

## SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH ADULT CHILDREN

*Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [Flyingfreenow.com](https://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 212 of the Flying Free Podcast. We are here at the beginning of March, and I'm excited about what we're going to be doing in both Flying Free and Flying Higher. If you were able to listen to Episode 209 where I interviewed Jenna Riemersma, author of the book "Altogether You," my favorite book in 2022, then you'll be excited to know that she is coming into my programs to do a live Q&A this month. In Flying Higher we are actually going through her book, "Altogether You," and in Flying Free, I'm teaching a little introductory mini course on Internal Family Systems, or IFS for short, and I'm going to be teaching those on Saturdays. Now, members of Flying Free can attend or they can listen to the replays on our private podcast. So it's going to be an exciting year for both of these programs.

Flying Free is for women of faith who are married to or maybe separated from or maybe divorcing an emotionally and spiritually abusive person. And we do weekly coaching, live Q&As, workshops, and interacting every day in our private community forum. This year I am reteaching all of our core curriculum live on Zoom to our members, and I would love to have you join us. You can learn more about Flying Free by going to [joinflyingfree.com](https://joinflyingfree.com). We keep it super affordable so that as many people as possible can join.

And then this year in Flying Higher, which is my program for divorced Christian women, since our core curriculum is finally finished after almost three years, members not only get access to that core curriculum, but if they want to they can come along with me while we go through twelve life-changing books in 2023. So far we've gone through the book "Beyond Codependency" by Melody Beattie, "The Science of Stuck" by Britt Frank, and this month, like I said, it's going to be "Altogether You" by Jenna Riemersma. So next month we're going to get practical and go through "How to Keep House While Drowning" by KC Davis.

So if you're divorced and you'd like to be part of that community and access our incredible lineup of courses, our private podcast, live coaching, our private community forum, and our book studies, you can learn more and complete an application by going to [joinflyinghigher.com](https://joinflyinghigher.com). So [joinflyingfree.com](https://joinflyingfree.com) for information on that program or [joinflyinghigher.com](https://joinflyinghigher.com) for information on that one. There's so many good things coming

up, and I think it's going to be an amazing year. Now, today I want to answer a couple of listener questions, so let's listen to the first one.

LISTENER: Hi, Natalie. I just want to say, first of all, that I'm incredibly blessed by your program, and I'm so thankful that the Lord directed me here. I have so much backstory, painful backstory, but I won't go there right now. What I want to talk to you about is how you mentioned in Episode 149 to just keep showing up.

I have three adult children, one of which is married with two of her own children. So I'm blessed with two beautiful grandchildren. She recently accused me of previously being selfless. This indicates to me that she doesn't feel the same way anymore. And the problem is I showed up too much previously, and I believe that I and my soon-to-be ex-husband created very codependent children.

I guess I'm just not really sure what showing up for these three adult children means anymore. Do I just wait for them to want me or something I have to offer? Or do I keep giving of my time and material as I have been doing, but just not nearly as excessively as I had in the past? Because they still all live at home but they are separate apartments, we affectionately and jokingly dubbed it "The Compound" at one point, which really isn't a joke anymore. Having listened to much of yours and Bob Hamp's material, I've realized this is not a healthy situation, and I feel a pull to do more than I do at the present time because I'm living elsewhere and they are still on "The Compound."

Her words cut me because even though I'm not living there anymore, I am still the major breadwinner and I'm still financially subsidizing the home. So while I'm not necessarily as present as I once was, I certainly am being selfless in that sense. So I just wanted to hear your thoughts on that.

NATALIE: Okay. So this is what "selfless" means to your daughter. It means Mom takes care of her at Mom's expense. That's it. If Mom does that, then Mom is selfless, and this daughter wants you to be selfless according to her definition of selfless. She not only wants that, she actually expects it. That serves her. See, she has a manual, a big book in her mind for moms. It's like "The Manual for Moms," and in her manual on page five-hundred and sixty-seven, it says, "Moms serve me in the way I want. And I want a place to live rent-free, and I want free babysitting, and I want free advice and free time and free resources when it is best for me. That is my mom's job."

So we can guess from that that her definition of "selfish" is when Mom does not do these things for. Instead, Mom takes care of Mom's life. "How selfish for my mom to

take care of her own life! That's not her job. Naughty Mom. I'm going to let her know." This is like a parasite, a flea, who says to the dog, "No, you can't wear a flea collar. That is so selfish. Now I'm going to have to find another dog to suck on. If you were a good dog, you'd let us fleas eat you alive. Bad dog."

I think the first most important thing for you to see is that this is where your daughter is right now. This is where she is. This is what she believes. She is stuck in emotional childhood. Now, she may be living in an adult body and she might be raising two kids, but she is still emotionally immature. She has a ways to go in her emotional development. Now, your time raising her is over. You are no longer responsible for her. She is an adult responsible for herself and her own two children. And this is the second most important thing for you to recognize. So first, your daughter is behaving as if she is an emotional child who refuses to take personal responsibility for herself. And second, you are not responsible for her. Those are two truths.

Now the question is, what are you going to do in light of that reality? You cannot control her, what she believes, how she feels, and how she behaves. All of that is 100% her choice and her responsibility and 0% yours. But what you believe, how you feel, and what you do about this is 100% in your court. Now, I know what I would do. First of all, I would sell that compound and I'd invest the money in my 401k for my retirement so that I don't have to rely on my kids to survive when I'm old. That is my responsibility, not theirs. Do you see this? I take responsibility for me and my future, and I don't expect my kids to do that. And vice versa, they take responsibility for theirs and they don't expect me to do that for them. That's called adulting.

Then I would sit down and decide what I wanted to offer of myself as far as babysitting and so on. I mean, for me, maybe I might offer to babysit once a week for a few hours. I don't know. That's it. Take it or leave it. I'm not saying that's what I would do or what you have to do. I'm just saying it's just an idea, all right? You get to decide, but that's the main point. You get to decide, not your daughter. And if my adult child whined and complained about how selfish I was for offering to babysit for them, I'd say, "It's time to grow up, moochie-noochies. You are adults. Start acting like adults. I think it's selfish to mooch off of your older mother. You are disrespecting me and you're disrespecting yourself and your adulthood when you act like you're still five-years-old. I have full confidence in your ability to earn a living and build a life for yourself just like every other human on planet Earth."

And then you know what I would do? I'd let them figure it out, just like all adults do. Right now, they don't have to figure out anything. Right now, they don't have to grow. Right now, they don't have to have a normal human experience. Why? Because mom is

preventing them from doing that by offering her body as a host for them. Now, it is human nature to do the bare minimum. We're actually wired that way. But do we want our kids to stay stuck in emotional childhood and never evolve into a higher version of themselves, or do we want them to experience all of life — the good and the bad, the hard things, as well as the easy things — so that they can grow up, mature, and fulfill their destiny? What do we want?

Now, in Episode 149, the episode that this mom was referring to, when I'm talking about showing up for my kids, I went back and I read the transcript just to see what she was referring to. But in that episode I was talking about my younger kids who are under eighteen, who I am still responsible for. Moms, we are responsible for our children who are underage. And I was referring to showing up for them or being there for them emotionally — to validate their experiences, to be a good listener. I was definitely not talking about taking care of adult children. I personally don't do that.

In fact, in that episode, I actually referred to my oldest son and his wife, who did cut me off for two-and-a-half-years several years ago, and how during that time, I did not reach out to them or “show up” for them at all. I let them go, and I explained in that episode how letting go is how we ultimately have a shot, actually, at winning them back in a healthier, more mature relationship that's based on mutual love and respect for one another, including an understanding of one another's differences and an acceptance of one another's differences. Now, when my son and his wife were ready for that, they came back, and our relationship is better than ever.

But I have never taken care of my adult children because that is not my job. Now, some of them have had to get very creative and scrappy in order to take care of themselves. I have stories I could tell you, but I am so proud of them, and they are all making it just fine.

We want to work our way out of a job as parents. How we show up for our adult children is that we support them emotionally as they make their own choices and get their own jobs and pay their own bills and raise their own kids and make their own life. We show up by loving them, by cheering them on, by encouraging them when they're down. But showing up does not mean living their life for them, taking responsibility for them as if they are helpless children.

Now, caveat — my youngest has autism, and he actually may live with me for the rest of his life, so I am not referring to helping support children who have special needs and are unable to do certain things because of those issues. All right, let's listen to the next question.

LISTENER: I was wondering if you could speak on the issue of sometimes why an abuser is the one that files for divorce from the victim. I left my ex-husband with the four kids, and then about a month later I was served with divorce papers from him. And I know typically it's the other way around: The victim usually has to divorce the abuser. So I was wondering if you have any thoughts on why the abuser, in my case, is the one that filed for divorce from me. I do know that my ex-husband has some strong narcissistic personality traits, and he was covertly abusive, especially mentally, emotionally, spiritually, financially. Not too much physically, but in every other area he was. Thank you.

NATALIE: Well, some abusers are narcissists, and if they sense that their narcissistic supply has dried up, they will discard that person and set out to find a new supply. So when you left him, that was his clue that you were no longer going to be a good supply. So he's like, "Okay," and he filed for divorce. They don't care about their partner the way that you care about them. It's kind of like the flea/dog thing. You are their dog and they're a flea, and all you're good for is getting... What do fleas do? Do they suck blood? I don't even know what they do. Anyway, all you're good for is you're a food supply for them. And if you're going to get a flea collar on, then they're just going to go to another dog, right?

Okay, one of the reasons that we don't see this, though, as much in marriages where the husband is a professing Christian and invested in being part of a church and looking good to everyone in his religious circles is because that kind of a guy is going to know he'll be labeled as "the bad one" if he files, and he wants everyone to think that his wife is "the bad one." So in that case, it's more about image management than anything else.

So it really depends on what your guy is interested in. Is he interested in narcissistic supply? He'll just discard you and move on to the next one. If he's more interested in image management, then he might try to be super mean and force you to file for divorce. We actually see that a lot in our private forum. Women are like, "I think he's actually trying to make me file for divorce. He just refuses to file. He keeps threatening, but he won't actually do it." So either way, though, the point is that abusers, whatever flavor they are, can find good reasons to do it both ways. And whatever serves your particular abuser the best, that's what he will do for himself.

Focusing on the abuser and his motivators and his choices, you know what that does, you guys? That distracts us and it steals our energy away from focusing on our own lives and our own healing and our own rebuilding process. So I find it to be a waste of time. It's when I was able to just let go of my ex and focus on my own life and my own

healing that I was finally able to find my groove and the flow of my own life. That's when I really began to gain momentum and start moving forward.

Now, if you're divorced and you want help with this refocusing and rebuilding of your own life, we can do that together in the Flying Higher program for divorced Christian women. Just go to [joinflyinghigher.com](http://joinflyinghigher.com) for more information. You guys, that's all I have for you today. Thank you so much for listening, and until next time, fly free.