

0:00:01.0 Nicole: I'm Nicole Antoinette and this is Real Talk Radio, a podcast filled with honest conversations about everything. Today, I am joined again by my partner Tom, who most of you know by his trail name Gent. This is also what I call him, so yes, Gent and I answer six listener questions today about how we handle conflict, about the things we've learned about each other during quarantine, about our eight-year age gap and more.

0:00:28.4 Gent: Go find something in your room, go find something in my room. My room's not a pigsty but, everything has a place in your room, and the place it has in my room is that was the closest surface that I could put that down. And again, it's not like my room has dishes all over the place, or just like trash everywhere. It's not a hoarder nest or anything, but it's... There are things places that they shouldn't be.

0:00:56.9 Nicole: This conversation is made possible thanks to the 400-plus awesome people in my sliding scale Patreon community. You all are the best. It is your monthly funding that allows me to get a full transcript made for each episode, cover all admin and hosting costs and pay fair hourly compensation to every single guest. To our sound engineer, Adam Day, and to myself as the host, researcher and producer of this show. It takes a village, as they say, and I am honestly just so grateful for the people in my virtual village that have gathered together around this mission of filling the world with honest conversations. Our Patreon community, which I have lovingly nicknamed Adventures In Honesty, it's not just a funding source for this podcast though, it's actually so much more than that.

0:01:42.8 Nicole: I host a live end of month reflection and journaling circle for the whole community each month, it's also recorded in case you'd rather do that on your own. You get a bonus monthly podcast episode called Real Talk Reflections, where my friend, Julia Hanlon and I share deeply and honestly about our own real lives in real time.

0:02:00.6 Nicole: You get my monthly business and money report. That's where I share all the behind the scenes info, and I do an in-depth monthly Q&A about the financial, administrative, and decision-making side of my own small business. And lots of other surprises, treats, delights. Basically, if you love the show, I bet you'd feel really welcome and have lots of fun in our community. You can always come try it out for a couple of months, see how it goes. You can, you know, leave at any time, change your pledge amount at any time, and as I said, we do operate on a sliding scale, so all tiers get access to everything regardless of how much you are able to pay.

0:02:34.6 Nicole: You can find us at patreon.com/nicoleantoinette. That's patreon.com/nicoleantoinette, and I will see you there. Alright, and now let's get into the show.

0:02:50.7 Nicole: Alright, babe, you ready?

0:02:51.0 Gent: I think so.

0:02:54.3 Nicole: It's not a test.

0:02:55.9 Gent: I mean, I didn't put my radio face on this morning.

0:02:58.1 Nicole: It's okay, I think you're ready. So the people, and by the people, I mean Lindsay has requested more bad business ideas when I opened up questions on Instagram and said, "Gent's coming back on the podcast, what else do you want us to talk about? Or what do you wanna know?" Lindsay said, "More bad business ideas."

0:03:15.9 Gent: So I have a bad business idea... And this one's actually really bad. Bad business idea and also a pretty good prank idea. The bad business idea is the toast office, and it's fancy toast on different kinds of bread and everyone's dressed like a mail person, like mail man.

0:03:34.5 Nicole: Okay, so it's a restaurant...

0:03:38.3 Gent: Yes.

0:03:39.1 Nicole: Where they serve toast, but they're dressed like postal workers?

0:03:42.5 Gent: Yes. Taking investors now.

0:03:45.0 Nicole: Okay, okay, so that's your... There you go Lindsay, that's your bad business idea.

0:03:49.1 Gent: You're welcome, Lindsay.

0:03:50.2 Nicole: And you said that you have a prank that you would like to share?

0:03:52.7 Gent: You sneak into someone's domicile and you peel all the labels off of their canned goods, so then they never know like, "Oh, you need corn for dinner? Well, it's chilly instead."

0:04:03.8 Nicole: That would actually be... Especially for someone who uses a lot of cans, if that were a person who had a whole cabinet that they rely on of canned goods, that would be kind of awful.

0:04:11.7 Gent: It's a pretty funny prank, yeah. [chuckle]

0:04:13.5 Nicole: Is it or is it just mean?

0:04:15.8 Gent: It's funny if it doesn't happen to you, that's how pranks work. [laughter]

0:04:18.2 Nicole: Oh my God. [chuckle]

0:04:21.5 Gent: Do you not get pranks?

0:04:25.2 Nicole: Do you know nothing about me? I hate pranks. Never do any pranks to me. I feel like the closest thing that we have to a prank is the jar of honey.

0:04:33.6 Gent: Yeah, that's true.

0:04:35.1 Nicole: Okay, how do we explain the jar of honey to people?

0:04:37.2 Gent: So we were in Vegas at a fancy buffet...

0:04:39.6 Nicole: Pre-COVID.

0:04:40.8 Gent: Pre-COVID, and they gave you a jar of honey with your tea at the end of dinner, and it has a teaspoon of honey in it. Like very small...

0:04:48.7 Nicole: Right, it's like a teeny, little... It makes you feel really fancy, makes you feel like a fancy giant, you have this tiny jar of honey and I don't put honey in my tea, but I was like, we paid a billion dollars for this buffet, I'm gonna steal this honey, or not steal, it was mine, they gave it to me. So I put the tiny jar of honey in my pocket and left with it. Then what happened?

0:05:09.3 Gent: Then it was... You kept wearing the same jacket for a couple days in a row, but not taking the honey out of it. Not taking the honey out of the pocket and you kept commenting, "Why do I still have this honey?" And then you would take it out and I would [chuckle] I would put it back in your pocket. [laughter]

0:05:25.1 Nicole: Oh yeah, that's what happened. I would take it out and put it in my suitcase, whatever, 'cause it was when we were traveling down to Arizona to do the retreat at the end of 2019.

0:05:32.7 Gent: And I kept putting it back in your pocket after you would take it out...

0:05:35.5 Nicole: Yeah, and then... So we were together until early January of 2020 when you flew back home and I went back... You flew back to Massachusetts and I went back to Bend and I put the honey... I hid the honey in your suitcase when you left, that I thought that I was very clever that you keep putting this honey in my pocket, I'm gonna put the jar of honey in your suitcase, and so ever since then, it's become a thing that we alternate back and forth, hiding the jar of honey for each other with long periods of time inbetween, so you almost forget about the honey. Except something that I've learned about you is that you're terrible at keeping secrets or not... If I tell you something in confidence, you're not gonna repeat it, but...

0:06:13.6 Nicole: It's like if you buy a gift for someone and...

0:06:15.5 Gent: I'm so bad at it.

0:06:16.5 Nicole: You wanna give it immediately, right. The gift is for the birthday in two months. No, the gift is happening today, and so when you hide the honey, you're too impatient to wait for me to find it, which is like the organic finding it is what makes it funny.

0:06:29.5 Gent: I'm bad at pranks.

0:06:30.5 Nicole: Yeah, no, but you're excited, you're so excited that you like nudge me, hey, hey, why don't you use that... Why don't you use that frying pan? 'cause like the jar of honey is in the frying pan. The best one was when you put the jar of honey in my bag of oatmeal.

0:06:41.6 Gent: Yeah, that was a good one.

0:06:42.3 Nicole: Like the big bag of oatmeal...

0:06:43.1 Gent: And I kept that secret, because I did it before I went to work in the morning, I usually leave at like 7:00 and you don't come downstairs until me and my dad have both left for work, so it was pretty good that I got a text, the jar of honey with a bunch of crying, laughing emojis.

0:07:00.1 Nicole: Yeah, that's true. Although I have had the jar of honey for a while now, and it's my turn to hide it and we'll see. So I feel like that's the closest. But no, I don't like pranks because I feel that they're mean.

0:07:10.3 Gent: That's fair.

0:07:11.1 Nicole: Yeah, so you don't prank me but we do the jar of honey.

0:07:13.7 Gent: Yeah.

0:07:14.0 Nicole: Yeah. Great. Great story.

0:07:15.0 Gent: It's a very nice, sweet, innocent... It's not really even a prank. It's a inside joke.

0:07:20.2 Nicole: It's a thing that we... It's a thing that we do, although I'm always... It's a glass jar. I'm always a little bit worried like, where am I hiding it?

0:07:26.6 Gent: It's a sturdy little glass jar.

0:07:28.3 Nicole: That's true.

0:07:28.9 Nicole: I wonder if we'll ever eat this honey.

0:07:30.6 Gent: Probably not.

0:07:31.0 Nicole: No, this is the forever...

0:07:31.7 Gent: I'll be pretty disappointed if we did.

0:07:33.2 Nicole: Okay okay.

0:07:34.0 Gent: It would have to be like a desert island situation.

0:07:37.1 Nicole: Also, why are we stuck on a desert island and all we is this jar of honey?

0:07:40.8 Gent: I don't know. Situations.

0:07:42.6 Nicole: Great, okay, so that's our prank story. So we got six... Well, we got more than six questions from Instagram, but we are gonna try to keep this to a minisode length episode, so we are gonna answer six questions. How do you feel? Do you feel emotionally prepared to answer some questions?

0:07:58.8 Gent: Let's start. We'll see.

0:08:00.1 Nicole: Okay, we'll see.

0:08:00.6 Nicole: Yeah, we'll see if you're... We'll see if you're ready. Okay, Anna asks, is the age gap ever weird. My boyfriend is five years younger, and there have been a few times where we can tell people are being weird about it, but if it was vice versa, no one would bat an eye. Just curious about your experience. So context... You are eight years younger than me. That is the context for this.

0:08:21.5 Gent: Yes, and you're eight years older than me.

0:08:27.6 Nicole: Great at math.

0:08:28.9 Gent: I got it. Summer school paid off that yeah.

0:08:31.5 Nicole: Oh my gosh, what do you think?

0:08:33.0 Gent: It's not really an issue with us so much like your friends tend to be your age and older, and every once in a while they'll rag on me for being the young one or something like that, but it is all usually very innocent and no one's ever judged us, for...

0:08:51.7 Nicole: Or if they do, they're not telling us.

0:08:53.1 Gent: Being together right, and that's their problem.

Listener Questions â What We Argue About, Navigating Dietary Differences, our 8-Year Age Gap and more, with Nicole & Gent

0:08:55.3 Nicole: I don't think there's anything about us that says, "Please tell us what you think about our life choices."

0:09:00.7 Gent: No.

0:09:00.7 Nicole: We don't give off that air of like, we really wanna know if you think that I'm too old for him.

0:09:04.1 Gent: Do you think I could improve on the situation, whatsoever?

0:09:06.6 Nicole: Yeah, some once in a while. The thing that will get me is not necessarily our age difference, but the different ages that we were when big things happened in the past.

0:09:16.4 Gent: Yeah.

0:09:16.5 Nicole: I remember last Thanksgiving in Massachusetts, when it was you and me and your parents, and we were having dinner, I don't know why over Thanksgiving dinner, we were talking about 9/11, but we were and.

0:09:27.6 Gent: Tradition.

0:09:28.4 Nicole: Tradition, right, tradition. And it came up that you were in second grade, I think...

0:09:35.1 Gent: I think so.

0:09:36.1 Nicole: At 9/11... On 9/11, and I was in high school and drove myself to high school, and yeah... That for me, for some reason, I know what our age difference is, but the older we get, the less of a thing it is, but when you think about the age difference, when we were younger.

0:09:52.9 Gent: Yeah.

0:09:53.3 Nicole: It kind of blows my mind.

0:09:54.5 Gent: Yeah, you drive your car home legally from school that day and I rode my bicycle home from elementary school.

0:10:00.4 Nicole: Yeah. I mean, that's the age, whenever you wanna give me a hard time about it. It is usually the eight-year-old and 16-year-old.

0:10:06.4 Gent: Yes.

0:10:06.9 Nicole: That you like to say, Hey, you could have been my babysitter and legally driven

your car to come and babysit me...

0:10:13.4 Gent: I love that joke.

0:10:14.5 Nicole: I don't love it so much. Okay, what do you think is cute about that? How does that make you feel good?

0:10:22.2 Gent: 'cause I like seeing you squirm.

0:10:23.3 Nicole: Oh my God. I remember relatively early on in our relationship, I think you were like 26ish.

0:10:31.7 Gent: Yes.

0:10:32.5 Nicole: And every once in a while, I think the age thing bothers me more than you, because I think I am a little weirder about age.

0:10:38.2 Gent: Definitely.

0:10:38.3 Nicole: I have a little... Oh God, I'm too old to whatever.

0:10:41.2 Gent: I'm a man, of the people, I don't discriminate.

0:10:43.1 Nicole: Oh my God. And I was having a particular moment of, Wow, you're 26, and you said.

0:10:51.9 Gent: Didn't seem to mind yesterday...

0:10:53.2 Nicole: Yeah, It's true. Now, the way... I wish that we had... Or I wish that I had a gif of your face in that moment referring to sex that we had had the previous day, that was very spirited.

0:11:07.5 Gent: Yeah.

0:11:08.3 Nicole: And that you looked at me and said, Well, you didn't seem to mind yesterday.

0:11:11.3 Gent: And I wish I had a video of you trying to collapse inside your own body after that drag.

0:11:17.3 Nicole: You did drag me. I mean, you were correct. Yeah, I didn't...

0:11:20.0 Gent: You didn't.

0:11:20.3 Nicole: I did not seem to mind your 26-year-old athleticism the day before you.

0:11:24.3 Gent: Nope. You did not.

0:11:24.4 Nicole: It's fine, that's great. So no Anna, it's not necessarily weird for us, but it does come up and... Yeah, it is. 'cause my parents are 13 years apart. My dad is 13 years older than my mom.

0:11:35.8 Gent: Yeah.

0:11:36.1 Nicole: Obviously that's a bigger age difference, but it is a lot more accepted to have an age difference that's that way gender-wise.

0:11:42.8 Gent: Yeah.

0:11:44.3 Nicole: But here we are. Our next question from Chloe says, Do you think a two-person van life set up is in your future?

0:11:52.3 Gent: One of the issues that would happen with a two-person van life set up is we would have to be totally off and actively traveling, I feel, because.

0:12:01.8 Nicole: Off from work, you mean?

0:12:02.8 Gent: Yes, because a problem is the van is your home and it's also your mode of transportation, so you're either doing everything together or someone's getting dropped off at the library or at the movie theater or whatever, while someone else goes to do their thing, like it's hard...

0:12:22.8 Gent: And it's like, "I'm gonna take the car and the house. You have nowhere to hang out."

0:12:26.0 Nicole: Right, you have no house and no...

0:12:27.6 Gent: Right.

0:12:28.0 Nicole: And so, I mean, sure, you could have a bike or something, but even that, it's the level of interdependence that if either one of us were working, how does that happen? Yeah, I agree with you if we were, well, sort of a separate issue is we don't like to share our beds or even bedrooms if we can help it. I'm not a great sleeper, just in general. And so sharing a bed in a van, I think would not work well for me in general, and wouldn't work well, you sleep really hot, I sleep really cold, it just is not great, but if we take that aside, I just can't imagine that level of needing to have your life intertwined with someone else.

0:13:07.0 Nicole: What if I wanna drive and go visit a friend in another state for the weekend? Then either you're coming with me, you have to rent an Airbnb and potentially a car and or not have

transportation... I don't, I feel like couples who live full-time together in a van, I would be interested to ask them questions of how they navigate this exact thing.

0:13:32.7 Gent: Yeah, I think that would be really interesting to learn because so far, we can't really come up with anything short of we get a moped and that gets ridden into town or something...

0:13:41.1 Nicole: But even that, it's like then you have no kitchen access. You have no anything. What if it's not good weather? I do think if it was hey, we've quit our jobs for a certain period of time and we're going on a slow road trip, where the point is we're together and traveling together like you said at the beginning, I think that's the only situation where I could see it maybe working, but even then, you get no alone time.

0:14:05.5 Gent: Right, and I feel like you and I are both so independent that even if we choose to spend time together, having the option in the back of our mind of well, if I wanna go do something, I can go do it and I'm not stranding the other person.

0:14:17.7 Nicole: Yeah, yeah, I wonder how much we wouldn't meet our own needs for independence and alone time just because we would feel guilty where it's okay, cool that I wanna go drive here and do this thing, but if I do that he's stuck.

0:14:31.0 Gent: Yeah.

0:14:31.2 Nicole: So I think that's a very long-winded way of saying, "No, thank you."

0:14:34.3 Gent: Yeah, yeah, that's fair.

0:14:35.9 Nicole: Yeah. Okay, so the next question, it's actually two similar questions. Daniella says, "What do you argue about most?" and Mary Jo asks, "How do you handle conflicts?" So those seem to be related questions. This was the one that we've talked about the most off-air, knowing we were gonna talk about it on air, because I think it's a tough question for us. What do you argue about most? How do you handle conflicts? 'Cause when we initially saw the question, we were like we don't argue.

0:15:05.4 Gent: Yeah.

0:15:06.8 Nicole: But we're like that can't be true. Let's unpack that a little bit.

0:15:09.5 Gent: We are, I would say, such over-communicators that nothing ever turns to the point of an argument. There are some things that we don't necessarily see eye to eye on, but...

0:15:24.9 Nicole: We don't argue.

0:15:25.4 Gent: Right, we don't have, we can have heated conversations and stuff like that, but it

doesn't, it's more passion than an argument.

0:15:33.1 Nicole: And even that is relatively rare. This question has actually made me do quite a deep dive internally into past romantic relationships that I'm not someone whose communication style is arguing, and I don't say that from like, I'm too good to argue. People are just different in the way that they communicate. Some people it works well for them to fight, whatever that looks like, or to have that. I never have. The only memories that I have with partners of what I would consider to be like an actual real argument or a fight, we were drunk.

0:16:04.6 Gent: Yeah.

0:16:04.9 Nicole: So much of that was my drinking history, that those things would come up, and part of that was we weren't communicating well when we were sober so that things would come up when we were drunk.

0:16:14.1 Gent: Yeah.

0:16:14.2 Nicole: But yeah, you and I don't argue, which doesn't mean that there aren't things that we disagree about or that we have to talk through, but I feel like how we handle conflict, for the most part, we're in such deep communication so often that the things get talked about before they really feel like uh oh, conflict, right?

0:16:33.0 Gent: Yeah, yeah. Yeah 'cause I think about yesterday, and we were talking about some plans for this summer, and I think we talked for like an hour and a half, not distracted, sat there on my bed and talked about this for an hour and a half.

0:16:44.9 Nicole: And there were some parts of it that we felt a little conflict-y or that felt a little emotional.

0:16:48.5 Gent: Definitely, yeah definitely, but a lot of times when I've been in arguments with people, I walk away from it and I'm like why did I get heated over that? Why did I let that turn into an argument when it could have just been a conversation?

0:17:01.2 Nicole: Yeah.

0:17:02.1 Gent: And I felt like that maybe wouldn't necessarily turned into an argument yesterday, but it could have if we weren't comfortable enough with each other to just sit there and talk about it for...

0:17:14.3 Nicole: Yeah, I also feel like, let me see if I can say this and have it actually sound the way that I mean it. No, I feel like I don't need you to be okay, meaning that if we're talking or things are, we're not seeing eye to eye, I'm fine to put that down and trust that we'll come back to it. It's not like oh my God, he's not okay. That means I'm not okay and maybe this is like, we're not co-

dependent. Maybe I don't, do I even really know what co-dependence means?

0:17:46.8 Gent: I don't.

0:17:47.1 Nicole: But there's something in that where I'm fine for us to, I don't know, manage our own emotional landscapes, and we'll talk about the things as we need to talk about them. Does that make sense?

0:18:00.1 Gent: Yes, and also, we've never been in the situation where it's like we need to make a decision now, and we don't see eye to eye on this, but we need to make a decision regardless. We have yet to be in a situation like that. So potentially in the future, it's not like we're these perfect people who just communicate and that's it, and you just never, but we have yet to be in a scenario that it is we need to decide now, and we don't agree on this, but we still need to come to a conclusion.

0:18:27.0 Nicole: Okay, so the last thing I wanna talk about about this, 'cause I think the initial question from Daniella, what do you argue about most? If we take out the word argue or what do we tend to disagree about the most?

0:18:37.2 Gent: What's our catching point in our relationship?

0:18:39.0 Nicole: I feel like one of them is definitely around cooking dinner. What are we gonna have for dinner? Who's gonna make dinner? Especially during COVID time, I feel like that is the reoccurring conversation, and the way we sort of jokingly cushion it is one of us will be, it'll be like 2:00 PM I hate to be that guy, but what's for dinner? [laughter]

0:19:02.8 Gent: Yeah.

0:19:04.7 Nicole: So I think that's definitely where we have friction on that.

0:19:07.1 Gent: Yeah, I agree.

0:19:09.1 Nicole: Mostly, you make dinner. So thanks...

0:19:10.6 Gent: That's true, and it's also been kind of difficult that over this past winter, you've been dealing with some dietary restrictions that doesn't leave for a lot of variety in the diet.

0:19:23.3 Nicole: And there's a dietary-related question that we'll get to in a little bit, so maybe we can put a pin in that.

0:19:27.4 Gent: Okay.

0:19:27.8 Nicole: But other things that we have... And maybe not not see eye to eye on but that

we've had to talk through and compromise. We have different standards and preferences when it comes to not necessarily cleanliness, 'cause that makes it sound whatever, but like tidiness.

0:19:41.9 Gent: Yeah.

0:19:42.3 Nicole: I'm a lot neater than you are, and my way isn't better. Your Way isn't better, but they don't... They're not the... You are comfortable with more sort of like mess and disorganization than I am.

0:19:56.1 Gent: Yeah.

0:19:56.2 Nicole: And so we've had to talk about what does it mean to share a living space somewhat.

0:20:01.8 Gent: As the messier person. When you said that it's not that one is better than the other. In my opinion, that's definitely not true, 'cause...

0:20:10.2 Nicole: You're like mess forever.

0:20:11.6 Gent: Yeah, go find something in your room, go find something in my room. My room is not a pigsty, but everything has a place in your room, I'm like, the place it has in my room is that was the closest surface that I could put that down. And again, it's not like my room has dishes all over the place or just like trash everywhere or like...

0:20:31.4 Nicole: It's not dirty, it's messy.

0:20:32.6 Gent: It's not a hoarder nest or anything, but there are things... Places that they shouldn't be.

0:20:38.1 Nicole: But also...

0:20:38.3 Gent: Or don't have to be.

0:20:39.6 Nicole: This sort of goes back to the sharing the van question of... Or separate bedrooms. I think that I would have a hard time, or I think it would cause more conflict, this particular difference between us would cause more conflict if we were sharing a bedroom.

0:20:53.4 Gent: I agree with that.

0:20:54.1 Nicole: Because then it's not your responsibility to meet my standard, if I'm the one with the higher standard, I feel like it's my responsibility then to do that, but I could see me getting resentful, feeling like I have to clean up after you.

0:21:07.6 Gent: Yes and no, it's not your responsibility to drop down to my expectation level, but it could also be seen as you don't respect common space.

0:21:16.9 Nicole: Right.

0:21:18.6 Gent: It shouldn't be a you drop down to my level, it should be a we meet somewhere in the middle that feels good for both of us.

0:21:24.7 Nicole: Yeah, and with some of these issues, I feel like... And this could be a separate conversation about compromise in general, I think compromise is often thought of as meeting in the middle, but certain situations, what meeting in the middle does is leaves both people sort of unhappy. I would so much rather like, Hey... I remember years ago when I interviewed Nick North on the podcast, and I think I told you about this, he was sharing that something that he and his wife do or that their therapist taught them was like a number system where let's say they are in conflict about something or they feel one wants to do X and the other wants to do Y, the question is, on a scale from one to 10, how important is this to you?

0:22:03.7 Nicole: And if for one person, it's an eight, and for the other person, it's a two, they just do it the way that the eight person wants it, obviously, if it's an eight for both people, you sort of have to figure it out, but I feel like I'm meeting in the middle sometimes is not... Not necessarily makes it worse, but I think there's something in that if everything always goes to the middle ground, both people are kind of like, This isn't what I wanted.

0:22:24.3 Gent: That's true, but I feel like in this specific thing that we're talking about now, I don't dislike a clean space. It's just that my natural tendency is not to do it that way.

0:22:36.4 Nicole: Totally.

0:22:36.4 Gent: So it's not like I would walk into my room and be like, this... Oh my God. This is too neat. My kindle's on my night stand and my water bottle's on my night stand like... Let's clean this up.

0:22:50.6 Nicole: Yeah, however, something that has felt really nice to me is... You and I like to do things for each other. I think we talked about this last episode that you'll bring me tea in bed before leaving for work, or at least before we were living in the vans, and I like that when you were at work during the day that I could go into your room and like make your bed and fill the water bottle and these very, very low lift things that you really appreciated and made me feel like, Oh, this was a tiny way to care for this person that I love so maybe it all works out. Maybe it does. The one other thing on this that I feel like we are working on is you being able to say no to me more, which I think sounds more intense than I mean it.

0:23:33.4 Gent: Yeah, I have, especially in our current living situation, where I have things that I can do, like working on the van, whatever random project I have going on in the barn, that I have an

outlet that's outside of the home to do things, and you don't have a lot of people in the... In real close proximity here. One of the issues that we had when living with my dad is I would feel guilty going to do something, like I have the van project that I was working on, I had projects in the barn that I was always working on, that... I have an outlet outside of the home, and you sort of don't.

0:24:15.2 Nicole: Well, not especially, I don't know anyone there.

0:24:18.1 Gent: Right.

0:24:18.7 Nicole: It's COVID, so I'm not gonna go do anything, you basically like, I have work and you.

0:24:23.1 Gent: Right.

0:24:23.7 Nicole: And that was it.

0:24:24.6 Gent: So I would run into feeling guilty in telling you, "No, I don't wanna go for a walk because I got home from work and I would really like to get into this project," or I would feel guilty. I wanna hang out with you it's not a matter of that I don't want to, it's... I wanna hang out with you, but I also wanna get this accomplished before it gets dark out. And that's something that I would run into a lot, and I'm trying to be better about. It's okay to say no, and it's not... I'm not saying I don't wanna hang out with you.

0:24:56.7 Nicole: That's also okay if like...

0:24:58.1 Gent: It is.

0:24:58.1 Nicole: You're like, "I would like alone time."

0:25:00.1 Gent: But a lot of the times I genuinely do wanna hang out with you.

0:25:01.7 Nicole: Right.

0:25:02.2 Gent: It's I also wanna get this accomplished because I'll feel really good once that's done.

0:25:05.8 Nicole: Yeah. Yeah, I think that was one of the hardest things about living there was, I don't like the feeling of my partner is my entire social world, that's not how I am in any other aspect of my life ever. And so one of the things you were working on saying no, and then I've been trying to work on, "Am I making it safe to say no?" And I know we've talked about this before, that like you've said, "yes" and sometimes it's like we... There's a difference between saying like, "Oh, it's totally fine to say no."

0:25:39.5 Nicole: And if you give off an energy where you say that but you're acting disappointed or you say that, and it's making it match up where something I've been trying to practice, not just with you, but in general, is thanking people, "Thank you so much for saying no, I really appreciate your no." Or honoring the fact that other people are welcome to say no is something in general that I'm working on.

0:26:00.9 Gent: Yeah.

0:26:01.3 Nicole: So there we go. Next question's from Natalie, what is something that you would love to teach the other person? What is something that I would love to teach you? The phrasing of that question makes me think what are skills that I have that you don't, but I don't know that it necessarily has to be that specific. Something that I would love to teach you or I guess maybe encourage you to learn, right? We could phrase it that way. I remember when we were in the UK on our road trip in 2019, and we were at a pub having dinner, and you wanted to get a beer and you were too nervous to go up to the bar and order the beer, would you like...

0:26:43.9 Gent: I get scared.

0:26:46.0 Nicole: What are... Yeah, provide context. What are you scared of?

0:26:47.4 Gent: I don't know, people... What if they're like, "you can't get this, you're stupid. You ask for it wrong." I don't know, I get... I'm pretty introverted, so approaching a group of people, "Excuse me, I need to get to the bar." Of getting through first of all, and then getting someone's attention so they can do their job and I can give them money. I just... It makes me nervous.

0:27:10.2 Nicole: Yeah. So I would love to encourage you to be able to go to the bar and order a beer, not just that specifically, but there's something in that of... I don't know, you get what I'm saying.

0:27:20.4 Gent: Yes. I totally do...

0:27:22.0 Nicole: Yeah.

0:27:23.3 Gent: And it's totally an irrational thing. I'm totally fine talking to strangers too, as you well know, I'll talk to anyone, but there's something about...

0:27:32.5 Nicole: It's... My...

0:27:33.5 Gent: "Excuse me... "

0:27:33.6 Nicole: Yeah.

0:27:33.7 Gent: "Excuse me. Could you help me?" That makes me nervous.

0:27:34.9 Nicole: My analysis of this, which feel free to reject 'cause... Yeah, you're the quintessential talk to strangers like we'll get... You'll get in the Uber and you will know the person's life story that you will then remember and reference two years later, you... And you remember... Yeah.

0:27:51.3 Gent: I'll remember and reference that two years later, but, "Where did I put that thing?"

0:27:54.6 Nicole: Yeah.

0:27:54.7 Gent: "I just put it down. Where is it?"

[laughter]

0:27:55.1 Nicole: Right, but where in my room is this one important thing that I need every single day? Yes, definitely. So it's not that you're uncomfortable talking to strangers, I feel like it's... My analysis is that it's potentially that you have some kind of hang up about feeling like you're inconveniencing people...

0:28:09.8 Gent: Yes, definitely, that's it.

0:28:11.5 Nicole: And like you said, it's their job to work at the bar. You're allowed to ask for a drink, but it's... "Can you move out of my way? Can you..." Yeah, so I would love to teach you that. What would you like to teach me or encourage me?

0:28:21.5 Gent: I would like to teach or encourage you that it's never too late to learn a new skill that I...

0:28:27.0 Nicole: That feels very real, I feel like I'm about to be dragged... Okay, hang on, let me change positions. Go ahead.

0:28:30.2 Gent: I feel like a lot of times that you and I come from very different backgrounds, and there is nothing that you can't do yourself with a little bit of time and can do attitude, and you look at something and say, "I don't know how to do that. Therefore, I won't know how to do that."

0:28:52.0 Nicole: Yeah.

0:28:52.5 Gent: And I look at it is, "I don't know how to do that yet."

0:28:56.6 Nicole: Yeah, yeah. That's very real.

0:28:58.4 Gent: And I think your attitude towards that could shift and I think it would be really good for you and really good for both of us, and I'm not saying that you need to be a car mechanic,

but like... Let's teach you how to check the oil in your car.

0:29:07.4 Nicole: That's great because... Yeah, yeah.

0:29:09.8 Gent: Just simple things.

0:29:11.2 Nicole: I do think you're... You're spot on at that, that's very accurate, and that it's related to our upbringing because...

0:29:17.7 Gent: Yes.

0:29:17.9 Nicole: My parents both have wonderful qualities, but they, I was just gonna say, "They can't do stuff." That sounds... But checking the oil on the car...

0:29:27.4 Gent: Not in the way that we do, right.

0:29:29.8 Nicole: Hanging a painting, doing... Whereas I look at... And it was really interesting living with you and your dad, like so many of those great qualities that you have 100%, I see where that comes from. There is nothing that you guys can't figure out when that thing broke in the heater in the house...

0:29:47.8 Gent: Yeah.

0:29:48.3 Nicole: That like 100% I would have called whoever the heat specialist is to do it, like you and your dad are down there with the flashlight, with the manual, Googling stuff, figuring it out, you get the part out, "Okay, where do we buy this part? We drive couple of towns over from the commercial part place, we get it." That whole process, and I'm sitting there being like, "What? I can't do anything." Which of course isn't true, but in these sorts of like... I look at it and I'm like, "Oh, that's just not for me."

0:30:13.9 Gent: Yeah.

0:30:14.0 Nicole: As opposed to, "Hey, I can learn stuff."

0:30:18.2 Gent: Right. There has never been a hired handyman in this house as long as I've lived here, it's always been, "well, that's broke. We can figure out how to fix it." And I think that that's... Not that it has to be a manual labor kind of thing, I'm not saying you need to know how to use this set of wrenches and that kind of stuff, but I think you get in your own way quite a bit when it comes to acquiring new skills.

0:30:42.4 Nicole: Yeah, I think so, too. I also... And I thought and read about this sort of what happens in adulthood to either kids that were on the super gifted track in school or kids that were praised for results instead of effort, which was definitely me, especially, I was very naturally good

at school, it doesn't mean that I didn't work hard, but my type of intelligence does well in the standard American education system.

0:31:08.7 Nicole: And so getting good grades was always a thing that my parents were really proud of. Teachers are praising, there's a lot of gold stars and accolades around being good at those types of things from a young age, and it feels good to get those gold stars and to be adored in that way. So I feel like I very quickly learned, "Oh, if I want..." And it's not if I want love, 'cause I certainly was loved by my family, but if you want praise or to feel special or any of these things, it comes from being good at something, so if I would start something and find that I wasn't good at it right away, I would give up really quickly, because what's the point? If these other things get me love, respect, whatever. And when you're young, you don't sit down and make the pro-con list of, "This gives me love and this doesn't." But it's this subconscious thing that I had very much carried into adulthood.

0:32:00.7 Gent: Yeah.

0:32:00.9 Nicole: And I don't think that was true for you. I think there's very much like praising of effort when you've talked about your childhood.

0:32:05.2 Gent: And it's the satisfaction of every time I hear that heat kick on, that's 'cause of me. That feels great.

0:32:13.2 Nicole: Yeah, yeah.

0:32:13.9 Gent: I fixed that and now there is heat throughout the house.

0:32:16.7 Nicole: Yeah, okay. Well, look at us, we are gonna learn new things, potentially. Alright we have two questions left. Kat says, do you eat the same, and if not, how do you deal with dietary differences?

0:32:28.8 Gent: So we don't eat the same.

0:32:30.1 Nicole: I don't even know what I eat, at this point.

0:32:31.8 Gent: That's fair.

0:32:32.6 Nicole: It's... For anyone who doesn't know this, I have a couple of chronic illness situations, conditions, that are supposedly helped by different dietary changes, the problem is that this condition requires this set of things, this other condition requires this conflicting set of things. Do they actually work? Does it matter enough to be worth the inconvenience? The last couple of years of my life have been plagued with dietary experiments, that I'm always like, "I think this is working, maybe." It's been kind of awful, and unfortunately, we have lived and eaten together during that time.

0:33:08.8 Gent: Yeah, and I do a fair amount of the cooking and I kind of eat whatever, I'm not a picky eater whatsoever, I'm not a great eater, I forget to eat, and suddenly it's like 1:00 in the afternoon, I'm like, "Oh, I haven't..."

0:33:21.2 Nicole: I remind you.

0:33:22.2 Gent: Yeah, I'm like, "Oh, I had a cup of coffee this morning, and it's 1:00." And that's another thing. You need to eat very regularly, or you start melting a little bit.

0:33:30.7 Nicole: Yeah. I get very melty. Remember that day, on trail, on the PCT, where you had to "pull the car over", when you pulled us to the side of the trail and you're like, "We're not going any further until you eat something, because I cannot with you right now"?

0:33:41.6 Gent: Yeah, it was the situation of, you're only two miles from camp, and you say only two miles, as if it's not gonna take you like 45-ish minutes to get there.

0:33:50.9 Nicole: Right. It's worth stopping and eating something.

0:33:52.3 Gent: Right. You can either be miserable for the next hour.

0:33:54.4 Nicole: And make everyone around you miserable in the tent, is really what you're saying.

0:34:00.2 Gent: Or just stop and eat a bar and you would be okay.

0:34:02.8 Nicole: I do think... Again, feel free to disagree. I think that I'm very amenable to that. When you say, "Hey, you're getting melty and not doing great. Please eat something." I'm not like, "No, I'm fine."

0:34:16.5 Gent: I don't need a nap.

0:34:16.6 Nicole: Right, exactly. I really... I think that's true for both of us, that we trust each other's assessment of the other one's condition, that it's not a personal failing, it's, "Yo, do better."

0:34:27.5 Gent: Right.

0:34:27.9 Nicole: What was the question? How we deal with the dietary differences. So for me, I feel like I've gone through periods of, I'm really restrictively trying to follow these recommendations and maybe seeing some symptom relief, but not enough, and it's really inconvenient, and we can't eat out and nothing is fun, and so that I'll go completely to the other side where I'm like, "Fuck this, I don't care. YOLO, eat whatever," which is fun for a couple of days, and then physically, I feel horrible again, and I'm just in this cycle that unfortunately, you have also been on the ride of.

0:34:56.5 Gent: Yeah, and one thing is, I can eat terribly for days and then I'm still just base level okay.

0:35:02.6 Nicole: Must be nice.

0:35:03.4 Gent: It's not bad.

0:35:04.1 Nicole: So yeah, being 28, it's hard.

0:35:06.4 Gent: It's not bad for now. But you choose not to eat meat, I'm not a big meat eater, but every once in a while, we also grow our own... Raise our own beef.

0:35:20.8 Nicole: You and your dad.

0:35:21.5 Gent: Yeah, me and my dad. So I don't buy meat at the grocery store or anything, but every once in a while, I'll want a burger, so we'll choose to do dinner separately, that night.

0:35:30.4 Nicole: Yeah, but in general, I feel like we don't have a great answer to this question, other than that, we don't have the same dietary restrictions, but we do mostly eat the same, because it's easier, it's easier to eat together, or it's more fun to eat together, than it is, to be like, "Okay, well, I'm having this. What are you having?"

0:35:49.0 Gent: Right. And it's not a big kitchen in Massachusetts, where...

0:35:52.3 Nicole: And in the vans.

0:35:53.4 Gent: Right. That it was always just, my default was your default because you don't eat meat, I respect that, I'm not gonna try to bully you into doing it or anything.

0:36:04.0 Nicole: Thank you.

0:36:04.2 Gent: So I'll just eat vegetables, because I'm not an asshole.

0:36:08.9 Nicole: Is that the tagline for this? I'm just gonna eat vegetables, because I'm not an asshole.

0:36:13.5 Gent: Yeah, yeah.

0:36:14.4 Nicole: Yeah, so this is something we are definitely still... I don't even know if struggling with, but it's a thing, and I have found that the more active I am, when we're on a long hike, most of my symptoms go away. Obviously, with COVID and stuff, we haven't gone on a long hike in almost two years at this point, so who knows if that will hold true, hopefully test that out, but I'm hoping,

as it gets into summer and we're more and more active and living in the vans just leads to more active, that I can have more leeway, meaning I can eat more of the things that I'm maybe not supposed to eat and not have symptomatic reactions. And when I'm in that space, it makes it a lot easier for us to eat together.

0:36:49.7 Gent: Yeah.

0:36:50.1 Nicole: So fingers crossed. Last question, Olivia says, any unexpected things that you learned about each other during quarantine?

0:36:58.5 Gent: I don't know if I learned it directly through quarantine, but something that really stood out to me is, the amount of space that you're able to hold for people. I have helped out at retreats and cooked and stuff, so I've seen you first-hand, work with these folks, and the space that you're able to hold for people, is really impressive to me. But coming home at the end of the day, and seeing that you've been on Zoom calls for most of the day, is pretty incredible to me, 'cause I have zero interest in doing that, I don't wanna do that all day, I can't sit at the computer and listen to people's... This makes me sound like kind of a sociopath, but listen to people's feelings and emotions all day, when...

0:37:47.0 Nicole: Oh my God. The other day, when we realized that throughout the entirety of COVID, the only time you have been on Zoom, was when we went to our friend's two-year-old's birthday party, for... There was a 15-minute, everyone log on to Zoom, we sing to the two-year-old, they eat some cake, and then log off, that that was the sum total of time that you have spent on Zoom. Obviously, knowing what you do for a living, it makes sense, but it blew my mind to actually realize that.

0:38:18.6 Gent: Yeah, yeah.

0:38:19.2 Nicole: Yeah. So say more about how you don't wanna listen to anybody's feelings, which... I'm sorry, I'm gonna interrupt myself, that it's so interesting to hear that, because you are one of the most sensitive and emotionally intelligent and emotionally available people that I have ever met in my life, and I say that in a... That's a huge compliment.

0:38:39.0 Gent: Well, I think a lot of it for me, is because I'm unfamiliar with Zoom and just in general, I never Skyped people, I never Zoom with...

0:38:47.6 Nicole: Except me, when we were long distance.

0:38:49.0 Gent: Yes. And that's...

0:38:50.1 Nicole: Get on Skype and take your shirt off.

0:38:51.4 Gent: Yeah, that's...

[laughter]

0:38:54.4 Gent: Yes. But I couldn't do that all day long. I will have a conversation with someone face-to-face. We'll talk about feelings, it can be emotional. That is totally safe. I'm not like a cold-hearted person, but I couldn't do it all day long with lots of different people. That's not for me.

0:39:12.5 Nicole: Yeah, that's fair.

0:39:14.2 Gent: And seeing your capacity to do it was very impressive to me.

0:39:17.9 Nicole: I think this is an interesting question. The, like, unexpected things you learn about each other during quarantine, because quarantine for us... I mean, the beginning of quarantine, we were long distance, but prior to me moving in with you and your dad for those seven months, which that's a really long time. For those seven months, we had either been long distance or been together all day, every day in the vans or on a hike.

0:39:41.1 Nicole: So we had never had the experience of both of us working full-time and being together. Because you would quit a job or like finish a project, come out to be with me, I would still be working for a lot of that, but you weren't working. And so this COVID experience, like these last months, were our first experience of being together in more kind of like regular, ordinary life. So that was interesting. So it's like some of the things we've learned about each other. I don't know that it was quarantine-related, it was more just...

0:40:12.1 Gent: It's because of quarantine, you learned these things, but it's not like... And he showed this side of himself that I've never seen before.

0:40:18.6 Nicole: Right. I feel like my answer to this, it's interesting what you said about the emotional space holding. I feel like the one of the things that I learned about you, and again, was really impressed by, is your physical resilience. I get so tired. And not to say, obviously, the work that we do, your work is very physical and my work is very kind of like mental, emotional... Sometimes I forget that the mental, emotional stuff is also tiring. Right? That I feel like, "Wow, I've been sitting at this computer all day. Why do I feel like I need to take a nap?", right, or like, "Why do I feel like it's such a Herculean effort to cook dinner?" And you get up early and go work this really physical job, come home, have relatively physical hobbies, we together like to hike and do physical things, and your ability to just keep going physically literally all day long until it's bedtime blows my mind.

0:41:06.2 Gent: Yeah, I mean, I can just kind of...

0:41:08.4 Nicole: Just go.

0:41:09.4 Gent: Just roll with it.

0:41:10.2 Nicole: Like, "Oh, okay, now we're doing this project, now we're doing this project.". Where I was like... I'm like, "I did one project. Can we lay down? Can I watch something? Can we be done?" [laughter] Oh my gosh.

0:41:19.2 Gent: Also, back to talking about our different backgrounds and if something needs to be fixed, we fix it kind of thing, a lot of it comes out of necessity like, "Yeah, I got home from work but also the heat's broken. Do I wanna lay down? Or do I wanna be warm?" kind of thing. And like... It's just an acquired thing over time. It's like, you just keep on going if you have to.

0:41:42.1 Nicole: Yeah. No, and I agree with that completely, and I'm impressed by it.

0:41:45.0 Gent: And then also my ability to just be like, "Well, I'm not working anymore, therefore I'm shutting down.", I think is pretty sweet too.

0:41:51.1 Nicole: Yeah, that is very true. Those are all of our questions. Anything else that you wanna talk about? May I ask you one question to wrap up?

0:42:00.1 Gent: Yes.

0:42:00.5 Nicole: What are you most looking forward to about being back in van life?

0:42:04.6 Gent: First of all, not working.

0:42:05.7 Nicole: Yeah, you're unemployed for a good chunk of time now.

0:42:07.7 Gent: Yeah, I'm really excited about it. Work has been fun. That sounded... That sounded genuinely...

0:42:13.2 Nicole: Is it? 'Cause I don't... You couldn't even get that word out of your mouth.

0:42:16.5 Gent: It's been interesting. It's been cool to work on these really old structures that haven't been messed with in like 200 years, and probably won't have to be messed with again for 200 years that like some years from now, someone's gonna be doing a repair and be like, "I wonder what the person was like who did this before me.", and that will be me that they're wondering about, which is pretty interesting to me. But my general capacity is I work a lot for a short time, and then I wanna be done with everything. And I'm reaching that done with everything point, and the timing is perfect. And I'm really looking forward to not having to work.

0:42:50.2 Nicole: Yes, yes, I love it. Well, thanks for doing this.

0:42:53.9 Gent: Thank you.

0:42:54.4 Nicole: I love podcasting with you very much. We got a lot of fun feedback on the last one, so if this is a thing that folks would like us to continue doing, say so, reach out, let us know so I can take more questions and we can maybe do a little minisode every month or something.

0:43:09.9 Gent: Yeah, that'd be fun. I'll enjoy that.

0:43:11.3 Nicole: Yes. Good. Me too. Thank you, honey.

0:43:12.8 Gent: I love you.

0:43:13.4 Nicole: Love you.

[music]

0:43:18.1 Nicole: And that's our show for today. Our music is by Adam Day, who also handles our sound editing. Thanks, Adam, you're the best. And huge thanks again, I can't say this enough, to our Patreon community for making this honest conversation, this whole entire podcast and so much of my other work possible. Like my weekly personal essay and discussion thread series on Substack which is called Good Question. Yep, that is funded by the Patreon community as well.

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[music]

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