

GOD LOVES YOU MORE THAN HE HATES DIVORCE

Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of FlyingFreeNow.com, and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 65 of the Flying Free Podcast! Today I have one of our longtime Flying Free Sisterhood members, Karyn, and she has agreed to share some of her story with us. So welcome, Karyn, to the podcast.

KARYN: Thank you for having me, Natalie. I'm excited to be here.

NATALIE: Good. We're going to dive right in. The first question is how did you meet your husband, and were there any red flags before you married him?

KARYN: I met my husband when I was only sixteen. I was attending an all-girl high school. It was the summer before my junior year. I had a new friend, Amy, who I had met the year before. I had just started that high school my sophomore year. We had summer reading program assignments and there was a packet we had to complete before school started the following week. She had me over to her house and I spent the night so we could work on the assignment. I didn't even realize she had an older brother until he came stumbling down the stairs the next morning.

The interesting thing is that when I saw him, I had this sinking feeling I would marry him one day. It was not a good feeling, but rather the sense of resignation and sadness. That memory really haunted me for years. I still don't quite understand what that was about. I thought it was odd that I had known her an entire year and she never even mentioned that she had an eighteen-year-old brother. She never liked the idea of us being a couple. In fact, the day of our wedding when I was nineteen, she was angry that day. She felt that I was making a terrible mistake. But I didn't see it that way. I just thought that she was jealous of our relationship because she and I were best friends and that she felt replaced. I see now that was probably a red flag right there.

NATALIE: Did she ever say why?

KARYN: No, she basically just said she didn't think we'd be good together. She was very vague and because of that, I didn't take it too seriously.

NATALIE: I'm sorry, but I have so many questions. Did she ever disclose either

afterwards or before that he was abusive in any way to her?

KARYN: No. In fact, we ended up becoming close because we had our first babies within two weeks of each other. They were close friends for a while, so we kind of raised our kids together for a few years before she went back to work. I talked to her about it because at that point I was in the middle of abuse, and I would vent to her about what was going on. All she would say is, "I just knew it wasn't going to work out. I just knew he was bad for you." She might not have even known herself. You know that you just have this gut feeling.

NATALIE: Right. Interesting.

KARYN: So that was one red flag. I also had some more. I didn't know a whole lot. I had never even heard the phrase "red flag." But I did know there was a big problem with his jealousy. I always felt like I had to convince him that I wanted him. He was even jealous of me swimming in public pools because he didn't want lifeguards looking at me. I remember thinking that was weird. I always just had this feeling that I shouldn't marry him, but I just couldn't... Something just felt off in the relationship, but I couldn't put my finger on what the problem was. I know he came from a dysfunctional home life. His mother verbally abused him. I heard her, so I knew it was a real thing. He wasn't just telling me that.

One time when I came to the house I heard her cussing him out, so I was concerned about that. My mom was concerned about that. She was concerned that he could come and abuse me. But I just thought he was not going to do that to me. Surely his mom abused him so that was why he was abusive to her, because he was also abusive to his mom verbally. But I was always able to talk him down when he was angry. I was his voice of reason, so I saw myself a little bit as above that. I was the savior.

I had this other experience that was another big red flag. When I was eighteen... I don't even know what led to this other than there was some type of argument, and I broke up with him. I was in his car. We were sitting at Taco Bell. I remember it vividly. I took off my engagement ring because I was engaged already and handed it to him and said it was over. I felt like this massive weight came off my shoulders and I just felt so free. But he exploded! He had never done that before. He had never raised his voice to me. He just freaked out. He was crying and screaming and raging, "You can't leave me! I love you." There was this big, huge, emotional scene. So I put the ring back on my finger.

NATALIE: Oh my gosh.

KARYN: I just kept thinking this was fixable and it would somehow work out. I have another story that should have been enough to keep me from marrying him. We had attended an “Engaged Encounter” weekend through the Catholic Social Services. I don’t know if you’ve heard about that, but it’s an intensive weekend designed to see if you are compatible for marriage. They have exercises for you to do, questions to talk about, and homework that you do. It’s good, and it does cause many people to call off their engagements because they find out that they are not compatible. I honestly thought we would sail through that weekend with flying colors. We had already done premarital counseling and talked about a lot of things. But that weekend was intense, and it showed me how immature my ex really was.

He stopped doing the homework because he said he was tired, it was too much work. This was Friday evening and all day Saturday. That’s it. We left Sunday morning. It was just too much for him. He was twenty-one years old and he said, “I just want to be outside. It’s a sunny day.” It was just awful. The last assignment that we were supposed to do is either write a love letter to them committing yourself to them or a goodbye letter. I couldn’t do either. Of course, he didn’t do it either because he had stopped doing the homework. I left with such a weight in my stomach but again, I just felt powerless. I decided to stay with him.

There were other red flags, too. He would say things and not follow through. He would take me to family events with cousins, aunts, and uncles, and I would say, “Please stay by me. I don’t know anybody.” He would wander off and leave me. I felt alternately worshiped or ignored. I was everything or I was nothing. I told my mom that I wanted to break off the engagement, but I just didn’t feel like I had the power to. I wish she had empowered me and said... But when I talked to her about it recently, she said she doesn’t remember that conversation. What I remember her saying was that I should pray about it and the Lord would guide me. I prayed, “God, please...” I wanted him to break up with me. I didn’t have the strength to do it myself. So I married him hoping that it would get better. I was determined to be the perfect wife. I would pray, we would go to church, and everything would work out. And it did not, unfortunately.

NATALIE: I’m assuming that things probably got worse after you got married. What are some of the ways that he abused you in your marriage after you were married?

KARYN: Our marriage started out rocky from the day we left to come home from our ten-day honeymoon. We had funded the honeymoon with money from our wedding. We just opened all the cards after our wedding reception. We had about \$1,000 I think, maybe \$1,200. We had been given a cabin to stay at in Tennessee. So we drove there, gassed up, and just had a ball. We spent the money freely. We were married at

Christmas time, so we bought each other Christmas gifts at the outlet and gifts for our friends. We had a wonderful honeymoon. I can't say anything bad about it until we were on our way home.

We had probably \$100 left, which in hindsight I know is not a ton of money. But I wanted to stop at this little Christmas shop, a Christmas all-year-round type of shop, and buy something. He exploded again just like he did in the car when I broke up with him and broke off our engagement. He started screaming, yelling, and cussing at me and saying how stupid it was that I would want to spend the money. I don't even remember all the words. I just remember being shocked and terrified and confused. I just went silent. I know I cried the whole way home. I don't remember the drive. I just remember shock. I do remember eventually talking to him about it and asking him why he couldn't just talk to me about it. Why did he have to explode? It just baffled my brain.

I said, "I wasn't demanding the money. I was just trying to have a conversation, but instead it was abusive." That began my years of overt abuse. It was obvious before we had kids. It was a lot of yelling, raging, cussing, and controlling. I was always trying to convince him to please not do this. Why was he doing this? I was never abusive back to him. These were his fears. These were his things. I was working three jobs, going to school, and just trying to make this work while being so confused as to what went wrong. I had the one experience in the car, but he didn't treat me like that when we were dating. So I was just so baffled.

He wouldn't let me decorate the way I wanted. I have this one story about a Claude Monet "Water Lily" print that I put up on the wall. He took it down and I put it back up. He took it down. Every decorating purchase for the next fifteen years was like that. It was a fight. He hated everything I did. It was hard to find a compromise, so I just learned to compromise but I never loved it. I felt like my opinion wasn't valid. It was his way or no way.

Then there were the lies from the very beginning. I took care of the checkbook until we had our first child. He would take money out and say that he didn't. He would literally lie about everything. I remember asking him one time why he lied, and he said he was trying to avoid my anger. But I said, "I am never angry with you. I don't get angry at you." He said he was used to growing up with anger, so he lied to protect himself. I tried so hard and diligently to explain that the lying was worse than the offense and that it was creating a lack of intimacy in our relationship. But he could never stop lying. In fact, to this day he is a chronic liar. He still lies to me. Now he lies to his kids. They don't trust a word that he says.

He was also very hot and cold in the relationship. There was a little bit of that in the dating relationship. He was extremely controlling unless he wanted to go out with his buddies, which was a lot. We had a counselor once say that he was a married single. He didn't see us as a team. He didn't ever really consider me at all because if I wanted to go out with friends and he didn't have plans, he would use guilt manipulation to either get me to not go out at all or to come home early. If I came home later than he expected, he was angry and verbally abusive. Once cell phones came around, I hated that cell phone because he would call me obsessively. It was always a dark cloud hanging over my head whenever I was just trying to have a good time. I felt guilty constantly. He was not considerate of my feelings at all. He would go out after work and not even tell me.

This one story is still hard to believe. Once he just didn't come home at all after work. It was just a normal day. I had made dinner expecting him to come home at 7:00. It was 3:00 AM and he still wasn't home. I had gone to bed. But it was 3:00 AM and he still was not home. At this point, I woke up in a panic thinking he was in an accident. But the power was out so our cordless phone wasn't working. I thought maybe the hospital had been trying to call. I got in my car and drove to the corner gas station (when there were still payphones) and started calling people. I called his parents and called all around trying to find him. I eventually found him at his best friend's house. It turned out he had gone there after work to hang out and had gotten too drunk to come home. Because the power was out he couldn't reach me, so he just went to sleep. I flipped out on him at that point. I think I did yell, curse, and scream. I just could not believe that he could be so inconsiderate while I was so afraid.

It turns out that was not a one-time thing. That happened on a regular basis to the point where I stopped wondering why he didn't come home. I knew it was just more of the same. I didn't even expect it anymore, reduced expectations. He spiritually abused me by saying the Bible said I had to submit to him and that it was wrong to divorce. I was reactively abusive at times, and he would say that I was just as bad as he was so he had every right to abuse me. He, of course, justified everything. When he saw me reading my Bible or praying, he called me a hypocrite because I had gotten angry with him. He said I wasn't a "real" Christian. Of course, he wasn't always abusive. He knew how to draw me out. He knew all my deepest fears and secrets. He would later use them against me to hurt me or to gain points in an argument. Once he said it was no wonder that I had lost my best friend because I was a horrible person. Another time he said it was no wonder that my natural father abandoned me. I was only two at the time.

NATALIE: Wow.

KARYN: I remember looking at him and thinking, "That's just pure evil talking right

there. That doesn't even make sense. Obviously a two-year-old doesn't do anything to deserve to be abandoned." But that's the kind of abuse that I experienced. As I grew stronger, I started counseling within two years of our marriage, personal counseling because he wouldn't do marriage counseling. I decided at year five that I was going to leave him. I did move half the furniture out of our house. We had purchased a home. I took half the furniture and moved in with a friend, and two weeks later I found out I was expecting our first child. Of course he went into love-bombing mode and convinced me he would change and this child was going to change everything.

So five months later I moved back in with him. He was on good behavior for about a year. I remember thinking it was strange. I kept waiting for the other shoe to fall, and it eventually did. When the abuse began again, it was more covert. Instead of yelling and screaming at me, there was a child around, so he wasn't yelling as much. He was still controlling. He was more subtle in his abuse. There was manipulation, neglect, gaslighting, minimizing, and then occasional overt actions. He would throw things. We ended up having three children, three daughters. As they got older, then the abuse became more overt again. It's like he felt it was okay to throw in a few cuss words here and there.

He would follow me around the house, not let me leave a room, get in my face, and tower over me spewing rage at me. If I hid in the bedroom, he would bang on the door aggressively and demand to be let in. Sometimes I would just leave the house and then the girls thought I was abandoning the family and they would cry. But I could not get away from him. He just would not respect any boundaries, physical or otherwise.

So in the last few years of our marriage... You know they say abuse escalates. It did become more physical. I started CrossFit to become more physically strong so when he would get in my face and tower over me or keep me in a doorway (that was his big thing, to keep me in a doorway so I couldn't squeeze past him) I would shove him out of the way and he would shove me back. One time I remember he shoved me and I fell and can't remember what I hit. I just remember it shocked me that he had shoved me that hard. He said, "Well, you deserved it. You shoved me." I probably bought that at that time. He spit in my face a few times. I began to get scared of him physically. I thought, "This is getting scary."

We did attend counseling a few times throughout the years for periods of time. He always lied to the counselors. They always loved him. He always acted like the victim. He twisted the narrative and made me seem like I was crazy. There was also financial abuse. After I stopped working to become a stay-at-home mom, he decided he needed to take over the finances and he put me on an allowance. He took me off the joint

checking account and I never had access to money unless he handed it to me. He was very stingy with the money unless he wanted something or was in buy-back mode, the love-bombing mode. He took at least two or three “boy trips” a year. He drove the nicer car always. I was treated as a child, like a second-class citizen. My desires were always called selfish but his desires were always reasonable, and if I would not give in to what he wanted, then I was selfish.

Again, toward the end of our marriage (we were married twenty-nine) years before we were divorced), I insisted that if I was going to stay that I was going to be on the joint checking account. He allowed that, but the financial control and manipulation was still there. We were making \$250,000 a year, living very modestly, and he acted like I was a spend-thrift. His favorite expression was that I was “hemorrhaging money.” We paid cash for everything. We went on one modest vacation a year. We paid cash for our cars and they were always used cars. Of course, his was a brand-new Mercedes because it was a “company” expense. All the best for him. But to hear him tell the story, I was bankrupting us. I lived within our budget unless he asked me to do something more. I didn’t even know until we were divorcing how much money we made. He lied and said it was far less. He said we were going under.

At the very end when we were separated physically for six months before I finally decided to divorce, he closed out the joint checking account. At the time, he said he was trying to fix the marriage. I knew then that he was done. He had gone into self-protection mode. He’s done. He lied and said the counselor told him to do it. That counselor had so bought into his narrative that he didn’t correct him. He said, “No, I never said that, but Karyn, you just need to give him a break. There are misunderstandings.” I knew it wasn’t a misunderstanding. That was very deliberate.

NATALIE: Yeah.

KARYN: The other thing he did was whenever we did make a major purchase... Like we carpeted our house. It was a twenty-year-old carpet and we replaced the carpet in the house. I would be punished for it later. He would yell at me and say I insisted on it even though we had agreeably decided it. Sometimes he even joyfully did it and said, “I just want to bless you.” But he was always mad about it later. One time (again, one of those final straws) he insisted upon doing a bathroom remodel that was his idea. I was worried because he was saying that we were broke. I kept saying, “Are you sure you want to do this? Are you sure? I think we should back off.” He said, “No, it’s fine.” Then later he yelled at me about it and said I insisted on doing that job when it was him who insisted on it all along. I said, “Now you are lying about what you are yelling at me about.” It was so twisted.

NATALIE: Yeah, it is twisted. I think we've all experienced that repeatedly. It is crazy, crazy, crazy! What were some of the biggest challenges that you faced in getting out of that relationship, and how did you overcome them?

KARYN: One of the biggest challenges was my own fear and doubts. Even though I knew I was abused, I was so terrified of starting my life over. I had been a stay-at-home mom for twenty-one years at this point. My ex said I would get nothing if I left. He was so intimidating. I was just standing on faith alone at that point. But when I realized that I would rather be dirt poor living in public housing than living with him, I knew that the material things had lost their power over me. I just wanted peace. But it was very scary to think about starting my life over because he had such financial control over me. Luckily my parents have a big house, and they took me and my daughter in for seven months.

My faith really carried me a lot. I spent a lot of time journaling and praying. I began to hear from the Lord in a new way, and I felt like He said that this was not the life that He wanted for me. He had something better and He would be with me every step of the way. I just had to get out of the boat and trust Him. So I worked for a commercial cleaning company and saved some money until the divorce process was over. Because my ex wanted the alimony to be a tax write-off and that law was changing in 2019, it motivated him to not drop the process as he said he would for years as he had threatened. It also motivated him to cooperate with my attorney to go along with some of the things I wanted because he was afraid if this went to court that he would lose control and it would not go well for him.

We did a collaborative divorce, which I do not recommend for anyone who is with an abuser. The only reason it worked for me was because of this fear. His own fear worked in my favor, and I ended up getting a good settlement. I did have a good attorney. I felt like I was represented well. But finding Flying Free... I found you the month I moved out, and that was by far the best thing that happened to me during this process. I knew that I was abused all along, but I didn't understand narcissism until I started reading all the articles that you had posted. I was quite stunned at what I was reading because I thought my ex was unique. I had never understood that this was a known character disorder.

NATALIE: Right! He's quite cliché.

KARYN: He is, and it was so comforting. I was so confused in my marriage because of the abuse dynamic. He could be wonderful and terrible, and I didn't know who was walking through the door each evening. But understanding narcissistic abuse and all

the tactics was so incredibly eye-opening and helpful. Plus, I had support for the first time and personal understanding from other women going through the same kind of abuse that I had experienced. Even though I had some friends who did understand that Ed was abusive, they couldn't relate to it. I could vent, but they couldn't offer understanding. Often their advice was completely unhelpful because it doesn't work in an abusive dynamic.

I also made a close friend through Flying Free, so now in addition to posting on the private Flying Free Sisterhood forum and having my questions answered, I had a live person to talk to who had been through it. I also had a cousin, who was the one who told me about Flying Free, who I could talk to as well. She is still in the middle of her divorce. Her husband is drawing it out long. So all that Flying Free offers was a lifeline for me. I have listened to every workshop and Q&A and read every article. I have also been so helped by the people I have met through the workshops like Bob Hamp and Sarah McDugal and Patrick Doyle. They are always speaking into my life. That has been so incredibly helpful to me.

NATALIE: Good. That is wonderful. How long have you been divorced, now?

KARYN: I've been divorced for just a little over a year.

NATALIE: Okay. Did life get harder for you? Are there any ways that you felt it got worse?

KARYN: Yes.

NATALIE: Can you tell us about that?

KARYN: When I left, the abuse escalated a lot. The emails, the things that he threatened, and the things he said blew my mind. He crushed me over and over with that. I was just not prepared for his rage, threats, and accusations. But the worst part was that he turned my middle daughter against me for about a year. He spoke lies about me. He convinced her I was crazy. She saw my reactive anger and thought it was my fault. She didn't speak to me for about seven months, and I was just devastated. She and I were actually very close before that.

My oldest daughter withdrew, and while she didn't reject me, she didn't agree with my choice, and that was very painful. Fortunately, they both came around. My middle daughter was a slow thaw. My ex began to abuse her, so she began to see through him. She learned that she couldn't manage him the way that she thought she'd be able to.

She tried a lot of the techniques that I had tried for years to manage him. Then she realized, "Yeah, mom's not crazy. She was abused." She learned about narcissism. Now she's the sweetest she has ever been. She is living with me again.

NATALIE: That is so wonderful.

KARYN: It is absolutely the best thing. I was not prepared for the pain that I would feel that this is the father that my girls have because they have seen his worst now that I'm out. That has been painful to see what he has done to them. We have 50/50 custody. That has been hard. Of course you want to see your kids as much as possible, and I hate the time that she must spend with him. Hearing what she experiences from her dad and the abuse that she experiences... She records it sometimes, so I get to hear it verbatim. It's a knife through your soul every time. I just want to protect her. I am currently trying to modify our custody agreement, but unfortunately, it's a long, slow process. We have to go through mediation. It has been a month, and I can't even get mediation scheduled yet. It is going to be a process.

NATALIE: I started that whole process again last summer and our mediation is scheduled in March. Yeah, it is an absolute nightmare and thousands of dollars. I've already spent thousands of dollars and we haven't even gone to mediation yet. Crazy!

KARYN: It is crazy. It's a game that they play, and they draw it out. He knows what he's doing, and he's aware. I have a very outspoken daughter, my youngest. She's a freshman in high school. She has said a lot of things that she probably shouldn't have because he's now getting more information than he needs to have. But she calls him out on his stuff all the time. So he knows she doesn't want to live with him anymore and that I am fighting for her. So he's scared.

NATALIE: Why don't they just give up? Do you really want to have your child live with you when they don't want to be there?

KARYN: That's the thing I will never understand. He wants her to be there. We are also arguing about Christmas. She wants to be with him on Christmas Eve and with me on Christmas Day. He wants it to be every other Christmas morning, but he still wants to have her every Christmas Eve. It's so twisted. She said, "But Dad, I don't want to." He said, "I don't care." He really doesn't care. He is that controlling.

NATALIE: That's because the universe belongs to him.

KARYN: That's exactly right. He says, "You're just a fourteen-year-old girl. I'm a fifty-year-

old man.” It’s a sick, twisted dynamic. It’s really quite heart wrenching. It is so hard. Another challenge is that I’ve had to grieve losing this marriage that I put so much effort into. I didn’t think I would grieve it. That’s been hard. I must figure out my life, starting my career again. I’ve tried a couple of things that haven’t worked out, and now I’m not working again. Thank you, Lord, I have good alimony for now. But I have diminishing alimony that is over a period of fourteen years. It’s eventually not going to be livable, and I want to build up a retirement because I didn’t get much of that. He has it all in his business. He had the business signed over to him as a gift from his father so it wouldn’t be split at our divorce. I found that out at the divorce table.

NATALIE: That’s awful!

KARYN: That was horrifying. Of course he lied and said, “You knew about that, Karyn.” I started bawling. The rug has been pulled out from underneath me so many times. I struggle with that, but it is improving slowly day-by-day.

NATALIE: Do you have any regrets at all?

KARYN: Oh my goodness, no! Not at all. I sometimes regret that I didn’t leave sooner, however, because of this custody nightmare, I’m glad I don’t have to deal with this for the next ten to fifteen years. I only have another three and a half years. I do regret that I wasn’t more prepared when I left. I didn’t ask for full financial disclosure. I wish that I had the “90-Day Escape Plan” that you offered. I wish I had advocated for myself more during the divorce process. I think that finding out how much money he made, I was shortchanged. But I was in a different place then. I have more strength now, a year later, than I did then.

NATALIE: It’s amazing how you exponentially begin to grow, and you morph into a completely different person.

KARYN: You really do. It’s still a process, and I’m still a little surprised at how slow the healing is. But when I look back to that, then I remember how far I’ve come. I always need to look backwards to be encouraged because I’m at peace now. I can’t emphasize how amazing that is. As hard as this is, I don’t have to live with him every day. That is the greatest gift I can explain. To be able to have a bed to myself, to know I can have quiet, I can enjoy my kids by myself. We have gotten together as a family, my three daughters and I. My oldest is married. We did a group activity together and we’ve done Christmas together. This last Christmas was decent. I have my own life. I feel like an adult. I don’t have to ask permission to be an adult. That is priceless! It’s worth all the pain of getting out. It’s worth it.

NATALIE: If you could go back and tell your younger self one thing, what would you tell her?

KARYN: I wrote this out, so I'm just going to read it because I really like it.

NATALIE: I love that.

KARYN: Stop second guessing yourself. Trust your instincts and your gut. If you are uncomfortable, that is God speaking and directing your life. Listen to your own heart. You matter. Your thoughts matter and you are valuable and dearly loved just as you are. You don't need a man or anyone else to validate your worth. You need to love yourself first and foremost before you can love anyone else. Any man or woman who tries to control you or makes you feel less-than is not a safe person. Healthy people build you up. They don't tear you down.

God never asked you to carry these burdens because He said His yoke is easy and His burden is light, so if you are feeling burdened and heavy and weighed down, stop and ask yourself why. Then lay down that burden at the foot of the cross and walk away free. God is not a slave master. He said it is for freedom that He has set us free, so don't let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Marriage is not slavery. It is meant to be a beautiful reflection of Christ and His great love for us. If it is not and you are being enslaved and abused, you are free to go. God loves you more than He hates divorce, and He wants you to live an abundant life and not a life surviving abuse.

NATALIE: Oh my gosh! I love it! I want that in print form because I want to put that out as part of the teaser for this. Also, I am talking to someone out there right now: that was for you. Someone out there just heard that, and that's for you. You know who you are, and you need to take that to heart. That was beautiful. Is there a piece of advice that you would give to someone who is married right now who is thinking about leaving for good? What would you say to them?

KARYN: I would say be prepared. Get a good support system in place, and if you don't have one, Flying Free is amazing. They really will walk you through every step of the way. That forum is incredible for asking questions, for prayer, for so many different things. Have a support system. Also know that it will get harder before it gets better, but it does get better. Don't give up! You are worth it. Keep doing the next right thing one minute at a time. It's okay if you are living your life one minute at a time. Be kind to yourself along the way. You need to love yourself now and be your own best friend. You can do this.

NATALIE: Also very beautiful. Thank you so much, Karyn. I see a lot in the forum. I see a lot of women who are on that cliff looking over the edge. They know deep down inside they must jump, and they are afraid to go through that initial pain of watching their kids get angry or get sad or all the stuff that comes with it. You didn't sugar coat that. It really is horrible. But it really is the path to freedom. Even with your kids, you temporarily lost a couple of your kids and it caused a lot of problems. But eventually, just like with mine, eventually they do come around and they can say, "I'm glad you took that step. It was the right thing for you to do, Mom."

KARYN: The truth eventually comes out. I remember you saying that. The truth will come out. That was such an encouragement when my daughter wasn't talking to me to know that she would see it for herself. That is exactly what happened.

NATALIE: Because these guys don't change. They are the same. You are changing and your kids will change and grow, but just because you guys do that and most of humanity, generally speaking, follows that trajectory, these particular kinds of people don't change. That is what makes them pathological. You can always count on them staying consistent, staying the same, and eventually they are found out. You just can't live a successful life when you are unable to take a hard look at your behaviors and change them.

KARYN: Exactly. In fact, my daughter has shared with me some of the things that he has said to her, and it was stunning because they were the same expressions he used with me. He doesn't even have new verbiage. He is saying the exact same things. They are stuck in a rut in that pattern of abuse themselves. The only way to get out of that is to pull yourself out of the equation.

NATALIE: Thank you so much for sharing your story with us and making yourself vulnerable. I know this is going to be really encouraging to people at various stages of their own journey. For those of you listening, thanks for listening. Until next time, fly free!