

5 ARGUMENT DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES

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[00:00:00]

Ryan: I think whether you've been married for 30 days or for 30 years, every couple knows when the argument starts to turn for the worst. It's like the milk you left out all night. You kind of know it's turned. It stinks. But you know. You get that feeling like-

Selena: It's chunky. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: It gets a little chunkier. A little sour lemon milk. No, but every couple knows when you're talking and you're realizing, "Oh, this is not just a conversation, we're not just disagreeing now. Now it's turning into an argument because I feel my own heels digging in.

Selena: Because you are wrong, [Ryan chuckles] I am right.

Ryan: I can see that my wife is getting defensive. She's being really touchy and emotional. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Touchy like you like or-

Ryan: Reactive. Maybe nuclear. I don't know, nuclear reactive. I don't know. Anyway, this is... It's turning. It's turning right now. *[laughs]*

Selena: It's happening right now. So in real-time. We will talk to you on the other side. We will give you five ways to de-escalate a fight.*[laughs]*

Ryan: All right, see you there.

[00:01:00] <music>

Ryan: Well, the train almost got away from me there. Little runaway train. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Almost.

Ryan: Goodness. Goodness.

Selena: All right.

Ryan: So de-escalation I think is a skill that if you can learn it, I think it can bear dividends, pay dividends long into the future of your relationship. If you can just learn to recognize when things are going sideways and remind yourself, remind your spouse that we don't have to go down this road, that we can actually-

Ryan: Well, yeah, there's other things that we can... So replacing those. Like you said, I think just recognizing what's happening and trusting that we don't have to go down that path, because we have other reasons, we have ways to cope and deal in a healthy way to kind of turn away from that consistent fight or whatever we're facing.

But yeah, de-escalation, I feel like it's such a ministry tool because you can feel yourself getting heated, you can feel yourself ready to fight. And then all of a sudden, it's like, if something is said or a deep breath is taken, the Holy Spirit can just come in and just decompress everybody and say, "Okay, this is what's really happening. Let's do one of these five things" that we're going to share with you in just a moment.

Ryan: So if you're watching this, go ahead and leave a comment, if you have a question about it. If you're listening to this, leave a rating and review. Please do take the time to do that. We'll remind you at the end. You remind me to remind them at the end.

Selena: Okay. I'm not good at reminders but... *[chuckles]*

Ryan: It's super helpful. It helps people realize that this is valuable content. And that's what we're doing it we want as many people as possible to hear the good news of the gospel bear full weight on the various aspects of married life.

So if you're not familiar with who we are, my name is Ryan. This is my lovely wife Selena. And we've been doing this for a number of years. This is our entire livelihood. And it's our lives in one way or another is encouraging couples and encouraging families.

So if you want to be part of that, like I said earlier, leave a rating and review, leave a comment, hit the like button, and smash subscribe. Or you can go deeper into the community by going to fiercemarriage.com/partner. And that's actually if you want to lock arms with us. We ask that you pray about that. And if the Lord leads, that you would step into that. [Fiercemarriage.com/partner](https://fiercemarriage.com/partner).

Thank you so much for all of our supporters. Because in these troublesome times when we don't honestly know, we don't honestly know if the other shoe is going to drop in terms of like our distribution, in terms of social media letting us talk about this message. But we do know that our lovely patrons, our supporters will be there month in and month out. So thank you if you're a supporter. It means a lot.

Selena: So a good friend of ours, and we don't know if he came up with this thought, I'm sure it's heard many times or been said many times, but our friend Brian over with FamilyLife- [00:03:54]

Ryan: FamilyLife. Weekend to remember.

Selena: Yes, he was one of the trainers there. He said something that will stick with us for quite a while, probably forever. But he said three seconds is the difference between a response and a reaction.

Ryan: Three seconds is the difference between responding and reacting. So what did he mean by that? I think reaction would be the negative side, right? Like I just feel an offense or I feel something coming on, I just all of sudden knee-jack react to you. Whereas if we take just a moment and just say, "One, two, three," I'm gonna think... You're not just waiting for three seconds. You're thinking and processing for three seconds. *[both laughs]* Maybe you're waiting. He said, "I gotta wait three seconds."

Selena: Just wait 30 seconds. I'm still gonna explode. But-

Ryan: So we're gonna take that theme and kind of unpack it, blow it out into bigger ideas that we can use and weaponize in this fight against an escalating argument. Right?

Selena: Mm-hmm.

Ryan: So let's just dive right into it. The first one, okay, the first step, the first way to de-escalate a fight... Now, before we get into that, actually, when we say fight, people think various things. I want to be clear.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: What we mean is a heated argument. Okay, we're not talking about any sort of physical altercations. We're not talking-

Selena: He would lose clearly.

- Ryan:** Selena, she's at times has been known to throw a sandwich or two.
- Selena:** Don't joke about that. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Don't joke about that. But we're talking about just an argument that is for your marriage a ten. Right? It means that you're starting to take low blows, you're starting to-
- Selena:** Your voices are raising, your heart is starting to beat rather hard and you're feeling hot, and not in a good way. *[chuckles]* You're feeling like you're gonna lose your marbles.
- Ryan:** Because every couple is different. It's so funny. I was in a car with a good friend, we were coming back for a men's retreat, and we had ended up staying later than we thought we were gonna stay-
- Selena:** Always.
- Ryan:** ...and his wife was fuming. Apparently.
- Selena:** Apparently. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** Apparently. Because I'm in the car and he calls and she's on speaker through the Bluetooth or whatever, and she's like, "Okay, well, when are you gonna be home?" And he's like, "Well, we're actually just leaving such and such a town. We're about two hours out." She's like, "Oh, really?" And like his face goes white. And they carry on the conversation. I was like, "Hey, that wasn't so bad." But he's like, "Are you kidding? She's furious with me. Like, that was a 10 for them." And I know they probably had words after he got home. But the point is, is we have to be clear about what we're talking about arguing wise or fight wise.
- Whatever that is, like an eight, nine, or ten level for your relationship. Okay, so that was enough burying the lede.
- Selena:** Well, I think one thing too, a difference to be... something to be, I guess, just highlighted in this conversation is that there is a difference between ignoring a conversation, ignoring or appeasing our spouse to just kind of get through and be done with it. Whereas de-escalating, we see it as like a ministry tool as far as, Okay, we're not just going to ignore the problem. We're not just going to... I'm just not going to appease you in whatever way just, "Okay, you know, like, give him what he wants. Yeah, you're right, whatever, like fine."
- Ryan:** That's so good.

- Selena:** That's not actual de-escalation, or it doesn't even put you on the path to actual reconciliation, which I think is the end game for de-escalating any sort of fight or argument is to actually go head in head in the direction of reconciliation.
- Ryan:** You're engaging with the problem, you're engaging with one another so that you can get down to the root of it. Because a lot of times there's going to be some sin there, some lack of patience-
- Selena:** A lot of times. Every time there will be sin there. *[both laughs]*
- Ryan:** It's true.
- Selena:** Every time there is sin and brokenness that is just burying it's ugly head-
- Ryan:** Or there could be a life circumstance that could be unfolding and it's causing heightened tension. But maybe that life circumstance is calling into question your ability to trust the Lord in that and to go to one another as help mates in that. So I love that you just said that. So it's a way of engaging more deeply with one another and with the true issues at hand, not just sweeping it under the rug, so to speak.
- Selena:** All right, five ways to de-escalate a fight. Here they come. Name it.
- Ryan:** Name it.
- Selena:** Name it. What does that mean?
- Ryan:** So recognizing. So you recognize in the moment, okay, things are actually escalating. We mentioned or kind of joked up front that every couple knows that feeling. But does every couple know to really name that and to say, "This is actually what is happening in that moment"?
- So you have to be able to see it coming and then go through the process of naming it. It's not just like, "Hey, we're fighting. Peace. I'm out." Or "I don't like this. You know, I can tell that you're getting emotional, therefore, I'm going to dismiss you..."
- Selena:** This is delicate to deal with.
- Ryan:** Yeah. So here's some really, I think, help... We realize this is delicate because you could say, "Okay, this is escalating. I can see that you're losing your cool..." That just makes the other person mad. *[Selena laughs]* This is not a way of arguing.

Selena: Or if one of us is saying... I'm saying myself because I can only represent myself. But if I'm saying, "You're really frustrating me right now and you're making me really angry," *[Ryan laughs]* I'm naming all the things but clearly, it's just gonna flame, you know... Flame.

Ryan: It's gonna inflame things.

Selena: In flame you. *[chuckles]* It's going to-

Ryan: It's not going to defuse the bomb, it's gonna set it off. Yes. So by naming it, here's a really careful process, because we want to be clear here. The first piece is set the baseline. So if you know what's happening, you know that you need to call it out for what it is, the baseline is this. "Hey, I love you."

Selena: It's always a good way to start.

Ryan: "I love you. I am for us. I am for you. I want to have a healthy conversation with you. I want this to be better than it is." So that's the first one. You set the baseline.

The second one is you articulate your concern. "Okay, I love you. I'm for us. The concern is this. Right now I feel like this argument is not going in a positive direction. I feel like it's getting worse." That's the second one.

The third one is state your motive. Sometimes you just gotta say it outright, "I don't want this to escalate because when it escalates, it hurts us both. We say things we regret."

Selena: That's hard to say because I feel like my emotions are like, "Yeah, let's fight it. Let's escalate this thing. Come on." *[laughs]*

Ryan: Or "I don't want this to go further because we will sin in our anger." Again, you can say all these things in sanctimonious patronizing ways. Like, "I don't want to sin. We shouldn't be sinning."

Selena: "Don't make me sin." *[laughs]*

Ryan: "You're gonna sin. But genuinely we have to actually want this, then it can be your motive. If it's not your motive, work on the motive. *[laughs]* And the final one is trying to get buy-in from your spouse. In other words, do you agree? Can you-

Selena: Sometimes I would just be like, "Don't ask me those questions right now. *[laughs]* I'm so angry."

Ryan: You can see that we're very skilled *[both laughs]* at de-escalating.

Selena: "Do you agree?" "No, I don't want to agree with you on anything right now." *[both laughs]*

Ryan: Anyway, that's the process of naming it. Part of naming it, too, is not just naming a situation but naming your emotions for yourself.

Selena: Again, is a delicate thing to do because I can't control him, but I can't blame him for how I feel either. Right? I mean, maybe there are things that you've said that hurt my feelings, "I'm feeling hurt right now. I'm feeling angry. I don't think that I'm thinking clearly. I think it's a good time for us to recognize that this is spiraling out of control. We need to stop."

Ryan: I guess the underlying truth here is that many of us we feel and we act on our feelings without really knowing what it is that was driving us, really being able to articulate what those feelings are. So here's the challenge. I think the greatest challenge in the naming piece is being able to put a label on how you are actually feeling. And don't just go to the default "I'm angry." Because you're not just angry. You're feeling sad, or you're feeling afraid, or you're feeling attacked-

Selena: Insecure.

Ryan: ...and insecure. Do that hard work of articulating exactly what you're feeling.

Selena: In a way that's, you know, not more inflammatory and not more blaming. But just saying, "This situation right now, this is what I'm feeling inside of it. I think I say this a lot. I know it's not real or I know, it's not accurate in what I'm feeling, but this is what I'm feeling right now. And this is what I'm wrestling with and I'm struggling with."

We need to go to number two. We need to breathe deeply. So first of all, like you said, name it, recognize that things are escalating, start naming, going through your feelings, setting that baseline of "I love you, I'm for you and for us, but I don't want this to escalate." So let's stop, take a few deep breaths, wait-

Ryan: Which is the second one. So yeah, breathe deeply and remember. We can I think accelerate through the numbers two through five simply because I feel like naming it is like 90% of the battle most of the time. If you can get through

that first piece, you'll notice that you've already begun. It's already almost de-escalated at that point.

Selena:

Yes.

Ryan:

But this is, again, continuing on the process. So yeah, like you said, wait, take a breath, so to speak. James 1:9, "Knows this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger teams."

Selena:

James 1:19.

Ryan:

Excuse me, 1:19. It's 1:19. You had a quote here by Kevin Malone. "Why use more word when few word do trick? I guarantee if you bust that line out and you're Office fans, and you bust that line out in a fight-

Selena:

It will de-escalate real quick.

Ryan:

It will de-escalate real quick.

Selena:

I mean, depending. I would say 80% of the time. *[both chuckles]* Sometimes there's times where he pulls out a quote and I'm like, "Don't you dare! Not right now!"

Ryan:

Which in itself is a quote. *[laughs]*

Selena:

It's a quote.

Ryan:

How dare you!

Selena:

Words are like toothpaste, friends.

Ryan:

We had a fight... I've talked about this on the podcast before, but it's been long enough I can talk about it again.

Selena:

Oh, oh.

Ryan:

We were arguing and I was making dinner one night, *[Selena chuckles]* and I was trying to articulate myself and I was really mad. I was really upset because at the moment. I felt like you weren't respecting me in a healthy way. The way it came out is I was like flipping, I don't know, a steak or something, and I was like, "I just don't get no respect." *[both laughs]*

Selena:

Just kind of came out of you.

- Ryan:** Which if you're an Office fan, that's-
- Selena:** He was like, "I feel like I don't get no respect around here." *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** But I said it like Michael Scott when he's quoting Rodney Dangerfield... Anyway. I laughed begrudgingly.
- Selena:** You did.
- Ryan:** I did not want to laugh.
- Selena:** Oh, we've had many of those moments of "I don't know I can laugh right now." But sometimes laughing is a good way of de-escalating. Oh, that should have been number six.
- Ryan:** That's part of breathing deeply, I feel like. Like that helps you remember immediately like, "Oh, yeah, we have a lot of contexts. I do love my wife. I do think she's awesome. I do laugh with her."
- Selena:** We are on the same team.
- Ryan:** We are on the same team.
- Selena:** Oh, I hate He says that though when we're fighting. *[both laughs]* "I'm on your side. We're on the same team." I'm like, "No, clearly we are not on the same team." It can be very irritating, just to be honest. But-
- Ryan:** "Clearly you're a perceptionist that we are not on the same team." *[Selena laughs]* Which is why I need to say-
- Selena:** I know.
- Ryan:** "We are on the same team." Okay. We use this analogy with our kids all the time, that words are like toothpaste. Once you get those words out, there's no taking them back. And so being slow to speak and slow to become angry, slow to anger is I think one of the wisest things that we can do in marriage. And in any relationship for that matter-
- Selena:** In life.
- Ryan:** And in life. Apparently, there's some science to this. So there's a family therapist whose name is Deb Hirschhorn. She said this: "When we slow down and breathe slowly, our autonomic nervous system, it slows down and it turns off the stress hormone cortisol in our brain simply by the process of deep

breathing." So in other words, the autonomic nervous system is like the things that happen without us knowing that they're happening. Like breathing.

Selena: Right. Your heart beating.

Ryan: Your heart beating. Your immune response or things like that.

Selena: I think that's so funny because when I get super stressed or angry, I feel like my breaths just naturally get deeper. It's like your body's just like, "I'm gonna take care of this one for you." *[breaths deeply]* But yes, deep breathing. There's also breathing techniques and things that I've heard.

Ryan: And you gotta be careful not to delve into the new age. But you know, I think there is a biblical case to be made for like meditating on the things of God. But by understanding that you're a physiological person, you're not just a mind, you're not just a soul, but you have a body. And by actually breathing intentionally, you can slow the mind down and you can calm the soul.

Selena: Well, and I think within those three seconds of responding versus reacting, we can be breathing deeply, and we can be thinking and praying, and asking the Holy Spirit petitioning, like, "Help me, God. Help me in this situation."

Ryan: The second point was breathe deep and remember. So what are we remembering? Really quickly, remember who? Who is this person you're actually up against right now? Oh, it's with my wife. I love her. She's a God-given blessing.

Selena: She's made in God's image. He's made in God's image, for me to care for and to respect and for God's glory.

Ryan: Remember what? Your marriage is good. It's good. It's worth fighting for. It's worth being emotionally mature and taking a step back. And why are you fighting? The big perspective is, you're arguing, you're fighting because you're both sinful people. And sin breaks things, including your ability to see that we are on the same team, Selena. *[laughs]*

Selena: It's not my sins, it's your sin.

Ryan: It breaks our ability to see things clearly.

Selena: Yeah, for sure.

Ryan: And a few episodes back, we talked about anger. Remember? Hot anger. It burns hot. It obscures our visionary.

- Selena:** I was very hot and angry. I don't remember that. *[Ryan chuckles]*
- Ryan:** We respond in ways that aren't healthy. And we can't see it. It blinds us. So remember that that's always happening. That's why we stop and we slow down and remember. Okay, number three. What's number three?
- Selena:** Assume less, try to listen more. This is really hard. So I feel like you'd go through these five things just really quickly of like, okay, pause, breathe, name it. Okay, breathe in again. What is actually happening? Remembering. What? Okay.
- And then assuming less. So when your emotions are running high and like he's saying, we're not seeing things clearly, I think we assume without assuming that we're assuming. Does that make sense? *[both chuckles]* We just think and we assume that, Well, he's saying these words, and he's saying them in this way. So like, the only way I can calculate a response is based on what I'm perceiving.
- But nine times out of ten, I mean, if you talk to any couple, the communication issues are around what's been said. So there's a lack of a shared meaning. Like we're not actually saying the same things even though we might be using the same words in the same context. There's a deeper, I think, understanding that we're not connected with. So as far as like we're not sharing that same meaning.
- Ryan:** So question yourself. Which, if we're not questioning ourselves, that says a lot about what we're assuming about ourselves and that we're smarter than we actually are. Like we think we are smarter than we actually are, or that we understand the situation better than we actually do.
- Selena:** Asking questions is a great way to assume less. So question-
- Ryan:** Is it possible that you're not seeing things the way you think you are? Not seeing reality, in other words.
- Selena:** Question everything.
- Ryan:** Yeah, question everything. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** Oh, when you're fighting sometimes I think questions are so good.
- Ryan:** Question yourself in everything I think. Don't question the things of God. That's what I laughed.

- Selena:** No. But question your spouse too, right?
- Ryan:** Yeah, question your spouse. How dare you? *[Selena laughs]*
- Selena:** How dare you?
- Ryan:** That's my first question for you.
- Selena:** I have a question.
- Ryan:** Okay, so number four—I think it's forefingers up—take a break. So they'll kind of you'll see the inner weave with one another. We're taking a break. In other words, it's okay to take a break with the clear intent to return and resolve.
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** You can always back away from something knowing that, again, I see this as escalating. The best healthiest, most loving thing I can do is not engage with this in this way.
- Selena:** Right. Because-
- Ryan:** I want to engage with it.
- Selena:** Yeah. But if we engage in the way that our flesh is wanting us to, nine times out of ten we're going to end up in sin. Ephesians 4:26 talks about "in your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down..."
- Ryan:** On your anger.
- Selena:** "...on your anger. But forgive one another."
- Ryan:** And what he's talking about in Ephesians is a brooding sort of anger. Like this vengefulness that would be that category of anger, not just oh, we've had a fight. And if we don't say we're sorry and have an immediate resolution, then we're somehow sinning. I don't think that's always possible. Sometimes you need to get rest.
- If you go to bed thinking, "Oh, I'm gonna get them in the morning, and I'm just gonna..." What that's talking about is doing what we're saying not to do. And that's where you sweeping it under the rug, and not ever dealing with it so that it becomes this festering wound and this gap that is widened over time. So take a break.

We have a saying in the Frederick household. This is why when we're talking about leaving and saying, "I want to engage, but I don't want to engage with it in this way." well, the thing that we have in the Frederick household is that play stupid games, win stupid prizes. We can't be surprised when we always are walking in the flesh. And we tend to walk in the flesh in these hard moments. It's difficult.

And if we take the easy route, which is the fleshly route, we can't be surprised if we don't see growth in our marriage, or our intimacy suffers, and we will no longer be connected with one another like we want to be. And the various other aspects of our marriage begin to suffer because we've played stupid games or winning stupid prizes. I'm not trying to make light of it. But just be able to see that cause and reaction of walking in the flesh and reaping the rewards the flesh, which what does the Bible say that is death, and the rewards of walking in the Spirit are life. So choose to walk in the Spirit, choose life.

The final one and the fifth one is take responsibility. Own your own part in it.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And again, a lot of these are impossible without humility, without being able to look at yourself objectively and say, "I actually do sound like I'm attacking my wife. I didn't articulate myself well. I need to back out of that. I need to admit that, own that, so then we can actually move forward." Otherwise you're going to continue down this path of just digging a deeper, deeper hole.

Selena: And I think questions are good again, in this scenario, because, if I'm just heated in the middle of an argument, the humility aspect, the grace... If I'm remembering who I am, like Christ has forgiven me, Christ has saved me, He died humbly the worst death for me... Yes, I think of those things in argument, believe it or not.

I'm like, "Okay, we always talk about this, we always talk about the gospel in the middle of our arguments. So in our own fierce marriage, and we're in the middle of an argument. Okay, God saved me. He forgave me, I need to forgive him. I know that's what I need to do but I don't know how to get there quite yet. Right?"

So how do I forgive him? I can go through the motions of forgiving him or I can, first of all, de-escalate this fight. And part of that, again, like you said, is owning my responsibility in either saying, "Hey, we need to take a timeout," and I'm recognizing this or engaging in the fight with a fleshly sort of reaction.

So we definitely have to understand that God's given us two ways to respond. We can respond in the flesh or we can respond in the Spirit. And not taking responsibility and always shifting the blame is a sign of lack of maturity.

Ryan: I was gonna say it's weak. *[both laughs]*

Selena: Same thing.

Ryan: But yours is more tactful. Part of this is, and we always talk about not doing this in our own marriage, kind of some of the communication ground rules. And we've talked about those in our Gospel-Centered Marriage courses. But we have to ditch the tit-for-tat mentality. And one example that I thought it was, you know, yearly on in our marriage I was really sensitive to how you were chewing your food. I'd be like, "Kind of think you're chewing a little loud right now."

Selena: Marriage? We were dating I think.

Ryan: "I kind of think you're chewing a little loud right now." And you'd be like, "Yeah, well, you smell like a hippo," or something like that. It's a tit for tat, right? Like, I feel attacked and I'm gonna act the best defense as a good offense. So I'm going to go on the offensive here.

Selena: He's working on it. *[both laughs]*

Ryan: That's not an actual thing that you've ever said to me. Although I would have received that with giggles. "You smell like a hippo." *[both laughs]*

Selena: I wish I would have said that.

Ryan: Well, up your game there, right? But the thing with tit for tat is it really does fly in the face of marital unity, a marital charity, and generosity toward one another. So like you can tell-

Selena: Oh, it's a keeping score, which 1 Corinthians 13 talks about. Like keeping score is not an actual way of love.

Ryan: Yeah, yeah. And you know I think when you feel like your spouse is attacking you because they're just angry with you and they're saying things that you know they don't really mean but you know what they're trying to do. And that's what you want to respond to is their motive to hurt you.

- Selena:** I don't always know. That's my problem, though. I don't always know. I'm just like... Because he's a really good arguer and he's a really good communicator.
- Ryan:** You're a good arguer too.
- Selena:** I'm getting there.
- Ryan:** No, you're very good. *[Selena chuckles]* And I'm only realizing now how good you are, which is part of how good you are. *[both laughs]*
- Selena:** I'm so good.
- Ryan:** She's in my head. She's in my head. I'm getting wise to your wiles and your games. So anyway. So the biblical premise for this, again take responsibility, is Romans 3:23. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We have to realize with humility that I'm a sinner. My wife is also a sinner. I'm not perfect. I'm owning my piece, but I'm also recognizing that she is not perfect in how she's dealing with it. So that helps me now think in terms of how can I actually be an agent for sanctification in my wife's life? How has she been an agent of sanctification in my life?
- Selena:** And it goes with owning it. Sometimes we think as a spouse, "Oh, I see your sin. Honey, let me help you with that, right?"
- Ryan:** "Let me help her."
- Selena:** "Let me help her." *[chuckles]* That doesn't go over well, either. So again, this posture of humility, this posture of recognizing that we've all sinned. If you're the first one to admit your sin, I think that is one of the biggest things you can do to de-escalate and to step into reconciliation.
- Ryan:** Bury the lead again.
- Selena:** There it is.
- Ryan:** Like apologizing, saying you're sorry, if you just want a fight to end, sometimes that's the quickest thing to do. Sometimes it doesn't work. But sometimes you can just say, "You know what, you're right? I'm a big jerk. I'm sorry. I give up my..."
- Selena:** It sounds patronizing. It doesn't sound genuine.
- Ryan:** Well, you'd have to say in a way that's genuine. *[both laughs]* That's up to you.

Selena: Really.

Ryan: That's up to you.

Selena: Yes!

Ryan: To end it with this, there's a kind of a caveat that if you find that you're in these ruts, these common, these well-worn paths of escalating fights, escalating arguments of kind of living with a low-grade tension that oftentimes escalates into the seven, eight, nine, then range, then it's time to get help. It's time to get someone else to come in and help diagnose the heart condition, the heart issues and even in some cases, the emotional, mental, physiological issues at play.

Selena: There's nothing wrong with having someone assess where you're at and giving you tools to get out of those ruts. No one wants to stay there.

Ryan: And the million-dollar question is, Who do you go to? We would say, by far, first and foremost, your pastor. Your pastor is in the business of soul care. He has been commissioned by the Lord to care for your soul. Which begs a bigger question. Are you part of a church body? Are you submitted to a church body of believers, people that can actually know you and speak into your life in a meaningful way, in a soul-deep way?

Selena: Where you can be vulnerable.

Ryan: So if you don't have a pastor, then that's going to put you at a disadvantage because this is a soul-deep issue. Like we're not talking about just psychological, emotional things. This has to do with your nature, the fallen nature. So you need a pastor, you need shepherd to help you. Now that pastor might then say, "Okay, let's get some psychological support here too."

Selena: Yeah. "Let get some counselors."

Ryan: Get some counselors. Although I would argue that the pastor should be your primary source of counsel as a noun, not as a verb, but for counsel. Anyway, we can go down that rabbit hole, but we won't.

For now, our couples conversation challenge for you is. identify what conversations and topics and events typically would precipitate an escalating argument.

Selena: Yikes!

Ryan: Identify what are those hot button issues, and then begin to talk through how can you deal with those in a way that maybe won't escalate or won't escalate into the future.

Selena: So some of that might even just be, you know, writing questions down in the off-time that you're not so heated of. "Gosh, we keep talking about how our finances are overdrawn and we're always stressed about it, we always fight about it. Maybe we can just start breaking it down and asking some questions of how can we be better about this? It feels like we're just at ends and..."

I mean, just kind of going through naming the feelings and writing things down often helps me process and clarify some things. So it's another way to deal with it.

Ryan: Let me pray for us.

Selena: Okay.

Ryan: Lord, thank you for the gift of communicating with one another in marriage. Thank You that we can share meaning through this gift of language, through the ability to speak and to hear. God, just what a gift it is. I pray that you'd help us as couples to wield that gift wisely, to love one another well through how we learn to de-escalate touchy conversations and difficult arguments. Lord, it's by your grace we proceed. May You give us the grace to succeed in this area. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right, this episode of Fierce Marriage is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: I almost forgot. If you liked this episode, if you've enjoyed it... You didn't remind me. You were supposed to remind me. This is gonna escalate, I can tell. *[both chuckles]* Leave a rating and review in your podcast app if you would be so kind. If you're watching the video, do hit the like button, leave a comment, leave a question. We read those questions. We often respond especially on YouTube because it's growing part of our ministry. So we do hope to see your questions there. But that's it.

So the episode is in the can. We'll see you again in about seven days. So until next time—

Selena: Stay fierce!

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:12:48]**
 - Scripture reference:
 - James 1:19
 -
- **[00:19:55]**
 - Scripture reference:
 - Ephesians 4:26
- **[00:25:07]**
 - Scripture reference:
 - Romans 3:23

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