

PRACTICAL HELP FOR CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN CONFUSING AND PAINFUL MARRIAGES

Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of Flyingfreenow.com, and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 112 of the Flying Free Podcast. I wish you could see me right now. I've got this pop filter that broke. It's supposed to go in front of your microphone so that your microphone doesn't pick up all the "p's" and the consonants that "pop." It broke. I have another one coming, but in the meantime I have to literally hold this thing with my hand. It looks really professional. I should have someone take a picture of this.

Anyway, I want to have a heart-to-heart with you today. I'm imagining that we are sitting in a living room with our coffee or tea. I'm a tea drinker now. I don't know how it happened. Actually, that's not true. I kind of know. I drank coffee every morning starting in college. I loved those flavored creamers — the unhealthy ones. You know, vanilla, caramel, and hazelnut. Of course, when I was a mom with five hundred children, coffee was a staple, right? It was like my little oasis every day. Then I wanted to lose some weight because of the five hundred children. I learned, when I was educating myself on how to lose weight, that the flavored creamers weren't helping me. So I switched to full-fat cream and stevia. That took some getting used to. (Not the full-fat cream. That took zero getting used to. I immediately took to that like a baby to the... Well, you know what I mean.)

Anyway, that became my new staple. As I grew older, I found that I really liked the strong coffee with my cream and stevia. I also discovered that I was less and less tolerant of those really rich, sweet drinks at Starbucks. They became too sweet for me and gave me stomach aches and headaches. My brain kept telling me, "These are delicious. You must love them." My brain told me it was weird that I didn't like them. Who doesn't like a really yummy Starbucks Frappuccino, right? That was my brain's programming. But my body kept screaming, "No!" every time I would have one. (Which wasn't that often.) Eventually my body won, and my brain settled down.

Fast-forward to last year. I was up by twenty-five pounds in January 2020. I honestly didn't feel the greatest. I decided I was going to lose twenty pounds in 2020. Doesn't that sound cute? Lose twenty in 2020? I did it! One thing I tried was switching to tea and coconut milk. I found that I actually liked it. I started trying different teas. I wanted to get to know all the teas — the blacks, the whites, the greens, the herbals, and the

oolongs. I found myself turning to tea instead of coffee in the morning. Every once in a while, I would turn to coffee. My husband drinks coffee and the other young adults in our family really like coffee too. So sometimes it is sitting there in the morning and my brain says, "It's good, remember? You used to like it. Try it again! Maybe you've been temporarily insane for several months. Come back to the land of coffee. You're not British; you're Norwegian for the love of Sven!" So I tried it. In fact, just a few days ago I tried it. I threw it down the sink after two sips. Nope! I'm going back to tea.

Do you want to know my favorites? I start the day with a black tea from a place called Tea Source in Minnesota. The tea is called "Minnesota Nice." Isn't that nice? Tea Source is right here. All the B&Bs around here carry Tea Source if they know what's good for them, which is making money while giving folks a relaxing break in the freezing cold tundra. Next, I transitioned to my favorite Oolong from The Tea Spot. It's called "Coconut Cabana." That is like my mid-morning walk on the beach — delicious! After lunch, I have a cup of my favorite green tea from the August Tea Company called "Combray." I'm not a huge fan of green tea, I'll be honest. But I really like this one. It's got vanilla and cardamom. Mid-afternoon I am drinking my favorite tea on the entire planet of Earth. It's a white tea also from August Tea Company called "Know By Heart." I can tell you I know by heart it's my fav! It's got orange blossom, almond, and honey. I just can't even! At night, I drink my second favorite tea on planet Earth. It's an herbal tea called "Evening in the Sula," also from Tea Source here in Minnesota. If they called it "Evening in Minnesota," would I like it as much? I'm not sure, maybe. But knowing it is a cup of the Sula feels so much more exotic.

Where were we? Oh, yes. We're in the living room drinking tea. What are you drinking? Right about now you are possibly reaching for some whiskey just to get yourself through this podcast episode. Let me tell you what I want to tell you for today. I have talked to hundreds, possibly thousands, of women by now — Christian women — who have lived with or are currently living with emotional abuse. Of course, the spiritual abuse is a given for Christian women, because they are brainwashed with this idea that God says the way they are being treated is not only normal and okay but is actually bringing glory to God, and He loves it when women are treated this way. It's His freaking plan for the love of Jehoshaphat, Mother Mary, and King Herod.

I used to believe this too. I used to not just believe it, but I taught it. I had this group of women I had organized called Visionary Womanhood. I even started a blog by the same name. I was all in! I was also stuck in many ways, internally stuck, because that is what gaslighting does to you. It is a crazy feeling when you are drowning and the folks around you are laughing, playing, and telling you that you are just making it up in your head or that if you would just laugh and play like them, you wouldn't be dying right

now. I truly believed they were normal, and I was the freak.

Part of what got me unhooked was finally calling a spade a spade and making my own decisions for my life. I had to stop waiting for someone else to rescue me. I had to stop asking for permission all the time. I had to stop being paralyzed by my fear of failure. I had to stop trying to be perfect, look in the mirror, and say, "You were right all along, girl! They don't care about you, and that's okay. Do you care about you?" Then I answered that question fiercely: "I love you, and I will always have your back from now on." I've never turned back since. That doesn't mean that my brain's programming doesn't keep trying to run in its loop. But it means that I notice when it is looping on some old programming, and I interrupt it with a quick reminder of the new loops that we are creating.

Just the other day I had this song from "Frozen" on my phone. It's a song called "Show Yourself." I was getting ready for the day, putting on makeup and brushing my hair, and I had this compulsion to lean toward the mirror and look deep into my own eyes and sing "Show Yourself" to myself. I could see myself connecting with myself through my eyes. It was kind of weird. Then my eyes filled with tears, and it was quite a powerful experience. Try it. That is my vision for all of you. Nobody is going to see you or know you the way that you need to be seen and known. Not even the most amazing partner. It's just not possible on this planet, not 100% of the time. I'm not saying you won't experience that in moments, but nobody is going to know you the way that... Well, it's kind of a no-brainer that our Creator knows us, right? We're Christians. That's what we believe. But there is someone besides our Creator who can be on our side 100% of the time if you want her to be. That's yourself.

I'm telling you: This is your superpower. Once you have this as the background programming that is always running behind the scenes of everything that you experience, think, feel, or do, your life is going to change. But so many of us are running on the old programming, which says over and over in a loop, "You are bad. You're a failure. You're not worthy. You don't deserve that. Your life is meaningless. You make people unhappy. It's all your fault. You need to let others use you in order to have a purpose," and on and on and on. This is the work I do. I'm not going to lie: I'm trying to brainwash you the other way. I believe it is in alignment with the heart of the Creator for you and the human race. I believe He wants His daughters to be running free and full of love. They can't do that when they are curled up in a corner trying to hide from all the abusive humans in the world. I believe you can be a Christian woman who is divorced and still be living in a cage of fear and powerlessness. The door is wide open, but you are afraid to come out and fly. I also believe you can be a Christian woman still in an emotionally and spiritually abusive relationship who is flying free internally

because she is learning how to love herself the way God loves her.

I have a program called Flying Free that people can join so that they can do this work. Flying Free is for women of faith who believe they may be in an emotionally abusive relationship and who want to learn more about who they can be despite that relationship. I teach these women how to let go of trying to change their husbands and all the other people in their lives. I teach them how to live lives of freedom, hope, and internal strength despite what they must listen to daily that tells them otherwise. Your husband or your family of origin may have programmed you to believe a certain way, but as an adult, you now get to decide if you want to keep that programming or change it. A lot of women aren't motivated to change their programming for themselves. They are so used to throwing themselves under the bus, but when they see their kids growing up with the same programming, then they suddenly realize how wrong it is. They don't want to throw their kids under that same bus. In that way, sometimes kids can even be the catalyst for a woman deciding to get help for herself. The fact is, you can only help your kids as far as you are able and willing to help yourself. If they see mom believing that she is worthless, they will internalize that and believe that they are also worthless.

Flying Free is only \$29 a month to join, or \$290 for a full year of a lot of good stuff. Let me tell you a little about it. As soon as you join, you will have immediate access to thirteen courses. I take you through the first course in your first month, because that first course lays the foundation for everything else that we do. After that, you can pick the courses you want to take whenever you want to take them. It takes about a month to go through each course. These include courses on complex post traumatic stress disorder, parenting, your relationship with God, unraveling scripture, dealing with a dysfunctional relationship, boundaries, divorce basics, and more. Again, each course takes about a month to go through. You can opt into getting the course delivered to your email inbox. We'll deliver that course to you one lesson every three days. These courses are super doable; they are not overwhelming. I also offer one hour of coaching every week. You can come live and get coached, or you can watch the replays. These coaching sessions play a really important role in deprogramming your brain and offering it new thoughts and ways of looking at things that have brought huge breakthroughs for many women. It's not just being coached, but listening to coaching is life changing as well, especially as I am coaching others who are typically struggling with the same issues. A breakthrough for one ends up being a breakthrough for hundreds.

As soon as you join you also have access to a vault with hours and hours of expert workshops from advocates like Bob Hamp, Gretchen Baskerville, Patrick Doyle, Sarah McDugal, and many more. There's also a vault of Butterfly Story videos where women

just like you share their stories of how they got into and then got out of their abusive relationships and what they are doing now to continue to grow and evolve into the best version of themselves. Do you like to get together for live online events? We do that every month too. We break down into small groups and get to know each other, and we also do a once-a-month live Q&A where you can ask any question you want and I will answer it. If you can't come live, you can watch the replay in the vault and get the answers you need. There are almost four years' worth of Q&A videos in the vault. There's a crazy amount of stuff in that vault. You have instant access to it.

Of course, you can never go in there and do all of it. That would be impossible. If you think of it like when you open Netflix on your TV, do you think you need to go in and watch every show? Of course not. You pick the shows you want to watch. That's what it's like in this membership program. It's like Netflix. There are millions of things in there, but you can pick and choose what you need at that moment for your life. Finally, we have an online forum with hundreds of members where you can talk about what is going on in your life. You can ask for prayer. You can interact with me, other coaches, and other women who can help you through this transformation work you are doing from caterpillar to butterfly. I send out a survey after the first month of Flying Free to all the new members, and I also send out an exit survey when people leave the program. The overwhelming feedback is that this program saves lives — sometimes literally — but definitely figuratively. People rave about this program and there's a reason for that: Because it works. If you want more concentrated help and support for what you are going through, if you are ready to quit trying to change your husband, and you are ready to transform your own life and your own programming, then this program will be an incredible fit for you.

As I mentioned earlier, it is \$29 a month. When the time comes to register, you can pay with a credit card or you can pay with PayPal. You will automatically be charged every month on the same date that you subscribed, but you can unsubscribe at any time. We don't hold any captives here. We're trying to teach people to fly free. Your payment will show up on your credit card as going to N. Hoffman. It will not say on your credit card statement, "Group for Abuse Survivors" to tip off your husband or anybody else. The option to purchase a one-year membership for \$290 will save you \$58. It is basically that you are getting twelve months for the price of ten. An annual membership will also get you a free PDF download of my book, "Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage" and a PDF download of the "Is It Me? Companion Workbook." That right there is worth the \$29 of your first month.

But we get the question, "What if Flying Free is too expensive for me?" I want to point out that Flying Free costs a fraction of what a lot of you are paying for counseling — up

to \$150 a pop. People are paying for medical bills to deal with the psychological and physical repercussions of emotional abuse. Many women have told me that Flying Free has had a greater impact on their healing than either of those two things. If you knew you would be a different person in a few short months in an incredibly life-transforming way, do you think the cost of Flying Free would be worth that?

However, there probably are some of you who are in a position where you absolutely have zero wiggle-room financially. In that case, I'd recommend you check if a friend or family member would sponsor you with a one-year subscription. Tell them you will send them updates on how their investment is paying off in your life. People love to know how they can help. Sometimes all you need to do is ask. We did use to offer scholarships. Once a month I would send out a scholarship. I also gave free scholarships to a bunch of women who were part of a program where they were getting helped. These were all women who were in financial trouble. I found that less than ten percent of the women that got free scholarships came in and did the program. This is normal human nature kind of stuff. The reason for that is that we don't value what is free. We don't value free things. This program only works if you actually do the program.

I just paid to hire a nutrition and fitness expert to help me for six months. One reason I wanted to pay for this is because I knew that if I paid for it, I would do the work. I would show up and do the work, and I am. Again, that's just human psychology. What if you don't want your payment traced by your husband, though? (Basically, I'm just going through some FAQs that are on the page. If you go to joinflyingfree.com, you'll see all these FAQs written down, plus a lot of other information. If this is flying over your head too quickly, just go to joinflyingfree.com and all this is there.) One way women have solved this problem of not wanting their payment traced by their husband is to purchase a pre-loaded Visa gift card at Walmart or another drug store. Banks also sell them. The only problem with that is you can only purchase one month at a time, so you'd have to continuously update your card every month so you don't end up getting canceled. Another idea is to have a friend or family member use their card. You could register with their credit card and pay them back with cash. Those are some different ways.

"What if I don't have a lot of time to devote to Flying Free?" That's another question that I get. I want you to know that Flying Free doesn't take a lot of time. There's a buffet of options within the Flying Free membership group, but it's exactly that. It's a buffet, kind of like Netflix. In a buffet, you don't have to eat every single dish. You can sample the things you see if you like them or if they work for you. Then you can stick with the ones that meet your specific needs the best each month. Even if all you did was come in to

read the lesson each week, once every three days, packed with life-changing insights into emotional abuse and into your healing process, or you just watch the videos, you are going to get your money's worth. You will begin to make those changes in your brain's programming. You will have brand-new thoughts you've never thought before. Those thoughts — when you change your brain, you change your life. That's how it starts. It starts up in your head. Maybe you just want the support and fellowship of other women going through exactly what you are going through. The community forum might be all that it takes to help you heal, although you can get that kind of help free on Facebook. There are lots of free Facebook groups out there. If you're only looking for that, go over to Facebook and get that help there. But it is nice to be in a community forum with other women who are actually doing the same work that you are doing and are working on the same things.

"How does Flying Free compare to other similar groups available to me?" There are some other groups out there that are similar to Flying Free, but here are some ways we are different. I believe we are the only program like this that offers weekly coaching using a powerful coaching tool I was trained in called "The Model." I'm a trained, certified coach using this model through The Life Coach School. Through this model, my clients regularly experience massive shifts in their thinking, in their emotions, and ultimately in the results they are creating for themselves.

Another way we are different is that as the creator of Flying Free, I have over twenty-five years of experience in an emotionally abusive marriage and experience dealing with spiritually abusive counselors and church leaders for many, many years. I'm not only a professional educator and coach, but I am also your sister survivor walking beside you. There are so many nuances and layers to emotional abuse, and I am intimately familiar with all of them.

A third way that we stand out or are different is that I've read hundreds of books and resources related to emotional and spiritual abuse, and I have vetted the cream of the crop. I can not only direct women to the particular resources for their needs, but I've written several courses available to all Flying Free members that break down the things I've learned into easy, bite-sized lessons that are perfect for women who are still in the thick of the battle and don't have the time or energy to study the prolific amount of information that is out there.

Another thing that's different is that I am personally involved every day in this group. You will find me in the private forum, in the weekly coaching sessions, in live chats and Q&As each month — you are my priority. Finally, I bring other professional authors, counselors, advocates, pastors, and all the people so you can learn from a wide variety

of experts rather than just me. I want you to meet and experience the wisdom that dozens of other advocates and former survivors bring to the table so that when your time here is over, you have a tool chest chock full of resources at your fingertips.

You may wonder if you are even in an emotionally abusive relationship. What if you're not and this will not be the right program for you? That would be wonderful. But one of the most confusing problems to figure out is, "Am I in an abusive relationship or not?" The Flying Free program will help you do exactly that. If you're not ready for Flying Free yet, I highly recommend you get my book, "Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage." That book will help you discover whether you're in an emotionally abusive relationship and the next steps you can take to find hope and healing.

What if you're not ready to separate from or divorce your husband? Will Flying Free still be a good fit for you? People wonder about this. I've had people wonder if Flying Free teaches that everyone needs to be separated or divorced from their husband. I want to say this right now: We have people in Flying Free who have made every different choice you might imagine for their lives. There are so many options for you. The timing and what you choose to do is completely up to you. That's why it's called "Flying Free." We want you to be free to be an adult who makes your own decisions for your life, and we support you in whatever your decision is.

We've got women in Flying Free who are committed to staying in their marriage relationship, and they are working on themselves and growing strong. One member's husband was so impressed with the changes in his wife that now he is starting to change. Is that common? No, but it is possible. (It's rare, but I'm just saying it has happened.) My point is that getting strong and healthy can only be a good thing, whether your spouse changes or not. We have other people in Flying Free who are trying out separation for a short period of time with the hopes of getting back together, some that are in the divorce process, and some who are divorced but still healing.

I have another program called Flying Higher, which is for divorced Christian women. That is new this year, I didn't have that before, so some of those divorced women are moving over to Flying Higher. But we still have some divorced women who want to stay in Flying Free because they are still healing from a lot of the trauma that they experienced. Flying Free is very careful and gentle and nurturing. Flying Higher is more me saying, "Let's go! We've got to do this!" Some people aren't quite ready for that yet.

"What if I'm dealing with my own anger issues and unforgiveness?" I just want to say that reacting to abuse in unhealthy ways just means that you need help with your boundaries. That's it. It is totally normal, and it's okay. Flying Free will give you the tools

that you need to grow strong in your own boundaries so that you can respond to abuse as a mature adult woman rather than a trapped cat in a corner.

What if you are afraid to change? Our brains always say that. "No! Don't! We don't want to change. We want to keep going on the same programming. It's efficient." That's what our brains do. You don't have to change. You can tell your brain, "That's okay. You don't have to change." Change is completely up to you. You can take it slow, or you may suddenly have a major epiphany overnight. But Flying Free will never force you to do or change anything. If you join and you change (which I believe you will), I promise it will only be because you want to change. Flying Free will help you make an honest assessment of what is going on in your life, but also empower you to make good decisions that will be healthy for you and your family.

That is what I have to offer you for today. If this sounds like something you want to learn more about, head over to joinflyingfree.com. There are tons of reviews over there and all the details so you can make a good choice that is right for you. Thank you for listening, and until next time, fly free!