

The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Season 2, Episode 3 - Your Ex, His Family, His Girlfriend, Heck, His Entire Orbit

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: Is being kind to your ex, keeping you stuck in old abuse patterns. Today, we're exposing the sneaky ways that exes and even their families pull you back in and how to break free without guilt. Stay tuned.

Today I'm joined again by my friend and fellow coach, Diana Swillinger. She's the host of the Renew Your Mind podcast and founder of the Renew Your Mind Institute, where she trains and certifies coaches in her own coaching methods, and she is an amazing coach. I'm Natalie Hoffman. I'm a host of the Flying Free Podcast and founder of The Flying Free Kaleidoscope, which is a community of Christian women who are motivated and inspired to leave behind their past programming and find their true identity and self-leadership gifts as they recover and heal from emotional and spiritual abuse, whether that was in their marriages, their families of origin, or maybe a toxic religious environment.

Today we are gonna be talking about exes. Their families and friends and maybe future girlfriends or wives, and how do we navigate all these things? So what I decided to do is actually ask the women in the Flying Hire program if who are mostly divorced Christian women. If they had any questions about this, like what I wanted to find out, what are your real life examples?

I mean, Diana and I have probably have examples as well, but what are some real things that you are struggling with in relation to your ex and all of his, the world that he lives in? Maybe we could answer those questions in the podcast. And we got quite a few questions, so I'm gonna read some of those to you.

And then, and then Diana is gonna be our resident expert and she's going to give her advice.

Diana: I'm just gonna share thoughts off the top of my head because I don't know what these questions are and we're just, we're having dialogue.

Natalie: Yes. This is a serendipitous episode. Okay. So we don't know what it's going to be like.

It could be a real dud.

Diana: No, it's probably gonna be great because by the way, when you do those intros, you always forget to say you are an amazing coach. So when you put us together, we're gonna have a great conversation.

Natalie: Yeah, that would sound really good. I am such an amazing coach. I'm an amazing coach.

Yeah,

Diana: but the, I have to say it because of course you're not gonna say it. And the truth is, you are. You were my coach before we became friends, and I was in your program because you're an amazing coach. So there I said it. Well, thank you, Diana.

Natalie: All right, so here's the first question that came in. She wrote, I'm really enjoying this podcast.

Season one was very good, the issues that come up. Come up for me with my ex is how to deal with his continued subtle signs of manipulation towards me. He still wants me to come back to him. So she's divorced, but her ex still wants her to come back to him. But I have set firm boundaries and have made that a no the last two years.

He's tried to use old tactics to soften and control me. I'm learning how to set firm boundaries, but the emotional side of me, my heart is working to catch up completely to my head. I know I won't go back to him, but I'm trying to be friendly with him and trying to be respectful so that our child can have a chance at some relationship with him.

I guess my question is. How do I interact with him on a regular basis, assess how he's doing for our child's sake and still move forward from grieving him

and getting over him. I care for him, but I know he is not safe for me and he's abusive. I recently joined Flying Higher because I'm struggling with grief again, and I wanna keep growing with boundaries around my ex.

So what would you say.

Diana: Well, there's a lot here. A lot of these questions I know. You know, if you and I got on a coaching call with him, we could ask more. We could find out more and we could get to the real core issues. So we're gonna be kind of talking a little higher level here. But I'll tell you things I noticed, um, toward the end of this question.

She said, I care for him. I think that's interesting. If I was coaching her, I'd be like, what do you mean you care for him? Um, you know, if it was destructive and there were problems and he's still using manipulation, what is this care about? And so I think there's, uh, we can learn to, in this situation where we're dealing with an ex and or his family, in this case it's specifically him, is we can care about him as a human being.

Yeah, this is a human that has worth and value just like me. We all, uh, you know, we're all on a spectrum, but everybody makes mistakes. Everybody does stuff. Everybody struggles, who I can just see that this is a human being who deserves respect. And no ill will. So I will do that. So I care about him in this way, but the word for I would maybe take, get rid of that.

What do you need to care for him with? Yeah. You don't need to manage his emotions. You don't need to be concerned about his experience. He's an adult and you're not married anymore. So the other word I noticed was I wanna stay friendly and respectful. I think respectful is great. Let's respect all the people.

Natalie: Mm-hmm.

Diana: So you're gonna respect the clerk at the store. You're gonna respect the, you know, your neighbor, you're gonna respect your ex-husband.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Same level of respect. And you don't need to be friendly with any of them. Yeah. You can be kind, but you don't need to be friendly. I have neighbors I'm not friendly with.

I'm kind to them, but we never have conversations.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: I might wave when I park my car, uh, if they're backing outta their driveway. I'm respectful and kind. But I don't get out and have a conversation with them. I'm not worried about their emotions. I'm not worried about anything. I'm gonna keep my stuff off their lawn 'cause I respect them.

Yeah. But I'm not gonna go over and talk to 'em when they're having a barbecue. Right. So that, that's my thought here. I talked once on the Flying Free Podcast about differentiating while you're still married to someone. Who's not treating you right or is emotionally abusive. And once you're divorced, let's keep the differentiation going.

They're a completely separate person. Yep. And you don't need to go beyond just respect and kindness and the rest differentiate, disengage. You can always walk away. You can say, I don't choose to have this conversation. Um, I've done the, been asked a question, how, how was you, oh, you went to Cancun for a work trip?

How was it? And I say, it was fine. And I shut it down. If you were to ask a follow-up question, I'd say that was also fine. I don't say thank you for asking. I don't elaborate. I shut it down or I, sometimes I'd, I'd say I don't have an answer for you on that one, so I'm just gonna leave it there. You don't have to engage and you can still, my kids see me be respectful all the time and they appreciate it.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. And also is it really respecting another person when we try to fix them or make their life better for them on their behalf when we take away their, you know, their own autonomy to make their own choices for their life and try to make things better for them. I, I'm talking about an adult. Yeah.

We maybe do that for children. Well, for sure We do that for children because they need us, but adults. Treating them like children, like they're inept or in unincapable of making their own choices is, I don't think very respectful. It's

Diana: not,

Natalie: yeah. Um, I just wanna, uh, after each question, I thought maybe I would say what resources inside of the kaleidoscope that actually addresses this issue for these people who ask the questions, they need that resource, they have access to it.

For those who are listening, if you want access to these, it's ridiculously affordable. It's only \$29 for Flying Free and \$59 a month for Flying higher. So this is a Flying Free course. It's just called Boundaries. And it just teaches like basic boundaries and in a way that makes it easy to understand and to begin to implement immediately.

And this, what she described is a boundaries issue that, um, just needs a little bit of tweaking maybe. Yeah. Alright, so here's another one, Diana. Yesterday I was packing and also bringing stuff to the thrift store. Since I'm moving in two weeks, I saw my ex's beautiful family China set that was a prize thing for three generations.

When he moved out, he said I could keep it. During our marriage, I adored this China and used parts of it daily, but I hate seeing it now. I was gonna send it to the thrift store, but then I decided to ask if my ex wanted it. This was one day after getting the judge's decision that he is an abuser and they denied his court motions.

I felt like asking him something nice and thoughtful would be equal to slipping back into fawning, submitting, and being nice to a monster. When he replied that he would really like having it, I felt like I went back to being a poor little weak woman who helps him. I guess my question is, is it normal to be afraid of being nice?

When what? When that seems right. Is it okay to be helpful and kind to him? It sounds silly written down, but I'm all twisted up about it.

Diana: Yeah. Uh, let's untwist the story. That's what I wanna do. Uh, it's just a twisted story.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: If we, I like boiling things down to just the basics. What is China is, what is China made of?

Is it, is it clay or what is it? Is porcelain, I don't know, know. Orla, something like that. Right. Okay. So it's made of components of the earth and it's been painted and glazed. There you go. Okay. That exists all over the world. It's plates and it's bowls and cups and whatever. You can have some plates and bowls and cups in your house, or they could be in someone else's house or you could throw 'em in the trash.

That's all that's happening. Or take them to the thrift store. Or take 'em to the thrift store so they end up in someone else's. Yeah. Does any of it really matter? These are plates and cups and bowls. All of the story. Everything beyond that is story. Who they belong to. They belong to my ex. They've been there for generations.

I used to use the pieces every day He gave them to me. If I give them back, is that me being kind is all story. If you just boil it down to these are dishes and cups that need a home, because I don't want them anymore, who cares where they go?

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah.

Diana: If you want to, you can put 'em out on your curb and say, Hey.

I'm putting the China out on the curb for anyone who wants it. If you want it. I just put it out 15 minutes ago, you could send that to him. Like, there's so many different ways to handle this. Um, it's not like you're being kind, it, you're finding a home for some China you don't want anymore. And you thought, I mean, and I guess it's kind.

I mean, think of the person who might want it before I just give it to the Goodwill store.

Natalie: Yeah. So what,

Diana: take all the drama out of it and just let it be plates and bowls. That's what I'm thinking. Yeah.

Natalie: Well, and also. Take the drama out of who you're offering it to. Yeah. Like so you're being kind to your ex, or you could be kind to your next door neighbor and offer it to them.

Or you could be kind to like your ex wants it the most if he happens to be your ex, but be, if you think, I usually try to think, well, what are my core values? Well, that's the kind of person I am. I'm the kind of person who says, who would want this the most? The ex would want it the most. I'm gonna give it to him.

I'm gonna offer it to him first, not because of who he is, the ex abuser that just got his motion denied. But because of who I'm, I'm the nice person who says, yes, he probably wants this. I'm gonna give it to him. If he wants it. I love that. Yeah.

Diana: That is so good.

Natalie: Yeah. So the resource that I'd recommend for this issue is you your greatest Hero.

It's a course that addresses being confident in your own autonomous choices based on your core values. So it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. You don't need to make decisions about how you wanna show up based on what anyone else thinks. Just what you think. How do you feel about it? What are your core values?

Then you be your own great hero in the, in the story that we are telling. Okay, here's another one, Diana. I might be an outlier, but my, and by the way, she is definitely not an outlier, but she says my ex is continuing the abuse, two plus years post-divorce. His lawyer is the same. We are headed to court again in March because he wants to decrease child support and he won't mediate, and now he's threatening custody contempt again.

I have super strong boundaries and I have a peaceful life and relationship otherwise, but maybe there are other women out there who face continued abuse post-divorce maybe.

Diana: Yeah. So there's not like a direct question there.

Natalie: No, there's not. But I think she wanted to make a point. Yes. So let's just drive home her point.

Yeah. I mean, there are lots of women who experience abuse post-divorce.

Diana: I mean, I, and I think, uh Right, she's not an outlier. This is normal. Unfortunately. It doesn't mean it's normal for all divorced women. It's normal for a huge amount of divorced women. Yeah. And I think it sucks, but, uh, in it used to be, um, lesson one of my coaching program.

I just moved it up a few, or down a few, but for five years. Lesson one was control. What can we control in our life and what can we not control? And it always boils down in the most simple form, it boils down to we can control what we think, we can control what we feel, and we can control what we do. We cannot control what someone else thinks, what someone else feels, or what someone else does.

And so if you have an ex who wants to still be contentious and keep a legal battle going. And manipulate things with the kids and finances even after the divorce has been finalized. There's nothing you can do to stop him from raising all that ruckus legally.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Then you're kind of back to what you said with the previous answer, Natalie.

It's like, well, how do I wanna show up? Before it was dishes China, now it's with an ax. Who wants to keep taking me to court?

Natalie: Yep.

Diana: How do I wanna show up in this? It really sucks that this is still happening. It won't happen forever. Be forever, because one day my kids will all be adults and there will be nothing left for him to take me back to court for.

But until then, how do I wanna show up? What's the best version of me? And what do I need to do? What do I need to fight for to help protect my kids? That is worth fighting for and what can I or am I willing to let go of? And then you make a choice. This is him being him. I'll respond as I need to and I refuse to let it upset my peaceful life, which is, she said, peaceful life.

You maintain I have a peaceful life. And then next to me, this a-holes got a vortex going. He is trying to suck me into, but I'm not going into that vortex. I'm here in my peaceful life.

Natalie: Yeah, and it doesn't mean that you won't have to address issues as they come up. 'cause I mean, you, it sounds like you're gonna have to go to court and you're gonna have to, there are things that you'll have to, you'll have to go through those hoops.

But, um, I, the, the resource that I'd recommend for her is some, a class I just taught this year and just finished about a month ago. It's a seven week course, and the first half of the course is about letting go alert, figuring out what you need to let go of. Then the second half of the course is all about accepting, accepting what actually is, and until you do that, really those are the keys actually to a peaceful life and, and that to a peaceful life.

Regardless of what your circumstances are, you can apply this to any kind of circumstance. Mm-hmm. All the next question is short. How can you politely and quickly address spiritually abusive people or spiritually abrasive people? Who speak into your life without permission about the subject of forgiveness

Diana: when people speak in, um, concept into my life that I don't need to accept.

Kinda makes me think of episode one when we were talking about sometimes counselors or mentors or therapists might say something that's like, I don't know that, that's for me. I think the same thing with this kind of thing. That's interesting. That's not for me. And so I don't, unless they're persisting at it over and over and I, I need to say, set up a boundary and then you send 'em to the boundaries course and fly higher.

I just say these three words. Is it three, four words. Thank you. Four words. Thank you for sharing.

Natalie: Oh my gosh. Can you imagine how mad that would make 'em? Because they just dumped out all of their great wisdom on you. I'm how you need to forgive. I'm them. Yeah.

Diana: Thank you for sharing. You can say it with whatever tone you want. Thank you for sharing.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Thank you for sharing.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, what can they say to that?

It's like there's nothing more they can say. I love that. Okay, so the co, the course that I recommend for this is called Living Into Emotional Adulthood. Do I need to say anymore?

Diana: No. It's you're responsible for your own emotions and you let them have theirs. If they're dumping that stuff on you, they're having some story in their head about you and their life.

That's making them uncomfortable. They're having uncomfortable emotions. Let them have their own, that's their emotional responsibility. And you manage yours.

Natalie: Yes. Yes. And it's not your job to manage them. Again. Now we're getting back into like, you know how kids, like we kids feel like they need to manage the adults in their lives so that they can stay safe.

But you are not a child anymore. You are safe. Even if those other adults disagree with you or don't validate you or think that you're terrible because they have a, a story about that you haven't forgiven anybody. Mm-hmm. Alright. Based on their idea of what forgiveness is. Okay, so here's the next question.

How do you navigate your children's relationships? Actually, there's two questions here, but they kind of are similar, so I'm gonna put 'em together. How do you navigate your children's relationships with the ex's family? So these are kids who are still at home. And then another question that came in similar is there are times I want to be a co-parent with him and attend a child's event together, but then I have to realize once again that he's not emotionally safe for me to do that.

How do you let that, I just wish it could be this way for our kids idea. Go.

Diana: I think, you know, once you're already past the divorce, you've already done the divorce. And that, why don't you live in the space of being divorced now? The kids have already adjusted somewhat to a divorce. They might have to keep working on it, you know, maybe they need therapy and they need, uh, years to work through it.

I remember my parents were divorced when I was little. I worked through it all the way. I was three and I worked through it in stages all the way until I was 20. And I confronted my dad on some stuff, and then I was finally ready I to let go. I had moved through it. Wow. But in general, your kids have already gone through the divorce?

What are you trying to hold together for them? Yeah. If you want to go to a family event and sit with your ex or go to family event with them and not sit with your ex, that's all up to you. Um, I, I've had different times, you know, I'd show up at a band concert and I'm like, please don't sit by me. I don't wanna sit by you.

And then, you know, now that was a couple years ago. And then my son was visiting from New York and they all wanted to go see the live action, how to train your dragon. 'cause that was a family favorite. And so my ex-husband arranged it and I was invited to go and I thought, you know what? I, I wanna go to that.

And so we sat on the opposite sides and our four kids, three of 'em adults and one minor sat in the middle and there really was no problem with it. But I. I decide what I want to do, go or not go, and the kids already went through the divorce. They know it's weird, it's different. Just let it be, whatever it is, and they're gonna figure it out.

You don't need to make it some certain way for the kids. They're going to be okay. You just show up as they emotionally regulated healthy adults that you wanna be, or as far along in that journey as you are. And bring the love, bring the compassion and honor what you need and what you want, and don't worry about the rest.

Natalie: Yeah. I think when we are resisting reality, like when we're saying I just wish it could be a certain way for my kids, we're basically resisting reality on some level. And we could wish, my mom always used to say, well wish in one hand and spit in the other and see which one gets full first. That's kind of, that's kind of the concept here.

It's like wishful thinking isn't really gonna get you anywhere anyway. The fact is this is, it's not that way for your kids. And also the other fact is it's not that way for probably at least 50%, probably more kids on the face of the planet. And that have ever existed on the planet in all of history. So your kids really are not having a, a highly unusual experience that is just, you know, yes, it can be traumatic for them.

However, it's not unusual. It's a pretty common experience, and the more you normalize it for you, even if it's uncomfortable, you can be like, well, it's like you said, it's gonna be uncomfortable for a while, but normalize that it's gonna be uncomfortable. Accept it. The more you do that, you're gonna be able to pass that energy on your kids, your kids will feel will buy into that.

I've seen this firsthand in my own family's life. When I am freaking out and resisting reality, then my kids are freaking out and resisting the same reality. 'cause they're looking to me for signals, and cues for what is normal and what's not normal. And so I have to, you know, be aware of that. So here I'm going to recommend something that anyone can join for only \$5.

And you can learn the mind shift tool that Diana teaches or that uses in all of her coaching and that I use in my coaching. Um, I have a different acronym that I came up with, but it's still, it's the mind shift tool. And you can take a workshop, it's a five day workshop for \$5, and it will teach you that tool.

And that's one of the tools that we both teach, uh, inside of Flying Free and Flying higher. And Diana of course, teaches that it's one of her many tools that she teaches in her coaching program where she certifies people who wanna get coached. And it's not just people who wanna get co or I'm sorry, it's who wanna be coaches.

It's not wanna be coaches. It's not just people who wanna be coaches, it's also people who are just looking for to, you know, like 10 times their self-development. Right. Totally. It's, it's

Diana: all I've had. Probably half the people go through it just for the personal development and the other half go through it because they're gonna start a coaching business.

Natalie: Yeah. Okay. And you'd, how often do you offer that training? Twice a year. Oh, twice a year. Okay. So by the time this episode comes out, your, your training for the end of this year is gonna be done.

Diana: Yeah, so they can, um, but I'll start again. And it starts in February, 2026. Okay. And so you can go to RYM podcast and find a link to set up an interview with me and I'll tell you all about it.

Natalie: Okay. And then is there a waiting list or something? That they can get, uh, you

Diana: know, it is first come, first serve and I have a limited number of spaces, but, uh, so far it's just worked out that I always hit just about my max and haven't had to put anyone on a waiting list yet, so. Okay. Alright. Yeah. Well mean you'll though after this episode, I might, I, I might in 2026, so get in there.

Natalie: That's funny. Okay, so here's the next question. I've struggled navigating how to respond when my aging in-laws are ill and in need of support. How do I navigate church when they are there? So this is someone who's divorced. I don't know. I would never, I don't think I would refer to them as my in-laws anymore.

Would you? How do you feel about that?

Diana: No, I'd say my, I'd call 'em my former in-laws. Yeah. And, you know, if you love them, like, we get to love and be family with anyone. We want to, I mean, I have some really close friends that I, I'm pretty, we talk as if we're

family, you know, and, uh, they're just friends. So these in-laws, former in-laws, you, you could be really close to them, like family or not.

You have no obligation. We really have no obligation to anyone in life. We decide to be responsible to the people we decide to be responsible to and for good reason. Do you have good reason? What, how do you wanna be involved in their lives? Or how do you not wanna be involved in their lives? What it, what helps you?

I mean, if you being involved in their lives is sabotaging you of joy and peace and time and energy, and it's just a suck on you. Do you need to be investing in them since they aren't your, technically your responsibility? Like only like your parents and your children. I mean, who are, are when they're all adults actually, we're even our own parents and children.

We're not responsible for them. We can bow outta that too if we want to.

Natalie: Yeah, that's true.

Diana: So you have no obligation here. What do you wanna do? How do you wanna interact with them at church? Do you wanna help with their aging and uh, needs if they're ill and stuff, or don't?

Natalie: Yeah. Uh, when I thought with the, with the second part of our question, how to navigate church with them there, I would just think, for me, I would think, well, how do I wanna navigate church with anybody?

There's a lot of people at church, how do I navigate people, how do I navigate church with just people in general and then their people. Therefore, I'll just navigate church in the same way with them. As I navigate with it. I'll say hi to them if I see 'em in the foyer, you know, if they, someone stumbles and falls might help pick 'em up.

You know? Yeah. Or

Diana: if I really love 'em and I think they're the, they're awesome and they've always been great to me. Maybe I wanna sit by 'em. Right.

Natalie: Exactly. Exactly. It's completely up to you and your situation. Yeah. Yeah. All right, so the next question is, uh, the thing I've had to continually work on is boundaries that protect my wellbeing.

Anytime I'm somewhere where his mom is, she brings the situation up and tells me to fix things, or something along those lines. I've emailed in the past and said that I love them and will no longer be discussing the marriage, but she does, and then I have to walk away from her and I have a panic attack.

The rest of his family, I've only seen once or never since, or never since the separation. My next plan is to just have a card that reiterates my boundary of not discussing the relationship. I guess the question would be, what are some practical ways we can keep contact with them, excuse me, and not discuss the relationship after all that needs to be said, has been said.

Diana: Well, I mean, I, I had a family member that I asked not to discuss certain things with my family of origin. I didn't want her, her bringing that drama to me and she just wouldn't stop, you know, the next phone call. She would say, oh, well you know that person that I'm not gonna name? And, and I'm like, oh my God, that's how we're not talking about them.

Natalie: That's so funny.

Diana: And so I, um, my boundary had to be, I am sorry, I. I'm not gonna be talking with you anymore. Wow.

Natalie: So you just so you don't talk to them anymore at all?

Diana: Well, I still don't. Yeah. I mean, I could, but there's, uh, she's done some malicious stuff online, so I don't think she's safe for me still.

Natalie: Yeah, yeah.

Diana: Uh, but, uh, wait, what was the first part of this question?

Natalie: Well, she was, one thing that she said that was interesting is I, she. She's told her mother-in-law, I don't wanna discuss the marriage, but her mother-in-laws just continues to discuss the marriage and so then, oh, I know what I

Diana: wanted to say.

Oh, okay. Good. She walks away. 'cause you can say, I'm sorry, I'm not gonna discuss that and walk away, but I was interested in the part of her walking away and then having a panic attack. Yes. I, if you are not an, if you're in Flying higher. This person who asks the question can show up for coaching. I would

get coached on this one because I, we need to figure out what is going on in your head.

What story do you have that when mother-in-law brings up the marriage, you have a panic attack.

Natalie: Yeah. Something's

Diana: going on there. We need to figure that out because really mother-in-law's just saying words. She could say, there's a puppy outside. I love hot dogs. You need to fix your marriage. She, whatever she's saying, she's just saying words.

Yep. Your ear is hearing them. Making meaning out of them and then constructing the story in your head that's creating panic. That's what I would wanna work on with you, which I can't, right now. We don't have enough information. But if somebody listening to this is like that same thing happens to me.

You've got a story Yeah. About what's going on. That's where you need to do some work.

Natalie: Yeah. And that's where that mind shift tool that we, that you teach and that I have that workshop for, um, will, and we'll put a, by the way, we'll put a link to that in the show notes. I, I meant to say that. That's what that, that tool will teach you how to find the story and then figure out if you wanna keep it or not.

Because another person in the same situation might have a story that makes them walk away from that giggling. Yes. Yes. And being mildly amused. They might be entertained. Yes. Cute little old lady who keeps bringing up the marriage is so adorable. Yeah. Yeah. See, so it's really depends on what you believe and what your story is.

Yeah. I'm so glad you said that. Um. Yeah, I think we, I think we're done with that one. Okay. So what do you say to the woman who feels like she is the bad guy for limiting access to her life?

Diana: There's a Bob Newhart video. He passed away recently, and I posted it on Facebook. It's one of my favorites. He does this skit where a woman walks in and she's like, every time I. Go by an elevator or something like that. She, she's like, I just get terrified. And he says, well, stop it. Just stop it. And so, um, I am

not minimizing this at all, but that was my first thought with this idea of not wanting to be the bad guy.

I'm just like, stop thinking that you're the bad guy. Just stop it.

Natalie: Yeah. How is that? Why, why are you the bad guy? Because you're limiting access to you. Everyone limits access to their life every single day when you think about it.

Diana: You know, in the movies, the people who swoop in and save the day and stop access so that people who are destructive can't access the good people.

They'll come in and they'll scoop the kids and take 'em outta dangerous way. They're the good guy,

Natalie: right? You could tell that story.

Diana: Yeah. When I stop them from accessing me, I'm the good guy.

Natalie: Exactly, exactly. I'm saving the

Diana: day.

Natalie: It's the programming that says that it, you're only good if you are endlessly available, emotionally available, you know, physically available.

You, we were taught that love means that you don't say no and that, and that if you forgive someone, that means they have full access to you now because you forgave them, or that godliness looks like, you know, self-sacrifice and staying small. That's not true. It's not true. That's just a story.

Diana: It's like what you talked about before with respect.

When we uphold boundaries and we limit access, it's out of respect for ourselves and the other person. Yes. Like, no, I'm sorry. I'm I, I'm gonna put up this boundary to save us both because I don't want to be affected in a negative way by your behavior, and I don't choose to give you the platform to act that way.

Which isn't good for you either.

Natalie: Yeah, yeah. I'm gonna be

Diana: the good guy here and I'm just gonna shut it down.

Natalie: Yeah. We have a neighbor that, um, they have a dog that they let run loose and this dog is constantly coming into our yard and defecating in our yard and, uh. We haven't figured out the solution yet.

We have called the police. The police have issued warnings. I haven't called the police again in recent years, but let's just say, let's take that story. I'm not gonna put an fence in our backyard, but let's say that I did. That would be like, what we'd be saying is I'm a bad guy for putting a fence up in my yard and not giving that dog access to my yard.

The dog can defecate anywhere else. In his yard, or I guess in the rest of the neighborhood when you stop and think about it. Yeah, but not in my yard anymore. Why does that make you a bad person? Your ex can access everyone else in the world if he wants to. Why are you bad if you say, well, just not me. I don't know.

You're not,

Diana: I'm still gonna, I'm flipping it. I'm totally flipping it to the good guy. That's what I like on the screen. Yeah, I

Natalie: like that too. I like that too. So what are some red flags that show that a woman is being pulled back, that she might be being pulled back into an unhealthy family dynamic you described, you know, that pit, that pit.

That was this episode, right? Where everyone was at the bottom of, or was that, oh, no, that was in episode one. Okay, so you have to go listen to episode one. Why don't you tell that story again? People are in the pit, okay, and you're standing on the outside of the pit. What are some red flags that show that you might be kind of like tempted to slip down into the pit and start fixing things?

Diana: All right, so, uh, season two, episode one, we were talking about the coaching, mentoring, therapy, relationships, and I was talking about, um, an aha moment I had with a therapist who, my family of origin, same person I did mention in this episode that I had to cut off that was trying to pull me into all this drama.

And she said, you know, that person and their spouse and your sister, they're all in down in this pit and. Uh, they've got chains on them. They've got chains on their ankles, they've got chains on their wrist, and they're all, all this drama. They're in interacting, they're doing, they're all getting tangled up in the train.

The chains, you're up here at the top of the pit, you're seeing them struggle and you want to help, and so you wanna climb down in the pit and get in there and help them. But what happens when you get down in there is now your. All tangled up in their chains.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: So let's figure out a way for you to be a part of your family and not get tangled up in all those chains and not get tangled in the drama.

So we gotta pull you outta the pit. You're up here, you're not gonna enter the pit. Now, how do you wanna show up?

Natalie: Yeah,

Diana: so I can still give encouragement. I can still give love, I can still give compassion. I see what you're struggling with and it pains me to see this. I can still even grieve it. But I don't need to get sucked into that drama.

I don't need to make it mine. Yeah. I can pull back.

Natalie: Yeah. I think if you're starting to feel internally, like I've gotta keep the peace or, or you feel this impetus to say yes when you really wanna say no, that you feel like you should say yes, that's like a red flag. Or just questioning your boundaries.

Like did, was I too harsh? Um. Guilt. We often make decisions based on if we're feeling guilty, but guilt is not always a very good compass to go by if it's been shaped by decades of spiritual manipulation and gaslighting. So we can't always trust. Guilt is a feeling that we get when we feel like we've, or when we believe that we've violated some of our core values.

But if you look at what's causing the guilt, often that core value or that core belief. Is something that we don't, when we look at it, we're like, I don't even believe that anymore. So why do I still feel guilty? Well, that's 'cause a part of you still is buying into that a little bit. And that's maybe work that you wanna do with a coach or a therapist.

Yeah, yeah. Um, or also feeling the need to explain, well, I gotta explain this. You don't need anybody's approval now. You don't need to justify, you don't need to explain anything. You are an adult now. I have struggled so much with thinking like an adult because I have parts of me that just wanna go back in a child mode where I had get someone else's permission to do something, or I get someone else's pat on the head.

This part of me is very strong and I just wanna like just what is your problem and push this part down. You know, we are an adult now, but this little girl part is so strong. I, and that's a red flag that there's something, uh, there's something I really need to work on here. Um, or like an anxiety of, of around events that are coming up that where you're gonna have to be with these people.

Right. So, um, I have a little bit more time. How do you talk to your kids about their dad's new partner? So like, what if you're and, or. It could be a new girlfriend, it could be maybe he got married. What if your kids actually like, and also what if your kids actually like the new partner more than you want them to?

How do you handle that? Or even what, what about the, if the opposite happens where they feel very uncomfortable and unsafe around this new person. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Diana: Yeah, I would say if the kids actually like the new partner, I mean, I, I would think this would be something to be thankful over.

Yeah, me too. Because you're, we're already comparing it to what if the opposite happens and you feel uncomfortable or unsafe with a new partner. So if your ex is going to date someone or get married, um, if, if it's someone your kids actually like, they probably feel safe around them.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: They probably have some sort of, uh, respect or, um, comradery type thing happening.

That is healthy for your child, it's good for your child. It's a good opportunity. It's way better than other options. Yeah. So when I was a kid, both of my parents got remarried and I liked both of their spouses, uh, while I was a kid, I should say. How did your other

Natalie: parents deal with that? Did they, were they good with that or?

Diana: Yeah, I mean, my dad got married right away. My mom, um, probably. Could have had a lot to say about that. And I'm not gonna give details of that on a public podcast, but she just was honoring all the time. Okay. My stepmom was always kind to me and my sisters and my mom never said anything derogatory and she, uh, always wanted us to preserve our relationship with our dad.

Was my dad a good husband to her? No. And she was okay with that. He was an okay father, or, you know, we all had different experiences. Some of my sisters would say he was an okay father. I'd say he was a great father. I was the third child. I just thought he was amazing, even though I saw all his flaws and I totally loved him.

And then when my mom married my stepdad and I was 10, my sisters were hesitant, you know, to have another man move in the home. And I just decided I loved him. But that's me. I'm the easygoing personality. But my dad, um, didn't say anything. Derogatory about my stepdad either. And I thought, how mature of, you know, and maybe your ex won't do that.

Maybe if you're the one who gets a partner, your ex will be a derogatory. You can't do anything about that. We just always. How do we wanna show up? What energy do we wanna bring? I like to think about what emotions am I feeling that are gonna fuel how I show up? I wanna, I want to have more love, more compassion, more understanding, more patience, more curiosity.

The other part of this question though is what if the opposite happens and your kids feel uncomfortable or unsafe with. Their new partner and this, uh, this could be, um, this is kind of a loaded one. This could have a lot of nuance to it. There's so many different situations you'd wanna be aware of. I would wanna say if you think something unsafe is happening, if you think there's a gun in the home that shouldn't be there, or there's drugs that are being used or there's emotional, um, especially maybe not emotional, but especially verbal or physical abuse or unsafe activities happening.

I would consider talking to your attorney and other resources.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Um, but if it's just that they're feeling uncomfortable, maybe it's not, she's not a nice person. Yeah.

Natalie: I don't know.

Diana: You can. Or maybe they just don't,

Natalie: you know, kids are different. Some kids are really sensitive. They don't want there to be another person in their dad's life.

Yeah. It might, it might just be they're uncomfortable because they just don't want dad to have a girlfriend. You know, and they might feel like that about you too, when you get a boyfriend. Yeah. They might be like, I just don't feel comfortable with that. Um, what about when, because I think some women feel like they're being replaced like the other, like the girlfriend or the new wife is replacing them as a mother.

How would you address that?

Diana: I am, you know, sometimes I feel like a broken record, but I'm all about the stories going on in our head. And if that's what you think is happening, that's coming from a story in your head, because I don't think that you are at that house watching the interactions. You're not watching what that person's like with your kids.

You're not watching what your kids are like with them. You're hearing tidbits of moments from your kids. And that's all you have. Everything else you fill in the gap with is story. Yeah. And what, what does it mean to be replaced anyway? Exactly. I mean, my thought is I can't be replaced. I'm irreplaceable.

That's my thought too. Yeah. Like my ex might get in a relationship with somebody else, but that person's gonna be nothing like me. It's gonna be completely different. There's no replacing happening.

Natalie: Yeah, exactly. And there's no replacing the, the, uh, the bond that a mother and her children have. You can't replace that.

Yes, it can appear to be broken at times, but honestly, just the way people are wired, children grow up and even if they have abusive moms or dads, there is a bond there and for the rest of their lives. And it's just the way it is. So capitalize on knowing that like, I've gotta bond with my kids. My kids, maybe they're gonna bond with the new girlfriend, but it's not gonna be like the bond they have with me.

Of course not. I'm their mother. Exactly. I bore them. I, I raised them from the time they were an infant. There's nothing that, there's nothing that can replace that kind of bond. Um. I, I Chachi, ptd this question. I just wanted to see like if

there's any analogies that it, that it could come up with. And it came up with this idea that you are the rooted tree and she is a new breeze.

A breeze may feel good for a while, but the tree is where they're gonna come to lean when the storms hit. And I Jbt is so

Diana: poetic.

Natalie: I know. I just thought, oh, I like that. I wanna sh I wanna share that here.

Diana: I do like that. And again, this is story and why not? And I always say, this is my saying. You heard it here first folks.

Diana Sweller quote, you can tell whatever story you want. You might as well make it a good one. Ugh. Make it a good one for your soul. Make it a good one for your emotions. Make it a good one that fosters peace and wellbeing in your heart. Yeah. And that story about being that rooted tree, does that?

Natalie: Yes, it does.

Okay. We're gonna do one more question then we're gonna close. How do you guard against being tri? And this is an important issue against being triangulated in ways that undermine your parenting. So triangulation might be, some examples, might be, um, you know, someone pulling your kids into the middle. So they're relaying messages between you and dad.

I mean, believe me, I've had my share of all of this in my own, uh, my own situation, but, or like comparing households or thinking that you have to, uh, thinking that you have to pick sides.

Diana: Yeah, I feel like I'm a little bit removed from the triangulation now, so it's not as fresh in my mind. It happened more during, it happened totally during my marriage and it happened through the divorce as well, but I, I like to just think of always going back to truth.

Other people are going to, you know, try to do some manipulation, try to change people's minds, try to, uh, insert people into the middle of things and make it more complicated. Or use Flying monkeys as kind of a triangulation thing as well, uh, which is where you just get somebody else to do some work for you.

Have them fly in and relay messages and or try to stir things up. And if I can stay outta that drama, like that's another pit filled with chains that I don't wanna be in.

Natalie: Yeah. I

Diana: wanna stay outta that pit and I'm just gonna keep speaking truth. I'm gonna know what is true in my life, in my experience, what's been true for me.

And I'll always just speak truth. It doesn't mean all the gory details. So if somebody, and you've talked about this, like, um, I'll never forget 'cause I've heard it a couple times now, the smoke alarm story.

Natalie: Oh yeah.

Diana: Where like your ex-husband told your kids that you stole all the smoke alarms from the house when you moved out.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah.

Diana: And you just said, I don't, I don't know what to tell you kids. I can just tell you the truth. I don't know where the smoke alarms are, but I know the truth is I did not take any.

Natalie: Right.

Diana: And then you had, but you had to let 'em think whatever they want after that.

Natalie: Yeah. What are your

Diana: thoughts on this?

Natalie: The funny one, um, I think, well, I mean, a tri, I always tell my kids, you know, a triangle is three parts, and so if you take one of the parts out, then it's not a triangle anymore. I can't control what my kids do or what my ex does, but I always know when I'm in a triangle, I'm like, okay, I'm in a triangle.

And sometimes it happens. Without you, you find yourself in a triangular triangulation situation and you didn't intend to get there. You just were got looped in. And that's when, once as soon as I recognize it, that's when I have to

just stop and go, okay, wait a minute here. I know what's going on here. I am in a triangulation pattern and I need to get out.

And sometimes I will just plain old say, this is a triangle between me, you, and so and so. I am getting out now. I don't know how you and so and so are gonna solve the problem, but I know that both of you are capable people and you will figure it out, but I can't be part of it. Now, there are times. When the triangulation happens, where it safety is involved and you have to get involved in that situation.

I think, I'm trying to think of an example. There have been moments when I've thought, okay, I can get out of this, or I, or I can stay, and I've actually made a conscious decision. To stay, but at least I know, I'm aware. I'm in a triangulation situation. I'm gonna stay in this situation until things are stabilized, and then I will remove myself and let the, the two, the other two parties figure it out.

Is that healthy or not? I don't know, but all I know is that. I am an adult and I can decide if I wanna, yeah. If I wanna be in a triangle, I wanna be in a triangle. Right. But at least I'm aware of it. And then the only other thing is, um, if you, like, if when you're talking about two different households with two different rules, that's okay.

It's okay. Because a lot of women will come into the program and they'll be like, I, I want my kids to make sure that they eat this way when they're at their dad's house. And so I keep telling my kids, and I keep telling my ex, you need to eat this way and you need to go to bed at this time and you need to blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And that is a triangle. That's now you've got the kids involved. They're tattling on dad, who's tattling on mom, who's like, you've got an issue and it's so much easier to just stay in your own lane when the kids are at your house. You control what they eat when they go to bed. If they get to school on time, you know what they wear to school.

All of that is in your control. Yay. Yay for you. When they are at dad's house, dad gets to decide if they go to bed late, if they eat sugary foods and if they go to school and they're always late to school. And then if they are always late to school and the school calls you, you can just say, I know crazy.

Huh? You better give him a call. Because on Tuesdays and Fridays, they're over at his house and there's nothing I can do about it. So you're talking to the wrong person right now. Call him and immediately you're, you're out of the triangle

otherwise. 'cause at the very beginning, I, I was involved in stuff like this where the school would call me about stuff related to him and then I would try to fix it.

'cause again, I'm like, oh, I gotta fix it. I gotta fix it. They told me to fix it. You know why they're asking me to fix it? 'cause they know I'm gonna fix it and they know he's not gonna fix it. I finally realized I'm done. I'm bowing out if he never fix it, and that is a problem for them. Oh, well why is that my problem?

This is between them and him. That's another like triangulation that can happen. So anyway, just staying in your own lane is helpful. Yeah. Um, yeah, I. Do you have any other thoughts before we say ADU bid? ADU bid ourselves adu? No, I thought this is, I mean,

Diana: this is on relationships. This is relationships with your ex and your ex's family.

I mean, just make it whatever you want it to be. Don't forget your autonomy in this. You don't have to try to placate everybody and make it good for them. You get to decide what works for you and what helps you live your badass life. That's what I think.

Natalie: Yeah. Think of yourself as. I think sometimes when we think about family systems and us in family systems, I don't know, maybe it's just me, but this is how I think.

I always think for some weird reason, I always think of myself as the kid. When I think about my family of origin, for example, I think about my grandparents and my aunts and my uncles and my parents and and my cousins. But I'm with the cousins. We're all kids. Yeah. And I have to catch myself up to speed and go, wait a minute.

I'm actually the old auntie now. I'm actually the grandma now. I'm actually the adult now, so I can make my own decisions. I don't remember my grandparents or my aunts or my uncles ever asking anybody for permission about what they were going to do with their lives or how they were gonna show up for their lives.

They just, they just showed up and lived their lives and made their own choices. And I don't remember, yes, we, there was some judgmental stuff, but for the most part, everyone, you know. There's always gonna be that. Right? But that didn't stop any of 'em. They still kept some of them, some of them, you know, would do very interesting things, and they didn't care if anyone judged 'em.

They just kept doing the what they wanted to do. And so why can't you? Why can't you? Exactly. Yeah. All right. We're adults, people, we finally get to be adults. Alright, let's close on that note. Um, oh, and by the way. One last plug. If you wanna join Flying Higher and learn how to be an adult, if you feel like you're a kid, honestly, if I could like succinctly say what I'm gonna help you do in Flying Higher is I'm gonna help you grow up and be that adult that you have always longed to be.

I know if that language resonates with everyone, but did, I mean, did you ever feel like that? Like you were a child sometimes or not? No.

Diana: No. Actually, when you talk about it, that part doesn't resonate with me so much. Okay. But. But I do at least wanna say, and I know it does with a lot of people, that yes, you teach us how to think like an adult and take charge of our lives, but we also get to have a truckload of fun.

We're not taking out the fun.

Natalie: Yes. No, absolutely not. We do. Plus just, uh, a little, uh, what's the word I'm looking for? Uh. Spoiler. Oh, I, when I am working with Flying hire women, 'cause I'm with them a couple times a week live, they get to see my real life unfold and they get to see the things that trigger me.

They get to see the way my little girl parts shows up sometimes, and not with them, but I will tell them stories, you know, and, and I think it, they have shared with me that it helps them. To feel better about the fact that they're still dealing with their little girl parts. It's not like, it's not like this goes away and we suddenly become an a sage old lady who just always, you know, has wisdom to share.

We still struggle. I, well, Diana doesn't, but I do. No, I do. I'm

Diana: such a human. If you're in my Facebook group, you know, I put videos in there when I'm totally falling apart and let people see the real me. So that's where, oh good. You have a Facebook group. I do, it's all at RYM podcast.com if you wanna be in the Facebook group.

Yeah, I did a a, um, it'll be older now. By the time people join if they hear this. But I got on there when I had a totally dysregulated weekend where I was beside myself emotionally, and I talked all about it.

Natalie: Wow. I'm a real person that, yeah. Well, I would join, except that I have a direct line to Diana on Vox.

Don't

Diana: join. Don't join. Just Vox for me. Oh yeah.

Natalie: So Diana and I, if people could

Diana: hear our Voxer. Yeah.

Natalie: No, I don't want people to hear our Voxer. No. Alright, well we'll see. Well thank you so much for listening and those of you who tuned in this week, and we will see you next week, I, I wish I remembered what we were gonna talk about.

Diana: It's gonna be great,

Natalie: whatever, but I just want, it'll be awesome. More relationship stuff. Alright, we'll see you then. Until next time, keep Flying higher.