

# The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Season 2, Episode 10 - Building Healthier Relationships with Adult Children Post-Divorce

**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:** What happens to your relationship with your kids once they're adults and you've gone through a divorce for so many women? This is uncharted territory. Maybe your child blames you for leaving. Maybe they've pulled away, or maybe you're walking on eggshells. Not quite sure how to rebuild trust. In this episode, I'm sitting down with my friend and fellow coach, Diana Sillinger, for a real living room style conversation.

No scripts, no canned answers, just the two of us sharing our personal experiences and the questions we hear from Christian women every day. If you've ever wondered how to navigate complicated dynamics with your grown kids after divorce, this conversation will meet you with both compassion and.

Practical tools that you can use right now.

Joining me today is my friend and fellow coach, Diana Swillinger. Hi Diana. Hello. She's the host of the Renew Your Mind podcast. We are gonna be talking about building healthier relationships with adult children after divorce. Now for this episode, Diana and I decided to just take a bunch of questions that people typically ask.

We work with a lot of divorced women and a lot of them have kids and a lot of 'em have adult kids. And we're just gonna answer some of these questions off the cuff. This means that we didn't, we're not really coming into this like with this canned, these canned answers or this. Um, you know, prepared thing.

We're just gonna have an organic conversation, like if we were sitting in our living room talking about adult children, and you guys get to listen in on it. How does that sound? Sounds good to me. All right. Um, okay, so the first question is, how do relationships with our adult children shift after divorce?

**Diana:** I think I'm gonna, Natalie, I wanna preface this whole episode by saying that you and I have both coached well. I've coached, I would say I've coached hundreds of women on this topic, and you can easily say you've coached thousands and thousands of women.

**Natalie:** Well, maybe this topic thousands and thousands, but I think probably over the last, well over a thousand.

**Diana:** Yeah. Oh yeah. No, it's probably a lot. Okay. And we both have adult children. Yeah, and we've gone through divorce with adult children while they were adults. Yeah. And then we've had some who've turned into adults during or post-divorce. So we come with this from a lot of different perspectives. So, and also when we're talking about our personal experiences, it could look vastly different.

So I, you know, I'll probably answer a lot based on my personal experience, but hope, you know, maybe I can weave in some stuff from coaching too. But because my relationship with my kids. Something I was intentional about from the very beginning, and I think it's something my mom instilled in me, and it was that I'm gonna give my kids unconditional love no matter what's going on, which turned out to be great because our family dynamics were so chaotic and there was so much going wrong, and I just always was like, I love you.

It doesn't matter what's going on, you know, this is solid. This is what we've got. And so as the divorce happened. I was able to maintain my relationship with all of my kids, though it had different dynamics. Um, I think I would boil down to with adult children, the shift I notice a lot is that these are young adults.

They're in their twenties, maybe thirties, and they don't have the full scope of knowledge that we do in our forties, fifties and sixties. They haven't seen as much. They haven't lived as much, they haven't experienced as much, and yet they do see themselves as adults and think they have a lot of answers.

And so I saw a little shift with a couple of my, well, one child in particular, adult child thinking he knew what was right for me as I went through my divorce and what would be right for me after my divorce and what would be right about whether I can or can't get in another relationship one day. And so.

It, it kind of felt like it shifted to like, he's the one who felt he had, it's okay, you're doing that mom, but recognize I have knowledge about

**Natalie:** how you should be

**Diana:** doing this.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Yeah. So that was, that's fascinating, isn't it? Yes. Yes. Someone that young could think that they have more wisdom, more understanding of the world, uh, uh, you know, a, a bigger, wider perspective of life in general than.

Than someone who's, you know, I don't know, 25, 30 years older than they're,

**Diana:** yeah. Yeah. So that was an, did you experience that dynamic too? Oh

**Natalie:** my gosh, absolutely. Yeah. I think part of it though is think about, well, I don't know, I guess I can only speak for myself, but I grew up in a very black and white family, and then I taught my kids in a very black and white thinking, right?

I passed that down to them. So think about, you know. Like when kids grow up with that, they're thinking in black and white. They're think, you know, they, they grow up thinking that divorce is wrong. And then all of a sudden, mom, mom has this epiphany and she starts changing. Right? But that, but that's wrong In their minds, that's wrong.

They're, they still have very rigid thinking and they don't have enough life experience under their belts yet, even though they, you know, we all make jokes about how teenagers think they're smarter than everybody else. Right? And then as they get older, they get into your thirties and forties and realize, oh, maybe I don't really know so much.

In fact, the older you get, the more in, in fact. As people if, if people get wiser, the older they get, the more they realize. I know less and less and less the older I get. Yeah. 'cause the world and the universe gets so much bigger and you realize your place in it is very, very tiny. Your perspective is very, very small.

There are a million different other perspectives out there, and we can, it's like the story of, you know, feeling an elephant and you're blind. You don't know, you know, maybe you've got the big toe. So you think that's an elephant? Someone else has the trunk, so they think that's the elephant. How we, how we

learn and grow is we realize, oh, there's a lot of people around this elephant and we need each other to get perspective of what this elephant actually is.

'cause we can't see it without the perspectives of everyone chipping in. Our kids don't know, some of them don't know that yet. Right. So they're blindly, you know, saying, yeah, well I know what's right for you, mom. 'cause I have the big toe of the elephant and I know exactly what an elephant is. Yes. Better listen to me.

**Diana:** Yes. Yeah. I, one other thing I noticed is the shift is the, the weight of trying to, um, manage my ex-husband's emotions shifted from me to them. And I did see that happen. It didn't affect my relationship with them in, in. Ways that I really noticed or know how to articulate. But I guess I noticed that dynamic shift and I felt it, and I, and I think I felt a little guilt about it sometimes, and I had to process through that.

**Natalie:** I think the re I know exactly what you're talking about and I think it's because I, I felt like, okay, relationships are more fragile than I thought they were, and I wanna make sure, you know, I lost this. This important relationship with me, um, recognizing that I need Boun needed boundaries. And they didn't respect that.

They didn't care about that. They didn't really wanna participate in the relationship the way I did. And I didn't wanna lose that with my kids. But it's weird because my ex, I had nine kids, just so people know, like you had five kids, right? I have four kids. Four kids, okay.

**Diana:** Three of 'em are adults right now, and one's, uh, almost done with high school.

**Natalie:** Okay. And then I had nine kids and, uh. Let's see it. Five of them, no, six of them are adults and the other ones are in, are teenagers still. So, um, yeah, I was so, I did not wanna lose my relationships with them, so I was very, very careful. But in some ways I think that's, in some ways I think that's good. I think, I mean it open also though, you have to remember that we were expanding our view of.

Allowing other people to have their perspectives, even if they're abusive. Right? Well, that's their perspective. Now what do I want? What am I gonna do about that? I decided I don't wanna live with someone like that. Right? But also, I think we did that with our kids too. They have their beliefs. They're black and white.

They think I should not do this. Um, that's okay. I'm gonna let them have that belief. And I'm still, I'm gonna hold space for that, but I'm still gonna also hold space for my belief that I can do it. And it's, it feels. Incongruent and it feels like dis, there's dissonance there and friction there internally.

And yet learning to live with that friction I think is an adult skill that we have to, we have to learn

**Diana:** this instead of just, yeah.

**Natalie:** This, yeah, go ahead.

**Diana:** Oh, I was gonna lead us into the next question. 'cause this goes, flows right into it. When you're ready. Okay. Yeah. Okay. The next question is, how do you handle it when adult, an adult child blames you for the divorce?

How do you respond if your child is still closely aligned with your ex and seems distant from you? So I'm gonna throw that one to you first.

**Natalie:** Yeah. I mean, because, well, I did experience that. Did you experience, I mean, you must have, if they had their opinions about, did they pull? Not as much as from the divorce,

**Diana:** not as much as I thought.

That they would, they used to blame me for friction in the marriage before the divorce.

**Natalie:** Hmm.

**Diana:** And they, it didn't seem like they did so much once it actually happened.

**Natalie:** Okay. That's interesting. Yeah. I don't think any of my kids really blamed me for the divorce. Actually, I, I think they blamed me. I think they blamed me for, um, a couple of 'em.

Maybe for, well, maybe they did blame me for the divorce. Actually. They didn't blame me for wanting a divorce. I'll, I'll tell you that. Sure. Okay. They saw, they saw that, that there were, is there were issues like their whole growing up life, they knew there are issues with mom and dad and also they were on the receiving end of some of their dad's issues.

Right. So they empathized with me in what I was going through. There were times, even towards the end when we kind of all banded together and shared our perspective with their dad. And then he would accuse all of us, of course, of ganging up against him. He was always the victim of everyone else's, you know, life and breath, right, right.

Existence. Um, but I dunno that they really blamed me for the divorce. My problem was that right after. My divorce, my separation was two years, and then my divorce took almost two years. And after I fi about probably six months after I filed for divorce, I started building a friendship just kind of outta the blue with, uh, with someone I knew from high school.

And I didn't really know him. I just, he was an acquaint, like he went to high school with me. That's what I'll say. And then we ended up, we ended up getting married. That was my second marriage. And they did not like that at, for my older kids were like, okay, fine, you divorced dad. But no, you don't just like jump right into another relationship.

And honestly, I kind of agreed with 'em. I didn't really like it that, that I met another guy so soon. Um, but it

**Diana:** actually, I wanna remind you that it wasn't actually that soon. If people read your book, all The Scary Little Gods, they're gonna see that there was actually several years in between. The separation and that, so it wasn't as fast as it seems if you just look at dates on paper, but Okay.

**Natalie:** Thank you. Thank you. That is true. I think though, that when you're living in it and you're a kid living in it and watching it, it feels fast for them. That whole separation and even the whole divorce process, I think in their minds, they still thought there was hope.

**Diana:** Yes, and as a child of divorce, I held out hope for.

Uh, you know, even when my dad was remarried, I still had this idea that maybe, maybe one day until finally I was like 12 years old, and I'm like, no, I never want my parents to get remarried. What was I thinking?

**Natalie:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. They would all, all my kids would say that. Now, would your kids say that now by any chance?

Would they Oh, yes. Agree with that? Yeah.

**Diana:** Yes. They would say that we're both because they're, my ex-husband has made. Some changes that look positive to them. Yeah. And I don't really consider that any of my business, but they believe that he's changed for the better. And they can of course see how much better I am not in a dysfunctional relationship.

Yeah. So they think it, it's better. So I didn't have my kids blame me directly. And you haven't, but I know we've coached a lot of women who have, and so some of the things I've told women who've had to deal with this, who, you know, they just want to get out and stop being. In the, the pain of their marriage.

And by the time they do, their kids are like, you could have stayed, you could have worked harder, you could have done this. You know, you're the one who left. And it's really, really painful. And I, I think what I tell people mostly off the start is, we can make space for our seeing our kids' perspective. They don't have all the information.

They weren't married to your ex. They saw it in a completely different light. They haven't lived the 40, 50, 60 years. Yeah. And they don't have that experience. And so they're seeing things from their little, um, and still maybe a little bit centric depending on how old they are and how they've grown up, and what dysfunction, personality dysfunctions they have because of what they grew up in.

And so they're seeing it in that perspective. Just trying to make sense of their world for themselves. They're trying to survive. So I like to, in the coaching space, bring people back to that place of compassion first, because it is very painful when they blame you, when you just are like, I'm just trying to advocate for health and healing and good things.

Yeah. And I'm so desperate for it. I finally had to leave and now you think I'm the problem. It's really painful. Yeah. But. I, I, if you can, whatever you can do to un to have compassion for what it's their experience too.

**Natalie:** Yeah.

**Diana:** And have some compassion for that. That's a place to start.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Uh, I think, why don't you talk a little bit about the mind shift tool.



Both you and I teach the same, it was from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, right? It's a tool, it's very evidence-based. Um, it works. It's changed both your life and my life. And we coach using that tool. We've, we talk on our podcast about that tool a lot. Why don't you talk about how that tool actually helps us?

When we can, if we can learn to use that tool, we can actually see our kids' models, right? We can see what our kids are doing with their thoughts and feelings and how we're actually not part of that. I mean, we think we are, we hook into it, but we're actually not. That's their own model, and we get to choose our.

What our model's gonna be. Can you talk about that a little bit? Yeah.

**Diana:** Cognitive behavioral therapy tells us that our thoughts lead to our feelings and our feelings lead to our behaviors. And then if you look at cognitive behavioral therapy, it'll show you that going in a loop. It's like the circle and it just keeps going and it's exhausting.

So when I wanted to make a tool for my coach, uh, coaching program, and I teach it now at the Renew Your Mind Institute Life Coach certification program, um, I wanted a tool that felt like I could just hit the pause on that crazy. Spin of thoughts, feelings, actions, thoughts, feelings, actions. And you've been trained in another life coach certification program that teaches the same cognitive behavioral therapy.

It just has, it's listed out as a model with letters and it, and it's the same thing though. It's your thoughts and then feelings and actions. And I just, I like to simplify it to what you think is going to lead to what you feel and what you feel is going to fuel. What you do. So when it comes, especially to this place of, if you have an adult child that's blaming you, that is the situation, adult child says it's your fault, or you walked away, and then you have a choice about the story that you're gonna tell in your brain about it, what are the thoughts that you're gonna have?

So if your thought is. I can't believe my son or child. I said, son, but 'cause my adults are sons, I can't believe my son thinks that about me. And then, um, and, and they, they don't understand. And then you feel, what do you feel? You might feel shame or you might feel despair. Mm-hmm. Hopeless. You get to decide what feeling you have, and then from that place you're gonna act, you're gonna have behavior.



It's the things you're gonna do. So what are you gonna do when your son is around you? If you think, if you're coming from a place of feeling, if you're thinking that stuff, and then you're coming from a place of feeling despair, how are you gonna act around him? Are you gonna feel awkward? Are you gonna, um, not get into deep conversations?

You're gonna try to keep it light. You're gonna walk on eggshells. Are you going to try to defend yourself? What are you gonna do? And of all those things I just said, how do any of those help your relationship with your adult child? And if they don't, now we have an option to change what we think. So we can feel something different and that can fuel different behavior.

So like in the beginning when I talked about wanting to unconditionally love my kids, if I wanna bring love to my interactions, I've got, okay, child blames me for divorce. What do I wanna think? This is my child and they're going through difficulties too. And then I feel love for them, and then I show up differently.

What I do is gonna be like, I listen. I say, I love you. I offer to give them a hug if they want it, I show up completely differently. So that is what the, the mind shift tool that I use, the model that you've been trained in, uh, that are almost the same thing.

**Natalie:** Yeah.

**Diana:** Allow us to do in these kind of situations.

**Natalie:** Yeah. And, and also to understand you can sometimes run a potential model, not that you know exactly what someone else is thinking, but on that, on the other person to see that you're not part of that as well.

**Diana:** Oh, yes. That's what you were talking about. Yes. Not part of that model. Yeah. You do that one then.

**Natalie:** Okay. Well, like for example, um, your, you, your son might be thinking, mom shouldn't get a divorce 'cause divorce is against God's will or something like that. Okay. That's their belief. And when they think that they feel anger or indignant or self-righteous, and then when they feel like that, what do they do?

They lecture mom, they try to get mom to change back. They send mom bible verses over text. You know, they, those of things that they do, they, they cut

themselves off from their mother. And then what is the, what is the result for them? They're actually breaking a relationship. Yeah, because oftentimes our beliefs end up creating a similar result in our own lives.

In our own lives. And, and so once we can, as moms, if we can see that, that that's the, that that's the dynamic that they are creating for themselves, we can see where am I in all of that. I'm not making the, I'm not creating this rift between my child and I, I mean, we could be depending on what our model is, right?

Depending on what we're thinking and believing. But if there, if our child is thinking and believing those things, and we're thinking and believing, like I was thinking too, when you were talking, the example of the belief that you gave underneath that belief that you gave is usually some kind of core belief like, I'm a bad person or I'm doing something wrong.

You know, and we can, we can buy into that because we're buying into other people's perspectives. But that's when we have to go, okay, I don't have to believe that. Um, I, uh, is there something wrong with me? Have I done something wrong? If I really don't believe that, then I don't need to hook into their belief about that.

They think I've done something wrong and that's creating some drama for them. But I want to always feel love towards my son. Yes. Acceptance towards my son, readiness to, um, you know, to have relationship with my son. So I'm going to believe. Something different. I'm going to, instead of believing my son is bad, my son shouldn't do that.

My son is, he, I raised him wrong. I, you know, like all of these things, think my son is young. My son doesn't have a lot of life experience. Um, I made, I taught my son these things and now look at, I must have done a good job as a mom. 'cause now he believes those things. Right. You know, so I had, I had, I have influence in his life.

Um. And, or also just, I just love my son. Uh, it has to be something that you, that your brain actually does believe. Yeah. You can't just like make something up that your brain is like, nah, that's not true. I just love my son. So every time your brain goes, I'm a bad mom. I've done something wrong. You can shift and go, oh, I just love my son so much and he's got, he's such a beautiful human being.

And look at how he, um. Look at how he just wants and craves goodness and rightness and uh, and joy and peace in this world,

**Diana:** and he can have that story and I can still love him even while he has that story. Yes.

**Natalie:** Yes. And it's hard. I mean, it's not easy. It's not like this makes the pain go away. It just, it reframes.

It tells a different story, as you would say. It tells a different story, one that is in, you have the pain there, but now you've got, you've kind of eliminated that dirty pain or that suffering. Suffering comes when we deny what's real, when we resist it, when we try to make it go away, when we try to solve it.

Pain is just what happens because we live life on earth and not everyone's gonna agree with us. Not everyone's gonna, you know, think the way we think, do the things we think they should do. Not everyone's gonna wanna be in a relationship with us. Um, and that hurts. And also that's part of what having a human experience on this planet is, and growing up into adulthood is sitting with that grief and.

Learning how to live and find meaning in life in spite of that real pain.

**Diana:** Yeah. And we get to have hope 'cause things can change over time. I witnessed my sister as an adult, decided not to talk to my father for four years and she ended up getting a terminal illness. So that's what brought him back together.

But still. It could be something else. I have another family member who decided not to talk to someone in the family for years, and after almost 10 years she decided to start rebuilding the relationship again. So even if it's painful and things are happening, now they can shift. And in the meantime, like we're saying, what do you want to bring?

Relationship is two people. What do you wanna bring to the relationship? I always like to think when I'm going into different situations, I'll think I'm bringing the calm. Or I'm bringing the peace, or I'm bringing the love, or I'm bringing the compassion and I choose ahead of time, what is it I'm bringing into this interaction?

Yeah. So we can do that with our adult kids every time we see them as well.

**Natalie:** Oh my gosh, I love that. I love that. Instead of like, I'm gonna bring the pumpkin pie. Yes. I'm gonna, I'm gonna bring the compassion. Yes. Cool. Okay. So, um, what is the difference between taking responsibility for your part? Then taking on false guilt or blame, and what does it look like to apologize?

Well, without o, without overexplaining or groveling.

**Diana:** Okay. Well, I'm gonna start backwards and say the groveling and overexplaining is when we're tying what we're saying to what emotion we want them to feel or what we want them to do. For us taking responsibility.

**Natalie:** Yeah.

**Diana:** So let's not take responsibility and then expect them to hold it a certain way.

Think about it a certain way, feel a certain way, or react a certain way. We have absolutely no control over that. If we let go of that, we're gonna be, we much less likely to feel like we have to grovel or overexplain if we're trying to get them to think about us a certain way. We're just gonna keep overexplaining until they say, you are right, mom, you did nothing wrong.

It was all dad's fault. Yeah, but that's probably not gonna happen anyway. So why are we trying to reach for that? We need to give ourselves our own comfort and permission and acceptance. And not try to pull that out of our kids. So when we are then taking responsibility for our part, either in, if they're looking for us to take responsibility in our part of the divorce, or if they're looking for us to take responsibility in our part of our relationship with them, we can own what's ours.

Whether we feel guilty about it or not, I don't know. When we take responsibility, do we have to feel guilty? Maybe we don't. Maybe we have a lot of compassion for ourselves and the guilt doesn't come, but we can still be like, yeah, I did that. That's on me. Um, I think false guilt is, again, when we're trying, we're trying to take responsibility in some way for the other person or for the experience for everyone involved.

But if we recognize we only take responsibility for ourselves. We can let go of the rest of that. So I've taken a lot of responsibility in my, uh, failed marriage with, uh, you know, what's the percentage of fault? I don't know. It's definitely not equal. Yeah. But did I bring things to the table? Yes. I drank alcohol to cope.

Um, this, uh, October, 2025. I'm 15 years sober, but in my marriage for many years. Yeah. Okay, everybody. Yay. Congratulations. In my marriage for many years, I. Uh, and 'cause of the death of my sister and my painful marriage, I drank. Mm-hmm. And so I will say that to my kids. And my, uh, nervous system was overloaded and unregulated, and I had anxiety and depression, and sometimes I yelled totally on me.

You know, I know it might've been reactive. But I can still be like, I did that and I'm sorry. I'm sorry I put so much pressure on you. I'm sorry. I tried to get you all to behave certain ways quickly by yelling at you so dad wouldn't get mad. Or, you know, I put all this pressure for you to get good grades in school, or I needed you to be quiet, or all these things I, all this pressure I put on you to try to manage the household that's on me.

And I'm, and I'm sorry, but I'm not overexplaining, I'm not trying to reassign blame. I am being honest. And taking responsibility for my part and letting go of the rest. What they do with that? I let I release them. Yeah. They might accept it. They might understand it. They might not accept it. They might not understand it.

But if there's a time where I want to explain that or they ask me to explain something, I can do it. I can stick to the facts. I can own my part and then release the rest.

**Natalie:** Yeah, I think there's a little bit of, um. Like when people, when women are first getting, waking up to abuse really, and uh, getting out.

I think, at least for me, I felt like I had, I had lived for so long thinking that I, there was something wrong with me. That's why my book is called Is It Me? 'cause I kept asking that to myself. There were these, all these issues in our marriage and I kept thinking, is it me? Even though I was. Just like bending over backwards doing stuff, you know, contorting myself in all kinds of ways to make it work.

Um, and then when I finally realized, wait a minute, this is actually what he's doing is creating this situation. And it's not just me, but yeah, I was having reactions to it, right? It's like, uh, if a big dog is got a cat cornered. In a corner and he is scaring the cat, the cat's going to hiss at the dog. The cat might try to scratch the dog.

The cat's trying to defend herself, trying to figure out a way to get out of this situation. And so, um, we wouldn't say, oh, that cat's being so mean if we saw a

situation like that. But that is how, so I, being able to frame it like that helped me unhook from my constant perpetual shame in the relationship.

But then I think survivors, and I know I did, we tend to swing in the opposite direction then and get really defensive when anybody points out anything that we do. And I would do, I definitely would grovel and overexplain and try to, you know, and now I've gotten to the point where, um, I have this course in my Flying Free program called Healing Your Relationship With Yourself.

Where I, that dark. Side of me. 'cause we all have, you know, a light side and a dark side. Right? A shadow side. Yeah. I have learned to love that shadow side. Or I am learning, I shouldn't say I have learned and I've arrived, but I am learning to love that shadow side enough where when that part gets triggered and that shame gets triggered, I can immediately recognize it and go, wait a minute.

Yeah. You know what I did shut down there, or Yeah. You know what I did that was wrong for me to raise my voice at you, or I got triggered and I, you know, reacted and that was wrong. I, I should not have done that. I can see how that impacted you, how that had had an effect on you, and I don't want to be the cause of that kind of pain for other people, and I'm really sorry.

Um, but I think like, and then I also wanted to bring up a story. Um, I remember when my, my oldest son. He and his wife had cut me off for about two and a half years, because after the divorce, and it was a mixture of things. It wasn't, it was a very complicate, comple, complicated situation. But when, I remember when we got together for dinner or for lunch, it was right before COVID hit.

'cause after that, all the restaurants were shut down. But, um, we got together and we ate a meal together. Just he and me. Just, he and I did. And he shared. I finally was at a place where I could listen to what he had to say, and it hurt. Okay? It definitely hurt inside, and there were things that I could say, yes, I can understand why he thinks that or where that's coming from.

And if I had that perspective, if I was coming from that place, I would be in pain too. Yes, I, I don't know how I would handle that either. And also I also it was the most meta experience because I could feel and understand where, where he was coming from. And also I could feel and understand where I was coming from and I could hold both of those truths even though they were not the same.

I could hold both of those truths as reality for both of us. And then to try to find a way to say, you know, there really wasn't much for me to say other than

communicate that like I understand what you're saying. I understand that I have my experience of that was so different. I had no idea at the time that that was your experience of it.

Um. And I, I don't know how can we bring those two experiences together and make them be the same. We can't. We just can't. Yeah. And I, but I do know this. I want, I love you with all my heart and I think you love me with all your heart, and I think we both wanna have a relationship and let's figure out a way to forge.

To forge, you know, to find our way forward. And we have, we have figured that out and we are closer than ever. He had triplets and I was able to go over there and once a week and just hang out with him when he was in charge of the babies. And we had amazing conversations and talked about so many things.

I could never have known at that lunch that that was going to, that someday. We would have a year. Really, it was a year bef then I had a car accident and couldn't move my arms, so I, it sort of ended. But I had a year of every single week having, spending like a few hours of time with my, just me and my son and his little babies and.

It was an absolutely magical, beautiful healing time for us. So, like you said, backing up just a, a few little bits ago where you said it's possible that relationships can be healed, that's absolutely true, and we can always hold out hope for that. We do not know what's around the corner for us and our kids.

So,

**Diana:** and, and if I could just kind of say it, what I observed. So that people listening who want to restore relationships with their adult children can hear is that you modeled dropping expectations of your son. You didn't have any expectations of him. You just showed up wanting to love him. In that meta experience you had of.

Holding space for where he was, what he was thinking and feeling in his experience, while simultaneously holding space for what you were thinking and feeling in your experience. If I was to bring that down to something simple that people could be like, well, how do I, how do I do that? How do I get to that?

Metaplace would be to just start using a phrase in your head like, it makes sense. It makes sense for him to have that perspective. It makes sense that he feels that way. It makes sense that he has. He's saying these things that all make



sense based on his experience. I can see it and where I'm at. This makes sense too.

And I'm gonna allow both of these to make sense even though they're one's feeling the toe of the elephant and one's feeling the trunk and they're having completely different experiences, but it really makes sense and I can make room for that to exist.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Oh gosh, that's so good.

**Diana:** All right. Let me ask the next one.

How do you give adult children space to pros? Oh, wait, did we just answer this?

**Natalie:** Well, it's kind of similar, but, um, yeah, you know what we kind of did. Let's move on to the next one.

**Diana:** Okay. Okay. Because that was, that was it. Okay. Just so everyone knows, it was gonna be about, um, giving your adult space or adult children space to process and sharing a breakthrough story and reconnecting.

So there we go. We did it. Um, oh, my story with reconnecting. I, well, you know, let me just share this real quick and then I'll ask the next question. Okay. But my, uh, oldest son for like, it was like two years after I moved out. I think it was maybe right when the, no, it was a year after the divorce was final.

So I had been out for three, three and a half years. Divorce was final and. I told him we were going to a Packer game together and we were gonna have two hours on the road tailgate the whole game and two hours back. And I said, you know, just the two of us, if you want to use this time to ask me anything, like, just like I get to ask Mom anything I want to, uh, we can, and I would answer anything.

You want, because I had noticed just little bits of tension here and there, even though we always love each other and are affectionate and stuff, and I thought there might be residual stuff, and so he asked me lots of questions about timing. Why did you leave then if dad had already changed this, then why that?

And he didn't know the full timeline because we hadn't told him. I. That I decided to get divorced until months later and their dad had been making changes and he is like, so I don't understand. And he had several questions and I

answered them all honestly. And that was a huge breakthrough, that little bit of tension that I had felt between us for years since I left dissipated.

Wow. So that's something that you can do with your kids. He was, uh, 24. Maybe 24 at the time. So definitely didn't do it with like a 19-year-old. Yeah. And he's a very mature soul, so, and I didn't tell him everything, but I gave him a lot where he was able to like be like, I could tell him holding that space for me.

That really makes sense.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Yeah, that's good. Yeah, I really, I do think it, it depends on the kid. It depends on, some of my kids, you know, shut down. They didn't wanna talk about it. They didn't wanna talk about anything.

**Diana:** Well, let me ask you the next question then. How do you know when to pursue conversation with an adult child and when to step back?

What strategies help rebuild trust when it's been damaged?

**Natalie:** Yeah, I mean with the, with the sun that I told you that I just talked about, um, it was two and a half years. And at first I tried to reach out a couple times. Um, I remember they bought a new house and I brought over a, a house warming gift, and I texted to see if I could come up to the front door and give it to them.

And they said, no, that was really hard. I sat in the car and cried. Um, but then I realized, you know. Am I really respecting their boundary when I try to keep, you know, I made attempts to let them know, basically, I wanted to let them know, I love you. I'm here. I, I want a relationship with you. But then they made it very clear that they didn't want that.

So then it's, it came down to I need to respect that boundary that they have. And so I, the story of the prodigal son, not that he was a prodigal son by any stretch, but that story. Was a good model for me of what I, how I could view it. I could be the dad who, who represents God by the way, who is always looking out the door, waiting for the day when his son comes home and whole and, and ready to celebrate like not.

In my bedroom crying and pouting, and I can't believe he did this to me. And, and being my, making myself out to be a victim because I'm, I'm an adult. Like we, I don't wanna play that role, right? I don't wanna play the victim role. I am,

God lives within me and I am called to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in the world.

How does that look like as my, in my parenting, it means. I will let my kids have their beliefs, but I also, I'm always here for relationship whenever they want. So, um, that's what I did with him right now. I still, so since that time, I actually, right now currently have my, my second oldest son. Um, this is also even more complicated 'cause we had a great relationship.

Amazing relationship, at least from my perspective anyways. Um, and then he decided this last year that he was going to step away from our entire family and he lives in another state. And, uh, there's really only one other. One of my kids that he actually continues to maintain contact with. And so thank God for that.

'cause I, you know, at least I know he's alive, right? And, um, he also struggles with health issues and he struggles with depression and other things. So I have just agonized over, you know, every time I send him a text, he doesn't text me back. But I do but I definitely want him to know, he's never said, please don't contact me.

So I just sent him little, little texts, maybe once a month to just let him know, I love you, I'm thinking of you, that kind of thing. And, um, and I don't know what else to do. I, I weep a lot over the loss of that relationship, but, um, I still have hope that someday he'll come back and I don't really know why, because we haven't had a chance to really, he hasn't really been.

Upfront with us about what's going on with his in his life. So, and then I do have a daughter who she was diagnosed with emerging borderline personality disorder when she was about 16 years old. And they can't diagnose you with BPD until you're actually 18. They can't like legally diagnose you 'cause you're not considered an adult by then.

But since that time, she's a lot older now. She's in her twenties. She has not ever had a full psych workup. I've encouraged her to do that, but she has not. She has continued to struggle and yet. We still had a pretty good relationship for several years and, um, and then a year ago, I don't, I think I, I don't know, I'm completely speculating, but she flipped something, flipped a switch, and she, she cut me off and she cut me off for several months and then.

She married a man, uh, that I didn't know 'cause she had cut me off. She married a man after knowing him for two months and then she came back into my life and said, Hey, I'm married now. Um, I need your help. 'cause I don't know if I

made the right choice. You know, she was freaking out. Then she moved outta state with him and she went off the rails.

She went off of her medication and she really, really was struggling with her mental health and. Sending me needing a lot of help from me, a lot of support from me, but also doing a lot of it's BPD. If you don't know what BPD is, you'll have to Google it. But she was basically exhibiting all like every single classic BPD symptom and having a lot of episodes, and I was absolutely, I could not sleep at night.

I wasn't eating very well. My anxiety was through the roof. I was starting to think maybe I need to go back and, you know, get on anxiety medication. And I realized after a while, I, I set some boundaries and then, um, they were violated over and over again and I realized I am actually enabling her to not be an adult and to not get her own help by doing, by doing this 'cause I'm so hooked in.

And I, I actually had to take, to cut her off for a while. Uh, I actually, I, I just recently unblocked her on my phone. Um, and she hasn't reached out, but I had to block her. And this is something I have never, ever wanted to do. 'cause my, I grew up in a home where my mom was, uh, her weapon of choice was the silent treatment.

And I gotta tell you, that is one of the most painful. Horrific things to go through when someone, when your own parent won't talk to you until,

**Diana:** yeah, but that's different. The silent treatment's different. Than pulling back from someone for your own mental health.

**Natalie:** Yes. I, I know that, I know that logically, but that, but my system, it, my nervous system still felt like, oh, you're just like your mother now.

You are doing what your mother did to you, you are doing to your daughter. And it was, I actually wrote a, a little poem about it. Um. Why don't I let you talk and I'll look up the poem and then I'll read it to you because it kind of expresses exactly what I have to find it. You talk.

**Diana:** Okay. Well, the part I wanna talk about so is, uh, a little, it'll just give a little bit more.

I mean, we we're talking about when to pursue conversation with adult child and when to step back. Is

**Natalie:** that what we were talking about?

**Diana:** Yeah. Yeah. But so you are making excellent points because sometimes our adult children have things that we, that we need to step back from for our own self-protection.

It's not like we have to. I think sometimes as moms we think I have to have good relationship with my children. I have to each one of them, I have to. If I don't, something's wrong and it must be fixed. And I don't think that we need to have to go back to what you think leads to what you feel leads to what you do.

If you think that, what are you gonna feel? You're gonna feel desperate. And then what energy are you bringing to that relationship with the child?

**Natalie:** Yeah. So

**Diana:** I, I wanna offer that we can. We can give our kids autonomy and we can maintain our own autonomy. They are separate people. You know, some adult children go off and never talk to their parents.

Sometimes the relationships sever forever. Is that wrong? No. I mean, a lot of times in different, and still probably still in different cultures. And think of immigration and stuff. You got people leaving their home country and going off and maybe never seeing or rarely talking to their parents again to go have a life somewhere else to try to create a life for their new family or whatever.

**Natalie:** Yeah.

**Diana:** We don't always have to maintain these re established relationships the way it's just, it's just a story of what we think they have to be. And so let's relax and give ourselves some space. Let's relax and give our kids some space and. I think whenever we want to pursue conversation with an adult child, we need to recognize it as we're making an offer.

We're making an offer to them, and then they have autonomy and they get to choose what they wanna do with that offer and they can say, no, thank you. And if they do, that's not about you. That's about them and what they're going through. Yeah. But I also liked what you said, Natalie, too, about trying to bring a present to your son and that, and you asked if you could drop it off and they said no.

Thank you. Yeah. And you recognized that you weren't, they had boundaries and you were trying to push through them a little bit and so you pulled back and you're like, okay, I get it. I, you know. 'cause don't we wanna be the kind of person that honors boundaries?

**Natalie:** Yes. And

**Diana:** it may not be with my kids, but I have a sister who has boundaries with me, is she doesn't wanna talk with me outside anything that's just family, business and short, quick things.

And I generally honor that. I did just recently, one more time, uh, on our dad's birthday who's passed away. I reached out and I was like, I'm just gonna tell you on this, on his birthday, how much I love you. I can't help myself. I have to say it once in a while. That's me. So I just poked through a little bit.

She did, but not, not super warmly. She responded back about my dad's birthday, so she didn't shut me down. So I thought, you know what? I put the love out there. It blew her way, maybe washed over her for a minute and it's over now and I'm gonna move on. Yeah.

**Natalie:** Yeah. Oh, I love that though. That's, that's all. Did you find the poem, oh, go ahead.

Yeah, I did find the poem. So it, it's this. And by the, so I've been doing this. I challenge my, I'm in the middle of it. I challenge myself for 30 days to write. 'cause I, I have gotten away from creative writing because it hurts, like when I, I don't know why, but I feel like I have to go inward to write creatively.

Maybe you, do you feel like this, when you're writing your music, does it, do you feel like you have to enter into some pain to do that? Sometimes.

**Diana:** I do, but it's, it's therapeutic for me because I'm an Enneagram three wing four, and for those of you who don't know what Enneagrams are, the four which is strong in me, is a deep feeling person.

Okay? And so I feel, whether it's good or bad, I feel it deeply. And so sometimes some people think I'm very passionate, or my emotions seem very, like I'm boy, you're very expressive and, uh. It's because of that. So I need these creative outlets to pull that deep feeling stuff out of me so it doesn't overwhelm me.

Yeah. So I'm already in the pain, Natalie. Okay. I have to use this to get it out.

**Natalie:** Okay. Well, what I typically do to, uh, deal with my pain is I just work harder and I keep my brain occupied.

**Diana:** Yeah.

**Natalie:** So that I don't have to think about it, but I've been, but I have. Recently be, I think because of everything that happened with my daughter, um, I have been like, Ugh, I still have a lot of issues inside that.

And I tried therapy again and it just was a colossal fail. So I thought, I'm gonna write again and just see. So for 30 days I'm gonna force myself every morning to get up and just write something. Just write something. And then I'm going to put it on in our private forum. I've got this little space called notes from Natalie.

And I'll put the little thing that I wrote in there to hold me accountable, make sure that I do it. 'cause it's easy for me to go, eh, you know? But if I've got people that are waiting for day seven, day eight, then I feel like I have to do it. So anyway, this was one, this was the first one I've been smacked, screamed at gaslit and ghosted by a mother and a daughter.

Each one devouring me from a different end of my history until they meet in the middle at my heart, where I cradle and rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock. Each one with convulsive longing and tears. Gosh, I can't even read it. Caught in an unresolvable loop. That is what it feels like to have to have a mother cut you off.

And then to have a, and then to have to cut. Well, to have a daughter cut you off, and then to have to actually cut her off too. And then I just wrote another one this morning. This morning's entry was this one. I loved them, my visceral fears forever revolving around their potential loss. Now that they had come to me as miraculous treasures.

How could I live without their light in this world holding their soft bodies and beating hearts in my rocking chair? I did not know how many ways a mother could lose a child, how many days a heart could shatter in a million shards. So I'm getting the feelings out, you know? Yeah. I'm getting the, the stuff out and.

I don't know. I think it's helping other people. I feel like a lot of mothers feel like this and don't know how to express it. It's inside and they don't know how to pull it out of them, and I'm hoping that maybe if I pull it out of me and hold it in my hands for other people to see that they can take it and use it as a little hook to pull it out of themselves as well.



Because we have to. Yeah, because. Go ahead.

**Diana:** When these relationships aren't what we envision. You know, we love our kids. We just wanna have a good relationship with them for the rest of our lives, and we just wanna have this love flame, you know, like warmth feeling between us all the time and when it's not there.

I did a podcast episode once on grief and all I could come to is the deeper You Love someone. The deeper the grief. And it doesn't have to be when they're dead. It can be because that love that you so desperately wanna feel, isn't it? It's not happening in a reciprocal way. It's not living out the way you hoped and you feel that void.

You feel that gap and it's grief. And if you have deep love, you're just gonna, you, you feel the grief and you're doing all this writing and it's helping you express the grief. It's not like your grief ISS gonna totally go away. Yeah. But you're gonna make it manageable because as long as that gap is there with someone you love because they're gone, or because of pain of the status of the relationship, or because of lack of relationship, that grief is gonna exist.

As long as you have the love, I'm like the only solution then is to stop loving them. Well, I don't wanna do that, so I'm gonna have to accept having some grief.

**Natalie:** Yes.

**Diana:** And that's okay.

**Natalie:** Yeah. I, we have so many questions, but you know what? Our time is up. I know. I'll have to revisit this. I feel like, I feel like we just started, this conversation went so fast.

We're trying. We could keep going, but we're trying to keep these episodes to right under an hour and we are going to go right into recording.

**Diana:** Let's do another one, Natalie. We'll record. We're gonna record another one.

**Natalie:** We are. So, um, so anyway, if you are listening here for the first time, we just wanna welcome you to this space.

Um, Diana has a podcast, it's called The Renew Your Mind Podcast, and you can learn all about her podcast as well as all of the other things that she offers by going to RYM.

It's RYM podcast.com. R y's m podcast.com.

**Diana:** It

**Natalie:** stands for because

**Diana:** RYM stands for Renew Your Mind.

**Natalie:** Yes, and And she is definitely amazing at helping you renew your mind. You can probably tell by these conversations. Hopefully you walk away from every single one of these episodes, having your mind renewed in some way, which is.

What God promises that we can, that will happen to us as we grow in our relationship with him. So

**Diana:** you can also find me inside the Flying Free and Flying higher kaleidoscope. 'cause I'm a coach over there, right? That's right.

**Natalie:** And if you want, we have a, um, it's, I started Flying Free for Christian women who are in abusive relationships.

But Flying higher is just for divorced Christian women. Actually, there are some women who are still married in Flying higher, but mostly it's, it's geared towards, and we coach, uh, for, um, divorced Christian women. So if you are divorced and you're looking for a community. We've got one and we, there are tons of classes.

Diana's taught some classes. Some other of our other coaches have taught classes in there. I teach a lot of classes. We have bible studies, we have book studies, we have discussions, um, all kinds of good stuff over there, and it's dirt cheap for what you get. So definitely head over to join Flying higher.com if you're interested in being part of what we've got going over there.

All right, that's it. Until next time. Fly higher.

Bye.