

The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 7 - Reclaiming Your Body, Time, and Voice

Heads up, friend: What you're about to read is a raw, unedited transcript straight from the robots. That means you'll find some weird words, funky punctuation, and moments that make you go, "Huh?" If you want the real experience (and to actually know what's going on), I recommend reading the polished article, listening to the full episode, or watching it on 1.5x speed with captions on. Your brain will thank you.

Natalie: Have you ever wondered what it looks like to finally reclaim your body, your time, and your voice after a divorce? Especially when your faith may have been used to keep you small. This episode brings together six courageous Christian women who share raw, hilarious, and deeply practical stories of learning how to take up space.

Again, sometimes by making very loud smoothies, sometimes by dancing like nobody's watching and sometimes by daring to ask, what do I want? If you're ready for a real conversation about finding joy, setting boundaries, and rebuilding your life on your terms, you're in the right place. Let's get started.

This season is called the first 365 days after divorce, and today I have with me Diana Marie, Michelle, grace, and Rochelle. These are all divorced Christian women, and we are gonna be talking about reclaiming your body, your time, and your voice. Basically learning how to take up space again in every way, learning how to have fun, I believe.

That Christian divorced women desperately need to have permission to do this, to take up space physically, emotionally, mentally, after, especially after a divorce, where that probably shrank them down for years, or a relationship that shrank them down for years. So this episode is not necessarily about recovering, it's more about reclaiming.

Welcome ladies. Here's the first question. What was the first thing that you did just for you after your divorce? Even if it was something tiny?

Marie: Hmm. Yeah. Well, I did several things that I wanna mention, but one of the daily things that I noticed that I began doing and taking up space was making smoothies in the morning.

Now, this sounds, you know, it might sound. Trivial, but I, I realized I was making smoothies in the morning without having to worry about the blender making too much noise. Oh, yeah. And so that was one thing. And then I would play my music really loudly while I was cooking, which I never did those kind of things before.

Now one of the. Really big things that I did was because soon after the divorce, I had started reconnecting with old dreams of mine and allowing

them to come up. And one of the dream data after the divorce was final was I dared to check on master's programs. And I started searching out those things, and that was a big move for me because it was very scary, but I just, I dipped my, my toe in and I just remember how uh hmm. It, it just felt so good to.

Just be checking in with myself about it. I didn't have to, there was no other, uh, nothing else holding you back. Just me, you know, and that was so important. Um, I did end up going to school and now I've gotten my master's, but you know, just even checking, uh, on programs was just a huge step and something that I did for just me.

Natalie: I love that you weren't, you didn't have to get permission from anybody else. You could just make your own big girl decision, right? Yes. That's, that's great.

Michele: I would say the first thing that I did, um, right afterwards, and it was something that I had started to do before I left, um, it was a bit of contentious between him and I was, I was going to work out three mornings a week, um, with a local, uh, women's group that met at like five o'clock in the morning. Um, and when I separated.

I had actually separated two states away. I went home for a couple months and when I came back, the gal who ran that, um, knew that I had been separated. She'd been through a horrible divorce before in a similar situation, had gotten bad advice from a church that just made it worse. And so she kind of knew the situation I was in and she said, you can keep coming for free.

I'm not going to charge you. Keep showing up. And so she had been kind of a lifeline through the divorce and. A, having a place to go work out with other

strong and positive women every morning. But knowing her and I met up several times over the, um, couple years that it took to get the divorce finalized and she was just an amazing like.

Just personal friend, but spiritual mentor because she had been through it before and she still is to this day. I, I can't find it in my schedule to get up at five o'clock in the morning and get to that group with the jobs I have now. Uh, but we still get together a few times a year and we catch up. On things.

And so yeah, that was a huge thing at the time. Um, and I too, like Marie ended up going back to school, not for my master's, but to get, um, another degree in education and then started teaching and then went back again this year to get another endorsement. And so I think. You don't have to have it all figured out right away, but as soon as you start to make those small decisions to do things for yourself, the path, um, kind of becomes a little bit more clear as you go.

Natalie: Yeah. Well, the sky is the limit. You realize that you have freedom to make those kinds of choices, and maybe before you had no freedom to make choices like that.

Michele: I can't picture, I would not have been able to go back to school. There would've been an argument about time it took away from taking care of the kids.

Natalie: Yeah. Diana, did you wanna share something?

Diana: Yeah, I, you know, I'm just noticing that there's, like, there's some big stuff and there's some small stuff. We've got master's degrees and we've got making smoothies, and I think that's so awesome. Um, and I, I feel like mine is, and we're gonna talk more about this, I think, but you know, like just reclaiming some things that we love and stuff, but.

I gave, one of the first things I did was to give myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I just would keep asking myself, what do you wanna do, Diana? Mm-hmm. And I'm like, I wanna go see my favorite blues artist in concert, Google that. And then I'm like, he is coming to Milwaukee, booked a ticket. Well, he ended up needing a heart surgery and that got canceled.

So I'm like. But I still wanna do something for me. What am I gonna do? And so I'm like, oh, this comedy show, they're coming to Madison. I can drive to Madison all by myself. And I actually went and had dinner on State Street by

myself. Well, you know, I grabbed a piece of pizza, but I ate, all the college kids are walking around and I ate out there.

And um, and then the other thing I did, so that's going out and doing stuff, but the other thing I did is I gave myself. Uh, and this was a very, very first, like, you're divorced. And then I'm like, what do you need, Diana? I need time for my mind and emotions to just do whatever they need to do. So I actually put on my calendar these words in all caps, nothing day.

And I flipped forward several days in my calendar, several months, and I found places to put in nothing days. That's what I wanted to do. For me. I felt like freedom.

Natalie: Yes. Well, you were taking back control. Yeah. I know something that I did was, um, actually this is when I was separated, but my separation was like, from the time that I separated till I was divorced was almost four years.

So, but during that time, after he moved out. I started seeing a chiropractor because I had a bad back and he always said that I didn't, it wasn't bad, so I couldn't see a chiropractor, but when he moved out, then I went and saw a chiropractor, and then I also saw a Christian female massage therapist in her home.

She only did massage for females, and I did that once a month for about a year, and I only did it for the sole purpose of just showing myself. I was like valuable that my physical health, I had born nine children, you know, and my body was in really bad shape just to show myself that my body was important and it was important to take care of it.

And I ended up, you know, after a year I didn't need those things anymore, but it was really, it was good for me to build that connection with myself. Okay. So speaking of that. How did any of you begin rebuilding that relationship with your body, especially if you came out of a marriage like many of us did, where we felt objectified or criticized or invisible or not valuable?

Rochelle: Well, for me, I did come out of a marriage like that. I, when I came out, I felt very beaten down that I was never enough, and I also was very unhappy with. Pausal weight I had put on, I mean, all my life, if I put on weight, I would diet. It was just like this discipline that was instilled in me from my mom.

And this time it was not coming off no matter what diet I tried, no matter what I did. And I was just gaining and then gaining, and I just felt so bad about my way I looked. I didn't like to look in the mirror. And so one of the big changes for me. Was came through one of your classes, Natalie, that I took inside the Flying Hire Program, and you were teaching us how to retrain our brain, and you said, I want you to come up with one phrase that you're going to repeat over and over and over over the next week.

So I knew that I really. Lacked confidence. I mean, some people may not have been able to tell that on the outside 'cause I'm an extrovert and don't have any problems standing up in front of a room and talking. But on the inside I was very small and lacked confidence, so I wrote down I am confident.

Another participant in the class wrote down, I carry myself like a queen, and I loved that. So I wrote those two phrases on a piece of paper and I put it up where I could see it all the time. And then, um, there was a long hallway that led into the bedrooms, and at the end of that hallway was a full length mirror.

So every time I came down that hallway, I would just stand up tall and I would say I am confident. I carry myself like a queen, and I would repeat it like five, six times. I repeated it all day, probably longer than a week, but after a while, my brain believed it and I was, huh. Yeah. It just completely changed me and completely changed the way that I felt about my body.

And so anytime I have like that negative thing coming up, I just go, no. I carry myself like a queen and I just stand up straight and just walk in front of a ton of people or whatever, you know?

Natalie: But oh my gosh, all of you who are listening, you can steal that from her. Okay. In fact, she wants you to steal that.

That phrase, you go try that for a week or a month and see what happens with you. I love that. Thanks for sharing that Rochelle.

Grace: Yeah. For me it's um, also, um, giving myself permission to be connected to my body. Uh, it's okay and it's not selfish. And of course I learned that from being, uh, with Flying Free as well and Flying higher program.

Um, and I also wanna say be patient with yourself because, you know, if you have for many, many years denied yourself, you know, um. And I'll put that in quotes 'cause I'll, I'll mention more about it later. But, um, you, for many years

you have kind of like not even been conscious about how you felt. It will feel really strange at first.

And so for me it's, you know, just a slow realization, right? I read, uh, the book, the Body Keeps the Score, uh, is really, really helpful to me. And even the more recent book that we read, how to Do the Work. Uh, so it for me is a gradual consciousness of or becoming aware of how. Important to keep, um, you know, your, your body healthy and the interconnectedness between your mind and your body.

Uh, some other things that I've started to try also, about four months ago, I started, uh, watching rest and relaxation videos that guides me through tensing and relaxing different parts of my body from top to bottom because it helps me, you know, be more aware of how does it feel when my, that part of my body's tense and how does it feel when it's relaxed.

That way I can be more conscious of it. And then another thing I'm learning is to incorporate, um, that into my daily, daily living. So, uh, let's say while I'm walking, you know, walking is something I really enjoy, but I didn't realize that usually when I'm walking, I'm solving problems from the past or I'm planning the future.

And then by the end of it, the walking is done. And, and I felt like I just slept, walked through the whole thing. Yeah. So what I'm learning now is while you're walking, try to be present. Uh, you know, and, and it's gonna be a gradual process. You know, like maybe one time while you walk, just focus on listening to the sounds that you hear.

Uh, what does the leaves of the trees, uh, sound like when the wind blows, or, or the listen to the birds or even the bugs, you know? Um, and then maybe, you know, the, another day, uh. Kind be more aware of how your body feels. How does your, you know, your, your feet feel, your legs feel while you're walking. Um, and how does the breeze feel against your skin?

You know, things like that. Just learning to be more present, like even no matter what you're doing, whether you're exercising or, or, uh, lifting weights to see, see how, how your body feels as you're doing it. How does your feet feel against a mat when you know, while you're doing yoga or whatever. Um, and um, also one thing that I've learned, um, is to like, even while you're driving.

Start to scan your body, like which part of your body is tense. And I have to tell you, the first time I did it for the first 10 and I have like an hour drive to work.

So first 10 minutes I was like, oh, I'm relaxed. And then it's like 10, 15 minutes later I realized, oh, actually my hands are really clenched around my steering wheel.

I really don't need to hold it that tightly. Okay. And then, uh, you know, another, you know, like 30 minutes into the drive, I realized. Oh my, my, uh, my shoulders are actually really tense and I don't know why I don't need to be that tense, you know? And then it was like towards the end of my drive before I even realized my left foot is flexed the whole time.

I don't know why it's not supposed to be doing anything, you know, but, so, I mean, just things like that, you know, because it was really strange for many years. We have kind of ignored our body, our, our body's holding all the tension that we felt, all the fear that we felt, uh, all the anxiety. It's all in the body, but we are not even realizing it.

Natalie: Yes, and when you start noticing that and bringing it to your conscious awareness, that is the first step. To actually healing that connection with your body. Yeah. I, I love that. Thank you. Oh, these are so, this is so great. It's already so practical and we're only, you know, a few minutes in. What about managing your time again without any guilt, especially if you were used to organizing your life around your husband or your family or your church activities and the things, your obligations or maybe even work.

Can anyone speak to that?

Marie: Mm-hmm. Um, uh, what Diana said, I did a version of that. I, I gave myself plenty of blank space in my calendar, um, for. Piddling. I don't know if y'all know what piddling is. Mm-hmm. But, uh, you know, you're just doing stuff and not really doing it completely. But, you know, it's very, it's just something I've always enjoyed to piddle, but not only that blank space so that I could go to spontaneous dinners when friends would ask, which was something that I never did before because.

It just was not appreciated if I went on spontaneous dinners. Um, so I, that blank space, it is not appreciated. I'm sorry. That's a funny way you putting it. There were those around that did not appreciate spontaneous dinners. A friend, um, um, but also because I was in school. It was very important that I learned to manage my time.

You know, like, because when I did end up going to school and saying, you know, uh, I need to block out this time, you know, it helped me, um, get used to

even managing my time as I, you know, studied or was in my online classes and, um, writing my papers. So I that. I think that just was part of me reclaiming my time.

Yeah. Just

Natalie: that

Marie: whole exercise of saying blank space here,

Natalie: um, yeah. Was very, didn't it help to think that it was your time now too? It was your time. Yeah. Like you owned it. Yes.

Michele: Yeah,

Natalie: yeah. Yeah. Pretty empowering. Michelle, what about you?

Michele: Yeah, I was maybe in a little bit different situation. I, I think Marie's uh, kids are a little bit older when she got divorced.

And for me, my kids, I had five between the ages of three and 13 at the time. And so I had been a stay at home mom and I think I had to adjust to, I didn't have the flexibility that I used to have. When you stay at home every day, things can get pushed to the next day. You know, if it's not urgent, well now I had to balance, you know, the kids and where they were going for childcare and work, and I was going back to school.

And so it became very intense on the weeks that I had my kids, um, just to try to make sure it was all getting done. And then my kids would go to their dad's for a week and then it was like. Nothing like, and it took a while to get used to the balancing the extremes of everything on all at once. And then, you know, the silence from, you know, 3 30, 4 o'clock on mm-hmm.

When the kids were not with me. Um, and so that was just kind of adjusting a little bit mentality wise of how do I try to find times to relax. What seems like the crunch time when they're all with me and I'm still trying to work and go to school, but still try to find fun and relaxing times with the kids versus, um, not having just this big drop off of energy when they all go back.

I. To dad. So I did end up getting a calendar that was a dual home and um, like, it was like a work from home one. So it had like your work schedule and your home schedule side by side. And so kind of the things and the appointments that

the kids have kind of overlaid with the meetings and classes and stuff that I had on the work side and I had to do and I was always.

Pretty good at planning and going ahead a week. Um, I live in a rural area, so it's always been grocery planning. You got, you're only making one trip to the grocery store a week 'cause you're not gonna drive the 35, 40 miles every day. And so meal planning and stuff like that, I was already in the mindset for so many years of I gotta plan my whole week out.

Get it ready, um, to implement it. And so a lot of that stuff kind of helped carry through that. What does this week look like for daycare, for food, for this, and having things all planned out and written out. Now, um, five years later, my kids are five to 18, or sorry, not five days, eight to 18. Things are a little bit more relaxed, you know?

Um, I don't have to worry about the daycare. I now work in the same district as my kids. There is no daycare. They come and go with me. My older ones can look after the long. Some of that stuff, I now have a lot more free time. And so now I don't rely so much on that physical, everything written out. I still use, you know, an online thing.

I have to set reminders like crazy because I know. I know which things that a 30 minute reminder isn't enough. I probably need to remind myself the day or two before. 'cause there's still a lot coming on. I mean, I had a friend once say, you know, you're not as busy when your kids get older, but it's just a, you are, it's just a different busyness.

You're not as hands on, but your mind has to hold on where everybody is going. Yeah. Yeah. And so I still, my, my online reminders and we have a big, I mean, we have like a five by five huge calendar on our dining room wall that has everything written down, color coded, who's going where Every day we talk at the beginning of the week of who's going everywhere.

And then the morning, remember this is who's going everywhere after school and stuff like that. So there's still a lot of that stuff that just, um, I. Needs to be implemented, but it seems like it's a little bit relaxed now that the kids are a little older. Yeah. And so if there's anyone out there and you got the little kids and you feel like you have to be hands on all the time, like it does get better.

They do grow up. They can get themselves from point A to point B and you don't have to, you know, micromanage all the drop offs and stuff as much.

Natalie: Yeah, yeah. I was gonna say that too. It's a season. It's a really crazy season when you have little kids. And I remember being in that season and you know, I look back on it now and I think, how did I even survive that?

Like, I don't even, how did I get through my days? But you know, you do. You just take one day at a time. You try to stay present, you do what you have to do, and you grind through it, and it does pass. It's gonna get better. If you're listening to this and you're in that phase, it will get better. All right.

Not for many, many years though. No, just kidding. Well, I'm not kidding, but. I'm not trying to discourage anyone. Alright, next question. How did you start rediscovering your voice, speaking up for yourself, setting boundaries, or even just sharing your opinions? Again, without being afraid?

Rochelle: Uh, for me the most, the thing that helped me the most rediscover my voice was discovering a part of me that truly believed I didn't matter.

And, um, I believed all my life that I didn't matter. I wasn't in touch with that belief until I really started to work on myself. But once I got in touch with it, and then I took the course within the Flying Higher program, uh, called Healing the Relationship with yourself really taught me how to really dig deeply to get in touch with that part of me that believe that.

And so giving that part. Time and space for me to focus on that part and allow all the grief that had been buried for so long on the inside to just come forth as I recalled all the different. Things that people had said to me, um, circumstances I had been in that just reinforce that belief that you don't matter.

You don't matter. You don't matter. And then being able just to grieve all of that out and, and allow it as much as it was uncomfortable and then after just validating that part of me. Saying, yes, you had a right. You still have a right to feel that way with the way that you were treated with the circumstances that did happen with the things that people said.

And then through doing those things, I received so much healing just by giving that time, allowing the grief and validating that part. And interestingly, that began really restoring my voice where I began to trust myself. Trust the things that I, um, thought decisions I made, uh, the way that I, um, desires. I had things I wanted to share, my opinions taking charge and, um, it really started to gimme back my more confidence and empowerment.

And, um, it's, it's funny because now I'll, sometimes it's as if I'm on the outside of myself looking in and I look at myself and I just kind of think. Who are you? Like, what? I like, who you've become. Isn't that awesome? It's so, yeah. It's so, it's so natural now for me to have a voice, but at the same time it's like, wow.

It's just so, it's just incredible. So,

Natalie: it is incredible because what it, what it is, is you're blossoming into the person that God made you to be all along and you finally get to, you know, show up. And that's a beautiful thing for you, and it's also a beautiful thing for everyone around you to get to experience who you really are.

Grace: Yeah. Yeah. I think that once you get to the point where you can see yourself from outside yourself, that's a sign of maturity. Yeah. So that's exciting. Uh, yeah, for me, um, it is from renewing my mind, um, just learning and understanding. I. What God really said in his word, because, you know, I was in the same kind of environment you guys are.

You know, I, I wanted to do the right thing, but I didn't realize that I wasn't really interpreting God's word correctly. You know? So I was so, um, you know, I'm, I'm, I've learned that, uh, when, when Jesus said, love your neighbor as yourself, I can't. Neglect myself. Um, you know, I, I always thought that God and then others and then me, but I never thought about the fact that if you don't love yourself, how do, how are you supposed to love your neighbor as yourself?

You know? So this just doesn't work. And also, you know, the, like, the verse I was saying, saying earlier, deny yourself, you know, for me I thought about that as meaning, um, you know, I just ignore my own needs and, you know, and, and do not value my own desires. But I'm learning that deny yourself actually.

Means letting go and letting God, letting God love me, letting his sacrifice be the only reason that I feel approved. Uh, trusting and resting in the fact that he's forgiven me and he's delighted in me, and it has nothing to do with my, my efforts. So I don't have to keep trying. So, uh, you know, so, so God, um, you know, saved us, um, by grace, um, through faith in the same way.

I think we need to live our lives on earth by grace through faith, you know, so yes, giving myself grace as well. Um, and then the second thing, um, that I've learned to renew my mind is by learning about boundaries. Um, you know, like from reading, um, the Boundaries book by John Townsend and Henry Cloud. Um, learning that, you know, it's not rude to set boundaries.

And in fact, it's necessary. Uh, I really like the illustration about, you know, boundaries is like, this is my yard and that's your yard, but if I keep watering your yard and not watering my yard, my yard is gonna die. And I never thought of the fact that, you know, 'cause I've always thought, oh, I'm a, when God gave me children, when God gave me a husband, uh, you know, I, it's, uh.

It's like a stewardship, right? I'm supposed to to serve and everything, but I forgot that I'm also a steward of myself. Yes. Our bodies are, uh, you know, um, are temples, right? I, and I forgot that, I forgot to take, take care of, of that temple. So I, I just haven't, um, you know, thought about that before. So, so by renewing my mind, uh, I've become more aware.

Um, and also, um. Given myself permission, you know, to, to set my boundaries. I think that's important. And, um, and then as you become, as you learn to value yourself more, it'll give you the, the boldness to, to, to go ahead and set those boundaries. And for me, um, I. One other thing that's been helping me is just learning about the Enneagram and how, you know, uh, I'm a nine, so I, I'm not even aware of the fact that I forget about myself and I assume other people's agenda into my life.

Uh, so, so just waking up to that was very important. And then letting go, because oftentimes. The, um, the Enneagrams really just are coping mechanism. Our defense mechanism. It's because of a fear. It's because, uh, we we're afraid we'll be rejected. We won't have relationships, so we tend to do those things.

But you know, now, so for me now, you know, taking that risk, going ahead and setting the boundaries and see where it falls, right? Um, and discovering that I'm not totally rejected. Um, but I also think it's important to work on yourself, right? Because if you are rejected. It's good to have your own back. So it's also learning to be my own best friend to, to, uh, love my own company and, and to trust that I'll be there for me.

You know? So those things are all so important to learn.

Natalie: Yeah. I just want, you're saying so many amazing things. All of you are, I wanna say, if you're listening to this. A podcast episode and you're thinking, gosh, I've never even heard some of these concepts before, or This is so far from the way I think, or from where I'm at.

I want you to know that all of these women have gone through the Flying Hire program. Well, I think most of you're still in it, and that's where they're getting.

They're getting it from other resources. 'cause I recommend stuff all the time to you guys write books and think, you know, you, I send you guys down.

So many different rabbit trail, but they're getting a lot of help from that program. And if you wanna join us and join all of us, we'd all love to have you just go to join Flying hire.com to learn more about that. Okay. Let's talk about having fun after divorce. Can you give some examples of ways that you started to have fun?

Because I mean. I think fun is important.

Marie: It's so important. So in 2018, two years before my divorce, I started backpacking. Um, so after the divorce though, I could do that more. And um, so I started going on more backpacking trips, uh, even got a certification in wilderness medicine. And Oh wow. Started backpacking by myself.

So in 2023 I went on my first, just one night, two days, um, one night, um, trip backpacking by myself. And so I do that regularly now. Well, I make sure to do that. Two, two times a year. One in the spring and one in the fall. Um, other backpacking trips too with groups. But I love the solitude in the forest, you know, and that, um, backpacking and to me, the freedom that I can go out in the forest when I want, plan that trip.

It just, there's no nothing else like it if they don't wanna share another story. I've always loved to dance. Always the only opportunity that I would ever have to dance would be weddings. Right? Well, I mean, you don't go to a lot of weddings, you know, as much as I wanted to dance. And, uh, but anyway, so, uh, last year there was a meetup.

I don't know if y'all know about Meetup, but it's this app that shows you different activities that are around in your area. Now. I've been getting emails for years, but this one particular email, um. Last year caught my attention 'cause it said dancing. And I was like, oh, okay, what is this? And it was at this place that I was familiar with and it wasn't a bar, it's just a venue where they would have a DJ come in.

And so I went by myself because none of my friends went with me. And it was the most fun. I have met so many friends now and I go dancing regularly. No way. Like what kind of dancing is it? Oh, you just describe this. Well, that I just freestyle. You know you're dancing. Like the very first one I went to was like a disco dance party.

So you're dancing to like. You know, um, dancing Queen and Michael Jackson and you know, those kind of things. It's so fun.

Natalie: Oh my word. It sounds amazing. So there's no, like, when I picture dancing, I picture in a bar and then guys are pawing you. And like, I don't wanna do anything like that. But this does not sound like that.

Marie: No, and there's all kinds of, like the, I wrote a, a, a post about it because it was such a beautiful experience that there was such a diverse group of people there, and I just looked around and I honestly felt God's delight in what was happening in that room because everybody was, we weren't worried about.

S their status, your beliefs, your sexual orientation. None of it. We were just all there in community having fun. Yeah. And it was just beautiful joy. And I was like, joy. Yeah. And really it made me think, oh well this might be, it was probably the vision that Jesus had for the church.

Natalie: Mm. Yeah. And his

Marie: community.

That's

Natalie: so sad. That is definitely not, I mean, it was just

Marie: beautiful.

Natalie: That is so incredible. That reminds me of watching the, the music video, brave Sarah Les's Song, brave for the First Time, and all those different people are dancing and they're just like, so free. I, I bawled the first time I watched that because I wanted.

That freedom so badly. I wanted to be able to express myself in that kind of way without being afraid of what other people were gonna say. And it was so beautiful to watch other people doing that. So I imagine that's what you experienced when you looked around and saw everyone dancing. Yeah,

Marie: definitely.

Natalie: Diana, do you have

Diana: any? Yeah, I dance in my kitchen. Uh, going to, going to a disco party, it is one of the, that is one of the things that I did though before I say anything. Also, I just. I just have to say the last question when Grace answered, she just gave everybody a masterclass and, and yeah. And it's so much wisdom and I just love hanging out with all of you guys and all the, it's incredible.

Um, okay, so I made a list on my phone and I just found it and it, it said reawaken, but this is actually kind of my joy things I wanted to do with reclaiming joy in my life. Well, I used to be a worship leader and I haven't totally reclaimed that one, but I'm. I will be. 'cause I, I love it. I love singing and doing music and worshiping God.

Um, but I had brewers on here. I used to love going to Brewers games. So guess what I started doing, going to Brewers games. It's so fun. So fun to go and hear the crack of the bat and eat a hot dog. And, you know, I'd, I'd go on like, take my stepdad, take one son. Last mother's day, I went with all my kids best.

Um, another sports thing is Packers. I do have some season Packer tickets I inherited from my dad. 'cause you can pass 'em down on your family. So I started actually going to games again, travel. I went to New York by myself. Yes, I knew people there when I got there, but I'm like, fly by myself, stay at hotels by myself, walk around with a backpack.

That's all I brought. Um, and explore Manhattan. Uh, I've had coloring on my list because when I was a kid and we went to my grandma's, she would host coloring contests for me and my sisters. And we'd all get, get out the crayons and color. And we started doing like, you know, when we're like 10 years old, you know, we're like, Ooh, the shading and this other like, it was serious crayon coloring.

So I bought myself coloring books and markers and it brings me joy. And I'm like, I don't care what anybody going to the movies, I go by myself. It's fine. Um, sailing, I haven't done that one again. Brings me joy. If you're watching on YouTube, there are sailboat pictures behind me. 'cause sailing brings me joy and photography.

I've been doing more of that on my phone in Spanish. I mean, I have this list, I have Duolingo and I'm relearning Spanish. On my phone and I could do more. And every time I do it, I also realize in my mind, so this is that renew your mind type concept again too. I'm engaging it at a deeper level. I'm like, I am doing something that brings me joy.

I, I notice it. I'm consciously experiencing it. I'm acknowledging it because we can just get lost in the doing and our mind's doing its own thing and then we forget to engage that part of us that awakens that joy. And so anyway, that's a little bit how it's going on my journey, and it's very mindful and purposeful.

Natalie: Yeah, yeah. Thank you for sharing all those practical ideas. One thing I've noticed so far in this discussion, and really in all of the discussions we've had so far in this podcast is that nobody is talking about, well, that's not true. I guess we touched on it maybe a titch last time, and we will have episodes where we go into this in more detail, but.

So far, you're all giving ideas of ways to find joy and to develop yourself that don't involve trying to find another husband. Okay? And I think that's important because when we, we need to find ourselves first. I. I mean, there's nothing wrong with finding another husband, but I really do think that it's important to see that we can, that we can have an amazing, loving relationship with ourselves that brings, uh, that's life-giving and fulfilling.

And then when we, if we bring that person into a relationship that ends up forming. Whether you're pursuing it or, or it accidentally happens, I think then you're bringing your best self into that relationship. And also you're able to recognize when that relationship is gonna align with you and who you are, who you really are now.

You don't need that person to be who you really are. You already know who you really are, and that person maybe compliments it or, you know, enhances it and, and then you can say no. To those who don't compliment and enhance that. Okay. So I just wanted to touch on that, but let's talk about the role that for either your friendships or your community, some of you guys have, you know, Marie getting out there in the community and dancing, or even online groups have helped to play in, um, reclaiming different parts of yourself.

Marie: Yeah. Um, the online support groups. Flying I was in Flying Free first and now Flying higher. Uh, I can't see ever not being in Flying higher. Um, but at the same time that I was in that group Flying Free, I was in Conquer, Leslie Vernix Conquer, and I did her whole thing for a year. Um. Both of those, yours and hers, both, uh, important at that time.

But then once I finished that, I was in Concord for like a year, but it was just the. Uh, comradery, the constant, sharing your story, getting feedback from others, which we do that in your, in the forum in, uh, Flying Free. I did not know how important it was for me to hear other women that had experienced

the same thing, because for so long, you think, or I did, I thought something is wrong with me.

You know, this is. Uh, I'm doing this wrong. You know, it was that kind of thing. So it's really healing to find people that are experiencing the same thing that you have and that you hear. Because we were all at different places, you know, there were some ahead of me and the journey, so it was so good to hear.

Okay. That's what's coming. You know, one of the best things, I listen to every butterfly story, like. I binged them, you know, because they were so, they filled me with such hope, um, uh, that I could not get enough of them. And I was actually disappointed when I had listened to them all. But, so those were very, that was very important, that online support.

Um, and then, you know, I've made friends in the group. I mean, I've, I see there are women that I have met in Conquer and in your program, NA, Natalie, that I meet with in person. So, you know, these are real friendships. And then I think also the, you know, my. Cohort in my grad school program. I mean, some people would think, what is it that was so important to me?

I don't know. It, it just was so transformational to me on the spiritual side. So I was doing this whole journey of growing spiritually and untangling my faith while healing from this divorce, and there was just something. Beautiful and unique about that cohort. Um, I needed them because they showed me Jesus.

Mm-hmm. I think they helped my distorted view of God they restored it, you know, or made it clearer and truer. Yeah. If that makes sense. Yeah.

Natalie: Yep. Thank you. Well,

Grace: thank you Marie. Um, I agree with Marie. You know, I think that, um, my, the community has been very, um, important to me, uh, the online community of Flying Free.

And Diana, I wanna thank you for your encouragement. I wanna say I've benefited from you and Natalie and Marie so much. I mean, I've listened to your podcast as well, the They Renew Your Mind podcast and you know, all the coaching sessions that you've done. Um, uh. You know, when you take on Natalie's place sometimes, so I really appreciate it.

Um, yeah. Uh, so I think for me, we just have to be more flexible about what we think community is now, you know, uh, so when, uh, when I filed for divorce, I,

I have just only been in this area for, um, a little over a year, so I didn't have that, um, you know, just friendships here yet physically as much. So, um, I've had to, um.

You know, be more in touch with my best friends from in the past. And I, I have to say that I'm just very blessed. Um, you know, God gave me some really good friends who, even though they were in the same, you know, religious circles we were in, they were able to, to understand where I was coming from and didn't, didn't reject me.

Uh, I was kind of got disconnected from the church here. And also, um, just, you know, the traditional family. But, um. I, I will have to say that the, the several half a dozen best friends I've had from the past, I, I, I can't have done it without them. I spent a lot of time on the phone, or whether it's Zoom, you know, just use technology because every time I learn something new, I have to process it with someone I.

That processing is so important, and the fact that they accepted me, uh, was, was very empowering and encouraging to me. Um, so I would just say be creative and, and be flexible. Kinda like Marie was saying. You know, like your community doesn't have to be like you, you that the way it's, you used to think like you have to be part of a, a church, uh, establishment or whatever, you know?

Um, so. But yeah. Um, Flying Free Flying Hire has been, um, very, uh, really great for me and, and listening to, you know, a variety of podcasts. I mean, for me, I also kinda like Diana's, uh, podcast. I also listen to like typology. And that's also, uh, very, been very helpful for me. Uh, the Eden podcast. 'cause then you hear other people, um, you know, from even outside the, the, um, divorce, uh, world that.

That they're also growing in certain areas the same direction that you are. And to me that's, that's very encouraging.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. There's so many great resources out there that don't cost anything. Okay. The next question is about our faith and our spiritual practices. How did that area of your life either support or even complicate your journey toward reclaiming your body and your time and your voice?

Marie: Yeah, well I mentioned earlier that mine was a parallel journey of me untangling my faith, my relationship with Jesus from manmade traditions and a distorted view of God that I had. Um, and at the same time I was doing that I

was. Reconnecting. Reremembering and recollecting. I love that word, recollecting all the parts of me that I had hidden away.

Natalie: Hmm.

Marie: And so, um, and, and you know, you don't know about 'em. They, they, they're coming up as you're learning all this stuff. And so you're like, oh yeah, I remember that part. And so what, what was important for me is. I stepped away from the local church for a while. That was, that was a necessary part of my journey.

Uh, I needed to do that in order to heal, and then I gave myself permission to wait until I felt like going again. So now, in the meantime. I was in grad school and we were learning, I was in grad school for Christian spiritual formation, so I was learning these different things and um, so I wrote a lot and I consider that a spiritual, um, formation, a spiritual discipline, um, and.

At the same time what I needed more than anything during that time. And I didn't know it. I could have never named it, except looking back on it now was, and Grace, you talked about this earlier, I needed to know that God's love for me had nothing to do with my performance, nothing to do with my ministry, nothing to do with my toing.

Um, that his delight in me was. Because I am his daughter. And, and that happened for me. And of course there was nothing I did to make that happen. Um, so, uh, these spiritual practice, I, for me was a lot of writing and a lot of sitting in silence. And, um, during that time, I'll never forget it, Jesus became to me.

The Good Shepherd. And I'll never forget how one day I was imagining him and holding me and saying, they're there. You know how you do a baby. It's like they're there, you know, when you're trying to soothe them.

Natalie: Mm-hmm.

Marie: And that has just, he is the good shepherd to me now. And, um. So I, there's no specific spiritual practice in there except writing was very important to me.

And silence. Really just sitting in silence. Yeah. That's beautiful. Thank you.

Michele: Yeah, mine was pretty similar to Marie's. I as well, had to step away from the church. I divorced a pastor, um, and so. Also being very small rural community, I just didn't really feel like I had anywhere to go. Um, and I felt like all eyes were on me and so I did much more of the at home cocooning.

Um, Flying higher really became my church on Sunday mornings, and so. Taking in all of that while also doing, um, daily devotions that I just, you know, downloaded on my Kindle. Um, a lot of journaling. Um, I think I journaled more in the couple years after the separation divorce than I ever have before. And it wasn't just, um, getting my thoughts out, but it, they were also just full of written prayers, um, to God about.

You know, who I was and what I needed and some questioning things. I had done a lot of the untangling before the divorce. Um, and so for me, I know, I mean, I've heard so many women in, um, Flying higher really struggle with that faith. I didn't necessarily have that. I had already done a lot of the wrestling in the marriage.

Mm-hmm. Um, and so when I walked out, I had a pretty secure foundation in who God was and. It was more, um. I don't wanna say it was exciting because it was still the most painful, terrifying, you know, years of my life getting out of the marriage. But to see the way that God worked and the doors that were opened and the dreams and the visions and the way he spoke through other people and things just started to happen in ways that you could not have explained or justified it.

That's what makes it exciting. At the time, it didn't feel exciting, you know, it, it was still terrifying, um, and scary. Um, but to actually let go of what you'd been told Christianity's supposed to look like and following God is supposed to look like, and to see the God of the Bible show up in your life in tangible ways, um, in the same way that he showed up in those stories of the Bible.

Um. Like I said, it is exciting. And so that's really just how I got through lots of prayer, lots of devotion over time, I began to even fully let go of even that daily devotion in realizing that. I don't have to have a daily devotion to be connected to God. Like are, there's nothing bad with them. Some of them are wonderful and some of the most beautiful things written, but to, to let go of, there is actually no religious practice that I have to do.

And I am still accepted and loved and welcomed in God's arms and as a part of his world. Yeah. And so I live more like that day in, day out now, and I feel like the conversation between God and I is much more fluid and honest and genuine.

Natalie: Yeah. That's beautiful. I will piggyback off of that and say what that I, in order to reclaim my own relationship with God.

You know, apart from how other people said a relationship with God was supposed to look like, I had to take a break from reading the Bible for a while, and I was an avid Bible reader from the time I was a small child. My mom taught us to read the Bible every single day, and I did. I read through the Bible many, many, many, many times over the course of my years.

But I took a break from it because it had been used in, in certain interpretations of the, of it had been used to, had been weaponized really against me for so long. And I wanted to breathe and heal with the Holy Spirit. 'cause I knew I had a connection with the Holy Spirit within, within me, and I just wanted to, I was like, okay, God.

Can I have a relationship with you without reading the Bible? I wonder if, if my relationship with you is only connected to this book, or if it's something more than that. And I found out that it was something so much more than that. But now, after many years, then I finally have been reconnecting with the Bible again.

But I'm reading, uh, in Flying Higher. We're reading through a fresh version. It's a newer version, a newer translation called The Mirror Bible. And it's just, it is like incredible. And we're all, I think we're all just feeling like, wow, God is so much. More amazing than we were taught that he was. It's so life-giving.

It aligns with what I know deep in my core and what I've experienced of who God is and his character, and it's a Bible that I can actually read and endorse. All right, so let's, let's wrap this whole episode up by going around. We'll do like a round robin if you wanna share. You can, but you don't have to.

But if you could go back and sit down and put your arms around. Your newly separated self or your newly divorced self, and tell her about this idea of how she's going to reclaim her full whole life again. What would you say to her?

Grace: Yeah. What I would say to her is do not fear. I mean, since uh, I've been divorced, I've realized more and more how often Jesus said that, do not fear he will take care of you.

Um, he sees you, he hears you, you know, like, Hey, I think about Hagar a lot. You know, she was a nobody. She was really cast aside and she was very depressed. And then God said, look up. When she looked up, she saw the well,

and God also gave her a purpose. He said, I'm gonna bless your, your son, and he's going to have, you are gonna have many descendants as well.

God sees you and hears you just as he sees and hears Hagar.

Natalie: Yes, that's beautiful.

Marie: I would tell her, just take the next step, no matter how small, just make the next move, even if it's just lifting your head. No. Um, 'cause some days that's how, what it felt like, but that's all I could do. But um, yeah, just take the next step and it's gonna be okay.

Diana: Uh, yeah, I would say 'cause a lot of us were already on the journey and the people listening, and you're recently divorced. You've probably already been on a lot of this journey of. Reawakening yourself. So I say keep, keep listening to your own voice. Notice that this new place in your journey is no longer about appealing anyone else.

It's your journey now, and it's okay to own that. And so now's the time to ask what do I want? That's not selfish. That's taking ownership of our lives. Yeah. What do I need? That's not selfish. That's taking ownership of your own body and soul and mind. And then when you get the answers to what do I want?

What do I need, trust your answers. It's okay to take care of you. Now's the time to do it.

Marie: Yes.

Rochelle: I would tell her breaking free feels great and also bewildering, like jumping into a world you know very little about. It'll take time to feel motivated again, and that's okay. Give yourself that time when you broke free.

Oh wait. You're going to encounter a zillion decisions, but you were made for this moment and that God has equipped you for this moment.

Michele: Yes, amen. And I would say don't, you don't have to be afraid to be yourself. Um, you're likable. You're lovable. And the world needs you as you are, not as you were told you had to be.

Natalie: Yes. Thank you so much. What a beautiful group of women. I'm so thankful for you for sharing your time with us. We get to get together again for next week's episode. I'm excited to talk about handling holidays, birthdays, and

other emotional landmines next week. So until that time, for the rest of you, thanks for listening and fly higher.

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