

Flying Free Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 327 - The Best Worst Decision: Erin's Story

Natalie: Today I am so excited to visit with Erin. She is a woman who has been part of the Flying Free community for many years. Do you know how many years? When did you I think I started in 2019. Okay, so a lot of years. Like six years. Yep. Six. That is insane. So I, anyway, I feel like it's important for us to hear stories from women who have gone through tho that deep, deep pain of not only being in.

An abusive relationship, but also extricating yourself from one, which can be a marathon process. And then after you're done with that, then you have to rebuild your life and that is also very challenging. So we're gonna talk with Erin about her experience and hopefully you'll get some takeaways and some tips and um, and just to even be able to see what is possible for you.

Erin is not the only one who's gone through this. There are probably. I bet you money there. It's in ma, millions of women who have gone through this. I've seen thousands of them do it. And we're talking and I'm talking about Christian women who have done this and so it is possible. So let's find out how Aaron did it.

So why don't you tell us, Aaron, first of all, how, um, in your relationship, when did you first start noticing that something was off?

Erin: Well, I, um, looking back, I can see that there were red flags during, um, you know, before we started dating. While we were dating and engaged. I didn't know that they were red flags because I grew up, um, very sheltered.

I was homeschooled Christian family and I only had sisters. So to me that, um, a guy was kind of a mystery. And then the only thing I had to go on was my grandpa would always call guys dirty rotten and to stay away from 'em. So when he would do things, that was all I would, you know, I would kind of put that through that filter.

Um, and so looking back, there were red flags. I was told red flags were if they're sleeping around or if they're, you know, doing drugs, partying, alcohol, and, um, he wasn't doing any of those. He was a good pastor's kid. And, um, now I could see that there were, uh, he was very, um, I don't. He loved his

mother and he, um, he didn't, wasn't an honor or respect, but there was a weird relationship.

He was, it was an abusive family that he grew up in and he was the, um, the golden child and, uh, her favorite. And, um, when we were dating, he was, uh, or before we were dating, I saw him. He was cruel to animals. I didn't know that that wasn't okay because I grew up in a hunting family, and hunting was normal, but it was different than hunting.

So, uh, you know, these little things that you put together afterwards, right. Um, after we got married, it was an instant change. He was very possessive, wanted to know where I was, what I was doing, didn't want me to go out by myself. Um, he would accuse me of thinking and intending things that I didn't think or intend.

And so then we spent most of our, um, arguments, me defending myself and never getting to the point and working through what we needed to work through. Um, sure. And I had no idea what that was 'cause I had never been exposed to somebody that would just constantly attack me and never, never try and solve anything.

Um. He, he would accuse my parents of being the cause of strife in our marriage, which we know that that's, uh, trying to get me to, to distance myself and to isolate me so that I don't have my support system. Um, we, he moved us to live with his family when we were six months married. And, um, moving into with a family that is very abusive was just more abuse to me.

I, and I was, um. Uh, my mother-in-law did not like me and she, um, would say things to me and it would trigger me and then I would respond back and then it would cause problems with my husband. And, you know, just that whole dynamic Yeah. Was awful. Um, I begged to go to marriage counseling and he refused, and then his pastor father found someone for us to go to.

I was like, whatever, I'll just go to anybody at this point. Um, so that was a big deal. You know, if you have somebody that's handpicked by an abuser, they're not a very good counselor. Anyway, so yeah, it didn't help much, obviously. Um, we found out that I was pregnant at our last session or just before our last session, so then we moved back to where my parents were.

Um, 'cause he got his old job back. Uh, at the time that when we moved, he didn't have any work, so I was the only one working and so we moved back so he could have his old job back. And we lived with my parents until we were

able to get our house where my son was born. I think we moved in and five days later he was born.

Um,

Natalie: so how was that living with your parents? Were like, did they notice

Erin: anything or. They didn't say that they noticed anything. Um, after I, I did say that he was abusive. Later, they said, well, you know, when they, when she was locked in the bathroom with him and she was saying, help or that hurts, don't do that.

They, they didn't know what to do. My dad was gone and so it was just my mom and sisters and they remember. Thinking, what, what can we do? How can we help her? And you know, my dad's advice to me, I didn't want to move. I knew it was something really bad. Um, and my dad's advice to me was, I, you know, you get to choose, but I think you should go and be with your husband was, wow, I just, I don't wanna do this.

And you know, afterwards they were kind of, what could we have done? How could we have. Fix this. Um, I think that they saw red flags. 'cause I do remember going back to visit my parents on my birthday and my uncle who was a cop was there. And that was the only one that was invited to the birthday party, was my aunt and uncle.

And I think that they understood something was up, but they didn't really know, um, how to address it. And then of course, I was covering everything up because that's what you're supposed to do when you're married to an abuser. So, um, yeah. And after the. The divorce, I, I would start remembering things like, I remember that he would spit in my face, he would wrestle me to the ground and hold me there.

He would call me names, he would block my escape. Um, I. He, he did tell me that he, um, took my 16-year-old sister home one night after she was helping me with my brand new baby. And when he got home, he said, I felt like kissing your sister. He was like, well, that's odd. Why would you feel like kissing my sister?

But thank you for letting me know. And it just kind of stuck in my head. After or during the divorce, my sister called me and she said, I just wanted to talk with you about this. Um, he said he already talked to you, but. I just need to get this out. And he said, um, she said that he, he, the whole drive home was talking

about how bad a person I was and how he couldn't stand me and how beautiful she was and how much he appreciated her and enjoyed her company.

And, um, then he kissed her when they got to, uh, my parents' house and he started to follow her into the house. Um, she said that she felt very uncomfortable and turned around and faced him 'cause she did not wanna go into the empty house with him. She knew that something was off and I was glad that she listened to her gut.

And um, and then I remembered putting the pieces together. He's like, yeah, he did tell me about it. 'cause when he got back home, he called her and he said, well, you don't have to, to, um, talk to your sister about it. 'cause I've already talked to her about it and you don't have to bring it up ever again.

Natalie: Wow.

But what he told you wasn't really the truth anyway.

Erin: Yeah. Right. Yeah. So I was glad that she was able to say that. I, um, I know that he's done that. Other people, and I kind of have all these little things in my head that are there that if God ever decides to bring the parts back together and I can, you know, come full circle with it, that's, that's fine.

Otherwise, I know that there are others. Um, but I, I don't have, I have the people I could go and ask. I don't know that I want to. Yeah. 'cause that's this point. Exactly. Except to apologize to them 'cause it's not fair for them. And to think that they ruined my marriage or you know, what? My sister, the pain that she went through and she wasn't, she told one person about it and they didn't believe her and they said, oh, it's nothing, it's not a big deal.

And um, you know, that was my sister's first kiss. She oh, awful. Sugg creepy. So creepy. Oh my gosh. So I know that he was addicted to porn and he, he would admit that to me during our marriage being, um, an a very naive Christian girl. I really didn't know what that was before we were married and, and he made it sound like he, he wasn't addicted anymore.

And then, um, right after I gave birth to our first kid, he told me, well, when I went back to move our things to our new, you know, back here again, I, I bought a magazine. I was like, are you kidding me? You're telling them this right after I gave birth. You know, what am I supposed to do? I have this brand new baby.

You're supposed to keep your marriage together. You're supposed to, yeah.

Natalie: Yeah. Fight. So it's almost a way, like his timing is almost a way of challenging you and at your most vulnerable when you don't, when you're not able to say, we are not able to resist or, or get out. Like, and then. By the time you are feeling stronger, it's, oh, you know, it's like in the past and your brain has already gone back to the numbing stage of just like going emotions.

Yeah. So what are, what are some things that you did to try to fix the problem? Because I know survivors, they try to fix it, they try to make it better. And, and were any of those things effective and why or why not?

Erin: Um. Yes, I, um, he would, he would use the Bible against me a lot. So we had, um, you know, the Ephesians 5 22 submit, the Genesis two where Eve was made for Adam, uh, he had 51% of the vote and I only had 49.

Um, he said women couldn't be trusted because they're too emotional. Like Eve, you know, she was too vulnerable. Um, and, and he would tell me that I was a terrible housekeeper. My coping strategies were to try harder. To try harder, pray more. Um, I, I would try and clean harder, clean more. I had six kids in eight years that I was homeschooling and, um, I, you just can't keep the house clean when you're raising kids.

And that to him was the most important thing. I remember when my youngest was born, uh, my oldest was eight, and um, he was. I think my baby was six weeks old, and a husband sat me down and he said, well, I need to tell you that you, I'm gonna have to hire somebody if you can't keep up on this. And it was a threat, not a, I'm going to relieve you of this because I know this is too much for you.

It was, you can't do your job very well. Um, so I would, I would freeze. That's still one of my things that I'm really trying to work on. When I get nervous or I'm triggered, I notice that I can't spell. All of a sudden I freeze and I can't come up with the words. Um, I would go for long walks, trying to work things out.

Um, and that would always help 'cause my brain would just go as I'm walking and I'd go at a very pretty good pace. Uh, I would call, I would fall fawn a lot, trying to calm him down and to keep the kids safe. Like, I don't want him to blow up and yell at the kids. And he would say things like, um, you do that again and I'm gonna chop your hand off you, um, you know, to the kids.

And then he would kind of laugh because I would get upset. Like, don't tell them that, that's not a trust. Yeah. Um, that's terrifying

Natalie: to children. Children don't know that that's not actually happen. Yep.

Erin: I know. Wow. And there are many things that my oldest, um, who sees the abuse, he's told me later, he, he would go.

His dad would, uh, go down and say, if you guys can't keep your room clean, you are never going to amount to anything. You're dirty, you're worthless. Um, you know, meaning like he would take his finger on the baseboard to see if it was clean. Um, he would do stuff and say stuff to the kids all the time and say, just don't tell your mom and undermine me.

And it makes sense why I had problems with them in their teen years 'cause they were severely abused. And I'm thinking I'm keeping the family together. Um mm-hmm. By. By doing all of these things, trying to stand in between, trying to Right. Calm him down. It just, it wouldn't work, obviously.

Natalie: Right. So what made you decide to get out?

Like how, I'm curious how old your kids were when you decided to get out and what was that process like for you? Because you had a lot of kids that's, that complicates things in a major way.

Erin: Yes. I was numb for most of their life, just trying to keep them alive. I. And keep up with. Um, you know, I was the one, I was a stay at home mom, so I was constantly driving them to things.

Um, I, as they started leaving the house, I got a little bit more time to think, which then helped me kind of put things together. I was like, this is not what a good, healthy marriage is. Um, I, we, I still tried to push him to do marriage counseling. We did, um. So, uh, in intensive through Family Life today, I, I read every article that I could find on focus on the Family, and listened to every radio, everything.

Uh, I don't think, I don't know if they're, I don't know if they have a podcast, but anything that I could hear, I would, I would do, or marriage, I'm gonna, I prayed through the power of a Praying wife created to be his help Me. I believed in James Dobson's 72 hour Rule. Um, I had been following Sheila Gregor's blog for a while.

It was the, um, I think it was called to love, honor and vacuum. Yeah. When I first started to follow her. Yeah. And, um, and, and that's I think what started to open my eyes and somehow, because I was following her, it brought yours up. I

don't know if, if, I don't know if she did an interview, there was something if she, no, we had a connection back then, right?

Yes. So it brought me to your blog, which then, um, I started reading everything as they, and then I got your book, is it me the first, I think at the time I could get the first three chapters 'cause you didn't have your workbook done at the time. And so I read through it and I still have these screenshots.

I took all these screenshots of the parts. Well, does he do this? He might be an abuser. You know, I don't know how many we had in there. I went through it with my finger and I checkmarked all of the ones that he did. I was like, oh my goodness, it's almost all of them. Yay, I win the prize.

Natalie: Oh my God. It's, it's so shocking when you look at it in black and white though, and because you know, you, you know, all those things are true, but when you actually look at it in black and white is, it's still a gut

Erin: punch. It is, it was, um, yeah, so then I started reading everything on your blog because that was kind of, I needed to read that.

Uh, my aunt and uncle actually help out with a, um, an abused woman's shelter here. And they had, um, Leslie Vern's book. Okay. So they loaned that to me. Um, they gave me a place to stay when I needed to. We separated three times in, um, 2019. I would go to their house. Sometimes I'd go to my parents' house, um, or I'd kick him out.

But that happened once. Um, and then of course it was, I'm so sorry. You know, what can we do? Yeah. We need to figure this out. And, um, so I, I then I started implementing boundaries as well, which when you do that, you know that they're, they start getting worse. Yeah. And his thing was, there's, there should not be boundaries in a marriage.

There's no reason for boundaries we're we should have complete access to each other and Oh yeah, no, only that

Natalie: really only goes one way with these people. Yep.

Erin: Yeah. Yep. Uh, my aunt and uncle connected me with a domestic violence, I dunno if she's a coach or counselor through their, um, organization. And, um, I thought, well, okay, you know, this is somebody that I can, that will help me walk through this.

I, I didn't pay her anything, so it wasn't anything that he could track. So I could, you know, that I, it wasn't, uh, I didn't have any access. I had access to the money, but he could see everything. So I had to be careful what I spent the money on. In fact, I asked my parents to buy your book so it would show up for them, and I shared with them so I could read your book.

I asked them, um. To get your program the Flying Free. Uh, in fact, I wasn't gonna do it. I'd already okayed it with my dad. I want, you know, I think I need to do this. And I was like, no, I don't need to do this. Okay, I think I need to do this. No, I don't need to do this. And then the night before the deadline, I got into a big fight.

Um. No, we got into a big fight that fed with X and um, he and I texted my dad and said, okay, I need the program. And so my dad bought it and then of course the next morning he is like, no, I don't. It's okay. We'll be just fine. But I started getting on and learning as much as I possibly could on the Flying Free program.

Um, so my using the counselor, going through your book. Joining Flying Free. Um, the counselor said, okay, well let's try this. Let's assume that he's a good guy and let's try this and see how this works. Like if you say, I do not like it when you do that, let's see how he responds. Because I freeze when I get triggered.

I would just start walking. I would walk outta the house and go for a long walk because I could get the words out. So I started to try and speak what I needed. And of course, that made it worse. Yes. I noticed your, um, Gretchen Baskervilles 90 day escape plan. So I, I got on that and I thought, okay, God, I'm gonna do this.

I have full belief that you are going to change X and I won't need this, but I'm gonna be prepared because this has been a very weird 2019. So, well, I had a, um, a to-go bag packed in my car. Um. And I was ready and I, I used the bag a time or two when I needed to flee. I owned my own dance studio, so sometimes I'd go and hide out there and think I'm just gonna spend the night here in the studio.

Uh, although he had a key to it, I still, you know, he could see where I was parked. I, I still felt safer there than at the house with him, with him being mean to me and yelling at me and, um, you know, them being super nice to the kids and, oh, it's okay. Yeah. Yeah. And in fact, my aunt and uncle, they said, you can't say that he was being mean to you.

You need to say that he was cruel because he was, he was very cruel.

Natalie: Yes, yes. I just noticed that to join something like Flying Free or even to buy a book means that you have to acknowledge to yourself that there's a problem, and I just, I noticed that you didn't wanna do that. You were like. When things were bad, then it was like, okay, maybe there's a problem.

But then, you know how the psych, the abuse cycle goes, you get into the better part and then it's like, no, I'm sure it's fine. And, and then it, it's like almost if you, if you get a program or you buy a book or you reach out for help, when things are feeling good, then you're, you know, that you're gonna open up that wound and you don't wanna open up that wound.

Right? Yep. When you're going. Good. For sure. So I'm glad that you did, because. When things are going good is actually when you can think more clearly. 'cause your amygdala is not, you know, activated. Your brain can actually think rationally and logically, and that's really the best time to actually read a book or to join a support group or to, you know, go to therapy or whatever is when you can actually take in the information on a, in a more logical, rational, objective way.

And, um, and then process it, and then that can start to work to apply to what, what's happening in your life. Can you tell us what the hardest thing was about getting out and may maybe we could talk about the hardest thing. The hardest thing about getting out and then the most transformative thing for you about getting out.

Erin: Yeah. Um, the hardest thing was, um. Actually recognizing that I needed that, um, I needed to flee. I needed to escape. I did finally make my escape, and I realized that the anger, righteous anger, was helping me to stick to my guns and say, I'm gonna file for divorce. This is, this is the end. I know I can't do this anymore.

My domestic violence counselor, I called her 'cause I had an appointment the next day and I was still super triggered. She said, um, I think you need to file for divorce. And she would, she would pray for me. She would. She was a good godly woman. She still is. Um, and she said she's never ever told anybody to get a divorce, ever.

Wow. Interesting. To be able to make their own decisions. But she said she knew how broken down my body was. I needed to get out and God knew I needed to hear that from somebody I respected. Yeah, I had texted you or I put it

on the forum that night right after I fled, I wrote everything out on the forum, what happened, and I woke up the next morning to, um, something from you that said, um, he is not a safe man.

You need to do whatever you can to keep yourself safe and try not to go back to that situation. You never told me to get a divorce. You just told me to protect myself and take care of myself. I also needed, so, um, you know, I, I did do your divorce course that you had, which was very helpful. Uh, some of it I didn't really understand until I needed it at that time.

Yeah. And it came in handy. Um, and I still was working through the rest of Gretchen basketball's 90 days Escape plan, which is also on your program. Um, like I didn't. I didn't make copies of all of the tax stuff. So when he was gone at work, I would go back and make copy after copy, after copy, try to get everything and get housed as quickly as possible.

Um, another hard thing for me was, um, navigating my adult children because he had told them all that I was abandoning the family. Um, and I was, I was in the wrong, uh, not supposed to divorce at all, marriage at any cost. Um, and they would. So navigating the lies, the ex would say. Um, he said that I needed psychological help.

I stole all of his money. Uh, I didn't give him any sex. I refused marriage counseling. Um, because that full last year he was pushing for me to go to marriage counseling. And you said on yours to not do that at all. It's not healthy. It's not safe. And so I was gonna, okay, well, she knows what she's talking about.

I'm just not gonna do it. I'm, I'm gonna listen, even though I feel like I need to go to marriage counseling, but I just saw. On the last time we went to marriage counseling, then it that he used it to further abuse me.

Natalie: Right. So you

Erin: did go to marriage counseling.

Natalie: It, it didn't work. So you just decided, I don't wanna keep doing that.

I'm not gonna keep doing it. Yeah.

Erin: He walked out and, and was, and made me walk home. He took the truck and just drove. Drove away. Yeah. Yep. He refused. Yeah. That didn't work.

Yeah. So my, um, one of my kids called me and said, Hey mom, would you, um, go get a psychological evaluation because of his father? Oh my gosh, that would be so hard.

And I was like, I don't have the money to do it. And he said, well, how about all of that money? That was dad's or something. I was like, well, I still don't have money. Wow. I'm not sure why he's telling you I stole all of his money, you know? Um, and then obviously I didn't not give him sex. I had six kids, you know, I did everything according to the book.

Okay. Um, yeah. Yeah. And, and, and I was empty nesting that same year, uh, because my youngest, he was 17, he refused to move in with me. Um, he said, I'm not gonna go back and forth or refuse to do that and I'm gonna stay with dad. Um, which then he did see the abuse of his father and he did come and stay with me a couple of weeks for a couple of times, which was very healing for me.

And he knew I was a safe place, so I know it was healing for him. The hard part for my kids is that to acknowledge that their father is telling lie, um, means that they have to acknowledge that he's an abuser. And I am right. It's easier to believe that I'm wrong. Yeah. And accept that what I'm saying is right.

Um, my oldest, um, I think it was about a year after the divorce, finally saw his father's abuse and he um, he called me at work saying, I am so sorry you've had to deal with that. I am so glad you got free. It was the best thing you. The best thing that you could have done, you were right about it. He got together with each of his siblings individually and said that, uh, mom was right in leaving.

Dad is an abuser. He asked for all of the divorce documentation to read through it all. 'cause he wanted to know the lies that were being said and the truth. He said, I need them. I like, son, I don't, this is gonna hurt you. And he said, I don't. I need them, mom. I need to read through them. His wife unbeknownst to me, their entire marriage had been telling him, your father's an abuser.

She saw it from the beginning. Um, it was, it's such a blessing from God. He has done so much good work in my oldest, um, and his wife, they've done intensive individual counseling with Andrew Balman. They've, um, done their intensive, I think couples counseling with them, uh, trying to get healthy. 'cause my son, um, you know, my teenagers, they went through trying to figure out.

The abuse and my oldest was the, the black sheep in the family. Okay. Um, and I, I have five boys and one girl. And the one girl is the golden child. So it was

very healing for me. I'm able to speak openly to them about everything. Um, they're still trying to do their healing journey and figure themselves out and raise their children differently.

It is such a blessing. I still pray every day for the, the five remaining kids and my many grandchildren.

Natalie: How everyone with how many grandchildren you have? I, I'm gonna have my 10th this year. Wait, if you're listening to this and you're not watching the video on YouTube, she looks like she's 35 years old.

Okay, so throw right out there. Yeah. 10. 10. She's gonna have 10 grandchildren. I was just blown away. Wow. Yes. That is absolutely. I I, I know how absolutely painful it is. It, it is, it's the most painful part about it is having your kids get the wool pulled over their own eyes and have them, and, and not have that, um, that understanding between you and them because they're, they were, they've been victimized as well, but they don't know it yet.

So to have them recognize that and then, and you can't heal until you recognize it and get that self-awareness and then go and get that healing for yourself. So you were a cycle breaker and now your kids are continuing on in that breaking of those cycles for their families. Um, really as a result of you were the first domino that that went down.

Thank God for I'm so

Erin: happy. Amen. That happened, my, my oldest said, um, mom, thank you for leaving 'cause you taught me how to walk away. Wow. That's absolutely incredible. That's amazing. Yeah. My, my oldest has been a, a big blessing to my life. 'cause he, he was also the biggest pain in my life. Not the pain to me, but like, you know, just his rebellion, his um.

He struggled with drug addiction and, um, he tried to commit suicide. And, you know, just through his teenage years, I, I spent so much time on my knees praying for him. Yeah. And, and to have his, um, his support that he sees it, and to he, he does not have anything to do with his dad. Um, I think he sent him Andrew Bauman's book, how Not to Be an Ass.

Like absolutely gonna help him. But it was a nice gesture. A nice gesture. He said he was going to, I don't know if they really did. Um, and X has only met that grand baby once because they don't want him to have any access to. Right. Okay. So that's been, um, that's been a blessing to me for, for them. Yeah.

And their, their health.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about how Flying Free was helpful to you? You didn't just go through Flying Free. You also joined Flying Hire, and, um, maybe you could talk a little bit about that for anyone who is kind of like where you were. They've been listening to the podcast for a while.

They're interested in the program, but it's almost like an admission of issues if you join something like that. And it's really hard to do that. And yet. That first step is so important in order to get the, to begin that transformation process. Definitely.

Erin: I was glad for that fight the night before the cutoff to get into Flying Free because God knew I needed it.

Um, and I was glad that my dad was still awake and able to buy it. Um, and that has been the best thing for me. I, I know that, um, some of the other articles that I read, they said, well, it could be this, and I. I was given hope when I read through, um, a, a different book. I can't remember all of a sudden the name.

But anyway, I read through the book that my aunt and uncle gave me, um, and I was like, okay, well there's hope that, you know, maybe I implement these things and it'll change. And then I read through your book and my hope was just dashed. Like, there's no fixing it. No way, but it's frugal. If you read

Natalie: my book, you lose olive oil.

Erin: No, I was so glad that you pointed out that. That it, that there is, um, that they are abusers. This is something that is, it doesn't have anything to do with you. And obviously God can change them, but he's not going to force them. Yeah. They get to choose that. Yeah. And he has invited them to choose that and probably until the day they die.

But I think absolutely. It's like 1% of them see it and change. Yeah. My oldest friend was on the path to becoming an abuser. He was abusive. Then he saw the truth and he knew he couldn't do it anymore, and X was given so many opportunities for that. And he just refused. Yep. He refused. And because of that, I leaned more into what you were telling me because it was validation of what I was going through.

Yeah. And I needed that. I needed that validation. I, I took advantage of your coaching calls. I went through every single last course in the Flying Free. Um, I,

as soon as it was available, I did the Butterfly bootcamp. Did you do one in 2020? I can't remember. For covid year. So maybe that was the first one we did.

Natalie: What did we do that year? No, I don't think we did one that year. That was the one year we didn't do it.

Erin: Yeah, I, I read all of your articles, um, and then you came out with your workbook in, in 2020, and you want it to go with the, the book. Um, you know, the, the, is it me and. So I got on there to try on Facebook, I think is where you had that you could log in to see, you know, in your area and, and your time zone.

And so I looked and I found one that would work for me because I'm mountain time zone and everybody else was central. So anyway, I found one and there were three other ladies in that group. And, um, one of 'em had already been divorced. I don't think she already went. She'd gone through all of your Flying Free stuff, but she wasn't on there anymore.

She was just following you on Facebook. Okay. And so she, the, um, the moderator or whatever, you know, the leader of our group and then, um, one lady in Minnesota and one is Wisconsin and then me and Idaho. And, um, we went through the workbook and then we started texting every day. Then, um, we decided to do our first get together and we did that one for, um, turning in the new year of 2021.

We met together in Minnesota with the lady there. And, um, since then we've been getting together twice a year. They come to Idaho in, in July, for the 4th of July, and then for our new year's, we go to wherever. Uh, I went to Texas once is where one of them lives. Um, the one that lived in Minnesota, she now lives in Florida.

So we go to Florida every New Year's, which is a beautiful go. Um, much better electric, see much better location. Uh, we text almost every day. We, Marco Polo our videos. We um, we talk, it was very encouraging to each other. Uh, I was the next one that was divorced and then, um, the other two got divorced after that.

So then we walked through the divorces for all of us, um, and. The first one that was divorced. She got remarried this last year, so we flew to Texas to go to be in her wedding with her. Oh. Oh my gosh. That's amazing. Yes, we, we get together as often as possible. And, um, they are what helps when I'm triggered, they help to calm me down and give me some perspective and some insight.

Um, I am signed up with the Florida, um, my friend Sheila, we're, we're going to go to the Butterfly Bootcamp already. She's like, it's open. Are you gonna go? 'cause I'm not going without you. Let's all be there. So every year the Butterfly Bootcamp has been, um, amazing. It's been a blessing and I'm so grateful to get to go and.

I will do whatever I can save up with, you know, whatever I can to be able to go and do that. It's almost like my little intensive, you know, once a year I get an intensive to help on my healing journey and um, it's the butterfly bootcamp.

Natalie: Oh, well I'm so glad to hear that. I am really excited about this next year too.

We're gonna do more experience related things together. It's gonna be more comradery and connection and less speaker type stuff and just more, more experiences. So I'm really excited. Well, and

Erin: it sounded like it was hands-on like arts and I, and so for me, movement is very big. And in the arts I'm not very good at at drawing, but I'm gonna give it a try.

We're just gonna, yeah, we're just gonna like be totally

Natalie: creative. So if you are a member of Flying Free or Flying Higher, you have a chance to come to Butterfly Bootcamp. Um, there are limited tickets and they are selling right now, so, you know, join if you aren't already a member so that you can, um, have that opportunity.

I also wanted to just say that what I, what I know, what I've noticed over the years is that women who go through Flying Free or Flying higher and actually do what Erin did and what her friends have done, where they actually. Listen to the coaching calls. They, you know, they go through the courses.

They're the ones who, a year later are, find themselves a, a completely different version of who they are. They really, what they, what they find is they find out who they've always been all along that's been squashed and, and covered up through the whole abuse process. And they rediscover that core self and then they start blossoming.

And so, but there are, you know, you can join and you can do nothing, and then it's, you, you know, it's not really, it's like anything, right? If you don't do anything with it, it's not gonna be helpful to you. But if you, if you do feel like

you're in a place where you're ready. To commit to yourself and you'd really like to be in a different place a year from now, that doesn't mean you have to be divorced in a year from now, goodness sakes, but if you just wanna be in a different place, in your own nervous system, in your own body and your own thinking and your own belief system, that is, it's a great opportunity to, um, get some help.

It's, you can just go to join Flying Free dot com to get more information. Okay. We're gonna close. Erin, I'm wondering if you can give us one piece of advice. If you could just, you probably have a lot of advice, but if you did this one to leave anybody with who might be thinking about getting out, what would you say to them?

Erin: I felt like God was leading me the entire way. He gave me every step that I needed. He provided everything that I needed and filing for divorce, continuing to walk through divorce even through his love Bomb ex's love bombing. It was the best, worst decision of my life.

Natalie: Oh, that's, that's a great way to put it.

The best, worst decision of my life. And there's just, you can't beat around that. I mean, you can't, uh, you can't pretty that up with anything. It's just, it's really, really horrible. You have to just be honest about that. Yeah. So, um, and also on the other side of that, there's some pretty beautiful things.

Erin: Yes, yes. But if you're willing

Natalie: to go through, if you're willing to go through the, the wilderness, just like the Israelites did, you're not gonna get to, you know, you're not gonna get to heaven. I mean, the Promised Land was not heaven. Alright? There was a lot of battles and skirmishes, you know, in that story, even after they got to the promised land.

But, but the point is, is that it's better than being in Egypt and being a slave to someone else's. Fantasy world about you. Yeah. Yes.

Erin: All right, Erin. Peace and it's wonderful. I love it.

Natalie: Yes, Keith, that's, that's honestly the promised land right there. Just having a sense of inner peace. All right, Erin, I'm gonna let you go.

I know you're, you've got a grandbaby on the way maybe this day, and so, um. And you're on your spring break from teaching, so I, I hope you have a wonderful rest of your week, and thank you so much for giving us some of your time and sharing your story with us.

Erin: Thank you. All right.