

the dots

a podcast about connecting.

Marla Martenson Transcript

Announcer: [00:00:04] Welcome to the Dots. A podcast about connecting. The dots is a series of conversations with artists, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and change makers who talk about how they connect the dots and bring things together for their communities, companies, and themselves for a better life. And now your host Digital Strategist, speaker, and entrepreneur Kathleen Buczko.

Kathleen Buczko: [00:00:26] Marla Martenson is a former model and actress turned professional matchmaker. She's introduced many couples who have subsequently gotten married and continues to inspire and help those looking for their life's companion. Her recommendation: Love yourself first. Marla, welcome to The Dots. Thanks for joining us.

Marla Martenson: [00:00:48] Hi.

Kathleen Buczko: [00:00:50] How are you?

Marla Martenson: [00:00:51] Great to be here. I'm awesome. Thank you.

Kathleen Buczko: [00:00:54] Marla tell me a little bit about your journey. Where'd you grow up?

Marla Martenson: [00:00:58] I grew up outside of Seattle Washington in a place called Federal Way. And when I was 16 my family moved to Tehran Iran. My father was working for a communications company. So we lived there until the revolution messed that up. And they said "Yankee go home". So we moved back to Federal Way and I always wanted to be an actress all my life and performer of some kind. So at 18, I left Seattle and came down to L.A. and started doing TV commercials, and print modeling, and acting. And then of course working in the restaurant industry to pay the bills. And so I didn't become a matchmaker until 20 years later.

Kathleen Buczko: [00:01:45] So from actress to matchmaker.

Marla Martenson: [00:01:48] Exactly. I used my people skills. Luckily. Because I just, when I was 39, my father died of terminal cancer. And I had been living in Chicago most of the '90s and I had to move back to L.A. to be with him. He passed away and I was just devastated. I had given up my job, my apartment and everything. And my whole life was shaken up and then my money was dwindling. And when I moved back to L.A. I thought, oh I better get my butt in gear and go get a get a job. A waitress job or something. And I just couldn't do it. I was doing a little acting here and there but it wasn't enough to pay the

bills. And I met my now husband. We were dating and he had a friend who was taking over the management position at a video dating service and she gave me a job. And so I was a videographer interviewing the singles. Finding out what they wanted in a man. What they wanted in a woman. And that started my matchmaking career because from then there I jumped over to a Beverly Hills matchmaking firm which was high end. And I was there for seven years and then started my own business in 2010. I left in 2009. So yeah, I, luckily those people skills from the acting and working in restaurants, translated over to the matchmaking. So that was great.

Katheen Buczko: [00:03:06] That's a unique career path.

Marla Martenson: [00:03:09] Yes. And when I was asked do you want to work in the office of the matchmaking firm? I said office? I said I don't know how to work in an office. I'm an actor. I'm a you know. I worked in the restaurant industry. I don't know. The said no, no worries. And because I thought gosh I don't know how to do all these power points or whatever. You had to do these these things on the computer and stuff and I really didn't. All I had to do was send some e-mails. And and then talk to people. Match people and tell them about each other and get them together. So it was, it was wonderful I really loved it. But to keep my creative side I started writing books. So I did write five books. And that, I love that. And that's how I keep the creative juices flowing.

Katheen Buczko: [00:03:52] So what do you find that people want in their relationships?

Marla Martenson: [00:03:57] Well, I get, I'm getting the people who they want to get together in the first place. So they are just you know, everybody's looking for love and wants. Like women, they have the same list you know. They, people, so humans are you know we're kind of shallow. We like pretty things. So of course the first thing people want to know is am I attracted to the person. So the women like tall, dark, and handsome or at least tall. And then they want somebody who is loyal, with a sense of humor, and you know a certain amount of success. And then the men want to know if they're physically attracted. And they want someone sweet, and somebody who loves them for them. And so it's pretty much, I would say pretty much everybody kind of wants the same thing but everybody has different lifestyles, and are different places in their life. Whether they want kids or had them or maybe their spouse died. So I know that everybody wants that ultimate you know soul mate but just people are in different places in their lives.

Katheen Buczko: [00:04:59] What is a soulmate?

Marla Martenson: [00:05:01] Well I like to say we kind of use that term loosely now.

Katheen Buczko: [00:05:06] Right.

Marla Martenson: [00:05:06] And I would just say its somebody that you know you click with, that you want to spend time with. I think we have a lot of soulmates. We travel in soul groups is what I feel. But I would say my dog is my soul mate. She's here sitting next to me right now. You know she's with me all the time. My husband definitely a soul

mate. Friends who are soulmates but we're looking for that romantic soulmate who to spend our life with.

Marla Martenson: [00:05:33] So how would you define a romantic soulmate? I love your reference point to soul groups because I do think that people get energy and excitement or prodding and enthusiasm from everyone in their networks. I mean that's really kind of the root of this podcast is how do you bring those things together. And so if we're looking at romance and not in the transactional way. Having lived in Iran, where things were based, I'm sure at the time you were there, on the family and the family's working relationships and there were still today marriages decided by those things outside of romantic concerns.

Marla Martenson: [00:06:23] Mm hmm.

Katheen Buczko: [00:06:23] How do we then bring that sort of romance to the forefront?

Marla Martenson: [00:06:28] Yeah I think people will kind of mistakenly think that somebody is your soul mate, that everything's perfect. You do everything the same. You like everything the same. You think the same. Like a twin or something but actually a soul mate will really push your buttons and force you to grow. With my husband. Oh my gosh. I mean I learned so much but we squabble. You know he's a spicy Latin man and I'm a wacky redhead. You know air sign, Gemini. It's like I want to do this, this, this, and this and this. So he gets me kind of grounded. And you can't do everything. And get organized. And save your money. And so he's taught me a lot of things but it hasn't been a smooth ride. And I think a lot of people, talking about arranged marriages. I think the reason in our culture that we see so much divorce is because people, and I see it with matchmaking, people think that if you have that that romantic spark right away, you have the butterflies in your stomach, your hearts beating, your like oh my god - that that's love. Well that's not love. That's lust or that's hormones, immediate attraction. Because that's going to fade away, you're never going to feel that way you did the first week six, three months, six months. So then you've got to see well is this the right person for me. Is this person honest? Is he have the same values? Do we want the same things going forward? And I think people will get married too quick or think that that was there soulmate. That's my soul mate. You know.

Katheen Buczko: [00:08:00] Yeah.

Marla Martenson: [00:08:00] Because that person is so gorgeous or you know, sexy. And then it doesn't. It fizzles out. And then what's left is you know the things that aren't working. So I think there's I mean, I wouldn't want to be set up and forced to marry somebody but I think some of these arranged marriages they're thought out a lot more. Like you know for long term goals and the quality of the person. So like in India they say oh marriage lasts a lot longer than here because they're you know, planned differently.

Katheen Buczko: [00:08:29] Yeah yeah they don't start necessarily with that romantic spark. They start with what makes sense for those hierarchy of needs. Perhaps.

Marla Martenson: [00:08:39] Yeah.

Katheen Buczko: [00:08:40] This podcast is brought to you by Chapelure Media. Digital media, analytics, strategy, marketing, creative products, training. They do all that. With these services they always add a serious dose of measurement. Visit Chapelure Media dot com to find out more.

Katheen Buczko: [00:08:57] So as you're putting together your career using your people skills. How did you find your voice? Your reference point to begin, even writing down or creating a book?

Marla Martenson: [00:09:14] Well when I was I remember I wanted to be a writer since I was like in the third grade and I used to I've always been a bookworm and my I would write letters to my favorite authors but I was like eight or nine years old. But when I was coming up we didn't have computers. You know. So I was plugging away on a typewriter and then I'd make a mistake and I'd have to use the white out or just.

Katheen Buczko: [00:09:40] Right.

Marla Martenson: [00:09:40] Chuck it you know, screw it I can't do this. And I didn't know how to do anything. You know I was just frustrated and so I put off. I had all these ideas at the back of my mind. I was like, I got, I want to write. I want to write. And I just. And then when we got, when I got a computer and then I talked to a friend who was a New York Times bestselling author and I said, I don't know how to even, where to put the commas and the punctuation and all that. And he goes, neither do I Marla but that's what editors are for. And I was like oh OK. And then when I was working at the dating service, I was talking to all these people, I thought Oh these are some good stories and tips. And I'm getting the inside information. And they're really telling me what people are doing wrong on the dates are what they want. And so I did write my first book, Excuse Me, Your Soul Mate Is Waiting. And I did. I took, kept notes. I just started writing a lot of notes. I remember even writing like an outline on the train from Paris to Venice, when my husband and I were in Europe in my little bunker up there overnight. And then when I was writing my memoir. Well I used to also have a file. So if somebody would send me some feedback about a crazy date, I would print it out and keep it. And just always make notes. I've always got, I've got so many little notebooks all around with notes because now I'm attempting to write a murder mystery and I don't know if I'm going to manage that one. But but I'm writing notes all the time. So yes just like you get inspiration and you write it down or I email myself ideas or whatever or if I'm out. So yeah, that's just what I did.

Katheen Buczko: [00:11:18] No, I love that you believe that you're never too late to try something new.

Marla Martenson: [00:11:24] Oh never. And when I started my own business I was I think I was 47 and I had never I didn't have a college degree. I didn't take any business courses. I didn't you know, I flunked general math. But but but like three times.

Katheen Buczko: [00:11:37] There's calculators for a reason.

Marla Martenson: [00:11:39] Exactly exactly. I hate math but you know I had other skills. You know I speak other languages and I am good with English and writing and talking and speaking and communicating and outgoing. So you used the skills that you have. I remember this one woman Rita Davenport, who I love. She had been a home ec (economics) I think a home ec teacher or something like that. And she wrote a cookbook. I mean she she used the skills that she had. Not that that was her passion or whatever, but that catapulted her to be a major speaker, and to do other things. So you use, take the skills you have. Every life experience, you can use with something. Whether it's, you put it later putting it into a book, or helping coaching someone or catapulting you in your own life. So I even my waitress years I wrote a really fun short story called amateur night. And it's about how one fateful night on Valentines when I was single in Chicago. And was waiting on all these people who were getting engaged and proposed to and it is super funny. So there's so much to draw upon from our own lives.

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Katheen Buczko: [00:13:44] So you talk a lot about in your in your matchmaking endeavors about loving yourself first.

Marla Martenson: [00:13:53] Yeah yeah. It's so important. I mean it might sound cliché. Like if you don't love yourself, how can someone else love you? But it comes down to it.

Katheen Buczko: [00:14:02] Right.

Marla Martenson: [00:14:02] I mean I had to do so much work on myself. I remember always, women have a tendency to look outside of ourselves. I mean I did. I was like. We sometimes and we still even in this day, kind of validate ourselves by the man we're dating. Or something. Well, he's tall. He's wealthy. Look what car he's driving. And then the men will do the same. Like this woman is so gorgeous. But it's not outside. It's not going to make us happy. And then, people will come to me with their list of what they want in a partner. And I'm looking at it. but they maybe haven't. So let's say there was this

man and he had at least 50 or 60 pounds to lose, a huge stomach, and he says I'll only date a woman with a flat stomach like Madonna. You know like a washboard stomach and I thought but how can you ask that when you got you know 50 pounds to release on.

Katheen Buczko: [00:14:59] So how do you handle that question? How did that put your people skills to test.

Katheen Buczko: [00:15:07] Now that was tough because I was working for another company so I couldn't really say. Now, I wouldn't have taken him on as a client. On my own now because I have a small boutique service working out of my house. I don't have a high overhead so I don't take everybody. So I wouldn't have taken him in the first place. I'd say get in shape and then come because when people come to a service and they're paying or they expect to know that they're expecting some people to be in shape.

Katheen Buczko: [00:15:34] Sure. Sure.

Marla Martenson: [00:15:34] You know.

Katheen Buczko: [00:15:35] But that may be a part of kind of our western disconnect as you as you as you so articulately put it earlier. It's that predicating love and commitment and soul mateness, if that's a term, on that kind of romantic spark or to your point you know. I want you to look like a celebrity.

Marla Martenson: [00:15:57] Right? Yeah. Instead of the guys will never, it's interesting because a lot of the women they'll lead with, oh what qualities do you want in the man? And they'll say, oh I want someone honest and romantic and driven. But the guys will always start with the look. They never start with I want a sweet, down to earth, you know supportive. No it's I want you know tall, you know blonde, slender, attractive and then they start with the personality traits. I mean I would say 99 percent that's just the way it is. Men are visual so they start that way. I try to coach them and let them see, look what other kind of qualities? You know. Because as we get older nobody retains that you know youthful gorgeous appearance. We can still be attractive but it's just never the same. We, our bodies change and that's just, we're human and that's the way it is. You know if they want a certain hair color I say, look all women have to, we have to dye our hair eventually anyways. We could dye you know. You only want a brunette. Maybe she could dye it or something if it's that important.

Katheen Buczko: [00:17:07] I have been married. This is a deep dark secret. I've been married for 28 years. I have married everyone I dated so I recognize that I'm a dinosaur in today's age. I've never Tindered pieces of fish or any other. But it's funny we actually started out as friends and ended up as debate partners because we I think we're the same height. I'm unclear what was driving our coaches at that time to put us together because we never, he was a Republican. I'm a Democrat. We did not share one policy view.

Marla Martenson: [00:17:47] Wow.

Katheen Buczko: [00:17:47] And we did not agree on anything. And in fact, kind of went our separate ways for a little bit. And I just was kind of driven to be in media and do different things and he certainly dated other people. And I you know had one or two dates. But it's very funny because as our lives have evolved, we do return to that friendship, that chemistry, that connection. He's still a Republican even today. Although he does regret it almost every morning when he watches the news. But it's that, that kind of connection, that has really kept us together through illness, through you know ups and downs, through children, and, to your point, through every body change known to mankind. And so when you begin to kind of look at the root of a relationship. It is some of those core qualities that you talk about as a human being. That intellectual connection.

Marla Martenson: [00:19:00] Absolutely. Is that "hot" person that you're so excited about because they look so good. are they going to be with you if you get cancer? If you, you know when you lose your parents, or you lose some money or whatever problem you are going through or will they be by your side? And my husband so cute because I'll say oh I'm going to get some more Botox, and he says no honey leave the cracks. He says I love you even if you're completely wrinkled. I love you. You know I don't care. So.

Katheen Buczko: [00:19:28] Yeah. No that's very powerful. I mean you talk about. I started out this journey as a brunette and anyone who looks at the web site will see that I'm a blond so we all know.

Marla Martenson: [00:19:39] We change.

Katheen Buczko: [00:19:40] That's life and changes evolve.

Marla Martenson: [00:19:44] Right. And then the most challenging thing. The most thing that fires me up that I get so aggravated with are women who say I have to date a man who is six feet or taller because I'm always in my heels. Because I have say, "well then, have a nice life with your heels. I hope that they're going to make you very happy." Because they choose heels over finding an amazing life partner. Or just you know, so what if he's a little taller, the same, or if you're - in your heels? I mean my husband is 5'9 and I'm 5'6 so if I wear heels I am the same height. It's nice because he's right there to kiss. I mean I don't have to crane my neck or get a crick you know or go to the chiropractor after or stand on a chair. You know is it like to get right there to hug and kiss. So but that gets frustrating that women are so attached to the high heels.

Katheen Buczko: [00:20:34] You know I'm 5'8. My husband is 5'10 and I've worn all the heels I want to wear. I mean it all works out. And you shouldn't make a choice based on the fashion of the day.

Marla Martenson: [00:20:48] Yes. Let it go.

Katheen Buczko: [00:20:50] Marla. Oh, go ahead.

Marla Martenson: [00:20:52] Especially if you want kids. Because a lot of women there it goes by so fast it's unreal. The start and think, oh OK I want kids. And they're 28-30 and there's really I mean by age 40 a woman has like a 5 percent chance to get pregnant. And if she does high chance for miscarriage. It's just it gets very complicated. But I think because celebrities, you know they see them having kids. You know 45-50 but that's because they're paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for someone else's eggs or you know whatever they're doing that the average person can't can't do. So I think women need to also you know not be choosing heels over over the right guy, if they want a family.

Katheen Buczko: [00:21:32] Well and that's you know part of the priority. I mean it was candidly not a priority for me to have children on. And fortunately or unfortunately however you cut it. I have been very easy to to have children. So I have children as the oldest 25 and as young as 15.

Marla Martenson: [00:21:56] Ah, wonderful.

Katheen Buczko: [00:21:56] So a full spectrum of generations across millennials to Gen X.

Marla Martenson: [00:22:02] Yeah that's great.

Katheen Buczko: [00:22:04] And so understanding kind of where that fits within your priority, your priorities change over time. Right.

Marla Martenson: [00:22:11] Right. Yeah absolutely.

Katheen Buczko: [00:22:13] So within that context what motivates you at this point? Marla what keeps you going.?

Marla Martenson: [00:22:19] Oh my gosh there's not enough hours in the day to do everything I want to do. And so I just I have so many projects. Sometimes I get frustrated like oh I feel a little paralyzed because I have so much going on because I've got my matchmaking business, than I do, I'm a Reiki Master and Crystal healer. And I love doing the healings. I do a lot of healing work with people with hospice and with my clients. And then I'm writing books, and my newsletter, and my blog, and I have my YouTube show and then I'm starting a blog talk radio show in October. And I've got my husband and my dog, my house, and my mom that I visit and I like to travel. So it's like I can never, I mean and even if I didn't have to work at so many hobbies interests that I mean yeah I don't even think about stopping. As long as I'm healthy and have the energy I could you know keep going for another hundred years probably and all the stuff I want to do.

Katheen Buczko: [00:23:16] So if you were to give someone some advice not only in finding their soul mate or their relationship of choice but if they were facing some challenges and how how do you kind of dig deep and keep that going? You've made some

pretty significant changes right? From waitress to actress, waitress to model to matchmaking and really and bringing that together with your healing and spirituality and that full spectrum how do you how would you challenge someone to bring that together for them?

Marla Martenson: [00:23:52] So if they. Well for instance right, when I was younger, I said I'll never give up acting. I'll never. I'll do it till, I'll keep trying till I die. And I remember when I was like 19 and then I thought of course at 19 you think what 25 is ancient. You know I thought if I'm 25 and I haven't made it as an actress I think I'll just kill myself you know because I'll be so old. And so there's a different perspective at every age. And I never wanted to give up the acting but then at a certain point you've got to kind of be realistic and say OK do I? Do I want to be? I do not want to be a 40 yo old waitress so I just didn't not want it. Nothing's wrong with it but it wasn't my dream. I never was happy. And so I kind of reinvented myself and used the skills that I had was able to stay creative and still kind of acting like on my YouTube show. And and so you can do things. Now we can do things ourselves we can. You want it. You know you can go on YouTube. You can do videos. You write. You can have a podcast if you need to be creative. So I would say if you're getting frustrated you're trying to kind of connect the dots there and say, "where is my life going?", think about things that you love to do. That you would do if you did get paid and try to incorporate those things into your life. And I learned something Elizabeth Gilbert said in her book Big Magic. She says "don't make your passion pay for your life". So she was writing and she said she would write no matter if she made money at it or not and she didn't require it she had a day job and she didn't require her writing to have that pressure on herself that that would have to pay her bills. And so then you know it was able to blossom and look where she is now. So yeah I guess that's my advice.

Katheen Buczko: [00:25:48] So Marla what's next?

Marla Martenson: [00:25:51] Well what's next. I'm looking forward to my podcast called the Mystical Matchmaker in October on Blog Talk Radio. And then for fun my husband and I are going to Vienna, Budapest and Lodder for my husband's birthday in September for two weeks. So that's going to be amazing.

Katheen Buczko: [00:26:12] Amazing.

Marla Martenson: [00:26:12] Trip of Lifetime.

Katheen Buczko: [00:26:14] Yeah.

Marla Martenson: [00:26:14] Yeah yeah. He's a composer musician. So for him to go to Vienna was you know Mozart and Beethoven. So he's very excited going to be great and his and two of his friends are flying over to Budapest to celebrate his birthday with us. So that's going to be real cool.

Katheen Buczko: [00:26:31] So thank you for sharing your soul group, your vision for validation, and helping us understand that if you love yourselves, love yourself, you'll be able to look for love that will solve all for yourself as well. Thanks Marla.

Marla Martenson: [00:26:47] My pleasure. Thank you.

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