

The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Season 2, Episode 5 - Family of Origin Wounds: How They Shape Divorce and Healing

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 if your deepest shame wasn't actually yours to carry? In today's episode, we're gonna talk about how some Christian families quietly exile divorced women and why your healing starts with one shocking truth they never taught you in church. Stay with me. This changes everything thing.

Joining me today is my friend and fellow coach, Diana Swillinger. She is the host of the Renew Your Mind podcast, and we're gonna be talking about family of origin, relationships and how those might change after divorce. And I think that the reason we have to address this is because for many women of faith who are raised in Christian homes, divorce was unacceptable and stigmatized.

I know in the family I grew up in, if someone got divorced at church, it was talked about in a very shameful way. I remember one couple who got married in our church who ended up actually becoming really good friends with my parents for several decades. But initially, when they first got married, it was a big scandal because the husband was a divorcee and the wife, the woman that he married was actually a widow, which would've been technically okay in our, in our religious beliefs.

Um, but they got married, but she married a divorcee. And so I was told, uh, that they were committing a perpetual adultery before God because the husband was still married to his first wife. In the eyes of God. And I literally could not look at them at church without feeling anxiety about their state of salvation and their standing before God when I was a young child.

And then when I got divorced, one of my siblings and her husband immediately cut me out of their lives and I was uninvited to their son's wedding. So this is a very real thing that many divorced Christian women have to deal with and I think that we should talk about it today. So Diana, let's start by addressing the feelings of disappointment and shame or judgment that we might get from, well, I shouldn't, I should rephrase that.

'cause we don't get feelings from other people. Right. And maybe you wanna talk about that. 'cause sometimes I think we think that we do, but, but we might feel those feelings when our parents or our siblings, they maybe wouldn't do be as drastic as my sister was and just cutting me out. Although some people listening probably have experienced that.

But they might just be, it might even just be like a quiet sense of judgment. You know? Like, like, uh, I think, I mean, sometimes I wonder, did the people at church know that my mom was quietly judging them for their choices or was she able to keep that pretty hidden? I don't know. You know, but I think I have felt that that energy coming from other people, um, when people are judging me about different things and I'm sure that they've felt that when I've been judging them.

'cause I've been a very judgy pants person myself. If you grow up in it, that's what you end up doing. Right. So why don't you talk about that a little bit from your coach's perspective? 'cause you, you're a coach that works with people's mindsets and the way that they're thinking about things and how that really impacts how they're feeling and how they're showing up for their lives.

Diana: Yeah. Good. I'm happy to jump into this. I'm gonna mention just a couple other things in addition to loving. Um, exploring how we're thinking about things. I also love to take a look at how people behave and maybe have micro expressions of emotion. So like you could take this question two ways. It was about how do you navigate feelings of disappointment, chain shame and judgment.

And then I was thinking, is it there the family member's, disappointment, shame, and judgment? Or is it us feeling the disappointment, shame, and judgment, and maybe they're the ones feeling disappointment, shame, or judgment first sometimes. And then through micro expressions or body behavior or little bits of the way they say things, that's how we pick up on it.

That's the energy we feel. We might not be able to identify it, but we notice this stuff. So it can get really convoluted. In one of my coaching programs, I have a

worksheet called mirroring Emotions. And so sometimes. And it can show up in different ways. If someone around us is feeling disappointment, shame, or judgment, and then they're pushing that out at us, we can mirror it back to them, or we might reflect it back, jump on the train and reflect it back to ourselves.

And then just pile on more disappointment, shame, and judgment. So this whole thing is really convoluted. We're not gonna solve it. Now, I kind of think this one's a tough one. Um, you know, I had someone in my family say, I'm okay that you got divorced, but you know, according to God, you can't get remarried.

So I've had to deal with that one yet. But, you know, I, I've had that and I've had shame and judgment from, um, and disappointment from my little sister. And it was not because of getting divorced. She judged me for a whole lot of other things. So, and she refuses to talk about it and won't have relationship with me.

So I understand this dynamic. Maybe not for personally, but maybe not in the space of divorce. Anyway, all that said, when we're trying to navigate what's kind of now become our own disappointment about the situation or our own shame for what we've been through or maybe our judgment of ourselves, which I had to deal with a lot through my divorce.

I had disappointment, shame, and judgment. I just brought on myself from my religious beliefs. Um, but when it's coming from a family, what can we do? Okay, so this is when you're noticing your family's doing it. And I think just acknowledging that they're having feelings, they're having thoughts and feelings, and that's about them is important.

This is a different way to differentiate. They're having thoughts and feelings and they're acting from it, and that's about them. That's their responsibility. And also differentiating and understanding that their reactions, the way they're thinking, it's all coming from their own story, their own fear, their own beliefs, their own unmet expectations.

'cause they have expectations for you. And if you're not meeting them well that's their expectations unmet, and they're just reacting out of all that going on in their own head. So what you can do if that's happening, if you feel yourself getting sucked into their vortex of all that icky feeling is to find somewhere else that you can anchor yourself into something.

That's not linked to them, approving of you or not, like you can anchor yourself into your own approval of yourself. Now, this is a high level answer. There's a

lot of work to do to make this happen, but let's, let's keep it up here. You can anchor yourself into having your own feelings of approval for yourself.

You can find friends or a supportive community like the Flying Free, Flying Higher Kaleidoscope, where there'll be dozens of other people who will offer approval of what you're doing and support you. You can surround yourself with friends who will speak to you in a supportive voice reminding you that you do matter.

You do have worth, you are a strong person. And then the, this other piece that I think is, can be hard for us, depending on our story and our faith is, and so I don't just wanna say, just believe in God's truth that he loves you, because sometimes we have a hard time. Grabbing onto that after all we've been through.

But you can work on deciding, I'm gonna figure out how to believe the truth that I want to believe in, that God does see me, he does love me, and he does approve of me. And he is for me, no matter what my messy life looks like, he is for me. That is the truth. You can decide to work on embracing that. So I guess I'll leave it there.

There's so much we could say about this. That's the tip of the iceberg. Yeah,

Natalie: yeah, yeah. And you know, if you, if you're listening and you're like, oh, I wish I could really work on this, that was a very high level, like a snowflake on top of an iceberg of what's available to you if you wanna do this work.

Diana actually coaches people. She does private coaching for Christian women who are dealing with stuff like this and wanna grow in these areas. And then the Flying higher community, it's a community and course based. Education support system that, um, that I run for divorced Christian women. And you can join that as well.

That's join Flying hire.com if you're interested in learning more. And then if you go to, uh, if you go to Diana's website, it's uh, I always forget the, I always think about, I always send

Diana: people, yeah. RYM podcast.com. Yeah,

Natalie: because the R is renew Your Mind. So, RYM Renew Your Mind podcast.com. RYM podcast.com.

And then, uh, everything is over there. You can listen to her podcast, but you could also get, uh, some coaching from her. So, um, those resources are there. And I, it's, I was just trying to figure out an analogy to describe what it's like to actually make these changes in your life. It's so hard for Diana and I to describe this.

You know, we can read reviews from people who have. Followed our worker have worked with us. And that will be one way of doing it. But maybe one way of doing it is have you ever listened to a song with your earbuds in and it's just like an this, you have this amazing experience and then you try to share it with someone else, but you know that they aren't going to get it unless they actually put earbuds in and go into that immersive experience and experience it for themselves.

That's kind of what it's like. It's like, listen to this great song. It's so good. I've had people do that. They'll send me a song and I'm like, I don't wanna listen to that song 'cause I don't know how good it is. And then when I finally listen to it, I'm like, wow, that really was amazing. That was incredible.

Um, that's kind of what I'm talking about. You ha if there's no way that we can really fully describe what this work is like and the feeling that you get when you start changing your life in these ways. But that's the best analogy I can think of to, to do that with. So anyway, um. Let's move on to the next question.

Oh, go ahead. Yeah, I'll

Diana: ask you, I'll ask you the next question. Here we go. Okay. What does spiritual authority feel like in my family of origin and how do I integrate that with my freedom in Christ? Okay, so a lot of us carry old expectations about obedience or approval, and it can feel really, really heavy.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. So, and I did grow up in a very authority centric family where you were always under some kind of authority and, um, I now, I believe what the Bible teaches about authority and that Jesus Christ is our authority. He died and rose from the dead. We, when we find our identity in him, he becomes our, the authority in our lives.

Now, a lot of people will use God. To take authority over you. They'll say, well, God has put me in authority over you, and they'll play that God card that is very controlling and abusive. By the way. It's called spiritual abuse when someone uses God or the concept of God or the Bible to control you or to make you do something.

And so you have to be very careful about that. But when a child reaches adulthood, scripture doesn't teach that parents are, continue to hold spiritual authority over their children. Um, Ephesians six, one, we all know that says, children obey your parents. But for adults, Exodus 20:12 says, honor your father and mother.

That's the command for us as adults, right? But honoring our parents doesn't mean that we blindly obey them. Can you imagine, especially like if you had abusive parents who wanted to have control over you. I've actually seen this. Where adults are obeying or obeying at doing everything that their dad told them to do, and they're, these are 40 and 50-year-old people who think that they have to just, that they're living their lives and making their choices based on what the patriarch of the family is telling them to do.

That is actually reneging on your own responsibility before God. I believe so. It means that when, when we say honor our parents, we can honor them. That means treating them with dignity and respect and care, even while we are still making our own adult decisions. And it also doesn't, honoring also does not mean that we have to be in close contact with them if they are toxic and we'll, we will talk about that in a little bit if they're toxic.

If they're causing serious mental health problems in your life, then it is you can honor them, you can honor and respect their choice to be a toxic individual and also honor and respect your choice to not be in close proximity to that right. When you grow into adulthood, your primary identity and accountability are to God, not to your parents.

I mean, even in Luke uh, four, uh, 14:26, Jesus says that loyalty to him takes precedence over loyalty to family ties. And as far back as Genesis chapter two, verse 24, that establishes that adulthood and especially marriage involves leaving your mommy and daddy to form your own life and your commitments.

And that principle shows independent, not lifelong subordination, so your parents can continue to influence you. I hope that you know Diana and I hope that we will continue to have influence. Input into our children's lives because of our, you know, our, as we get older, hopefully we are growing in wisdom.

We get more experience, we have more understanding of how relationships work, but we don't hold spiritual authority over our adult children. And, and your parents don't hold spiritual authority over you. You are responsible as an adult for your own choices, your faith, and your walk before him. Okay? So

Diana, I don't know if you have anything to add to that, otherwise we can go, go on to the next question.

Diana: Yeah. No, that's good. I'm gonna say I got my spiritual authority and then I'm my spiritual authority. Yeah. Like I'm the one running my spiritual life.

Natalie: Exactly. That's what I'm thinking.

Diana: Yeah,

Natalie: exactly. That's what it means to be an adult and not a child. All right. So how do you, how do we build healthy boundaries?

We got this, I, we actually opened this question up to our Flying hire members, and the, the question that came kept coming back is, how do I have boundaries with my family members who tend to be overly or emotionally enmeshed or involved in my life? They think It's so interesting how our family members, like your family members says, well, you know, though, I mean, okay, so you got divorced, all right, but you know that you can't get remarried, right?

It's like, right, who made you the boss over me? Or, you know, it, it's just so fascinating to me how that works in our families. So tell, talk about that.

Diana: Yeah. Well, okay, so talking about boundaries with family members who are sticking their nose in a business. Um, by the way, I, you, and I'll always talk about the resources that are available 'cause people who wanna really learn about boundaries, there's a course about boundaries in the Flying Free, Flying higher kaleidoscope, which is outstanding.

So if you wanna go deep, 'cause sometimes you'll hear what we're saying today, it's like, okay, I understand that, but how do I actually do it? That course will teach you how to do it. So the first thing you need to do is, uh, decide what is your responsibility and what is their responsibility. I like to boil it down to what I think and what I feel and what I do is my responsibility and what they think and they feel and they do is their responsibility.

So, by the way, if we create a boundary, we still can't. Have any responsibility over what they do. We still can't in or create a boundary and then be like, they didn't follow it. No, we don't have any control over what they do. So, um, if you do think you need a boundary though, no, they're not gonna follow it probably.

But you decide when you feel it's needed or appropriate and then you decide if you want to communicate that boundary. We don't always have to do it, but if you want to, you can communicate it, uh, calmly and you can say it directly and you don't have to overexplain it. It could just sound like when we're on a phone call, if you start dictating to me what you believe I should be doing next in my life, I'm gonna take that as a cue to end the call.

And so you'll hear me say, we're getting into territory I'm not comfortable with, so I'm gonna hang up now. And you calmly and directly communicate it. You don't over explain. And if they ask questions, why would you do that? Da da da. I don't really have anything more to say about that. I have now told you what I will do, so you won't be surprised.

And that's all I have to say.

Natalie: Love that. You won't be surprised. You won't

Diana: be surprised again. Expect them not to change their behavior based on you setting a boundary. Expect pushback. In fact, I will boldly say, okay, maybe not a hundred percent of the time, 99.5% of the time, unhealthy people will resist your boundaries.

Yes, healthy people will respect your boundaries. So we have to expect unhealthy people to not follow our boundaries and to push back. But that's okay because you're not setting the boundary for them to change. You are setting the boundary to take care of you.

Natalie: Yeah. To

Diana: protect your peace, to help you navigate this life in a better way.

To create more space for you to be healthy and heal.

Natalie: Yeah. So

Diana: decide ahead of time. When you set this boundary, you're gonna need to stay consistent and, and just enforce it when it's hard. Even what or when it's not, you're just gonna enforce it. You're just gonna do it. Because if you're intermittently enforcing your boundary, it's gonna lose all its power.

They're gonna be, ah, I pushed back. She's not really serious about this. Yeah. So you need to be determined that you're gonna follow through. And I also

wanna add that you don't have to be mad with anybody when you set a boundary. You don't have to be resentful. You can just come from a place of peace. I'm doing this for me.

I know I need to, and I'm have compassion for me. And you can have compassion for them. They're walking through a human life. It's not easy being them. They got screwed up along the way. They've got stories swirling around in their head. They're not listening to podcasts like this, by the way, that help them.

Natalie: Mm-hmm.

Diana: So just understand they're kind of in a mixed up world like we are. They don't have the tools you have. And you can offer compassion in your own head in the way you communicate if you want. You can offer love if you want to and still. Have consequences through boundaries. Consequences is the thing that'll happen next in sequence.

If you do this, then I will do this consequence. And then last, don't feel guilty. Taking care of you is coming from a place of love. And also, by the way, having a boundary that shuts down what's happening or interrupts what's happening that they're doing that's unhealthy is also an act of love for them.

Yeah. So you don't have to feel guilty for setting a boundary.

Natalie: Yes. Yeah. And I, I will just, uh, add to that, that if you sense that your, this is always my, like, you know, on your car dashboard, if you, there's a red light, you know, okay, something I need to get my oil changed or my tire needs air, or whatever.

This is like a red light on your, on your life. If you are feeling angry and frustrated in your relationship with someone, I always take that as a red light that my bound, I have boundary problems here. Some me, I have words problem here. Yeah. Yes. I, I have not established a boundary in this relationship.

It is consistently being violated. That's why I'm angry and frustrated. The, the issue is not to change them. The issue is to set a boundary, get that boundary in place so that I don't have to be angry and frustrated. I can just be safe.

Diana: Yes. Perfect. All right, Natalie, next question. How can I determine when a relationship with a family member is emotionally toxic or needs more limited contact?

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: And should we reconcile all relationships? Like, these are family, what do we do about that?

Natalie: Yes. Uh, no. Let's move on. No, just kidding. Um, so here, here are some things that, that you can do to, uh, to figure that out. If. You know, is my family member toxic? I, I mean, I almost hate to use that 'cause I don't know that people are toxic, but they definitely have toxic mindsets that can leak out into the, into the, their relationships around them.

And that can then poison your mindset or poison the way that you are experiencing life as well when you get in close proximity with that poison. So look at the fruit of your relationship and your proximity with them, not just the words that they're saying. I mean, we know Jesus says in Matthew seven 16, by their fruit, you will recognize them.

So think about what this relationship is producing in your life. Do you feel consistently drained or anxious or guilty or less than, or, you know, unworthy or whatever? After you interact with these people, do you actually dread being in contact with them instead of feeling peace? Do you, are you able to be your authentic self?

Or do you feel like you have to kind of shrink and get small or maybe perform in a certain way or hide parts of you when you're around that person? If the fruit is just chronic confusion or chaos or a feeling of shame, that's a strong signal that there are, there is toxicity involved in that relationship.

Secondly, look for patterns of control or disrespect. Healthy families do have disagreements, um, and boundaries and toxic ones don't. So ask yourself, do if my family members dismiss or make fun of or minimize my feelings and experiences. Um, I experienced a lot of that growing up. Like, oh, you're just making a mountain out of, oh, you're just being dramatic.

You know, things like that. Um, do they try to guilt, shame or manipulate you into doing what they think that you should do? Do they ignore your stated boundaries? We just talked about how they usually, if this this is a dysfunctional

relationship, they are going to dis ignore your boundaries. Or, or, and do they retaliate when you set them?

This is what I dealt with retaliation. I, I was just talking to a friend, um, earlier today saying, one thing I appreciate about this relationship is that you don't retaliate. When I set a boundary, you don't get, try to get back at me. And that's something that I don't, that I have not experienced a lot of in my life.

And then third, notice how you feel about yourself when you're around them. Pay attention to your internal world and what's going on inside of you. Do you feel small or weaker or wrong? Do you feel like a child when you're around them? Do you lose your voice or doubt your judgment? In conversations? Do you feel responsible to take care of their moods or their happiness or their problems?

Healthy love is going to affirm your worth and toxic dynamics are going to erode it. And then four, try to know the difference between conflict and toxicity. Again, every family has conflict. That is normal, but when conflict becomes one-sided or unsafe or chronically destructive, that's when it go, falls into the category of toxicity.

And here's how you can know the difference. The other person does not apologize or take ownership when they have done damage to the relationship. They repeatedly violate your trust and they don't change. And then finally they scapegoat you or they twist the story to make you the problem when you bring up the problem.

Those are all signs of that, that's really abuse. That's what that is. And then finally, can this relationship function without boundaries, or, I'm sorry, can it function with boundaries? Sometimes limited contact is enough. You know, you don't have to totally cut them off. You can just limit your contact with them by not initiating things with them or whatever.

Um, if you set a clear boundary like Diana suggested, do they respect it? Like, I'm not gonna discuss my divorce with you. Are they respecting that or do they keep bringing it up? If you limit time together with them, does that improve your emotional wellbeing? I've noticed that in, um, one of my fa familial relationships, when I limit contact with them, my anxiety levels drop to I think what is a normal level.

And when I am in contact with them, I start to wonder, maybe I need therapy. Maybe I need to get on anxiety meds. Like I start to go downhill fast. Um, and

then do they escalate or guilt trip you or increase their harmful behavior of you? If you do pull back when boundaries lead to more peace, then the relationship may be salvageable at a limited level.

But when boundaries only invite more abuse, then you might need to distance yourself from them and cut off contact with them. And sadly, we're seeing more and more of that now. I think as I think, I don't know if you've noticed, but I feel like on social media especially, we're seeing a lot more people saying, yeah, I'm cutting off my mother, I'm cutting off my, you know, sibling.

I'm cutting off this person, my friend, because, and that, and that's becoming more, uh, socially acceptable. I think there was a lot of stigma around cutting off a family member before you just don't do that. But, you know, there's a lot of dysfunctional family members out there, and I think people are starting to prioritize their emotional health and wellbeing rather than, um, you know, just blindly being in relationships that are destructive.

Diana: And that's okay. It's interesting. As you were talking, I was thinking how I've been on, I'm on both sides of this. I mentioned my sister, little sister who doesn't wanna have contact with me, and I mean, I, I'm trying, trying to figure out how I'm, what unhealth I brought, and I haven't figured that out. And maybe I didn't bring any, but I, I'm not gonna be so arrogant that I didn't do something wrong.

I'm sure I did something wrong. She won't talk about it. But I, I've tried to reconcile with her and I, and talk with her, and I keep just telling her how much I love her here and there sporadically over the years, you know, once every year and a half or something, a text that says, I just want you to know how much I still love you.

And she doesn't wanna reengage. And, and I just come to the place where I respect that I, if, if that's what she needs to feel better going through her life, I can respect that whether I find a valid reason or not. And then also, I had to cut someone off in my family who I set boundaries for, and she just kept trying to skirt around the boundaries and like, okay, I'll comply a little bit this way.

So she thinks I'm following the boundary, then I'll find this loophole and do this. And I got to a point where I decided. I needed to, uh, block her and have no contact. And then I just wanna offer this too. If sometimes people are like, okay, I've done that. How do I know if I should reengage or not? Yeah.

Well I, uh, that person that I blocked contact with, I've thought about that over the years. Maybe I should reengage. Maybe I, maybe I'll reach out. I thought, but on the other hand, she could reach out if she's healthy. 'cause I told her why I was disengaging. And then one day I went on my business Facebook page and found a bunch that she had left a bunch of disparaging comments on my Facebook page.

And I thought, oh, it's not time to reengage. So I got, I got my answer, and that was like four or five years ago. And I thought, you know what? I don't need to wonder anymore. Because that was after like five, six years, she was still unhealthy. I just, I won't wonder. Yeah, if it went that long and she didn't do any work, I think I'm okay just leaving it this way.

So sometimes we might dip our toe in the water, maybe unblock, see what happens. And then, you know, you can be cautious and then you can go right back to where you were. Yes.

Natalie: You'll know. Yes. I, it's interesting when you were talking, I have the same thing. Um, I have a, well, actually my whole family or my dad, my father passed away, but the rest of my family just cut me off.

But they did not, it's interesting 'cause they did not communicate to me why I got no communication. It was just silent treatment, which is a very typical of my family of origin. Silent treatment is like what you do to kind of manipulate people to come change back and come back and get under compliance.

Right. So that was the end of that. But when I have, I have a family member that I had to cut off a different family member and I made sure I, I, first of all, I didn't want to cut them off. But they repeatedly were coming after me with very abusive texts and the relentless communication. And I had, and I had to, for my own sanity sake, but I let them know, I love you so much.

This is why I need to block you for a while. If you can show that you can respect these and da, da, da, da. Bullet pointed the things that I needed to see happen, not that I needed them to do, but that I needed them to stop doing to me, right? So they can live their life however they want to. But when it comes to coming into my personal space, like there's no swearing, there's no cussing me out.

There's, you know, just basic courtesy, right? That's all I was expecting. Um, they could, uh, disagree with me. They could have different opinions than me.

All of that was perfectly acceptable, just not the abusive aspect of it. And then, and then I blocked them. And when I have released that block at different times.

I just get more of the abuse, so then I have to set that block in place again. So I think there's a big difference in the energy with which there's a blocking situation going on. One is because you love them and you love you, and you want to create safe spaces for both of you. The other one is revenge and bitterness and hatred.

And I'm done with you and you didn't believe what I believed politically, so therefore I shall block you. You know, that's ridiculous, but alright.

In my personal opinion, I guess, yeah,

Diana: no, I just like the, you using the word ridiculous. That's what got me all giddy. Oh,

Natalie: I don't know why I heard that. Is that like a thing? My family? I dunno. It seems like it's

Diana: from our childhood for some reason.

Natalie: Maybe. Yeah. I don't know. Is that

Diana: from the eighties?

Everybody? They're all chiming in. They're going, yes.

Natalie: They're probably all just going, I've never heard that. That's really stupid. That's okay.

Diana: So, alright, what are we on? I think you're gonna ask me a question next. Am I right?

Natalie: I think, I think, uh, yeah, you're right. I have to ask you a question next. I'm ready. Maybe should we delete that part? I don't think so. Okay. Here we go.

Diana: No, we don't delete on this podcast. We we're real.

Natalie: Exactly. We're real.

Diana: We're authentic, we're badass, divorced Christian women. That's us.

Natalie: Okay, so we're gonna talk now I want you to talk about the process of grief. Um, not just about the marriage 'cause we, you know, not just about grieving the loss of a marriage and, and all of that, but specifically related to the topic of our episode here, the grief over lost expectations and family dreams.

Like, you know, I don't know about you, but I thought that. I mean, I imagined, you know, raising my children with my extended family all intact and my children would bring their grandchildren, like all of us having big reunions and so much love and holidays, and that's what I imagined. So my grief has been around, like, we don't have extended family anymore.

They pretty much all cut me off and, and so they, they didn't really cut off my kids, but, um, they don't, definitely don't get together with them or anything. So, um, anyway, why don't you talk about grief, I guess.

Diana: Yeah. It's like this idea of like, it's not supposed to look this way and. They're in divorce.

There's grief in so many different layers. Like, uh, my ex-husband did not have a, his parents were gone and all that was left was his, uh, brother and he didn't have a big extended family that didn't really stay intact, but his brother's local and I grieved spending time with his brother. I love him. Just recently this summer, got a few times where I spent with him and, um, you know, like a half an hour here, half an hour there.

And I, I cherished it. He is a, our relationship's been good and I really enjoyed that. Um, but I had to grieve that I, I grieved, you know, Christmas morning with my kids hanging out with their parents together and all those traditions. And the traditions are split up now. They do some of the things with their dad and some with me.

And you grieve that. Um, I grieve how they spend a lot more time now as three adult kids and at one teenager when the holidays and whatever, they're all in town. The kids together at the same time. They spend a lot of time making sure dad gets their time with him. And I choose not to pressure them. That's my choice.

I choose, I'm like, you guys are free. I would love to have you all together. Um, even if it's for half an hour where, you know, we can have a group hug and take a picture and just laugh together. And if it's longer than that, it's great, but, you

know, whatever. If you could just manage that. But then when they end up spending two hours with me when they're all in town for a week together and they end up spending 20 hours with him, I grieve.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: And I just, the idea of, you know, will I be married again? Will I have somebody that I sit on a porch and read the no newspaper and my eighties and, you know, watch the flowers grow and drink lemonade and laugh at the neighbor kids or whatever that looks like. You know, we paint these pictures in our head.

Natalie: Yep.

Diana: And, and there's so many different things to grieve. And, um, my loss of my sister and another family member that, uh, I had to block didn't. Come because of the divorce. But I know a lot of people, you know, that's what they're experiencing when their marriage is over, is they've lost some of that. Well, there's so much family vacations.

My kids are like, we're not gonna go to Disney World as a family anymore. I'm like, you're right. And all this stuff gets grieved. And so the answer, how do we process this grief? I actually don't have an answer. I don't have some brilliant answer here. I have found in my work, in my personal life and talking with friends and all my coaching work that, um, and losing my sister, who, when I was 30 years old, she died of leukemia.

I, the, the grief that I felt with that she was my best friend, um, is a different kind of grief I think than like when I lost my dad when he was in his seventies though, that was extremely painful too. It, it's just also different and it's so unique and there is no way. The thing is, we need to process our grief.

We need to notice what's creating the grief. We need to create space for it to, to breathe. We need it to have airtime. If we hold it back, it can. When my sister died when I was 30, I held back my grief and I got angry because I don't know, how do you hold back your grief and not get angry? Yeah, I haven't figured that one out.

If you're feeling very angry at the loss, you're probably not processing grief. That's a blanket statement. It might not be true a hundred percent of the time, but I'm, I have a feeling that's true a lot, and I, it was terrible. I, I was dying inside and I had to decide with my sister way back when. I'm like, I have to not

be angry if I'm gonna get ever get better, or I'm just gonna walk around being angry, angry, grieving for the rest of my life, and this feels terrible.

So I had to start allowing it and processing it. And it's different for everybody. So we've got, you've gotta Google it, you've gotta talk to therapists, you've gotta get a coach, you've gotta talk to friends. When you feel like you're, all the tears are welling up from something because there's a trigger, or it is a recent grief.

Uh, don't stuff it, stuff it down for the moment if you need to, but then go find a place to release it. Natalie, you talk all the time about watching a sad movie. I, I think I mentioned it might have mentioned this in season one that I put on hope floats with Sandra Bullock and, um, Harry Connick Jr.

Because there's this one scene in the middle, guaranteed I will B and if I can't get it out on my own, nothing's working. I feel it right there. I I put that on so I can baw and get some relief.

Natalie: Yeah,

Diana: so there, and there's so many other things I do. I journal, I. Write music or um, do breathing exercises or commiserate with a friend or get out coloring book and markers.

There's so many things we need to do to process great, but we need to allow it. Don't push it down and find what works for you. 'cause it's gonna be your own unique experience.

Natalie: Yeah. I think, um, the anger piece, I think that's part of the grief process though. Yes. I think the anger piece is like, is the resistance part that comes before.

The acceptance part is when we're resisting, um, this, this new reality that we have and we're upset. We don't want this new reality to be our new reality, so we're resisting it. We feel anger about that and I think it's normal and we, I think we have to go through that part to get to the, to the acceptance.

Just not stay

Diana: stuck there. I chose to stay stuck there on purpose. I, when my sister died, I was like, God, you are never gonna use this to help anyone else. It's not okay that this happened and I choose to stay angry. Yeah. So I blocked my grief when I did that.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Um, we, I just wanna throw in a another thing.

We, in Flying Hire, one of the options that people who are members of Flying Hire have is to be part of our monthly book study. They don't have to do it, but they can't if they want to. But I always curate like really powerful books that are gonna move the dial in some way in our lives. So the people who do participate, we have a lot of big epiphanies, a lot.

It creates a lot of movement in our lives. And one of the books that we studied this year is called Finding Meaning the Sixth Stage of Grief. I think. I wanna say it's by David Kessler, but that's just off the top of my head. I'm not sure. Um, I will put, uh, I'm just gonna mark this in my notes 'cause I'll put a note in the show notes with a link to it.

Um, excuse me. That book was so good because it talked about how. The, that sixth stage, which you don't hear about, I think it was, uh, Elizabeth Klerman. Klerman is her name. She's the one who came up with the five stages of grief.

Diana: Klerman sounds right.

Natalie: Yeah. Sorry. I, I'm in my late fifties so I can an excuse.

Um, she, she talked about the five stages of grief, but this guy, I think it's David Kessler, he came up with a sixth stage where we find meaning. That's where we move on and we, we actually make meaning. We are the ones that get to assign meaning to whatever it is that we processed and grieved, and we don't have to do that right away.

It's something that comes a little bit later on in the process, but it can be a, it can create a very profound shift in our lives. With, uh, whatever it was that we lost. So I just wanna share that. Um, yeah, because

Diana: that meaning locks in with acceptance. If we give it meaning Yes, then we will accept it. And I also wanna thank you for clarifying that, uh, that anger thing.

Um, I just wanna restate, I think if we're stuck in anger for an indefinite amount of time, that's a marker that we're resisting grief Yes. Versus the way I said it the first time. But yeah. I love your part about making meaning. I, I think I've, um, I think that's just part of who I am as a storyteller in my head.

I do always wanna get to a place where something has meaning and it provides a lot of relief.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Yeah. Yeah. All right. I think I'll ask you a question now. Let's see. What do we have, what role does forgiveness play when family relationships hurt us? And how do we know when releasing anger is healthy versus rushed?

Natalie: Yeah, so forgiveness is not, when is not forgetting, it's not excusing, it's not reconciling, it's not pretending that harm didn't happen. You can forgive without ever reconciling with the person. If reconciliation would mean that you, that, that puts you back in harm's way. I forgive this person that I've blocked.

I do, I love her and I would 100% open up the doors to relationship. But right now, if I were to do that, I would be back spiraling downward, not sleeping, um, getting sick because of my anxiety for what forgiveness is, is it's letting go of the burden of carrying that debt ourself. If when you forgive someone, a debt, you are saying, I'm not going to hold you.

I'm not going to make you pay me back. You don't have to pay me back. It, it, I will, you don't, you just don't have to. Um, and or another way of thinking about it in Christianity is to say, we're gonna hand this over to God and let God take care of it and let God's justice take care of it, rather than holding it in our body.

And I know a lot of Christians, we believe in retributive re retributive, retributive Justice. Wait, how, I dunno. Put the wrong emphasis on the scale, on the wrong Scale. Yeah. Um, anyways, retribution. There you go. We don't, we, we, we, a lot of times we believe that justice means retribution. Justice means he gets them back, they burn in hell, they get a millstone hung around their neck and get thrown into the depths of the ocean.

But the Bible actually teaches that God's justice is redemptive and restorative. We're actually going through in One of the other things you can get when you're a part of Flying Hire is you get access to, if you want to, you can be part of our Bible study. And we are going through the mirror Bible, the mirror translation of the Bible.

And it is absolutely mind blowingly amazing and it focuses on the actual good news of the gospel. And it focuses on God's redemptive justice, not his, not retribution for all of us, for the for winner takes all right? Takes all the spoils. Satan gets nothing. Jesus Christ gets everything. And so, and when we believe

in that kind of God, then we know it's all the story is going to have a good ending.

And so we don't have to try to get revenge. We don't have to try to get justice our own way. So, um, also in episode two, if you wanna hear author Susanna Griffith, she's the author of the book, forgiveness After Trauma, is the best book on forgiveness I've ever read. Uh, she Act, actually that's another book that we studied in Flying Hire, uh, in a year ago or a year and a half ago.

But you can actually listen to an interview that I did with that author. If you go to episode 281 of the Flying Free Podcast, to get there, you would go to flyingfreenow.com dot com slash 281, and that is an amazing interview about the idea of forgiveness after trauma. Um. Another thing I think we need to talk about is what we talked about earlier, Diana, anger.

Anger is in and of itself is not a sin. It's a God-given emotion that signals to us, like I mentioned earlier, that a boundary has been violated. Healthy anger energizes us to set boundaries and to say, no, it's fi, you know, to finally stand up and go, no, you cannot do this anymore. When I finally blocked this family member, I was, I had to get to that PO before I was just like, eh, you know, what about love?

And what about, I was very much in the mushy aspect of love, right? And I had to get to the point where, oh, my word no. This has got to stop. This is not healthy for her. This is not healthy for me. Now I am mad. And the answer is no. You may not say those things to me anymore. You may not treat me that way anymore.

I am done. Energy. I needed that energy to get to that place. 'cause otherwise I just tend to buckle and be compliant and just be like, oh, I'm sorry and I'll try to do better. And you know, like about nothing, you know? So I think toxic anger, that's when it festers, it turns inwardly as bitterness. And how we know that it's crossed that line is when we're like, now I want revenge.

I'm not only, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna block you. I'm gonna actually spew forth my own venom on you. Alright? Instead of just saying, I love you and no, you may not talk to me like this anymore. This is done, we're done here. So if you rush past anger too quickly in the name of forgiveness, sometimes I think parts of us, we like to pretend that we're really godly and we're so forgiving and so, and oh no, I couldn't be angry.

We're just like. Shoving our anger under because that's ungodly or whatever. We can silence the actual alarm system that God gave us to protect ourselves. And I think we're gaslit into doing that by our religious communities. I know when I finally stood up and said No to abuse in my first marriage, my church is like all of a sudden this nice, quiet little cooperative wifey is saying, no, I'm done and I will not put up with this anymore.

And they were like, you're so angry and bitter goodness. And, and, and tried to make me feel like my indignation over two decades of being mistreated like this and trying to get help from them and them just also mistreating me. Trying to make it seem like my anger over that is, is a, a bad thing. And now I just look back at on that and I'm just, I wish I would've just said, you're damn right.

I'm angry. And

Diana: your good reason, your response is

Natalie: making me angrier piss off.

Diana: I wish you would've too, and I wish I could have been there for that.

Natalie: Yeah. So anyway, I just think that, um, you can release your anger and I think that, I think healthy release comes after you've actually, you're able to name the harm and let yourself feel the grief and it's gonna feel healthy.

Release is gonna feel like setting down a heavy bag that you've been carrying. You're gonna feel relief. It's gonna leave room for sadness, it's gonna leave room for wisdom and boundaries, not just positive vibes. Um, and it's often gradual. This is not a one-time event, one and done in you're feeling great now.

You may have to revisit anger in layers as you heal. I think a rushed release of anger. Which is often due again, to pressure, you know, to pressure from family or pressure from our church, or maybe our own discomfort about the fact that, woo, I'm a human being with angry feelings. Woo. It skips over the reality of harm.

It says, oh, I'm fine. I've forgiven. It feels internally, it's gonna feel like you've betrayed yourself, okay? And it's going to allow ongoing abuse because you're being pressured either by yourself or by other people on the outside to keep the peace, and you are gonna be left feeling anxious, resentful, or maybe even just numb and shut down instead of actually feeling free.

I think forgiveness and boundaries can coexist. It doesn't mean you reopen the door to, you know that relationship to coming back in your life. You can forgive in your heart. Also say, you know, I release this person from any vengeance that I might wanna take on them. I will not give this person and also I will not give this person ongoing access to harm me.

Again. I think Jesus set boundaries. He, I think there's several examples of that in the Bible. Um, and if you read the gospels, I'm not gonna spell all those out. You go read the gospels and see if you can circle all the times when Jesus set boundaries. 'cause he did. Okay. Diana, how do we effectively communicate new expectations or change roles to family members as our life looks different?

And do we even need to, I mean, some, maybe we don't always need to.

Diana: That was the first thing I was gonna say is we might not need to, so I like to decide that if I need to or not, by just asking myself some questions like, do I need, I'm changing how I'm approaching this or what I'm doing here. Do I need to share this with anybody?

Hmm. And then you could further ask, okay, I feel like I should share it with this person. Why am I feeling like I need to share it with them? Because if it's too, um, like I'm afraid how they're gonna feel, they might be mad at me or I wanna temper it so they don't end up mad at me or I just wanna test the waters.

'cause maybe if they say they don't like it, then I won't do it. Those aren't good reasons. Right. But if the reason is I do wanna share it with them because I want it to be clear and I don't want this, uh, that day to be awkward. It'll be easier if we just all know ahead of time or, uh, I'll feel better if I communicate it.

So it's not out there not wondering what's happening when I change how I show up. So ask yourself, and sometimes you might not need to communicate anything at all. You can just decide, no, I just show up differently here. Now they'll figure it out. No big deal. Yeah. So if you do wanna communicate it, I think it can be helpful in a lot of situations, especially like, uh, if roles change in the family, like with divorce and it's affecting kids.

I, you know, even if they're adults, I think it's really respectful to name changes and acknowledge them out loud. Like, okay, things are different here and let's, let me kind of iterate why it's different and tell you how I'm adjusting. And you can even ask if it's a close relationship where kids or something, like if you want input, you can ask her input.

Like, I'm not gonna change anything, but I'm open to hearing your input, um, so I can understand how this affects you. Open dialogue with our kids is great. Some, you know, maybe siblings you have respectful relationships with. You wanna have open dialogue. You can also ask yourself, is this a safe person for me to have any dialogue with?

Otherwise, you know, I'm not going to dialogue. I'm just gonna say, I recognize, here's a shift, here's what I'm doing now. It's gonna be different. Yeah. So couple different layers on how you can just acknowledge that with everyone. When you do communicate with them, this is a classic. You're gonna hear this everywhere.

You know it. It's talk about you. I'm doing this because I, it's the I statements. Mm-hmm. I notice that I get stressed out at this time of the year, and so because of that, I am going to approach this differently for me.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: And I just wanted to share that with you. Um, I also am a proponent of being clear and specific.

I think I heard, or I said before, with boundaries. We don't need to overexplain, we don't need to overexplain shifts that we're making, that we're sharing with people. Yeah. We can just be clear, here's what I'm doing different on this day. This is what it will look like. And we're clear and specific so they're not like, why didn't you help bake the Turkey this year?

You know, I decided I don't help bake the Turkey this year or, or anymore. Uh, that just gets too labor intensive to me. And the holiday is too stressful. So I will be bringing mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie clear. Yeah. If they're like, well, who's gonna help make the Turkey? I'm not sure. I just know it can't be me.

I could also bring a ham if you want. I'd be willing to do that. Yeah. You know, whatever. Clear and specific. Um,

Natalie: honey baked, by the way, if anyone's wondering, in panicking now about Turkey Day, which is coming around the corner, uh, if you're in America, um, honey baked ham company has a, makes a, an amazing Turkey.

I did that last year. I just bought, is it like the, one of those

Diana: Turkey breast things where you can just

Natalie: Yeah. And and it's so good. Yeah. And it's flavored amazing. And it's like, and you just have to heat it up. It's, and it's so good where I'm totally doing that again this year.

Diana: Yes. Uh, we have had that before and that is good.

I think when, maybe it was COVID year or something. We did just a tiny Thanksgiving not spreading germs.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Um, okay. Another thing you could do when you communicate is, well, I think I just demonstrated it with the Turkey and the, but what I will do is you're offering an alternative. So I think that can relieve pressure.

If you're changing how things are playing out with your family, I won't be doing this anymore. But what I will do, you know, like I won't be mom, I won't be coming to check on you five days a week anymore. And you know in your head it's because she's always creating drama and it's very stressful. But you don't say that, mom, I won't be coming to check in on you five days a week anymore.

What I will be doing is I'm going to have your son, my brother's gonna come on these two days and I'm gonna come on these two days. And the other days you're on your own. That's the alternative. That's the new, you're presenting the alternative. So it's not like you're just changing something and then there's a void there feeling.

But if you can kind of articulate what will happen instead, that may ease things for them, or at least for you too. You can feel less guilty when you offer something like that.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: And lastly, I'd say, um, it, well, in addition to if there's pushback, you can just be redundant and just, you just state, state clearly what you intended to state and know more.

But come at this from a place where you're grounded in values. I love talking about values. We could have talked about it at the top of this episode and probably all the episodes we do for this podcast. But when we know our values and when we're rooted in them, like I value peace, I value respect, I value clear communication.

I, and that is fueling all of what you're bringing, this energy you're bringing when you're communicating. They might still not get it, but you'll feel solid. You'll feel true to yourself. You'll feel aligned with your values, and you can let them struggle with the changes you're making or the boundaries you're setting or whatever.

However, the dynamics are shifting. But you can feel solid in that because you're rooted in who you are and what matters to you most.

Natalie: Yeah. So good.

Diana: Yeah. Um, okay. We still have more questions. Do you want me to ask you another one? Um,

Natalie: we probably should wrap this up actually. Um, I mean, that's a

Diana: good place to wrap it up.

How to communicate the change, you know, changes. I think

Natalie: so. I do want to, uh, I do wanna say that, you know, again, if you, I want to say if you're a divorced Christian woman and you do want more help with navigating your relationships like this and maintaining good boundaries and emotional healing and recovery, growing in your confidence as an adult woman, um, that is what we do inside of the Flying Free Kaleidoscope.

You can go to join [Flying hire.com](https://flyinghire.com) to learn more and you can do this work. Both Diana and I are in that, in that program, helping hundreds of other Christian women doing the same thing. It was, the Kaleidoscope was originally created. To help women of faith find hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.

And indeed, most of our women who are in our kaleidoscope community are women who are still in, in their marriages. However, a few years ago, we expanded it and we began to teach and coach divorced Christian women. So we have our inside of that community. We have our own special spaces and courses, advanced courses for divorced Christian women.

We, and we called it Flying Higher instead of Flying Free. And, and again, it's with coaching. There's bible studies, book studies, co classes every month specifically for divorced Christian women. Um, also I wanted to read, I can I

just read, I wanna read a quick review that came in, uh, about you can do whatever you want, Natalie.

Do whatever you want. Podcast, right? So here's a, here's a review that came in just to give you a taste. Someone said, I just wanted to tell you directly that I think you're doing a fantastic job in all the areas that you're working in to bring, to help bring women who need to hear your message. I work cleaning houses, so I've had the opportunity to listen to every podcast that you put out.

And when she's talking about podcasts, she's talking about the private podcast, not the public podcast, but the private one that we have. 'cause when you're in Flying Hire, you get a private podcast where you get to hear all of the courses and the bible studies and the book studies. You can just pop it in your earbuds and listen to it on your private podcast.

Um, I was in Flying Free for several months and now I'm in Flying higher. Your content, your message in your work has been life saving, saving and life changing to me, what you teach with the model, what you share of your experiences and your compassion and love for God. Others and life have impacted me more than any other help out there.

By the way, I have been accused by people on the outside who don't, who aren't part of my program, that I'm actually trying to lead people away from God. But of course, if you come into my program and you're part of my program, you know, that's the exact opposite. My passion is to help people restore and revive their relationship with God, the creator, God who loves them.

So yes, it is true. I do try to lead people astray from the crazy, abusive, small petty God with a small GI am trying to lead them astray from that God, because that God is so destructive and I don't believe in that God, and I don't even believe that God even exists. I want them to meet the, the creator God who loves them and who has died and rose and offered them free life.

So, um, anyway, she continues here. All of that has given me the tools and the inspiration that I've needed to get my life moving. Finally, what I've learned has allowed me to finally move forward with healing in my relationships with my adult children. And we, we see that a lot 'cause I feel like a lot of the divorced Christian women in our program are, their most painful relationships are with their adult kids because of all the fallout of getting out of the marriage and all of that.

So, um, we see a lot of that kind of relationships restored and things because they're learning different strategies. They're not doing the typical Christian strategies of, you know, beating kids over the head with. You need to listen to what I'm saying and you need to hear me, and you need to see me, and you need to understand, and you need to, you know, do what I'm doing.

It's that those don't, strategies don't work. So we teach them new strategies of actually building healthy relationships with their kids. Um, you are doing a great job. You're organized, easily accessible, and your content is well researched, grounded, educational, compassionate, and so very helpful. You're always working to improve and do and be better.

You truly are a blessing and an inspiration. I appreciate you and your ministry and just wanted to say thank you. And by the way, people who are members, they are the ones that are supporting this podcast and the Flying Free podcast. Their part of their membership funds go towards the, the production of these podcasts.

So come on in and see for yourself what it's all about. Join, just go to join Flying hire.com. And, um, and then if you're looking for a resource that's gonna help you change the way you think and your whole mindset around your life, do check out Diana's podcast. It's called The Renew Your Mind podcast.

You can just do a search for it on your favorite podcast app. You can go to RYM podcast.com, right? And get more information, get access to the podcast, all of Diana's, um, other free resources, and you can, of course. Why don't you talk about your coaching? Like what do you,

Diana: well, I also, in addition to coaching, and you can get a free coaching call if you've never had one before, and I do group and individual coaching, but I also, one of my favorite things to do is the Renew Your Mind Institute's Life Coach certification program.

So, you know, if you've been in Flying Hire and you've done all this work and you've done coaching and you're like, I really wanna take it to the next level, even if you're not gonna become a professional coach, it's great if you wanna become a professional coach. I'll teach you everything you need to know and how to start a flourishing business.

But you'll also get deep personal development and a lot of the women that go and men, now I've got some men joining go through it or doing it for the deep

personal development. So you can also find a link with more information on that@rympodcast.com.

Natalie: Alright, thank you so much Diana. Uh, and that's it for this week.

Until next week, keep Flying higher.

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