

HARD RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR PARENTS AND OUR ADULT KIDS

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 288 of the Flying Free Podcast. I don't know if you can tell, but I have a cold. I don't get sick very often. I feel like I was sick all the time as a mother when I had a lot of kids at home. I still do have a lot of kids at home, I guess, but when I had even more.

But now I've got grandkids, and so I feel like I pick up some of the things that they get. A couple of weeks ago, the triplets, who just turned one, by the way, they were all sick a couple of weeks ago and I went to see them and I thought, "Ah, I never get sick. I'll be fine." But I ended up getting whatever it was that they had. And then I was just getting done with that last week, and then my daughter graduated and we had an open house. And then I saw my other grandbaby and she was sick. And I was thinking, "Oh, she probably has what the triplets had." But I think not. I think she had something completely different because now I have a brand new thing.

So anyway, I'm kind of in the thick of it, but I do need to record this. I was going to record a different podcast with a guest today, and that got canceled at the last minute. So I scrambled to put together something different for you, and I decided to do another kind of a mishmash of things I've been thinking about and listening to and reading here in June 2024. And I think you're going to be really interested in some of these things, especially if you are a parent.

So first of all, my husband and I went to this personality profiling conference a couple weeks ago in Seattle through the Personality Hacker website. It's personalityhacker.com. They have an amazing podcast, which I highly recommend. I'm going to talk about that in a minute.

But anyway, we did a deep dive into the eight cognitive functions. We learned a lot about each other, and now we have sort of a beginner's knowledge of how to profile people in order to understand them better. I think we just scratched the surface.

Believe it or not, this training was for six days from 9:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night. Very, very intense. So it was great for my husband because he manages a lot of people at work. It was great for me because I have a big family with lots of moving parts, plus I do a lot of coaching and it's always good, I think, to get better at understanding what makes people tick and how to motivate them to get from point A to point B. And I try to do trainings every year — at least two or three.

So anyway, this was run by extroverts. Extroverts run this thing. All of the extroverts were running around like chickens with their heads cut off, all excited and happy and full of energy. And at the end of the day, they'd all just be so excited and whatever, and Tom and I were just like, "Oh my gosh." We were dying. At the end of every day, dying, and we were absolutely wiped out when it was over. I don't know if I can ever do something like that again, but anyway.

The Personality Hacker has an awesome podcast that I love. It's just called Personality Hacker Podcast, I think. It's got hundreds of episodes, and I've only listened to a fraction of them. But I've got a friend who is systematically going through all of them. She's a total die-hard Personality Hacker fan, and she heard one that she loved, which sometimes she'll do this. She'll hear one she loves, and then she'll tell me that I just have to go and listen to it.

Well, this one, I went and listened to it, and oh my word. It's Episodes 243 and 244, "Making Peace With Your Parents" parts 1 and 2. So if you're listening to this and you've had issues with your parents or maybe you're a parent who has had issues with your adult kids, I cannot recommend these episodes enough. It is not their typical type of episode, okay? It's very different. It was actually recorded in 2018, so several years ago, but Antonia, who's one of the two hosts of this show, she had just come back from attempting to visit her parents.

Now, Antonia was raised in a cult and she got out, I think when she was in her 20s, but her parents are still in the cult. Anyway, they had cut her off for many years after she left, but at the time of this recording that she did in 2018, she had been able to make some inroads with them. And then when her dad had a stroke, she went to see them.

Now, without telling you the details about what happened, because you really need to listen to this story as she tells it — she tells a really good story — I'm going to tell you that they basically cut her off again in spite of her efforts to show them love and support and gratitude. She really went into it just with so much gratitude. And it was just mind-boggling how it ended up turning out. But her story just made my jaw drop maybe because I can relate to some of it with my own family of origin, and mainly because of the bizarre disconnect between reality and what these people actually believe.

But I wrote down one of the things that Antonia talked about toward the end of these episodes because it was so powerful. Now, I can't remember her exact words, how she got it started, but she was talking about how a well-crafted meme is a powerful thing. And I think what she meant by that is a meme — like a belief, like a sound bite that you

believe and you're going to die for it. That's the hill you're gonna die on.

Here's what she said. This is a quote: "I have a newfound respect. This is a formidable opponent. These memes are formidable. People live and die for them." And then her husband broke in and said, "Wars are fought over memes," meaning beliefs, okay? "Who did I think I was? I was going to waltz in there with all my tools and understanding and all the development work I've done and somehow take this meme on toe to toe and win? I think that was some hubris on my part."

Okay, this is the part that I just thought was mind-blowing. It was a big light bulb moment for me. She said this: "Memes will supplant biological love. The biological love that a parent has for their child, a really well-crafted meme will interrupt that. It will interrupt some of the deepest elements of human interaction. It's appealing to something even deeper than the lizard brain wiring toward your child. Somehow it's tapping into something more profound for people, which is often very spiritual, quite frankly. It transcends that lizard brain. It's almost a transcendent framework. At least, that's how it's presented often."

Okay, that's the end of the quote. And what I say to that is yes, that supposedly transcendent meme or belief is very religious, often. Think about all the world religions that revolved around human sacrifice. It was a serious and even expected thing back in Bible times with some of the cultures. That's why Abram didn't blink when God told him to sacrifice Isaac. That was like, "Well, sure. You know, the gods expect these kinds of sacrifices now and again. So I guess that's what I've got to do now." Religion can get people so devoted that they are willing to sacrifice their own children.

I've seen this over and over, and so have you. Of course, we Christians don't kill our children for God. We just reject and abandon them if they don't buy into our beliefs about God. We are so much like the god we worship, and I put that god in with a small "g," that we must do as we believe that he does: control, manipulate, threaten, coerce, demand, and shun.

Jesus tried to show us how the Creator God wasn't like that, but you know what? We didn't listen. And even so-called Christians have been killing Creator God's messengers ever since, just as in all of history. You guys, this is why I felt compelled to write *All the Scary Little Gods*. This at its core is the message of that book. It shows the fruit of this decoy type of Christianity and then offers some hope in the darkness.

So anyway, when I heard this episode, I thought about my own family of origin, but I also thought about my own parenting. How do I want to parent my adult kids? When

they come to express gratefulness and love, who do I want to be for them? And when they come to express anger and pain, who do I want to be for them?

My adult kids, not all of them are living their lives the way that I dreamed that they would. And so who do I want to be in light of that fact? How do I want to show up like Jesus Christ, who I follow in that relationship? Jesus Christ didn't shun anybody. Well, He had hard words for the religious people, but not for everyone else.

Which reminds me, in the Flying Free private forum, a mom wrote about how her teenager was lying about homework and vaping. And this relates, okay? So this mother was obviously and understandably upset, afraid, angry — parts of her were even resentful. She had done her best to be the best mother that she could be, and this child wasn't turning out the way she had hoped. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever looked in fear at your kids and gone, "Oh my gosh, I have no control over these hooligans, and they're all going to hell in a handbasket. And all he did was try to homeschool them for twenty years and give them my very best"?

So anyway, this mother wondered how she could stop her child from doing these things but also how to choose herself. The mother was worrying, "How do I choose myself?" Because in Flying Free, we talk a lot about the importance of working on our own healing as a priority, because it's hard to be a mom and be helping our kids when our own inner parts are hurting and dysregulated so much of the time. So I think this is what she meant when she said, "How do I choose myself?"

So I just want to share with you a kind of a paraphrase of what I wrote to her in our forum. And by the way, this is what I do each day. I get into the forum and I read through people's posts, and we have a lot of other coaches in the forum that are also answering people's questions and helping. And then also the women in the forum are amazing and so full of a lot of experience and wisdom, and they're all helping each other. But I get in there and I answer questions every day as well.

And so this is what I wrote to her: Choosing yourself is to choose to help your children too. It's not selfish. Because if you think about it, if we're not regulating ourselves, that's not helping our kids. It's actually modeling for them what being adult is all about, which is more out-of-control behavior, right? I mean, here our kids are out of control and they were like, "How do I get them in control?" but then we're out of control in trying to get them in control. Isn't that ironic how that happens?

That's because we haven't done our healing work. And trust me, we all will be always doing our healing work. I am always doing my healing work. I don't always show up in

the best way as a parent, but I'm working on it and I'm doing better than I was. And I think we have to give ourselves that as well. But anyway, accepting where we are in our healing process helps us accept where other people are as well. And we expect this to be a process, not a final product for both us and for them. We're not looking for this perfect little robot person to spit out at the other end of our healing. Healing is an ongoing thing. It is for us and it is for our kids.

Your belief is that your child shouldn't be who they are, it shouldn't be that way, and that makes you angry. Resisting reality is exhausting and maddening, and it doesn't help us and it doesn't help the ones we love.

So your child doesn't do homework and your child vapes. Of course, we care about that, but why do we need to resist it or get angry about it? What if we allow the teen to learn about some consequences in the way that they choose to learn? A lot of our teens choose to learn things the hard way. But when I think back on my life, I had to learn some things the hard way myself. And so I think that's part of life.

When my daughter who was diagnosed with BPD, when she was vaping and failing 11th grade, she didn't have to lie to me. You know why? Because I wasn't mad about it. I told her I was worried for her health and her future but that also I wasn't able to control what she did and that the consequences would come naturally at a later date all on their own.

So do you see this? I don't think she was afraid that I was going to have a cow because she knew that I would just be like, "Okay, I guess if that's what you're going to do, that's what you're going to do. You're seventeen years old — almost eighteen. There's not a whole lot I can do at this point."

Now, the school also called me to tell me that she was failing. I don't know what they thought I was going to do with this child, but you know what I told them? I said, "You know what? If she decides she wants to graduate or that she doesn't want to graduate and she wants to fail, I can't force her." I'm not going to sit and force her to do her homework. I'm not going to stand over her with a little whip and make sure she does her homework.

Because here's the bottom line: I'm okay if she never graduates. If she doesn't graduate, that doesn't make her a better person or a worse person. It just makes her a person who didn't graduate. She'll figure it out. There are lots of people in the world that never graduated high school and they end up doing just fine. And then I told her, "Hey, I'm fine. If you don't graduate, I love you, and you're old enough to decide if you

want to graduate or not. I know you can, you're smart, you can do it if you want to, but if you don't want to, okay."

Well, guess what? She took summer school that year and she caught up, and I didn't have to do a thing. Now, not every kid's gonna do that, but if she had dropped out, I truly would have been fine with it. I had already thought through the whole thing and I had come to terms with it and decided that it's not my life, it's her life. But if I get angry about it, that's not gonna change anything anyway. All it's gonna do is push her further away, I give my power away, and then also I forfeit any influence that I might have in her life because I lose the relationship.

So anyway, she's twenty now. She still vapes. She smokes weed too. And we have a great relationship. And guess who she calls when she needs advice or support? Guess who she doesn't have to lie to? I have influence on her life, but I really believe it's because I've chosen to work on me and my own thoughts and beliefs about things and my own emotional regulation. And then I give her freedom to work on herself however she chooses to. And sometimes that work comes together for both of us in amazing conversations and connections. I helped her a lot when she was younger, and I'll get to that in just a minute.

So I'm not saying, "Just let your kids go and you don't have to do anything to help them." Please don't say that I would ever say that because I would never, ever say that. But we have to remember that Jesus never forced anyone to live a certain way or do things "God's way." The father of the prodigal son never forced his son to be a good boy, and God never forces us to be what He hopes that we will be for our own sake, by the way, not for His sake.

God loves us just the way we are. He loves us whether we are failing, vaping, smoking, having sex, cutting, purging, yelling, swearing, all the things. Our opportunity is to lean into that love from our Creator and then learn how to love ourselves the way our Creator loves us. And then what follows is that we learn how to love others that way, but it starts by learning that process of love within ourselves.

Now this method, the love method, it doesn't look nice and neat, and it really doesn't please those who want the world to feel perfect in order for them to feel like they can be regulated. It's very messy. It's very scary because it lets go and it trusts in the long game that love will eventually win. Not today, not tomorrow, maybe not ever here on earth, but one day.

But what's the alternative? Controlling people? That never works. I mean, yeah, it can

work for a short amount of time, but think about Antonia. Her parents tried to control her and tried to keep her in a cult, but eventually she grew up and learned, "I don't want to be in a cult. I choose not to do that." So they lost her anyway. Forcing people to be perfect and shaming them when they're not, does that work? Nope. That doesn't work. Not long-term. But love over the long haul results in healing and then healing, as we heal, that leads to changed behavior, behavior that is more protective of our bodies and our minds.

So this is what I'm leaning into for myself and for my adult daughter. And it's available to you as well. Now, that said, we still have children, possibly, you still have children who are minors in our custody and we want to give them all the opportunities for help that we can. That is our responsibility as a parent.

These are some things that I did for my daughter: County Mental Health Services, medication, therapy — week after week, month after month, year after year. Day treatment if it's available, a full psych workup. Involve the police if there's violence. Admit a teen to a hospital if there are suicidal issues.

There are certain things we can do in light of the facts if we are willing to lean into those facts and assess reality. Assess where you do have control and where you do not have control and what is critically important — which is their life — and what is not critically important — their homework, for example — and then make decisions accordingly.

And also their age is going to come into play, too. You might respond differently with a 12-year-old, for example, for sure than you would with a 17-year-old who's going to be 18 in a few months. Now, I know I talk about religion a lot, and some people have had a problem with that, and they're like, "Well, but what about the secular world? It's the same way out there," and you're right. It is the same way out there. It's the same way across the whole board. It's just that my focus is on what happens inside of religion because that is my lived experience and the lived experience of the women I'm working with.

And quite frankly, although it doesn't shock me that this is happening out in the world out there, the reason why it galls me so much about religion is because people who are caught up in religion and in Christianity specifically, because that's my background, claim to be different. And they're not. They're not different. That's why I call it out. I just call a spade a spade. No, you're not different at all. You're just exactly the same. In fact, you're worse because you say you're better. You're worse because you say you have the answers. But you don't. You don't have the answers, and you pretend that you do. And that is hypocrisy. And that actually drives people away from Creator God, not

towards Creator God, so thank you very much.

All right. We're just finishing up our first-ever coaching intensive. I've never done this before, but I took twelve women who wanted to go deeper with me and we spent twelve weeks together learning about my own method of healing using kind of a combination of IFS and then a cognitive behavioral tool. Now, if you get my book, *All the Scary Little Gods*, you can actually see this type of healing that I use on myself, you can kind of see it unfold in the story.

But anyway, every week we got together for ninety minutes and we spent the first half hour where I would teach them different things about my method and we would do some exercises. Not physical exercises. We would do exercises like IFS and cognitive behavioral therapy exercises. And then I would coach two of them each week in the group. So each woman got two thirty-minute coaching sessions, but they also got in on twenty-two other coaching sessions where we practiced the things I taught them. So that's a lot of coaching, and it was pretty intense. That's why I called it a coaching intensive.

Anyway, here's what a couple of people have said about it. One said, "The concentrated time focusing on IFS, participating in the coaching, as well as listening to the other women being coached and being able to encourage those coached in the chat and the homework is all such a deep, rich experience. Each week I'm gaining more and more." And another woman wrote, "I believe what I'm gleaning from this intensive is invaluable and will be useful going forward for the rest of my days."

Another woman wrote, "It helps to have consistent coaching on IFS and thoughts that our parts hold. We get to participate, but we also learn by seeing others doing it. It feels very supportive to be in the group." And then one final one. A woman wrote, "I have found other programs to be mostly informational, where yours are mostly transformational."

So I really appreciated those thoughts and those words and I'm really glad because I don't want my programs to be just a bunch of information thrown at you. I want my programs to be a catalyst for incredible transformation. For a metamorphosis, really, which is why I love the butterfly analogy.

I only opened up this opportunity to women who are inside of the Flying Free or Flying Higher programs. It filled up almost immediately. It now has a lengthy waiting list. I'm going to do another one in September. I think I'm going to do a coaching intensive around my book *Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage* as well. So if you're

part of my membership community and you're interested in being part of that, keep your eyes open for that opportunity.

You can even send me an email and tell me you want to be on the waiting list. Anyone who requests to be on a waiting list, I'll give you first dibs to sign up before I open it up to anybody else, but you have to take the initiative and ask to be on that waiting list. So there would be two waiting lists. One is the coaching intensive, the IFS coaching intensive, and the other one is the Is It Me? coaching intensive.

So if you're not in Flying Free, you can join us when you're ready. It's only \$29 a month or \$290 a year. And many women have told me they've made more progress by doing that program than they have by doing therapy for several years, at a fraction of the cost. I mean, come on — \$290 a year? I used to pay \$150 for a therapy session. That's two therapy sessions, okay?

Don't get me wrong, there are incredible therapists out there. I know some. I didn't even have a therapist, though. Remember, I had a Bible counselor. Actually several, but this one, I saw her for probably a year and a half. And she was a... What was she called? A pastoral counselor, I think — whatever in the world that means — but she charged \$150 an hour and it was basically her listening to me and her going, "Yeah, I believe you, I believe you, I believe you," And then she betrayed me at the very end. So much for pastoral counseling, right?

Anyway, \$290 for a whole year. And I promise you, you will get your money's worth and then some, and don't hesitate to learn more about this program. All the information is over at joinflyingfree.com. All the FAQs, there's lots of reviews over there. And you can also complete your application over there.

So speaking of joining, we are getting ready for our annual Butterfly Bootcamp in October — October 4th and 5th. It's only available to members or alumni of Flying Free and Flying Higher. So there are going to be five teaching sessions, then we're going to break down into groups where you get to process the sessions with women who are in the same stage of their relationship as you are. So whether that's you're staying in your relationship, you're separating, maybe you're in the process of divorcing, maybe you're newly divorced, maybe you've been divorced for more than two years, you'll be put into a group with women who are in that same stage as you are.

There's going to be prizes like free private coaching from different coaches inside of our program. They're donating prizes like that. Amazon gift cards. Someone's going to win a free year of Flying Free. Someone's going to win a free year of Flying Higher. All ticket

holders from the United States are going to receive a beautiful free notebook and stickers in the mail.

You can't purchase a ticket unless you are a member or an alumni, so it's another good reason to join us. We do this every year. It's an annual thing, and next year we're going to do it live. It's going to be a live event next year, and this year it's going to be virtual. But if you want to come in and do this transformational work inside of our very supportive, educational, loving community of survivors and coaches who have all been exactly where you are today, just head over to joinflyingfree.com to get started. See you next week.