

Flying Free Podcast with Natalie Hoffman, Episode 322 - Breaking Free From Narcissistic Relationships

Natalie: [00:00:00] Welcome beautiful butterflies to episode 322 of the Flying Free Podcast. Here's a podcast review that just came in.

When I was crying out to God, Over my painfully confusing marriage, with a soul ache that screamed to heaven, Do you see me? I didn't know that finally God would answer me. He answered me in a way unexpected. The Flying Free podcast has been a light piercing the darkness of my life, a beacon and a storm that I thought would drown me.

My journey isn't over, but now I have hope. I know that God sees me, and he sees you too, dear friend. Thank you to Natalie for this amazing gift. I want to thank you to the listener who wrote this review on Apple Podcasts. Your rating and written review makes a huge impact because it lets Apple Podcasts know [00:01:00] that this podcast is relevant and resonating with a specific audience.

It will then show this podcast as an option for others who are like you, going through the same things. If you want to be a kind of like a missionary to other women of faith who are screaming to heaven for help, this is one easy way that you can do that. Every little bit helps when we all do our part to spread the word.

Today, we are diving into a game changer for anyone dealing with difficult relationships. You know that feeling when someone makes you question your own reality? When you're walking on eggshells constantly doubting yourself or feeling like nothing you do is ever good enough? Well, Dr. Rahmani has a message for you, and it's right there in the title of her new book, It's Not You.

I actually had to laugh when I saw that title because, as many of you know, my book for Christian women [00:02:00] is called, Is It Me? And while my book focuses specifically on the challenges, That we face as Christian women who are married to covertly, emotionally abusive, patriarchal men who deny women their adult rights.

Dr. Romani's book takes a broader look at narcissistic relationships in general. And I really wish I would have had this book during my own awakening journey. I think it would have been a helpful perspective for healing and

processing, especially when dealing with my ex husband. So let me break down how this book is structured.

It's divided into three main parts. First, Dr. Rahmani helps us identify patterns of difficult behavior and understand their impact on our lives. Second, she explores why we often get trapped in these dynamics. And finally, and this is where it gets really practical, she provides concrete strategies for setting boundaries and reclaiming your sense of self.

So, one of the things I love [00:03:00] most about this book is how Dr. Romani challenges the self help industry's tendency, and frankly, the church's tendency, to put the burden of change on the victim. You know those well meaning but ultimately harmful suggestions that we've all heard? Well, you just need to communicate better.

Try to understand their perspective. Work on yourself first. So Dr. Rahmani explains why these approaches often fail when you are dealing with certain personality types. And more importantly, why it's not your fault when they do fail. Let me share an example that hit home for me. Dr. Rahmani describes what she calls the empathy trap.

You know, where kind, conscientious people, that's you and me, sister, we keep trying to understand and accommodate. Difficult behavior, only to become increasingly depleted and confused. It's like having a bank account where you [00:04:00] keep making deposits over and over, but the other person only makes withdrawals.

So, let's talk about what narcissism actually is. According to Dr. Rahmani, it's a personality trait that exists on a spectrum from healthy self confidence to pathological narcissism, which we know as narcissistic personality disorder. At its core, narcissism involves excessive self focus. A lack of empathy and a constant need for admiration.

While some level of narcissism is normal and even healthy in moderation, pathological narcissism can be absolutely devastating to relationships and emotional well being. Let me walk you through The key characteristics of narcissism that Dr. Rahmani outlines. First, there's that lack of empathy. These individuals struggle to understand or care [00:05:00] about other people's emotions.

So, conversations with them are drastically one sided. They will regularly dismiss or invalidate how you're feeling or what your perspective is. Then

there's the grandiosity or an entitlement, and not all of them have this in an overt way. Sometimes it can be very covert, but they at a core level believe that they are superior to you and that, and that they deserve special treatment without needing to put any kind of effort to deserve or earn your respect or trust.

They also have this constant need for validation and attention. Their self worth literally depends upon you. Constantly praising them, and they'll seek admiration from you and others through bragging, social media, excessive storytelling, and, or, if they're more covert, They might not be doing those things overtly, [00:06:00] but if you should offer them any criticism or even constructive feedback, that is going to feel like a personal attack to them, and they're going to take it like a personal attack.

The manipulative and controlling behavior is another big red flag. They will use gaslighting to distort your reality. and make you doubt yourself. They'll play mind games. They'll shift the blame from themselves to you. They'll use guilt, fear, or obligation, a feeling of obligation that you have inside of you to the relationship, to control you.

And sisters, this is especially challenging in Christian contexts where we are taught to be sacrificial and submissive. I really think that religious communities actually are petri dishes to grow narcissism within men. They can be incredibly charming and sweet on the surface. [00:07:00] That's the superficial charm that Dr.

Romani talks about. But over time, you will start to see the inconsistencies and the lack of depth to their character. Relationships with them often feel transactional, so they will engage with you when they can gain something from you. Such as, if they want to come home and talk about all the things that they're doing at work, they'll be giving you attention, but only in that what they're trying to bid for is a bid for your attention on them.

Their exploitative behavior is particularly painful. They use people to achieve their own goals, often without any remorse. And relationships are one sided. They take far more than they give. So if you're feeling like your relationship is, that that's what's happening in your relationship, That, that's a dynamic.

It is not a healthy dynamic. Dr. Rahmani also explains that there are different types [00:08:00] of narcissism. There's the grandiose narcissist. That's your typical, you know, in your face narcissist who's arrogant and attention seeking. We kind of see that in television shows or, you know, even in politics. Or maybe

even in religious circles with religious leaders that are more charismatic and trying to gain a following.

But then there's also the vulnerable narcissist. This is more of a covert narcissism. They appear to be insecure, and they will often play the victim. But they're still manipulative. Malignant narcissism combines narcissism with aggression and sometimes sociopathy. And then there's communal narcissism.

These are the ones who present themselves. As incredibly selfless and charitable, this is the one that can really trick you, but they're doing it, their reason for doing it is for that personal recognition. Now, let's talk about [00:09:00] protection strategies because this is where Dr. Romani's book becomes incredibly practical.

First, you need to recognize narcissistic behavior early. So pay attention to early red flags. If someone is constantly invalidating your feelings, manipulating you, or making everything about themselves, take note, trust your gut. If you are, just notice how you're feeling in your own body. If you might not even be able to tell if there's red flags going on with them, but if your body is feeling drained or confused, I'm sorry, but confusion is a huge one, or anxious around somebody, that is very important information that you want to pay attention to.

Also, observe patterns, not the words they say. Oh no, narcissists often say all the right things, but their actions will tell a different story. Setting strong boundaries is crucial. Learn [00:10:00] how to say no without guilt. That's the key. Say no without guilt. If you don't know how to do that. I want you to join my program, Flying Free.

Go to joinflyingfree.com to find out how you can be part of a program that will help you to say no without feeling guilty. Now, they might push back, but you want to learn how to hold your ground. Also, I would suggest limiting personal information, because the less they know about your vulnerabilities, the less they can use against you.

Oftentimes, we as women just open up and we share everything, and we make ourselves very vulnerable. That is information that people like this are taking, and they will use it against you down the road. They'll know, like, what your soft spots are and what they can push in order to manipulate you. Also, reduce emotional engagement.

Narcissists love to provoke emotional reactions. Whether it's good, you know, positive reactions or [00:11:00] negative reactions. They don't care. They just

want to see the reaction. So keep your responses neutral and unemotional. If you have a reaction that's really big, you have big emotions, share it with your therapist or your friend.

Don't react that way in front of your person if you don't know what's going on quite yet. Dr. Rahmani introduces the gray rock method, which I've written about and talked about and many other people have talked about as well. But if you've never heard of it, it's about emotionally detaching in such a way that you become as uninteresting as a little gray rock on the ground.

Nobody notices a gray rock on the ground. You don't want to be a colorful, shiny, you know, beautiful blue agate or red agate. You want to be a boring gray rock. That means keeping your conversations short, factual, and, like I said, boring. Stay calm and neutral. If they try to provoke you, just shrug, nod, or say, Okay, without engaging any further.

Try not to argue with them. Try not to give them what they're [00:12:00] looking for. Here's the crucial part, and this is so important. I cannot say it enough. Enough. Don't try to change them. Don't try to change them. You cannot change a narcissist. So instead of wasting all of your emotional energy hoping that they'll change or praying for some kind of miracle from God, Accept that their behavior is about them and their choices.

It's not about you. And you need to adjust your response accordingly. Avoid justifying yourself. This is what Dr. Romani calls radical acceptance. And we talk a lot about radical acceptance in flying free as well. Stop seeking their validation. They're never going to give you the reassurance that you need.

Recognize their limitations. They lack empathy, and you cannot force them to develop it. [00:13:00] Refuse to engage in their toxic cycles. Walk away when they try to bait you into an argument. Remember that narcissists need attention to survive. So what's the best protection? Starve them of that attention. Ignore their attempts to provoke you.

Avoid engaging in their drama and redirect conversations to more neutral topics. Most importantly, protect your energy and prioritize your self care. Dealing with a narcissist is exhausting. So focus on healing yourself through therapy, journaling, meditation, exercise. Join the Flying Free program. Build a strong support system that validates and uplifts you.

And if necessary, Consider going no contact, especially if you have no kids. Speaking of no contact, Dr. Rahmani explains that sometimes that is the only

solution. If you are experiencing consistent emotional abuse, chronic [00:14:00] stress and anxiety, or loss of self worth due to their manipulation, then no contact might be your best choice.

This means blocking their number, blocking them on social media. Cutting off mutual connections who act as they're flying monkeys, and resisting the urge to check up on them and see how they're doing. Let me leave you with this final thought from Dr. Rahmani's book. You are not the problem. You didn't cause their behavior, and you don't deserve their mistreatment.

Your peace matters. You are allowed to walk away, and you don't have to fix anyone. Remember, beautiful butterflies. God created you to thrive and not just survive. You're not called to be someone or created to be someone else's emotional punching bag. No matter how they try to twist scripture to convince you.

Otherwise, your worth is inherent and no amount of narcissistic manipulation can change that truth. [00:15:00] As we wrap up, I just want to highlight what I believe is the book's most important message. And that is that healing from difficult relationships like this, Is not about understanding the other person and their pathology or their, you know, personality disorders.

It is about reclaiming your own story and trusting your own experiences. And that is again where I can help. I offer a totally affordable daily education and support community for Christian women who are navigating these kinds of relationships. In the Flying Free Kaleidoscope community, you will get courses, workshops, hundreds of coaching sessions organized by topic, Q& As, and a vibrant, active community of hundreds of women just like you in a private, online forum.

One member wrote, I don't know how, but after being in this program for just three weeks now, I feel [00:16:00] known and valued in ways I had come to believe were not possible. It amazes me how many rich resources you make available and how thoughtfully you do so at the exact right time in a woman's journey. It's like you're here in the house with me and you know just what I need.

Worth every penny. I remember having so many more resources when I went from Flying Free Podcast to the Flying Free Sisterhood. Like mini snack size to Costco size. So, I love that analogy. This podcast is like mini snack sizes of health. That I can offer you that if you join me and me and all of the other women inside the Flying Free Kaleidoscope, you're going to get Costco size,

meaty meals that are going to nourish you and help you transform your life in it's only 29 a month.

Head over to joinflyingfree.com for more information and to join me and your other beautiful butterfly sisters today. [00:17:00] Hey beautiful butterfly, thank you so much for listening. If you liked this episode, be sure to subscribe, and then consider leaving a rating and review so others can find us. To connect with me and get a free chapter of my book, head over to flyingfreenow.com.

com. And until next time, fly free.