

Ep_31_What_She_Wants_to_Know_about_Your_Recovery_Work_2

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SPEAKERS

Lyschel, Pam B., Bonny

L Lyschel 00:02

Hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace, and I'm Michelle Burkett with hope redefined,

B Bonny 00:07

and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us.

L Lyschel 00:13

Welcome back to another episode of hope for wives. Since we know that many spouses in recovery are listening to our podcast today, we thought we'd talk to you. We're going to be discussing how to share my recovery work with my spouse. Sometimes this can be tricky to navigate as we balance the need between over sharing and possibly triggering our spouse, or under sharing or just appearing to check boxes and not truly have your heart in it. So today, we would love to answer the question, what does she really want to know? When she says, How's your recovery going? So join us today, as Pam, Bonnie and I get a chance just to discuss this and share our personal experiences. All right, so ladies, let's just start from a place of personal experience. I'd love for you to share from your own story. How much information did you want to know about his recovery work?

P Pam B. 01:13

I wanted every single minute replayed back to me, play by play, word for word. I wanted every single bit of information that he could provide to me. I wanted to be inside his head, knowing what thoughts he was having about his recovery and about what the therapist was saying. That's That's what I I wanted, and I know now, of course, that I wanted safety. What I was looking for was safety later on, you know, maybe emotional connection or emotional intimacy. But I can, I can see now it was really my need, me trying to fulfill the need for safety.

L Lyschel 01:57

And so what about that? Pam, did you interpret like if you knew every single detail, what about that interpreted to you that that was safe for you, that that was creating safety?

P Pam B. 02:09

Well, I thought, you know he's there to get to the root cause of of his behaviors. And if he can do that, then he'll be safe if he delves into his childhood and his trauma and his family of origin, and he goes down through all that, he'll have insights, and he'll go Oh, and then he'll he'll know that that's why he does what he does. And then he'll become safe, but that's a cognitive distortion. A cognitive distortion is a distortion of thought, an untrue thought that we think is real, we think is a fact, but it's really based in anxiety or fear. It's very common in betrayal, trauma, so some cognitive distortions I had around his recovery was, he's purposely not telling me he's hiding something. Is this? Some of my questions around safety were, is this the right therapist? Is he actually engaging in therapy? Is this actually going to work? And you know, my I had fortune telling, future telling, if this therapy doesn't work, he's going to relapse. And I didn't realize it, but I can see it now. I thought his therapy was

for my benefit. I also was discounting the positive that he's willing to go to therapy and be present while another person listens to him talk about his past or talk about his his sexual history, or is his current method of dealing with stress, fallacy of change. And again, I can talk about this now with clarity and in the moment I couldn't I I had such a swirl going on of anxiety, I had a fallacy of change about my own recovery and that the ability for me to ever be happy again depended on him changing. I do get the caveat that they must change in a way to become safe people, honesty, clarity, transparency, but I can still find safety in my own safety by enforcing limited contact or limited vulnerability, and do recovery and find pockets of happiness. So all of that was so wrapped up in my husband's recovery, but it was cognitive distortions. Bonnie,

L Lyschel 04:45

how about you? How much information did you want to know about his recovery? Well,

B Bonny 04:50

it depended on the season, looking back that second D Day, I did want to know everything. I wanted to know everything you talked about at the therapy office. Office. I wanted to know all about his acting out behaviors in the past. I wanted to know everything, and for me, I think it was because I was getting absolutely nothing. If I'm desperate for everything, at least I might get a little bit. But what actually happened after that second D Day was that he did not give me anything. He walked away from therapy, and I went into denial from there. So my personal experience about wanting everything from that second D Day was not satisfactory. Put it that way, fast forward to the last D Day, and honestly, I didn't care what he was thinking. I was in such a state of anger that he had not taken his recovery seriously and had continued to deceive me that I didn't care how he got there, but I would see the fruits of recovery that you talk about, Pam, that I would see that or I was gone. So I didn't need to know what he was doing. I just needed him to do it and figure out how to find health for himself and for God,

L Lyschel 06:22

I think for myself, you guys were sharing, I feel like I've ridden every one of those waves. I think in the beginning when he disclosed it, it felt like he was being vulnerable and showing up with integrity because he shared that he was having the problem. I don't necessarily know that I asked a ton of questions right in the very beginning, but after the first slip, certainly I started to investigate much more, like you were talking about, Pam, I think that I'm trying to think about, like, what was my thought process or motives back in the day? And I think I didn't ask because I just thought, well, it's his problem. He'll figure it out. And I didn't. We were still very newly married, and I don't think that I even still had a good sense of what that covenant meant for us as the two becoming one. And so I was still, we were still functioning in roles of independence, learning how to become husband and wife, right? So I was just like, yeah, go figure that out, and I'll see you later. But then when the when the slip happened, there was definitely that's when the the trauma set in for me, and the betrayal and the realization of that's what I was experiencing. I was we were navigating betrayal. So then it came to exactly what we're talking about, like him coming home from group, and I feel like I'm playing 20 questions, just trying to get something out of him. And his response was, Well, I can't tell you anything, because it's all confidential, and that was so crazy making. And I think it's what you were talking about. Pam is really what sparked that thought for me was that I was looking for safety, and I was looking for safety in just in a couple ways. One I was looking for, is he willing to tell me what's going on now when he's not with me, because clearly he was doing things when he was not with me that I didn't agree with. So now, is he going to be willing to tell me things and share things with me that when I'm not together with him. And two, I was looking for the change. And I thought in my not really understanding what recovery was, I was expecting him to come home with answers. I really had this belief system that once he got better, then I would get better. And so he was the one who was sent out to the masses to go find the tools and bring them back and fix everything. And so that's what I was checking for. It was kind of like, the example I would give is like he went to the grocery store. He had a list. He knows what he's he knows the recipe he's making. And I'm asking, did you get all the ingredients? And he's like, I can't tell you, it's confidential. And I'm like, well, then how are we going to make this recipe? Like, I don't what, what do we need for the recipe? Like I was looking for something in that and desperate that he was going to come back and show me or have this awakening of this is how we fix this. This is, this is, this is what's you know about me to fix it, this is what you need to do different Michelle, to fix it. I was looking for the answer, and I thought those groups had it. It certainly led to a lot of places of feeling abandoned, again, rejected, not included, left out, which, of course, were all yes, some of those were cognitive distortions, and some of those were just things that I was really, truly feeling, but not knowing how to describe them at the time. So then it just looked like me being grumpy, edgy, controlling, overly questioning. Let's go through the list. That's how. They presented. But the reality was, what was underneath all of those was fear.

o 10:05

I was terrified.

L Lyschel 10:07

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I was afraid that we were not in the right place to get the right answers. And that's what I was looking for. I was asking him to assure me that he was in the right place getting the right answers.

P Pam B. 10:19

I love that analogy of the recipe. That's That's it, that's so it. We've got to make this new thing, and you're part of the equation. And the the safety seeking is authentic and normal and natural and needed. We do need safety. How do we, how do we get it from our partner, and how do we help our partner help us?

L Lyschel 10:51

Well, let's, let's move into the next question. Let's, let's try to just really streamline this, because I know that we get kind of in our word pictures and our personal experiences. If we were sitting across from someone who has betrayed their spouse, and that person that betrayed that betrayer is saying, what does she want from me? What does she really want to know? What would you say to him?

P Pam B. 11:16

I think that might be overwhelming for some people early on, and I think it would be really good if we all had permission to say, I don't know yet, but I sure want to get there, because I think my experience, and from what my husband has shared with me later in recovery, is that early on, there's no words. There's no words happening. There's a lot of processing happening and a lot of maybe reprocessing of traumatic events, and it may be wordless, and this is a new language of growth and maturity and humility and slowing down self care, these there's, there's new concepts, and they may be hard to convey for somebody who's brand new. So I think it would be good if we agreed that we can say, you know, I It's hard to put into words right now I want to share with you. I want you to share this journey with me. We're doing this together. This isn't me doing my thing and you just doing your thing, that we are actually on this journey together. And I want to share as much as I can with you. Please be patient with me as I as I figure this out. If, if you could say to her, I want to be able to share those key takeaways. I look forward to sharing them with you, because you're my partner, you're my you're my life partner. You're going through this with me. I want to share this with you. I want you to see me and hear me and know me. But we may not even have that language right, all of us in the in the early days.

B Bonny 13:13

So while I hear you and yes, he needs to have permission to say those kind of things from from her perspective. Sometimes that feels like deflection. And I hear you, he does need to have that language. He needs to have the tap out. He needs to say, I'm working on I get that, but if he can just give her a tiny bit. I was living in such an emotional desert up until our last D day that I needed something to show me. He was in there working, and I gave him tap out when he was flooded Absolutely. I was compassionate. I was empathetic. We we actually what really helped us. And this is a pragmatic level, and I know not every couple will be in this place to be able to do this, but weeks AFTER D DAY, he and I read out loud the unwanted book, the unwanted by Jason stringer. We'll put that in the show notes. It is. It is kind of a higher level psychological book. However, I knew some of his background, so reading through that book was was not triggering for me. It could be triggering. I'll just give that caveat. I have heard a partner say it's triggering for them. However, as we walked through that book, that book sparked real conversation, and that book actually was a big part of his recovery work, because he went on to do the journey group that was led by his therapist, but it was based on that book. So anyways, just saying that while he does have, and I know that's who we're talking to today, are the is the betrayer. Okay, while you do have the ability to tap out your spouse if you've been living in an emotional desert, while you may not have a lot of language around it, give her the best you can, even if it's just a sentence or two, but that'll be showing her, recovery is working. Recovery is starting.

P Pam B. 15:22

Oh, absolutely. And I wasn't suggesting that, you know, this is a constant, that saying I don't have the words yet isn't should be the standard. But, like, I tell my partners, you have different kinds of boundaries, of requests, and there's, there's deal breakers. Obviously, we know what those are, and there's things I'll be patient with. And the sharing of the growth and the recovery is something I'll be patient with. That you're asking me, How do I build trust with you? I want to build trust with you. I've I've damaged that trust. I know it's my job, it's my responsibility, to rebuild trust. And I say to you, sir, to the betrayer, being able to share that growth with her. Share that's emotional intimacy, sharing the emotion, even if you don't have words for the actual processing. How did you feel when you walked out of group tonight? Here's the feelings wheel. I felt scared, I felt shame, I felt hope. Right being able to share at some level is how you will rebuild trust with her if she's looking for safety, that's how you can give safety. So please make that your goal to find the words to share with your partner. This is a big part of your life. This is a major milestone in our lives. We need to be able to share that with one another. There are these major growth spurts from recovery and the gifts of recovery, we want to share that.

L Lyschel 17:13

Yeah, it's almost like, if you put it in a different perspective, if my husband were recently diagnosed with cancer and he's going to a doctor's appointment on a weekly basis, and they're processing through different things, trying to get to the bottom of it. And he comes home, and I say, So, how was the doctor's appointment? And he says, good, but it's confidential, and I can't tell you anything, right? Like, so think of, I mean, if that's the possibility to shift that perspective, like we're really just trying to gather the information to understand, where are we at, what's going on here. Help me understand, you know, what the future is looking like. Help me understand that, like you said, Pam, just some indication of work is being done. I do want to say this about addiction. The kryptonite to addiction is connection, right? Addiction flourishes in isolation, and so oftentimes what you do see is an addict may begin to start to see a therapist or someone who has betrayed their spouse. They may not feel like they're an addict, but betrayed, and they're seeing one person, and that is the extent of their work that they're doing. They're not necessarily in community. They're also not necessarily going home and creating connection with their spouse. So there's still a tendency to have those addictive behaviors of isolation, keeping things very close to the chest, very internal, and not sharing those things. So when we talk about coming home and using this new language, we understand that it is a new language, and it is a new behavior that you are we're you know, she's asking you to show up in a way that maybe you've never done in your relationship before, of being very expressive and sharing deep thoughts and emotions and all those things. But the hope is, is that as you continue to do your own personal work that won't feel so laborious For you, like your therapist is already going to be walking you through some of that trying to get that self awareness functioning, that muscles, that self awareness muscle moving, and so then you're going to have the ability to come home and be able to use that with her and with your your other people. So I just wanted to offer that, you know, just that understanding for someone who is trying to to walk recovery and be like, This is really hard, and it is really hard, and it is really hard when you're trying to hold your own stuff and then knowing that you have to also hold space for the people you love, and these are also the people you hurt. The truth is, is that I we can do it. You can do it. I believe. And. In us as humans and as people who have Christ, that we can do it So, ladies, what hope can we leave for our listeners today? I

B Bonny 20:10

mean, I love what you just said, Lachelle, that you can change things. Can build intimacy. Can be built that that relationship, safe, vulnerable, relationship can be built. And I know that in my own story, early on, I heard a lot of, oh, you can't, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. You know, that was early on, early that was like early 2000s and you know, it's just the way I am. I'm never going to change. And I'm sorry to use that tone of voice, but there it is, guys, that's how I felt about that. But, but we are called to mature into a Christ likeness. You know, that's that sanctification. Sanctification is a continual process of growth. So if God says you can change, who are you to say you cannot?

P Pam B. 21:12

Your husband's probably like my husband. He always says you do really bad impression of me,

L Lyschel 21:19

because I was mine's always really country, and we're not even from the south. So I don't, I don't.

P Pam B. 21:27

The Hope I want to leave our betraying listeners is it takes a special person to stay after they've been betrayed, and says, I am willing to do the work. I'm willing to do some hard work, because I love this person, and I believe in them. Staying means she believes in you. She wants to make the repair. She wants to see the growth. And you can trust her. You can trust her with your truth, and she'll stop asking about what's going on in your recovery groups, when you start showing more changes in your behavior. It's the little things too. It's not just the big things, it's the little things show up different in every conversation. To protect the relationship, you can say, I'm feeling some anger, but I'm choosing the relationship. I'm feeling the need to be right, but I'm going to choose the relationship over the need to be right. When you show up that way, she'll probably stop asking about the details of what's going on in your recovery, and when you share insights and revelations and new interpretations of past events for you.

L Lyschel 23:02

Well, ladies, for the sake of time, why don't we pause here? And we want to encourage you listeners to tune in to part two of this conversation, where we're going to talk about the over sharing and the desire to either be an over sharer or still the request to overshare. So thanks for joining us today. We hope to be a bright spot on your recovery journey. If you'd like to leave

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