

The Flying Free Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 338 - Could You Be FRAMED in Family Court?

Heads up, friend: What you're about to read is a raw, unedited transcript straight from the robots. That means you'll find some weird words, funky punctuation, and moments that make you go, "Huh?" If you want the real experience (and to actually know what's going on), I recommend reading the polished article, listening to the full episode, or watching it on 1.5x speed with captions on. Your brain will thank you.

Natalie: Ever feel like the family court system is a rigged game and you are the one holding the empty bag. In this episode, I'm talking with Amy Polacco divorce coach, award-winning journalist and fellow survivor about why women must become the CEO of their divorce. We're pulling back the curtain on gender bias, spiritual abuse, and what really goes down in the courtroom.

So buckle up.

I have a guest with me, and you know what I forgot to ask you before we started, I forgot to ask you how you pronounce your last name, and this is notorious for murdering people's last names. It's Amy. She's got a really easy first name, Amy, and her last name is, can I try it and just see? Go ahead. Go for it.

Is it Polacco? Yes. Perfect. Oh my gosh, great. Okay. A awesome. Alright. Amy Flacco, she's a divorce coach and an award-winning journalist who's also a domestic abuse survivor through her Freedom Warrior coaching business, which I love the name of that by the way. She has guided hundreds of women out of toxic relationships and she empowers women to be, get this.

The CEO of their divorce, that is my favorite. She is a former full-time investigative reporter on television, and her work has been featured in all kinds of national publications, which I am not gonna go through here, but I'll put it in the show notes. She co-authored the book. It's called Framed Women in the Family Court Underworld, and this book exposes the gender bias crisis in our justice system.

And some of you who are listening to that. You're nodding your heads and going, oh my word. I'm so glad that someone is actually saying something about

this. So we're gonna get into her book a little bit. But first, Amy, welcome to the Flying Free Podcast.

Amy: Thank you so much. Yeah, I love what you do. I love your presence on Instagram, especially.

I was telling you, when I see your posts, it's like they speak to me and I think you are filling a void that was so needed. So I just have to say thank you. It's an honor to be here. Oh, thank you so much.

Natalie: Alright. Why don't you tell us a little bit about what you do and how you got into this kind of work.

Amy: Sure. Like so many women, Natalie, I am a Christian woman, right. I never thought I would be divorced. I took those vows seriously. And uh, I am divorced, not once, but twice. It's an exclusive club, right? That I just joined recently. Yeah. Yes. Congratulations. Congratulations. Um, I, you know, got divorced the first time, got remarried and that did not work out well.

I started a support group in my living room. You know, I live in Connecticut in this cute little like Norman Rockwell esque town. And I really thought I'd be the only person divorced. And then I met other women, right? And my home became a gathering place. Friends who had friends getting divorced would send them to Amy.

And I, what I saw in this room was magic, really when women helped and supported other women through this. I just thought more women need this. It is this huge void, right? I think we've been kept in the dark about divorce a lot, and I couldn't look away from my own experiences. At one point I was. In post-divorce litigation in family court with both ex-husbands at the same time?

Natalie: Oh my gosh,

Amy: yes. So that's awful. It was, uh, one for, you know, problems we had following the agreement, let me put it that way. And the other took me to court for vaccinating my son, who desperately wanted to be vaccinated during COVID. Uh, I actually wrote a Newsweek column on that. My ex-husband won't let me vaccinate my son, but.

When I saw what happened in family court, I had a retired judge brag about how much money they were making in front of me. The type of treatment from attorneys, and I'm not saying all are bad. I have friends who are attorneys and

there are some great ones, but this system is an upside down world and I couldn't look away.

You know, Angelina Jolie has said the same thing after her experience in family court. So that's when I, I started my coaching business and. In addition, I thought, you know what? I'm gonna dust off these reporting and investigative reporting skills I have and shine a light on this. And so I started writing, you know, instead of being on tv, I've written for Ms.

HuffPost, the independent NBC news, different places about this, because like you said in the beginning, women have got to be educated and you do a great job of that too for

Natalie: people. Are people in, are these news places? Are they interested in these stories, by the way, or not really? Because I wonder why more people don't, why there aren't more, why there's more journalism around this.

Amy: I think that's an excellent question, and I think it is an uphill battle. I get emails and calls and texts and social media messages on a daily basis from people who want me to tell their story, right? And understandably, and these are all valid stories, um, I'm not a full-time reporter, so I get to as many as I can, but a lot of the news outlets, I won't say all because many of them have run my pieces.

Are reluctant to cover family court? I think, look, there's a stereotype in our society that hurts those involved in it, right? That it's an ugly divorce, it's a Jerry Springer situation. It's high conflict. We don't like to call it high conflict. There's usually a high conflict person and somebody who just wants to get divorced.

Yeah. So I think a lot of times they see it as, oh, it's so messy. We don't wanna get involved in it. I'm tremendously grateful to MS. Magazine for covering and allowing me to write about family court in a way that many other outlets have not. There have been some, ProPublica has done great work. HuffPost has run some of my pieces.

I. But I think that there, there is a reluctance for every piece. I always tell people that I get published probably 10, you know, died on the drawing room floor. Like never made it anywhere because places don't want to venture into this world, which is unfortunate. It's a huge story, and when it finally breaks on a national and international level, I think it'll be like, me too.

I do. Yeah. Yeah. I was

Natalie: gonna say. I feel like there needs to be some kind of catalyst to, um, to open, to break it open, to break it wide open. 'cause it's, it's a story kind of like the me Too thing that just isn't, it's like, it's like a, it's getting all this pressure that's building up and building up and gosh, it's, it's a problem that needs to be solved, that's for sure.

Okay, so another question I had that we're kind of deviating from what we were gonna talk about, but I just have so many questions. Um. Maybe we'll get to this later. So tell me if we will. I wonder if you ever get stumped helping women 'cause they are up against all odds and sometimes do they just have to radically accept that?

Like, this is, this is it. It's a, it's a losing battle in some cases, and sometimes you just have to pick up the pieces of what's left over and try to make the best of it. Do. Does that ever, like, what do you do when you get a, when you come across a case and you're trying to help a woman and it's like.

You're hitting walls left and right.

Amy: Absolutely. I say all the time, it is the hardest part of what I do, Natalie, especially when I have a new, I have a lot of women coming to me who are thinking about divorce. Right? And we all grew up thinking the justice system is for us. Right? I'll just go in and tell my side of the story.

I may not get everything I want, but it's gonna be pretty fair. 'cause that's what I've been told all these years. And I'm paying taxes for this system too. And what a rude awakening it is for all of us to realize. Oh my gosh. It's the Twilight Zone. So when I have to. Break that reality to clients. It's heartbreaking.

And then also when I have people come to me, I just had a woman, uh, last week, you know, couple hundred thousand dollars in, nothing has happened. Doesn't, her attorney's hardly communicating with her, and she's destitute and her husband makes. You know, 10 times more than she does, and I often have to say, I wish I had a magic wand to change the system, but I don't right now.

Right. I hope, hope you join us in our movement to change it, but let's do what we can. Obviously, it's always advantageous if somebody comes to me before they've hired an attorney, before they're in the process so they can strategize and anticipate. What we call the abuser's playbook. There is an mo they follow.

Yeah. And if you know their game, you can stay a step ahead of them. But you know, to your point, I think there are some things you can do sometimes.

Women are with the wrong attorney and it's scary to change. That's one of the many, many mistakes I made myself. That's why I'm on a mission to prevent women from making the mistakes I did.

I thought, oh, how can I switch? He already knows my case. How can I, looking back, I should have switched. I was with the wrong person who told me they knew narcissist and they did not. So, yeah. Uh, you know, I think having a guide, someone like you or me who understands the system. Strategically. I think that's an education point we have right now because women think I gotta go out and hire an attorney, hire a coach, and a strategist who's gonna help you hire the right attorney.

Natalie: Yes. Yes. I think what I'm seeing a lot of times for women who are thinking about getting a divorce is their, they, they'll come into the our forum and they'll be like. I think my husband, I'm pretty sure that my husband will be, you know, will be able to do mediation. I'm pretty sure that he'll be more cooperative than what, and I'm like, was this how he showed up in your relationship?

Just ready to cooperate with you? Ready to have a meeting of the minds? Well, no, but I think now, and I'm just like, no, expect conflict. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't. Cases where like my second divorce actually went really smoothly. All right. So that doesn't mean that they're, but also he wasn't like, he wasn't, uh, the same kind of person that my first husband was.

But at the same time, you know, your, you know your husband, you can profile him. You know what he's going, how he showed up in the marriage. He's going to show up that. Times a hundred in the divorce. They don't like that you're divorcing them, so they're going to try. They're gonna get mean and nasty, and you should be prepared for that.

And then if it doesn't end up getting mean and nasty, great, but at least you had all the pieces in place. For if it takes, there's way too many women that come back and they're like, oh my gosh, I had, I really thought that mine was gonna be different. And that is really the, the victim mindset it that we get when we are stuck in that, um, that fog and the believing the best and just, we can't wrap our brains around how someone could show up in this kind of way, but.

They do. Oftentimes we don't really unhook from that until we're actually really out and we've got some space, you know, and then we look back and go, oh wow, that was really bad. I didn't even realize how bad it was until I got out.

But, um, and you're still kind of in it when you're trying to think, should I get divorced?

Should I not get divorced? But I'm glad you brought that up. I think you're right. I think people need to get the right people, the right support in place first before they file for divorce. And then those, that support is gonna help them walk through the process in the most strategic way possible.

Amy: Right.

I think we're going to save them money too, right? Oh, totally. I love how you, I love how you said that, that you have to profile the husband. I say to clients all the time, I want to get to know your husband first session. We're gonna cover a lot of things. And I wanna, and it sounds weird, but I'm gonna tell you why.

Because I wanna know what makes him tick. I wanna know what you can leverage. I wanna know how he's likely going to behave to your point in this divorce. And I think. You hit the nail on the head, Natalie, is we as women, we want everything to calm. Who doesn't? Right? Yeah. How many times through this process, it's why it takes seven times on average for an abuse victim to leave is, we're bargaining.

Maybe it's not so bad. Maybe I can stay all these things and we don't wanna rock the boat. I often tell my clients a story of how I didn't wanna rock the boat, things were bad in my second marriage, and I. Knew, okay. There was this money in an account and I probably should have gone and taken half out, but I was scared.

Yeah. I was scared. If I did, it was going to cause World War iii and I vacillated back and forth and Oh, I was, I never did things went south. I went to the bank. I will never forget it. I went there and they told me there was nothing in the account. Yep. Yeah. I couldn't believe it. I'll never forget the teller printing it, like old fashioned man, a slip of paper and.

Pushing it across the counter to me. Zero. So we as women, what I, you know, we don't wanna scare people and we're not trying to create conflict that isn't there. We just know from our experience that while we're sitting here hoping for the best, if you're dealing with a coercive controller, narcissistic abuser, they're taking five steps ahead.

That's right. While you're sitting there. While you're sitting there, and you know, this probably, you know, really goes for Christian women because we believe in

the good, in people we. Our good people. I'm not saying we're all perfect, but you know, we live our lives in a certain way. Right?

Natalie: Yeah. Well, and oftentimes our husbands are claiming to be these godly Christian men and a godly Christian men.

Man wouldn't take all the money and leave his wife destitute Woody. Absolutely he would. I watched it happen hundreds and hundreds of times. All these godly Christian men out there. Taking money away from their wives and leaving them destitute. It happens every single day. So just because your husband claims to be a Christian and you're going to a nice church, doesn't mean that you're, they're not gonna stick it to you as soon as you try to get out.

Yeah. Okay. So divorce, I remember, you know, I, I, the only. Time I, when I would think about divorce before I got divorced the first time, all I could think about was court and then TV shows. And it felt really scary. And also I had read this book, uh, I think it's in Created to be his help Me, and it's this really conservative book that I had dogeared and I think in, I think it's in that book that Debbie Pearl says something about, you know, if you get divorced, you're gonna end up living in a trailer park eating cat food.

And so I just, I was terrified like the. Not only would I make God mad and he'd probably send me and my kids to hell, but also my life on Earth was going to be hell for the rest of my life if I got divorced. So, and also I don't wanna go to court. And also I don't know what any of the legal terms. And also I don't know how to talk to an attorney and it feels like this great big mystery.

So what would you say, what do you think every woman who's contemplating this needs to know about divorce that they don't know right now?

Amy: I think you said it right at the beginning. You have got to be the CEO of your own divorce to protect yourself. I mean, putting your head in the sand. And letting fear paralyze you.

And look, we've been there. We know it's hard, but it's not going to end well for you. You are going to kick yourself later. How many times I kick myself about the money? You know, so many of my clients kick themselves about things they've done. Learn from us. Don't make the mistakes. Yeah. Right. Yeah. And that's why I think back to when I made these mistakes, I was in an emotional state, right?

There's three parts of divorce, legal, financial, and emotional. And as an attorney friend always says to me, emotional is the most important part. We've got to get that in check. So you make the right strategic decisions for you and your kids that could affect you the rest of your life. Yeah. So. I think it's having a buddy to lock arms with that shows you, okay, we're gonna take this baby step every, every week.

Right? I think people probably ask you, like, they ask me, what's the difference between you and a therapist? Well, therapists are wonderful. It's not that we don't get into emotions, but we're strategic and we're looking forward like, okay, this is what we're gonna do this week. Right? Because I've seen so many women.

In denial and then call me in crisis when the, you know, what is hitting the fan. Yeah, right. We don't want you in that situation. We want you in a power position. And the way you do that, and it doesn't mean that you're creating World War iii, just means you're being smart. You could do a lot of these things in secret.

Um,

Natalie: yes. It's like, um, a therapist is really good for helping you dig into why, why you find yourself in this situation in the first place. I. And I think a coach is really helpful with helping you get out of that situation. Yeah, exactly. Well said. Yes. Okay, so you're a reporter. You've written for all of these national publications, what have you observed and exposed about our family court system, and I'm also wondering how do you feel like it's moved the dial?

Do you feel like it's moved the dial at all? What? What kind of feedback do you get?

Amy: From your work? I think it has moved the dial, not just my work, but many others. Obviously there's been some great ProPublica work and other places. I do think it's caused more awareness because I think if you interviewed a hundred people out on the street, Natalie, they would say, oh, women always get custody and family courts are preferential to women.

The data shows otherwise. Yeah. The United Nations Human Rights Council spoke out in 2023 saying there's gender bias in our court system, so they didn't make that up. There's been a study by Joan Mayer of the George Washington University Law Center that proves only 41% of women are believed when they report abuse in custody cases.

Oh. So some of the things I've exposed are the gender bias. I. I wrote an article for Ms. Magazine about the misogynistic tropes in our family court system, and they run deep. We used a picture of Glenn Close from Fatal Attraction in the movie because women are constantly painted hysterical, unstable, and out for revenge, like a spurned lover over and over again.

So before you even walk into the courtroom. That idea about you could be circulating, and we don't say this to scare women, we say it to prepare you. Yeah. So you don't give them any ammunition that allows your spouse or any other player in this crazy world to paint you in that way. And another thing I've exposed is that.

A lot of women don't get due process in our family court system. That's a term we're hearing a lot in the news lately. Right. In regard to immigrants, which is, yeah, a very legitimate and important conversation. But I've often said people don't realize women don't get a chance to present their side of the story.

I have a coaching client who lost custody of her children. Has, she has so much evidence of abuse and that she was framed really, and she has not been allowed to even present it. How is that okay in America? So, uh, those are some of the things that, uh, I've been working to raise alarms about.

Natalie: So you, one, you said you, you mentioned that you could read a story from your book framed about that highlights the spiritual abuse that's also going on and playing a role in all of this.

Do you have, do you have that available?

Amy: Absolutely, yes. Can I tell you a little bit about the book first? Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. To speak for people ly for sure. So I wrote this book with Dr. Christine Ola, who is a course of control expert and does parenting coaching. It's called Framed Women in the Family Court Underworld.

And we say at the bottom Know the Abusers Playbook. So it's a compilation of 22 stories from around the world, the US, Canada. The UK and Australia and women tell us not just their family court nightmares, we've changed their names, but these are true stories. But also we ask them, how did you meet this person?

Right? Um, Dr. Romney, who I'm sure a lot of your listeners know, she wrote Our Forward and Tina Swen from One Mom's Battle wrote our epilogue. We're

very grateful to them. But, um, I wanna read you a little bit from. Lucy's story. She's from the United States and her chapter is actually called spiritual Abuse.

And just a little background, she met her husband out of college, out west. Uh, he was a hedge fund manager from New York. You know this glitzy guy who promised this amazing life. She was young and she took off on this life with him, but things really changed. They moved all over the country. And, um, I just wanna read this section about the spiritual abuse in particular.

She said, so every Sunday, whether it be the east coast, the west coast, or on the road, our church attendance was required until I found myself immersed in a well disguised Orthodox Southern Baptist, homophobic, patriarchal, evangelical church. I made a couple of friends and was thankful for the social relief, but something was off.

The saccharin camouflage began to chip away, and underneath I discovered a system of controlling, silencing, and surveilling women by the leaders of the church. One sermon explained why God wants wife to submit to and obey their husbands, leaving him to make decisions for the family, and granting him complete access to our texts, emails, social media, accounts, and bodies.

A friend convinced my abuser of the benefits to waking me up in the night as often as needed. To resolve festering resentment, real or imagined, my abuser would support and counsel young men who had taken a vow of chastity before marriage. At one point, even doing a group sex fast in support of their brothers in Christ via the church, he was able to institutionalize and justify his control and cruelty.

The expectation of domestic servitude extended beyond the home. Into the church community requiring women to not only meet the demands of their husbands, but those of the body of believers as well. And it had to be done joyfully because women must be pleasant in order to make insecure men feel comfortable.

For years, I denied myself hood and learned how to slip into the shadows of my abuser's hatred. I will tell you that she. Ultimate loses custody of her children because he calls the police and frames her as the domestic abuser. So she left her home. I mean, she lost everything. She is in contact with her, her children now, uh, but it has been a long, long road and she has a rap sheet now.

Very hard to get a job

Natalie: right? Absolutely insane. So women can have all of this evidence. They won't listen to it, but a man doesn't have to have any evidence. He can just frame her and she ends up with getting in trouble and losing her kids. That's

Amy: insane. She's not the only one in the book who has that happened?

We have women, many women who've lost custody tables were turned. I have a client who is a top level executive of a company we all know. Her husband had her arrested and he, she shares in here, waved from the window, like laughing, like, oh my gosh, Jack Nicholson. Kind of like, ha ha, I got you. So it can happen to anyone.

And I love to dispel that myth, right? That the, the abuse victim is down and out, asked for it. Don't get me started on this whole Cassie Diddy thing. I wrote an article for HuffPost that was published a week or two ago, and people have spoken out saying, well, she should have done this. And she should, you know, they don't understand coercive control.

They don't understand these relationships, the financial abuse. Right. They, yeah, they get you in a corner and they control you. Even the things you need to just survive. Food, clothing, shelter.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Wow. So, so I just wanna say this book is a, it's a blend of personal stories and research, right? And it reveals how family courts can become complicit in post-separation abuse.

Even so with life altering consequences for both the mother, the mothers, and the children. I, you know, I'm wondering too, like long term, what are the. What is the hope that these moms have? The ones that have lost their kids or have very limited contact with their kids? Have you, I don't know how far in the past some of these stories took place, but I'm just to give, I always wanna, I always wanna help people have a little bit of hope, like even if this world just strips you of everything, what

kids grow up. Kids grow up and I have, I personally have seen stories, long-term stories that have ended up being heal, very healing and very life-giving in the long run. But, um, a lot of pain in between. I'm just wondering if you've seen any of these stories unfold long-term or where the moms did end up getting their children back or even in adulthood when their children's kind of phased out of that being underage.

Absolutely.

Amy: We never lose hope. It's something our, my co-author and I talk about a lot that there is a deep unbreakable attachment, right. Between a mother and children. Yes. And even if a system is tragically keeping you apart, there is that connection. There is that string between you that this bond. And yes, we have stories in here of hope where mothers have been reunited some.

Have said they've used this term, they've let go of the rope for now, you know, and accepted the situation, but it doesn't mean that they're not trying. Some of them have limited visitation. This coaching client who lost custody, I guess it was probably about six months ago now. Every time I have a session with her and she tells me about her visitation with her children.

It's so obvious that she's the psychological parent, that these bonds are not broken and the evaluator is starting to see it and the evaluator is reporting back to the court. And I said, this is a glimmer of hope that there are good people in this system too, who say, you know what? This is wrong. These children need to be with their mother.

I mean, we've had this tragic case in the state of Washington, right, of the. Three children who were killed. Yes. And you know, there, there's always that situation and, and sometimes people misconstrue what a lot of us are saying in this field. We're not saying that dads shouldn't have visitation. We're saying that anyone, anyone who is a danger and has been shown to be an abuser.

Should not have contact or very limited contact with children. We have to put the children first. You know, some children are coming out and speaking out. There's a whole movement called the children are coming and maybe that,

Natalie: maybe that will end up being the catalyst. Sorry, didn't we interrupt? But yes, that

Amy: absolutely.

And then the other thing, which is a, a beacon of hope is we have a whole call to action in the back of our book. What can you do? We say yes. We hope you get ticked off when you read this book. So much so that you wanna join us and you wanna join this movement for change. I would tell everybody that you can make a difference by, you know, going and joining the National Safe Parents Organization.

It's trying to pass Hayden's Law, which was passed nationally, has to be passed on every. State level, and there are several states who have passed it already. It

does many great things. It restricts expert testimony to those who are truly qualified. It limits the use of these reunification camps and therapies that rip kids from protective parents.

And it does provide evidence-based training to judges and court personnel that includes coercive control. So we've seen in cases that where judges feel the pressure, the public outcry. It does make a difference.

Natalie: Okay. Yeah, I was gonna say, um, is there anything else then that, that we could do to help stop women from being wrongfully accused?

I

Amy: think a lot of what we're talking about today, educating yourself and knowing the reality of our system before you walk in is going to put you light years ahead. I think women have not gotten these warnings or these tips for. Decades and decades. So I think that's number one education. Like we said, being in the driver's seat and knowing what you're walking into.

I always say to clients, we're gonna prepare for the worst and we're gonna work for the best. To your point, hey, if, if mediation works great, but we're not gonna forget that if this turns south because we've seen behavior in him or past behavior. You've got all your ducks in a row, right? Right. And you maybe have a litigator ready to go and you have evidence and, and all of these things.

So I think that is really important. Finding a team who can support you and understand you and truly does understand. Narcissism, coercive control, domestic abuse, and that it doesn't have to be physical. Some people give that lip service to get you and your retainer, and then once they've got you kind of like an abuser, once they get you in marriage, the mask falls off.

Then they suddenly have the amnesia. They're not really going to do all these things they told you they were going to do. Yeah. So I think finding and vetting an attorney through a coach through. Asking someone who has had them represent them successfully, who has a case similar to yours. You probably see this too, Natalie.

It drives me crazy when I see in different Facebook groups. I'm headed for divorce. You know, something egregious has happened. I need a shark attorney right away. And all people start putting names in. We don't know who these people are. Yeah, I hired the wrong attorney because a divorced woman I know gave me the name of someone that.

On me. I err erroneously thought she had used in her divorce. He was just a buddy of her boyfriend. Okay. It was a, you know, he, he was a very well-known attorney in my area. Yeah. Don't get me wrong, but I trusted it and later realized, whoa, I should have done a lot more homework.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So I, what I'm hearing you communicate is that when we feel powerless, a lot of times we will.

We make decisions from our, from being in a, from, from being in a place of panic, either. I know some people, when we panic, we hide. We just run and hide and we don't, we don't wanna look at it and we don't wanna think about it. Other people, when we panic, we fight or we, or we freak out, or we say lots and lots and lots of words.

And either one of those things can be not a good thing when you're dealing with this whole, um. Custody and court and all of that. Whereas if you feel, if you are in a place of power now, you can think more clearly, you can think more strategically. And I think what you're saying is that if people have someone in their back pocket that's helping them not to panic, not to run and hide and also not to freak out and, and blah, throw up all over everything that they can that, that they can now go into this.

From a place of, um, strategy and confidence, and that's gonna make a difference. If you're gonna make a difference in your divorce, that's the best way to make a difference.

Amy: Right? Exactly. And guess what? You're gonna save some money doing it that way too. Yes, because here's the thing, every time you freak out and panic and call your attorney, they're charging you.

When you get that first bill, women are in sticker shock. Right? Wait a minute, when I. Called my attorney because my ex was late with the kids. I got charged \$700 for reading that email. Taking that, yes. Yeah. I mean, it ticks up a lot of things. You can settle with a coach, you can keep things under control.

And I think also I. And this goes to our societal conditioning. So I don't blame anyone because I did this same thing myself. You think, okay, I hired an attorney few, I can relax. I can put my feet up a little bit. There's probably a lot of other chaos going on with kids and emotions and everything. I'm gonna let them handle the case.

You can't do that. You just cannot do that because you have to stay on them. You have to light a fire under them. I often use this analogy of they have a stove with 80 burners on it, and those are their cases and they're only dealing with the one that's boiling. Exactly. The one that's

Natalie: boiling over. Right.

So you've got, we

Amy: gotta keep you there or we've gotta find a way to, to do that. Uh, so. Yeah, I think it's understanding how the system works.

Natalie: Yeah. I just wanna read a, a little quote from your book towards the beginning. It says, um, for this reason, this book is crucially important. It matters more that you recognize these dynamics than necessarily trust the courts to identify these patterns.

So you need to recognize these dynamics. We don't trust the courts to, to identify them without fail. Every client I have ever clinically worked with as they traversed a divorce or separation from a narcissistic person has uttered the same words. I feel insane. This book may help you develop better strategies with an attorney or advocate or shed more light on what you are experiencing to other people who care about you.

So I'm guessing that this book, um. Through the stories, will they also get some ideas of like way things to avoid even?

Amy: Absolutely. Okay. Every story is a cautionary tale. Okay. And, uh, you know, Dr. Romney did an amazing job with our forward talking about the divorce industrial complex and understanding the reality of it.

But after each story, there are notes from either me or Dr. Ola about. You know, what can, what can we learn from this story? What does research show us? And you know, what is, what is the writer themselves telling us? In many cases, they're saying, I shouldn't have done this, or I should have done that. Learn from me.

I mean, these women, even though we changed their names, we're still really brave to put their stories out there in a book. It's not like social media. We can't take it down, you know? Yeah. And, but they wanted to pay it forward and help. Other people, and like I said earlier, we hope that young women and men too read this book because.

Before you get married, you know, you should be looking for these red flags that maybe many of us were never taught. Right? And it's not our fault. We didn't recognize them. So you can see through the courtship things that bubble up and you can learn from in every one of these cases. Um, can I read just the end of Lucy's story because I thought she did such an incredible job of summing up why she.

Decided to share it. Okay. Yes, she said. I tell my story with the hope that it can demonstrate the devastation that occurs in families when the institutions that were set up to protect the vulnerable are broken. My situation exemplifies the need for change within the family court system and serves as a cautionary tale.

Women are equipped with strong intuition that can either be nurtured or silenced. In the fog of youth promise and romance, it's easy to ignore our internal warning systems and get swept away. But I swear upon my soul that our bodies know, even if we convince ourselves that fear and butterflies can't coexist, they can.

And you can long for a life with someone dangerous. Nurture your voice and find a way to get strong so they can't dismantle the gifts you have brought into the world. Making ourselves small to accommodate someone's rage does not end well. I had to lose everything to learn that, but that doesn't have to be your story.

Natalie: Hmm. That's very well put. Wow. So this book is called Framed Women in the Family Court, underworld and I, it's an amazing book. I highly encourage people to get it. I, I'm really glad that you came on here to share. About this book, this important book. Also though you have, you have other places that people can find you.

Why don't you tell us where they can find your work and what you do exactly to help women?

Amy: Sure, and I'll just say, we often say about the book framed Natalie, it's not a beach read, but it's a must read. Okay. Yeah. First of all, you can find me on Instagram at Freedom Warrior Tribe. I have a free support group for women called Strong Savvy Women on Facebook, and I do have a proactive playbook for divorce, which is a digital.

Kind of, you know, playbook for women because I think it's about time. We have one with spreadsheets that you can put things into, you know, your marital history, things you can prepare to save money with your attorney. And I have a

full fledged course divorce Decoded, where I devoted a whole module to family court warnings because I wanted to put everything in my course that I felt.

I never got, I thought, what did I need to know that I just didn't know. Yeah. And so I think that. All of us are in this together, uh, educating women and, um, as a Christian woman, I, I support and, and applaud everything you're doing. So thank you for having me on here. Yeah.

Natalie: Do you also do one-on-one coaching if someone wanted Oh, yes, I do.

Hire you. And, and where can they find that help? Do you have a website?

Amy: Yes, I have a website. Thank you. Okay. [Freedom warrior.info](http://Freedomwarrior.info). I do free 15 minute coaching consultations, and yes, I do one-on-one coaching with, some are thinking about divorce, some in the process and some are post-divorce, still processing what happened, dealing with co-parenting with a narcissist and dealing with post-judgment issues and post-separation abuse.

Okay,

Natalie: beautiful. Thank you so much, Amy, for coming on the Flying Free Podcast and sharing your work, your life's work, which is so, so important. With the people who are listening, and thank you for listening. Those of you who are tuning in this week, thanks so much for listening, and until next time, fly free.