you were saying--I think it was particularly frustrating as a viewer because we had additional information. We had the context of seeing Katie's conversations with Greg's family. And we also--I saw what both of them were trying to say.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah.

[Caitlin](#)

In multiple places, and I was like, "Wait, but you can just--" if you literally just said this differently, then it could have turned the ship around. It could have had a different outcome than what it ended up being.

[Ariella](#)

Absolutely. Yeah, I think that was why it was so hard because the subtext--the want was so clear, the desire was so clear. And I think that where it was frustrating to be on social media in the days that followed was that most people were posting about gaslighting: is it or isn't it? Which side are we on? And as someone who has been called out on social media before, as someone who engages with people really actively, that kind of picking sides is so unproductive to actually moving forward and learning from what it is that we saw. It's the opposite of what I want us to actually do after we watch something like that is to then choose a side and be as in our own vision of it and of the event and what we think is true, versus how we can learn and move forward because it doesn't matter what we think is true! We're not there! We're not a part of it and we're not Katie and Greg!

Caitlin

I think it also allows us to separate ourselves from the moment if we kind of label it as gaslighting.

Ariella

Yeah.

Caitlin

For ourselves, right? Because it's like, "Well, if I call that--if I say that's gaslighting, that's abusive behavior--abusers are over here, but me as a person who is not an abuser or not a gaslighter-- I'm over here, and I am immune to this type of miscommunication when I don't think that's true. I think we all have had these moments of missing each other and not being able to communicate your needs and not being able to meet other people's needs. And to reduce it-- for lack of a better word--to sort of, "Okay, well this abusive behavior is over here," then you are separating yourself from it.

Ariella

When we name call, there's nowhere to go. That's it, that becomes the period on the end of the sentence. And what I found so particularly disturbing about this fight was how easily any of us could be either of them in this. I think what you're saying is exactly right, when we just call it this thing--that this is abusive, or Greg is gaslighting and whatnot--they're totally distancing ourselves. When in reality, we should be being like, "Oh, fuck, have I done that? How easily could my own communication style, tactics, whatnot, fights, dip into that territory? And how dangerous is that? And how

unfortunate is that, especially when the two people, I mean, seem to have had a lot of love for each other."

Caitlin

Totally. Yeah. And I think that's a good place to kind of get into. I'm gonna do a quick little recap. I was telling you before this, I was watching--I watched it back for the first time. I'd watched it when it initially aired. And I watched the fight scene in particular back for the first time, and I was like, "Okay, I'm gonna try to understand what happened." And it was A) really hard to watch again and B) it was really hard to understand what was happening. It was very--and I think that's true--that rings true to my own personal experience of fighting too of it's like, "Oh, wait, how did we get over here? And okay, now, you know, I don't know what you're saying and I was trying to go back to this point." And there was a lot of that. So I'm gonna do the best I can. So this occurred--this conversation occurred after Katie's hometown with Greg's family, where--as you alluded to before--we heard her talking to his mom, his sister, and saying, "You know, Greg's gonna be here next week. I don't care if I'm allowed to say it, he is my number one. And I also am not gonna tell anyone I love them until the final person," because that's just a

rule that she set for herself. Then they sort of have this conversation where Greg is like, "This was so meaningful to me, I poured my heart out to you. And I am all in on this. And I am falling in love with you." And Katie kind of is looking at him. And he was kind of like "What? What's happening?" And she's like, "I love--I just love looking at you." And immediately you see Greg start to shut down, right? You see him sort of like, "Okay, that wasn't the answer I was looking for." But he's not saying anything. He is very much--his body language is very shut down. And then Katie's like, "Okay, what? I don't know what's happening, you seem upset." He just is like, "Well, why do you think I'm upset?" And immediately starts to kind of get defensive, and then Katie's getting more confused, he's getting more defensive. And they kind of interact like that for a bit. They go outside and have sort of a whispered conversation. I don't know, I think it's supposed to be outside of the camera's view, but, you know, obviously (laughing) we can see it and there's subtitles. And, you know, he's like, "I'm losing my shit here. I just poured my heart out to you and then you had no reaction whatsoever. I don't think you're being real with me." And she's like, "Whoa, I told your family that you're gonna be here next week." And he's like, "I don't care if I'm here next week," and there's this interaction of--he's

frustrated and he is clearly at his breaking point in this whole process. And she is like, "How did this get so out of hand? I don't really know what we're even talking about now. I feel like you're giving up on us." And so--and then there's kind of the break--where he kind of goes back to the house and is stewing and then is like, "Okay, I need to go talk to Katie." And then that's where the fight--I think the real meat of the fight happens--because then he's been stewing on this, he kind of comes to Katie. And, again, still shut down. The body language is very much, you know, "Why do you think I'm upset? Why do you think that?" And she's like, "Okay, clearly you're upset. I don't know what you're gonna say. I'm holding my breath. I don't--you know, I don't know what's happening." And again, he's like, "I poured my heart out to you. I laid it all on the line, and you had no reaction. I didn't feel like you were being real with me. I didn't feel like this was the real Katie. This is the first time that I haven't felt like that." And she's like, "I'm sorry, I literally don't even remember what I said. I don't even remember what my reaction was. I'm really--it was an emotional day. I'm really sorry." And he's like, "I just--I am, I'm done with this process. I'm done with you. I'm done with this." And again, that's where we sort of get to see a little bit of the "I told your family you're my number one" and

he's like, "Fuck being your number one. I don't want to be part of this process for you anymore. I want us to be better than this process." Then he goes outside. She follows him. But she's, you know, on her knees, essentially begging him to stay. And he's like, "No, I'm done." And, yeah--

Ariella

Ugh!

Caitlin

It was painful. It was painful even in the recap, right?

Ariella

(laughing) Yeah, listening to that. I think you did a really good job. But I'm like, "Wow. That sucked."

Caitlin

It was a lot. It was a lot. And you can--like I said--especially in the rewatch, I could see what they were trying to say. And I'm like, "Ah, if Katie literally said this, or if Greg could just communicate, then this wouldn't have to be at this level of a breaking point."

[Ariella](#)

Yeah. Totally, totally.

[Caitlin](#)

So okay, so the fight happened. And then you posted about it on social media and kind of laid out some ways to sort of fight better.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah.

[Caitlin](#)

And I think that kind of gets to this point of "Where could you have turned the ship around?" And you laid out a couple of different strategies. I'm wondering if you could talk through that a little bit in terms of--yeah, how do we communicate better? How do we not be Katie and Greg in this situation?

[Ariella](#)

Totally. So I had made two posts about this. The first one was after the initial fight that you just explained. The second post was after

the After the Final Rose, where they fought again, on camera, and it was so hard to watch! In the first post after that fight that you explained, it was so clear when the first thing went wrong. And when the first thing went wrong, it was when Katie responded, saying "I just love looking at you" and Greg shut down. So that kind of set up the argument--everything from there--if that initial hurt is not addressed, everything from there is gonna be really hard to recover. My main premise of fighting better is taking turns being the hurt person. And now, this is a concept that I developed. This is not--I didn't read this anywhere. This is not scientific, this is just what I've lived, what I practice, and something I've never learned from someone else. So I find that when we take turns being the hurt person, we can actually manage the fight easier. Now, it's hard in practice. I mean, easier is relative, right? But when both people are really hurt, we wind up just kind of bumping against each other over and over, where if we would pause and be like, "Okay, it seems like we're both hurt right now. Let's focus on you. Let's focus on how I can take responsibility for how I hurt you first, and then we'll kind of put focus and the attention back on me." And this is something that I do with my partner. This comes up in really all of my personal...it's hard to call them arguments, because I feel like we have such an

idea of what an argument is. And when I'm fighting, quote unquote, "better," it doesn't sound like an argument. It's just a tense, hard conversation more than anything else. So I can call it an argument, but it's not--there's no yelling at each other, or anything like that. So you can all picture that in your mind: a tense conversation where two people are really hurt. So that's kind of the main idea is--I think about it like a spotlight, having a spotlight on one person. And you can't split the spotlight. It has to be on one person or the other. And the problem is that a lot of fights look like a strobe light where it's switching back and forth between the people, between each person expressing their own hurt. And neither of them really pausing to take care of the other person. It honestly reminds me of queer sex, where there's a lot of back and forth, and there's not really so much happening at the same time a lot of the time. It's taking turns pleasuring each other. Not all queer sex is like that. But it feels like a very queer sex concept of like, "We take care of one, then we take care of the other." So that's the essence of fighting better: taking care of one, then taking care of the other.

Caitlin

I think that's a really important visualization/metaphor of keeping the spotlight on the hurt person, and I'm curious what happens when it feels like keeping the spotlight on a hurt person invalidates your own hurt? Because I think that happens a little bit what we see with Katie and Greg, and I wonder if that's pretty--that's a common experience of like, "Well, if I focus on this other person's hurt, I don't know if I'm gonna be taken care of after." Or it means somehow our hurts are kind of juxtaposed against each other in a way.

Ariella

Totally. I think that's a really interesting question. So let's take this very beginning Katie and Greg example. He's pouring his heart out to her. She says, "I just love looking at you." We see him shut down. If I were Katie in this situation, this seeing him shut down would be my priority to investigate why the shutdown is happening and what the stories are in his head that are making him shut down in that way. That's also on Greg himself to be like, "Wow, I am totally catastrophizing this situation." Because basically what happens with Greg there is that he's shutting down, because he's probably

thinking, "She doesn't love me. She doesn't want me. I am a fool. I shouldn't be here." All of these stories that are kind of getting bigger and bigger with every passing second that Katie's not interjecting, which makes him completely closed off and get defensive. He wants her to be able to mind read what's going on for him. So there's this element of real transparency and keeping the spotlight on the hurt person. I think that if you actually do this, you will realize--if you're with a partner who is communicative--someone else's hurt does not negate your hurt. Because often you're not apologizing for the same thing. So my partner and I, this week, we had a bit of a tiff, let's say. And what they were hurt about was, I kind of brushed something off that they had said, and it seemed like I wasn't taking their desire seriously. Now, I don't feel like I brushed off what they said. I felt like I was following their lead and this was kind of a jokey conversation. And I didn't realize it was a really serious conversation to them. So for me, in that way, I don't necessarily think what I did was wrong. But I made them feel like I don't take their desire seriously, or that I wasn't listening to what they were saying, or I wasn't handling what they were talking about with care in a way that it needed to be handled with care. That, I care deeply about. We don't need to agree on whether I brushed it

off or didn't, we don't need to argue about the semantics of how I shrugged my shoulders or I didn't. What I can acknowledge is that I hurt them by not listening to them in the way that they needed to be listened to in that moment. And I deeply don't want them to feel like I don't care about their desire or things along those lines, right? So now, my hurt wound up being kind of similar. I was like, "We're both hurt. Let's take turns. You go first. How can I give you what you need in this moment?" And we talk through it and then they say back to me: "How can I give you what you need in this moment?"

Caitlin

Yeah, I love that so much. And I think what you said about it not really being about the shrugging of the shoulders, or not really being about the brush off itself. But it's actually what's underneath that and how someone else is interpreting that--that's the real hurt. And, you know, to take it back to Katie and Greg, the real hurt is not she said, "I just love looking at you." The real hurt is his narrative in his head when she said that is "Okay, so she doesn't love me. And I just poured my heart out and everything that I thought is now a lie in my mind." And so, because I think also in Katie's mind, she's like, "I can't say I love him right now, because I've already set this rule for

myself. I've told people, you know, that is a boundary that I have set." And so I think she was really struggling to find the language to express Greg's importance to her at the time. A) I think she was reacting to his shut down and so it's hard to think things through and express yourself clearly when someone is kind of either shutting down or there's a big emotional response happening in front of you. And then it's also like, "Okay, I have this external, little, you know, devil on my shoulder of the Bachelor franchise, saying you can only do certain things at certain times. Yyou have a contractual obligation, whatever." But I do wonder if she had actually addressed the hurt underneath it and said, "I'm so sorry, you know, I have this boundary that I've set, but I care about you so much. I need you here right now." That would have been a different--and I think eventually she kind of got there.

Ariella

Eventually.

Caitlin

But at that point it had escalated so much. It was too big! It was too big to be addressed by that. But if it had been addressed

immediately with the shutdown, and again, it's still on Greg to be able to say like, "Hey, I'm shutting down. This is really upsetting me that you just reacted that way." It's still on him to be able to communicate that.

[Ariella](#)

Totally.

[Caitlin](#)

But if she had addressed it at that point, it would not have escalated.

[Ariella](#)

Exactly. And I think that what had happened was that after Greg shut down, Katie wound up not really acknowledging the shutdown as Greg being hurt, and immediately was kind of like, "I don't know how to get you back from this. I don't know what to say--you're acting this way, I don't know what to do about that." Which I can understand if this is a pattern that comes up a lot and this is something that the couple has worked through, I understand kind of being like, "I love you. I can see that you're shutting down, whatever

it is." Obviously, I know Katie wouldn't say I love you. But if this is a pattern that's already established in a couple and you're trying to be interdependent, and you're not taking responsibility for always cheering up your partner in these moments, totally cool. But I think that Katie kind of let go of her hand. She kind of let go of him very quickly being like, "Well, I don't know how to fix this. "Which then I think made him spiral even more. I think the initial hurt was the "I just love looking at you." But I think here--and in the case of my partner and I--we have to look at intent versus impact, again. Because my shrugging of my shoulder and me having this conversation with them because--and following their lead, thinking that we were having a jokey conversation, not realizing this was something that was very real to them. It doesn't matter my intent of continuing to joke with them. All that matters is the impact that it had. Same thing with Katie. It doesn't matter her intent of "I just love looking at you," she was trying to capture big feelings and a big moment into very small words. All that matters is the impact, which is that Greg understood that to be something very different. So it's the paying attention to when our partners are feeling hurt. And, in ourselves, staying vigilant about stories that are popping up for ourselves and practicing naming those as much as possible.

Caitlin

Yeah. I think I'm just reflecting on how hard that can be in the moment of--

Ariella

Yeah, it's really hard.

Caitlin

(laughing It's really hard! And, you know, it's something that I think about a lot in my relationship too, in my partnership, and I have a lot of trouble staying emotionally regulated when I'm in those big feelings. And, you know, working on it in therapy, but, you know, it's something that does not come naturally to most people.

Ariella

Yeah, totally.

Caitlin

Of being able to sort of take the 50,000 foot view and be able to name your feelings and then also be able to communicate those feelings effectively to another person?

Ariella

Yeah.

Caitlin

Especially when they're not having those same feelings. And I think that's something that it took me a long, long time to not shut down or not be able to communicate in a way that--but then my partner's like, "Well, what are you--what's happening?" Kind of what Katie was feeling of "I don't know how to help you." Now, we were kind of communicating, and now we're not and now you don't want to communicate anymore. And so, yeah, I'm just reflecting on that emotional regulation. And I'm wondering if you have tips or ways to really stay present in that moment to be able to name your feelings and communicate those feelings to someone.

Ariella

Totally. Okay, well I'll say it's actually easier for me personally to name a story in my head than to necessarily name what I'm feeling. I'll just know that I'm feeling a lot. And sometimes feeling a lot for me is not productive to this type of conversation. So the only feeling I'm so clear on naming when I'm feeling it, is defensive. Which isn't

exactly a feeling (laughing), but when I am feeling really defensive, when someone is expressing hurt to me, then I know I need to stop the conversation so that I can emotionally regulate because if I am so wrapped up in my own defensiveness, and in being right, then there is no way I'm gonna be able to receive the information I'm supposed to receive. So in those moments, I'll be like, "I am feeling so defensive. I need to pause this conversation and I need to just journal, or breathe for a little bit. I care about what you're experiencing and I care about the way that I hurt you and I want to learn and I want to be better and not do it again. But I have so much going on inside me right now that I feel like I need to take a break so that I'm able to better listen." So I do do things like that. So that's one, you could take a pause because you're feeling defensive, or you can take a pause because you're feeling a lot, even if you're not able to name what the feelings are. The other tool is really the "I have a story in my head." It's very easy for me when I am going through something, or having a tiff with a partner, to recognize what I'm telling myself. But I think that that's a practice. So this winds up becoming a practice for outside of your tiffs as well, where your friend doesn't text you back and you start to feel upset about it. What are you thinking that's going on with your friend? What story

do you have in your head about why your friend's not texting you back? Are you thinking that they don't want to be friends anymore? Are you thinking that they're hanging out with your ex or something like that. You know, starting to take stock of how we talk to ourselves outside of really high intense moments--high intensity moments--so that in the high intensity moments, we are also able to be like "Okay. I have a story in my head that this, this, and this is happening and that you want this." And usually when you phrase it in that way, versus "You are doing this. You are this." You can't say it like that, you gotta say "I have a story in my head that this is how you're feeling and this is what you're thinking about me." And when you phrase it like that, usually that allows other people to take on a posture of non defensiveness and be like, "I want to address that story in your head, because it is totally not my experience. And I don't want you to feel that way." So it allows the other person to kind of step up more actively, I find.

Caitlin

Yeah! Well, and it's even just like the old adage of "You can't revise a blank piece of paper," right? And so if you're able to actually say,

"Here's the story," then the other person can come in and say, "Let me revise that story as to sort of my intent," or whatever.

Ariella

Yeah.

Caitlin

And you're able to kind of come from a place of creation and building in a way that doesn't shut people down, you know, "This is what you're doing" versus "This is the story that I'm telling yourself is what you're doing means XYZ." And then they can say, "Okay, let's revise it." It's almost like a collaborative moment.

Ariella

Totally. And I think that the meat of what arguments come down to wind up being about "How can we do this differently next time?" I'm big on--if my partner apologizes to me, I'm like, "For what?"

Caitlin

(laughing)

Ariella

And will make them name what it is that they're gonna do differently. Same thing for me. If I don't say what I'm apologizing for, they say "For what?" So that apologies are never used to placate, they're used to actually encourage change, and help us shift. If the goal of this argument is that we are a stronger couple on the other side of this, then that's what the apologies are for. They're to help kind of heal what has been hurt and promise that it won't happen again, to the best of our ability. And then I think a lot of arguments end in collaboration and end in recreation of "What can we come up with together that feels better for the both of us?" Or "If I notice you shutting down like this in the future, what can I say to you in that moment, so that we're kind of able to zoom out together and realize that we're falling into a pattern that we have?" I'll ask things like that, too, so that we are catching it every moment where we could have put our hands on the wheel and turned the ship.

Caitlin

Yeah. And how powerful to think of fighting and arguments as this opportunity rather than--I think fighting often kind of gets lumped

into sort of the bad stuff that happens in between people in a relationship--

[Ariella](#)

Yeah!

[Caitlin](#)

--and it's--yeah, I mean, it sucks. It's tense. It's not fun to go through, but at the same time, there's a way to fight better or more productively, in a way that's going to make life easier for all parties involved moving forward.

[Ariella](#)

Totally! And I'll say, I've been with my partner for--we've been seeing each other for a year. And we've had many fights. Many tiffs, many arguments. But we also talk about, how proud we are of how much we've been able to move through, through this way of fighting. Through not practicing non-defensiveness, through pausing when we need to pause, through apologizing specifically, and through making creative, collaborative compromises or agreements

in our relationship that can help us help each other and adjust our behavior in the future.

Caitlin

You should be proud of that, right? That is hard, hard work that you are clearly actively thinking about and working towards together. And I think I operate very similarly with my relationship, too, where, yeah, if something's bothering me, if this thing didn't land right, I'm gonna say it. I can't-- don't do well with like, "Okay, I'm just gonna swallow it and, you know, hold it in."

Ariella

And what's the point? What's the point if--and I think that's where the intention of the argument really matters. Where there was at some point--their argument on After the Final Rose-- the intention was not to heal the relationship, the way Katie was talking to Greg. It was not like, "I hope that we're friends. I hope that we get back together." Obviously, none of that was on the table. So the intention of that argument was like "There really is none. I want to be right. And that's it. And I want you to apologize and realize you're a piece of shit." That was essentially the intention versus

when you are in partnership, and if it's a good one, and we're treating each other well, the intention of any fight should really be like, "How can I learn how to love you better? I did something that hurt you. How can I take responsibility for that hurt and do different next time?"

Caitlin

Yeah, and I honestly, I didn't even rewatch the After the Final Rose because I think that would be even more painful because there's not even the hope of--and I knew it. There's no hope of fixing it.

Ariella

(laughing) No hope. Yeah.

Caitlin

It was so hard and it was very much, you know, proving a point and trying to kind of "gotcha" Greg--

Ariella

Yeah!

Caitlin

I guess maybe that feels good in the moment. And I'm sure, you know, I think Katie has a lot of healing to do around that relationship. And, clearly, we saw it play out. She was the hurt person going into that situation.

Ariella

Yes. Mhmm.

Caitlin

And, you know, of course, After the Final Rose is kind of postured as--I mean, it's all full of gotcha moments. It's not really building relationships, or growing relationships in any way. I do wonder if some people fight like that in real relationships, too, not even just in front of cameras--

Ariella

Oh, absolutely!

Caitlin

Right? They have to.

Ariella

A hundred percent! You've never been in a situation where you fight like that?! Of course people fight like that! It's so normal, because what happens there is that we just want to be right. We want to be right and it's kind of vindictive. It's like "I want to win this." But that intention of wanting to win this, or wanting to be right, is not the intention to grow your relationship. It's not the intention to learn how to love each other better next time. And I think a lot of people fight like that. And then the fights repeat themselves and repeat themselves, because they're never actually addressing the ways in which we need to be treating each other better. Because no one's learning how to do that from each other. And that's on both people.

Caitlin

Yeah. It's, again, going back to that true hurt underneath whatever is actually happening. And yeah, it is amazing in--especially longer term relationships-- fights are essentially the same. The same underlying hurt. But it's different things that trigger that underlying hurt without sort of addressing that core layer, then it's gonna be immediately reacting to "Why did you say I love looking at you?" You know what I mean?

[Ariella](#)

Yeah!

[Caitlin](#)

It's gonna be that surface level addressing versus actually talking about the problem.

[Ariella](#)

Right. Totally.

[Caitlin](#)

Ugh! My heart just hurts.

[Ariella](#)

I know!

[Caitlin](#)

My heart hurts.

[Ariella](#)

I know! I literally was such a mess that night. I could not get over it. I was in--I felt like I had been broken up with.

Caitlin

Yes!

Ariella

My heart hurt so bad. And my sweetie was just like, "How can I help you? You're a mess! How can I help you?" And I was like, "Let's just watch funny Tik Toks and I'll move through it, you know." Really, I was going through it. I was really going through it. But, I don't know. I'm also a deeply empathetic person so sometimes watching TV is, honestly, too stressful for me.

Caitlin

Yes! No, and I think that that was a lot of people's experience.

Ariella

Yeah.

Caitlin

From the social media discourse, and the recap podcasts I listen to, everyone was like, "Oof, I feel this so hard." We've all been in these situations where it's so frustrating and heartbreaking. And, ultimately, relationship ending, and I think we saw the full escalation of those types of miscommunication.

[Ariella](#)

Yes!

[Caitlin](#)

You know, we saw the ending of that relationship and we saw Katie's pain afterwards. And trying to move through it and to see that up close is, I think just reminded immediately--

[Ariella](#)

Too much. (laughing)

[Caitlin](#)

Yeah! It's a lot. I'm just like, "Ooh, I can't look at it straight ahead."
You know?

Ariella

Yeah, uh huh. Totally. Totally.

Caitlin

Yeah, it's painful. But I also--I'm grateful for this conversation to be able to process it, because I think there are really nuggets that are important to think through. And it's weird to be like, "The Bachelor can apply to your life," but it kind of can!

Ariella

Yeah! Totally, totally. I think that it's so evocative to think about what happens on that show in relation to ourselves and how we live and love. And I think it can be really majorly informative in that way.

Caitlin

And, again, you know, I think there's a level of escapism and separation that you can have with reality TV, which is cool and, whatever. You're even more kind of tied to the story if you can actually sort of put yourself in their shoes. And I think this moment between Katie and Greg and this fight, we were all able to kind of identify with that. We were all able to say "Yeah, that's happened

to me." And it's humanizing in that way to be able to see, okay, other people are going through it too. And then also, if you can then take what happened there and be like, "Okay, how can I learn from this? How can I apply this to my current relationships?" That's even more impactful ultimately in the long run.

Ariella

Totally.

Caitlin

Well, thank you for wading through this shit with me. (laughing)

Ariella

Ugh, what a mess.

Caitlin

(laughing) What a mess!

Ariella

I'm feeling inclined to review some bullet points of fighting better for the folks that listened to us kind of detangle this. I feel like we kind of mentioned a lot through the course of this episode, but--

Caitlin

I would love that.

Ariella

Same. Okay. And also, if you want to review what I'm saying, for the most part, you can look back at my pink Instagram post from August 10th. And this is the "How to Fight Better." And you can kind of read more of my thoughts on this. But here are some things that we talked about today: One is keeping the spotlight on the hurt person. So in this case, this would have been instead of Katie kind of (laughs) you can't see what I'm doing, but I'm holding my handd in a fist and then I'm kind of opening them up and rinsing my hands like I'm flicking off water. So instead of kind of dropping and Katie kind of taking herself out of it or becoming the hurt person herself, in that moment where she saw that she had hurt Greg, this would be keeping the spotlight on him, addressing what it was that had

happened there. Actually, I'm gonna go a little bit out of order of this post and skip to the third one, because this is how Greg should have showed up here--is to be really aware of the stories that you're telling yourself. So this is on Katie to not let go of him the minute that he gets hurt and she doesn't exactly know how to fix it. And it's on Greg to be like, "I am really shutting down," and noticing where he's at emotionally. So that's actually number two on this post, noticing where you're at emotionally. And then being able to take responsibility for the stories in your head. "I am really shutting down right now. I have a story that since you just responded to my deep, deep love for you with something that's seemingly so surface level, that you don't actually feel the same way about me, blah, blah, blah." He could have said anything along those lines. Take responsibility for what you did that hurt the hurt person and gather data on how you can adjust that in the future. So Katie would, in this moment, be like, "I see what I said completely--" if Greg shared that he had a story in his head that she doesn't feel the same way, she would be like, "I am so sorry that what I said made you feel that way. That's completely the opposite of my experience. I care so much about you. I told myself I had this agreement that I wouldn't say 'I love you' until the last guy was standing. I want that person to

be you. I'm so crazy about you. And I want you to know how much I care about you." Blah, blah, blah. Anything along those lines. This is all my improv (laughing).

Caitlin

I love it.

Ariella

Ten-second better fighting improv. I wrote on here, number five: be vigilant about not expressing defensiveness. So this is kind of throughout this whole conversation, Greg being like, "Why do you think I'm hurt?" And what the fuck is the point of even asking that question? No, just acknowledge that you're hurt. Don't put us through a test. And then Katie immediately being like, "I don't know what to do here. This is kind of on you." That's also defensiveness. But defensiveness can also look like "I didn't say that. I didn't mean it that way. You're taking it the wrong way." All of that is defensiveness. Number six is: apologize with specifics. And make this shit genuine. Really, if you see that you hurt someone that you really care about, yeah, you should apologize genuinely that you hurt that person. And you should know, okay, "In the future, when

you share something--when you open your heart up to me, Greg--when you share something that's really vulnerable, I want to take that vulnerability really seriously. And I will give you the most beautiful affirmation I can come up with, instead of saying something surface level in a moment like that, because I can see that that really means something to you. And I want to do things that mean things to you." Something like that. And then number seven: review what you learned. So that's kind of "How are we going to do this differently?" I kind of mentioned briefly before, but what could have happened then is that they realize that Greg has a tendency to really shut down when his feelings get hurt. Katie wants to help him stay kind of emotionally regulated and not shut down in moments like this. So she might be like, "Okay, it totally makes sense to me that you shut down in this moment. I have a tendency to do that, too. If I notice you shut down like that in the future, or if you are noticing that you shut down in the future, and you need a second or you need to pause the conversation, what can we both say or do to emotionally regulate here?" So this could be Katie saying "How can I point out to you that I think that you're shutting down, especially if you're feeling defensive about me calling that out? What can I say to you?" It could be Greg saying something like, "I'm shutting down

and I need to take a five minute break from this conversation, so that I'm able to kind of nurture my own heart, so that I am able to have a productive conversation." Anything like that. So it's kind of once you apologize, let's go into brainstorming, collaborative, creative, fighting territory, so that we are able to do things differently the next time it happens.

Caitlin

That was super helpful that to be--because I think, yeah, there was a lot of stuff to wade through--

Ariella

Yeah.

Caitlin

--as we're recapping, so it was super helpful to have that nice bookend of "Okay, here are the steps." And you even acted out some of the fight, it was great. (laughs)

[Ariella](#)

(laughing) I find that kind of improv-ing fights or improv-ing how to say certain things to certain people. I really eat that up. It's so fun. So.

[Caitlin](#)

Oh, yeah.

[Ariella](#)

So it could be a two-person, one-person show...

[Caitlin](#)

That would have been great--if I watched the fight that you improv-ed--I would have been like, "Wow, what great communication skills they have." (laughs)

[Ariella](#)

(laughs) Well, I'm glad.

Caitlin

Yes, thank you so much for--and I also just really appreciate that framework, in general, to be able to kind of map out a messy fight in a way that's like "Oh, here some actual tangible things that we can take from this and actually apply to our our daily life," I think is super helpful.

Ariella

Yeah. And I think that something that you said earlier is sticking with me too, as far as if the goal is to grow the relationship and the goal is to figure out how to communicate better and how to love each other better, your hurt will not be invalidated by taking care of the other person's hurt first. It's not--your hurt's not gonna go anywhere. You can take turns, it is okay to take turns.

Caitlin

And it's important to trust that the other person is gonna be there for you to address your hurt afterwards, too.

Ariella

Absolutely. And if you are someone--if you're with someone who is not doing that, that's information.

Caitlin

Yes.

Ariella

Because we're acknowledging this as having folks that do show up in that way after we show up in that way. But if you're with someone who repeatedly is like, "Okay, you fixed my hurt. Deal with your own by yourself." That's information and that might not be the best type of communicator for you to be with, especially if you're trying to kind of level up in your fighting in this way.

Caitlin

Yeah! We all have needs and we all deserve to have our needs addressed in our relationships across the board, romantic or otherwise. So, yeah. You're the best. Tell folks where they can find you on social media, plug your stuff, anything you have going on, let us know.

[Ariella](#)

Yes! Find me @queerdatingcoach on Instagram. I have my boot camp that I'll be launching again sometime in the near future. But I've also got some more cost effective community-oriented goodies coming up. So the best place to stay up to date with that is my Instagram. Or you can get on my newsletter that comes out every other week by going to queerdatingcoach.com/newsletter.

[Caitlin](#)

Yay! Thank you so much, Ariella. I really appreciate it.

[Ariella](#)

Yeah, my total pleasure. *(outro music plays and fades)*