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Hosted by: Doug & Andrea Van Soest

Episode 12 – Can You Really Work With Someone You Love?

Andrea: Take time out for fun.

Doug: Yeah.

Andrea: Who wants to work all of the time and be serious all the time.

Doug: Boring.

Andrea: It's not fun.

-- Intro/Music --

Andrea: Welcome back to Spouses Flipping Houses. We hope you had a great Thanksgiving!

We did. It's always awesome to take a few minutes out of your life to remember what you're thankful for and to eat good food with friends and family, so.

Doug: That's right. I think you had those switched, to eat good food and then be thankful for it. I hope everyone is fat and happy out there and feeling good. We had a great break.

We are glad to be back at it though. Sometimes, for me especially, I don't know if you've noticed, well yeah you have noticed Andrea because we've talked about it here the last couple of days, but I've been a little bit all over the map getting back to sort-of the normal flow of work.

And it's not like we've been gone that long. But here's what's happened and what I've been going through the last couple of days. So we went to a Mastermind meeting, which we talked about in the last episode, which was great.

We got lots of good information. Andrea and I have talked a lot about things we want to implement into our business, and changes we want to make, and just all positive good stuff.

But just a lot of information that's just sitting there in your head, trying to find a way to get out. And then we take a break and have a Thanksgiving, which was great also. We got to be with family and have a good time away, so then Monday comes after Thanksgiving, and I'm

ready to get back to it, and all energized to get back to work, get back to our business, implement everything.

And then Monday happens, and it's like spending a whole day just catching up on stuff we've missed. Emails, things that needed to get done, all things that weren't really what I wanted to do that way but needed to be done nonetheless. And then kind of the stress sets in, that overwhelms you. So all of the energy I had Monday morning, Tuesday morning was completely gone.

You just kind of feel overwhelmed, and it's like, "Oh, how in the world am I ever going to get this stuff that we need to get done, done. And yet make the changes and implementations and good things that will move our business forward in the way we want to. How are we going to get that in there as well?"

Andrea: And the thing is, I think that this happens to everybody, but some people allow it to shut them down.

Doug: Yeah and I can see how. I can definitely relate to that over the last couple of days, how you can just shut down, and it becomes so overwhelming you just think, *okay, I'm not going to deal with it. I'm just going to go back to what I know and get the tasks done that I normally would do, and nothing really happens.* And the stress kind of sits on your shoulders and just stays there.

So, how have I been dealing with that? Well one thing that I've noticed that seems to be helpful for me is number one, getting it out of my head and onto a piece of paper. That is basically a simplified task-list of the things, a bullet-point list almost, of the things I want to implement in our business, our priority list really. And you make the most important thing at the very top, number one.

And don't make it a 30-task list. Five to ten at the most, so it's not overwhelming in itself. And then, maybe just focus on one the first day. And once you start checking those off and they get done, you start to feel productive and energized again and notice that you're making progress, and just having it on paper and seeing it going, *okay, I can do this. This is manageable.* That helps me.

Andrea: I love that because I think when it is all bouncing around in your head, it feels so overwhelming. So to get it out of your head onto the paper, so you can look at it. And then at least for me, I love checklists. So when you start checking something off it's exciting, and you feel like you're accomplishing something, and you're moving forward. So that's good stuff.

Doug: Yeah, definitely good stuff, but we have a great topic today, and we're really actually happy with it. This is a great episode, and you're really going to like this one, a lot of good information today.

Andrea: So yeah, our topic today is our eleven tips to working successfully with your spouse. And so this is actually an e-book that I

wrote, and we're just going to go through it a little bit and each of the different points. And I think this can pertain to people who work with their spouse, but also people who maybe work with their son, or brother, or even just a business partner.

A lot of it is just pertinent to relationships in general and how you can work together successfully to be more efficient, and get things done smoother, and have a good relationship while doing it. And so the reason that I decided to write this e-book is because we've had the chance to speak at a few different real estate clubs and things, and afterwards the people that come up to talk to us have more questions about how we work together than they have about real estate actually.

And we thought that was so interesting. We didn't realize how many people either do work with their spouse and struggle with it or they would like to work with their spouse or loved one but are afraid to do it.

Doug: Right, yeah.

Andrea: So some of the main questions that we get are number one: how do you work together and not kill each other? And so that's what we're going to go through with these eleven points. But then also a lot of people would come up to us and say, "I would love to work with my spouse, but they hate real estate. So what can I do?"

And my solution to that is to find out what they love and how can you incorporate that into your business. Because real estate is just a means to an end; it's just a part, an aspect of your business. So maybe your spouse, or son, or brother, whomever, maybe they love marketing, and you can incorporate them in that way.

Maybe they love social media, and there's for sure a marketing angle with that. Maybe they love crunching numbers or they love systems and tech stuff. If you take the time to figure out what they love or what they're good at, there's a good chance you can find a place for them in your business.

It doesn't have to be looking at the houses. It doesn't have to be the thing that you do. Find what they love and try to figure out how you can be creative and incorporate them if you really want to work with a loved one.

Doug: Yeah, I think that's an excellent tip right there. Real estate is not just "here's a house, what's it worth, let's fix it and sell it." You know, that can be completely boring to some people and overwhelming, not any interest in that at all, but there are so many other aspects to working together in this business and other businesses that have so many different parts, like you mentioned, that people can fit in.

Andrea: And then we've talked about this before, but we really recommend that you take a strengths finder test. So we've talked about the Colby test I believe, the actual strengths finder test, and

then Doug and I took another one last night just for fun called [The DISC Test](#) by Tony Robbins. So you can just Google Tony Robbins DISC Test, and it's free. So that's the cool thing about that one.

It's very in-depth. I found it really, really interesting, and it tells you how to communicate with a person that is whatever you're...

Doug: Whatever your strengths happen to be on that particular test, whatever category you fall in essentially. It will tell you, "Here's your report Andrea. Now the best way to communicate with Andrea is this." And it will list five or six bullet points, and "Andrea may have weaknesses in this area," and five or six bullet points.

Andrea: Yeah, so you can read on your own and learn more about yourself, but then read your spouse's so you can learn how to communicate with them effectively. It was really, really cool. I liked that.

Doug: We are going to have all of our team take this test, and that will hopefully help us to know how they operate. Maybe we need to talk to them with this angle or encourage them this way. You know, those kinds of things. They'll be happier doing these kinds of tasks. You might even have to shift roles around a little bit within your business, which is good. These tests are great, so yeah definitely go check out the DISC test.

Andrea: So working successfully with your spouse. The first thing I want to say is I want to give a disclaimer: the fact that we are not relationship experts.

Doug: We're not?

Andrea: We have been working together successfully though for the last 15 years. We've been self-employed our entire married lives. We enjoy it. We enjoy each other's company, so we do feel like we have something to offer, but we're not perfect. And we're just going to give you what works for us.

Doug: Yeah. It doesn't mean that everyday is just easy breezy, and there's no challenges at all. There definitely are, and we're always trying to work through those things and improve. So the first tip for successfully working with your spouse is number one: put your relationship first.

This may sound like common sense or maybe it doesn't. Maybe it gets breezed over or isn't even something you would think about because you're so invested together in growing this business, but put your relationship first. You've heard the saying, "Happy wife, happy life?"

That's not the best statement because that's kind of a one-sided thing, so I love that Andrea has switched that around, and we have a new sort-of motto here in our business, which is "Happy spouse, happy house." You've got to remember why you even got in this business in

the first place, and usually it has to do with bettering your family's situation or being happier just in life.

And who is more important to you than your spouse or your significant loved one, whoever it is you may be working with? So keep that in mind and put that before your business. I actually read a book recently that tried to make the opposite argument that by putting your business first you're somehow putting your spouse first, because you're building the nest egg and providing.

And I just disagree with that. I think that's wrong, and I think your priorities can get misaligned if you're prioritizing your business and your things to do over your spouse.

Andrea: And your family in general.

Doug: And your family in general. Remember what's really important in life, and that boils down to your loved ones, so that's number one.

Andrea: Okay, number two is assume the best of the other person's intentions. So I think a lot of times we can get stuck in sort of a negativity trap where once somebody does something that bothers you, or bugs you, or annoys you, you assume that they did that on purpose: *He was trying to be a jerk to me.* And most of the time they weren't.

So if you stop and think about it for a minute, sure there are people that do jerky things on purpose, but I think most people don't set out to be mean or rude to you. They just have something else on their mind, they were focused in a different way, or maybe they didn't mean to. So I think it's really important to give each other the benefit of the doubt and don't just assume you know what the other person was thinking before they acted that way.

Talk it out in a nice way and just assume the best of the other person's intentions.

Doug: Yeah, definitely good. Number three: treat them with as much or more respect than everyone else. So it seems to be that we tend to take things out on people we love. Isn't that interesting?

Andrea: It's so interesting, and it's so true because they are our comfort zone.

Doug: Yeah I don't know if it's because they're our comfort zone or maybe you feel like they're always going to love you no matter what. I can kind of air my dirty laundry out on this person and just kind of take it out all on them. But for whatever reason, this is the person you love more than anyone in the world here. Why do we do that?

So when working together, try to remember that there is a respect factor you have for your other employees and people you work with.

Have that same (or more) respect for your loved one that you're working with.

Andrea: I think it's really important that you respect their strengths and what they're good at and possibly even more importantly, respect your partner's weaknesses. Don't expect them to do things that you know they're not good at or don't set them up for failure in that way.

Doug: Take the strengths finder test and know what your loved one is good at and what they're not good at.

Andrea: Yeah, they're not perfect and neither are you. So don't expect them to be and just I think keep respect in the forefront. Okay so number four is to take time out for fun. Who wants to work all the time and be serious all the time?

Doug: Boring!

Andrea: It's not fun. So for us, this is what we do. We have set aside time every Friday morning on our calendar to do something fun. We had told ourselves originally that we were going to go find a new paddle boarding spot every Friday morning, and we haven't done that. So maybe it's really good that we're looking at this right now to remind ourselves.

But it could be as simple as sometimes we'll just go to a pancake house that we love or we'll go for a walk. just anything that takes our mind off of business and we're just hanging out and having fun, remembering why we like each other.

Doug: And it's like a scheduled time every week that we can look forward to, that Friday morning. It doesn't have to be super long. It doesn't have to be anything crazy like we talked about, but yeah, let's take a little time out and enjoy this, enjoy what we're doing together.

Andrea: I think it can really reenergize you personally and as a couple, and it just gives you that motivation to get back to work.

Doug: Yeah it's like recharging your batteries.

Andrea: For sure.

Doug: Along those lines is also taking time to reward yourself. In your business you're going to set goals, and milestones, and marks of achievement, and when you hit those marks and reach those goals, go celebrate! It doesn't have to be major, just go out to eat at your favorite restaurant. Enjoy the ride here and reward yourselves here for accomplishing those things. And then you'll look forward to the next one.

Andrea: Definitely. Okay, so number five is define your roles. This one, for me, is so important. It is really, really important for me to feel like I know what is expected of me. Because if you don't know what you're supposed to be doing, then you end up floundering around, and you cannot be successful if you're floundering around.

You need a direction. Everybody needs to know where they're headed. So we've said it before. Figure out what your strengths are within your business and what you enjoy doing, and then the things that you don't enjoy doing or that you're not good at, what you need somebody else to be doing.

And then I would honestly, honestly take the time to write out a clear description of what you believe your role is and then what your partner's role is. And then have them do the same thing. And then make sure it is in alignment, that you are expecting the same thing from one another, that you guys are on the same page basically because if you take the time to do that, you might realize *oh wow, you were expecting me to do this, this, and that. I didn't know that so I haven't been doing it. That's why it's not getting done. I'm sorry. I thought you were going to do it.*

It's really important that you guys be on the same page, and know what is expected of you, and stick to your own roles, and don't step on your partner's toes.

Doug: Yeah and Andrea says that with a smile. This is one of the things that we've had to learn sort-of the hard way I guess working together. We didn't do this for the first several years in our house flipping business, and I tend to be the kind of person that just, I don't know, doesn't talk about these things as much.

And I just tend to put my nose down and start doing, and before you know it I'm doing little bits of everything, and I've sort-of infringed upon or crept over into some of the tasks that Andrea had defined as her role to do. And so I was stepping on her toes a bit, and she would have to talk to me about it, and just say, "Hey, that's what I handle. That's what I'm good at. What are you doing here? Are you doing my role and yours?"

So that's encouraged us to really clearly define that this is what I do, this is what I'm good at; this is what you do, this is what you're good at. That's really helped us be productive.

Along those same lines is tip number six, which is hire someone to do the minimum wage tasks or the things you just don't like doing or aren't good at. This was probably the single best thing we've ever done in our business.

Andrea: Absolutely.

Doug: So early on when you're starting your business or if you're an entrepreneur, doing anything, you are every role from day one.

Andrea: And it's okay to start that way.

Doug: Absolutely. Yeah it's okay. You don't have a budget to go hire everybody or even know what roles you need to fill early on. So we were our entire business. We did everything for the first several years, and one of the tasks that was necessary that we had to do was bookkeeping. We both hate it.

Andrea: And we're not good at it.

Doug: Somehow I forced Andrea into doing that, and that became her role early on. So she would have to do the books, and she just despised it. It was a stressor, and she would do it, but she just hated doing it, and we realized early on that we needed to hire someone to do this.

So we did. We hired a bookkeeper and huge change. All of the sudden, Andrea likes going to work again, likes doing things. And the books get done, and they're probably done better than— they are done better than what we could do.

Andrea: It was such a burden lifted off of my shoulders, but then it also freed me up to do more things to help grow our business, so it was the best.

Doug: Another thing we used to— and we're talking about things that are important in your business. We don't want to downplay the roles of all of these different moving parts that need to get done, but some things you should just hire out.

Andrea: For sure. Like when we first started to do direct mail, we were a little bit nervous about the cost of that. We had never done it before. We weren't quite confident that it was going to work, so we would literally sit in front of our television at night, stuffing envelopes and writing addresses on hundreds of letters. That is insane.

Doug: For hours and hours. Sometimes you have to do that to get going. I get it because you're on a budget, but we did that for far too long. And we would spend hours and hours stuffing envelopes. Listen; there are services out there that can do that for far less than your time is really worth.

Andrea: Absolutely. Value your time. I think that's what it boils down to.

Doug: It definitely boils down to valuing your time. What is your highest and best use as a business owner, as an entrepreneur? Is it stuffing envelopes at night?

Andrea: No!

Doug: No. It could be marketing; it could be negotiating; it could be working on systems of your business. It could be a hundred other things that are far more valuable than that. So the next hire we made was an administrative assistant, because paperwork began to get overwhelming.

And we're talking about just filling out forms, signing papers, you know checking checkmarks. Things like that, calling the utility companies and spending hours on hold to turn on the gas at a certain property.

That stuff can just drain you and take up all of your time. So hire that out. You can get lots of people that will work and fill those roles for you, and probably do a better job than you would do.

So tip number seven is to not throw each other under the bus in front of others.

Andrea: This one I think is really important. You guys have to be a team and have to stand united. So basically that means having each other's back no matter what. You need to trust that your spouse or business partner will not talk negatively about you in front of others, and you need to not talk negatively about them.

So that means not ever, not in front of your employees, for sure not in front of your employees.

Doug: For sure not in front of your employees.

Andrea: Not in front of your contractor or clients. It just really dilutes your strength as a team. It makes you both look weak, and it can ruin your relationship. So stand united and don't talk bad about each other.

Doug: Yeah, absolutely.

Andrea: Okay, tip number eight is be each other's cheering squad. And in this little e-book I tell a little story about how I ran track in high school, and my race was the 800. And it's basically two laps of sprinting, and a lot of people say that it's one of the hardest races in track because you're basically sprinting for two laps. It's a lot.

Doug: Half a mile.

Andrea: And so the way it was set up at our school is that the cheering stands, where people would sit to watch you, was all on one side of the track, like at the starting line. And so all of your encouragers were right there. So you would start out, and when you would get around past that cheering squad, you feel great. *I can do this. I'm going to win.*

And then you get past them around the backstretch where you can't hear the cheering squad, and you feel like *okay, I'm going to die. I can't*

do this anymore. And you realize how much that cheering squad motivates you, and keeps you moving forward, and it's so important.

And I think it's true in business. It's true in life that when people encourage you and tell you that you can do it, you're more likely to do it. My mom used to always tell us that you treat people like they are who you hope they will become, and they will likely become it. I think there's so much truth to that and so much wisdom.

And your business isn't going to be fun every single day. Some days you just have to do the hard work. Some days you're going to feel more stressed out than others. So be there to encourage each other and to cheer each other along, and it will just motivate you as well.

Doug: Yeah, absolutely. We've noticed that sometimes our business—excuse me, our relationship and our business is kind of like a teeter-totter. There will be days where I just need that encouragement. I'm feeling overwhelmed, or I'm stressed, or whatever is happening, I'm down.

And Andrea is there just lifting me up with her encouragement, with her positive attitude, with her being my cheerleader essentially. And then they'll be days where it's switched.

She'll be having a bad day for whatever reason, and I've got to be there to kind of bring her up and encourage her, and it just kind of goes back and forth.

It really has been a positive thing where one person can help lift the other one up, and together that lifts both of you up.

Andrea: And you keep seeing things move forward. So, awesome. The next one, number nine, is no business at the dinner table.

Doug: Nope. Food at the dinner table.

Andrea: And talking.

Doug: Oh, and talking.

Andrea: Talking to your family. So I read this little book by Anne Voss Camp called [*One Thousand Gifts*](#), and she said something that I will never forget. It was so powerful, and I try to remember this all of the time. She said that, “you will be remembered for what brings you the most joy in life.”

And I love that, and someday when I pass on, I don’t want my kids to say, “Well, she sure loved real estate.”

I want them to say, “She loved me, that I brought her joy. I could tell that she was happy when she was around us.” And so one way that we know we can always do that everyday, I hope we do this in a lot of ways, but at the dinner table.

That is our time. We are not going to talk about business. We put our phones away, and we go around the table asking, “What was the best part of your day? What was the worst part of your day?”

And Doug and I will tell them about our best parts and our worst parts, and usually everybody’s best part of the day is “right now.” That’s what they always say: “Right now with you guys!” So I just think it’s always good to have time that is set aside that you are not talking about business.

So maybe you don’t have kids, but that’s okay. You have to have time where you just don’t talk about business.

Doug: Right, your business can’t dominate your entire relationship. You have to take time to focus on your relationship, and your family, and what’s important. So number ten is to listen as much as you speak. And I kind of feel like this one was written right for me.

Andrea: Nah.

Doug: So, you know you’ve heard it said that when your mouth is moving, your ears don’t really work. True. And God gave us two ears, one mouth. All of those things are very true, so by listening, the important thing here is that you’re not just listening, you’re focusing, and you’re taking in what’s being said.

I think it's especially important for guys, or at least for me, I can't speak for all guys, but I know that when Andrea wants to talk to me about something. I'm very focused, so if I'm doing a task, if I'm watching a football game (which is a task sometimes), and she wants to talk to me about something, I need to pause the game and turn, and look at Andrea, and really listen to what she's saying because I cannot do both.

If I'm writing an e-mail and she wants to talk to me, I can't write the email and really listen and hear what she's saying. So listen as much or I should probably say listen more than you speak.

Andrea: You've probably all talked to that person that you can tell that when you're talking to them, they're not listening to what you're saying, they're planning out their next statement that they're going to say in their head. And you don't ever walk away from that situation feeling good or feeling like you were heard.

It's annoying, and it does not help your relationship. I never walk away from a person like that thinking *gee, I want to hang out with them more.*

Doug: Yeah, like *they really cared what I was talking about and paid attention.*

Andrea: Yeah, so I think it's good personally and professionally to be sure to listen to what people are saying. Take it in.

Doug: Make sure they're heard, and they know it.

Andrea: Because it makes people feel valued.

Doug: Right, exactly. Last tip.

Andrea: Last tip, number eleven is always be grateful. Life will always be filled with stress and difficult things, so to either start your day or to end your day by reminding yourself of everything that you have to be thankful for in your life can completely change your mindset. And I think you might hear to always be grateful and think *okay, that's silly or that's simple.*

Well the truth is that in business or in life, there is no magic formula. I think people are constantly going to these "Get Rich Quick" seminars and different things thinking *I just need that one magic formula thing that somebody is going to tell me, and that's going to be it.* No, the truth is you just have to do it. You just have to do the hard work, and sometimes it's as simple as stopping to think about what you're grateful for everyday.

And we've noticed a tremendous difference in our own lives as far as fulfillment since we have taken the time to do this. We discovered this app called [Gratitude 365](#), and by literally taking a couple of seconds to remember what you're grateful for, jot it down, it can transform you.

And there have actually been studies done on the physical effects it can have, psychological effects, social effects, and it's amazing.

So for physical, they say that it can give you a stronger immune system; you'll be less bothered by aches and pains in your life, have lower blood pressure. People who are grateful exercise more, take better care of their health. They sleep longer and feel more refreshed when they wake up. Psychologically, they have higher levels of positive emotion, more alert and awake, more joy, more optimism and happiness.

And then socially, they generally feel more helpful, and generous, and compassionate, more forgiving and outgoing, less lonely and isolated. So gratitude is *so* important.

Doug: Yeah, so important, and we've talked on this before. But it helps you focus on the things that are good in your life, and everybody has things that are good in their lives. And it keeps you in a positive frame of mind. *So* important. Very critical.

Andrea: They say that it's not happiness that brings us gratitude; it's gratitude that brings us happiness.

Doug: So true.

Andrea: Maybe you're like me or maybe you're not, but I am such an "out of sight, out of mind" person, and so I wrote this little book thing, and it's great. But it's kind of thick, and it's a lot of stuff, and I need, in order for me to remember things, I have to have it in front of me sometimes.

And so we're going to add a little bookmark to the end of this e-book that is just bullet points of the eleven tips.

Doug: A literal bookmark.

Andrea: Yeah, if maybe you're a person that's just like me, and you need to have certain things in the forefront of your mind, and that will help your relationship to be focused on these eleven things and just be a good reminder, you can print out that bookmark and tack it up somewhere, stick it in a book that you're reading, and help keep these things in the forefront of your mind.

Because it's one thing to read them, but if you forget it, you're not implementing that into your relationship or your partnership. So if you can take them and put them to action...

Doug: It's so much more valuable. Yeah to have them right there in the forefront of your mind.

Andrea: You're much more likely to work successfully with your spouse.

Doug: You are much more likely.

Andrea: And so we will be putting this bookmark up in our office.

Doug: So we hope you got a lot out of this episode.

Andrea: Yeah, you know we really tried to sit down and truly think about what are the most important things that have contributed to us having a happy and healthy working relationship, and we feel like these are the eleven things. So we hope that it is helpful to you in some way, and we'll continue to strive to do them too.

Doug: Absolutely. We wanted to encourage you to head over to the website and get that bookmark as well as get a copy of this e-book that Andrea wrote. And the website is [spousesflippinghouses.com](https://www.spousesflippinghouses.com). What else do we have? Anything else to wrap it up?

Andrea: We had somebody write a review that got me all giddy last night. It's kind of exciting when you get a review from somebody that you don't actually know.

Doug: Yeah, it's neat to see that wow, people other than maybe our close friends and family, are listening. They're might be somebody out there who is actually benefitting from what we're saying. We don't know who this person was, but they wrote a great review, and I'm trying to pull it up here so I can read it.

So the review comes from "SWhite37," and they said, "Five stars. Life changing information. As someone who is looking to get into real estate, specifically flipping, this podcast, website, and resources are simply unmatched. I have learned so much in such a short period of time, and the information they are giving is priceless. Thank you so much for sharing your ideas and insights. It brightens my day each and every time I listen."

Thank you SWhite37 for your kind words. This keeps us encouraged to continue to record podcast episodes.

Andrea: Yes, for sure. Thank you so much! We appreciate it.

Doug: Thanks so much. If you haven't left us a review or rating, please head over to iTunes and do that. We really appreciate that and like to hear the feedback from our podcast.

Andrea: And besides that, it also helps our ranking in iTunes which just keeps it kind of out there for other people to find this podcast, so thank you so much. We really do appreciate it.

Doug: Absolutely. So on that note, we are going to wrap it up, and we will be back with another episode soon, and we will talk to you later.