

## 454: How to Make Your Marriage Easier with Natalie Clay



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jody Moore**

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Welcome to episode 454. How to Make Your Marriage Easier with Natalie Clay.

We all know a good marriage requires work, but have you ever wondered what that work actually is, or how to do it? I have. Today I've got an expert who also happens to be my sister, Natalie Clay, who's been coaching couples for the past eight years. She's a highly sought after marriage coach who works with couples together and as individuals. And today she's here to help us better understand what the work is and how to do it.

You'll learn why Natalie believes traditional counseling or therapy is usually not the best way to approach the problems in your marriage. What to do if your spouse isn't open to getting help, and why she says this makes perfect sense and how to disagree without fighting. Let's do this.

Welcome to better than happy. I'm Jody Moore and I'll be your coach today.

Jody: What's up, Nats?

Natalie: Hello Jody Moore.

Jody: You always call me Jody Moore. It's so formal.

Natalie: I know that because people say, "You're Jody Moore's, sister?" I'm like, "Yes, yes I am."

Jody: Well, they say the same to me. They say, "I love having Natalie Clay back in The Lab."

Natalie: I know, they say, "Oh, the hot sister Natalie Clay."

Jody: The hot sister.

Natalie: That's right.

Jody: I want to do a class in The Lab called hot girl summer. Do you think that'll be offensive to people?

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Natalie: Maybe just to me.

Jody: I probably won't call it that, but I don't know. Podcast listeners, let us know. What I want it to be about is style. It could be decluttering your closet, or it could be updating your wardrobe or I don't know, I just think I'm having fun with clothes. Anyway, that's off topic.

We have Natalie Clay here today on the podcast, so it's a very special day. Natalie is my sister. I'll let you introduce yourself, but I always have to talk first as you know. Natalie was coaching back in the day when we first started *Be Bold*. And then she left and grew her own business. And she's still doing her own business, but she also is back, doing a little bit of coaching in The Lab, which we're all so thrilled about. Natalie, tell us more about what you do as a coach and who you are.

Natalie: I am Natalie Clay and I coach couples primarily. I do have some clients who are one-on-one clients that I've been coaching for years and sometimes I take new ones. I like to mix it up. So not everybody is married, but primarily in my business I'm working with people on their relationships, whether they're married or not. And that is a topic I love to coach on and I've coached on for years and I am still so obsessed with it. I just think it's so fascinating.

Jody: And you do lots of reading, I mean, we both do, but you do more than me, reading psychology books, human behavior, both as they directly relate to relationships and just people in general. And this is a topic that from day one, when you became a coach, you were like, "I want to help people with their marriages." What is it about it that you find so fascinating?

Natalie: Well, I think that we learn so much about ourselves through our relationships. And so the thing I like about it, I was thinking about this recently when I was working with a couple in one of our sessions, that it just speeds up our progress so much faster. Because things just become clearer when I'm working with a couple and I can see their dynamic back

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and forth, we can't hide behind as much. It's kind of hard to explain it until you see it.

But it brings things up in us that we're able to work around in other ways when we're not in a relationship. So I guess the best way to describe it is, when we're single or when we're not in a relationship, there's certain, maybe some things about our personality or some weaknesses that we might have that we can just kind of ignore for a while. But in a relationship, we tend to say, you know, especially in marriage, "There's going to be some struggle or you're going to grow." Usually both.

And I think it just brings things up in us that we were able to maybe neglect before. So when you're with a couple, just because we tend to choose someone who's very different from us and it hits on our deepest insecurities, our sense of safety, our sense of security, our sense of identity and worth. It brings up all of those things which I think can be really beneficial. Also very painful if we're dealing with it in a productive way, but I think it can be so helpful to help us overcome a lot of those things so much faster.

Jody: That's interesting. I would agree with that. I think there's a handful of things. I think marriage is like that, even being a parent is like that at times.

Natalie: For sure.

Jody: I like the way you said, you're either going to really struggle at times or you're going to grow through some of those challenges, starting a business, trying to lose weight or work on your health in some way. Those things tend to bring up, like you said, these areas that are really, really useful to then work on. So can you talk a little bit about coaching versus therapy? And I don't mean that you have to necessarily flesh out, if you want to speak to the differences you can.

But here's what I'm curious about, and I know traditional therapy or counseling can be really useful for some couples. And so we're not trying to bad mouth it at all. But what do you find in terms of the couples that come

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to you who have not seen success in traditional counseling or therapy and in what way is coaching different?

Natalie: So I think there's a time and a place for both. And I think I used to be a lot more careful about this, which is therapy is fantastic and this is just another, which it is. But there is a time and a place for it and I think I'm becoming a little more comfortable saying that personally. And then of course this is my business and I'm not just saying this to sell my business.

Coaching makes a lot more sense for your marriage, in my opinion, because if you think about why we go to therapy. In my opinion, I think the one of the best things we can achieve in therapy is to find greater acceptance that you are who you are and you have the habits and the shortcomings or whatever we want to call it for justifiable reasons.

And especially with CBT, I'm a fan of CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy, they can make some connections to your childhood that really help you see, I don't need to be beating myself up over this. Because this thing happened in my childhood so of course I'm showing up in a protective way in this regard. So I think it's so helpful to help you feel validated. Also, there's times when you need a diagnosis or you might need some interventions or some support that coaches obviously are not trained in, things like EMDR, things like this.

There's just some different treatments that might be appropriate to help you deal with some of the things that you've experienced in your life. However, that said, when I'm working with couples, people aren't usually coming to me in need of a first time diagnosis for something. I'm not trained for that, but they don't need that. Maybe people have been diagnosed with a personality disorder or all sorts of different things, but that's not why they're struggling with their relationship.

So I think coaching is really helpful for relationships specifically because the problems don't lie in our past. It's what's going on now, how we're

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looking at things now and what we're trying to achieve in the future. And that is really what coaching is about.

Jody: You know what? That's so interesting. I never have thought about it that way before. But it's making me think about what we just said of how I think starting your own business, for example, is another way to bring up all of your own drama and scarcity and self-esteem and whatever. And either you're going to suffer and fail, or you're going to work through it and grow. And we wouldn't go to therapy because we're starting a business because nothing's wrong. We're just in a new circumstance that's bringing up stuff.

So I feel like what you're saying, I don't know. That really resonates for me and I am probably biased as a coach. But I do see what you're saying that there's nothing wrong necessarily. You're just in a new situation that's bringing up stuff. That's what coaching is really, really good at handling.

Natalie: Absolutely. And I think if you're interested in therapy, I think it's great, I think for you as an individual, just again, I'm talking to a select group of the population. Because people who haven't been to therapy for a lot of years come to me. And so I'm hearing a lot of the negative sides of it. And just like you said, I think it can absolutely, couples therapy can be very impactful for some people, no doubt. But if you find that you're struggling with it...

Jody: I'm sorry to interrupt you. What are some of the shortcomings people are, and again, we're not trying to bad mouth therapy, we're just trying to help people find different tools. What are some of the shortcomings and complaints that people have of it?

Natalie: This is often what I hear that it really helped for a little while, but then we kept going and we're like, "Okay, but at what point do we just stop going and it doesn't feel like it's really helping anymore? And it just kind of petered out, the help." Or the other thing they'll say is that it helped for a little while but then they're still having the same exact struggles. So that's why I think therapy is much more effective for an individual because again,

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if there's things that you need to feel validated for, if you need to be justified, if you need specific help, therapy is excellent at that and helping you tie back to your childhood and things like that.

But I think if you decide to go to couples counseling, just be careful because what I find doesn't work, I sometimes hear things like, we're going to understand how maybe you're more sensitive in this regard, maybe. And then we try to address it through, in therapy it tends to be addressed more through action. What I hear from people, which is, so this person is really sensitive about being left out or they have had this thing in their childhood and now they're sensitive. Okay, we've established that.

Then when you come home from work, just make sure that you check in with them in this way or you use these words, which again can be very helpful in a moment because that might happen. But unfortunately from my perspective, I think that's assuming the worst. It's assuming that they don't care about you and they need to show it in a way so that you can believe that. So while that works in the moment, that tends to sometimes, I think, exacerbate problems.

Because then when it stops, not only now are they not doing it, and you're no longer able to rely on them to make you feel good. But now you have the resentment because an outside person has told them that they should, and they're not doing it. So we have to watch out for that. So if you are in couples therapy, again, it can be great. But if they're telling you any action items to do, make sure you, even something like a weekly date night, that works for some people. It doesn't work for others.

Anything action oriented, try it and see if it works for you, but don't take it as this is the only way or this is the way for me to feel better in our relationship.

Jody: Or this is the right thing to do because an outside authority told us.

Natalia: Exactly. And they're not doing it, that's why I'm not happy because someone told them they should or [crosstalk]. Because that doesn't only



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set them up, that sets you up to also wonder where am I falling short? What should I be doing differently?

Jody: Eventually, we're both pretending to try to keep the other person happy. So, Natalie, I'm sure you have some couples come to you who are questioning whether or not they're going to stay married. And we'll speak to that in just a minute. But first can you talk to the ones that come saying, "We want to stay together. We're not trying to separate or that's not the plan as of now anyway." But there are certain subjects that maybe like you said, maybe they temporarily get resolved with some behavioral guidance, but overall they don't seem to. That seems to be possibly a common challenge, right?

Natalie: Well, yeah. So I think a lot of people they're not necessarily looking to decide, should I get divorced or not? A lot of people I talk to are like, "No, it's no question, we want to stay married. But we also know that things could be so much better than they are." And so they're missing that next level connection, that next level friendship.

So that seems to be really common with people, no, but I believe that they're a good person and I think I'm a pretty good person. And I know that we have this mutual respect for each other on our better days. So why is it that we're still not able to get to that place where we feel as comfortable with each other as we did at the beginning or where we do really just feel like best friends? That's a challenge for people.

Jody: How do you address that?

Natalie: Well, a lot of it comes down to our expectations on this relationship. But not only that, it's again, I think this is where it brings up our issues that we have been able to skirt around in other aspects of our life. But the reality is, if you are insecure as a single person, which we all are, then you're going to be insecure after you're married. And what I find is interesting is we go through that period when we're first dating where it's



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really a whole brain chemistry connection that we have. But really that's just about our brain wanting to continue the species.

So there's a lot of things that are going on during that time that are not actual reality. But we have this idea that, isn't that what love should feel like where we just feel so good around each other? We feel like we're high basically during that time period. And everything is just easy and it just feels so good to do things for each other. And then what happened? Where I think if we look at it like, yeah, that time period is so fun, but there's a good reason why we don't stay in that. Our brain is not meant to stay in that natural state.

It's the same reason why, yeah, probably it feels really great to do cocaine, but there's reasons why maybe you don't want to do cocaine in your life. It's dealing with how do we then look at this relationship in a different way. Instead of it needing to take away instantly all of our fears and insecurities and make us feel instantly safe. That would be nice, but if you think, that doesn't require much of us. So there's not a lot of depth behind that.

Where I think marriage offers us this opportunity to really learn and grow in ways that can help us have a much deeper interaction with each other and a deeper connection that you can't just replicate by going out and meeting somebody one night.

Jody: So what you're saying is that it's natural to feel that high in the beginning and then for it to change and become more boring and more challenging in many ways? What about, let's say this subject that we keep going back to is money, for example. Maybe we just don't see eye to eye, one of us is more of a spender, one of us is more a saver or the things that we think we should be spending money on we disagree about. I mean, is that the kind of thing you're talking about when it's, we don't want to separate, but we just can't figure out this issue?

Natalie: Yes. And so that's why I think human psychology is so fascinating, why I just love to study our fear response and all this. Because I think we

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have to be able to separate that out. So there's if we have a disagreement around money, for example, then there's our way of thinking about it. But then it hits on something so much deeper. And that's why simply talking about, but if we just set up a budget and we meet every week to talk it through. That's going to solve all our problems.

The reason it doesn't is because so often it's hitting on something on a deeper level that deals with our identity, mostly our identity, but our confidence. And so if we're not addressing it at that level, then anything that we're doing on the surface level. It's not going to fix it long term. It'll find other ways to come out. But again, I think that's an invitation to us, instead of looking at it like, we're just not as good in this area. I think that's a really great invitation to see, wow, this is really butting up against something in my identity or my confidence. What's that about?

Let's explore that and let's find ways to strengthen that and become more resilient as a human. And that's such a better, I think, more rewarding way to approach it, rather than how do we just make it so this goes away and that part of us is never triggered. We're missing out on that. And it also doesn't work and leads to resentment and more disconnection down the road.

Jody: So are you talking about being able to work on things like scarcity or worthiness? Sometimes we have worthiness stuff around money, shame, guilt, and that you're saying then you work on those things personally and it impacts your marriage. Rather than just let's make sure and stick to a budget, which you could have a budget too, but we want to address those deeper issues. Is that what you're saying?

Natalie: Yeah. So let me give you a more specific example. So if someone says, "My partner spends money this way, and I would rather spend it this way, on something basic." And so when we look at why that's really a problem, the worth thing is huge, our identity, our sense of am I lovable. And again, that goes back to fear brain stuff, which is we need to know that as a person who consumes oxygen in the world and resources, there's

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something in us that feels like I need to feel it's okay for me to stand up for myself or to keep myself alive.

There has to be a reason for me to feel justified in consuming resources in the world. And we also want other people to acknowledge that in us as well, because we'll feel safer if people want to defend us. It goes back to our primal needs there. But in an example like that, it challenges our identity because for so much of our life, if I'm someone who feels like I'm really good with money and I'm good at saving money and I'm good at planning my money.

Then oftentimes if I end up with someone who's more, maybe they're just by nature, they're more spontaneous. That's also going to translate to how they spend money. And if they spend in a different way, that might feel like a challenge to my identity because it's basically saying, but if I'm good because of this then they're doing it a different way, that challenges. But again, this is where I think the growth comes up, which is just such a great opportunity to realize, no, you're not a good person because of how you've spent money.

And they're not a bad person because of how they spend money. We don't have to call that irresponsible. We don't have to call you tight with money. This is a chance for us to just look at, we spend differently and now why is that a problem? But when we really recognize why that really is causing us some angst deep down, that's where the real growth happens.

Jody: There's so much psychology behind all of these topics.

Natalie: It's so fun. I love it.

Jody: What other things do people bring to you? I just picked money out of the blue. I don't know if you even get that commonly. What kinds of challenges are people dealing with these days?

Natalie: Yeah. So it's interesting you say that because I think if you ask people what are the most common reasons for divorce, everyone says sex

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and money, which sure, those absolutely come up. But that's not the most common thing I'm hearing from people. People want more connection and they want to be able to communicate better. That's the two things I hear most. And sure, it can relate to those different things. But it really comes down to, again, as we get older, I think we just naturally struggle with our sense of self.

Carl Jung talks a lot about this in the second half of life. And so you're going to go through that whether you're single or married. But when we're married and we're going through what might feel like a midlife crisis or you're just getting older and trying to establish your identity at this age, as you're aging and you're no longer able to rely on, I'm the hot sister. Maybe I don't feel as hot anymore. Or maybe you were really athletic. And these things are challenging you.

Again that's going to come up in ways of, it feels like we're disconnected because I'm around this person and I'm not feeling that sense of, I don't feel amazing about myself like I did when I was younger. So it's easy to disconnect and that's a really natural thing that happens because what happens is when we feel challenged on something, going back to the money issue for example. If my thought is wow, they spend more than me and now they're saying they should be able to spend more, am I cheap? Have I been viewing it wrong?

And if that feels like a challenge to your identity then we have a couple of options. Either that feels a little bit like shame, maybe it feels like a challenge, or we can go to the place of no, maybe they're irresponsible. So it's really natural for us to project that outside of us because that allows us to maintain this identity and maintain this idea of, no, this is why I'm good and I need to keep that. But when we choose someone who's very different from us, that actually compels us to need to be disconnected in order to maintain our identities. That's why it's problematic.

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Jody: I know we can't solve it on this podcast, but can you give any examples of what it looks like as we start making progress in the right direction?

Natalie: Yeah. So it's not as complicated as it might sound, it really isn't. I think it's really fun, actually. But it comes down to choosing vulnerability over certainty. So in a couple, the way that looks is, alright, I like to remind people, remember, we're not dealing on the level of eternal truth here. I'm not saying that eternal truth doesn't exist in this situation, but neither of us really know what it is in terms of how should we spend our money because people have pretty firm ideas on that.

But I always like to remind people, do all of you have a pair of shoes and are you eating? Yes, okay, everything else is kind of extra. So let's not argue over this. It's based on a lot of personal history and opinion and all those other things. So when we can get to a point of realizing, this can feel right for you and something else can feel right for them, and that's okay. Now again, that still might be challenging where your sense of identity comes from. But again, if we use that as an opportunity for growth, then it's alright, maybe we have a different opinion on this and that's okay.

And then I like to go to this place of, let's assume the best about them and the best about you and let's assume we do love and care about each other and on our better days, we do ultimately want the other person to be happy. Then what does this mean? Because then we can get a lot more curious about it and just know, wow, maybe there are different ways to spend. And that doesn't have to mean anything less about me because I'm not less than as a human, because now there's multiple ways to spend well.

You don't have to be more special than another person to be special. So it's relying on that vulnerability of maybe I'm still a good person and we do it differently. And they don't like the way I'm doing it. And I really like the way I'm doing it. And how do we work together in a way that supports our individuality but also shows us support for ourselves in our own ways and

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allows us to be unique individuals. But we can do that as long as we're not saying there is one right way and I have it right and you have it wrong because that's just such an elementary way of finding your identity.

Jody: It's hard for people to let go of, don't you think? I'm just thinking about the coaching I do with people privately and when it's like, what if your way of being with money is right and good and works well and his way of being with money is right and good? And sometimes there is that resistance of, if I just say it's okay then he's just going to go spend all the money or he's going to never let me spend money, whatever the thing is. I know you do some work when you're working with couples, you do some where they're together and some with them individually. Is that correct?

Natalie: Yes.

Jody: And do you notice a difference? Is it harder for someone in front of their spouse to admit maybe my way isn't just the one right way? I'm sure it varies, but I'd just love to hear what happens in those coaching sessions on those topics that we have a hard time letting go of.

Natalie: Yeah. So I don't think it is because of the way I have my program set up where I do work with people individually for a while because I do feel it's really important for them to know that I absolutely support them and their decisions. And as I'm helping them to learn how to do that, because anytime we're at odds with someone else, it's always coming back to some insecurity in ourselves. So when I can help them find some space to be a lot more unconditionally loving of themselves, which might even mean I don't like the way I spend and I still am not going to criticize myself for it.

But when I'm working with couples, I really don't meet with them together until I feel that we have a really good spot where they both feel really supported by me. And then we'll come together as a couple, even if they're really struggling.

I had one like this recently, and I just started off saying, "I hope both of you at this point really feel that I'm in your court. And so I think this can be really

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beneficial for us, even if you're at odds and that's okay if you are. This is our opportunity to work through that. And to work on the things we're working on individually and see that I'm working with you two the same way. That this isn't about that one is really lousy in this way so no wonder they're struggling." Or, "They're the worst. How do we account for that?" That does not work. And I don't think that's helpful at all.

Instead, it's, no, you're an amazing person. And yeah, you're flawed and you have insecurities and some things about yourself that you don't like and so does this person. How do we make room for that?

Jody: It's like you're creating a safe space for that I feel. Where it's okay that we're just a couple of humans. And then we don't have to have good guys and bad guys and right and wrong.

Natalie: Right. I think that's so important. It cannot be the case of looking at one or the other. Even if we're looking at things that might seem more extreme. If we're looking at mental health or someone said or did something that was mean by both of your standards. We have to know that's never coming from confidence. And so ultimately this is where it feels very counterintuitive.

I talk to a lot of people that are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which I am as well. Not everyone I work with is, but people will say, "But they're not supposed to. It's not okay that they're doing this thing. They're looking at pornography or they're doing this." But I like to remind people, remember why we're trying to do all this. Because we do believe that if we become more like Christ, we'll be happier. So doesn't that say that maybe we should have compassion for people that aren't making those choices you are making that you think make you happier.

And again, it's counterintuitive, but if we're not looking at it, that it's a challenge to me and that's also not to say you should just accept everything and be okay with everything. Part of this is saying, "Yeah, you don't like that they're doing that and you don't like that it's a struggle for



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you.” All of that is okay. But starting from that point is going to get us to find ways to work together with each other so much faster than saying, “You should be more perfect than you are. Oh, and by the way, I shouldn’t judge. So I should also be more perfect than I am in this moment.” That does not work.

Jody: One of the things again, I remember when you first started doing couples coaching. I always love hearing about the experience that it seems is common for men and I don’t mean to stereotype this way. So correct me if I’m wrong, but it seems it’s not uncommon anyway for the man to come to it more reluctantly, just getting any kind of help or whoever it is that comes to it reluctantly. But that oftentimes it’s the men that respond also quickly and latch onto the tools that you use and make fast progress. I know those are gross stereotypes and generalizations.

Natalie: But it’s true, it’s absolutely true. But I think there’s reasons for that. And yes, of course, that’s not every single couple. It will be different in some, but the vast majority fall into that in my experience. But I think it makes sense why. I think oftentimes the person, if we’re being really honest with ourselves, the person who’s driving the idea to come and get help is the one that feels I am confident enough that my story makes sense. And I want them to see that they need to make some change. So no wonder the other person doesn’t want to come.

Jody: I want a third party to kind of validate that I’m right about this.

Natalie: Yes. And so if you’re the one that’s more verbally articulate in the relationship. So maybe you’ve been able to craft a story that says why you’re right and they’re wrong more of the time. Again, I don’t think people are intentionally trying to do that and there’s reasons for that. But you could see that if you’re someone who isn’t able to articulate their experience as naturally, why would you want to go to a counselor or a therapist, a coach who is in your mind, going to say, yeah, they’re going to tell me why I’m doing it wrong.

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And I'm already being told that and maybe even part of me agrees and I don't know how to change it. Who would want to go to that? But the reason I think that if you are in that situation whether you're a man or not, the reason people really do end up finding it to be a different experience is because that is not my approach at all. There's no part of me that's looking to decide who's right and wrong.

In fact, if you're the one that's really struggling with your partner, guess what? That's work you need to do. I'm not looking at your partner to change. I'm never looking at it like, well, you're right. They really are causing you to be miserable. I'm like, "Okay, I get why you don't like that. And now what, how do we help you be more resilient instead of needing them to change for you to feel better?"

Jody: Or have boundaries or something.

Natalie: Yeah, sometimes it's boundaries, but oftentimes it's just learning how to take personal responsibility for the things that we're not happy in which doesn't sound fun. But it's actually so much more empowering, because then and again, I think people hear that and think, so I should just be okay with things I don't like. And I'm absolutely not saying that.

I think you need more compassion for yourself and the things you don't like and be like, "No kidding, I don't like this. But let's look at the options that are available to me on how I can resolve this." One is for them to change, but that's maybe most likely the hardest way for you to find relief.

Jody: And the least likely. And I guess the reason I'm throwing in things like boundaries and whatever and again, tell me what your experience has been. But I feel whether it's your real life experience or just in your mind, you start dreaming up scenarios and we kind of go to worst case scenarios. Really, Natalie, so you're saying if my spouse is abusive to me or is gaslighting me or whatever, then I just need to learn to be okay with it. That's an extreme scenario.

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Well, I don't know what you're seeing. I know you get some really heavy, serious problems in there. But then there's the other side of all the judgments and ideas we have about what makes for a good husband or a good wife. And what we thought it was going to be like when we were married and how we thought we were going to feel and how we have this unrealistic expectation. And I think that coaching can help in either scenario, what's tricky is trying to apply a one size fits all.

And I'm asking you to do that so I recognize the challenge of it. I don't know. Do you want to speak to that at all?

Natalie: Yeah. And I think we can go to a one size fits all in general terms, maybe not this specific approach to how we resolve it. But in general, every 'bad behavior' comes from some sort of shame, everything. And so that's really what I'm helping people undo and that's why I think it's so counterproductive to have a conversation with someone and say, "What you did, that's so mean or you shouldn't talk to them that way." Yeah, no kidding.

People don't like when they're showing up in ways that are unkind. We have a pretty good sense of what that is. So if someone is showing up in an unkind way, I don't know if this is a gift I have but I do feel compassion for them. I'm like, "They're scared or they're feeling attacked. They're feeling insecure." So the last thing they need is judgment outside of them. So instead, it's understanding the vulnerability behind it and helping them work through that and get to a place of self-compassion and understanding for why they do what they do, along with an approach.

Because every time they might act out on that, they're liking themselves less. They're finding more evidence that their shame is valid. And we don't want to validate the shame. We want to say, "Okay, so here's a process where we can slow down our reaction and we want to interrupt that pattern and start establishing new patterns so that you're acting more in integrity. But we can't do it from a place of so that then you can like yourself, we have to find compassion for ourselves first."

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Jody: What about when there are kids involved as I'm sure there often are, what if I'm like, "Okay, I can do that work on my own self?" Because I get this question a lot, then I see my spouse mistreating, being angry, unkind, whatever, towards the kids.

Natalie: Yeah. So what do you do in that situation?

Jody: Yeah, because the way the question gets asked to me a lot and I just want to hear how you would approach this is, it's one thing when I feel like he's mistreating me, but what about when it's affecting other people, then are you saying I'm just supposed to 'not try to change him'?

Natalie: So here's the tricky thing. So especially when we're talking about things like abuse or there's kids involved. There's so much shame, not just for the person who's acting out that way, but for the other person as well. So if I see that my husband is acting in a way that I don't think is okay for the kids and I'm staying in that relationship. What I find with people is a lot of shame in that.

In our society, we talk about, especially for women, it's, don't stand for that. A woman stands up for herself by demanding she's only respected. So what does that unfortunately communicate to women who are staying in situations that are not what they wanted and take that to any extreme is they're weak. They are not getting their own back. That's the opposite of feminism. And I think that is such a damaging message for women because these are people that need greater support and it can come across very shaming if we're not careful.

So in a situation like that, I would say, yes, you have to understand that that's a scary situation. If someone is acting out from anger, that's scary. Now, what did you do in that situation? What do you want to do in that situation? Yes, how can we set some boundaries? How do we keep you and your kids safe? Because the last thing we want to do is rely on them maintaining their temper to keep all of you safe. They are the least able to do that in that situation, so what can we do?

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Now, as far as do you want them to change? Absolutely. Do you want to suggest they get help? Maybe you need them to get help. Maybe you don't want to live in the same house with them for a while. And you're going to take your kids with you, and that might be the most loving, compassionate thing you can do for yourself and your partner.

So that's a very individual decision that needs to be made based on a whole bunch of factors. But again, I think it should be left to the individual and we have to be really careful about making these broad statements about what should or shouldn't be done.

Jody: That's so good. I love how you talk about that in general too, back to not such an extreme situation, but just I think we have this kind of Leave it to Beaver or whatever picture.

Natalie: You just aged yourself, Jody, you just aged yourself.

Jody: Do you guys not know who Leave it to Beaver is? What is the new standard?

Natalie: I was trying to come up with something fast so I can seem younger, but I'm with you. I know Leave it to Beaver so go with it.

Jody: Anyway, I just remember again years ago you were coaching a couple and it was like, "Well, I think they wanted to stay together until their kids graduated." And then they didn't plan to, but you were like, "It can look however you want. You can share a bedroom or not. You can have your own apartment." We're not suggesting that that's ideal, but I love the idea that you can create whatever you want for your marriage.

And I know actually many very happily married couples who have separate bedrooms even. I think we have to just be more open to what is a 'good' healthy marriage' and let ourselves define it.

Natalie: I just have to share. One of our cute little neighbor girls who's six. I was outside with our dog the other day and she said, "Oh, we have a dog.

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Our dad sleeps on the couch with our dog every night.” I’m like, “You know what? It’s normal.” Of course she doesn’t know it’s not but her mom would probably [crosstalk].

Jody: Okay, wait, wait, wait. That also reminds me of my favorite scenes in The Simpsons where Homer’s supposed to explain the birds and the bees to Bart. And so he says, “Okay, Bart, so you know how your mom and I sleep in the same bed?” And he’s like, “Yeah.” And he goes, “Do you know why?” And he goes, “Yeah, because we’re poor.” Then he goes, “That’s right. And we’re poor because we had kids.” Okay, good job, good talk.

Natalie: That’s so great. I love it.

Jody: Anyway, okay, sorry. What were we going to say about this?

Natalie: No, but I totally agree. That is how I teach. I just love that idea again because everything I feel like I’m working with people on as a coach is to combat shame. And we naturally have shame because our fear brain sends us to shame to keep us alive. So we so naturally go into shame. It’s not just because I’m just someone who was born with low self-esteem or I’ve had a rough life. No, our brain is looking for what could go wrong, not what could go right. And so shame makes sense because it keeps us in hiding and it keeps us living a smaller life and being less vulnerable.

So, so much of what I’m working with people on is, even though they might not call it shame, it might look like guilt, might be less intense, it can come across as guilt or disconnection or apathy. But anyway, it comes out in a bunch of different forms which is something I work with people to help them figure out their unique style and how it comes out, but that’s a whole other discussion.

But yes, so I think it helps because again, if we’re feeling shame that I’ve been sleeping on the couch and we don’t want anyone to know. Again, that’s breeding shame. That’s the opposite of what we want to be doing. So I like to just open up to people, “Yeah, this is not what you thought it would

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be. And you're really struggling right now." I think we have to be careful not lumping it into this category of our marriage is so terrible.

I'm like, "Yeah, it's hard right now. And there's some moments even during this challenging time where it's not hard, it's fine, but yes, it's not overall what you want. But if sleeping on the couch is making it easier for you guys to make this work right now and you both want to try to make it work for any reason at all, perfect." Why do we have to say that that's negative, that's bad? So I think we have to be careful where I think it's well intended, but people like to put out a lot of advice, you've got to have a date night every week.

Jody: Don't go to bed angry.

Natalie: Yeah, Jordan Peterson, who I love. He has some very prescriptive ways that couples should interact. And again, I think it's coming from a good place and that's worked for him. But if it's causing you to feel any guilt or shame because you don't have that. Then totally disregard it because that is not eternal truth.

Jody: Or resentment.

Natalie: Or resentment.

Jody: Or resentment. There's no return. I love that. Well, this is all so good and this really is, I will say one of the topics that I notice brings up a lot of personal work. This, building a business and trying to lose weight for me are the three things that bring up my own personal work. But with my marriage, it's vulnerability for sure. And I consider myself a pretty confident person.

But being able to really connect with Jake requires a level of vulnerability that I'm not comfortable with. I think partly just our family of origin wasn't very intimate emotionally. And so I'm not real comfortable with emotional intimacy, I notice. So I love the work that you're doing. I think it's so important. Does it work for people, Natalie?



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Natalie: Yes, there's not a one size fits all. I am not preaching that I have eternal truth doctrine that I'm teaching. I like to even say that because I think it's dangerous to look at anything as that, other than your own spiritual beliefs. I think that I do believe that eternal truth exists, absolutely. However, what I'm teaching is not that. I feel like it is very effective for the time we live in and the way our society functions. And different messaging coming at us and the expectations we have of relationships and being parents and all that.

And so I feel it's very effective for the way humans interact and feel safe in this particular day and age. So yes, I do find it can be very effective for people. I get messages all the time where sometimes I don't know if it was helpful at all, and it'll just be a one off session or somebody I coached on the podcast. And then I get a message back and I'm like, "Oh, good it was really helpful."

It might not be helpful for everyone and that's okay. But I am a fan not just because I'm doing it, but it just feels to me, if you're wanting to feel better about yourself and become more of who you are as a unique individual and find ways to function as a partnership that way. Then it's going to be helpful for you.

Jody: Okay, Nats, well, thank you so much for everything you've taught us. If people want to get more personal help from you, where do they go?

Natalie: Yeah, there are so many different ways that I work with people. But just to simplify it, if you are looking for help, I know that can feel really daunting. It can feel embarrassing, and sometimes we make it into this big thing, we need to get help or we need to talk to someone. Everybody can use some help in their relationship. So whether you're really struggling or whether you just know things could be a bit better, I put together this class called how to disagree without conflict because every relationship has disagreements.

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We are two unique individuals. Your marriage isn't in trouble if you disagree. There's no relationship where we just agree with everything all the time.

Jody: It's actually healthy to be able to disagree, I mean it's a good thing.

Natalie: Absolutely. And we choose someone who's very different from us, which is actually really beneficial. It's really good that we are different as long as we have some information on how to do that in a way that doesn't feel so challenging to our egos and things.

So I put together this free class, how to disagree without conflict, where you are going to get some really helpful tools to help you navigate step by step that process of how do we go from disagreeing to oftentimes it explodes very quickly. How do we interrupt that process and how do we come up with a new way that actually brings us closer together because of our differences rather than just deciding, well, we don't agree on this and now we just need to ignore it for a while until it comes back up again.

So if you are struggling in any way or you just know things could be a bit better, come to this free webinar. It is going to be recorded so it's okay if you don't come live. No one's going to be on camera so you don't have to worry about anybody seeing you or showing up and having to stare at yourself on a Zoom screen. I hate that when I do classes.

It's also okay if your partner doesn't want to come. So much of the work, I'd say 80% of the work, maybe even 90% of the work we do on our relationship is work we do on ourselves to make things better. So if they want to come, great, if not, that's okay. You could even use this as, if you like date night, record it and play it for date night and discuss and could bring up some interesting conversations between the two of you.

Jody: I love it. And I will be able to ask questions or whatever on this call though?

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Natalie: Yes. So you can ask questions. I want to make sure that you're getting personalized help. So for sure you can ask questions at the end. I'll try to save some time as well. If anyone wants to raise their hand then no one has to come on screen if they don't want to. Yeah, you can find the details for that at [natalieclay.com/freeclass](http://natalieclay.com/freeclass).

Jody: Okay, I love it. I was going to say that's my favorite kind of Zoom where I don't have to be on video.

Natalie: Me too, I don't like being on video [crosstalk].

Jody: But if I can type in a question, I might want to get a question answered, but I don't want to have to put make-up on.

Natalie: For sure, and I don't think people should just come and feel like they have to worry about being exposed or anything. I know it takes some time to be comfortable. Being on a Zoom call with a bunch of strangers is not super comfortable to begin with, but again, you won't have to see each other. You can ask any questions. Just come and get something out of it for yourself, don't worry about anything else.

Jody: Okay, Alright, [natalieclay.com/freeclass](http://natalieclay.com/freeclass). Go check it out. Are we going to learn about how to get more help from you if we want it?

Natalie: Yes, for sure. So I will be giving information on that call about a two day couples intensive I have coming up in Carlsbad on May 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, which I am so excited about. It's going to be two full days where we're going to go through my entire program in an intensive setting. So that instead of dragging it out and coming weekly for calls, we're going to bust it out and get you really intensive help over those two days. So yes, [crosstalk] about the details for that as well.

Jody: Love it. Alright, thanks Nats, thanks for coming on.

Natalie: Thanks for having me. Let's do couples coaching with Jake and Jody on the next one.

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Jody: I'm in. Alright, see you later.

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