

PARALLEL PARENTING PART TWO

NATALIE: Welcome to episode 312 of the Flying Free podcast, where we continue our discussion on parallel parenting. Last week we had a big, introduction, and talked about what parallel parenting is and isn't. This week we're going to get into questions that people had.

In the private Flying Free and Flying Higher forum, called the Kaleidoscope, people dropped all their questions about parallel parenting.

There were a lot. So we're going to dig into them today and we're going to just get right into it now because we already had our introduction. I am with Diana Swillinger. Why don't you tell everybody who you are, what you do. I didn't say any of that in the last one.

DIANA: I'm Diana Swillinger. I'm a coach in the Flying Free Kaleidoscope, which I love being a part of. Before that, I was a member in the Flying Free Kaleidoscope. And before that I have been a life coach for almost eight years now while I was married and after I was divorced.

An interesting journey for me that I was doing all this self growth and then even helping other people while I was still married and decided to get divorced. I still do it today. I have a life coaching business and a life coach certification program to help other people like me. I focus on mind renewal, which you're going to hear every time I talk. I'm almost always talking about what's the perspective? How are we thinking about this? Is that word helpful? What if we had a different word? I'm such a nerd in that space. So I consider my coaching mind renewal coaching and it is transformational.

NATALIE: It is. She's an excellent coach and she creates excellent coaches. What is your website?

DIANA: The best one. I love to send people to the one related to my podcast because you can get offerings with me and connect with me. Latest podcast episode free classes, free coaching call. It's at RYMpodcast.com. RYM for Renew Your Mind.

NATALIE: Renew Your Mind, and that's her podcast. If you're listening to this podcast, you might wanna go check hers out Renew Your Mind Podcast with Diana Swillinger. All right, Diana, are you ready? Diana and I are real life friends, and we keep in contact with each other every week. Not every day, sometimes it feels like every day. Okay here we go. How can we navigate a much needed parallel parenting style while also not falling

into the alienation trap?

DIANA: I would just say sometimes I have quick answers and then we got to dissect it. To parallel parent and not fall in the alienation trap, don't disparage their dad.

Don't say derogatory, put down blaming statements about their dad. You can say truth, but it doesn't have to be in a way that diminishes them as a human being, even if inside you're thinking it, feeling it, and you really want to say it. If you don't want to step into alienation, then just don't say anything derogatory. Just speak truth.

NATALIE: Alienation would be like trying to get your kids to not want to be with their dad and not enjoy their dad. That is alienation.

DIANA: Yes, so if the kids come home and say: "Dad told me to sweep the kitchen and then he yelled at me for not doing it right and I felt terrible." Alienation might sound like, "I can't believe your dad did that". That is way out of line. There is something wrong with him and he should not treat you like that. You shouldn't have a dad like that."

"Something's wrong with him. He's not a good person for talking to that way. That would get into the alienation space. Speaking truth without alienation might sound: "I'm really sorry that happened to you. "I don't think it's fun to get yelled at and that happened to you.", "Oh, that makes me feel sad." "How does that make you feel? What was that like for you?"

NATALIE: Yeah, it's focusing on them and how that interaction made them feel. And you know what I love about that too, is that they're going to go out and meet other people who do things like that to them. This actually gives them a tool for processing through the pain of, when someone treats us like that, it hurts. It doesn't feel good. And how do we want to process through that pain so we can move forward?

DIANA: Thinking of different ages of kids, if the example I just gave, "That makes me feel sad that happened to you. How do you feel about it?" - might be good for younger kids, for older kids, if that happened to a 14, 15-year-old, I might say something like, "What do you think was going on for your dad?"

"What was going on inside of him that he yelled?" Maybe even start introducing them to the idea. We're not disparaging dad. We're not putting him down, but, if the teenager doesn't come up with it, you might say, huh, in some ways it makes me think maybe he wasn't regulating his emotions.

Cause sometimes when we explode, we're not managing whatever's going on inside of us and our emotions aren't regulated. They get out of control. What do you think? Do you think that was happening? No disparaging, no alienation, but calling out truth and helping to teach our kids and give them more awareness.

And then maybe the discussion goes into equipping for next time that happens. What do you want to think? Or is there something you want to do? And it's not that we'd have the right answers for all of that, but we can explore possibilities with them and teach them.

NATALIE: The thing I love about that is that it makes dad's emotional reaction about what's going on internally for dad and not about the child. Sometimes we can't always show up in a way that's going to mitigate someone else's big emotional reaction. We can do our best, but if they're going to have an emotional reaction, that's sometimes about them and what's going on for them. It has nothing to do with us at all. Okay. So here's another one.

I think the thing that was interesting to me about that question was the idea that parallel parenting borderlines on alienating.

DIANA: If we called it counter parenting, remember last episode we talked about some people call it counter parenting. This is exactly why I wouldn't use that term.

Because that implies you got to fight against, push back, call out problems. And I think parallel parenting is a nod to we can go alongside with the two roads next to each other, right? There's different trees. One's the freeway, one's the frontage road. Different things are happening. We don't have to combat it. We can come alongside our children in their growing up experience. And be someone who's encouraging, supporting, teaching. And you might need to advocate still. And maybe that's where this question was going. How do I advocate for something my child needs without Alienating.

NATALIE: Oh, we're gonna get to more questions like that, actually. All right.

What can we do when we sense one or more of our children is not comfortable with the other parent, but they're too afraid to voice their true feelings? And how to navigate children who do not want to visit the other parents in a way that supports their truth and concerns.

But you're still sending them into the other parent's care. And then related, what to do

when a child refuses to visit the other parent. There's a lot there, but I combined some different questions that were all similar. Kids who are afraid of the other parent, but they don't really know why. They don't know how to say, they either don't want to say it, or they don't know how to say it.

They don't want to go to the other parent's house. Older kids might even just straight out refuse. And then also she touched on sending them. She made it seem like, there's a little bit of emotion about and now we're just sending them into that other person's care.

DIANA: Yeah, when you know they don't want to go, but you have to do it. What are your thoughts on that? The idea of sending them when they don't want to go, you're going to hear, I'm a broken record sometimes, I love speaking truth.

Okay, my dear one, I know that you don't want to go. Here's what happens in our country when parents are no longer married. We have a legal system, the court, there's a judge, and they approve papers that the parents agreed on. You just have to spend time with both parents.

It's what happens in the United States. Because this is the legal arrangement, it's like when you're driving down a road and it's 75, you can't go 85 here, it's 75. We're like, okay, that's what I have to do. With the parenting agreement, this is what it says. You go to your dad's every other weekend and it's like the speed limit.

It's just what we have to do. I'm sorry that you have to do something you don't want. This isn't a great arrangement for you and your needs are right now. What can I do to help? Depending on the age of the child, you might have a whole bunch of different resources.

So this wasn't after divorce, but when I would travel, when my husband was still at home, but my daughter was always like, don't go. I would take one of her stuffed animals that I bought for her and I would hug it for one or two minutes in front of her and kiss it and say, I'm putting my love in, I'm putting all my love in it and give that to her before I would leave for my trip.

I did that for many years. And I would imagine something like that could work what would work with your child to help encourage them give them a tool, give them a stuffed animal, do you have any other ideas on that one?

NATALIE: No, I didn't. I never did anything like that, but I love that. That is so sweet.

DIANA: How did you send your kids off when they didn't want to go? Cause I know that's happened.

NATALIE: Yeah, I would just tell them it's, I didn't go into all the detail about the law and everything.

DIANA: Well, you could.

NATALIE: I actually love that too. I mean, that's not true though. Cause I guess we'll see. I think because we were separated for so long before the divorce was final, the kids had gotten used to, we spend time at dad's house. Plus they weren't really afraid to be with their dad. Their dad was fun. He didn't have them for very much of the time when we were separated and he was a fun dad.

So when they went to see dad, they got to swim in the swimming pool at his apartment. They got to have fun. And he always was and is a fun dad. He likes to do fun things with his kids. So they weren't scared of him in that way. He did play favorites. Some kids struggled more than others because he tended to be critical of some kids that annoyed him.

We all have kids that rub us the wrong way. Different personalities rub parents the wrong way. But the ones that rubbed him the wrong way, he would get really annoyed with them and be really critical of them. Those are the kids that didn't want to go because they didn't necessarily feel loved and accepted.

The interesting thing is that as they've gotten older, we're seven years out from the finalization of our divorce and 11 years out from not living together anymore. That's a long time.

Over that time, as the kids have aged, they've just said, I'm not going. When my daughter turned 13, she's I'm not going over there anymore. I just said, okay, let's try it and see what happens. He's not necessarily a fighter in that way. So nothing happened. So she just didn't ever go over there anymore.

DIANA: Yeah, that happened growing up. My sister did that when she became a teenager because she had a lot more struggles with my dad with her being, behind in school and things like that, because I mentioned on the last episode, she had developmental delays from having meningitis as a baby.

He would really push her because he was success oriented and really believed in her

rehabilitation, which is great, but it was way too pushy for her. By the time she felt strong enough to voice it, she would say, I don't want to go. And she only went sometimes then. And my dad didn't fight it.

My mom didn't fight it. They let her. This is where I think last episode, we mentioned the profiling course. This is the divorce course in Flying Free. Some of us can say my child doesn't want to go, and do nothing about it, and what are they going to do?

Profile your guy, or the person, whatever you want to call him, some of them would be like, you don't follow the court order, I'm taking you back to court. If you've got one of those people that loves hiring lawyers and taking you back to court, you're going to approach it differently from somebody whose ex-husband isn't going to really do anything about it. You've got to know who you're dealing with.

NATALIE: I know people whose husbands love to take their ex-wives back to court. Just for the fun of it. So in that case, you'd have to really toe the line.

Although sometimes that can turn in your favor because if the court sees that they keep bringing you back, if you're the innocent little kindergarten teacher, if you have that persona in court. Tina Swithin teaches, the courts could potentially be biased towards you and against him because he seems contentious and unwilling to co-parent. They want you to co parent, The court's always going to talk about, you need to co parent, get along. if you appear as if you're trying to do that and he appears like he's not trying to do that, Eventually, they might just say, yeah, I can see why your 16-year-old doesn't want to go back. That's fine. He doesn't have to go back anymore.

DIANA: Yeah, you've mentioned on past podcasts and in the divorce course in which I'll keep mentioning because it's so useful in Flying Free where you use things like, I don't know why my child doesn't want to go there.

And I'm not sure how I'm supposed to force my child to do something against their will. And I'm really puzzled about this. we act like I really want to make it work. But I don't understand. maybe you can do that with their dad too. He comes to pick him up and unless you want to pick her up and put her in the car, I don't know what to do. She just says, she's not going to go.

NATALIE: When we're talking about a seven year old, you really need to get them out there into the car because you're going to get in trouble, but when you're talking about a 14 year old, 15 year old, 16 year old.

That can articulate, I don't want to go over there for really valid reasons, obviously, if they're saying I don't want to go over there because dad makes me do my homework, no, the court's just going to go, okay, that's not, but if they don't want to go over there because what would be a valid reason?

Because dad's always screaming at them Putting them in their bedroom and locking the door all the time not letting them come out or that dad doesn't feed them, only gives them macaroni and cheese for dinner and never feeds them anything else. Those might be things that a court might go, okay maybe they don't have a bed. Maybe they're sleeping on the floor or whatever.

DIANA: If you do have some serious concerns, you can always talk to Child Protective Services or Social Services and educate yourself and learn.

And the other thing you can educate yourself on is in your state. This isn't going to be for the little ones. In your state, I think some states are as young as 14 years old they let the child. In Wisconsin, it's 18. If you're in a state where it's 14, by the time your child turns 14, he's not going to have any grounds going back to court to try to force your child to see him anyway.

If that child is 14 in that state, they're just going to have the child talk to a guardian or the judge, and they're going to do what the child wants when they hit that age. So know what the age is in your state as well.

NATALIE: You can Google that if you don't know. So how to talk to children about dangers of keeping secrets for the other parent. About abusive behavior that happens under their care. I went to the library and got a bunch of books for kids. There's picture books about everything.

If you Google picture books to read to my kids about sexual abuse, like good touch, bad touch. There's Christian versions of those books and then secular versions you go to your library or do an intra library loan and check those books out and start reading.

I read books about that to my kids. I read books about divorce, about going back to mommy and daddy's house. I try to, get it into their conscious thinking that these are things that can happen. And here's what to do in these situations. Especially the ones about, going to dad's house, going to mom's house, that kind of normalizes that. And they just go, Oh, that wasn't normal before, but it's normal now.

DIANA: Sometimes getting a psychologist or a therapist involved could be helpful too,

because if a child, the children do, coming from a divorced home I did worry about what one parent would think about the other parent, and I didn't want them to think anything negative about the other parent.

So I didn't have the kind of abuse that we're talking about in this question, what their or dangerous situations a person would be. Considering, but even without that, I was always very thoughtful about it. Some kids might not want to say something that might make their parent look bad in the other parent's eyes and are very sensitive to it.

They don't want to say to the other parent, but perhaps if a psychologist or a therapist was involved, that would be a safe place for them to talk about things. you could partner with the therapist and ask them to help educate your child on when do you speak up? What kind of things are dangerous?

If your child does share things with you that you think are dangerous behavior, log the instances on this date, at this time, my child reported XYZ, in case that kind of thing escalates and you need to contact Child Protective Services, also known as CPS, law enforcement,

NATALIE: Yeah, and sometimes therapists too are mandated reporters, the two times that my ex-husband was reported to CPS were not by me, they were by two completely different therapists. it is good to have a therapist working with your children when they're going through all of this especially if you.

DIANA: It is, but especially if you suspect dangerous behaviors happening at the other house.

NATALIE: For younger kids, they can do things like play therapy. Things that seem benign that the child will tell what's going on in different ways that are easier for the child to say through play rather than just straight out being able to try to use words to say things like that.

It would be helpful to know how to discuss with my children the different rules and expectations they have at their dad's house for when a conversation needs more than, that's just how you do it at dad's house. And this is just how we do it at mom's house.

DIANA: I think that's fine most of the time. Again, here's my broken record. You can go back to saying truth. at your dad's house, doesn't see a problem with letting you have macaroni and cheese for three meals a day. And that's what he believes.

I look at things like the food pyramid nutritional value and getting vitamins and that's what I do. At your dad's house, he doesn't care if people argue, he thinks it's fine. At my house, I believe in different communication styles that psychologists have shown are more helpful to building good relationships and resolving problems. that's why I do it differently. So just add the truthful things you're aware of, especially the reasons for why you're doing it.

We're going to help our children grow and learn things have more discipline or take on responsibility better. So let's tell them, we think that even the little ones don't understand. You can say to a four year old, listen broccoli helps your muscles grow better than just macaroni and cheese, chicken helps your muscles too. tell them in language that's appropriate for them, whatever the situation is.

NATALIE: Yeah. And also they can watch Magic School Bus and learn those things that way too. I think this is a great springboard for conversations with our kids about the differences in families. And how people do things you've got your home and dad's home that's only two of probably, five billion different ways to run a household in the world.

You get to experience two ways and when you get married and have children you'll create a third way. If you look at your friend's house, how are, how is what it's happening over there different from dad's different from us?

There's all kinds of different homes and ways of doing things. And it's not necessarily that one's better or worse than the other all I can do is give you the reasons and my thinking behind why I've established our home here this way. What your dad does and why, and his thinking and reasoning, I'm not privy to because I'm not in his brain. If you want to know why he does things his way, you can ask him.

DIANA: There's sociology studies about that, different cultures and different countries different states and different areas of the city. when you get down to different cultures at different homes, they call it microcultures.

And that's just the way it is. It's based on what's fed into you that has you executing culture in a certain way in your own home. every home has a different microculture.

NATALIE: I think the key is, as moms, we need to be willing to let go of our control. Just because we have an idea about how the world should work and how children should be raised, does not mean that everyone's going to do it that way. We can own our own power and our own idea and what we choose to do in our own home, but also let go of

the fact that, Other people, including that ex of ours, is probably going to do things differently.

DIANA: You mean the way you run your home, Natalie, isn't the right way that all of us should be doing it?

NATALIE: I think it is, but yeah. How far should I go in helping my child create an emergency plan for when they visit the other parent? For example, if such and such happens, you can call mom or go to the local library, etc. Without seeming like I'm putting ideas in their mind to actually do these things, even if they are necessary for the child's well being. I want to jump in here. The thing that comes to my mind when I hear this question is if you're actually putting an idea in their mind, then is it even necessary?

When I think about my own kids, would I have had to, Set up an emergency situation. My ex husband didn't drink, so he wasn't driving around drunk. He wasn't beating them. Yes, he did spank them. I wasn't gonna say, if your dad spansks you, call 9 1 1, because they wouldn't do anything about that. I couldn't think of anything specific that my children would need to call 9 1 1 for, other than the obvious things, like if the house is on fire, if someone's stabbing somebody, those are things you call in but that wasn't actually happening.

Their dad wasn't doing any of those things. If you think there's a possibility that your child could be in danger at their dad's house, you have evidence this is a pattern that you've seen, then I think you do need to, I don't think you're going to put that idea in their mind, because if that's already happening, then that idea is already in your child's mind.

You might think that you've been able to shield your child from Your husband beating if that's what's been going on in your home, they are seeing stuff, they're hearing stuff. Go ahead and go to those places with your kids.

DIANA: Yeah. I was going to say if I want to put the idea in my child's head that if the driver of the car seems to, if you've seen them drinking alcohol or they don't seem normal. They're impaired in some way, depends on the age of the child. If you think, I want you to have the idea that if the driver of the car is impaired or drinking, that you should call for help.

Yes, I do want to put that idea in your head. So if there is something dangerous, we're on that theme again. If there's something dangerous. Yeah. Why wouldn't you want to put the idea in the child's head that they need to report or access help in some way?

NATALIE: Yeah, exactly. All right. What do you do when for your safety, you need to parallel parents? Which is a curious way of putting that for your safety.

DIANA: You need to think of safety, think of emotional safety too, for all the people listening, if they're a fan of this podcast, if they found this podcast they're either in or have been in an emotionally abusive marriage.

It's for your emotional safety to not communicate with that person. It leaves parallel parenting as your only option. Trying to get on a phone call you're going to go into circular conversation. You're going to be blamed. You're going to be manipulated. You're going to have gaslighting for your own emotional safety and your opportunity to heal after leaving that relationship, you need to not have communication that makes that possible.

NATALIE: Yes. Okay, so they went on what are you doing for your safety? You need to parallel parent, but your ex is convincing the mediator that you need to co parent. I am in a situation where I'm being pushed to co parent, quote, for the benefit of the kids, unquote. And I feel like I'm just opening back up the door for abuse, control, and him stepping all over my boundaries.

How do I convince the mediator and judge that this is not in my best interest, even if it appears to be so for the kids? How do I evaluate parallel parenting with mediators, therapists, court, etc., when one parent is making poor choices but claims it's merely his personal preference? Let's just focus on the first one. Go ahead. What were you going to say?

DIANA: There are layers to this. I think the bulk of this question is, how can I convince the people involved in the divorce process?

That I need to do a parallel parenting plan and not a co parenting plan. I haven't been in every legal situation. I don't know your mediator. judges and lawyers in your town, and they're all different the way they think of it. But if it was me, I'd approach it as a broken record.

The only way I'm going to be able to communicate on parenting with him is going to be through an app like MyFamilyWizard. I'm not comfortable with email or phone calls. I'm going to be needing to use MyFamilyWizard. I would like to use this mediation process to set up some of the main rules that we agree on cell phones dating and car usage now because I don't have good faith that we'll be able to accomplish that later for my own, well-being, I need to restrict myself to MyFamilyWizard. That's the only thing that's

going to work for me or an app like that that's how I would approach it.

NATALIE: Yeah. This goes back to you know how we talk about don't go into court and talk to the mediator the guardian ad litem or the judge my husband's a flaming narcissist. Don't use the term narcissist. They're desensitized to that term. If you do that, they're going to look at you and think you're the narcissist,

So don't say that. Likewise, why do we have to go in and go I can't co-parent. I need to parallel parent because. He's, dysfunctional or whatever. We don't have to say that. That's like saying, no, I can't gaga parent. I have to go go parent. No, we don't need to say those terms. We just need to talk.

We need to describe those terms, like what you just did. I really do believe in communicating with the parent. Absolutely. Let's do this. I think the best way to do this. That's going to be that's going to document everything and help us both keep things straight.

Cause sometimes I get a little addled in my head and can't remember everything. This goes back to the whole, just go there. Sometimes I get so confused. I really need an app like our family wizard. So see how you're getting to the place where you're going to parallel parenting parents, but you can let them think you're coping.

Yes. Let's co parent let's use our family wizard to co parent. Just like we don't say, he's a narcissist. We say, sometimes we all need to manage him so that he doesn't get upset. So we have to, cater to him make sure that we are very quiet opinions agree with him a lot and just help him feel better.

And manage him. That's all you have to say. Then all the court's going, oh wow, I wonder what his problem is. You don't have to use the word narcissist. You just have to talk in terms of that. I'm so confused. We don't know really why we have to do this, but we do.

DIANA: Yeah, conversations are great. I would love to do it. The problem is keeping track of it all because there's so much to keep track of. So I really would love to use the app where it can all be in one place so I can keep it straight. I want the best for my kids. I think our kids. I want the best for our kids. And this will help make that happen. Let's get on the app and decide the key things ahead of time.

NATALIE: It sounds like your ex is pushing to co parent Just say, Yes. Thank God we are on the same page. Let's do it.

DIANA: That'll speed that up.

NATALIE: Yes, exactly. The other question said: How to discuss parallel parenting I think we already covered that. When one parent is making poor choices but claims it's merely as personal preference. This is where I think some people are, because I know what people are talking about in the forum, a lot of people are talking about things that some people might, what some people might define as a poor choice is actually a personal preference.

Okay, like for example, vaccinations. You, I might think that's a poor choice to not vaccinate. That's where I stand on it. Now watch, half the people will unsubscribe. That's fine. I might think that's a, that is a poor choice to not vaccinate our kids if my husband didn't want to do that. And he didn't actually for a while. However, it's actually just a personal preference. I prefer to have my kids vaccinated, and others prefer not to. And that's their right.

DIANA: If you want me to balance out your listeners and show how open minded you are, I'll tell you that I did not vaccinate my children while they were young. I wanted to wait until they were teenagers and their bodies were more developed and get the ones that we thought were needed. So I have a different mindset on it and it's just a personal preference.

NATALIE: Yes. Actually I did the same thing with mine, but we did in there with a few of mine. I had nine kids over the course of 20 years. Towards the end I was like, forget it. Just vaccinate the kids. Apparently there's an outbreak of whooping cough in our area now. it's at the high school.

DIANA: Every week another case at the high school.

NATALIE: So it's going around. Anyway, we do need to be careful what I might call a poor choice is actually just someone else's personal preference. Of course, I'm going to say that's a poor choice, because that's not the choice that I would make.

DIANA: Letting the kids stay up till 1am when they're 10 years old.

NATALIE: Yes, poor choice, but actually it's just a personal preference. Some people let their kids stay up late. Did you have friends that stayed up till all hours?

DIANA: I've had kids who at my house go to bed at 10 and at a different house stay up all hours.

NATALIE: Same. When I was growing up, we had to be in bed, start getting ready for bed at eight o'clock and in bed by eight 30, even in high school. As a kid who grew up like that. being facetious, but there could be situations where it's really putting my child in danger. For example, if your dad's going to drive you to a ballgame and he's drunk. That's not just a poor choice. That is actually illegal. It's illegal to drive drunk.

DIANA: So it's poor choices and dangerous choices. Dangerous choices, you need to keep record, talk to people at Child Protective Services, get advice from police, talk to an attorney, talk to a therapist, get input from other people on dangerous choices, poor choices in parallel parenting.

We need to let a lot of them go. You can do your best to try to influence. I notice when Sally comes home on Sundays, she's falling asleep at 8pm when she still has homework because she had fun being up late watching movies and eating popcorn and ice cream till 1am

I noticed that she's struggling now on Sunday night and she's got to go to school exhausted and without her homework done. Do you have any ideas about how we can fix this? You can try to get the other person to participate. Maybe after four attempts, you just let it go because it's not going to change.

And so I like to think of this in the tools that I have and talk about all the time. One is that we have a list of expectations for other people and we have them for the other parent for our child too. And we're like, if they would do this thing, I've got the list. If they would do this and this, then I could be at peace.

I would be happy. I could be content. I would believe. Everything's okay. And I could feel okay about what's happening when my kids aren't with me. However, they're not doing this. Now I'm frustrated. I'm angry. I'm blaming. I'm trying to coerce the other person.

People have been abused. We do try to convince. The other person over and over to get them to get on board and feel like I'm banging my head against a wall and punishing myself. I did my due diligence. I tried to cooperate and co parent on this issue to no avail. And so now I'm going to let it go. Unfortunately my child, Sally comes home with no homework done and exhausted on Sundays. That's the reality. of what I'm dealing with now. How do I want to show up with this reality that I can't change?

What would I like to do now? That's hard to let go, but we do it for the benefit of our own emotional sanity. And when we're more emotionally sane and at peace with reality, we can show up better for our kids and then try to come up with some solutions

with what we're left with.

NATALIE: One of the solutions that I came up with some of my kids who are, good kids. And they want to please me not just when I'm around, but when I'm not around, I was able to tell them, even though your dad doesn't put you to bed for a regular bedtime, I would like you to go to bed at his house by 11 o'clock. I want you to be in bed by 11. Can you do that for me? And they did.

DIANA: That's beautiful.

NATALIE: How to deal with the situation of the other parent being extremely permissive and not setting rules or boundaries on things such as phone time, homework, and chores so that they can be the favorite parent?

And then telling the kids that you are the mean, controlling, insensitive parent because you expect certain behaviors and uphold boundaries. This has resulted in my ex being able to convince our teenager that mom doesn't get you, she's a bully, but I'm the one who's there for you. This is leading to detrimental consequences with academics and even the college application process. Any information on combating parental alienation would be appreciated.

DIANA: You know what I have to say? That sucks. That's what I want to say right now. I'm so sorry that's happening. That sucks. I wish we didn't have to deal with this. Don't have the answers for all of this, we have some ideas and things to explore and try, what can you do? In a lot of ways you have to let that parent.

She taught it to me back in the 90s. You can't change him from doing that. You can't change them from berating. Let me tell you something as a story of hope, and then maybe Natalie, I'll let you see if you have any practical things but in my family, my parents were divorced, Then my mom remarried when I was 10 to a wonderful man.

He is such a good Christian man, loving caring and gracious. a strange thing happened. He had two daughters, my stepsisters. Dear friends with one of them, or dear sisters with one of them now, not like best friends as sisters. And she wasn't around for a while, because her mom said terrible things about her dad, that he didn't care.

I don't know all the things that she said. She said so much derogatory about him. And I know him as a wonderful man who filled a wonderful space in my life with unconditional love. And she sees that now. She stopped coming to his house as a teenager didn't see him that much and moved away decades later when she was going

through therapy.

She started to reunite with her dad and totally heal that relationship. And they have the best father daughter relationship now. So while Natalie and I might not be able to solve it now. For a lot of you at any age, if your children have been alienated against you by your ex-husband, that really sucks.

My stepdad did is he kept showing up with love and grace every time there was a chance to communicate with her. And he just stayed the course. So that's some long-term hope, but I'll turn it back to you. If you've got any in-the-moment stuff.

NATALIE: One of the things I do, and I know you do this in your coaching program too, in Flying Free and Flying Higher, we mostly work on, unhooking from what other people are saying about us. And then we get to decide who we're going to be. They can say all kinds of things. I've had people say that I am an adulterer, I got excommunicated from my church and kicked out completely. My family of origin doesn't talk to me anymore.

So I'm someone who knows what that's like to have a bunch of friends, Who decided that I was no longer, worth anything, have said so many lies about me I've had to just sit back and go, okay, there's nothing I can do with what people are saying about me. They said horrible things about Jesus, too,

but who do I want to be in this situation? Who do I want to be as a parent? So it sounds like this man is defining you, or this person, as a parent, and saying that this is a mean, controlling, insensitive mother who has boundaries and expects certain kinds of behaviors. Okay, that's what he says about me, but who do I want to be when I am with my daughter?

That's all you have control over. with your mom, you experienced love when you were growing up and your parents were divorced, Did your mom have boundaries? Did she have rules and regulations? I do as a mother, for sure. But if you're feeling guilty about that, there are a lot of rules I used to have that I don't anymore.

I had to loosen up my thinking about some things readdress things a lot of that was in conversations with my kids as they became adults. I was like, tell me what was good about your childhood and what was bad. What are some areas where you felt like I was rigid?

Where it would have served you and me better if I had loosened up. So I think there is room always for getting feedback but if they're saying I want to be able to sleep, go to bed at four o'clock in the morning. Then like you said, there's reasons why we have a

bedtime.

And it's because I really care about you. And I want you to be able to do well in your homework. Or there's reasons why I encourage you to do your homework before I let you get on your phone or play computer games. Like you can play computer games all you want tonight with your friends, but you do have to do your homework first. Let's do a quizlet and make sure that we're practicing for our next test. Then you can play. Those are some of my rules. It's okay if my kids don't think that's fair.

I believe it's fair. I believe it's good for them, and I love them so much. The rules that I do have amazing reasons behind them. My kids are on board. They understand why we have those rules. I have a parenting course in Flying Free.

I had a child with borderline personality disorder. She was diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder and was in a day treatment center for two years. The parents were all required to go through a class that helps parent kids who are very violent and volatile as teenagers.

They taught us some incredible techniques and ideas. I put all of that in the parenting class for you I encourage you if you have a child like this, or who's being alienated against you to take that course. One person who'd already raised their kids, took the parenting course.

And she said, I learned in that parenting course, how to parent myself. I realized that I needed to be parented that way. I had a whole bunch of epiphany moments in going through that course that have really changed my life. Anyway, that's all I want to share about that.

DIANA: Yeah, that's so good. The more we heal ourselves. The more we can bring healing and loving to our relationships with our kids.

NATALIE: Absolutely. 100%. To that point, we have a healing your relationship with yourself course. And I also love that one. If you can take that course. And my book, All the Scary Little Gods dovetails with that course because it takes what I teach you in that course. And I walk it through my own life so you can see what's possible for you and how your own healing can come about in this way.

That will give you ideas for how to parent your kids. You will see your kids in a completely different light once you see yourself in a completely different light. We've had so many people give feedback after going through that course it changed their

parenting just by going through the healing your relationship with your self course. So that's another plug for joinflyingfree.com. It's only \$29 a month. Try it out for a month, take one of these courses.

DIANA: It's a no-brainer at that price. That's just a testament to how you want to serve and help as many people as possible and not make any barrier for anybody to get in. \$29 is not a barrier. We drop that, buying a pizza. You can spend a month doing a course to help heal yourself for the same price.

NATALIE: It's going to change your life. All right. Here's another one. I don't even know how to reestablish a relationship with my kids. This person has been alienated from their kids. The kids are living with their dad and everyone is happy, but they are not answering my texts, emails, or phone calls. One of the kids said, mom, it's easier with dad because he's fun. Dad took them on vacation this summer without clearly communicating that he was going to be taking them.

He's said that my non-response was permission when he emailed me his idea. I was a collaborator in our marriage with decisions. He simply would make decisions and tell me about them. And now it's the same, except I don't hear what they are. He was completely hands-off with discipline and left it up to me when we were together.

I was the bad cop because he didn't step up when needed. There's no opportunity to do what is best for the kids because I'm the one who left. And I have texted them about the circumstances, which again makes me look like the bad guy. I never spoke unkind words about him for all the years we were married until the end. I always believed it was important to hold him high in regard. Now, however, Truth. Who on earth can be a fun mom when dad isn't stepping up to meet the kids emotionally?

DIANA: We don't know if there's a legal custody agreement. We don't know how old the kids are. In the context of parallel parenting, there is no, opportunity for her to parent right now if the kids are alienated and he's assumed custody I feel like there's a lot of pieces we don't know.

If that was me and there was a custody agreement, I'd have my attorney helping me figure out how to enforce the custody agreement. I'd still work on myself. I know the frustration at the end of the relationship, and you just want to be finally, let me tell you all the crap that has been going on here all these years when I tried to make everything look good.

And that can be helpful for some kids to hear some of that to process, but it's not

always helpful for building the loving, trusting relationship that you want to have with them, because they don't want to be, most kids, they don't want to be pitted against their parents. I don't know if that felt like it for them, but he's doing it too then. So it just puts the kids in a difficult place.

NATALIE: Yeah. I think what's not mentioned in this question is all of the legalities of what's going on. And I'm guessing maybe it's because there are no attorneys involved. There is no judge involved. I'm just guessing only because physical separation with no legal.

So my recommendation in this case is she started off with, I don't even know how to reestablish a relationship with the kids. I don't think you're going to be able to until you get some legal help wherever you are I think that would be your next step. While you're getting that in place, definitely keep working on your own self development so you'll be in the best frame of reference to begin building those relationships once you have legal custody,

DIANA: And in most states you get an attorney who would be willing to work on a temporary order is what it's called in a lot of places, temporary order for custody right away, that's urgent. everything else has to come later, you might have to file for legal separation to get a temporary order. You might be able to do a temporary order on custody without actually filing, find an attorney who's willing to make that a priority with you and go for it as quickly as possible.

NATALIE: If these kids are older like 15 and up. This is how I would do it.

Cause my 15-year-old, when we were divorced, he chose to live with his dad. I would let go of that idea of that. They have to live with me. In my mind, I would think they don't have to live with me for me to have an amazing relationship with my kids, I know they're not answering texts and stuff, but I'd be like, want to go out to eat?

I would just be building that relationship with them. What do you want to do? Do you need a ride somewhere? Do you want to go shopping to get some school supplies or shopping to get some stuff for your face that's the kind of stuff I do with my kids.

Go out for coffee together. Let's just do fun things with them. I know you think that Dad's doing the fun things, but you can have fun with your kids too, most kids want to go out to eat with their mom if they don't, then you need to get some legal help to deal with that. If you're hearing this podcast reach out and we can talk about more details about your situation.

How do I avoid parallel parenting? I already know for my children's safety, I need 100 percent legal custody because my soon to be ex is completely against doctors. For broken bones, cancer, or any kind of emergency, is there a court mandate for co parenting so the shared goal is documented and it avoids the counter parenting? How do we document and request in court without looking like a control freak?

DIANA: Talk to an attorney. You got to get a really good attorney for what's going on here. And you need to know what the laws are in your state, about medical treatment and all that kind of stuff. You need a good attorney who's interviewed several attorneys and talked to them specifically about these medical things and pick the one that seems to really understand it and can help you best. Trust your gut and go for it.

NATALIE: How to parallel parent but show the court in an effort to co parent that you are making efforts to co parent. We talked about this. And not be labeled as a contentious parent or labeled with parental alienation. We've already talked about those. Yeah, I don't think we need to. I think the last one that we can talk about has to do with an ex or a dad who has picked a child to be the golden child and a different child to be the scapegoat.

What do we, and there are actually two people who brought up this exact issue. How do you mitigate that or deal with that when dad has a preferred child over the other child?

DIANA: We have to always remember, we have no control over what dad does. Dad's going to talk to his kids, treat his kids the way he's going to do it. And unless something illegal is happening, there is no recourse. So I'm assuming, whether you're either still married or It said parallel parent with your soon to be ex. Oh, soon to be ex, yeah.

NATALIE: On the way to getting divorced.

DIANA: You're either still married and dad's in the house and he's going to do what he's going to do or you're separated or divorced and there's some arrangement where the kids are going to be with dad for at least some time. Either way, you have no control over what that person's going to do.

So the answer to this question is just going to be What do you want to do for your children? And it might not be just, I need to now compensate for the scapegoat and not worry about the other child. You might want to speak into both of them. It's all going to depend on their ages.

Some of the ways we've already talked about speaking truth and being able to encourage your children, heal your relationship with you first. So you come with a healing and loving perspective and tone for speaking to that scapegoated child who's going to have wounds.

Some scapegoated kids don't even want to admit that they are or they'll want to excuse dad. And they don't want to see the favoritism others are going to be all over it. Yeah, dad hates me and loves. So the way you approach it's going to be very different depending on what that child's experience is.

But I think it's also worth talking to the favored child too and say, hey, tell me more about your experience with dad and how does your sibling experience dad? Why do you think it's different? How do you feel about it? And explore that with them too, because there might be teaching opportunities

If dads, in a way, a favorite and a scapegoat might be trying to pit the kids against each other, it puts an abuser in a power position to control how others experience each other. And maybe they'll want to partner up and support each other.

NATALIE: I can relate to this question. I had nine kids, but it wasn't just one scapegoat and one favorite. There was a couple of favorites. Three favorites. And then a couple, three scapegoats. What ends up happening is as they get older, at least in my situation, the scapegoated kids, don't really like to be around dad because they feel like a loser. They feel like dad thinks they're a loser and they feel like a loser.

So actually with one of them, they have phased out. They're slowly phasing out of going over there. I will let them go over there as much as I want to, but they don't want to go over there. She just dropped cold turkey. But this particular one, we're phasing out slowly. I'm allowing him to phase out slowly. Although he did say, I want to see him sometimes. I just don't like going over there all the time because he picks on me.

Which is so sad. They want so much for their dad to approve of them. And they're always going to hang on to that hope. As my kids get older, their dad, I think my ex has a hard time with little kids just dealings. All the stress of that. So as they get older and turn into adults, he has a better relationship with all of his kids. Now, plus they're not living with him anymore. So it's like these touch points that can be very just positive and not negative. So that's one way that time just tends to heal some people's situations as it has with my family.

But my youngest, he loves going over to his dad's house. My youngest has autism. He's

a joyful little kid. Doesn't rub my ex the wrong way. And my ex, he said to me, I just love going over there. Dad and I, we just chill together. It just loves it. And I love that. So there's no way anyone could accuse me of alienation.

Because I love it that my youngest kid loves to go over with his dad's house. I'll let him go over there as much as he wants to. Now he wants to be over here too, which I love also, he likes to go to both of us. He likes that there's different good things about both of our places, as he gets older, he's going to be 15 in a few months. Once he's 15, he's old enough to be able to go, I'll go over there when I feel like it.

DIANA: And the other thing you're good at, which I imagine you do for him, is being an empathetic witness when your children are having difficulties. Yep. He knows he can talk about it and I will just listen and go, yeah, I get it.

NATALIE: Instead of I didn't get that. My dad, he passed away now, but he didn't really stand up for any of us. He was just as scared of my mom as, the rest of us were. When mom was on a rampage, we all just shut up. I always thought my dad was weak.

Even as a kid, I was ashamed that I thought my dad was weak, but as an adult I understand, he was weak. He was also a beautiful man, but also a very weak man when it came to, he just did not know how to stand up to admit, or maybe he just made a decision. I'm just not going to stand up against my mom.

DIANA: He was just surviving like the rest of us. Okay, we're done.

NATALIE: This has been great and helpful. We find our own solutions. I hope that this has been helpful. This has been great and helpful.

DIANA: It has been helpful because what happens is we find our own solutions. People listen because hearing other people speak helps our brains find our own solutions. This was helpful. maybe not the whole thing, but parts of it. And that's all you need. Your brain to light up and go for some solutions from parts of what we said. So take it and run with it.

NATALIE: Thank you, Diana, for sharing your time with us. For those who want to go deeper with both Diana and myself. Check out joinflyingfree.com or joinflyinghigher.com or check out Diana's coaching. She does private coaching. I don't do that anymore, but Diana does. And she's an amazing coach and she also trains coaches and you can do that by going to RYMpodcast.com.

DIANA: Thanks for having me. It was so fun.