

The Divorced Christian Woman Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Season 2, Episode 9 - Raising Resilient Kids: Building Connections that Matter

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: Why your kids hold it together at their dad's house, but fall apart at yours. It's not because they respect him more, it's because you are the safe one. In this episode, we talk about what's really going on when kids have meltdowns after transitions, how to respond without taking it personally and practical ways to set boundaries and take care of yourself in the middle of it all.

If you've ever wondered if you're failing as a mom, this conversation will give you the clarity and hope. That you need.

Joining me today, we have Diana, Loretta, and Charlotte. They are all divorced Christian women, and we are gonna be talking about raising resilient kids and building connections with our kids that matter. So we're gonna kick off by talking about parenting kids who are living in two radically different emotional worlds.

And how we do these podcasts when I have a panel like this is I give, I put out a bunch of questions. Then our panel kind of picks and chooses which questions they wanna focus on themselves. And then whatever's left over, I might answer. So the very first question that we had, no one took it. So I'm gonna actually address the first question and then, um, I'm gonna let you guys take over after that.

So first of all, welcome all of you guys. Why don't you say hi, just so everyone knows there's other people here. Hi. If you're on YouTube, you can see it's

obvious that there's other people here, but many of you're listening on the podcast and so you can't really see everyone.

Diana: But we're gonna, so Natalie, I could ask you the first question.

Natalie: Oh, okay. Yeah, you do that. Okay.

Diana: Alright, here we go. Diana, here. Uh, Natalie, this one's for you. How do you handle it when your kids behave one way with their dad and very differently with you? And why do you think kids often feel safe enough to fall apart with mom?

Natalie: Yeah, this is a big one. And we talk about, we have talked about this a lot in different places, and I think, you know, if you did a quick Google search, you might find this information out there as well.

But kids pick up on emotional climates and they adjust themselves accordingly because they're just like us. They're trying to keep themselves emotionally safe. So if dad is the less emotionally safe parent, they're going to do what's called masking or you know, like. Hiding who they really are. In order to make sure that they can keep themselves safe, they're gonna hold themselves together.

If they sense that there's unpredictability or that they could be criticized, they're gonna keep their feelings tucked inside to avoid that conflict. So that can look on the outside like they are well-behaved, like they're easygoing, or even like they're detached. But then with the safer parent, they tend to have meltdowns.

Why? Because they know. They're that your love is not gonna disappear just because they have a meltdown. You are the one who has proven over time to be safe enough for all of those raw, messy feelings that they're having. So when they have bottled up stress from school or from transitions from home to home, or interactions with dad, that's gonna come spilling out on you.

That is because. Uh, when you, when you notice, when they come home from dad's house, they're having like, they're elevated emotionally. That's what's happening. It's not because they respect him more or, um, that they're trying to take advantage of you. It's because they trust that re they trust their relationship with you.

And if you think about this, if you, when you had a stressful day. You probably keep it together for your coworkers and your boss or the people at church, right? But then when you get home with someone safe, that's when you maybe fall

apart and might maybe cry. Well, kids are the same way. Their nervous systems need a place to release, release that pressure, and you are that place.

So there's my answer. All right, next question. What does it look like to manage. Now we're gonna talk, you know, talk about our own management of this exhaustion, of being this safe parent while still showing up, you know, with all the patients that our kids need, especially when they act out when they return from dad's house.

Mm-hmm.

Charlotte: Yeah, for me, um, one of the game changers was when I started looking more into something I had heard about and I had kinda seen about with, um, PTSD and C-P-T-S-D recovery, uh, about polyvagal theory. And I actually, even though my theology was changing as I was parenting my kids after the divorce, um, I would see these big.

Behaviors and I, I, one of the things I was still praying about that I was still just like believing that whatever theology I came to land on, that God would really. I don't know, like rescue us from these horrible behaviors that I would see. And I didn't know what to do about them with all the, um, theology, the Christian parenting stuff that I was leaving behind.

It wasn't helping. Right. And so I kept praying that God would show me how to manage this and, um. I feel like he brought us to a therapist for our family that also really heavily relied on polyvagal theory for like difficult behaviors in kids. And so we started having family counseling, but then she would work especially with my youngest, who at the time was six years old, um, at that point, like right after their dad moved out.

And he was really violent. Like I had another kid like three years older and then I had some younger, like teenage um, kids, but my youngest, he would do stuff, um, in his meltdowns. Like one time I was driving down the road and he unbuckled from the back of the minivan and took this giant Richard scary book and just started whacking me on the head as I was driving.

Um, he did stuff while I was driving a lot, but that one I kind of drove into the side of somebody's yard and it was horrifying. Someone almost hit us. Wow. Um, so it was like that level of meltdowns he would have if he was triggered. And the polyvagal stuff helped because, like, it kind of explained it without making it a moral failing of my kid or a parenting problem of mine.

And, um, you know, the Christian stuff for people that were raised themselves or trying to raise their kids with all the Christian parenting stuff, it's like they have to obey immediately. Like I heavily relied on all the Dobson. Mm-hmm. And similar stuff where it's like they shouldn't question, um, they should never even talk back.

And then after my kid's dad moved out, it was like my good little kids that were, I think they were always kind of frozen and afraid to do anything. When he was in the house. He left and it was like. Everything fell apart, like anyway, so they were all having big behaviors and the thing that helped me was seeing that every big behavior has a reason.

And it's not like they're sinful. It's not that they're bad. Um, or that I'm being too permissive. All that stuff that I was programmed with, it was more like they have some kinda need that they are really trying to fill. And even the worst behaviors, you know, like sometimes my kids would take something precious of another kid, like the most precious thing they could ever find and like rip it up or throw it out or something when they were mad at each other and it was just these, I don't know, these bigger things, um, hurting each other, hurting me.

And so with this therapist and with diving into this, um, you know, just looking at how their nervous systems were acting out. 'cause polyvagal is all about your nervous system is responding to a threat and a lot of times the emotional threat, like of a disappointment, if, if, uh, you know, their dad used to kind of trick us a lot and he would say.

Hey, you guys we're gonna go on this fun trip on Saturday and we would get excited all week. And then that morning, right at the last minute, like one of his patterns was he would be like, someone didn't put the dishes in the right way, or someone forgot to flush the toilet, like some petty thing. He would take away this whole big fun day trip that we had been waiting for.

And so my kids, if they had disappointment after they left, that's where these huge behaviors would come out. So anyway, um, I started to see like, you know, if it's that they're going into fight or flight like a watchdog and just like growling and snarling and doing all these crazy acting out behaviors, um, I could sort of like keep myself regulated if I thought my poor little kid, like their nervous system is do, is taking over their body right now.

And they are just in the throes of this thing. And so not like that I was explain or like not, um, excusing it, but that gave me the mental capacity to be able to see

not like a sinner who's possessed by demons or whatever Christian stuff I thought before, but more like they are hurting still bad. Mm-hmm.

And they can't even hear if I go into like. You know, consequences or talking or whatever. Like they need containment. They need like some kind of nervous system regulation from me.

Loretta: Yeah. And that

Charlotte: was the game changer. Like where, 'cause you can learn skills. I think even if you just start looking online or listen to podcasts, you can learn skills to help co-regulate.

And for me it was so healing to think. My kids, they're hurting, but they're normal. They're just normal human beings. They're not like these wretched, broken down sinners that are like obeyed state in because Yeah, that's what I used to think.

Loretta: Yeah. You know

Charlotte: about any kids who acted out. It was more like. Oh my gosh.

I need to nurture them. Almost like if they were injured and they're like recovering from like surgery. Yeah. You know, that's how I kind of saw it. So I hope that all makes sense.

Natalie: Yeah. So, Loretta, can you tell us what you like what strategies helped you to stay calm when things like this were happening in your family?

And do you have any examples that you can give us?

Loretta: Yeah. And if you want, we could even go into the next question 'cause I can tie them both together. Um,

Natalie: yeah, that is the next question.

Loretta: Oh, okay. Sorry. So, so, um, when you talked about, um, I love what Charlotte said because it was so similar to things that I went through, but I had older kids, so I mean 10 to 16.

So. I, I had seen in my family the little kids that come back dysregulated and they knocked out immediately, right? Mm-hmm. But with the older kids, they'll

hold it in a while, infest it and ruminate about it, and then they'll like blindsides you upside the head on some random day and you're not expecting it because it's like a few days out when they get stirred up or, um, they're being told things that, um.

How you should parent criticizing your parenting, how you should be treating their brother, their brother's gonna go to hell if he doesn't straighten up. Those kinds of things. So, um, before I could show up as the safe parent, I had to reframe my thinking again and again and again. Like, and one of 'em was just even to file.

I had to like. Come to terms with, I'm going to have to have these kids away from me for a whole week at a time, week on, week off in the summer. And that just broke my heart. I, I, I had the hardest time just even wrapping my brain around that, and I had a lot of fear around it. But once I reframed that, I thought, oh, we can have some downtime.

I'm always the parent that has to be on all the time. I could go visit my sister, I could, you know, so I got really excited and it shifted my brain to where I could actually step out and do that filing. Right. But shortly after that, um. That time off never happened. Right. So even when they were going over there, I was getting these texts about what was going on and my, you know, I'd get the movie and I would sit down and I'd be like, my glass of wine, I'm gonna have these, this one night alone.

And it never, it would be, you know, texts back and forth with the drama. Yeah. And I'm like, right. And I, I actually wrote into you in the Flying Free forum and I said. Like, what do I do? I'm, I was just so mad that I didn't get to have, like, it's unfair. Right? And, and you said, and I, I take this with me today.

Like, I think I said it to myself yesterday. I am the parent that shows up. That's who I get to be. And so, um, anyway, so, so I took that and, um. The kids, like the other thing I had to reframe was the kid should not behave this way. Charlotte talked about that, right? They shouldn't be acting this way. They need to be lined up in a row at church and, and I had.

The cops at my door a few times. I would walk in, I think I've showed this before to my counselor and be like, my life is a Maury Pop show. How did this happen? Right? Like it was crazy. And, um, things that I just never, like, how did I get here? But when I started realizing they're on the same journey that I was on, they have to.

You know, their brains need to develop. They're struggling with the programming of the legalism and the black and white thinking. And so when they would act out and come at me when I was successful, I wasn't defensive, I would be curious and I'll remember I. When I started to go back and think about these questions, it's hard because you ask for specifics.

There's just these visions, kind of like when you're in the middle of the marriage, right? You have these visions of, I was standing on the back patio and this kid was coming at me and I was like, like, what do I do? And I, I was being defensive and I was arguing and then, or I was on the steps in the garage and this other one was coming at me, and in the middle of it I'm like.

I'm not even talking to him. I'm talking to my ex, right? And so I would stop in the middle and I would say, oh, what do you want me to do? And I would start asking questions, well, what do you think the solution is here? What would you like me to do? Do you want him to move back in here? Do you want us to get remarried?

Do you wanna give your room up and go back and live with your son or with your brother in his little room? Like, what do you want? Oh, no, no, I don't want that. Right. So then when I started being curious and not defensive, and yes, I can't, I'm a bad parent sometimes I just, I know. I know. I'm trying. Right?

Then we were able to get into. Had, I know the exact time with my oldest who was parentified like crazy. I got to talk to him about boundaries and he always thought he needed to fix it. He was gonna fix it. He was gonna be the hero. He was gonna come in and solve all the problems that his dad presented.

And um, he was gonna be the dad to his brother. That's like where the crazy came in. And I, um. I said, you know, all of your other three brothers had figured, have figured this boundaries thing out. Do you wanna know what they're doing? And I would share that with him. And it took him a while to figure it out.

But he did. But I couldn't be regulated like Charlotte said, until I reframed what, how I was being. And one of the things that, um, I have to say is the giving myself permission. To trust myself as a parent and not be a people pleaser to people around me telling me how I should be parenting when my kids are not behaving appropriately.

That was a game changer. I, I mean, I was turning myself into a pretzel, trying to be, you know. I would do things that just didn't work. And I would go into

my counselor and I would say he's pulling away from me. I mean, I, I had a kid who would leave in the middle of the night and walk around town at two in the morning, and finally I asked him, why do you do it?

And he would say, my brain doesn't turn off at night. And when I walk, it calms me down. I had the cameras, the alarms. I mean, I like, I was gonna solve this, so this wasn't gonna happen. I was gonna follow him. I was gonna, I was exhausted. Um, I finally just had to turn loose and I mean, it's not like it's, you can't control a 14-year-old who doesn't recognize discipline anyway.

Yeah. But he started coming back to me emotionally. He wasn't pulling away from me anymore, and he talked to me and we went on walks and he shared things with me. And I have to say four years out, I just had to win. He asked me if he could talk to a counselor because he figured he needed to get things figured out in his life.

Wow. And that was his past week. And, and I begged my counselor, you're the only, he just wanted someone that he could trust that had wisdom that wasn't judgment. He said, I have people in my life, but they're only one way. That's the way he said. They're not open-minded. And I begged my counselor, who does not take kids to please talk to him.

And he did because I said, you're the only man I trust that's not gonna be. Like trying to preach and even though he is a preacher at him, and so I just have to say it's that reframing. If you find yourself, I just encourage anyone. If you find yourself just being living in fear, um, afraid, you know, you gotta get, I have very valid fears.

They're gonna kill themselves. They're gonna end up on drugs, and they're gonna not be able to come back because the drugs are gonna destroy their brain. They're, um, they're never gonna be able to hold a job or have friends or worried about what everyone else is thinking. Those are very, very valid fears.

But when you're parenting and you can't reframe when you're parenting from that. You're, it's a non-starter. You're not, you're never gonna, it's you're jumping in the, the pool with them and you're gonna drown too.

Natalie: Mm-hmm. So,

Loretta: um, yeah, really learning to reframe is key.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. So, good. So how do you explain or respond to bad behavior coming from Dad when your kids bring it up to you?

Like, do they, I mean, when I go pick up my boys doesn't happen so much anymore, but it'll happen all the time before. Um, and I'm, you know, eight years out from my divorce, but when my kid, I'd put the kids would get in the car and they would just gush all the bad stuff that happened. So how do you explain or respond to that without confusing them or putting them in the middle?

Diana: I'm gonna jump in and say a little bit and then I know Charlotte's got more to say on this too, but I'm gonna kinda give just a short overview answer. And one thing I've done with my kids is I and I, I'll do this with anybody, it's like your dad's being your dad. You are being you. I'm being me. Now. We're all human beings who have our own personalities.

We've had our own struggles in life. We've gone on our own journey. Things that have happened, we've had all had different messages taught to us in school and church and by our friends and all of this, and it's this cocktail of stuff, and then this is who we are. So your dad's just being your dad. That's how he knows how to be.

He doesn't know a different way. Is it coming from health or brokenness? Maybe both. Sometimes, depending on how he's behaving. But he's a human being. I'm not showing up. Perfect. You're not showing up perfect. He's not showing up. Perfect. And it looks different for all of us. Now, is it sometimes confusing and hurtful and frustrating?

Yeah. But let's at least just start with seeing, we're all human beings. Trying to figure it out, and none of us get it quite right. And, and that way we're teaching our kids to make space for letting other people be them. You know, as my sister said in the nineties, let them, and Mel Robbins just ran with it.

I don't know how she found out, my sister said that, but it, we're teaching our kids let them in a way, like, I know what affects you because you're experiencing it, it feels like things are happening at you. And on the other hand, we can't change that person. And so in some ways we have to let them. And so now can I help you come up with strategies for how you want to regulate your own emotions or respond or navigate what it's like to be around your dad?

Do you wanna talk about it? So anyway, that's kind of my high level overview on that. I'll turn it over to Charlotte. Mm-hmm.

Natalie: Yeah. Well, can I just jump in here too and just say, and they get to that, just 'cause you're accepting that this is who they are. Doesn't mean that you have to agree with them.

Doesn't mean that you have to say, well then that makes their behavior okay. Or anything like that. You get to decide, like if we can let our kids know, you get to decide. Is that behavior okay to you or not? You get to decide and, and it's bouts. 'cause I, I'm thinking about my family of origin. Bad behavior was happening, but I didn't get to decide it was bad behavior.

I was told this is right behavior for a parent to do this is right because they're the parent, so they get to do whatever they wanna do. And so I grew up with this, like basically it's gaslighting telling me that I can't have my, I can. Even though I thought, I don't think that's good behavior. I don't think that's right.

But then, oh, I guess parents do. I guess parent it is right for parents to do that. That really messes with a kid's brain. So I think letting them know you have the freedom to decide if you think that, like do you think that's good behavior?

Diana: You

Natalie: know? Right, right. You could have your own opinion about

Diana: that.

Is that? Yeah. Is that a helpful behavior? Is it a hurtful behavior? Is it bringing clarity your life, or is it bringing confusion and ask 'em some of those questions And then I still like coming back to it, like, how do you want to navigate it? And if they don't have any ideas, you can be like, would you like to brainstorm, storm some ideas on how to navigate this because, and then another thing I'd give my kids is.

You have choices. I give this to everybody. I give it to myself. I'll give it to all of you listening. You always have choices. You have choices. Loretta's kid had a choice. Do you want to jump out the window? Or, I don't know. My kid went out the window when he went out in the middle of the night. I don't know if yours did you wanna go out the window and go to Walmart or walk around town in the middle of the night?

I mean, that's a choice. There's other choices too, but dealing with your dad, there's always choices too. Let's think about some,

Loretta: yeah,

Diana: you're right. 'cause the, we don't condone. Hurtful behavior, but we realize we can't control their people. And now what can we teach our kids to take ownership for so they can learn how to be emotionally responsible so they can learn how to navigate difficult people, because they're gonna have to do it the rest of their life anyway.

This is a great training ground.

Natalie: Yeah.

Diana: Yeah. So good. Yeah.

Charlotte: Yeah. For me, I mean, I echo all of that, like trying to frame it so that the kids could see. Like the real behavior instead of getting caught up because my kids like, I think most when they're coming outta this situation, um, I have five kids and they would all do the classic thing of defending their dad and going on and on instead of like.

Being confused or being angry at his bad behaviors, you know, or hurtful behaviors, stuff like that. Um, they would take it out on me all the time. And I mean, our situation, it was pretty unique because my ex just moved away, so I had the kids full time. Um, he said that he didn't want, um, any overnights or any like, real custody schedule.

He just wanted to visit them now and then, and then he moved across the country. So they were with me. They barely saw him for the past three years. Um, just a couple visits when he flew up here. And, uh, so even so, they would just. Kind of spiral, you know, things would happen at home that would trigger them, or, you know, a certain day, a certain place we went, whatever it was, fighting with siblings over stuff that they wanted.

Um, the thing that helped me to sort of, um, coach them through it over the years was showing them. Okay. Um, when you get into this, you know, your body gets all hot or your, your speech is like so fast. Like we would try to focus on the body sensations later on after somebody spiraled out. Um, and they could usually, even the younger kids, they could usually say.

Stuff like, um, well, I felt really disappointed or I felt really upset and mad or whatever about this thing. And it would usually come that the teenagers in whatever moment, even if it seemed unrelated to their dad, the teenagers would

say. I think it's because dad always did this right? I think it's because dad always tricked us about going somewhere fun or I think it's because whenever we went to that store, dad would hurt someone in the car on the way home or you know, they would start naming the physical abuse as well as the emotional that we had gone through.

And it was interesting to me because I didn't have to name or bring up any of that really hard stuff. It was my teenagers. Bringing it up and then the younger ones kind of like saying, oh yeah. And so the way that I played it, um, really thanks to the Flying Free classes, I would just stay really curious or kind of be like a narrator and so.

You know, or at, at a visit where my ex would fly up, it was horrendous. Uh, they would come home at night, then go to see him for maybe like a two or three day thing coming home at night to sleep in the house and then going back to him, and then afterwards for like a week or two, just absolute um, really, really hard behaviors and emotions.

And they would be saying stuff like, I guess more what the question was. Like, you know, dad says that you tricked us all and dad says you're the abuser. Um, dad says whatever. And I would just stay in that, that place of like forcing myself to stay regulated enough, even if it's only like a quarter regulated and three quarters of me inside is freaking out, just staying on the surface at least like.

Okay. And saying, wow, I wonder why he would say that. And just like those kind of questions would kind of like kickstart the part of, you know, the kids' brains, I think to say, oh yeah, I wonder why. Or I would say, wow, that's different than when he lived with us. Like I heard myself seeing that a lot. Um, or they would have phone calls, um, my three oldest, uh, almost a year ago, cut off all contact with them.

'cause legally they're old enough. And, um, but when they were still talking, they would, you know, come out like outraged about all these things and dad's doing this and he is saying this and, and if I said something like, you know, one of those one-liners to observe. Then it was almost like this, I don't know.

This whole thing would just like fall off of them. You could physically see them just kinda like come to and they'd start talking. Right. And so I didn't have to. Go through and be like, no, your dad's a manipulator. And he tricks people and this is his agenda against me and he needs to look like good guy and make me the bad guy.

And, you know, all the stuff that inside was kind of boiling over. Um, and I feel like the best, uh, the best thing that I've seen my kids do about this, out of all the stuff that's changed over the years, 'cause now all but the youngest really. Spot it. Um, I think I posted it in the forum the other day, uh, because my ex moved like two hours away from us a few months ago.

I think it was three months ago. Uh, the younger two kids have had a few visits with him and when they saw him a couple weeks ago, so they're nine and 12 now. The 9-year-old was telling me that his dad took them to his apartment and said. Even though your mom doesn't want you to stay overnight, I have all these treats for you.

And he opened a kitchen drawer and it was full of every candy in the world, according to my kids, just full. And he was like, if you stay here, like you know, one of these trips, I don't have to bring you home. And then he showed them a bedroom. He has a two bedroom apartment. Um. One of 'em was completely empty and he said to the 12-year-old, you can tell me on Amazon, like, send me the links to stuff you want.

I'll buy you a bed. Posters, every toy, every video game. Like just trying to hook 'em in, right? Yeah. To stay overnight. And so on the ride home, when my kids are telling me this, the 12-year-old is disgusted, and he's like, I'm just gonna. I'm just gonna get dad to buy the most expensive bed and tell him I like all this like stuff and just, and I was like, wait, why are you doing that?

You know that you're not allowed to stay overnight? He was like, no, I wanna run out his money. If he's stupid enough to think that I'll, you know, stay when that's hilarious. Dad says no. And then the even better part was when the 9-year-old was like the candy drawer. I just, mom, you have to let me stay there.

I'll never get that much candy for the rest of my life. And the 12-year-old just said, you know who does that with candy? Trying to get kids with candy like that. Pedophiles and kidnappers.

Natalie: Your 12-year-old is on fire, man. Seriously. I know. He's amazing.

Charlotte: It was so good. Him and the teenagers, like they're like that whenever the younger one gets kind of still sucked in.

And so I really think that because I didn't come on like trying to save 'em and teach 'em and explain it all and you know, all the stuff that it would've been my

inclination to do at the beginning. I think they learned how to critically think for themselves.

Loretta: Yeah. And

Charlotte: so I didn't have to. You know, go on and on.

And it was so freeing too for me when I would say those one-liners, it was like, here, let's let my ex just. Be shown for what he is. If I say, you know, why do you think he would do that? That's confusing. And then hearing the kids say, oh, I think he's trying to hurt us. You know?

Natalie: Yes. Have them come up with it.

'cause then there's no resistance. I think our kids resist when we tell them how they're supposed to think. Don't. But I think that's human nature for us to just resist what other people tell us that we're supposed to think. But if you can ask questions and get them to come up with the answers, then there's buy-in in their brain and then that's gonna change everything.

Okay. Loretta, how do you, um, you mentioned that you had a son, a teenage son that you struggle, that you know, had issues. How do you balance empathy? How did you balance empathy for him and what he was going through even and also hold him accountable for his behavior?

Loretta: Um. So when they would, so when they would come at me or when, whether it was him, um, having, being able to have empathy for him or being able to, well, first of all.

Stumbling over my words. 'cause that's about how I was when I was going through the middle of it. It was like, uh, Charlotte probably had a little more education than me. I felt like I had one hand tied behind my back and, and I was trying to be triangulated. And I knew, I could see, I knew the triangulation thing.

I knew I, I mean, I was educated enough to know that. But when it's happening to you and you're being asked, and they're old enough to ask very pointed questions, um, and they're programmed religiously like. Intensely. Um, you want to be able to answer. 'cause you know you're taught, when they come to you with questions, then you answer.

Right. But you know, if you answer, you're being triangulated and you're getting, you're actually in a argument with them being the conduit with your ex

or soon to be ex, right? So I felt like. I couldn't answer, but also I was confused in my own mind 'cause I was doing my own deprogramming. So it's hard to take their entire life and explain why.

Maybe it's not the best way to be thinking about things. Black and white thinking doesn't work, but you're trying to explain this to somebody that maybe doesn't have capacity to understand it or it's not a one-off conversation. And that's when I had to realize I don't. Have control over this right now.

I can give a little bit of information, but the more I tried to explain, the more I found myself in conversations that were very similar and swirling and familiar as when he, he lived at home, right? But they were always with him. So I, um, when I let go of trying to control things and like Charlotte said, and um, started, um, reminding myself that, um.

Hold on one second. I just gotta look at my notes here. I started being able to introduce new thoughts and ideas, but it was the long game. It really was like getting, like I told myself. And I coach people on this all the time in the forum, and it's like, remember, look how long it took us to figure this out.

Or when people would come and criticize them that they, they trusted and they were friends with for 20 years. It's like, why are you mad at them? You thought this like 10 years ago. You thought this two weeks ago. Right? And so knowing that everybody's on their own journey, my kids are on their own journey and God has them.

So I would start to introduce new thoughts and ideas with them, but it wasn't in one go. I had to trust the long process. So over time, I've been able to have conversations with them that were about the love of Jesus, that were, Hey, yeah, I'm kind of liking this new Jesus. I'm learning about with love and it makes more sense this new.

Interpretation I read and, um, that those are conversations I wasn't able to have with someone who was 10. And, but I could have it when he turned 14. Right. Or he went through something with a girlfriend or with a friend, and then he would come to me asking questions and I would be able to do it in a way that wasn't me against his dad.

But more just introducing an idea. Oh yeah. Sometimes when people are, um, uh. Angry. They might act out in this way, but they don't understand and how do you wanna show up for them? Or hey, sometimes people just aren't there yet.

They have resources, but they're choosing not to take them. What do you wanna do if you have resources?

Do you wanna take those? So it's those life lessons that only come when life happens. But when you're going through the middle of the chaos, you think you have to fix it all at once. I was so, I have to deprogram these kids. I only have three years of them in my home. Right. And you're living with all of this regret?

Um, it's very hard. Yeah, it's hard. But at the same time, I like looking back, it was, it's crazy to see how far I've come and what I've been through. And the more I have grown, the more I've learned, the more I know I don't know and I don't have, and I don't have to know. And when I share that with them, they're open and they're learning actually, that they don't have to have it all figured out.

Yeah. So we're not operating out of fear anymore. Right. When I'm operating out of fear, I do not show up. I wanna show up. So, yeah.

Natalie: And the, and to always remember that the journey for them, it continues past their time with us. You know, we don't have to get it all right while they're with us. They're gonna have their whole lifetimes to work on that, just like we have.

Um, okay. So I wanna talk a little bit about boundaries right now. And, um, I'm gonna just answer this question, um, 'cause no one put their name by it. So I, and I definitely think it's an important question to talk about. So we, the, these are some ideas of boun and, and. For anyone who doesn't understand boundaries, I think we come into the i the topic of boundaries.

Sometimes thinking that a boundary is what we set for, for someone else. We say, you shouldn't do. You can't do this around me, and you can't do that around me. Well, that's actually not what a boundary is. They can totally do those things around you because they get to choose how they show up in their lives, and you really don't have any control over that.

You can wish you had control over it, but you really don't. So boundaries are really what we set up to keep ourselves safe. They're our own, what we are gonna do, if they do that, then what are we gonna do? So here are some ideas of ways that you can set boundaries, um, around protecting your kids emotionally, even if you can't control what happens at dad's house, number one, you can have a boundary around your own reactions to what you're hearing.

By the way, I wasn't always very successful at all of these, so I'm putting these forward. I'm as in, in the aspect of that I am not perfect at these things. I don't think any of the women here are perfect at these things. These are things that we're, that we have to work on and, and work towards. But kids often un as we talked about before, they'll often unload their fear and their anger at home, uh, with us and our boundary.

For us is that we don't take it personally. We don't absorb this as a personal indictment against ourselves or our identities or our parenting. We can remind ourselves this is their emotional storm that they're having. This is not about my failure. And then when you can stay regulated as Charlotte gave some examples and um, um, so did Loretta, that that is when.

You are, you're gonna be able to be there, be present for them. Then in that, um, it also demonstrates to them that their feelings are survivable. Even though they're having these big, huge emotions, they're not, it's not too much. It's not like. Too overwhelming. I have to say I have failed a lot in this because sometimes, sometimes I've had a couple of kids who have mental health issues and it does feel like at like even as teenagers and older people, and it does feel like the storm is a hurricane and it does feel like I'm, it's going to blow me away.

So this is something that I'm still working on. But another boundary is truth telling. Kids get gas lit in the destructive home. Your boundary is to say, okay, maybe they're experiencing that over there, but over here in my home, I'm gonna be a truth teller. If they're told over there, mom doesn't love you, or You're too sensitive, or you're a naughty person, you can calmly counter that with the reality when they're in your presence by saying, that's not true.

I love you no matter what. It's okay to feel things deeply and you are not a naughty person. You are a good person. You have a good heart. You're just doing the best that you can. So you don't even really need to campaign against dad. You just need to help them when they're with you, to anchor them in what's actually really true.

Another boundary is be predictable. You can set a boundary for yourself that, in my home life is going to be predictable. Maybe over there it's all about candy one day and, um, getting, you know, ha having the rug pulled out from an from you another day. But your home can be a place where there's rhythm.

Where there's meals and bedtime and check-ins and even rituals. Like Saturday night movie with mom or Sunday morning pancakes. Predictability is an emotional safety net for our kids. What about a boundary of respecting their

voice? Maybe over a dad's house, they don't have much of a voice and there is no respect for their thoughts and perspectives.

But with you, you on, you say, I honor my children's opinions and feelings. I can't always give them what they want. I understand why they want those things, and I honor that your thoughts matter to me. This is what you're communicating to them. Um, another boundary is around what you share. Sometimes, and I'm guilty of this, we overexplain adult problems because we need to vent to someone.

So a protective boundary is separating our adult worries like our finances. Or our legal battles or our drama around dealing with our ex from our kids' worries. And that way they're not carrying loads that aren't theirs. And then finally, a boundary of having compassion, but with limits, you are not their punching bag.

You can say, I see that you're upset, but I, I won't let you scream in my face. But I'm here when you're ready to talk and snuggle and give them some space and give yourself some space. Safety with boundaries teaches them that love does not mean chaos. And limits don't mean rejection, and that's really important for them to know.

All right, so I think, uh, we'll do one last question. How do ladies take care of yourself? In the middle of all of this, in the middle of dealing with. X drama, but also with your, the drama that your kids bring to the table so that your, so that you are coming from a place when you're caring for your kids and showing them love, whether, well, we're talking about younger kids right now, so that you feel filled up and not depleted all the time.

Give us some ideas.

Diana: Go ahead, Loretta. I'll, I'll go after you.

Natalie: Okay.

Diana: We probably have

Loretta: the same answer. No, maybe not. Um, so one thing, I edu number one, educating myself. Um, being, I, I've surrounded myself with people who grow, who are in similar situations as me, who have a growth mindset. I'm always listening to podcasts in the car.

I have learned habit stacking from our lovely Diana in one of her podcasts about, um, I started my, I. I now have a child who isn't it? Elite sport where I find myself driving four hours a day and waiting three hours for him. So I have it stacked, exercising while he's training. I'm training, right. And I'm also listening to podcasts.

Um, on the way up and on the way back I'm educating myself or I'm talking to a friend who is better than a counselor. It's so great to catch up with an old friend or, and I've surrounded myself with people who get it. Who have a growth mindset, who have curiosity, who aren't judgmental. And so those safe spaces just fill you up to where all that anxiety, you're, you, you don't live with it all day long.

And I've learned to recognize in my body when I have, um, you know, a tingle going down my arm, there's some rejection coming up. So where do I need to process that when I have. My chest starts getting tight or I wake up like with grinding my teeth, obviously I've got anxiety. What am I thinking? What am I sorting through?

And I take care of that with a friend, a counselor doing my own mind shift tool work or running models. Um, I also ha, this is a big one, people pleasing. I have stopped, well, I am recovering people, pleaser. Um, it's. I worry about what people think. I'm always wanting to do things for people and just, I have given myself permission to just let go of that.

In fact, the other day, the cops, I, I got a message and I was told when I got home, the cops had showed up at my house again. And I'm like, what? And what happened was my, I didn't even, my level, like I was on the phone with someone, they're like, you don't seem very upset about this. Like, like this is kind of, and I said.

This is not my first rodeo. Like my, my, it didn't even elevate, but my child had been playing video games and his window was open and he was yelling to his friends.

Natalie: Oh no.

I can just imagine. 'cause I have, I've heard things you a well check. And I'm like,

Loretta: and when I got home I just started laughing and I said. You were just jealous 'cause you're the only one that hasn't had the cops come and talk to you

all laughing and it didn't become this big, huge thing. So because I wasn't worried about what people thought in the neighborhood, 'cause we do have nosy neighbors.

Just like you, just beyond that, you just can't pick and choose, you know? Yeah. You still deal with the small stuff anymore, right? Um, and anyway, so what, one thing too, I wanna say one more thing is your kids do, they do not wanna be controlled. I had to tell me, you know, mom, I just don't, even though I was gonna go do that, now that you told me I have to do it, I don't wanna do it.

Hmm. S Yep. Recognizing that, you know, sometimes it's, you gotta just hear them and listen to them and be curious and, and you can't control anyway,

Diana: so

Loretta: why

Diana: bother? That's funny. I'm gonna tie that in to take understanding our kids' needs is part of taking care of ourselves too. I'm gonna hit on that. I do. I wanna mention though, Loretta, you mentioned that I.

Uh, you heard the habit stacking from me, which I got from, um, books, Atomic Habits, and then there was another book I pulled some stuff from. But that was actually a training that I did in the Kaleidoscope for Flying Higher, which is still there. So if any of the listeners are wanting to hear how to add healthy habits on a daily basis to change how you take care of yourself and your life, that is a, a.

Uh, what was it? It was a weekend training I did in the Kaleidoscope earlier this year. So that's available for any of you who decide to join Flying Hire, which Natalie always tells you about at the end, which I highly recommend. I'm gonna be a member for as long as it exists. So taking care of yourself, taking care of yourself has to be number one.

Where I think it's gonna get talked about in episode 11 this season as well. A little bit about taking care of yourself, and I have some ideas of what I might. Say there, but it is not selfish. That's what I wanna say. It's not selfish. Selfish is when we are elevating our own needs is way more important than other people.

And we think we're someone special and we deserve better than them. That's not what self-care is. Self-care is taking responsibility for the body that God gave you, taking responsibility for the soul that God gave you, for the mind that

God gave you. Saying, I care who you made me to be so much that I'm gonna give myself what I need.

There's, I care for this creation that you made, God. And so I ask myself all the time, what do I need? Yes. This comes up in parenting when you're all stressed out, when the kids do all their things. A lot of, you know, everyone here has been through the ringer. I didn't tell as many of my stories here in part 'cause I told my kids, I wouldn't tell some of their stories, but boy have I been through the ringer.

I was just talking about it with somebody else yesterday. 'cause she's got some young boys and there's yelling in her home and, and how stressful that is. But all through it, I kept, uh, I got better and better at figuring out what do I need? What do I need, what do I need? And we can navigate how to take care of our own needs and model it to our kids as we do it.

Don't be afraid to speak it out loud as well. Like if your kids are pushing back at you, it's. Listen buddy, I love you so, so much, and I care so much about what you're going through and I've gotta take a breather to take care of me so I can keep showing up for you. I wanna get better. I would tell my kids I wanna get better at this mom thing.

I wanna get better at navigating the the hard moments. And when you're struggling and when I'm struggling. So I need a breather right now. I'm gonna go for a walk, I'm gonna go for a massage, I'm gonna be taking care of me. Let your go ahead and let your kids see it as well. So, uh, I guess that's everything I have to say on that one.

Natalie: Before we close you guys, I want to do, I wanna actually talk just like uh, Diana mentioned. I wanna invite you to join us inside of the Flying Hire Program for divorced Christian women who are eager to rebuild their lives from the ground up. The work that you do on yourself, and I think all of the women here would attest to this, it's gonna have a direct and profound impact on how you show up in your parenting.

You can go to join [Flying hire.com](https://flyinghire.com) to learn more. Here's one of, one of our Flying hire members recently wrote this to us. She said, I wanna express how thankful I am for Natalie and her honesty and transparency. I believe that has helped me more than anything, Natalie, if you came across as having arrived and not having ongoing challenges within yourself and in your family, I would feel like I'm missing the mark and I'm working very hard in vain, and I'm just a total loser.

But because you're so honest, I have hope that this is all part of the journey, and I press on. I'm, I'm glad that she said that I, because sometimes I wonder, maybe I say too many things about how, how I'm a hot mess half the time. But I'm glad it's helpful. I am thankful to have finished my grueling divorce this year.

I have to say that there are so many more hard times, too many to begin to talk about, but even though I'm not in the forum, I have been doing the courses, taking notes and implementing the materials. I just wanna say too, cut in here and say that some people join. They dive into the forum and they like to talk to everybody else, and they maybe don't do the courses, and so they tend to kind of roil around in what they're already dealing with.

And it's just, and it's so hard to watch them suffer, but they're, but others get in and they aren't in the forum interacting, which is fine there. I mean, you can interact if you want to, and you can have access to all of these people that are here, uh, right now on this episode. We can help you, but Oh, but they are doing the courses.

This is kind of what I do when I join programs. I usually go in and I'm not necessarily talking to everyone else, but I am like feeding off of whatever the teachers are teaching and taking the notes and learning and implementing what I'm learning. And those are the people that then they eventually come into the forum and they're like, oh my word.

I can't believe what's happening in my life as I'm taking these courses. So. Uh, here's what else she says. Something that spoke a lot to me this summer when I was dealing with deep betrayal and abandonment emotions, which also brought shame, was in the health course when Natalie talked about going through the hell of hard emotions and facing them head on.

That's what I decided to do. I decided to run into the storm like those buffalo do, even though I had worked hard until that point, to heal and to grieve. Natalie's teaching in this course helped me to become more aware of these really hard emotions that made me still run to band-aids during very intense times.

Also, my body has been stuck for years now, and I had some extra weight that didn't come off no matter what. I felt very stuck, hopeless, and defeated about losing these extra pounds, even though I really didn't have a lot to lose. I ate, I eat healthy foods, so I knew my hormones were messed up from all the trauma that went on for so many years, even during the separation and divorce.

There's a part in the health course regarding setting a goal to lose weight. And resetting your body and losing weight with intermittent fasting. So I set a goal and I've been doing intermittent fasting for about 18 hours a day. I also go for brisk walks, even while I'm fasting. I could not believe the energy and amazing feeling I had.

I walked faster than ever, even in the hot sun. One of the biggest bonuses besides feeling so empowered by my efforts and success is that I have lost lots of weight in a very short amount of time and can wear clothes I've not been able to wear for years, and I haven't stopped there. My brain is looking for more dopamine hits.

I have cleaned out decades of stuff that I dreaded facing and believed that my brain could not deal with until. I began until I began the life skills course, which I am doing now. I am still facing challenges with decluttering certain areas and items, but I'm determined to reach my goals now. I am doing all of this in the midst of hard times that would've left me stuck and immobilized before.

I'm choosing to change how I think so that I get different results and every win and victory just make my brain crave more. I love Flying higher. I love the fact that I can find courses on whatever I'm dealing with and be guided in changing my mindset so I can reach new heights and not be defeated by what's going on around me.

So that's an example of someone who's doing the courses, making the changes, and actually experiencing her entire life start to turn around and change, not just while she's in the middle of working through Flying higher, but when she leaves Flying higher, she's going to take all of these skills with her and they're going to impact the rest of her life.

So if that sounds like something that you'd be interested in doing, you'll want that for your life. Well, we can help you get that for your life. Go to add an affordable price too. I might add. Just go to join [Flying hire.com](https://flyinghire.com) to learn more. Thank you ladies for joining me for this episode and um, thanks for listening.

Until next time, fly. Hire.