

WHAT ABOUT WHEN PEOPLE DON'T VALIDATE MY EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE?

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 242 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, we're going to be exploring, "What do we do when people disagree with us?" So there are two listener questions that are a different version of this question, and let's listen to the first one.

LISTENER: So as a woman divorced now, a Christian woman, my ex-husband, who is the narcissist, is getting remarried after our divorce was finalized less than a month ago. And my children, my two adult children and one minor child, have the belief, and my church believes, that I do not have the ability to find love again — that since I divorced, I'm expected to remain single and celibate the rest of my life. So can you address this in your podcast?

NATALIE: I would love to address this in this podcast. In our world of eight billion people, there are also eight billion different ideas about how to do the billions and billions of things we humans do on planet Earth. Some people think you shouldn't buy cars, but horses and buggies are okay. Some people think you shouldn't eat pork, but cucumbers are legit. Some people think women should always have long hair, and some people think men should always have long hair. And some people think that if you get divorced, you can't get remarried.

Is it possible for us to follow the billions of varieties of rules for life that all these billions of people have? And what about in history? We can add billions more ideas if we go back in time. What would happen if all the humans thought it was their job to have all the answers and then force everyone else to believe the exact same things? Hitler tried that. Stalin tried that. They just killed anyone who disagreed with them.

We think they are horrible people, but guess what? The Puritan Protestants also killed people who disagreed with them. During the Spanish Inquisition, Catholics tortured and killed people who didn't hold the same exact religious beliefs they did. During the Crusades, Christians killed people who didn't agree with them. Muslims have killed people who don't agree with them. And there are thousands of examples of this throughout history with all the world religions. Because if you have all the right answers and you know you are right, what else is there to do but make sure everyone who doesn't agree is kicked out? Get rid of them!

I do not believe in a God who promotes or encourages this at all. That's not the kind of god that I want to emulate. That's a weak, petulant, whiny, loser god who can only win if it kills its enemies. If I'm going to believe in God at all, that God is going to have to be a lot bigger than that. And if we worship a bigger God, then I believe we are safe to take risks, get messy, and know that we are loved no matter whose rules we are obeying or not obeying, even if we leave an abusive marriage and get divorced and establish a truly loving relationship down the road, okay?

So the question was, "Can I get remarried if I get a divorce?" And of course, the answer is going to be that you can do whatever you want to do. You're an adult. Some people don't want to get remarried. Some people do. You get to decide what aligns with your own core values and your own life's purpose and trajectory between you and God. What resonates inside of you within your relationship with Creator Love?

If you want to find validation for your choice, you'll be able to find it. There are lots of people who will agree with whatever it is you decide. If you want to find people who disagree with your choice, you can find all those folks too. There are lots of people who are going to disagree with whatever it is you decide. It's all out there. Who are you going to follow? And why do you have to follow other fallible human beings? Really, is there a human being out there who has all of the right answers? I'd like to meet him or her. Actually, I take that back. I don't want to meet them. They're probably an asshole.

I love the work of Gretchen Baskerville. She wrote a book called "The Life-Saving Divorce," and you can find it on Amazon. She also has a YouTube channel with some educational videos on the subject that are really, really good. She's been working closely with Christian divorcees for over thirty years, so she knows what she's talking about. And I'll make sure to put links to her stuff in the show notes. I encourage you to check her out.

So the other part of the question was, "How do I explain to people who don't agree?" Actually, I think I didn't play that part. I think I might've trimmed that off. But anyway, at the end of her question, she asked, "If I decide to do this, how would I explain it," okay? So the question that I would ask you back is why do you have to explain it to people? I think we want to explain things to people so that we can convince them to change their minds so they'll agree with us, right? And then if they agree with us, then we'll feel good about our decision.

Do you see how our happiness and our peace depend on other human beings' opinions and beliefs? Yikes. That is a powerless way to live because now we have to try to control them so that we feel better. What if we could feel better without having to control them

or convince them that they should agree with us? Imagine what life could be like if we could just be our own adult self, make our adult choices, and have our own backs. That would be amazing.

LISTENER: Before I joined the Flying Free Sisterhood, I had done a lot of foundational work on my own to understand narcissistic abuse and toxic marriages and learning more about the particular situation that I am in. But I needed to do the deeper work in that I really didn't even understand that I'm an autonomous adult. Doesn't matter how many degrees one has and how successful one is — until you understand truly that you are an autonomous adult before God, it's an ultimate game changer when you're in a toxic marriage. I really did not understand it until I joined the Flying Free Sisterhood.

And because of it, I now know what I like — or I'm still learning — but I know more of what I like, what I want, what I don't want, and what I will tolerate and won't tolerate, and it's taught me how to do the work first with myself so that therefore I can have healthy relationships outside of myself. It's changed everything. And so ultimately I know that my life is never going to be the same. And so there you go.

NATALIE: Before we get onto the next question, I want to thank this person for sending in the testimony about the hard work that she has been doing in the Flying Free program, and just let those of you who are listening know that if you want to come into the program and do this work with us, you can. If you head over to joinflyingfree.com, you'll get all the details. All the details are there. There's a FAQs section that answers all of the most frequently asked questions, you'll read tons of reviews and testimonies of people who have been in the program.

It's \$29 a month or \$290 a year. I like to say it's the cost of two therapy sessions because it just puts things into perspective a little bit. Some people have asked, "Why is it so cheap? Like, is it something stupid?" It's not something stupid. It's a very robust program. The reason that we keep the cost low is so that as many women as possible can take advantage of it. And there are some women who can't afford therapy, and this is a good alternative that is economical for them.

Also, this is a nice supplement to therapy, and a lot of therapists will recommend this program to their clients because it's a daily support for them, so in between therapy sessions they're still getting that input and that support. And then a lot of times they'll take what they're learning from the program into their therapy sessions and process through them with their therapist and make even quicker progress. So it works out well that way too. Okay, so you can go to joinflyingfree.com to find out more about that. And now we're going to listen to the next question.

LISTENER: Hi, I just finished listening to my very first podcast from you, Episode 224. And I feel like the second to last question that was asked could have explained my marriage perfectly. I've suspected covert abuse and manipulation and emotional abuse for quite some time. I had a counselor that I can no longer see that was really helpful, but now we're just kind of surrounded by people that think this whole emotional abuse thing is nonsense, and it's really trapping and I don't feel very encouraged.

And I guess what do you do when nobody else will listen or see you as truthful? They just kind of think you're crazy. Because the mask that you talked about in this episode is just, it's so good. I guess what do you do when you don't have a support system and anybody that could be a support system is shunned from your church?

NATALIE: All right, so, a lot of Christian women in abusive relationships are swimming in what I call the "abuse pond." The abuse pond is an environment full of other fish who've been eating and drinking from that pond for a long time. Everyone in the pond is struggling with spiritual and emotional illness. Everyone needs tender loving care, they need fresh, clean water to swim in, but they don't have that. In that pond, they all think that emotional abuse is nonsense because think about it — fish don't know that they're in water. That's all they know. So you don't feel encouraged because you have actually grown aware of the poison in the pond, and now when you try to tell the other fish about it, they don't believe you.

You're like, "This pond is poisonous. We're all dying," and they are like, "You're crazy." So what do you do when nobody in the poison pond believes you? Do you stay and die with them, or do you jump into a different pond? Now, if you jump into a different pond, yeah, they're going to go, "Oh my word, look at that crazy lady. That fish is jumping into a different pond. She's crazy." But once you get over into that new pond you're going to meet people — for one thing, they're not swimming in poison anymore, so they're going to be healthier — and they know about the poison pond. Maybe some of them got out. They're not going to think you're crazy at all. So you'll be able to be with people and be surrounded by people who think you're normal. And that really does feel so much better.

So in other words, what I'm trying to tell you is that you're not crazy. The people telling you that, that you are crazy, they're just blinded by the poison that they believe. You don't have to make the fact that they are poisoned believe anything about you personally. You can simply make it mean that this is just what they believe right now at this point in time in their lives. Maybe they won't always believe it, but right now they do.

And actually, everyone has the right to believe whatever they want to. We do, and so do they. They can believe that clouds are cotton candy if they want to, and they can think that you're dumb if you don't believe that, but that doesn't mean that you're dumb. You get to decide what you want to believe, okay?

I think most of us, in order to stay in our abusive relationship... Because the thought of leaving is just, you know, it's a terrible thought, it would involve going through hell and back, and most of us don't want to do that. So in order to stay, we had to believe that emotional and spiritual abuse is not a thing, that it's just not that big of a deal. And that is why we stayed. And other people who want you to stay are going to keep gaslighting you in that same way to get you to go back to gaslighting yourself. Do you want to go back to believing that? You don't have to.

What I would encourage you to do is stop looking for encouragement from people who are swimming in that poison pond. They need help just as much as you do, so they're not the ones who are going to be able to help you get out. You are the one who is going to rescue yourself. That's what the transformation is all about. You are going to go from being someone who is afraid to make any moves to transforming into someone who can tolerate the disapproval of others enough to be able to find a new pond to swim in. And that is how we fly free.

Hey, beautiful butterfly. Thank you so much for listening. If you liked this episode, be sure to subscribe, and then consider leaving a rating and review so others can find us. To connect with me and get a free chapter of my book, head over to flyingfreenow.com, and until next time, fly free.