

Ep_61.2_More_Keys_to_Coupleship_Recovery

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SPEAKERS

Pam B., Bonny



Pam B. 00:03

Hi. I'm Pam Blizzard from recovered peace,



Bonny 00:05

and I'm Michelle Burkett with hope redefined, and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. So welcome to another episode of hope for wives. If you've been with us, listening from the beginning, or you've binged us up to this point, you'll know that we have purposely laid out content to follow a trajectory from first discovery through safety and stability, grief and mourning, and at some point we will move into post traumatic growth we haven't got there yet. So the past episode and this one deal with couple ship recovery, and that lands in a space of when you feel safe enough, especially if your husband has jumped into recovery with a full commitment. And we do want to acknowledge we know that some husbands take a little longer to come out of denial to embrace recovery, and unfortunately, some never get there. So today, Pam and I are talking about three more keys to couple ship recovery, and we want to let you know that Lachelle is not here again. Today, she is attending the sexual integrity leadership summit that's being held in Colorado Springs, but she will be back talking with us very soon. So Pam, in our last episode, you know what we didn't do? We didn't define what is couple ship recovery. So I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.



Pam B. 01:39

I don't think you can go back and recover the old relationship. I think betrayal destroys the agreement, the covenant that you made, all the conditions that you believed you were entering into. I believe that relationship is dead and gone, and that we need to recreate a brand new relationship with new definitions of what we thought. You know, we thought we covered when we first met this person and was making the decision, are they honest? Are they safe? Are they

trustworthy? We come up with new, better standards for what that looks like after, especially for relationships touched by betrayal. And so I say, this is not a remodel. This is a tear down and rebuild from scratch, something I call it the bionic marriage, newer, better, faster, The \$6 million marriage. Some of our older listeners will remember what that is, but absolutely, you have to recreate something that is better than what you had before. And I'm just grateful for the people out there in the world who are doing this research and coming up with some of this criteria and putting language around some of these things that seem nebulous. What is radical honesty? What is safety? What does that look like? What does that sound like? What is trust? How do I rebuild trust? And if you haven't seen that in your home with your own parents, recovering for, or, you know, coming back from a major rupture of trust and betrayal, and if you haven't seen that demonstrated coming back with honesty and vulnerability and truth. If you haven't seen that, we don't know how to do that, but just they don't teach it in freshman English. You know what I mean? Yeah, yeah,

B Bonny 03:55

yeah. And before we started recording Pam, you mentioned what Jake said in the podcast we did with him that he described the betrayers recovery as really not recovery. It's a process of self discovery, where, where the betrayed. We are recovering ourselves, because we've lost we've lost a lot. We've lost a lot of identity. We are recovering in a certain sense, but couple ship recovery is really couple ship self discovery as well. I totally agree with that. And yeah, you are building new our Yeah, our story. I said absolutely what you said, the old is dead, and this is a new beginning. And that was kind of our catch phrase. I even have, I found a 2024, calendar with the front of it it says new beginning. So that's been, that's been our mantra since our D Day. That's so. Important? No,

P Pam B. 05:01

and I just it makes sense, because what you don't know when you go into this is that when you come out on the other side, you are completely changed, whether you're the betrayed or the betrayer, if you're doing recovery and you're looking into those deep issues, how for the betrayer, how did I get here? How did I develop these beliefs and behaviors? And for the betrayed is, where is this pain in my body and in my in my emotions? You really do come out the other side with new skills, new understandings, new insights. And you are. You're just not the same people that when you started dating and you first got to know each other. So it makes sense that we have a brand new relationship because we're brand new. Mm,

B Bonny 05:51

hmm. So when would you say it's appropriate to start thinking about the couple ship rebuilding?

P Pam B. 06:00

Well, I'm glad you asked that question, you know, and I tell this story all the time, because I've been on this journey for 30 years. And Jeff and I stopped counting the other night. We were counting all the relationship therapists we had been to and we got we stopped at five because

counting on the relationship therapists we had been to, and we got we stopped at five because we got disgusted, because the it was such a bad advice that well meaning people, but they didn't have the knowledge that we have today. And it used to be, wife, you go to your corner. Husband, you go to your corner, and you do your personal work, and when you come together, it'll all just work out. That's the biggest lie in the world, and it's very damaging, because then when it didn't just all work out, I thought, Oh, I haven't done enough personal work, or my husband hasn't done enough personal work. And then later on, in the years, they said, Well, you can't start relationship work until you've done your personal work. And Jake Porter has come out with a model, the couple centered recovery model, that says, From day one, we can take what exists. It's a connection. It may be bruised, it may, in some cases, be broken and bleeding, but if there is a connection of two people who desire to rebuild that you can do work. It's not traditional couples therapy. You can do work if both people have expressed the desire to, especially the betrayer, express the desire to heal and change and change the behavior and become a safe person for the betrayed. And again, it's not traditional couples therapy. It is a model that recognizes the injustice and the disempowerment. And so in a case like that, I would refer people to couple centered recovery. Dr, Jake Porter, couplecenter.org, to learn more about that model and how it's very different and it's very specific to sex addiction and betrayal, because it follows the trauma model.

B Bonny 08:17

Yeah. Dr, Jake Porter is both a CSAT and an app sets so he has a full working knowledge of both those dynamics and how they interplay together, which makes that a powerful combination. So what about empathy? So to help, to help the couple ship recovery, how important is empathy?

P Pam B. 08:44

Vitally important, absolutely necessary. And this is where I'd like to stop and make a confession. I thought I know empathy. I'm a woman, I'm a mom. I go to my support groups as a recipient, and I go and I support other women. And then I got into my absats training, and I was and I learned about how vitally important empathy was for me to show to the betrayed as a coach, and how the betrayer needs to step into that and show empathy to the betrayed. And I was horrified to learn that I had been doing it wrong, but the good news was is they could teach me and so empathy, I believe we all feel because we have mirror neurons, and there may be some exceptions because of certain medical or psychological conditions, but they're rare. We all feel empathy, but we don't always know how to express it. Walk that out so that the person we're showing empathy to actually feels it and senses it and feels it authentically from us. But we can learn how to do that. Yeah. That's the good news.

B Bonny 10:02

So what about the person who's mired in so much shame and fear? How can they move into empathy?

P Pam B. 10:09

We all need to learn, all of us, let me just say this to we all need can learn to self regulate

what's happening in our nervous systems. And if you've ever parented small children, and you the first time they ever see their own blood, right? Maybe they've fallen off their tricycle or something, or they think they are dying. They think the world is ending, you know, they're they're panicking, they're in deep distress, and we as parents see their distress in our mirror neurons create distress. That's how our species survived, right? That's what prompts us to run in and go, I see the blood. I'm going to get a band aid. Maybe we'll go get a cupcake, right? But that distress is common, and so when my husband saw me in distress, he went to distress, but what he didn't have was the tool to calm himself in that distress. And so it was kind of this big cycle of seeing me in distress and feeling shame because he knew he created it, and being fearful of doing the wrong thing because he had done the wrong thing in the past, and I kind of lashed out at him, and so he was afraid, and so his whole regulatory system was off the charts. He didn't have the tools. So that's my my first recommendation is learn to ground. Learn to manage your regulatory system, learn to breathe, learn to feel into it, change your body postures, put your shoulders up, and that's the first thing. And and get some education, if I could learn it and I could bring it home to my Marine Corps, John Wayne, husband, and teach him empathy. Anybody can learn it, and it is a skill. And so my recommendation is, there's books out there. There's help her heal by Carol sheets. There's a really great new book by Marcia means, learn empathy, help your betrayed wife heal. We can put that in the show notes,

B Bonny 12:28

Carol sheets, book in the show notes too. There's two. There's help help her heal, and then help them heal,

P Pam B. 12:35

right, right. There's webinars out there. I know Dr Jake Porter has a webinar on empathy in his library, and that is something that we we teach also in the Choose connection Academy for a couple for everyone to learn empathy.

B Bonny 12:52

Yeah, and, and you're talking about the dysregulation that hinders empathy from coming through. I know the Rab Smith's use a pain peace cycle for individual empowerment to help people learn how to regulate themselves. And it's very simple model, but the pain peace cycle, I'm actually getting trained in that right now.

P Pam B. 13:20

Yeah, and well, and I guess what? I didn't know. My husband said, I want to help but I don't know how. And I thought it was just an excuse, but he was being very honest. You didn't know how you wanted to. There was no shortage of wanting to. It wasn't a character thing. It wasn't a go get some therapy thing. He wanted to do it, but he didn't have the skill set. It is a skill.

B Bonny 13:47

And I think there's Yeah, and I think there's three questions a person trying to show empathy could always ask is, how are you doing? How can I support you? And what do you need from me? Yeah, those are good. Just a good place to start. Those are good because when you have heavy duty shame, you're making it about you.

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Pam B. 14:12

You're making it about you, and you need to take the focus off of you and give, I say, give the spotlight, give the microphone to the person who's hurting that you're trying to show empathy for, let them be the center of your attention.

B

Bonny 14:27

Yes, yes. And I guess it's a shift from shame and selfishness to curiosity and openness to move into those questions of how are you and what's going on? Yeah, so let's so we've kind of set this we've just had a conversation we probably should have had in the first episode. So take note, but moving on then. I mean last episode, we talked about the stability and safety. We talked about how to prior. Prioritize, and how important it is to prioritize the relationship above all things, aside your relationship with God. And we decide we talked about the radical honesty, and there are some great show notes on our website about those things so but one thing we didn't tackle last week is is really the grief and mourning space. How do couples share their grief and write write a grief story together?

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Pam B. 15:36

But I think this is an often overlooked element

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15:42

of

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Pam B. 15:44

the couple ship, rebuilding something new is acknowledging the past. Our natural inclination, myself included, in the past was I want to put this behind me. I want to forget about it. I don't want to think about it anymore. Unfortunately, my nervous system and my body remembered when I didn't want to. And grieving can be so healing and therapeutic. I'm sure if we said, hey, you know who wants to grieve? Everybody would be like,

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Bonny 16:16

No. Thank you. Yeah, no. But

P

Pam B. 16:18

when you have those skills from safety and stability to regulate your nervous system, and then hopefully co regulate with each other, provide comfort and safety to one another. You can step into that grief where all those big, big emotions are going to come out and when done well, with guidance, with guardrails, with understanding what you're doing and why you're doing it. Grieving is where we can make new meaning out of everything that happen. And that's again I said before you know, you know that we we become new people, right? We were changed by the recovery work we do, and this is also where the relationship experiences some of that growth and change. You're stepping into reality. You're acknowledging reality. You're not sweeping it under the rug. You're honoring the beautiful things that you did lose. We have to do this as individuals, both the betrayed and the betrayer. Have to do their personal grief of what all this betrayal costs them and it costs the relationship and so stepping into that reality with one another, but this time with a common enemy of the dysfunction you can lock arms with your partner and look at the things that you lost and honor them and grieve them and make brand new meaning from everything that happened for Jeff and I, this is where tragedy of betrayal and his addiction and dysfunction and everything that happened to us, we turned that tragedy into our triumph

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Bonny 18:06

in a tiny shift where we found triumph. I mean, it's around grief was was a shared grief in the present, because we know that addicts aren't emotionally available a lot of times. But we lost a very special dog after we both got after he got into really good recovery. You know, I'd been, I'd been on my recovery journey for several, several years, but, um, so we we'd move through all the safety and stabilization stuff and but we'd had a dog for 14 years who had seen us through a lot and had moved with us, and just was A cool dog. But you remember, yeah, so we, we had to put him down right before Christmas, and Dave showed up in that grief with me so well. I felt so connected to him and seeing that he understood that how much I love this dog, because he had loved this dog too. It was just beautiful to be able to grieve together, even though it was something in the present. It wasn't about our past history, but it still was such a it was such a precious moment. And even though it was hard, and I don't want to go through that, that's horrible having to put your dog down, but, but what came of that was a shining moment. It really was so grief work is, is connecting.

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Pam B. 19:55

Yeah, it's sharing those big, big, heavy emotions. Is on both your shoulders. It's it's stepping into that space together, knowing you don't have to go through it alone, that someone is there to hold the pain with you. Yeah,

B

Bonny 20:13

yeah. And I guess for the partners you know, as you get farther in and he's fully committed, you can hold the pain of what he lost in childhood,

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Pam B. 20:27

absolutely, absolutely. I think that's one of the things for me that came out of full therapeutic disclosure, is I came out with a lot of different feelings. So there was there was anger, there was righteous anger. I had a right to it. There was resentment and sadness and grief and loss, but I also came out with a sense of loss, of what my husband lost in his childhood and in his development, and what his addiction cost him personally, in terms of time and self image and self compassion and and, you know, just all, all of the ugly stuff, I absolutely was able to have empathy for him. Two things can be true at the same time. I can hold him responsible for his behaviors, but I can also see, acknowledge, appreciate, I mean, understand and have compassion for what that little boy lost when that addiction was being created when he was very young. Had a lot of trauma in his childhood, and even in the current moment, I could see the pain in his face. That was a turning point for me in my recovery, that this is what Jeff and I had going for us. One of the things that we had going for us is that before our relationship became romantic, we were seriously buddies and pals, really good friends for about a year. In fact, he was dating someone else, and he would tell me about his antics, and I would sort of snicker and laugh, right? And I was dating someone, and I would, you know, vent to him about how that was going, and we traveled together. It was always platonic. We really had this foundation of mutual respect for individuality and for differences that like the things like when he was dating, I could laugh off things that he would talk about, or things about work, and I didn't agree with him 100% but I could kind of laugh it off. In my betrayals, in those discoveries, I was able to step outside of the role of wife, lover, girlfriend, you know, extreme confidant, that real intimate relationship, and sort of stand back and view him as a friend or a family member.

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Bonny 23:05

Yeah, so let's we're going to move into that, listeners, we're going to talk about the F word, which one friendship, not the F bomb,

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Pam B. 23:19

another F words, forgiveness. But that's another episode.

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Bonny 23:21

That's another episode, yes, but no, that's a beautiful segue into talking about the importance of friendship to get through this betrayal and and to get to the other side, because like you, Dave and I had built a friendship. Now, I won't say that it was built before we got married. We we liked each other and we enjoyed each other's company, but it wasn't really honed until after the first D Day. Actually, we took a marriage class that helped us become friends, believe it or not, so, yeah, even really gregarious people sometimes need tools on how to be a good friend. But it was also it was really good because it showed it was really good because I had been asking for certain things the the entire time we had been married, and this, this class that we took validated what I had been asking for, those needs that I had been asking for. So that was huge for those needs to be validated, and for Dave to understand that that's part of building a relationship. That's part of building a friendship. I think on the last episode, I talked about, you know, quality time together, just the two of you, that's so important. And I know when guys are

workaholics and when they are constantly running from things, running from you, running towards doing good for all the other people. People that that quality time together is usually is minimal. So even in his addiction, he learned to start spending more time with me. And that, of course, that was just the basis of a friendship, spending time together. And then it moved from there, what you were saying about moving out of the wife role, I think as wives, we think that as one, we should, we should walk through life together, mirroring each other, that we become the same unit. And while we're a partnership, we aren't identical. We aren't we aren't super dependent on each other. We are interdependent, but, and that's almost separate and apart from you, don't you lose your individual identities just because you get married. And so that's what I was hearing you say when you said you were stepping out of your wife role into the friend role, because if we hadn't have had our friendship this last D Day, we might not have made it.

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Pam B. 26:10

There can be either super disconnection, where people just don't everybody goes their separate ways, but also very common is that enmeshment, where you are over connected, there are no boundaries. You are not allowed to disagree. Everybody must be on the same page and have the same viewpoints. And so that's what I was used to, and I had done a lot of work prior to meeting my husband on developing that individuality, and so I'm glad that I had that experience. But again, I would tend to sort of merge back in. And when he was angry about something, I'd get angry with him. I'd get in that rowboat and row with him. But this round of recovery, I've really been more mindful about maintaining my individuality as I give credit to values work and doing really, getting intentional about what are my values, and sticking to my values, my own personal core values, versus jumping in that rowboat and just roll along with him. And it's been it's how boring is it to be married to your exact copy? Right? If I don't maintain and my husband doesn't maintain some kind of individuality, then life is really boring. And I just think it's so much more healthy, and it allows me to detach from what I cannot control. When my husband is upset or angry over something at work, you know, and he's got a right to those feelings. Absolutely old Pam would jump in and bake him cookies, and new Pam says, Oh, I've got this urge to go bake cookies because I want to go cheer him up and change his mood and make him feel better. But if that's why I'm doing it, that's the wrong reason to do it, and I've got to let him work through his own feelings and his own emotions. So that kind of friendship where I maintain a good healthy distance over some things, right? That it really helps our relationship flourish, because we get to express. We have a wider circle of personal expression and experience, and I don't have to worry about clamping down because something might threaten him or, you know, just not expressing myself. And the same goes and in his addiction, it allowed me the perspective to take a healthy perspective that his addiction wasn't mine, to carry, to manage to feel shameful about, to help, right? Oh, I've got to run in and help him with his recovery. No, that's not helpful. So that helped me be a friend. You know, do you want me to just listen, or do you want me to help you find a solution? And most of the time, it's, I just want you to listen. And

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Bonny 29:31

that was you showing curiosity.



P Pam B. 29:33
Yeah? Hey, yeah. I love when my husband that,

B Bonny 29:40
yeah, I think what you're talking about, what, what you've said, reminds me of Proverbs, 27:17, As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Because if we were married to our to a mirror image, copy our. Banks wouldn't help fill their weaknesses or their gaps or their deficits, and vice versa. And I know it's hard to think about allowing him to influence you in any way early after discovery, but towards post traumatic growth.

P Pam B. 30:20
That's a that's a goal, that

B Bonny 30:23
you will be so healthy that you will welcome you both will be in such a healthy spot that you will welcome his insight into things that you struggle with.

P Pam B. 30:35
That's true. I can say that that's absolutely true. Gottman

B Bonny 30:40
does a lot of work around friendship. Now, gottman's not around recovery. He he's more His research has just been general marital conflict and that kind of thing. However, he has some great content, and one of the things he promotes is friendship, and building that friendship through communication. He has communication tools. He has another book. Is it seven keys? Anyways, I'll put it in the show notes, the Gottman book. It's not like I said, it's for the general population, but I found it very helpful, and you can read through it now and then in a year, read it again and see what else you learned from it. You know, as we move towards the end of our time together, Pam, what other couple ship resources? Okay, you've mentioned Jake's very pivotal theory that he's developed and his new online, online community,

P Pam B. 31:44
Academy, Academy skills, building Academy

B Bonny 31:49
skills, building Academy okay, we and we will have that in the show notes as well. But are there

other, so, other resources that come up for me, and then you can chime in if you have any more, is helping couples heal. Podcast, I love that. One is secular, so you might hear some things you don't exactly agree with, but they've had Stan tatkin on, and he is amazing, and they've had other experts as well as their own discussion, but it's all around helping couples heal. Partner sensitive, totally. The book by the rabsmiths. I'm not sure if we talked about this last time, build true intimacy by the rabsmiths. Yeah. And Dan Drake, Pam's holding it up. She's reading it, yeah. Oh, you got the workbook. Very good. Very good.

P

Pam B. 32:40

No, the work i i interviewed them for the summit. The the workbook isn't ready yet, but they are working on it, and I was nice enough not to pressure them for a date. But this, this is the book, and it's a great book. And I just think that model, and they've come up with it, the intimacy pyramid is so brilliant because it succinctly gives language to the building box. You really you you have to start at square one and move through each phase before you can get to intimacy. Yeah,

B

Bonny 33:14

yeah. There's no, there's no cheating on this test. You have to do the work. Yeah? So that build true intimacy. Sue Johnson's book, oh,

P

Pam B. 33:29

yeah, hold me tight. Hold me

B

Bonny 33:34

tight. It's a it's a paperback and a workbook. And I've had couples, I've I've pointed couples to it, and they have done the entire book by themselves. It's very self explanatory. And if you're in a regulated space with your with your spouse, you can do it. It's a very good book.

P

Pam B. 33:56

Another really good podcast that I've been listening to is called From Crisis to connection, and it's with Jeff and Jody. I hope I was saying their name right? Stir, and we can put down the show

B

Bonny 34:08

notes, and it's J, G, E, O, F, F, S, T, A, U, E, R,

P

Pam B. 34:15

yes, yeah. So we can put that in the show notes. So really good about the neurobiological, again, connection that we create. The human intimacy podcast with Dr Kevin Skinner. Dr Kevin Skinner is great. He's done a lot of research and work with betrayal, trauma and recovery.

B Bonny 34:41

And I will say if you are farther along in the journey authentic intimacy. And Dr, Julie Slattery, some of her things are applicable. Of course, she goes into some other areas of sexuality that aren't where I. That aren't really where our focus is, but all our stuff is good, but it's another it's just another resource to offer that I highly regard. Take

P Pam B. 35:10

what you need and leave the rest right. There you go. There you go.

B Bonny 35:15

Yeah, and and listeners. If you have some great couple ship podcasts that you know of, put them in the comments. Yeah, we'd love to know about them. So Pam, before we go, hope. Can you leave our listeners?

P Pam B. 35:33

Relationship, recovery, discovery. It works when you work at most of it is education and skills building. Be open, be teachable, be coachable. Be open to learning new paradigms, new insights, new ways of relating. And I'm coming up on my seventh year in a couple of days. Wow, of a relationship that, if you would, told me, This is my could it be my relationship? Eight years ago, I would have said that only happens in the movies and in novels. I have such a fun, safe, interesting, curious, intriguing, connected relationship with this new man who had been married to for 30 years. Recovery does work when you have two people who are willing to take feedback and learn new skills and put them into effect. So relationship works when you work it,

B Bonny 36:49

yeah, and I was learn, I was looking, so this, I've probably mentioned this on a previous podcast, but this was, this was what I held on to. It's a verse. It's Malachi, four, two. I held on to this in the very early days after full therapeutic disclosure, because this was the goal. And if it's in Scripture, it I just felt like it really can be my goal. God says it, it can be my goal. So for Malachi four, it says, But for you who fear my name, the son of righteousness, will rise with healing in its wings and and you will go out and frolic like a well fed calf. Oh,

P Pam B. 37:48

that is so beautiful. And I would say, yes, that's what, that's what Jeff and I are experiencing

now. We are playful, we frolic. We have a home base with each other, that we can go out and venture into the world and have exciting adventures and come back home and have that safe place to fall. Our relationship is home,

B Bonny 38:19

beautiful, and I have just one last, as you've said, that I have one last practical suggestion, if you are trying to rebuild your friendship, recreate your marriage relationship, Dave and I, even in the early days, after full therapeutic disclosure, when I was I was really in the both, and I'm really angry, and yet, there are some things about you I still care about in that both and place. We started doing Weekend Adventures, and part of what we went to were waterfalls, mostly, not always, but we would look for little Airbnbs with hiking trails to waterfalls, and so for several weekends, we'd go all we'd traveled around Tennessee just to do something different and get out of the house and also experience a new, novel Place. Because what I have learned in my past life when I was writing my other marriage blog, when you have a novel experience with your spouse that actually fires up different places in your brain, and it's connecting, but because you're also sharing this new memory together, so you're firing up a positive spot in your brain, and you're connecting. So it's a double whammy, and it's fun, typically it's fun, but, but just just, just a practical suggestion, and even if you have little kids, you know, perhaps you could just have a Friday, Friday lunch date somewhere. New You know, it doesn't have to be huge, but some place different that you've never been to make new memories. Yeah,

P Pam B. 40:06

yeah, yeah.

B Bonny 40:10

All right. Well, listeners, thank you for being here with Pam and I today. We are just so blessed by your encouragement and your support. It. It blows my mind. I think we have nearly 900 subscribers. Yeah, yeah, and we're having 1000s of downloads a month, which, wow. So so we welcome your feedback. We welcome topics. If you want to suggest we are not, at this moment, entertaining guest solicitations, and that's only because we have such curated content. If you do want to email us and let us know you're out there, that's great. We can't guarantee we'll get you on if it doesn't align with where we're going. And that's not that's not disrespect for any professional anywhere. It's just it's the way in which we see our mission playing out. So yeah, we hope to be a bright spot in your day, and if you have found any help here and you want to share it with a friend, that would be awesome. Also, you can leave a five star rating or write us a quick positive review over on Apple, and that will be such a blessing. So all right, friends, we'll see you in a couple weeks. Or actually, yeah, actually, we'll probably see you next week, unless something goes wrong.

P Pam B. 41:47

Pray for us.



Bonny 41:51

All right. Bye, for now. Bye, bye.