Weaponized Empathy: Why “Nice” Girls Get Sick in Trauma Bond Relationships Transcript

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Introduction to Healing and Trauma Bonds

Hey and welcome to today's episode of the thyroid pharmacist healing conversations podcast. So healing can be a bit of a complex topic and oftentimes one of A runaway from is trauma.

So a lot of us might be cutting out toxic foods from our routines. We might cut out various different things, but one of the things that I've always said is oftentimes cutting toxic people can be incredibly more healing than anything else that we do.

Today, I'm super, super excited to have a guest with us, Dr. Nadine Macaluso. So, she's known as Dr Neh. She's a therapist specializing in trauma healing and personal transformation.

And you might recognize her from her incredible life story that was featured in the Wolf of Wall Street. So she was actually married to the wolf of wall street and then was able to reinvent her life and became a therapist and now helps other women and men around the world.

recover from trauma bonds and get into healthier relationships. So, Dr. Nadine, thank you so much for being here with us. Oh, Thank you. so, much, for having me.

I'm so excited for our conversation. Yeah, so I know there's so many, let's just say so much misinformation, right? Some people often think it's about two people bonding over their trauma, but that's not it at all.

So a trauma bond is a toxic dysfunctional relationship between two emotionally attached people. You're not going to have a trauma bond with the barrister at Starbucks.

Okay. You have to know the person. So you can have it between friends, a boss and employee. It can even between a parent and a child. But the way I write about it is between lovers.

And what makes it dysfunctional is that one of the partners wants power and control over the other partner. And so that partner is not allowed to have autonomy.

And it's really can end up being quite toxic because what starts out as a loving kind, what you think is beautiful relationship. You think you met your soulmate often becomes, as I say, your cellmate.

Wow, it's, It's really quite devastating for women to go through illness, autoimmune disease, and then they come to sometimes realize as part of their healing journey, that actually a lot of the habits in their day to day life might not be working for them.

What a Trauma Bond Really Is

And unfortunately, as they go Through their Healing journeys, oftentimes they realize that they are married to a narcissist or that their partners are just not showing up for them the way they were hoping to.

There's actually interesting research connecting traumatic relationships and dysfunctional relationships, abuse, psychological, physical abuse to developing asthma and inflammation and various types of autoimmune disease.

Now, it's been very, very fascinating to me to see some of the stories that the women tell themselves. A lot of times, they kind of blame themselves, like, why did I fall for this kind person?

Some of women I see are like the empaths and healers. So they have these beautiful hearts and almost it's like they want to fix their partners, right?

Can you talk about some of the dynamics that you see? Yeah. So, I mean, it is very important that to discuss and illuminate that relational trauma, does affect your immune system and it affects your stress system, affects cortisol, and so it does effect inflammation, so, its very importance to illuminating that.

And so in a trauma bond, what happens is that there's usually a pathological predatory partner, right? Like as I said, that wants power and control over this other person.

And as you mentioned, you know, people, one of the reasons I wrote my book Run Like Hell was because people often stigmatize the victim. You know she's codependent, she has got learned helplessness, and she is a love addict.

What the research shows, as mentioned is that's not really the truth, okay? It's that, In 2019, I read a fantastic book called Women Who Love Psychopaths by Sandra Brown.

And what her research illuminated was there is a personality trait. There's something called the five factor model of personality, and it measures five personality traits, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extroversion and neuroticism.

was that 70% of the women that she was healing and treating that were the aftermath of trauma bonds scored high to very high in the personality traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness, right?

So what does that mean? When you are agreeable, you have lots of empathy. You're very altruistic, your pro-social, Your loyal, You are tolerant. When your conscientous, You're directed, you're goal-driven, and you have a moral compass.

You will work to see things through. Those are great qualities if you and I are in relationship. But in a trauma bond, what happens is those beautiful qualities get weaponized by the pathological person.

And I have community online for women who are healing from the trauma bonds. I would say 30% of them are therapists. Wow, yeah, I just got chills because I feel like a lot of women who are these beautiful, kind healers and empaths, it's almost as though they were targeted by the narcissist.

Have you seen that? Yeah, because this pathological narcissist will test your boundaries. We'll see if you're a flexible person. strengths, but not when you're living with a person who wants to dominate you and control you because slowly but surely you lose yourself.

How Trauma Bonds Affect Health and Self-Blame

And I feel like women oftentimes will blame themselves and they'll say, oh man, I must have gotten him mad or this is my fault that he's this way because they have that empathy and consciousness and that desire to like show up as a really good person, right?

Yeah, that's what will happen is that, you know, this, the woman is able to be reflective. and have insight, but the pathological partner, they're not able to do that.

And so they, one of the signs of a pathologic person is that they will always blame the victim. They make everything the victims fault. and then the, victim, because they are so reflective and insightful, will really reflect on it and be like, maybe it is me, Maybe it's me.

But it not them. That's just part of, the Pathological person's manipulation. Yeah, it's quite, quite scary. And I know you went through this on a personal level where there is an actual movie if anybody wants to see it called the Wolf of Wall Street, and you can see some of the examples of of Hollywood taking on some of that, you know, toxic,

narcissistic husband and showing how he was showing up in your relationship.

What was it in real life for you like? Was it like the movie? Yeah, it was just like a movie and it just was like Trauma Bond, right? Because I was in the quintessential Traumabond unbeknownst to me because nobody was talking about this 25 years ago.

I just knew that something was wrong because I was really love bombed in the beginning, right? Just tons of adoration and tons attention and, you know, flowers and big dinners and just fast and furious and super intense, but intensity is not intimacy.

And then so that I call that that pathological partner wears a mask and the first mask they wear is Romeo, right? They're loving, they're generous, kind, helpful.

You're like, I've met a unicorn. That's it. I'm set for life. And that's what you see happen in the movie. But then as time went on, the mask fell. and my ex would become very dominating, very threatening, and say to me stuff like, if you don't marry me, I'm not gonna date you, or if don have children, then I am not going to marry you.

And so, always moving the goalpost, being very threatened and dominating while doing drugs. And so his personality was very dramatic and erratic. And I was just like, hey, where'd Romeo go?

But now Dirty John was in the picture. Because I called the two masks Dirt John and Romeo. By that point, by the time the mask falls, you're already in it.

I was going to say at that point, you're probably in love with the person and you are committed and maybe you have a wedding dress picked out and the wedding venue and deposits and sometimes children and a whole life with this person.

Part of you, I feel like, can be very much in denial that this is the mask. Maybe it's the drugs or maybe it is dressed from work. Yeah, especially for my ex because he was such a severe drug addict that I really believed that once he got sober, he'd be normal, right?

And so what happens is that in a trauma bond, there's something called intermittent reinforcement. Meaning that 70% of the time is when they're cruel, controlling, unkind, betraying.

That's the Dirty John. And then the other 30% is Romeo, generous, kind and helpful. So when Romeo comes back, hope is the hook. You're like, oh, there he is again.

But then he always goes back to Dirt John and especially with my ex, as I mentioned, the drugs, I really believe like if I could just get him sober, our life will be perfect.

but that wasn't reality. And that's your inner healer, right? So you're seeing this person, you are seeing some of the beauty or the booty that you want you to see.

That's actually a mask. You're a smart person. So, your analyzing and you like, okay, well, maybe it's mental illness or stress or drugs. And then once they get off of that, we're going to be okay.

I just need to focus on getting them clean. Is that what you did? Did you try to work with him? That is exactly what I did.

Nadine's Story and the Two Masks of Abuse

know, I didn't understand about personality disorders and pathological people and you know I had no I mean it was 23 right so I have no idea about any of this and I just believed we were so in love and my love could fix him and that if I could just get him sober we can have a normal family life.

But I realized, first of all, you can't fix anybody, not even as a therapist. You can control anybody. And it was really just an illusory tale that I was telling myself, but we were married.

We were starting to have children, right? We had bought a home. So as I'm recognizing more and more how unhealthy this is, also the more entrenched I am becoming.

Yeah, I mean, like you want the father of your children to thrive and you, want your partner to Thrive. Now, um, was there a time period where he was sober and how, can you tell us how that ends up?

Cause I know there's a lot of women that are like, Oh, he just needs to be on psychiatric meds or he Just needs X, Y, and Z. But then this happens and things don't necessarily change.

Right. Yeah, so for me, what happens is that, and similar to a typical trauma bond, is the domination, threats, coercive control, which is constantly pressuring someone to do what you want them to, actually escalates, right?

So it doesn't get better. It only gets worse. And I would say for, we were married for about eight years. He got sober for the last year because I threatened him that if he didn't gets sober, I was going to leave him.

And that's actually, we know that the most dangerous time for a woman is when they say they're going to leave. And I would never recommend doing that actually.

I did everything wrong because I didn't have anybody guiding me. That was when he got really, it escalated into physical violence. They show it in the movie, but not exactly in chronological order that it happens.

But it's escalating into a physical violent. He kicked me down the stairs, he tried to drive my daughter into the garage door. Luckily I was able to stop him and he did get arrested.

And then he didn't get sober. So, but what had happened at that point and it came back to us and being again the good wife, I waited for him to come back because he was getting sober for me and the kids.

But at point I didn' love him anymore. Because you can't dominate, abuse, control, physically harm somebody, be a severe drug addict and just think that it's not going to affect them.

I'm so sorry that you went through all of that and I am kind of reflecting on what you said is he got sober and you sort of got sober too at that point.

Yes, yes. And what happened to for me was there's always a last straw in a trauma bond, but I have three last draws. I always say the one was when that whole scene when he go physical with me.

The second one. Was when we were in the sushi restaurant and it was about six months after he was clean and sober. But after that very traumatic incident and relay to him how much the abuse and the drug addiction had affected me, and he just looked at me and was like, it wasn't that bad.

And in that moment, I didn't know the word callousness, because now I know it, but my heart closed because this sort of person really doesn't have remorse, empathy or compassion.

There's no resolution, right? There is no real healing. if you can't have remorse, if he couldn't remorse. And so then six months later, he got arrested.

That was my third last straw. I did end up leaving him. It takes a lot of courage to do that. Yeah, it takes courage. You know, I always say I got very lucky that he was arrested Most of my patients don't have that luxury, right?

So, you know, God, goddesses, whoever was looking down and he had an ankle bracelet on, he got arrested. And I was like, well, now he's the government's problem.

He's not going to try to come after me, and try and take my kids or, we know women experience post-separation abuse. That didn't happen for me because the second he get arrested, I'm finally safe enough to leave.

You can't harm me anymore. Because also, as you're mentioning, women believe they're the problem. They take a lot of the blame. And they are afraid that, you know, this pathological person is going to go after them.

But it was so clear once he got arrested that he was a criminal, he is bad, and I was not. So I'm safe and left. Yeah, it is amazing that you got that opportunity as difficult as that must have been for you as a mother, as the wife, and for your children.

I feel like a lot of women, too, maybe hold out the hope of, I can co-parent with this person. I want them involved in my children's life. i want my Children to be with their dad, to know their Dad, to have that beautiful love, but it doesn't always happen the way that people would hope.

So sometimes children can kind of pull the partner back into another unhealthy situation. Is that right? Yeah, you know, I got lucky again because he became so humble after his rest.

And so that was when I moved to California. And so I took my children and we just started a whole new life because I didn't want them to have to deal with the stigma of him getting arrested.

Escalation, Leaving, and Co-Parenting

He stayed in New York. Then about two years later, he followed us to California and him and I were able to actually co-parent. You know, it's interesting.

The second part of a trauma bond is a power imbalance. And clearly in the beginning, he had all the power, right? Because of the resources, because he's dominated threatening, cause I loved him.

But once he got arrested, the Power and Balance shifted. Now the difference with me is I would never abuse my power. Right? So once you came to California, and as long as he was sober and decent, which he, was he has a relationship with my children.

And we really didn't have any issues co-parenting. That's wonderful news because I know that can be a lot, a big fear for women. And there is a bit of a struggle too when they are trying to be really good moms and they're trying, you know, do, one person was telling me an example, they were trying do a joint birthday party with, both families and both partners and how terrible that ended up because the narcissistic partner was still trying exude control and dominance.

Yeah. So again, I, you know, as unlucky as I was in the first eight years, that really was a turning point because the power imbalance did shift and he couldn't control me anymore.

And so now we were, we got very lucky and most women are not. They have post-separation abuse, they have to fight them in court. There they'll weaponize their children against them.

We'll try to fracture the attachment to the children. which is terrible, but that was not my story. That was my experience. And yeah, we restarted our lives over in California.

We got a second chance at life. It's wonderful that you've had this second-chance of life, and then you were able to take your challenges that went through, so you actually started to study to become a therapist.

While you were in California, can you tell us a little bit about your journey to help other women and individuals who need the help that might be stuck in a trauma bond?

Yeah, so when I first met my ex, he was so crazy and my life was extreme. I put myself right into therapy. So I was in therapy through my whole relationship with him and I do believe it saved my Not that my therapist was talking to

me about narcissism or trauma bonds, again, because we weren't talking about that stuff, but it was a safe place for me to go, express my feelings, learn how to manage my feeling.

So when I was living in California, I in the garment business and I meditating, and it just came to my to back to school to be a therapist. So I went back to school, got my master's, Got my doctorate, because I love to learn.

I'm a total nerd. And I wanted to be of service to people. It's like something you can do. There's no ageism. You actually get better at it as you get older.

and I never wanted a specialty. So while I was getting my masters, I think the book, The Wolf of Wall Street came out. Then while i was finishing my Doctorate the movie came.

So luckily when the movie came out, I had done a lot of work on myself at this point, but I still was like, who the hell is going to want to come to me for therapy?

I mean, i made them change my name in the move, y but i still didn't know, you know like what people's reactions were going, to be but what actually happens is that people said, oh my god you went through this and came, out like this, we do want, Absolutely.

I could definitely see that lived experience is so much more powerful than studying a textbook, right? And saying, like, this is what we do. Yeah. And then what happened is all these smart, bright, beautiful women were coming into my office being betrayed, being controlled, and being abused.

So I said, you know what? What's happening? Are we in the 1950s, coming in with autoimmune disorders? but living with a terrorist at home, but not really putting the two together.

And so that's when I went back to the research and wrote my book, Run Like Hell. run like hell um I want to ask if there are any red flags perhaps that you talk about in your book for men like let's say you know everybody loves being adored I know um i've been married for 20 years and I have a great husband and he you, know bought me flowers and all the things that everybody, loves that and appreciates that, and sometimes you.

Know falling in love can feel intense but what's the difference between like healthy romantic um maybe not perfect versus like, this is a red flag and you need to run like hell.

Yeah. So like you say, right? Of course we all want to be adored and we want be fond over in a way, especially in the beginning. Right? So, I mean, there is normal piece to that, but what happens in this, like some of the red flags are, first of all, when you first meet somebody, And you start to negotiate time or experiences, and you set a boundary, right?

How do they react to that boundary? Are they like, oh, yeah, I understand. Not like you want to do this, or I want do that. Or they go ballistic, that's a huge red flag.

Do you notice that you could be out at a restaurant and they could say, look at that guy. Right? So you start to see them get very possessive and jealous over you.

That's another huge red flag. Or you notice that they say repeatedly they're going to do something for you and they never do it. Their words don't match their actions.

If you see extreme substance abuse, if they tell you all their exes are crazy, why are they crazy? So I have a whole pathological lever checklist in my book and on my website, an electronic one, so anybody who's worried about it can go take it.

Becoming a Therapist and Writing Run Like Hell

There's a trauma bond assessment, because it's much more than those five things, but those are really five that are

very easy to listen for. I feel like young women should have this training.

I don't know if you grew up watching Disney movies or Disney princesses, but now I reflect back and I'm like, wow, that was a red flag. The guy lied about who he was.

Are you serious? Yeah, right. Anybody can present a good mask initially, or if they're calling you 10 and 20 times a day and needing to track you and know where you are, that constant texting, texting texting.

That's a normal. And I have another thing too. If it feels too good to be true, it probably is. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, being when we're younger, sometimes we don't know.

what's healthy and what is a not healthy amount of attention. And so you might be flattered that somebody is like obsessed with you and so possessive of you, but at the same time, it's like, yeah, I don't think, you know, there is the difference between like flattery and like control, right?

That's right. That right, and you we have been sold this myth of romantic love through Disney movies, through rom-coms, that love has to be this like crazy, intense thing that knocks this, you know, your socks off and, and you don't love at first sight.

And they can't have love in first. You can have attraction at First Sight, but you're not going to have a love of First sight and there is nobody coming to save us.

Yeah, absolutely. Do you have any movies that you're like, okay, if I were to have a daughter, I would not let her watch that, because it's just a cringe example of…

Pretty Woman. Did you ever see that? Yes. What are some of the red flags in that movie? Oh, listen, he comes and saves her, right? He hires her first of all, so he doesn't want her to any needs, have emotions.

And that's what happens with a pathological lover. It's all about them. You can't have needs, you can be real, You have emotions, but then slowly but surely her love fixes him, right?

Cause he can have a normal relationship and then he, drives in the limo and he's like Romeo, coming to save her. And that's just not the way it works.

But trust me, I saw that movie at probably 2021 and I was like, oh, this is what I want. Yeah, and it never quite happens like that, because in the movies, it's always like, there's something wrong with the guy.

And it sort of women's love and something that she has to do to fix him. But what happens in real life is that the guys actually doesn't change and the woman actually gets damaged in process, right?

That's exactly what happened to me. you know, a very loving, kind person that is very relational and you're uneducated, you do believe that. And actually the ages from 18 to 24 are when most victims of domestic violence, like that's when they first enter into those relationships.

Cause you naive, your gullible, You're so hungry for love. Um, and so then you get trapped in a trauma bond. I know, I'm having a daughter soon, so I need to make sure I educate her about all of this before she gets into her first relationships, because sometimes we do have those blinders on.

Well, the good news is, my daughter is happily married. She's a therapist, as I mentioned with her second baby, and she married a great guy. But she would often say to me, Mom, Connor and I, we don't have this crazy, ridiculous thing, dramatic.

I was like, that's good. That's okay. Yeah. It's like definitely Hollywood sells us on some things that aren't like happening in real life. You mentioned the term pathological lover.

Use that term instead of narcissist. Can you get into that a little bit? Yeah, so, you know, it's one of my pet peeves. Like everybody's, like, narcissist, narcissists, and, that's just not what this pathology predatory person is.

So pathologically means mentally unwell. And this pathological lover will use, harm, exploit and betray you and anyone to get their needs met for money, power, pleasure and status.

And so I believe anybody that will do that is monthly unwell, right? They're using people as objects, as tools to get their needs met. And, so what I say is that they're not just a narcissist.

Often there's something called the dark tetrad. The dark Tetrad is a term that came about in 2002. What it is, it's an umbrella term for four different dark personality traits, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, meaning like you're very manipulative, narcissism and sadism.

And sadist is the worst because that means you actually get pleasure out of knowing that the people that you know are hurt. Narcissism is entitled, exploitative, very into their image, but psychopathy is very cold, it's very callous, and really is into short-term exploitive relationships.

Red Flags, Love Bombing, and Media Myths

So they usually have like a few threads, maybe not all the threads of that, but then they can have a substance use disorder, they're highly impulsive, They can ever compulsive process disorder like sex and gambling addiction, and they could ever mood disorder.

Like bipolar, right? So this is a very complex person. They're not just a narcissist and that's why they are so challenging to really catch and decide and that's why I call them pathological lover.

They're not just, I wish they were just narcissists. And that makes a lot of sense. Cause I think I was looking up stats, but the narcissistic personality disorder is like one to 2% of the general population.

and a lotta times women might use that term for, you know, like an ex-husband. That's probably not exactly what's going on with majority of them. It might be more of a complex thread of different, personality issues and mental health issues.

Yes. In fact, when people have a cluster B personality disorder, which is narcissism, antisocial personality, disorder histrionic or borderline, 40% of those people are bipolar.

So there's a lot of things that are comorbid that go together. And so that's why this person is so tricky to figure out, because unless you have How are you going to understand all that while the Romeo mask is on?

Absolutely. Can you tell us a little bit about the difference between what is a mental health disorder? What is substance use disorder, and then what a personality disorder and how all of those might affect perhaps how a person might show up for us in a relationship?

Right, so a personality disorder is a pervasive way of being in the world, right? It's a pattern of behavior that shows up in, in work and in love. And a cluster B personality, disorder, they are known to be people that are very dramatic and erratic and their personality.

Disorder doesn't just affect them. It affects everybody who loves them on mood disorder. Is more like just affects you. You either have depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder.

And then substance abuse is when you abuse a substance like alcohol, cocaine, people do ketamine, and people to all these crazy things nowadays. What happens is that once the substance gets low in your bloodstream, you crave it.

You want more. A compulsive process disorder is more like a compulsive behavior that doesn't have to do with a

substance, but has to with an action, like I have gamble compulsively, I need to have sex compulsivly, right?

So yeah, those are very short, succinct but explanations. That's very helpful. I know I'm a pharmacist by training and I believe in healing and i know there are medications for different things but at a certain point I feel like we have to protect ourselves and put some boundaries up for ourselves.

i've heard people say you know you can't really rehabilitate a narcissist or you cant heal a personality disorder. I'd love to know your thoughts on that.

Yeah I mean it's Personality disorders, if we look at the cluster B personality disorders in general, borderline, antisocial, narcissism, and histrionic.

We don't really talk about histrionic that much anymore, but out of those four borderlines, a person with border line personality disorder, they are the most likely to heal.

Antisociation personality, disorder narcissistic personality is not so easy. Not so easy. So have I seen people heal from them? Yes, not anti-social, but more narcissism and borderline, I have for sure.

However, it takes, here's the thing. people have to want a change to change, right? So if somebody with that one of those personality disorders really wants to do the work and finds a therapist that can help them heal, it's gonna be a long journey with medicine, psychotropic meds, could they heal?

For sure. But when you're getting all your needs met, you don't usually want to heal. You don' usually wanna change. And also, if you not reflective and you have insight, because their brains are different, really hard to heal.

Yeah, I've heard a part of the condition is like a lack of self-awareness. and a lack of empathy and lack understanding, or even caring on how your actions, where a person with perhaps borderline might be a little bit more insightful.

Person with depression, you know, they have still the capacity to have empathy. And if they get better, right, then they can show up in a different way.

That's right. Because what happens with A mood disorder is its ego dystonic, meaning, I don't want this. This feels yucky. this doesn't feel like me. Personality disorders are egocentonic, Meaning they're just like, this is me, take it or leave it, because it's part of who they are.

It's the fabric of Who they Are. Do you think people are made or born that way? I think it's multiple causalities. So I'd think its psychosocial, biological.

I there is a huge genetic component. Then there's also the family environment.

Pathological Lovers and Personality Disorders

And then also there a cultural piece. We live in a patriarchy. Men often feel more entitled and superior and then you throw in the lack of a moral compass and you got a mess.

Absolutely, and a big mess that somebody else has to clean up, right? Yeah, or they can't clean out, but they're greatly affected by it. I work with women.

In fact, I worked with this woman today. She finally left after 34 years. 34 Years of suffering. You mentioned that it can be dangerous. even though that might be the thing that you need to do, can you talk to us about safety and how do you get out of that trauma bond?

Yeah, so that's a great question. So what you have to is now you to wear the mask. Once you radical acceptance that your in a trauma, which is something that can be really hard to come to terms with, you know, OK, I'm in the

trauma bonds.

I have get it out this. You now have put on the masks and act totally normal to the pathological partner. and plan everything behind the scenes. Because you can't tell someone who wants power and control over you, hey, I'm out.

They're gonna go crazy. Let me do everything to stop you. That's why it's the most dangerous time for a woman often. So you have to get credit cards, you get bank accounts in your names, You have get resource for the trauma-informed therapist that understands trauma bonds and pathological people, right?

I started a community And you have to join a community where you can get support and get validation. If you're married, you need to go deal with an attorney that deals with people like this.

And so you really need resource yourself to start to prepare. You have know where your passport is, clean out any documents that, or pictures that you don't want to be used against you.

So we have a whole system of documentation planning behind the scenes while you're acting normal, and then you have to make an escape. Wow. How long does it take for people to usually prepare?

I would say a year to six months. So you need to be planning six month to a years ahead? If you want to do it right. Like she made the escape and she's doing great.

She has the right attorney, she is safe, She got a temporary restraining order, they removed guns out of the house. And he doesn't know where she is. And so, like, you have to be very, very smart about this.

You provide a checklist on how to do that in your book. Yeah, in my book, so my books is, first of all, I explain what a trauma bond is the personality of the woman, the person personality, of a pathological lover, um, symptoms that you get, reasons why people leave, how they leave and then the last section, most important section is how you heal.

I'm not the most important, but you can heal. I guess that's what I want to say. Yeah, I feel like I've seen pictures of women before, like during the time they were in abusive relationships, and they look like a percentage of themselves and then after.

They've had some time to heal, they're vibrant again and they'll say like, my hair grew back and all of this inflammation went away and it's just incredible what can happen when you let go of that situation.

What are some of the healing stories that you've heard in your practice? So many healing story. One woman, I worked with her for three years. She was in a terrible trauma bond and we came up with an escape plan that really worked.

And what we did is when he headbutted her, and so we knew he was going to be physically violent with And so she had a code word for her friend and she texted her friends.

And then the friend called the police. The police came with a body cam and he got arrested. She won her kids, she won all the money she wanted, and now she's getting her MBA.

Her children are thriving and they're thriving. Or the woman that I just spoke with about with you before. So there's so many stories of women who come to me.

Now listen. I don't say to them, you have to leave. When a woman wants to lead, it's her choice and her choose alone. But what happens for women that I find, which is wonderful, is when you've been in the trauma bond, You have be obsessed with the pathological lover to live, right?

You got to be hypervigilant. You know about their mood. you got walk on eggshells. Once you leave, I have a system of turning the mirror back on you. Who are you?

What do you need? what are your attachment patterns? What are your personality traits? How did your developmental trauma shape you? And so we get on a whole excavation of them and healing them.

Because once you understand the trauma bonds and the pathological personality, that's not how you heal, by focusing on them, we can't control them once we got the facts about what we're in, then we have to go inside and go on that deep, beautiful healing journey inside of us.

It's incredible that you do focus on that because I feel like there's a big focus. I'm like, if you're in an abusive relationship, you should just leave.

But that doesn't help people with organizing some of the patterns and red flags. What are their individual needs and attachment needs? That's right. And when you leave a trauma bond, and you have loss of self, your CPTSD symptoms, right?

So you're hypervigilant, you have anxiety, your depression, and the physical symptoms often because your immune system has been so impacted.

How to Leave Safely and Begin Healing

And so you need to heal those symptoms. You're not just like, oh, I'm out. I mean, listen, it is a relief to get out and it's a very liberating feeling, but there's also grief, of the relationship that you thought you had, the life you though you were going to be building and living.

So there's just so much to unpack afterwards. That's that the real work for your healing starts once you leave. I mean, it can happen while you're in it, but much easier once left.

It's like all of that energy you were using to manage this person and their feelings and they're moods and predicting and trying to fit into a box. Now you can liberate that and really focus on yourself.

Yes. And the women just love it. They love learning about themselves. So in my community I took my book and I made it to an online course. Today at four o'clock I'm going to teach a lesson on emotional regulation.

Right? So they're learning how to do these things. And listen, whether you've been in a trauma bonds or not, you need to know how self-soothe. You need know about emotionally regulate, right?

These are things that we need learn how do in general. Oh, absolutely. I know some people have gone through those kind of relationships and they are doing a lot of work to get themselves back, so find a healthy love again.

The other thing that they struggle with, and I knew you had mentioned there was a bit of a power dynamic change within your marriage, but a lotta women I see, they continue to struggle Oh, it's so hard.

My heart goes out to them. I had Bill Eddy speak in my community and he has this concept called BIF. And so when you work with this person, you want to be brief, informative, firm and friendly.

Right. Another term for it is probably gray rocking. You know, You want To take all of the emotional emotionality out of it when You're dealing with them, be very boundaried with them and deal with all the emotions with your therapist or with you friends, right?

Because this person can't meet your emotional needs. And, you know, so a lot of times people have to use court ordered family wizard, like these apps that you can communicate with this on so they know that somebody's watching them.

It's really, if the pathology is very extreme, which often it is, you really need to just predict that it's gonna be difficult, unfortunately, and become emotionally regulated and learn how to self-soothe and learning how communicate with them as effectively as possible because you want your life to go on.

But it can be really challenging, especially initially. Over time, it usually does get easier. I've heard that like the emotions, they essentially like feed them if you are upset, if they sense that you're upset or hurt by something.

that that can actually feed their power? Yeah, it can. And it because remembers that person wants to have power and control over you. So if they see that a certain behavior is affecting you, they feel a sense of control.

They're like, yes, and they like that. That's why the term gray rock was invented, right? The way I like to say it is you need to be very stoic with them, almost like a stranger, really.

Yeah, keep those boundaries and that kind of polite interaction as though you were like a grocery store employee and they were passing through your line.

Yeah. But it is very, very challenging. And my friend, Dr. Christine Cotchiola, she's a real expert in that and helping women manage their children. That's her specialty with pathological people.

You can find her on Instagram. She's good friend of mine. That's wonderful to have these resources, because I know this is such a challenging thing that many women go through.

And it's oftentimes that the really important part of healing is breaking the trauma bonds, finding themselves again, and then figuring out how to show up for their families.

Right. That right. You know, in women, you can't do it, but you must get educated. Don't just wing it. Absolutely. Can you tell us the resources that you provide for women who are perhaps in this journey, who aren't listening to this and they're like, I know this is me and I need to do the work right now?

Yeah. So as we mentioned earlier, wrote my book Run Like Hell, right? So that's just a great resource. And if you're stuck in a trauma bond, you can do it as digital ebook.

or you can do it on audio, right? Cause you really can't have like the book run like hell next to your bed stand. That'd be a little bit of a, too much of, of assign, but if you're not still at home, you could actually get the books.

And I really suggest everybody go to my website, Dr. Nae, Naee.com. All of the assessments that I mentioned are on there for free. I have tons of worksheets that are there on for, because I understand a lot of times you are being financially coerced when you were in a trauma bond.

Resources, Community, and the Heroine's Journey

So I do do therapy with patients privately, but then I started my survivor community, which is only thirty dollars a month dollar a day where you get four support groups a week and expert comes in and talks to every week.

I teach the course once a weak and it has its own social feed and a whole community of women. In fact, Tonight, Dr. Romney and Dr Ingrid Clayton are promoting Dr Claytons book in Los Angeles.

She has a great book out called Forning and four of the women from my community are going together because when you're going through this, you need community and you can find the link for that on my website too.

So yeah, so there's so many websites for whatever and there are so much resources for every level you Thank you so much for making this your life's work and taking your pain and turning it into purpose.

Eating all these resources for so many women that need this life-changing information. You know, it's funny, like, again, you know when you're a little girl, You're not like when I'm older, I am going to be a trauma bond whisperer.

It's like it is nothing that like any woman, any young girl imagines that she will be, but you now I went through it. It got made into a major blockbuster motion picture.

And I love psychology, I loved education. I wish I could say I have this grand scheme, but it just turned out the way it did. My kids are all grown up, so what else am I going to do all day?

Yeah, sometimes like life just gives us something and we can decide what to do with it. Do we turn it into something that destroys us or do we turned it in to something, that helps us grow, become a better version of ourselves and then perhaps share with others, right?

And that's the heroine's journey. I mean, we're used to think about the heroes journey, but it's a heroines journey right. You go through certain things, you have challenges, You learn from them, then you bring them back to the community.

I'm 57, so it's a perfect age to do that. And I love my work, as you can tell. I am very passionate about it. Yeah, and you're helping so many women. So I really, really appreciate you taking some time out of your busy schedule to come and chat with us, give us some insights.

Really grateful for the work that you are doing in the world. Oh, thank you so much. Sometimes I work a little too hard, but it is okay. It is for a great cause.

It is for a great cause and we really appreciate you. Thank you everybody listening. I hope this conversation has been healing on your journey. If you know of somebody that might be dealing with a trauma bond or perhaps wants to learn more, please share this.

Conversation with them until next time.