

CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, AND GUILT, OH MY!

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 286 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today we have a couple of listener questions. One question has to do with taking care of ourselves, really. What does self-care look like and what do you do if you feel guilty if you take care of yourself? And then the other question has to do with confessing our sins. So we've got a little bit of dismantling to do of maybe some of the things that we were programmed with in our religious culture. So let's listen to the first question.

LISTENER: Hi Natalie. I'm going to try to think of how to phrase this question most succinctly, but I have been married for thirteen and a half years. And we realized we're basically on the path to divorce. I've been separated for almost two months.

And my personality is feeling like I need to get back to the grind super hard, and I feel guilty when I take time to care for myself. And the ironic part is my personal brand is all about health and wholeness. And so in my work, I equip other people with the importance and the value and the pursuit of Shalom to take the time to do these things. But sometimes I find myself just wanting to do yoga, go for a prayer walk, or listen to worship music or something like that, which these are all really good things, but I guess I'm struggling to find that balance because sometimes I feel guilty. I feel tired, I want to lay down for a twenty-minute nap, which is something I never did.

So I'm trying to navigate the process of evaluating how much... Because obviously the process, once I realized the situation I was in, I realized there was tons of suppression of emotions and how I was feeling over all the years, and then it was just all coming out and I felt like I was dealing with the stress and coping in a positive and healthy way, but I still feel like man, I'm taking all this time.

How long is this process? I guess I don't really know how to ask this question. What's realistic? What should I expect in extending myself grace and not feeling guilty about really acknowledging what I went through? Because it's easy for me to be like, "No, I'm good. I shouldn't need all of this anymore. Just grind it out, work, skip the nap. I'm taking too many walks. I should just be focused on the work." And so I'm trying to navigate this to avoid feeling guilty for doing the very thing I tell other people that they need to do, because I don't fully, I think, understand the impact that the last thirteen and a half years has really had on me.

I don't think I really have any idea because spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, I would just keep trying to do the right thing to keep myself well. But I think I haven't fully comprehended the trauma of it all. And how much grace do I extend myself in

doing these self-care things versus being like, "Okay, you also really need to focus on the reality of life and the hustle"? Does that make sense?

NATALIE: Yes, it does make sense. All right, so let's dig into this. First of all, our feelings come from our beliefs or our thoughts. So if I'm feeling guilty in my body, it's not necessarily because I'm doing something wrong. It's because a part of me believes that I have violated some moral code and that I am guilty of that violation. Do we see this?

So I've shared this before, but if I was raised to believe that wearing the color red was sinful and that's the message I heard my entire life, then if one day I decided to rebel and wear the color red, I would very likely struggle with feeling guilty about that even if I had made a conscious choice to reject that belief. If I decided, "No, I don't think that's right — I don't think it is a sin to wear red," there would still be a deeper part of me who is programmed to believe that it was sinful. So that part of me is still going to struggle with guilt.

If part of you believes that the only way to be valuable or to be of worth in this world is to work hard and produce and help people and be generating output all the time, then when you take time out to do other things that are not necessarily producing anything tangible like money or goods or pleasing others or whatever, you'll feel guilty because that's your programming.

Other people can take breaks and enjoy free time and even actually build time into their lifestyle for things like yoga and naps and walks and whatever they love, and they don't feel an ounce of guilt because their belief system might be something like, "When I do those kinds of things, I am producing peace and love and rest in this world. I'm taking care of my body by promoting the cultivation of healthy hormones and a healthy immune system. I'm working to increase my longevity so I can continue to offer my gifts to the world for as long as I can as a healthy human.

I have one life, and my number one job is to steward that life in the most loving, kind, honoring way possible. My job is to set an example of this for others so they can see what is possible for themselves as they learn self-care and self-respect. I do this because the more we care for and respect and grow and develop ourselves and our God-given potential, the more we have to give to others, as well as the more wisdom and experience we have to help them reach their full potential."

Okay, so someone with that mindset could do all the same things that you do and that you feel guilty for, and instead of guilt, someone with that mindset feels amazing. I would like to propose that in the work you do that you described, understanding your

“why” is critical to your deeper success as a human and as a business owner of your particular business. The more you lean into the goodness of caring for your mind, soul, and body, the more effectively and powerfully you will be able to help others do the same in your business.

Now, if you want to do this work with me and others like us, consider joining Flying Free. Just head over to joinflyingfree.com and complete an application. And speaking of Flying Free, in that program, one of our member resources are courses — coursework that we can take. And one of the courses, it's called “Healing Your Relationship with Yourself.” And so someone who was going through that course jumped into our private forum, which is another resource that you get in Flying Free, and asked this question.

And by the way, people who are members of Flying Free can come into the forum and ask me a question twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week if they want to, and tag me if they want to. We also have five other coaches that are in the forum answering questions as well. So if you want that kind of ongoing, everyday help... It's not just the coaches that are answering questions. There are women in that program that have been there for years, and they're also very, very helpful, and they have a lot of good insight. They've already gone through the program, they know what's going on. They can help you with some of your technical questions as well as questions that you have about your life.

But the people over there are extremely supportive. There's probably 70% now... I feel like the participation rate has just increased exponentially over the past couple of years. But about 70% of our members are actively involved in the forum and click over there and read through posts and ask questions or answer questions or give their insights or share their stories, and it's a very warm and loving community.

All right, so here's one of the questions that came in just recently, and I thought I would answer it on the podcast here. So she was going through the course called “Healing Your Relationship With Yourself,” which talks about IFS. It stands for Internal Family Systems. I write about this in my book, *All the Scary Little Gods*. I've talked about it many times on this podcast. But we kind of go into a little bit of an overview of what IFS is and how we can use IFS to help ourselves heal.

So anyway, she had a question about that and this is what she asked: “If I am supposed to welcome, accept, and meet all of my parts with compassion and love because they're all good, how will I see if I'm sinning and need to confess to God a sin and be sorry and repent from that then?”

I know that I have to see the part as being good but not the behavior of that part. But still, this way of approaching this part seems to me as if I just want to heal that part with my love or the love coming from God's image inside of me but don't necessarily want to see it as sin that I have to confess and repent from."

All right, so I see this a lot and I experienced this a lot growing up in this very conservative Christian environment where we learned the importance of confession and repentance. And I'm not saying that's not important. I'm just saying that there's a lot of beating ourselves up and even... I don't know if you've noticed this, but even when you confess and repent, do you feel better after that? Not usually, because there's a part of you that still feels like you're a worthless, dirty, rotten, nasty, horrible sinner person.

Even people who have prayed the prayer a million times and believe they're saved by God and that they're going straight to heaven when they die, they still believe that about themselves, because that's what you're taught. We're taught these contradictory things.

And so I just want to point out, Romans 2:4 says that it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. And repentance is a changing of the mind. So when we are moving towards our parts, the parts inside of us that are riddled with shame and fear, we are simply partnering with the Holy Spirit when we do that because it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

So these parts are riddled with shame and fear due to lies that they were programmed with. But love is what casts out fear. Not shame — love. Love is what sets us free. Jesus Christ came to establish the law of love, which He said that is what it sums up, all of the Law and the Prophets. The Law and the Prophets is all summed up in the Law of Love.

Have you ever felt truly changed within when someone criticizes and berates you for your sin? I want you to think about this. Write it down in your journal. Just say, "Have I ever felt truly changed within when someone criticized or berated me for my sin? Why or why not?" I really challenge you to think about that. Think about the why or why not. I'm not going to answer that question for you. I want you to think about that and process that inside of your own self.

So Coach Barb, who is one of the coaches in Flying Free, and she is a level two trained IFS coach, she wrote this in response: "If my kiddo yells at me, I have a couple of options. I can approach him with judgment — 'You need to respect your mother and not sin against God by yelling at me, etc.' — or I can approach him with, "Hey, what is

going on in your world? Something must be bothering you to have yelled at me like that.”

If I approach him with the first response, I might get some words, but not really a U-turn of him turning inside of himself. If I approach him with the second response of compassion, wanting to get to hear and listen, then we are opening a trusting relationship where there is invitation and love. This is how we want to work with our parts inside of us, not as bullies pointing a finger, but as ourself, our God-image within us, showing compassion and inviting those parts of us into relationship. Internal Family Systems, or IFS, is about our self to part relationship building.”

So how I would interpret that is we are taking leadership of our inner world, of our inner system. And by doing that, part of our leadership inside of ourselves is building those relationships with those different parts of us. And not all of our parts are all shiny and pretty. Some of them have a lot of problems because they've been programmed in a lot of different ways and they've experienced trauma and they have certain beliefs about the world that aren't working for them.

I just want to read an excerpt from the course that I teach in the “Healing Your Relationship with Yourself” class inside of Flying Free: “The spiritualizer part of us” — and by the way, the “spiritualizer part” is a term coined by Jenna Riemersma in her book, *Altogether You*. So I want to give her credit for that. I use that and I talk about that in my book, *All the Scary Little Gods*, but it's a part of us.... Well, actually, I'll just keep reading. I guess it explains it when I read it.

“The spiritualizer part of us is a part that does everything it can to be perfect and to please God. It thinks that it can drum up spirituality by doing all the right things, and it's ready to prove to God and to everyone else that it's got its act together.

The problem is that we have lived most of our lives confusing this part of us with God. And then when we see the fruit of this part's hard work, which is usually shame, judgment, condemnation, anger, and even hate and division, we wonder who in the world God is. And sometimes Christians will walk away from their faith altogether, mistaking God for this burdened part in ourselves or in other people. So here are some distinguishing characteristics of our spiritualizer part.

It's not open to other perspectives. Everything is black and white, right or wrong, us and them, binary thinking. It's threatened by and fearful of those who do not think the same or who do not agree. It judges those who don't follow its manual for life, and it alienates them. It's uncomfortable with and shuts down uncertainty, mystery, and not

knowing all the answers.” Which, by the way, is part of life. “And finally, it shuts down conversations and critical thinking.

Some Christians will never discover the difference between God and their spiritualizer part. Jenna Riemersma in her book, *Altogether You*, points out that there are two main crisis points that come to a person's life that will cause them to be open to exploring the differences, which will then enable them to discover God and be empowered to live a life of Christ-likeness.

One of these crisis points is when we experience doubts about our faith and start asking questions. We may experience what is sometimes been called ‘the dark night of the soul.’ If you were blessed enough to have someone who is accessing their God-image within them, you would have experienced them sitting with you in your doubts, allowing your doubts, and loving you in the midst of them.

Again, you would have experienced them demonstrating curiosity towards you, compassion, courage, connection, clarity, calm, confidence, and creativity.” These are the eight C's of IFS that Richard Schwartz, the founder of IFS, talks about. “Not condemnation. You would have felt closer to God after being with someone like this, not farther away from God.

But if you had encountered someone with their spiritualizer part activated or if your spiritualizer part was activated, then you would have been given Christian clichés and told how and why you must be doing it wrong and you would need to trust God more or spend more time reading the Bible or stop worrying or be more obedient.

You might be told that God is punishing you by withholding His presence due to your sin of doubt or some other sin in your life. And this is how you know the difference between someone's God-image coming through them and someone's spiritualizer part. Jenna says the formula goes like this: thinking right thoughts + doing right things = God showing up in a way that feels good and real and makes everything and everyone better.

But this is transactional theology — I do this and God does that. That is a man-made idea of God. It's basically making God in our own image of how this world works, but that's not how God works. Throughout history this is how humanity has always viewed their gods, whether it's the Greek and Roman gods or the tribal god of Baal or the gods we set up politically in the form of presidents and kings. Yes, we worship those kinds of people.

We do this to please our gods, whatever they may be, and then the gods will come through for us with good crops and healthy babies and happy lives. And sadly, Christians, people who say they follow Christ, we often do the same thing. But God, creator God, He actually operates on a completely different level. Experiencing how this transactional type of theology doesn't actually work wakes us up to explore who God really is rather than who we think He should be.

The second crisis point that many people come up against that has the potential to empower them to heal their spiritualizer part and access the true God-image within them is suffering. Who do you want to be around when your child commits suicide or when your daughter is addicted to drugs or when you get breast cancer or when your husband is forcing you to have sex or when your church excommunicates you?

Do you want to be around someone's spiritualizer part, judging and condemning and offering clichés and lectures and rules? Or do you want to be with someone who will see you and know you and love you and offer you space for your grief and your anger and your sadness and your own choice? Which one will draw you in and create deep healing and life-giving change in your being? Which one will turn you away and create deep wounds of disconnection and shame?

This is how you can know if a church is healthy, if a business is healthy, if a school is healthy, if a country is healthy, if an individual is healthy, if a pastor is healthy, if a friend is healthy, to the degree that they are in alignment with the spirit of God within them or to their own spiritualizer part within them who's pretending to be God."

So back to the person in the forum and their question about how we should think about confession and repentance. She was concerned that just loving and moving toward a darker part of us with compassion and curiosity would enable that part to continue to do harmful things. And this is why so many of us have this spiritualizer part that believes it needs to try to make our darker parts feel terrible for the way they're showing up in our lives so that they repent and change.

Let me give you an example so we all know what this actually looks like. I have a younger part of me that freaks out when it thinks someone's taking advantage of me. Even if adult me understands that the other person wasn't trying to actually take advantage of me, this part of me thinks they are.

Now, other parts of me will hold this part in check for the most part. But on occasion, someone will do something that feels really unfair and unjust, like, let's just say one of my kids tells me they need something for school the night before they need it. And I

had a bad day, I was planning to go to bed early, but now I have to make a Target run.

This part of me might freak out, have an edge to my tone, and purse my lips and say, "Why do you always do this to me? I'm not your servant. Show some consideration," and then my child slinks away in shame. And then another judgy part of me comes online and says, "Why did you get so impatient? She's just a kid. Kids do this kind of thing, and nobody's trying to put you out. Chill out. You're so selfish. Be a good mom." And then another part of me chimes in, "I'm a terrible mom! I repent in sackcloth and ashes! Oh, God, help me! I'm such a horrible person! I'll never change! I'll always be selfish and rude!"

Do you see the internal mess inside? All of that criticism and judgment and resistance, it gets me nowhere. We think that if we feel terrible enough, then we will repent and never be impatient again, even though we have gone through this a time or 8,497.

But what if, just what if, we did it differently? What if instead of looking at all these parts inside freaking out and judging them and yelling at them to repent, what if we got curious about why they think we are getting taken advantage of? "I wonder what that's about. Where does that belief come from? And can I find some compassion within the God-image inside of me, God's image which lives inside of me, to move toward those parts and hear them out? Can I partner with God to move towards these parts with love and compassion and hear them?"

What happens if I do this, oddly enough, is those parts begin to change their minds about what they believe. They begin to repent. Repenting, meaning, changing their minds. We will never change our behavior until we change our mind about something. It starts there, in our beliefs and our programming. When these darker parts of us change their minds because the kindness of God moves toward them within us, they begin to change the way they show up in our lives. Instead of panicking and pushing my kids away, they begin to move toward my child and hold space for them to be a kid.

And also, they begin to think creatively about how to establish my own boundaries around my time and let my kids know in advance what those boundaries are. Because honestly, if I had a clear boundary that I don't shop for a child the night before a project, then my kids would learn how to ask me sooner. And I can calmly say, "I am so sorry that you chose to wait until the last minute, but you know that I don't go shopping the night before for last-minute project materials. You'll have to turn in your project late or get a bad grade or something, but next time, be sure to ask me sooner." And this is how my kids learn to be responsible humans as well, and nobody has to get upset or freak out. Well, my child might freak out at that point, but that's their adventure to go

on.

So beautiful butterflies, do you want to learn more? Let's dig into these kinds of things together in Flying Free. I just got another announcement from another program person/coaching person to get in on her coaching intensive for \$500. My \$500 would get me two hours of this person's time.

And you could do that, or you could spend \$290 and get an entire year of weekly group coaching, live online gatherings, courses, workshops, a private forum to work through your questions and issues, and so much more. We would be learning these things together, and you'd be able to practice them in your life and change your life. I will always keep Flying Free dirt cheap so as many of you can join as possible.

If you can't let your payment be seen by your husband and if you also have a friend or a family member who's willing to sponsor you, you can have them send us an email to communitysupport@flyingfreenow.com and we can get them set up so that they can purchase a one-year membership for you and then give you a code so that you can go in then and register for free using that code.

Now, maybe you're okay with spending money and maybe you have your own account or whatever, but \$290, that can be a lot for some people. So we do offer a monthly version of it as well where you pay \$29 a month, and then it's not taking quite so much out of your account each month.

Just go to joinflyingfree.com to learn more. All the details, all of the information that you need to make a good decision for yourself are over there on that page, joinflyingfree.com, and you will have a chance to complete an application and join us.