

LOVE IN A F*CKED UP WORLD PODCAST
EP04 WHAT ELSE IS TRUE?

Dean: I'm Dean Spade. Welcome back to my new podcast, Love in a F*cked Up World, where we talk about how to build and sustain strong connections with each other because our resistance movements are made of our relationships and are only as strongest as they are.

I launched this podcast a little over a month ago with the idea of talking to some of my favorite people who've influenced me about the ideas from my book, Love in a F*cked Up World. It's been so much fun to watch this podcast grow and spread in the short time that it's been out in the world. I'm excited to see the way it's being taken up and shared. It means a lot to me to know that people are listening.

I'd love to keep expanding the podcast. If you've been enjoying it so far, you can help to keep the podcast going by rating, reviewing, and following it on Apple and Spotify. It really makes a difference to help people find it.

I also wanted to mention that Morgan and I were able to record this episode in the same room instead of online. So we're releasing the full video footage of this episode on YouTube in case you wanna watch.

Also, there's a graphic for this exercise that I describe in the episode. There's a link to download the graphics in the show notes.

Today's episode is a deep dive into the tool What Else Is True? If you listen to episode three, where I was having a conversation with Tourmaline and Morgan Bassichis, you'll remember that Tourmaline kept returning to this tool in particular as one she found especially helpful as a reminder to treat people with spaciousness, remembering to give other people a break in the way that both felt good to her and reflected the way she wanted to be in relationships.

Morgan is with me in this episode talking through the tool What Else Is True? And in addition to being my dear friend, Morgan Bassichis is an amazing artist, performer, and anti-Zionist and abolitionist organizer. Morgan also has a background in generative somatics, though not, as you'll hear in this episode, in teapot studies.

Welcome back to the podcast, Morgan Bassichis.

Morgan: Thank you, Dean. Nice to meet you.

Dean: I'm so glad to be encountering you for the first time ever.

Morgan: Yeah, it's a pleasure.

Dean: I'm here with my friend Morgan, who I've been friends with for

decades, and who is someone whose work really overlaps the same kinds of worlds that this book is about and this podcast is about. And has been in a lot of fucked up relationships [laughing] and helped me through several.

Um, and so today what we're gonna do is talk about this tool that is in Love in a F*cked Up World called What Else Is True? And this tool is the one people are saying, mostly, is their favorite. This came up in when we had an interview together with Tourmaline for this podcast, and it's come up a bunch of other times since then.

Morgan: Do you hear the chimes?

Dean: I do.

Morgan: And I, that's my politics. Just name what's there and there's chimes. Okay?

Dean: It feels so good to tell the truth.

Morgan: So I just wanna say, the chimes in the room.

Dean: Yeah. Calling it in.

Morgan: Um, Dean, now I've heard of hammers. I've heard of screwdrivers. I've heard of rulers. But I've never heard of a tool called What Else Is True? So tell me, what is this tool?

Dean: Okay. Okay. So this is a tool that is something we can use when we get really focused on something upsetting that we're obsessing about. And our, our, our idea of the world gets very narrow. And some of the examples I give in the book are like, if I'm really focused on an insecurity in a relationship. Or I'm focused on somebody I'm unhappy with in a group I'm in. Or I'm mad at the group. And just like, something that's like keeping you awake at night, like you can't stop thinking about it.

So this tool is for those moments, to try to broaden our perspective and get us out of that kind of obsessive little corner.

Morgan: I've been there. Fixated.

Dean: I doubt that.

Morgan: I'm there right now. Um, how does it work?

Dean: So the way it looks in the book is, it's like there's a smaller circle inside, a larger circle, but you don't need to use that graphic to do it. You can do it just listening to the podcast. The first thing you do is you just write down like, what's the thing that I'm feeling

so strongly. Like, I'm so mad at this person, or I'm so jealous or scared, or...

Morgan: Dean...

Dean: You get it! [laughing]

And then in the larger circle, the first time you do it, you write about what else is true about that person or group or situation?

Because sometimes we lose site. Like I'm so upset by the last thing the person said to me or what happened between us, but I've forgotten actually this person has the same values as me. Or they were kind to me in this other time, or they're actually going through a really hard thing and I'm aware of that. Like, just try to remember what else is true about the person or the group.

Morgan: Hmm. And what happens when we can remember what else is true beyond only the thing that we're fixating on?

Dean: I mean, for me, it's like relaxing.

Morgan: Mm-hmm.

Dean: It's like, I am no longer, like, I feel like I've like tipped up on my heels obsessed, you know, kind of leaned forward over something, and I just feel myself kind of like, come down a little.

Like for me it's often, no one else is thinking about this as much as I am. Probably, I don't know everything that's going on in their heads. Probably, you know, they're not actually my enemy. If I'm feeling strongly about them, it may, because we really rely on each other a lot, so that's why I'm so stirred up.

Morgan: Yeah. What I like about it is that it's not saying you have to forget about what you're fixating on. It's just also, what all, what else is true? It's not like, stop fixating on that. 'Cause it's almost impossible. It's like telling somebody to relax. It's like, that's just not how it works, to drop it, whatever you're fixating on.

Dean: Yeah.

Morgan: So it's, it feels very compassionate that you're just like, let's add more. What else? Not just, but not like, stop talking or stop thinking about that thing.

Dean: Yeah. It has not worked for me ever to try to stop talking or thinking, just to stop focusing on something. It's just like, then I focus on it more.

The second thing you do in this tool, after you think about what else is true about them, is you think about, what do I not know? Like what might be contributing to this that I don't even know about? I don't know what their day is like. I don't know what they actually thought. I don't know if they actually said that. You know, like, whatever you don't know.

That can also be relaxing. 'Cause I'm often making up a story about what people are like, especially if I don't know on the internet. I don't know who they are.

Morgan: Yeah.

Dean: You know, but also even people in my group, I, you know, or people close to me, I might not really know what was behind that tone of that text or, you know, there's a lot of speculation happening. So that can kind of bring it down.

And the third piece is writing down what else is true about me and my life. Like how can I remember, oh, I actually have friends who support me. I'm actually connected to other people in this group. Or this isn't, when it's the narrow focus, it's almost as if my life depends on it.

Morgan: Mm.

Dean: And so how can I like, back off of that a little bit and be like, what else is true about my life that might pull the lens back, help me remember there is lots going well, or lots of support or alternative spaces to get my needs met?

Morgan: Mm-hmm. Maybe I've felt these feelings in the past and I survived them.

Dean: Yeah. And then after you do that, you make, the book has a little chart. On one side of the chart you write what's my responsibility, what can I can control or contribute to? And the other side you write what's beyond my responsibility and control?

And that can be so helpful. Just to be like, oh, there's some things I can't affect. I can't affect how other people think of me. I can't control, maybe like whether this group is going to achieve some goal I was hoping for. I'm not single handedly able to do that. I can't control whether or not this person's gonna leave me. Whatever it is I'm obsessing over.

And what can I control? Oh, I can make sure I have dinner. I can call a friend. You know, whatever's actually within reach. I can do my part of the task if I'd like to. You know, like that, kind of, bring it back into that kind of realism, what's in my zone.

Morgan: Mm-hmm. And, um, what's the cumulative impact then, of doing these things, on the thing that you've been fixating on?

Dean: I think it just reduces the fixation of it.

Morgan: Right.

Dean: It's just like, it doesn't mean it might not occur to us. But the other option is to fixate more and more and more and try to imagine controlling more and more things and who are all the people I could call right now and get them to also be against the person or the group.

You know, like there's a kind of way in which the other side can be one of the ways we disorganize our communities.

Morgan: Right. Or like, can you read this text? Can I, can I have 50 people read this text message? And then they'll be like...

Dean: No, I love doing that! [laughing]

Morgan: Yeah, exactly. You designed this tool for yourself!

Dean: Of course! Every single thing in the book is something I desperately need or else.

Morgan: You're not only a, you're not only the president, you're also a client.

Dean: That's so true. The call is coming from inside the house or whatever.

There's a thing at the end of the tool that's kind of related to what you just said. A set of questions: are there any sore spots from my history that the situation might be rubbing against? Like, am I really freaked out about this or am I partly freaked out about what happened at this other job or with this other group or with my parents or my school? That can just be helpful 'cause it's like, oh, maybe my feelings are a little turned up and it's not all about this moment.

And there's a question, am I in any familiar roles in this situation? Like, have I previously felt like the odd person out or the truth teller or the carer or, and so is any of this, again kind of historical for me?

And then how can I be kind to myself about these histories that are coming up? And there's just a checklist of like, do I wanna go to nature? Do I wanna take a bath? Do I wanna ask a friend to talk to me? Do I wanna move my body? Do I wanna write things down? Just like

reminding us. Like, so much of this book is just about noticing when we're really activated. And then like, can I take a little bit of care of it instead of just being totally run by it?

Morgan: Hmm.

Dean: Which feels so bad and sometimes leads to doing things that we regret.

Morgan: Right. Would you say... like, how do you know if you're fixated on something?

Dean: For me, it's often that I am thinking about it when I'm trying to do other things.

Morgan: Right.

Dean: And it's a lot of times keeping me up when I'm trying to sleep and I'm distracted when I'm talking to people, I'm still thinking about this other thing.

I'm curious, how do you know when you're fixated?

Morgan: Um, I've never been fixated. So this is, for me, I'm like, um, I'm an outsider.

Dean: You're feeling a lot of empathy?

Morgan: I'm feeling a lot of compassion. Um...

Dean: A little bit of judgment.

Morgan: ... for people who, yeah, no, just curiosity for people who have these kinds of feelings.

Dean: Mm-hmm.

Morgan: Um, no. I think that there's maybe like a sense of like, things get faster inside of me, in a sustained way. And I can kind of like, the, it's like, like as if there's like a teapot and it's just like the teapot that sort of like the, what's it called, Dean? Whistle? [laughing]

Dean: Yeah. Yes. It is called a whistle.

Morgan: Dean, I'm not in teapot studies, okay? Sorry.

Um, you know, like, it just feels like you're, like, that alarm is going off. Um, versus the kind of like, maybe more quieter voice inside myself that's like, something's wrong. I like what you're

saying about it interferes with other stuff.

Dean: Yeah.

Morgan: How else do I, I think I fixate all the time. I think I'm like a generally fixated person. So this is like, I think I can use this. I think you just solved my whole life, actually, not just relationship.

Dean: Sorry I held this back for 20 years.

Morgan: I think that's what I'm learning. I don't think I'm acutely fixated. I think I'm generally fixated.

Dean: Yeah.

Morgan: Is that possible?

Dean: Sure, sure.

Morgan: Do we exist?

Dean: Yeah, absolutely. I am remembering recently I have been noticing, I say this one like, kind of gratitude prayer every morning. And it's the same thing every time and maybe it takes about two or three minutes. And it's, you know, this same exact litany. And when my mind wanders during that, how much is it wandering into what? It's a little bit of a, like I could take a little bit of inventory of my mental state by whether I'm able to stay with these words and images that are very meaningful to me, or whether I'm like constantly dipping out.

Morgan: Hmm.

Dean: Or it takes me a while to get through it 'cause I keep stopping and forgetting where I am.

Morgan: Hmm.

Dean: And so that I think sometimes is an indicator of fixation. Like just going to something you, you're used to doing. And being like, what's it like right now?

Morgan: Mm.

Dean: You know?

Morgan: I can imagine this being helpful around jealousy.

Dean: Mm-hmm.

Morgan: Because there's, while I can get really fixated on like, evidence of like, that my jealousy wants. I can also imagine being like, oh, there's so much other evidence too, of like the security of our relationship or like how this person loves me or like our commitment or whatever. So I can imagine that this being helpful there.

Dean: When I have this with jealousy, one of the ways I use this tool is in the what else is true about me?

Morgan: Mm-hmm.

Dean: I make a list of the reasons I've chosen a situation that's not completely locked down, right? Like I could be in completely isolated relationships where I have a friend who doesn't have any other friends or a date who doesn't have any other date.

Morgan: You should!

Dean: Thank you. It should just be you.

Morgan: Yeah.

Dean: I get it.

So I, I like return to my commitment to everyone having a lot of support and love in their life. I return to why I chose this. So then I'm getting out of the like, kind of victim role that jealousy often makes me think in. That like, this is happening to me and people are leaving me. Or I'm, you know, whatever the story I'm telling and I'm back to like, oh, I chose this. And that, I think any moment where I can revisit choice when I'm fixating on what I believe is being done to me, or I'm being left or whatever, is really helpful.

Morgan: Yeah, that's a perfect note to complete on. Thank you.

Dean: Great. Thank you, Morgan.

Thank you always to Morgan Bassichis for being such a thoughtful, brilliant friend and teacher, and for always helping me recognize what else is true.

Thank you for joining me for the latest episode of Love in a F*cked Up World. This podcast is based on my new book with the same title, which is out now from Algonquin Press. I hope you'll pick it up from an independent bookstore in your community. Please don't buy it from Amazon or Audible.

Love in a F*cked Up World is hosted by me, Dean Spade. It is produced and edited by Hope Dector. This episode was recorded by Matt Harvey.

Thank you to Ciro, Eugene, Derekh, Kelsey, Lindsay, Jessica, Raindrop, and everyone else who helped make this podcast. Our theme music is I've Been Wondering by The Ballet.

If you found this show useful or you have ideas of things you'd like to hear about, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us at Love in a Fucked Up World at gmail.com. The U in Fucked is a zero. Or you can leave us comments on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.

I have an email list where I occasionally share new projects and opportunities to get involved. If you wanna join it, write to us.

We need each other more than ever now, and I hope this podcast offers tools and ideas that can help us build and sustain strong relationships and strong movements. I hope that you'll keep listening, subscribe, and share this episode with the people in your life.