

The Flying Free Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 343 - Out of the Poisoned Pond: Jennie's Story

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: Today we are gonna hear a survivor story. Her name is Jennie and she spells her name the way my mom and my daughter, who I named after my mom spell their names. Do you run into that spelling very often? I don't see it very often.

Jennie: No. No.

Natalie: Yeah, it's J-E-N-N-I-E. My mom was, she always dealt with people who called her Jeanie.

Do you deal with that? Sometimes? Yep, all the time. Jeanie, my daughter does too. Anyway, it's Jennie and she has been a member, I think since 2021. Is that when you, do you know if when you joined?

Jennie: I think it was bigger than that. I think it was 18. When did you start?

Natalie: Did you start out in Flying Free? Yes. Yeah.

Okay. And you've been in Flying higher than for four years? I think. Several years, yes. Yeah. Wow. Okay. So. Jennie has a story to share. Let's dive in and hear it. Why don't we first talk about how and when you first noticed that something was off in your relationship?

Jennie: Well, uh, we began dating, my ex-husband and I at, we were 15, we were married by 20.

Um, we didn't argue about anything. It was a seemingly perfect relationship, and yet, one year into our marriage, almost exactly, he had an affair while on a

business trip. And, uh, this wasn't just like, you know, he went out and, uh, had. And to my relations with somebody. That was it. It was, he actually fell in love, which blew my mind.

I was heartbroken. And, um, were you guys, can I just ask, were you guys Christians at this time or Oh yeah. Very much into the church. Okay. We met at bible camp. We were, uh, constantly in that environment. We played Pinnacle every Sunday night at church and I mean, it was a great, happy. Environment. Uh, and I was actually way counseling at a church camp, you know, when this evidently all started.

So, um, yeah, it was, it was truly shocking. And then a couple years later, he had a few more that weren't kind of falling in love, but just, um, affairs sort of thing, sexual encounters. Um, and I certainly saw those as problems, but I actually was. Not aware of the real character issues until much later and how this all played into our whole picture.

Natalie: Okay. So did your church know that he was doing this kind of stuff?

Jennie: Only very few people knew, and I hid that from everyone, and I was later labeled to later to unpack why I had not shared that with people, because it was a reflection on me. I believed that I, yeah.

Natalie: Did people communicate that in different ways?

The ones that you did disclose it to? Did they communicate that at all, or?

Jennie: No, nobody told us to get help. Nobody really, I mean, it just stayed hush hush. Um, so in

Natalie: your community, what did they think about adultery? Was this something that was accepted for men to do? No,

Jennie: certainly not. We are in very conservative church circles.

No, it was not accepted at all. Um, and

Natalie: yet, and yet he got away with doing it multiple times. He did. That's fascinating to me.

Jennie: He did. And one of them, the ones that knew was an elder, uh, a very kind man. I lived with his family for a year and a half before we got married, and yet he never. Addressed it either.

Natalie: That's so interesting. I always wonder if one of the reasons why some people don't address it is because they're struggling. They're doing the, I shouldn't say struggling. It's not a struggle. They're doing the same things. Yeah. Or they're covering up for someone else and so they feel would be a hypocrite for to come down on.

Him because they're, it's something they're either doing in secret or maybe they're into porn or cheating on their wife in other ways. Who knows? Yeah. I don't know. It's just something I wonder about. Yeah, so, so, okay, so that was, I mean, honestly that is a way of being abused. I think you're being taken advantage of, you're being used as his wife, but he's actually, you know, able to do, I mean, this is like tale as old as time, right?

The wife at is at home taking care of the bus business at home and the husband, but he gets to go off and do whatever he wants to with whoever, whomever he wants to, and gets away with it. And it's actually the wife's fault. If it all comes out, it's gonna be your fault because you weren't keeping, you must not have been keeping him happy at home.

So poor guy had to go out there and, you know, and it was naughty on him. Shame on him, but still. Yeah, you could do better as a wife. Right. Alright, so what are some of the other ways that you were emotionally and spiritually abused?

Jennie: Um, well, it's interesting because I really didn't connect until I was doing this podcast looking at all the ways, like I was gaslit during that time, uh, where, you know, I would say, here's the thing in your wallet, you know, that still has this girl's number on it.

And he was like, oh, I threw that all away. That was a mistake. And, you know, numbers in his phone. So I was like going, oh my gosh, I was, I was just. So blind to it, and again, just wanted to shove it underneath the rug. Um, you know, so, you know, I went on and got pregnant very shortly after that affair and, you know, just kind of life went on and it was shoved underneath the rug.

So, um, from there though, um, uh. I reached out, I believe I subconsciously was reaching out for something to protect us against him having affairs again. So I kind of got into the James Dobson thing. Uh, families that pray together,

stay together. If we could just stay close enough to God, everything would be okay.

And you know, we went on to get into much deeper into the, all the ultra conservative stuff, and that's where. The signs of abuse that I see that lead directly to, you know, the demise of our marriage, you know, began in those things because we really got into the hyper conservative things and the way that we dressed.

Um, you know, we wore dresses to the floor and just the, the ramped up patriarchy is what I was gonna say. Mm-hmm. Um, so we just went on and on from there. And, um, it got progressively worse as he had to. Um, be in control of everything that happened and I gradually, um, was relegated to the status of one of the children.

Yeah. As you know, what I could, what I could speak on, or the decisions I could make, everything was his, you know, as far as that goes. So, um, uh, I could tell you a few of the examples of things that happened. Yeah. Yeah. I do.

Natalie: And I'm also, I'm also a little bit curious, did he continue to have affairs? Is this something that was ongoing throughout your marriage or,

Jennie: I certainly believe so.

He traveled a lot. Um, can I, I can't prove most of them. Yeah. Okay. And I can't tell you how many business trips he was on that uh, you know, my goodness. He was the one designing all the phone systems and those phone things, and yet he could not get to a phone to check in with me. And, you know, he just couldn't sleep at the hotel.

So he went out to see movie. You know. Ah-huh. I met kids worrying about, you know, could you just at least let me know where you were and that you were safe while you were in this foreign place? You know, many times overseas and things. So, but again, I was really sticking my head in the sand. I was afraid to ask, and I think.

Too scared to ask. So Yeah. But he did have, um, I mean, one of his things was we can never talk about sex with the kids. They don't need to know anything until the night before they get married. Um, that has come back to haunt me. Uh, several of my kids tease me about it. Um, you know, it's a point of, you know, kind of fun teasing, but several of them, it's more serious and you know, that.

Um, was certainly not a wise thing to do. Um, he also required that the kids, as they got older, that 50% of everything they made go to him, supposedly us, and yet it wasn't to save for them when they were 18. It was, it was to us. And like we made plenty of money. We lived on a 30 acre farm, I'll say plenty of money.

Of course, we had to manage our money, but we, he was an engineer and we did well and, um, he, he, um. He, he just wanted to keep their money for the community. So, so not only were they not allowed to have jobs, that was another thing, a, a real job. But, you know, a daughter could teach piano and he wanted her to only charge, she's a Suzuki teacher.

She can teach, charge a whole lot of money, but he only wanted her to charge \$10 for these homeschooling families, of which he gets five. Oh my gosh. You gotta be kidding. So, and I thought with that again and again on those type of issues, you know, um, you know, appealing, appealing until he would just get to where he was really angry and this built up.

And then the more serious ones honestly were, um, dealing with my physical things. Um. You know, I, I had, had, I was having my sixth miscarriage and I'd had fever, I had had, sorry, been in bed for three weeks, just weak and getting weaker. Finally got fever. I just don't get fever unless I'm dying. And, um, I got a very low grade fever and I wanted to go.

I said, I just please take me in. And he, he said, no. And so, um, you know, I knew I was sick. I knew I wanted to be in, and he said they're just gonna do A DNC, which it, you know, is where they clean out your uterus and things. And I said, well, I might need that, you know, kind of from the miscarriage. And um, you know, I had to tell my daughter who was a driver at the time, you know, I'm giving him one hour.

And if not, you're taking me in 'cause I know I'm good for

Natalie: you.

Jennie: So, uh, he did agree within the hour. Finally, you know, reluctantly agreed to take me in. And, um, we went in and, uh, he, you know, I was, had an infection. The, the, the miscarriage was complete. I was nothing to do with the miscarriage, but I had some sort of infection in an ovary and a cyst and five antibiotics and several days in the hospital.

Natalie: So, unbelievable. You could have died if you had stayed home.

Jennie: Yes, yes. But it was him on

Natalie: septic, so. Mm-hmm. Wow.

Jennie: Okay. Yeah. Yep. So, um, anyway, yeah.

Natalie: Um, okay. So what made you decide to, and this was going on? I mean, it's, I mean, first year, first, you know, first affair, and then all of this stuff got worse and worse and worse as you're doing things that I bet you thought would make it better.

You know, if I'm a better wife, if I wear the long skirts, if I. Do the appeals, make the polite, respectful appeals, surely things will get better and they didn't. Sounds like they just got worse and worse and worse.

Jennie: They did. He his, his power or his need for power grew and to be, yeah. Of, um, I mean all the patriarchy stuff.

We were listening to Doug Phillips from Vision Forum. Uh, we had everything he put out and it was just, um, you know, there's little nuggets in there that sound so appealing. Yep. Um, to a lot of us still, that sounds so wholesome. Um, you know, men taking care, women and children first, you know, I mean, that sounds really good.

And you know, I guess if we're on a boat, maybe I do believe that, but, but the power and control that it, that, I don't know it fed in them was. Uh, not foreseeable. I didn't see that coming.

Natalie: Well, and I don't think that those were the teachings that actually were destructive women and children. Yes, men should, we should always be putting other people first and looking out for their best interest as well as our own.

But that's not what was happening. So they were paying lip service, like selling you a glass of lemonade with a rabbit shirt at the bottom. Exactly. It was, they were paying lip service to the truth, mixing in truth and good things with a whole bunch of horrible stuff. That was enabling. Really what it was, was programming women to be subservient and then programming men to be entitled.

Narcissistic assholes basically is what they were doing. And that's what your husband just got worse. And you know, I think anyone, I mean, if you're told like, yeah, what you're doing is good guy, you go, man, and then yes, get that

woman under control. She shouldn't be rising up and expressing herself. She shouldn't be, you know, that's a rebellious feminist.

So they're giving, and they're making it seem so wicked and so evil, and yet the whole thing is twisted on its head.

Jennie: Absolutely.

Natalie: Yeah. Okay. So, and I only wanna point that out because I know there's some people that are listening who are still involved in those kinds of things, and also feeling like there's something wrong here.

Jennie: Mm-hmm.

Natalie: That I'm taking all these classes, I'm reading all these great marriage books, great in air quotes, and yet things are getting worse. That's because they are designed to make it worse for you and to make it better for your entitled husband. They're designed that way. They're doing exactly what they're meant to do.

So the only way that you're gonna get outta that loop is if you actually get out of, if you stop listening to that propaganda, get out of that kind of programming. So what made you decide to get out, and what was that process like for you?

Jennie: Um, so I, I wouldn't necessarily call it a decision to get out, um, but I made a life altering decision to make a stand for my daughter.

Um, I think in my mind, I reasoned that she was 25, so therefore I was not standing against him with the children because she was clearly an adult. So after a whole lot of internal struggle, um, we decided to approach him. We'd approached him many times, but we decided to officially approach him and, and tell him that she was getting a job outside the home.

So she was not allowed to have that before. And again, she's 25. Mm-hmm. And, uh, when we did that, we knew, uh, he had built up and he was getting progressively. More angry. His empire was falling and we could tell we were walking on eggshell eggshells with everything we did. So we did, we, we planned the night and literally shaking, went in and, uh, she said to him, dad, I'm gonna get a job.

And um, he had said very nicely, no, you're not, not while you live here, you can leave and do that. And I knew that meant, and she knew that meant she had

no car, uh, she had no income. Uh, or, or anything, any means of doing that, no place to go. And I looked at him and said, I'm not doing that. And that was the beginning of the end for our marriage, although it wouldn't end until eight years later.

So he, that night, he like threw the remote control and stomped out a door and ended up getting drunk, which we didn't drink at the time. So that was really out of like crazy and ended up calling the police, um, because of the things that were happening. Very serious.

Natalie: I'm, I'm so glad that you did, and isn't that interesting that you were, you were going to bat for your adult daughter, but not quite yet seen how you were an adult in the situation and that you could go to bat for as well, but now it sounds like that's what you were forced to do.

Jennie: Yes, and it was just, um, it was just the thing I could do in my mind, and it was, yeah.

Natalie: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I think that's so fascinating because when we're invol, when we're immersed in those kinds of environments, which I was, you know, that I was as well, both the whole vision forum and the whole build author thing.

Mm-hmm. When you're immersed in those environments, you're so ingrained with and program with that it's okay and good and godly and right and holy to an advocate for someone else, for someone else who needs your advocacy, but never for yourself. No. And yet, and yet. We wanna train our children to be advocates for themselves when they are facing unrighteousness and abuse.

And so, but why not ourselves? 'cause we're also children of God. We're equally as children of God, as our young adult children are and as our children are, all of us are God's children. And all of us deserve to have respect and honor and to have safety and emotional. Love and freedom and all the, all the good things that are our inheritance because of Christ.

Right. So, okay. Was there anything else you wanted to say in there? I feel, I feel like I might've maybe interrupted.

Jennie: No, no. I mean, that's just kinda so, so I don't know that I ever made a decision to be, to be out. It was, um, it was just, uh, one step leading to another and, and our lives totally changed after that point.

Um, okay. So

Natalie: yeah. What did you think? I'm just curious. Like what was running through your head when he's having a toddler tantrum and then going out and getting drunk? 'cause he can't have his way. I just almost think that's interesting too. Like this gives a grown man who can't have his way, expects everyone else to be mature, but he doesn't have the same expectation on his own self.

It's fascinating.

Jennie: But see, Natalie, I can look back at that now and say. Oh my gosh, that was such a tantrum. And, you know, whatever. In the, in the moment, I can't describe anything except for incredible fear. Yeah, incredible fear. Yeah. I mean, I just, I just didn't, didn't know where to go. Um, the church was no help at all.

Um. Y you know, I, I, I really, again, that shows where my brain was. I thought their son needed to be somebody else to help me.

Natalie: Yes, yes. You see that, and I, I think that is so important to point out, because when you're swimming in that pond, you don't know. It's like d Speaking of Vision Forum, Doug Phillips used to always say this.

He used to always say, A fish doesn't know water. Because he's swimming in it. He's living in the water. So when you're swimming in that poisoned pond, you don't realize what it is. You can't see it for what it is until you get out and you're in fresh water. Then you have something to compare it to. Then you can look back and go, oh my gosh.

That was so dysfunctional. That was so absolutely whack and insane. I can't even believe it. That's why I think there's so much of a disconnect between people who are, um, maybe just coming into Flying Free for the first time. They're still swimming in that poison pond, and it's really, really, it's not, it's not that they don't wanna see what's actually happening, it's that they can't, yeah, they literally can't.

You have to rewire your brain. Strategically and that takes time. I mean, you've been, you were in Flying Free several years ago and you've been, so you've been involved in this program for probably as long as I've been doing it. And that take, look at all these years, and same with me all these years. I've been growing and changing too, and see things very differently now than I did even seven years ago when I got married the second time.

Yeah. So you can you don't know what you don't know. And I only say that 'cause I wanna encourage people listening that if you're still feeling like, I don't get it, I don't, there's something I don't get, I can't follow this thread, it's okay. You're not supposed to be able to follow it. Right now you're living in a poison pond.

Your brain has been brainwashed and programmed to think certain ways. And we can't just turn that around overnight. Mm-hmm. But we can turn it around and it actually doesn't take as long as you might think. Um, yeah,

Jennie: well one example, a quick one was that, um, he had guns in the house and he got to where he was saying, I'm gonna go get the gun, like, to kill, like to hurt himself.

But I knew that the possibility was there of him hurting me or the children, although I never believed he would do that intentionally at the time. At least I did not believe that. And, um, I. Didn't have the, I, I believed I had to have somebody else's permission to take the guns out of the house. And I finally got the elders at a church to, um, reluctantly, very reluctantly, just because of my silly fear.

Agree to take the guns out of the home and store them somewhere else until things settled down.

Natalie: Wow.

Jennie: Uh, and I look back at that now and I say, I can't believe I did that. I mean, I just look back and say, 'cause now I would say, get those guns out of here. You know? I mean, I, yeah, yeah. I'm not the person I was then Exactly.

But my brain was so clouded and so unclear. Um, yeah. Which is why I'm on a mission to help churches get, um, get clarity on this, because they need to be able to see in and see. That were being abused, that were being, um, confused.

Natalie: Yeah.

Jennie: Feeding, confusion and fear. Fear was a huge factor for me.

Natalie: Yes. Yes.

Jennie: So,

Natalie: okay.

So what kinds of things did you try to do in order to fix the problem? And were any of those things effective? And why or why not? How did you beat your head against the wall? Tell me.

Jennie: So, well, one thing I did, I, I just knew at some point in there, and again, I wasn't, had, didn't have access to books because he read all our email.

He saw everything that was coming in. We couldn't order, um, you know, I did not know about Flying Free or any of that. Uh, I was afraid to even go search 'cause he would read our search history. Right. But I did know enough to know that I couldn't change him, but I could change myself. And so I went to a local organization, which I think is international access now, but um, it's called Operation two 20, or Exchange Life.

And I, I decided to take a nine month course there. It was a \$1,600 course and I love to study and you know, I was like, this sounds really fun. And uh, he decided that God had told him that I should not take that course. Uh, he didn't even believe that God spoke to you. 'cause if we ever said God spoke to us, he didn't wanna hear that.

'cause you know, it's right. God only speaks to him, but Oh yeah. But God could speak to him. And, uh, I had spoken to him and said, I would receive too much comfort from that course. They were a grace based organization and, uh,

Natalie: oh my gosh, we can't have our loved ones be comforted. Right? Yeah. And again, not does he even, did he even read his Bible?

Jennie: I mean, unbelievable. Actually, he came to a point and he told him, God had told him after that night with my daughter that he didn't have to read the Bible until I repented. Now this didn't come out, you know, immediately, but he was waiting for me to repent. Uh, and he said this directly in front of a counselor with me, present that eventually he said it and until God brought me down and he would be there for me.

You know, when he did. Oh. So, but he was trying to kind of help God along here. And making our family fall so that he could step in and rescue us. Unreal. Talk about using, which is he threw his children under the bus for that. Just saying. And he, he very much did that and they all saw it, um, you know, in the coming years.

Uh, 'cause he stepped out of everything. So, uh, he stepped out of their, their lives. Our, our whole everything changed. Yeah. So, and collecting liquor. I mean, he really went off the rails.

Natalie: Yeah. He sounds like a very mentally ill person. Yeah. And you had 10 kids. Yes, yes. Yeah. 10 kids. I just wanna point that out.

Okay. Keep going.

Jennie: So I went, you know, so I went to that class and oh my goodness. So I learned so much in that class about me. I started unpacking me. I started realizing how I had become just like my mother, who had said I'd never wanna be like my mother, who I loved dearly. And she was sweet and kind, but she was under the control of my dad her entire life.

And, uh, in a very horrible way. And, and I just looked and said, I've become just like my mom. I'm no different. And I, I sold my soul for comfort and, um, you know, for, so, you know, you didn't have to work. And if you looked at his Facebook feed, it was vacation. He would call him our honeymoon trips. I mean, I just went on all these things and it was just a facade.

So now having said that, I can be happy almost anywhere, and I, I, I was, I enjoyed our vacations, I enjoyed my children. I, I mean, I. I, I can persevere. Yeah. Yeah. I can persevere. Well, and I, I can't, I don't look back, uh, badly on all those years, but, but they, that was, um, but it was bad. And I did let him, uh, become over me.

And I, I guess I came to realize that, that I had a choice, that I was a separate being and I wanted to be me. I was not an extension of him. Um, so I, I, and then, and then as I grew stronger, I know he saw that and he did not like it at all. So, and again, I didn't flaunt any of it. Um, you know, and I just started growing closer, me and Jesus.

So,

Natalie: yeah, well, they can't have that either, because the closer you become to God, the more you see yourself reflected through God's eyes rather than through his abusive eyes. The more that you, you don't, they don't have control over you anymore. Yeah, that's 'cause now you are growing full of joy, you're growing happier, you're growing and, and they're getting more and more dysfunctional in their rage of trying to control you.

Yeah. They want you, they have to be, they have to make sure that their victim sees herself through his eyes so that she's full of shame. This is such a Satanic thing. Do you see how Satanic this is? They have to be, Satan wants us to stay in shame. He wants us to stay, uh. Feeling guilty, feeling down about ourselves, hating ourselves, feeling like a worm.

That's where he gets us, and that's the opposite of the good news, which sets us free from all of that. So he's not really living as a Christian at all. I mean, he's actually an antichrist type, to be honest.

Jennie: Yeah. Yeah. And I describe it as having, I used to say, I have a little birdie on my shoulder and every time I read the Bible.

That little bird, there was like his words and I would say, oh, he would say this about that, and he would say this about that. And it took a long time. And just gradually, uh, working through, had to get a new bible, new translation, just different things to, to be able to open it up and read it and say, Jesus, you're speaking to me.

Natalie: Yeah.

Jennie: It doesn't matter what he would've said, or how so and so reads this. Just me And you kept like open it up fresh?

Natalie: Yes. Yeah.

Jennie: And that surpris.

Natalie: Okay. So what was the hardest thing about actually getting out and. Yeah, I've already

Jennie: alluded to that. And that was just the churches, um, that did horribly spiritually abusive things, uh, to us as we got out.

The one church we were in, well, we home church for a long time, but once we had gotten back in a church who, you know, took my 10 children and put them in a circle and with him there, with all the elders, the youngest was six years old and said, are you really afraid of your dad? And of course all the girls were like, yes.

You know, and all the boys were like, no, it's no big deal. They're just making a big deal. Of course they were, I believe. Yeah. Um, yeah. I mean, I could, I, you

know, knew so, but they, they just, um, you know, they just did it. That's just one of the many things that they did. It, you know, you're not being excommunicated, but you know, your 25-year-old daughter can't play the piano and your teenagers can't work in the nursery.

Uh, ridiculous things. Um, wow. So, uh, yeah, so. Um,

Natalie: so then what, so, um, so this church, so all, are you, are you saying that all of your kids, like even the boys who, you know, obviously we're programmed to say we're not afraid of anything. I mean, I know, I know those circles. Yeah. You teach women to, you know, you teach women to be afraid and that's okay.

Mm-hmm. It's okay if women are afraid, but not the men. We have to be strong. We have to like, overlook all the dumb things. But so they, they, besides that though, um. All of your kids did, did all of your kids, um, see the truth and, and like, for example, are, are they all still in relationship with you today or did any of them kind of maintain their beliefs that they were raised in?

I'm curious.

Jennie: Oh, no one maintained the beliefs they were raised in, not even close. Um, I do have one son who I'm estranged from, fortunately his wife and children I'm not estranged from, but, um, uh, and I still, I really don't understand that one. But, um, you know, that's, that's just a process still pre on that one.

Yes, yes. Um, but they, and they, they just, you know, it was hard. They just didn't want the merit. They just didn't want the change. Um, honestly, I think a lot of 'em didn't want to give up the place we lived more than anything. We had a, a neat place on 30 acres and it was special, uh, very special to most of them.

And um, I think they were more worried about giving up that, but, um, they certainly see him, especially now we're seven years out. They certainly see him for what he is, most of them, so.

Natalie: Okay. And are your girls, are they able to. Have jobs or be live, the lives that they wanna live now. Do you feel like they're,

Jennie: uh, well, I mean, you know, they're 21 to 41 now, so, okay.

Uh, yeah. You know, and, and of course the youngest was 13 at the time. It all began and, and she was lived a very different life 'cause I kind of raised her.

Yeah. Um, and so yes, she's, you know, she definitely got to do. All kinds of different things and the older ones got to do. Um, but yes, they all, uh, are able to do what they, you know what they wanna do.

They, they live completely, seven of 'em have no relationship with him at all.

Natalie: Okay. So

Jennie: no contact.

Natalie: How many grandkids do you have? Just curiously?

Jennie: Number 17 is due November.

Natalie: Oh, that's amazing. Wow. Yeah. Okay. So what was the most transformative thing about getting out?

Jennie: Um, you mean for me personally or that the thing that happened or, um,

Natalie: just, I, I, I guess you could interpret that however you want.

Just what was transforming, uh, for you about getting out of that relationship or the most transformative thing for you?

Jennie: Um, well after the trauma of it all, um, which was just unbelievably, um. Traumatic. I mean, uh, just one little thing. Uh, you know, in the process, again, it was little steps for me. Um, uh, he, he came and one day and very outta character and said, if you don't straighten up and start acting like a good wife, you need to be out by the end of the month.

Very like, totally. I can't believe he ever said that. And I believe it was God, like, because I couldn't leave. I couldn't leave. So this was your, this was your chance to get out. And he said that, and I like packed my bags and dropped my daughter at church camp and went to my other daughter's. Now, I never thought I'd be gone forever, but it was actually the last time to permanently live in that house.

Wow. Um, I mean, you know, I ne I, which, oh my gosh, if I'd have known that, I would've. It, it, I don't know that I would've Right. It. That was too traumatic to even think about that. That could be the case, but it was, and it all led to, you know, positive things. I ended up getting an apartment at the encouragement of some good elders, and they kept using the words I needed to hear.

You're just working on your marriage and if he doesn't let you stay, it's okay. You know, but he needs to let you have some time to get better. Wow. Because they knew that's what I needed to hear. Yeah. Right. I think they saw that it probably wasn't gonna work, but, and that he wasn't gonna change. They knew him, but, um, they knew that I needed just, you know, that's all, that's the next step that I could take.

And then that quickly snowballed into divorce. Uh, you know, when I asked for money for an apartment, he said, um, uh, he said, uh, that would be like paying for a prostitute for him using family funds.

Natalie: Well, he already does that. That's what I would've said, well you've been doing that for years, honey,

Jennie: in interesting example.

Right? So, so, you know, getting an apartment for me meant using family funds to pay for a sinful activity. So that's, I mean, that's level unbeliev. Yeah. Yeah. So that's just a small example, you know? Oh, sick, what he did. So, yeah, it was an, you know, incredibly traumatic, expensive, um, drawn out, uh, you know, process.

The first thing he did after filing was file a motion saying I was unfit to parent. Um, had a history, family history of bipolar and mental. Illness. Um, I had always, uh, you know, I've never been on a drug. I had never been, you know, and I, I sit here and I would. Did this, then I would defend myself. But I've never been on anything.

I've never even seen a mental health counselor. Yeah. And he's the one who drinks, he began collecting whiskey after that whole thing and like over 400 a month. And yeah, it was horrible. Our house was full of liquor after being, you know, nothing. And I would just like, in my mind going, how could he do that?

And of course it was just a, a play. And it, to large degree worked, you know, on me. I mean, it just was like, oh my gosh, you know, and I have a family history of mental illness, not me, but, you know, it didn't work on the courts mental in my family did. I'm just curious. Did the courts see through that though?

No, that was, it just they, it never went there. It just went to mediator. It was just on there. And that, you know, he needed to have all the guns because he was, they were concerned for me. Um, and yet through all of that, you know, I had

never been anywhere close to crazy acting or, you know, the things that he had done.

I mean, the police had been called a number of times at that point on him. Yeah. Uh, you know, but, but, um, yeah, very, very twisted. And again, they just played into my fear and, um, I still had a high need for validation, which,

Natalie: yeah, it wasn't

Jennie: long after that that I actually found Flying Free. And that was. Uh, such a means for me to begin.

Um, hearing things that were my stories over and over, so, so many similarities of the wordings and the tactics that are used. And, um, and also answering the questions like, you know, what do you do with a, a kid who is saying these things about you and, you know, the adult child relationships and, um, visitation and how to deal with.

Those things. I mean, just, just began learning and devouring all that. And as I began to get words for the things that were happening, like gas, lighting, um, and you know, how to set boundaries, you know, I could see little ways that I did, had tried to set boundaries. I just, uh, yeah, could have done it better, no doubt.

Um, but you know, that I, I just began getting language and. Um, healing for everything and validation that I felt like I needed. I wish I could say I didn't need that. Yeah. But I still, I still tend to do that, so I, I'm a lot better, but I do tend still to say, I

Natalie: think that Right, right. You heard that Exactly.

We, I think we need that to even have it modeled for how we offer that to ourselves eventually. And even, it's like you need, like a baby needs milk to be, he needs. The mom to give him milk, but then eventually he figures out how to feed on his own and be able to give self nourishment. Right. Yeah. So I think that's really important, especially for women who are coming out of what you and I came out of.

Yes. Where we're not taught that we have minds of our own or are even allowed to have minds of our own and make decisions on our own. You, you said it perfectly at the beginning, you became another child in the family. Mm-hmm.

It's, but the child that holds all the responsibility for. The husband and the children.

But you are also just the, you know, the oldest child, the responsible child in the family. Yeah,

Jennie: exactly.

Natalie: Yeah. And that is not, that is not how marriage was supposed to be. That's not what the Bible teaches, so, oh, it's, it's so wackadoodle. It's, it's very cultish. I mean, I think it's safe to say this is, you were in a cult.

I was in a cult. It's very cult-like. And, and deprogramming from cults takes a long time.

Jennie: Yeah, I do. Being in a cult because it, it really, it really was.

Natalie: Yeah. Okay. So you mentioned Flying Free. Is there anything else you wanna share about Flying Free? Just because people, some people have thought about being in Flying Free, don't really know, you know, how is it really going to make, I mean, I've heard this before, people will be like, well, I listen to your podcast all the time, and that's really helped me a lot.

How is Flying Free gonna help me any more than your podcast already has?

Jennie: Um, an incredible one-stop resource for everything because you just deal, um, not just with, uh, the, you know, the marriages and what's wrong with the marriage. 'cause, you know, even post-divorce, it's like, why would I stay in Flying Free?

Well, I'm in Flying higher now and because just of the, the self-help courses, um, starting a business, uh, running a business, how like mentally, um. So just in improving myself, because I'm on a mission now and it's a, it's a lifetime mission. I'm not healed. I'm healing. Yeah, same. Same. I'm not healed. I'm healing.

And I will never stop learning, uh, never stop doing that because to help my children. And so as I listen to things on there, you know, I'll just hear things I didn't even think about. You know, I'll say, somebody will say, oh, my, my kid is telling me I did this and, and I hear it and I think, oh yeah, mine is too, actually.

And what's the, you know? Yeah. Yeah. What are

Natalie: people trying? How,

Jennie: what's

Natalie: working? Yeah.

Jennie: It's a resource for, uh, you know, all, all the parts of your life, uh, not just those related to marriage or divorce. Um. Yeah. So, yeah.

Natalie: Okay. So if you could, let's close with this. I like to always ask, what is one piece of advice that you would give to the listener, to the woman who's driving in her car right now, or maybe doing the laundry or doing the dishes or getting ready for her kids to come home from school?

Or maybe she just finished reading a homeschooling book to her child and she is thinking a very brave thought. I think one day I wanna try to get out. What would you say to her?

Jennie: I'd say take the next step. That was you, you, if you're speaking that to yourself or if you're even just thinking, I, I don't want to get out 'cause I don't, divorce is too scary.

You're still thinking this isn't right, this isn't normal, and just take the next step. I could never have set and planned, um, the steps out and saying I wanted to get a divorce. That was way too big of a thought for me. Yep. But what I did know is I wanted to stand up for my daughter. What I did know is I wanna take that class.

Yeah. And those were pivotal and there were several other things like that where I just took a stand and it, it might have looked like a little stand, but to me, those things were all, and I mean, every one of those steps, I'm telling you they weren't little. Right. I, they, they were terrifying, but they were one thing that I knew that I wanted and could, my brain could wrap my brain around or that I needed to do, like, I can't not do this.

I have to stand up for my daughter. Um, I'm just, I'm just not, and um, so anyway, I, I did walk through those and it did lead, like, I don't, there was not a point where I said I want a divorce until like, right at the very end and I said, I want a divorce. And then he actually jumped in the next day and applied before me.

So he could have the run. Well,

Natalie: yeah, because he, he wanted to be in control of that. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, that's so hilarious.

Jennie: But it, again, it was, it was all terrifying. I did it to just step forth in fear and do the whatever next thing you see that you can do. And of course, read, of course, read and learn. And, um, again, I didn't have access to these things.

Then if I would've, I think those steps would've been a lot easier. But, um, for whatever reason, God didn't bring those to me, uh, in advance, but I did get 'em after. Yeah. And I will tell you now that I'm seven years out, I, I have started a business, um, and I absolutely love it. I never dreamed I'd love working.

Um, and I love working and I have time to be with my kids and grandkid and we've recreated holidays and it's a different life and I would never go back.

Natalie: That's amazing. That is fantastic. Thank you so much, Jennie, for that. That advice that you gave at the end is perfect. And that is exactly what pe, that's really the only thing we can do is just look around us and go, what could I do even just to learn a little bit more?

Mm-hmm. That's a huge step, and I think even wanting to learn a little bit more is scary because you're afraid that if you learn a little bit more that it's gonna maybe lead to something else. You know that it will, but it doesn't. I just, I think it's important for people to know. You don't you, when, when, when God calls us.

I love the story in Corey 10 Boom's book, um, the Hiding Place. When she was a little girl, she was afraid of dying and her dad said, when do I give you the ticket to get on the train? And she said, right before I get on. And he said, same with dying. When you, when it's your turn to die, that's when you'll get the grace and the strength that you need to go through that process.

Not.

Jennie: That is gold right there, Natalie. Yeah.

Natalie: Yeah. It really is. Yeah, and it's the same thing with if you, if with a big thing like divorce, if, if you wanna go that far, it could be even just separation. It could be even just like admitting that you're in an abusive relationship could be like getting on the train.

You'll get the grace to do that. You'll get the ticket that you need to get on the train. Before you get on the train, but you're not gonna get it while you're on in the car on the way to the train station or anytime before that. So just do the next thing. That's all you need to do. That's so important.

All right. I just wanna thank you for giving us some of your time and sharing your story. I, and you kind of had to relive it and prepare it, and I'm sure that's not easy. Maybe it was easy for some of your parts, but I'm sure there were parts of you that maybe didn't enjoy that process. Mm-hmm. Um, I appreciate your being willing to do that.

And, um, and we should have you on the, the Divorce Christian Woman Podcast. Would you, I would

Jennie: love to tell that, that side of the story as well. 'cause um, yeah, this whole business thing has been unbelievable and I never dreamed yes, I could be, that could happen. So yeah, I'll definitely put that down. To just do the next thing.

Yeah, exactly.

Natalie: Exactly. Alright, thanks Jennie. Thank you so much, Natalie, for all. Yeah, you bet. And thanks for listening and we'll see you next time.

All.