

# Ep\_44\_Sobriety\_Isnt\_Enough\_part\_1

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

sobriety vs recovery, emotional immaturity, self-awareness, denial, gaslighting, overfunctioning, boundary setting, self-discovery, emotional intelligence, recovery tasks, self-care, detachment, emotional sobriety, community support, hope in recovery

## SPEAKERS

Pam B., Bonny

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### **P** Pam B. 00:00

Music. Hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace, and I'm Michelle Burkett with hope redefined, and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us.

### **B** Bonny 00:15

Welcome to another episode of hope for wives. In today's episode, we are unpacking recovery just a little more. In episode 35 we had an insightful discussion with Dr Jake Porter about the three legged stool of recovery, her recovery, his self discovery, and the couple ships relational repair and growth. But today we're going to talk just a little bit more, and this episode is called, sobriety isn't enough, because we're exploring a wife's experience with a husband who may be sober but is not in a space of self discovery. And I just want to let everyone know that Lachelle is at a conference this week and was not able to join us in this recording, so it'll just be Pam and I so we wanted to let you know where Michelle is. She's fine, just has some other obligations. So Pam, what is a quick understanding of sobriety versus recovery?

### **P** Pam B. 01:14

I'm so glad that we're covering this topic, because I needed my eyes opened about this. You know this is about addiction, and whether it's alcohol or drugs or another process addiction, sobriety is very different than recovery. Sobriety is just simply not using that unhealthy coping mechanism. Whether it's drinking, it's just not drinking or not using drugs or not acting out sexually, in the case of porn or sex, addiction and sobriety is necessary for recovery. Recovery is when you're actually digging into the feelings that you were medicating with the addiction in the first place, you're digging into growth, developing new tools, and as Dr Jake said, discovering new parts of yourself. And it's it's really about growth and developing healthy coping mechanisms, versus turning to the addiction to medicate, to cope. And

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Bonny 02:27

honestly, sobriety is the kindergarten in the School of recovery.

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Pam B. 02:33

Absolutely, yeah, and

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Bonny 02:34

that's not to denigrate anyone. It's just because it's the bare minimum. And I know it's extremely, you know, sobriety is extremely difficult for guys first in this space, but it is that first step towards healing and wholeness and maturing into the character of Christ, and that's the true mark of recovery. And also, I've heard that recovery is what wives deeply desire. I've heard over and over again. I just want to see heart change. I don't want to see boxes checked. So recovery is learning to like yourself, step out of shame, embrace humility. It looks like enthusiastically meeting all of your wife's boundary because your wall of denial has fallen and you'll do whatever it takes, because loving your wife is no longer a threat to your manhood. And you know what? I realized we're already and this is fine, we're already going into our second question, which I will tell you listeners, is, what perspectives have you had or heard from your clients about a husband who is not in a place of recovery. So

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Pam B. 03:42

this is what I've learned from my own experience, not just with my husband, but with other people in my life who have had addictions. And I this is, this is what I wish I knew from the beginning, that all people with addictions are immature. They're emotionally immature. They just don't have that emotional intelligence. They're all pretty much irresponsible in relationships. They don't take responsibility to be mutually interdependent. They're very, very independent. They live in denial. They live in denial that their own attitudes and thoughts and behaviors cause them problems for themselves and for other people, they don't do emotions. What do addicts medicate? They They medicate emotions so they can't tolerate your emotions, because they can't tolerate their own emotions. All, pretty much all addicted people who, even if they're sober but not in recovery, gaslight, deflect blame, project, minimize, defend because they don't have the skills to do any. Else yet to process those difficult emotions in their body at a physical level, in their head, at an emotional, psychological level, so a person could still be sober, technically not using or not acting out, but still have all those hallmarks of that immature personality, and it can be so confusing for a wife, because she can say, well, he's doing all the things, he's ticking all the boxes. He's going to therapy, he's going to meetings, he's doing workbooks. But yet, I can't have a conversation with him about simple emotions or simple difficult conversations, because he's not truly embraced the growth and discovery of recovery. There's been a

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Bonny 05:53

theme recently in the past few weeks with with some of my clients, and it's something I

experienced too. A guy that in need recovery can continue to let you even function. Sometimes

experienced too. A guy not in good recovery can continue to let you over function. Sometimes, I think this is from men who were raised in that patriarchal environment where they saw Mom over function. So that's just how it is. My wife does all the work around the house, even if she has a full time job. It's her job to do the laundry. It's her job to take care of them and discipline the kids, those kind of things. An example is like, there's a pile of laundry on the bed, and he passes by it and just looks at it. He doesn't do anything about it, because it's her job. And so the work of recovery is seeing that perhaps my family of origins, way of doing things weren't really healthy or helpful. I have heard of stories of women asking for help and him saying, to varying degrees, you don't need help. My mom did it all. You can do it.

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Pam B. 07:04

So that's not my job, that's not my job, that's not my job, that's your job.

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Bonny 07:08

Yeah, so that entitlement, being able to see, being able to piece apart, what I learned from what really is healthy is that that's the self discovery, isn't it? Pam,

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Pam B. 07:24

well, and it's it has to start with self awareness, and that is so hard because it's pain. It can be painful. Life can be difficult. We go sometimes have choices we don't like, and life is not always smooth and a joy ride. And so being able to have that self awareness of, what am I feeling, what am I thinking? Am I thinking clearly? Am I responding or am I reacting? Just it has to start with self awareness to get out of denial that, oops, there's a problem here. There's room for improvement, to put a positive spin on it, opportunities for growth and improvement. And if you don't have that self awareness of the growth of recovery, then you can't act on those things that need to be improved. And if you don't have self awareness, you can't also be aware of what other people need. You're not going to be able to have empathy.

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Bonny 08:26

Yeah, and I think sometimes it's the addict has to give themselves permission, just like we have to give ourselves permission to do certain things. They have to give themselves permission to look at those scripts. It is self awareness, and it's challenging. What have I been thinking all these years? Challenging it, and it's okay to challenge it's okay to say I didn't do it right before, but I'm going to do it different going forward.

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Pam B. 09:06

There's other ways, there's other ways to deal with this. There's other ways to respond. And I have to be open to trying something different new. If this is what you're observing, I'm talking to the wife and saying, if this is what you're observing, this minimization, the defensiveness, the lack of self awareness, lack of responsibility, kind of snarkiness, right? If this is what you're

still experiencing, that's not okay, and you get to have boundaries and you have a voice, and it is perfectly okay recovery or not, you know whether they're doing the quote tasks of recovery, it's okay to say, Hey, I'm not okay with the way you're talking to me. I'm not okay with you serving over here outside of the home. When there's things in the home that still need to get done, Charity begins at home. The relationship comes first, right? What I hear from other wives is they notice the lack of responsibility, the lack of ownership, the lack of connection they feel. Quote, something just isn't right, and if they try to bring up this grievance with their partner, he'll turn around and say, but I'm in recovery, but I'm doing therapy, I'm doing group. What else do you want from me? And they're two different conversations. There are two different conversations. Yes, you can be doing all the tasks of recovery, but if you're not showing the fruits of recovery, you still need to address that, and if you're not experiencing the fruits of recovery, responsibility, slow to anger, kindness, slowing down all of those things that we talk about that are the fruits of recovery. If you're not experiencing that, make requests, set boundaries, the response of but I'm but I'm doing recovery is not an appropriate, accurate, full response to your very valid concerns, that you're not getting kindness, you're not getting warmth, you're not getting empathy, you're not getting connection, or that you just feel something is off. Your feelings are important. Your partner should be leaning into the fact that you feel like something's off and saying, Well, what do you need? How can I provide it? Tell me more. Let me get curious about what you're experiencing. And it makes sense that you're feeling sad and scared and that you're confused because you're being given the appearance of one thing. Hey, I'm a guy in recovery, but yet your experience of his of his connection, is something very different than what you would expect or what you would hope for, what you need. So I would validate her feelings, and then ask her, How can you use your voice to express yourself and be authentic and be real. Don't walk on eggshells. Don't hold it back and use good, safe language of I feel statements to your partner that's just being realistic and real, and if you still aren't getting the response that you're looking for self care, go to your sanctuary of your group. If you need connection, you need healthy people, go to your group. Your your group is a place where you can get connection, where you can get Authenticity, Responsibility, all those things you're looking for in your partner's behavior and his recovery, if he's not there yet. You can get that with your group. You can get that with God. Sit in in worship and lament. Lament to the Lord he understands. He gets it. He's sad with you. He's angry with you. He understands you will feel heard and seen in prayer and in worship and also in your group. And keep speaking it. Don't protect your partner from your needs and your feelings.

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Bonny 13:46

So since we do have husbands that listen, and I'm assuming that guys who are willing to listen to us are probably farther along in their recovery journey, but there could be a few who are still wobbling on that denial wall, what would you say to them

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Pam B. 14:03

go out of your way, over and above to ask your wife what she needs from you, emotionally or or physically, you know, with the help with the house, with the kids, with whatever go out of your way, go over and above. Listen, listen to understand, not to respond when she's talking. Be slow to anger. Be self aware. Learn what the fruits of recovery are that we're looking for. We're looking for you to slow down. We're looking for humility, responsibility, your own self awareness, expressing to us your own self awareness, getting curious about our feelings and

what we need and what we're looking for. To develop the capacity for those difficult emotions. Life is hard, life is hard, but God gives us the tools to process through those difficult emotions and those different difficult conversations and learn so learn the tools. You can do it. I did it. I had to learn them too. I had to learn them too. And my husband thanked me for setting strong boundaries some there were days early in recovery, I set boundaries seven times a day. I don't care if it was leaving the milk out or if it was how he responded to me. You know, he would speed up, and he'd be in really fast mode, and I would ask him a question, and he would just be responding really quickly. And I would say, hey, when you don't stop and give me your attention and look me in the eye, I feel sad. I feel worried. I feel confused. Would you consider stopping what you're doing, putting that thing down and giving me your full attention and talking with me? And he would come to me and say, I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for calling out what I'm doing and what you need done differently. It's helping me to be a better person. He never knew how he wanted to do those things better, but he didn't know how.

**B** Bonny 16:40

Yeah, you've hit on the key there. They don't know how I know it. Some things feel so natural to a person like I think. I don't want to make a generalization, but some people have tools and some don't. So if, if you have the tools and he doesn't, sometimes it doesn't make sense. But just like learning to play a violin, it takes practice, little by little each day, practicing two two things, you get to practice, stating your needs like Pam was just talking about, and he gets to practice slowing down, I would say, in self awareness and body awareness. I know early in my husband's journey, he started focusing on physical activity as a way to cope. And so in that he also learned to be more attuned to his body, and more attuned to when emotions perked his body in a up, you know, when emotions impacted how his body was feeling. So sometimes that physical, from what he's told me, realizing he was having a physical response to something helped clue him in that he was having an emotion.

**P** Pam B. 18:09

And, and I used to help, right? You need to go do this. You need to join a gym, you know, right? Finally, we were in a good recovery, and he had an anger issue that that reared its ugly head, and it came out physically. And I was like, I did not come this far. To only come this far. I set a boundary, and I said, No, I will not participate in relationship while that kind of physical behavior is happening around me, it was a bit terroristic. He threw something wasn't intentionally, went to move it out of the way, but he did it with such force that ended up flying. And he goes, Well, what should I do? Should I? Where should I I'm like, I don't care. Not my problem. I don't care if you find a therapist, find a group, read a book, watch a video. I don't care if you stand on your head for 12 hours a day in the front yard to make it happen. That behavior I will not stay present for. And you know what? He figured it out. He found help.

**B** Bonny 19:25

If you're getting a lot of pushback, you have my my my coaching is about detachment. If you're getting a lot of pushback from a husband who may be sober but not in a good place of recovery and detachments, what Pam has been talking about. I don't care what you have to do. It's not

my problem. Detachment. I've heard it called Emotional Plexiglas, or also that really silly, childish rhyme that goes to. I am rubber and you are glue. What you say bounces off me and sticks to you. So what they say doesn't it isn't absorbed into your heart. That's detachment. It's loving. You can still love them and not take what they're saying personally, because if they're not in good recovery, they're not in a good place of mental health.

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Pam B. 20:21

I'll tell you what I say to women and I if there are any addicted men in recovery listening, please know that I say this with love all addicted people who are either living in the active phase of their addiction or in early recovery, they may be sober, but they haven't yet learned those healthier coping tools. Addiction regresses us emotionally. So you know, you stopped developing at a certain age in addiction, maybe 910, 1112, 1314, to the wives, I would say, if your husband is not being the kindest, most understanding, most present person, and is maybe even using difficult behavior as a coping mechanism, it's like the 12 year old got into the parent's liquor cabinet. You're talking to somebody who is emotionally unsober. Just because they're sober from using doesn't mean they're emotionally sober, psychologically sober. They're they're not using really good tools to cope, and so would you take the 12 year old who got into the liquor cabinet seriously as they're spouting off? No, you probably wouldn't. You would say that child is inebriated and not in his right mind and not using his best skills and tools, and He's immature, and you wouldn't take him seriously. And so you can either give what he's saying and doing a weight of importance of like nine or 10, or you can say, you know, I'm really only going to give that thing that he just said or did a weight of two. It's data about where he is mentally and psychologically, but I don't have to take it to heart and to let it under my skin. I have to take it as data. I'm not saying just ignore it, or just, you know, pretend like it didn't happen. It's data. It's important, but you don't have to take it seriously. If he's, you know, saying things about you spouting off and making statements that aren't true. You don't have to take it seriously.

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Bonny 22:49

Yeah, something you said about being sober minded. I went over to the dictionary and looked up sober and aside from abstaining from drugs or alcohol. This dictionary has it number the number two definition is that sober is marked by sedate, grave or earnest, thoughtful character or demeanor. Bingo, yeah. Bingo. Number three touches on what you said earlier, it's unhurried and calm. And then number four says it's marked by temperance, moderation and seriousness. It's showing no excessive or extreme qualities in emotion or prejudice.

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Pam B. 23:38

And I fully admit, in my history, in my relationship, there were times I was not emotionally sober with my husband, over over this addiction, and I would let my emotions rule my mouth, and I didn't use a filter, I didn't slow down. I reacted versus responded. I fully admit I needed to learn how to become an emotionally sober person, and it's this is so interesting about some of the parallels in my recovery from betrayal trauma and my husband's recovery from his sexual addiction that we both had to learn how to get better at feeling, not just to feel better. And that's what I say recovery is about. Is not about feeling better, it's about getting better at

feeling if I can learn it, if I can learn it, you can learn it. It's a skill. It's not just it's not just a character defect, it's a lack of skill. It was on my part, and I say for my husband's part, too, and we both learned these new skills

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Bonny 24:54

well in this conversation, if sobriety isn't enough, what hope can we leave a wife who's in this. Situation where he is not in good, solid recovery, but he's sober.

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Pam B. 25:06

The hope that I would leave otherwise in this situation is that God will always be there for you. God is there to listen and to see you and to hear you and your feelings are important. Your safety is important, your comfort and care in your relationship is important. You don't have to sacrifice that or put that aside or give it up, and that your voice is important. Your voice matters. Keep speaking your feelings and your needs. Don't give up. It's more important for you to hear yourself saying it than it is to land with the person you're saying it to. And the other piece of hope is, is that your husband isn't your only source of connection and comfort and growth, and that if he's not there yet because he's early in sobriety and not yet embraced recovery groups, getting into a group of other women who are walking the same path is a lifesaver. It's a sanity saver. Being able to be with other women who are on have the growth mindset, who are looking also to be emotionally sober to help reinforce that it's possible. It's important that your boundaries are important, your feelings are important, and that your husband isn't the only source of connection. God intended us to heal in community, to be in community. So stay connected to your community, who will lift you up and encourage you and connect with you and help you feel seen and heard and known.

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Bonny 27:12

And the hope I'd like to leave is is from Romans 15:13, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will give you that discernment and wisdom you need as you walk this path. You can you can trust him. You also have the mind of Christ. So if there is pushback from a husband who isn't in solid recovery and he's still relying on old coping mechanisms and old behaviors, use your discernment and wisdom and how to move forward for yourself,

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Pam B. 28:00

do the best you currently

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Bonny 28:02

can and but the Holy Spirit is there with you. His supernatural guidance will see you through this.

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Pam B. 28:10

Amen. Amen. In the other if I can co tail on to that. James 119, everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. And Lord knows, we're being tested as wives. I get it. I get it. This is a most testing time, not just in our relationship, but for us personally, as individuals dealing with somebody with a mental illness, a dysfunction like this. And so just lean, lean into that, lean into the word to be comforted and encouraged.

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Bonny 29:01

Well, thank you for joining us today. We hope to be a bright spot on your recovery journey. If you'd like to leave us a question or comment, please use the contact button on our website. Hope for wives.com and that's hope F, O, R wives.com Also, if this podcast has helped you, please leave a five star rating or a view on iTunes to help other people find us, and when we reach 500 ratings, Apple podcast promotes us in a different way. We'll see you later. Bye, thanks for listening. Bye, you