

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPATHY FOR YOURSELF

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 309 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today I have my friend, Diana Swillinger, and she is the host of the Renew Your Mind Podcast. This is kind of a serendipitous episode—let's just put that out there right now. Diana and I are Marco Polo-ing back and forth, and we were talking about the topic that we're going to talk about today, which is about empathy and coaching. And we were like, "Let's do a podcast episode about this subject. And so when can you meet?" "Yeah, let's do it on Thursday."

And so here we are, but we're both very busy. We're both coming off of other appointments and other things, but we just inserted this little hour into our time and this is not scripted. It's just off the cuff riffing about the topic of empathy. So first of all, welcome, Diana.

DIANA: Thank you. It's fun to be back. A year ago I did an episode with you about how to grow while you stay in an emotionally abusive marriage. My mom just listened to that a few weeks ago and she was like, "Wow, that was so goo. But here we are a year later. I'm excited to be back. And so we didn't research it. You don't have to hold us to anything and find all the research to support or not support what we're going to say. We're sharing our perspectives from our lived experience. And so I'm excited to with you.

NATALIE: Yeah. And Diana, she's a coach in her own business, but she also trains coaches and certifies coaches. So maybe you should introduce that a little bit as well. Tell us what you do.

DIANA: Sure. I spent seven years being a coach, one on one and group coaching, helping people renew their mind. I felt like all my life as a Christian, I'm like, "I'm going to church, I'm reading the scriptures, I'm leading the Bible studies, I'm in Bible studies, I'm a worship leader, I'm reading my Bible every day. What is the deal? My mind is not being renewed. I'm not feeling all the joy in all circumstances and peace that surpasses all understanding." Of course, part of it was my marriage, but, "I'm stuck feeling miserable all the time. How can I renew my mind?"

And so it wasn't until I finally starting diving into practical things, which, we're going to talk about coaching, and that was one of the main things that really helped me think practically. And so I wanted to bring these tools to other people, started coaching people in practical mind renewal tools. And then people started asking me, "How can I

do what you do?" And they were going to go explore all these different certifications out there, but none of them teach what I taught myself to do and taught my clients. So I'm like, "Well, if you want to learn how to do that, I will teach you, I will certify you."

And so the Renew Your Mind Institute was born. And so for the past couple of years, I've been certifying coaches to do the same kind of work I do, which is my biggest joy right now, because the more women... And then they don't have to help women. They can help whoever they want. But the more people we can help experience joy, hope, and peace in their life, regardless of the struggles, because we're all going to have them, even if we change our situation, we're still going to come across struggles. And so to be able to know how to tap into that constant joy, hope, and peace that is God, that's His love, that's His grace, if I can help other people spread that around the world, I am lit up. So yeah, that's what I do.

NATALIE: Yeah, that's awesome. And Diana coaches inside of Flying Free too. If you join the Flying Free Kaleidoscope... Kaleidoscope just means a flock of butterflies. I feel like I need to explain that because people are like, "What is kaleidoscope?"

DIANA: I always think of that little toy when we would like look at the light with the little tube.

NATALIE: Yeah, I totally remember that. It was made out of cardboard.

DIANA: Yeah. That's what butterflies look like if there was a whole bunch of them all together. It'd be all these beautiful colors. It makes sense.

NATALIE: Yeah. So if you join the Flying Free Kaleidoscope, you have access to myself and Diana and some other coaches, professional certified coaches, with a lot of experience under their belt, working with women of faith who are in emotionally abusive relationships. And Diana's an amazing coach and sometimes she'll substitute coach for me. We do weekly coaching calls every week and Diana coaches a lot. I think we have a similar style of coaching.

And she also is an amazing speaker and also helps people learn speaking skills, like public speaking skills. So she's a very well rounded, experienced, wise, amazing human being, and I'm happy to call her my friend. I'm really glad that she's on here today offering her thoughts.

DIANA: Before we say anything, though, let me pay it back. Because I do believe in reciprocation. I was already a coach and coaching people and then I found your

podcast because I was looking up "Christian podcast about gaslighting." And that's how I found you. And I listened to all the episodes and joined Flying Free, and from the very start, I've known you as somebody who's just so passionate about helping women climb out of the pit and get back to living life. And I see you do it over and over and over, and I'm just so grateful to be a part of your world, your sphere, and be able to speak into the lives of those women that need it so much too. I was one of those women, and I'm so glad to pay it back and be a part of all the great work you do.

NATALIE: Yeah, well, I should say, too, that all of the coaches in Flying Free have all been that woman, including me. We've all been, and I love that because we're not just helping women understand their situation. There are so many layers and nuances to emotional abuse and actually living with someone who is emotionally abusive and covertly abusive that I feel like you almost need to have experienced that to really understand the mind of the victim or the survivor and what she's going through and what is needed to help her get out of that situation, whether it's getting out of it physically or mentally, emotionally detaching from it.

And Diana does speak into women's lives who choose to stay in their relationship, and what can you do? What are the strategies that you can employ in your mind and in your own personal space where you keep yourself safe in order to survive in a situation like that if you decide, "Divorce is not for me," or "Separation is not for me," for whatever reason? There's a lot of reasons why someone can't get divorced or someone can't get separated. So what about those people? So Diana's really kind of our on-site expert in that because that's what she did. She stayed for how many years?

DIANA: Almost seven years. I almost left and then I stayed for seven years dedicating it to getting healthy and living healthy and living aligned with what I value and getting less sucked into the craziness. Every year I got better.

NATALIE: Yeah, so it's almost like working out, building those muscles. It's painful, and it requires a lot of discipline. But if you can do that, then yeah, I think it's an important thing. And then when you got out, you were really strong. You were a pretty powerful person by the time you got out, actually.

DIANA: Yeah, one of the epiphanies I had right before I left was, "I don't think I can get any healthier than I am while I stay. So if I want to keep growing, I have to move on." I mean, there was a lot more involved in that. Go listen to my podcast a year ago with Natalie and you'll hear a little bit more about the story.

NATALIE: That'd be like, "I want to play softball, so I'm going to practice and practice and

play in a neighborhood softball league.” But then you realize, “Oh, I have a lot of skills in this area, so if I want to play professional ball...” I don't know why I'm even using a sport analogy. I don't even know anything about sports.

DIANA: You know why? Because we have to hire a coach if we want to get better.

NATALIE: There you go. But anyway, you know that, “Okay, I'm going to have to actually do some really hard extra things in order to actually go pro with this.” That was a really terrible analogy, but you know, that's what we're here for. We're here for all of this terrible analogies.

DIANA: That's part of why I love you so much. I'm like, “I can go down all the analogies,” and then when you're like, “Now it breaks down at this point,” I'm like, “So what? I love it.”

NATALIE: Exactly. “Part of it was really good, it just ended bad.” I want to talk about empathy, and the reason why this, I was inspired by this is because someone in the Flying Free Kaleidoscope private messaged me in the community about it, and she left a voice message. So she's a younger woman, she's got two young children, and she, unfortunately, is living with every kind of abuse that you could imagine. And so she was expressing how... And I don't know if any of you can relate. I can relate to this. I felt bad for my husband when I was married to him. Did you feel bad for yours ever, Diana?

DIANA: All the time.

NATALIE: Why? Tell me why you felt bad for him.

DIANA: Because I saw where something was deficient and I'm like, “Oh, you could be having joy right now. Instead, you're angry at everybody. I feel so bad. You don't get to come enjoy Christmas. You're pouting in the kitchen or whatever.” Or, “Oh, you are so busy at work and trying to call the dentist on your lunch hour to make your appointment. That's really, really hard. I understand that's hard.” I just wanted to help him all the time. I guess as part of my personality—maybe that's why I'm a coach today, too—I do like helping people. And sometimes I guess I wasn't doing it in a way that was actually helping him. It was more enabling him, but it came from that good place.

NATALIE: Yeah, I would feel bad, he would do things that would almost sabotage his relationship with his kids. I would try to correct him or offer him some constructive criticism only with the express purpose of, because I really wanted him to have an amazing relationship with the kids. And I could see how some of his strategies were

failing.

Or like even working at church with people or volunteering in certain areas, sometimes his behaviors would sort of sabotage his success in those areas and I feel bad. But even in our relationship, when he was mean to me and then I would try to give him feedback to show how, “We could be so much closer and we could have better bedroom experience,” for example, “if you could come to the table and offer more of this or more of that,” and he just couldn't do it. I told him once, I said, “You have a six-foot brick wall right around you and you're stuck inside of it, and I can't reach you,” and I felt terrible.

So he was being mean to me and destroying me, but I always felt bad for him. And I also, whenever I'd react, sometimes he'd be really mean and I'd react, then I'd feel bad for him that he had a wife that reacted like that. “If only I could be just a more supportive wife when he's mean to me.” It's the weirdest thing.

DIANA: I mean, you've coached so many more people in Flying Free than I have, but also what I've noticed in my own practice as a coach, probably because of the way I speak about things, even though most of my audience doesn't necessarily know a lot of information about my marriage or even that I'm divorced. I just don't even talk about it because it's not what I'm really focusing on. And yet I still attract women who are in struggling marriages. So probably about half of the people I've coached over the past seven years have been in difficult—is what I've called it with them because I'm not in the abuse space all the time—difficult relationships.

So in all this coaching I've done, I've seen over and over so many people... Just happened with someone I coached in the Kaleidoscope earlier this year where it was like, “Well, we had a legal meeting about some stuff. And then afterward, he told me that he felt blindsided and it was so overwhelming for him going through some pre-divorce stuff.” And she was like, “I need to apologize to him.” And I'm like, “He's making things difficult for you, and you're trying to make it work for you because nobody else is looking out for you, so you're doing it. And now he's saying, ‘But when you look out for you and take care of your needs, that's really overwhelming and hard for me.’” And then she felt guilty for creating that.

So I'm not going to share any details because that's a private thing, but sharing it in that general way, I want to say, I have had that same kind of conversation over and over and over with people and I've had it with myself. When I was going through things with divorce and there was something that would be a consequence, and I'm a word nerd. I look up the word “consequence,” and if you go to the root meaning of it, it means “in sequence.” That's all consequence is—something that happens in sequence.

And so if I would do something, and then in sequence, the ripple effect of what would happen for my ex husband made things difficult for him, I would panic inside because I was just so used to making things easier for him. But guess what that meant for me? I was carrying the burden for both of us.

It's like what Bob Hamp says, that abuse is a lack of taking responsibility. So if you're in a relationship with somebody who is emotionally abusive, they are trying to offload their responsibility onto you, and you're taking it because you're a nice person who cares, which is why they love having you as a partner. And that's why you feel so overwhelmed and burdened. If we're talking about empathy, you're carrying all the empathy for that person. It becomes your priority, and that's where all your empathy gets placed. But it's never ending. It's like constant. You need to keep trying to fix that person, and it's just a never-ending suck of all your energy and brain power and emotional everything.

NATALIE: Yep. And they're relying on you because they're unable to take self-leadership in their own lives. But at the end of the day, we're not taking self-leadership in our lives when we are looking out for them at our own expense. Now we're taking leadership in their lives because they're not, so we're kind of taking over for them. But we're doing that at the expense of taking leadership over our own lives, kind of throwing ourselves under the bus, which is what I want to talk about.

I do want to bring up something, though, that you mentioned. You said that in your clientele, you said, "I think I tend to attract people who are in these kinds of relationships—about 50% of them are." So my belief—I have no stats to show this other than that... If you go to the abuse.org online website, the main website—I think it's the worldwide website for abuse—the stat on the front page, I believe, it says that 29% of women have experienced physical violence or rape or stalking at some point in their life. 29%.

Now, those are very overt forms of abuse. That does not even tell the percentage of women who have experienced, in addition to those things, emotional, covert, subtle, blame-shifting, responsibility-taking kind of abuse.

And I work with Christian women, and I've always said, I think at least half of Christian women across the board are living in an abusive relationship. Not an overtly abusive relationship, but a covertly abusive relationship. So it's not surprising, then, that of half of your clients that you would get, half of them would automatically... They're maybe not coming to you for those problems, or maybe they are, but it's not surprising that half of them have... And half of the people listening to this... Well, actually, this podcast

is probably 99%, unless you're a people helper—I know there's people helpers who listen to this podcast too—but probably most people who are listening to this have experienced or are living in an abusive relationship right now.

But anyway, let's talk about empathy because this person who left this message, what she was saying was something I hear all the time, and we just talked about our own experience with this. It was that, “I kind of feel bad for my abuser. Like, if I divorce him, just think: He would have to give up half of his retirement.” Some women will even say, “I don't want to take his retirement.”

They didn't have a career. They were at home working their butt off, maybe homeschooling, baking homemade bread, taking care of the house, doing all the child care, doing all the volunteering at church, doing all the things at home so that the guy could go out and build up a retirement fund, but they don't think that they deserve to have half of that retirement fund that they would normally have if they stayed married. That retirement fund is theirs too. And in fact, legally, it does belong to them. If you get a legal divorce, in most states, a judge would say half the assets go to one party and half of them go to the other.

If you've lived with someone for that many years and you were a stay at home mom, that money belongs to you. That is your nest egg so that you can one day, if you can't work because you're 85 years old, you have money coming in that can pay your bills so that you can have food on your table and have shelter.

But I've heard a lot of women say, “Well, I just don't feel right about taking my husband's retirement account.” So they feel bad about that. If they stand up and give a boundary, “No, I can't have sex with you because you trashed me all over the place and whatever, and so I kind of don't feel like having sex with you,” the man will be like, “Oh, no, what am I going to do? You're depriving me. I don't know what I'm going to do,” and then they kind of feel bad. “I feel bad for him.”

This woman didn't say that, but I'm giving you a conglomeration of things I've heard people say. “I feel so bad for him. Where is he going to get his needs met? I'm the one that has always been that warm place for him to come home to.” But Diana, what would you say to that?

DIANA: Well, I like the way you describe it as it's programming. So first of all, the only reason that we have that over-corrective thought to self denial, almost self deprecation, like removing our value completely and elevating the other person's value is usually because we've been programmed to do that.

A lot of the women I coach—you probably heard this too—if you have a conversation long enough with them, it could be how you'd think they've been conditioned in their marriage, but then if you keep talking, you'll uncover they actually were conditioned that way in childhood too to deny themselves. Like, “When your dad's in the room, don't talk,” or “Children are to be seen, not heard,” or “Stop whining about that. I don't want to hear what you're feeling emotionally. Go do your schoolwork and deny all of that. Don't share that with anybody. None of us care about that. Go do what you're supposed to do.” So you could have been conditioned either way, but you're conditioned.

One thing when you were talking about it at first with the retirement thing, I was thinking about like, well, healthy people don't usually get divorced. Sometimes they do. Sometimes some healthy, mature people say—I'm not taking Christian people, just people in general, in the United States—“This marriage has served its purpose.” Some people actually are like, “Let's still be friends, but let's end the marriage.” They don't go to court. When they go talk to an attorney or they figure it out themselves at the kitchen table—I know somebody who did that—they're just like, “Of course, half of everything is yours. It's so reasonable, of course.”

And so I was thinking how this component of not wanting to put out our abusive person and make something difficult for them is not reasonable. It's unreasonable. “Why am I being so unreasonable about this?” And I'm never putting down someone who's been through abuse. So don't anyone think, “Oh, I'm being unreasonable. Oh no, I need to judge myself for that.” No, I'm pointing out—and maybe we'll talk about this when we talk about what's the purpose of coaching—but as a coach, I'm pointing out that that is an unreasonable way to think about it in today's culture. So if you know that, I'm inviting you to think about it with reason.

When people get married and come into a marriage together, it's meant to be a partnership. We're going to have a household. We own the house together. We're going to have kids. We're both parents. We're going to need to buy food and however the money came in, let's use the money and go buy food. That seems like a good use for it. And we just do it. We would do it collectively in a healthy relationship, in a partnership.

Now, if you're married to someone who doesn't view it that way, you're feeling like you're opposing that all the time, and that can really wear you down. You might just concede. “Fine. Well, I'm the one out there working my butt off to put food on the table. I don't need to help with that. I'm out here working all the time. It's me. It's me. I'm the one creating the money that goes in the account.” Well, then eventually we just think, “Well, maybe he's right. He's the one putting the money in there. And well, he sure does

get upset if I ever want to talk about money. So maybe he's right. And maybe I shouldn't worry about that."

And it's just that we've been conditioned. It works really well for him to condition you that way. And boy, if you come to get a divorce and you're like, "I only need a 10th of your retirement—that ought to do. It's fine. I'll be fine," then, well, that's great for him. How he's talked about money and condition you has worked. It's just not the reasonable way that people do it in this culture, which is why the court system has stepped in to protect people from the inequity and try to bring... I think the court gets it wrong a lot. I totally admit that, but a lot of laws and things, the court gets it right, and one of them is that equitable split of assets.

And why would we feel bad about that when we've been a partner in the relationship? If somebody else has tried to convince us we're a lesser partner, they were just wrong about that. And are we willing to see that they're wrong? Even if they came in thinking they were the dominant partner who deserved way more than you, they're wrong about that, and you don't have to believe them.

NATALIE: I like to help people make that shift in their mind by having them think of their own daughter, if they have a daughter, or a niece, or they know a child that they can think of. Would you ever teach that child that? "If you grow up and get married, if he's working and you're staying home and taking care of the kids, you don't have a right to any of that money. That's not your money." Would you teach your kid that?

DIANA: It would be like saying, "So, when you get married and he works so you can stay home and take care of the kids, and then he comes home and he expects you to do all the housework, and he's not nice to you, and he demands sex even when you don't feel like it, or he says something mean to you, and he wants you to forget about the things you need and always take care of his needs, when the marriage gets so hard, daughter, that you need to exit, you also need to make it as easy as possible for him."

We would never say that to our daughter. We'd be like, "No girl, I'm going to help you get out of this. We're going to fight. I'm going to help you find a great attorney. You're not going to get pushed over by this guy anymore. You matter. I care about you. I'm here to help you." That's what we would do as a parent. And so why wouldn't we do that for ourselves? What makes us any less important other than we've been conditioned?

I have an online Facebook group, it's just about 600 people in it. It's not like a super active thing, but I get to interact with people who've listened to my podcast and they

can ask me questions there and stuff. So it's fun. It's the Renew Your Mind Community. But I ask everybody on the way into the community, "What is one thought that's keeping you stuck right now?" or something like that.

And I stopped tallying it after like the first 400 people because I still pay attention to what they're saying, but I'm not tallying the statistic, but I got the statistic. It was like 37% percent of people joining my group already knew and identified that their main thought keeping them stuck was a version of, "I'm not good enough, I'm not worthy, I'm not worth it." Anything that was in that, "I don't have value" was in that family. I lumped that in because that's the same thought. "I'm not enough." 37%.

And those are only the people who were able to identify it. I didn't walk them into that. That was just them answering. I stopped tallying it because I do announce that statistic on my podcast and so now it's tainted so I can't get a pure sampling anymore because they know that I looked for that. But we carry that into these situations subconsciously—it is in there, this lower, "I have a lower value. All that he's done. He's really worked his butt off. He's really suffered. I haven't been able to be the kind of wife he needed me to be." I used to say that in my marriage all the time. I'm like, "I don't know why you're with me. You don't like the way I communicate with you, you don't like the way I do anything around the house, you don't like the sex in our marriage, you don't like this. You're married to someone you don't like. This is weird."

NATALIE: What would he say to that? Did he have any comments?

DIANA: Nothing. No, my husband was like yours. Not a lot to say. When you brought common sense to the table and asked them, then they get quiet.

NATALIE: It's so true. Mine would usually just parrot back what I said. He'd literally just repeat what I said, but turn it around so that I would be in his role and he would be in my role. I'd be looking at him like, "What planet are we on right now?" It was so weird.

DIANA: Yeah, I learned real quick once I introduced the idea of like, "I think this is verbal abuse," well, a few months later, I was told I was being abusive. I was like, "I see how this works." So I took that one off the table.

NATALIE: Sometimes we accidentally give them rope that they can hang us with, right? Okay, so these women will say, and you and I have said this in the past, "Well, I just feel so bad for them." I used to think of myself as being a very empathetic person. I was empathetic towards my husband. But I realized that I don't have empathy for a very important person in my life. It's actually the only person that I'm called on to manage

their life. It's my own life, and I don't have empathy for me. I was willing to throw myself under the bus on a regular basis. And I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts about that?

DIANA: Well, I am direct when I coach people. This last person that hired me for one on one coaching, right at the very beginning, I said, "I tend to be blunt, and it's the kind of coach I am. So I want you to know, if I notice something, I would normally mention it. Do you want me to mention that right now?" Cause I start with a free coaching call, and she was like, "Yes, I want you to call me out on everything." So that is my style of coaching, and the people that come to me do generally appreciate that.

And when I say to people in this situation, I'm like, "What makes you so special? How are you the special unicorn?" And it's kind of a reverse, like, "You're the special one that we need to relegate to the corner and say, 'You don't deserve empathy.' There's something special, meaning separate from everyone else. You're the special unicorn that can't relate to anyone else and doesn't have value like everyone else. You're the one."

Because when I do that thing, like, "If it was your daughter, if it was your friend," I do that one a lot. "If this was your friend and they came to you, what would you say to them?" And they'd tell me, and then I'd say, "But why won't you say that to yourself?" And they're like, "Well, I guess I just don't think I'm worth it or whatever or I'm not good enough for that." And I'm like, "So you're the special unicorn. You're the one human being that doesn't deserve to be seen as valuable and have empathy. Is that what you're telling me?"

And so I'm just trying to shake them out of... Because we all feel that. I did too. I'm like, "I'm the only one. I'm the only one who has to go through this pain. I'm the only one who's screwing everything up in my marriage. I'm the only one. And oh, sick, gross, lowly me. I don't deserve to be even rescued from this. I don't deserve something better. This is it. This is my lot in life. I guess this is it." But that is just wrong.

So I love to tell people, "You're not special. You're a wonderful human being like the rest of us." I love to talk about having humility. And I describe humility not as we're lower than people around us—they're better. So humility means like, "Okay, I'm not going to consider myself better than them," but then we might actually kind of think, "I guess I'm a little bit lower then," but we're not.

I think humility is lifting us all up. I am a child of God made in His image and so are you. Here we are lifted up together on the same place, on the same field. And if I can help

lift women up and be like, "You are just as amazing and valuable as that woman next to you, your friend that you would speak to that way with love and compassion. You are just as amazing as her. And if you've thought differently, it's okay. But it hasn't been true. Now I want you to believe what's true."

And there's so many more places we can go with that about God's character, being made in His image and being love and God's grace and all this stuff. There's so much about God's character that supports this if we're willing to let go of the story of being lesser and accept what's true about how God made us and who He is to us and for us and with us.

NATALIE: Yes. It made me think of, I'm watching Poldark right now, which I know I've talked to you about. I'm on the final season. I'm going to be weeping in my tea when it's over. It made me think of that because Poldark, there were certain characters in that story. There's the gentry and then there's the miners and the people who are poverty stricken. And then there's some of the people in parliament are like, "Yes, people should be slaves and people should be miners and they should stay in their place and they shouldn't be educated and who cares if they starve and who cares if they get scurvy. As long as the companies are growing and whatever, then we're good." And Poldark, who comes from, what's the word for it?

DIANA: I guess it was he was born into a family name that already had credibility, even though he was struggling and often was broke. It was because of that bloodline. So I don't know what the term is for that, though.

NATALIE: And most of the people in the bloodlines had money, old money, family money. So anyway, Poldark comes along, he ends up marrying a miner's daughter, who used to be his cook, and then he ends up fighting. Throughout the whole show, he's fighting for the underdog. And so humility doesn't mean that he becomes... I mean, he does. He gets down into the mimes, he does the dirty work with everybody. It doesn't mean that he becomes one of them, but he has humility to get in there and, like you said, lift up their cause. Lift them up, try to see if we can get them the resources that they need so they can raise their children, so they can get educated, so they can better themselves in life. And then he goes to Parliament and tries to get those changes made on that level.

That's humility. It's not saying, "Oh yeah, I'm just a terrible person." Not Christianity in general, but there's versions of it that kind of get that a little bit mixed up. Okay, so let's segue into coaching now because it's come up on different occasions and again, more recently that sometimes, and this is my style of coaching, and I know this is your style of

coaching too, where, and actually I have a whole episode. There are these advocates out there that, basically, they're saying that if you call for personal responsibility, that you are somehow victim blaming.

And I believe that responsibility is part of being an adult. Personal responsibility is adulting. But I also believe taking responsibility for another adult who should be taking their own responsibility for themselves, that's when we can get victimized. When that person tells us, "Well, you have to take responsibility for me. You have to make sure that I'm happy. You have to make sure that I'm satisfied and that I'm emotionally regulated. Okay, we agree with that." "Okay, that'll be my role. As a wife, my role is to keep my husband emotionally regulated. It's to set him up for success. It's to make him look amazeballs to everyone at church. And whatever that takes on the home front, I will do that," that's an abusive dynamic.

But personal responsibility for ourselves, that's what we are called to do as Christians, and that's not victim blaming for me to say, "I'm so sorry that you're in an emotionally abusive relationship—there's nothing you can do. You're being victimized, he's doing these horrible things to you, but I'll just sit with you and hold space for you"—all of these things are important, by the way, everybody—"and then I just feel bad for you."

DIANA: Right. But also agree, "Yes. What he's doing is wrong and this shouldn't have happened to you. And this is unjust, and a lot of agreement.

NATALIE: Yeah, 100%.

DIANA: That's not not empowering, that's just validating. Validating can lead to feeling empowered, but not always. You can feel validated and stay stuck.

NATALIE: Yes. So some people, when they're validated, it can lead to them suddenly going, "Oh, maybe there's steps that I could take to potentially change some of the circumstances in my life." It's usually baby steps. Usually people can't just all of a sudden get out. That's not very realistic. "But maybe there's little baby steps I can take." One of my baby steps was just making a couple of small decisions on my own without asking my husband's permission. That's a baby step. I mean, it actually was a really big deal for me at the time.

DIANA: Those baby steps feel huge. I just think about one of the first baby steps I made and I was like, "That was a gigantic step."

NATALIE: Exactly. But those are really important steps. That's called taking personal

responsibility. If the person that was coaching me at the time just said, "Yeah, he is a jerk and I can't believe you're going through that, and wow," it'd be like, "Okay, now what? Thanks for validating me, but now I don't know what to do next." So when people come to you or they're coming to me, if all they want is validation, we can do that all day long. And we do, we do.

DIANA: Validation is important because we need to be seen and heard and that's foundational. It's not alone what can help bring change or healing or growth or a better future.

NATALIE: Exactly. And just to make sure that nobody misunderstands me, my whole book, *All the Scary Little Gods*, is about empathy and being seen and seeing others and the importance of it. It's everything.

DIANA: Yeah. I love that book. Can't wait to listen to it again. And I was like, "Ah, that's me. Ah, that's me." Not everything, but I know everybody who listens will find their part.

NATALIE: Yeah, they find themselves somewhere in there. But then what? Some people want more than that. Some people are like, "Okay, now what?" And that's where coaching can come into play.

DIANA: Can I just say, it's okay if you don't want more.

NATALIE: Yeah, totally. Absolutely.

DIANA: So if you're noticing that you've been victimized and you're wanting to stay, you may need to... Or I'm trying to think how to make this not sound bad, but I was the victim in my own marriage for a long time, and it's why it's a huge part of why I drank. And I reached out for help and nobody was fixing my husband, and I just wallowed in it, but it was a very important part of my journey. And if I wanted to stay there for the rest of my life, I could have. I still could reach out to God for comfort and I could still somehow try to grow in my relationship with Him and also be like, "And this is just really hard and I'm going to be here."

I have some friends, they're very much in life is just really hard all the time. And they're not the kind of people who go out, get coaching and do different... I don't know. Whatever stage you're at is okay is what I'm saying. But sometimes we get to a point where we're like, "I want something to change." And we can't change any person around us. When we change, sometimes people around us start doing things differently. That is true. But sometimes they don't.

Or sometimes what happens in abusive relationships a lot is like for me, when I started changing, things went from, they were covert in the beginning, then overt, and then when I started changing myself big time, they went back to covert. So it was actually a lot more pleasant in my house, because there was less yelling, there was less disappearing all night long at bars, there was less of some of these really overt, crazy things that were happening because I was creating change.

However, it didn't ultimately change the people around me. It just kind of changed how they danced with me. I wanted more, and I made my change for me and my life and my journey with God and becoming—I have a friend who calls it becoming—becoming who God really created me to be. Like, “What are the best things in me that haven't even come out yet? What else could I do with my life? How can I serve other people? What if I healed my CPTSD because I did a whole bunch of work and I got help from people outside of me who could see things and give me tools and call things out for me and I could grab ahold of that and start making those changes in my life? Then what?”

And when I started doing that, boy, everything changed. When I talk about staying in my marriage and feeling more joy, hope, and peace even while I was still there, it's because I embraced all this. I was willing to look at myself in hard ways and take responsibility for, “Ah, I see in this part I wasn't creating the problem, but I wasn't doing everything I could to make that kind of situation better for me. What if I started changing?” And it could be boundaries or it could be other things, could be changing a job, ending a friendship, all these little things I did along the way that were really, really hard. But I did it because I wanted something better.

I even kind of visualized at some point, “I think my entire friend crew is turning over. I think they're all sunsetting, and I might be without friends for a while, and then a new crew of friends is going to have to come in.” And all that kind of stuff is really uncomfortable, and a lot of people don't want to go through the growing pains. When you do, I have found having coaches is an incredible step to make that happen. Getting someone alongside you is going to give you ideas and tools and help you feel supported and start opening things up, opening up opportunity and choices and feeling more strong.

NATALIE: Yep. So to piggyback off of that, I think the most important thing that's going to create change in any of our lives is most of the time we're stuck because of our programming. There's an important question that I think people who ask this question on a regular basis of themselves are the ones that are changing, and people who don't ask this question are the ones that are stuck. And the question is this: “Could I be wrong about that? I wonder if I'm wrong about that.”

You have to be willing to look at each one of your beliefs as they come up and ask yourself, "Am I wrong about this?" And that's what I think a good coach will do. A good coach will find the belief, the belief that that person is having, and say, "Is it possible that you're wrong about that? And if you were wrong about that, how would things be different in your life? What would change in your life if you were mistaken about that?"

But the problem is that when you get asked that question, it can sometimes feel like, especially if you're really sensitive and we've been raised to believe that you have to be right about everything...

DIANA: ...or if you've been gaslit and you felt confused at times.

NATALIE: Yeah, exactly. Maybe your husband always said, "Well, you're wrong about that." So now you're coming into your own and realizing, "I'm not wrong about everything." You're not wrong about everything, but when it comes to our programming, we could be wrong about some of our programming. And we can hang on to those wrong beliefs if we want to, but if we do, then what we're doing is we're saying, "I want things to stay the same. I want to stay the same person."

DIANA: It's an invitation to look at it and consider different opportunities. One thing that you and I both do is we help people look at how their programming or their beliefs or their thoughts influence their emotional state and then how that emotion influences their behavior and how they show up in their life. And so if we want to change how we are feeling or how we're showing up in our life, we do need to be courageous enough to look at what we're thinking or believing and examine. I like to ask people, "Is it true, 100% true? Is this just a perception or an opinion?"

NATALIE: Meaning a fact. "Is this a fact?"

DIANA: "Or is this an actual fact?" There is water drops on my window. Fact. It's too damp to go for a walk. Opinion. So be willing to question what we're thinking... This is the three questions I ask. "Is it true?" "Does it serve me?" And you'll know if it serves you by how you're feeling and how you're showing up and if you like how you're showing up in the world. And then the last question I ask, and not a shaming one, is, "Does it honor God?" Which is an invitation to ask yourself, "Is this in line with God's character of love, grace, mercy, and all the good things that He has for us?"

NATALIE: Not just for other people, but for yourself.

DIANA: For yourself, too. That's why, "Is it true? Does it serve me?" Not a selfish

question. But I want to show up as the best version of me. The people around me in my life are counting on me showing up as the best version, not the most depleted, broken-down version, which, I've been there, and there's a place in time for it. I've even struggled this week with feeling down about things because there's changes coming, including one of my sons is moving out and I have like a business loss coming up. Some camaraderie I had is going to change, and these friendships, we're gonna have to find a whole new way to hang out because the way we collected doing business workshops together is sunsetting.

And so there's a time for all that, but it's okay for me to ask, "Is the way I'm thinking about it serving me?" because there's people in my life I want to show up for as my best self. And I, in partnership with God, it's like, "What is the best You created for me to be? How do I do that?" It's not selfish to look at yourself as His creation and His love and His child and want the best for that. That's good stewardship.

When we were on Marco Polo, we were talking about empathy and the difference between having empathy and like what happened when you broke your arm and a doctor helped you—kind of like a friend having empathy versus the way a doctor practices empathy.

NATALIE: Exactly, you're right. When a friend comes to me and they are having a bad day, I'm not going to start coaching them. I'm going to just give them empathy. But when I had my car accident and they took me to the hospital, I wasn't there because I just wanted the doctor to come in and go, "Oh, I'm so sorry that happened to you. And I see you and it looks like it's really painful." No, the doctor came in and said, "This is going to hurt. What I'm going to do next is really going to hurt." And he offered me pain, and the pain was necessary to get my bones initially set before my surgery.

And then another doctor came the next week and said, "Now I'm going to go in there and cut you open and do surgery." And that was necessary to get everything back in order. And now I have to do physical therapy, which is also painful. And it goes on and on and on. But if I don't do those painful things and address those issues, I'm not going to get my life back.

So I can get empathy from my husband. My husband was there and he offered me lots of empathy, but he could not do anything about my arm. And I wasn't looking for him too. I was looking to the doctor. So a coach helps a person get their life back. A coach helps a victim rebuild, and that means looking at the breaks, looking at the places where that person needs help. They can have empathy, but then they have empathy plus they add to that empathy real solutions to real problems.

And so when a person comes to a coach and asks for help to move the dial in their life, they're expecting to get that kind of help. And that's the kind of help, I think, that's amazing for people, and that's kind of coaching that you and I do. Sometimes it hurts.

DIANA: Yeah, there might be coaches out there that just walk beside you and they're like, "I'm so sorry, and this really sucks." And if that's what you need, that's great. You might even not have to pay for it. You could probably just get some good friends to do that for you. But my passion as a coach, and I hope most other coaches are like this too, is we're here to take it to the next step. You don't have to stay here. I talk to people about being stuck all the time. When I do free classes online, a lot of times they're called like, "Unstuck Your Brain," "Unstuck Your Life," because we just feel stuck and people want to get unstuck. If you want to get unstuck, get some coaching.

We want to help you move forward toward more goodness, toward more healing, toward more hope. Life doesn't have to... Yes, suffering does continue to happen because, like, Natalie's living a great life and got in a car accident, for example—there's been a lot of suffering along the way. So that stuff still happens. But in general, in life, we're not in a state of emotional suffering all the time. We just know how to have more of that joy and be more in control of what's coming up next in our lives and partner with God to create. He's a creator and we're made in His image. What can we create and do next? So much possibility.

Well, thank you for having me and hey, butterflies out there, I'm so glad you're listening. There is hope. Get the help you need. Natalie's here for you. If you haven't joined the Flying Free Kaleidoscope yet, I gotta tell you, it's amazing. I'm in there every day and I hope that you guys will take Natalie up on it and join us there and get some support and encouragement. So I'll see you all inside the Kaleidoscope. Thanks for having me.

NATALIE: Sounds good. Bye, Diana. Okay, I just wanted to share with you. I want to talk a little bit about the Kaleidoscope because I actually don't do private coaching anymore. I love coaching and I'm passionate about it, but I'm more passionate about I really want to reach as many women as possible. And I know that coaching can sometimes be expensive, but for the average person, usually most people can afford \$29 a month, and then you do get access to years and years of past coaching. For years, every week I've done group coaching—you get access to all of those coaching calls as well.

And you can also get coaching inside of our private community forum every single day if you want to. Not just from me, but from the other coaches, including Diana. And then if you do want to get some private coaching, you can get to know the style of these

coaches. And then they all have expertise in different areas. And you can go over to their websites and get private coaching from them. Most of them have special offers just for Flying Free Kaleidoscope members.

It's not just coaching in the Kaleidoscope, though. It's community with hundreds of other women just like you. It's also classes that will help you go from that little egg into the caterpillar, the growing and learning caterpillar into the part of the caterpillar transformation where you're going through the grief process and you're in that chrysalis doing that transformation work all the way up to the point where you are flying free, whether that means out of your relationship or in your relationship, but disconnected, detached emotionally and spiritually from that abuser so that abuser is not taking up a lot of real estate in your brain.

So I would love to encourage you to join the Kaleidoscope by going to joinflyingfree.com. There's more details over there and all the FAQs. It's only \$29 a month. It's so worth it and it will change your life. I'd love to see you in there even by the end of today. All right. Have a great rest of your day.