

## BUT I DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE!

*Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [Flyingfreenow.com](http://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 91 of the Flying Free Podcast!

Today I want to talk about hurting people. No, I'm not going to teach you how to hurt people. Most of us aren't interested in doing that. In fact, most of us stay stuck because we DON'T want to hurt anyone.

We believe if we take steps to set boundaries or to say "no" or to get free, we will hurt all the people, and we don't want to do that.

Most of the women I work with are coming from a stance of love. They love God and they love their families and they love their church and they love their friends. Their love is responsible and steady. These are the kinds of women that people trust, and for good reason. They show up because they genuinely care.

They don't show up only when it's convenient for them or only when they've got an urge to be nice out of the blue. They don't show up for others because they've got an agenda and they want something in return from the other person.

They show up because they care. These are not the kinds of people who neglect their relationships or their responsibilities.

Now, you take a woman like that after she's been burned over and over again by people who DO take advantage of hard working folks and you begin to educate her in the importance of taking care of her own personhood, of setting those healthy boundaries, and of being able to say "no" when necessary so she can say "yes" to her priorities, and you know what happens?

She sees the truth and she wants to do something about it, but what is her NUMBER ONE CONCERN? You know what she tells me?

"I know I need to make some changes in my life, but I don't want to hurt anyone."

She feels the burden of responsibility to manage her husband's personal life. To

manage her children's education. To manage all their emotions. To manage their physical health and well-being. To manage their schedules. To manage her volunteer work at church. To manage her friendships. To manage her home.

And if she says "no" to any of it and lets go of all that responsibility in order to place it where it belongs, people will get hurt. Her husband will miss his appointments. Her kids won't do their homework. Her friends will get upset that she isn't calling them to check in and see how they are doing. Her church will have a huge gap in that ministry she was running, and people will suffer. Her home will never get clean, and the family members will have to wear dirty clothes to work and school because their servant won't do their laundry anymore.

So. Much. Suffering. And it will be all. Her. Fault.

My first thought is that this woman has a ton of power, doesn't she? She runs her life and the lives of everyone around her. If you take her out of their equation, their life falls apart.

But my second thought is that she has given away all her own power to them. They run her life for their own agendas.

So which is it? Does she have all the power or do they? And who is really hurting here?

I think they've all given their power away, and I think they are all hurting as a result. But each one of those people are NOT hurting because of someone else. They are hurting because they have given someone else responsibility for their own happiness and wellbeing. And when human beings do that, they become disillusioned and unhappy.

It's impossible to be free when you give your freedom away.

You guys, the scenario I just described is how the world seems to operate everywhere you go. Everyone wants to control everyone else, but nobody wants to do the one simple thing that could break the spell, and that's to control your own self. Nothing else. Just yourself.

I'd like to propose a new way of life. Now, just know that most folks will never buy into this way of life. It goes against our brain's programming. You see, we've literally been programmed from birth to want to either, one — take control over others, or two — to give up control to purchase love and acceptance. We do one or the other, and sometimes we do both.

But what if we took control of the one life God DID give to us to control, our own, no matter what anyone else says (and believe me, those who love to control will have total snit fits when you take back control of your ONE life. THEY want it for themselves). And Christian people will use Christianese to shame you for taking your life away from them. They'll tell you that you are selfish, rude, unloving, stingy, and all the bad things. But just know that they are simply distraught that you've taken away their little plaything, you, and it's emotionally upsetting for them. It will take them some time to recover, but you wouldn't believe the resiliency of the human spirit.

THEY WILL SURVIVE! And they may even grow up a bit in the process, which is always a good thing for the world.

So let's just say you take back your life, and YOU decide what you will and won't do and when. YOU decide what you can offer and what you cannot offer. YOU decide when to say "yes" or "no."

And then, what if you let THEM manage their own drama around all of that? Let them make your life mean whatever they want it to mean. It's all fine. They get to be who they are. They get to have their own rulebook for how life is supposed to work, just like you do.

Here's the thing. You may discover that some of your friends are not a good match for you. They want you to be blue and you are a yellow. You've been trying to be blue for them for so dang long, but now you decide to be who you are. Yellow. And they don't like it. Yellow doesn't work for them and their agendas. So are they going to be hurt that you've withdrawn your blueness from them and caused them deep upset and distress? Will they accuse you of changing and hurting their feelings?

Yes, they might. And that could be upsetting to you if you buy into their manual. You see, in their manual for life, you must be blue. So if you believe that their manual is the master manual for all people everywhere, you may believe that you are responsible for their emotional well-being. This will cause you to feel guilty, and you may go back to being blue to ensure their state of emotional equilibrium.

BUT WHAT IF you decided their manual belongs to THEM? What if you knew that their manual is their own programming based on all of the things they have heard, seen, felt, experienced, and learned throughout their life and there's not much you can do about that? They get to have their manual. They get to believe whatever they want to believe. And that's their freedom and their choice.

Does that mean that their pain over you choosing to be your beautiful blue self is your fault? That you are somehow responsible for their emotional angst over your blueness?

Nope. And nope. And more nope.

You see, we can't cause pain in someone else when we are just being ourselves. If they experience pain, it's because of what they are making your choices mean for them.

Let's bring this into real life, okay? Because we're not really talking about blue and yellow here.

Let's say that you decide to stop working in the church nursery because you've got your hands full at home with a two, four, six, and eight-year-old. The nursery coordinator, who is also a good friend of yours, makes that mean that you are not a very good friend. Now she has to find a replacement for you and it's hard to find people who want to be good Christians and serve in the nursery.

What I'm saying is that's okay. She can make it mean that. And her feelings might be hurting, and that's okay too. The reality is you love her and the church nursery and no, you can't work there for a few years. You can totally love and say NO. And they can totally be mad or sad or bad about it.

And if their emotions cause them to shut you out because they now believe you are no longer a good friend match for them, then so be it. You've lost a bad friend match, but you've gained your sanity and peace of mind IF you can let their emotions belong to them and not take responsibility for them yourself.

Here's another example. You tell your kids that if they don't do their Saturday morning chores, they don't get to go to the park that afternoon for a picnic.

They may whine and complain about what a strict parent you are and how you run them like slaves and take advantage of free labor. They may talk about you behind your back and conspire to ruin your reputation in the neighborhood. But you know that they get to make your rules mean whatever they want to make them mean. And you're going to love them anyway.

Here's another example. You separate from your husband and your teenagers make that mean you want the whole family to burn to the ground. Of course you don't. You have avoided taking this step for years now, hoping and praying for a miraculous transformation, but as you enter your forties and consider the rest of your life, you

know you won't survive unless you do something. You see your kids growing up and getting ready to launch their own lives, and you realize you haven't ever launched yours. Er, you tried, but it got shot down by the guy you're now choosing to separate from. Your teenagers get to have their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions about all of that. That's okay. But it doesn't mean you have to think, believe, or feel the same way or you're a bad mom. Parents and kids often think about life in very different ways. That's normal.

You see, once you can normalize some of the drama, you can be more objective about it. You don't have to go deep-diving into the same pool of emotions your kids are swimming in. You know, as an adult, that your kids will recover (more quickly than you might imagine) and learn through this family disruption.

Life for your kids is going to be just as hard AND just as wonderful as it was for you. They will have horrible things happen to them. And they will have amazing things happen to them. And that's the human experience. So let them have their human experience. Your job is simply to love. Not to shield them from hurt. But to love them no matter what.

And that's the same with everyone else in your life. God didn't put you on planet Earth to protect all the humans from pain. But your brain really believes He did. Somehow, somewhere, your brain got wired with that belief, and now you need to decide if you want to keep that belief or let it go.

God put you on Earth to steward one life. Yours. And your job as a parent is to be an example of how to do that so your kids have a good role model to follow. So if you're always throwing yourself under the bus, saying "yes" to everyone, making sure everyone around you is pain-free at your expense, your kids MAY grow up either being just like you or exploiting others who are just like you.

And what we really want is for them to grow up taking care of and being personally responsible for themselves. When they do that, they will have so much mercy and grace and love for others because they will have lots of practice on themselves. That's how it works, my friends.

What I'd like to show you is that when you say "no" to something and then think, "I'm hurting everyone," you feel guilty. And when you feel guilty, you go out of your way to grovel and make up for what you just said "no" about and the result is that you end up hurting yourself. The one person you actually CAN control and take responsibility for.

Bottom line? If we have a pulse and venture out of our hidey holes, it is inevitable that we will rub someone the wrong way, look the wrong way, make the wrong choice according to someone else's manual, and they will make it mean that we have hurt them.

But the only way you actually, in reality, hurt anyone else, including yourself, is when you take their freedom to be responsible for their own lives away. That's how we hurt others here on planet Earth. We steal their personhood from them. Jesus never did that. And He never let anyone do that to Him. Oh, people called Him names and plotted against Him and ruined His reputation. And of course, they finally murdered him. But He never let them steal His identity or His autonomy to make His own choices and do what God called HIM to do. And He never forced anyone to do what HE wanted them to do either.

See Jesus? Let's be like Him.

Thanks for listening and until next time, fly free!