

Ep_70.1_Self_Esteem_Plummetts

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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. Welcome to another episode of hope for wives. Today we're discussing why and how a betrayed partner self esteem decreases after discovery. Self esteem is your sense of overall personal worth or value, and it's similar to self respect. It describes your level of confidence in your abilities and attributes, one of the criteria for post traumatic stress in the DSM five is that a person will possibly have persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself others or the world. So it makes sense that a large percentage of betrayed wives experience this drastic drop in their confidence, and why this conversation is necessary. So ladies, what are some experiences betrayed partners have with loss of self esteem or loss of confidence?

P Pam B. 01:14

I think we can even go further back and say that that we as betrayed spouses who have experienced the trauma we lose ourselves. I remember Barb Steffens in our abs training saying that we go through an existential crisis, and I had to look that up and see what that meant. And it meant we really we lose all of our identity. We I've said it. I've often heard women say I've lost myself. I just don't even feel like myself anymore. And what I've learned about trauma, and by the way, I've learned more about neurological stuff than I ever thought I was going to and I'm certainly no expert, but I know that all trauma survivors, whether you're a soldier coming back from war or you've had a major car accident or you've had betrayal trauma, our brains change at under at a physiological level, and the part of our brain that informs us of who we are, what our history is, Whether I like cream and sugar in my coffee, everything, it becomes really, really difficult to connect back into. And so we also lose everything that we know about

ourselves that is strong and resilient and capable and skilled. And so, you know, there's the emotional piece of it, right? Wait, I thought this is who I was in, this relationship in the world to society, and now this brand new, life changing, volcanic information has threatened my perception of all reality, including who I think I am in the world. So I think it, you know, and in order to have self esteem and self worth, you've got to have that basic this is who I am, and the ability the part of the brain that can self reflect is affected too. So we've got to have that basic underpinning first or get get it back again. So thankful

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Lyschel 03:25

for your just your explanation of that. Pam, because I think it gives it a really good, I guess, foundation for us to start building off of the experiences that we've heard or seen or witnessed or even personally experienced from our partners, to give you like real life examples, watching women who are highly successful. Women, highly successful attorneys, people in politics, doctors, teachers, educators, etc, just very successful individuals, and watching everything that felt real to them just start to disintegrate after the impact of, you know, after betrayal and them just the the belief that I'm not good enough, right? And it becomes this solidified belief system for them. So sometimes I see women when that loss of self esteem happens, they plummet and they start losing things. But I also see women who go into hyper over functioning because they're bound and determined to not lose these things. So this, the lack of self esteem is what starts fueling that train for them to perform, perform, perform in whatever way that looks. And I see this too with women who've chosen even to walk away from Careers in hopes of a different lifestyle. I personally walked away from my careers when we started having children. I. Yeah, and I, I enjoyed working. I, you know, I didn't like the idea of having to go to work, but it I didn't not like working, but I made the choice to walk away from my job, to be home with our children, and then to have my husband relapse, and have three small kids at home and realize that that was I was in a, I was in a predicament, because I couldn't necessarily step back out there. And, you know, my self esteem surely was impacted. Like, what am I value? Where's my value coming from? What is my worth? Like, I don't, I don't do anything now, right? Which I do a ton. But that was a bit of that impact of self esteem, the loss of it there for me too.

B

Bonny 05:43

I also think that the loss of trust. I know there's a study that Lisa Taylor and Donna Dixon did around the loss of trust in God, and of course, that and the loss of trust in ourselves. Why didn't we see this? How did this happen under our nose? You know, so and that that filters over into well, then I can't trust myself, and if I can't trust myself, then maybe the thoughts I had were all wrong. So I think that's a place of losing confidence too, because we're not trusting that we do have the capability of making good choices. That doesn't mean it can't come back, but that's that's the reality. I think, another place for me, personally, where I saw a loss of self confidence was my memory and attention. You know, the brain fog that happened, the loss of memory skills, the loss of, you know, I felt really add that also, my self confidence also took a nose dive from that. Because, honestly, in all transparency, one of my, one of the things I feel very confident in is my mind and my intellect, and I, you know, I'm smart. That's one of my that's probably a piece of my identity there. Pam, and that took a big hit. It was very hard money.



07:14

Oh, thank you.

B

Bonny 07:20

Yeah, yeah, thank you. But it took a big hit, and honestly, it was humbling. It was very humbling. And I would say that this is kind of a little side note, but I would say that that piece and that humbling was was good. It was good for me to experience. It gave me better perspective for a lot of an empathy, you know, for a lot of people so but I think mistrust of ourselves and that lack, that loss of memory and attention, can also play a part in the loss of self esteem.

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Pam B. 07:53

Yeah, I would just add that when I was putting together one of my courses, and I took a course on how to create a course, and I was encouraged to have phone conversations, phone interviews with betrayed spouses, to ask them, What was the first thing I should teach about my course? And I thought units of boundaries course, and I thought the first thing would be the who, the what, the one, the where, as asks or answer all those questions overwhelmingly. And I talked to 25 women overwhelmingly. They said the first thing I want you to do with me is to reinforce my my self worth, my self esteem. What am I protecting with boundaries? Do I have a right to to reinforce that? And it really it changed my paradigm. But I think it just really reinforces how common this is. And you know that if you're listening to this and you're feeling this, you are not alone. This is very, very common to the whole betrayal, trauma experience.

B

Bonny 09:00

Yes, I 100% so how does this lack of self esteem affect recovery from betrayal, trauma?

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Pam B. 09:16

I didn't know what I was recovering if recovery is going back and recovering something, I didn't know what I was going back to get, that's, that's the first thing that comes to my mind. The other thought that came to my mind at the at the time was, what's the point? What's the point in doing recovery? What? What's the payoff? I just I felt so hopeless and lost, and I didn't I didn't know how to turn or which way to go, and I'm grateful for the people that were there to help. Me through it. I could not have done it on my own.

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Lyschel 10:10

So in one of our groups in hope redefined. It's called one of our groups is called abiding and hope, and it's a longer term group for women to step into and have a closed group of women that they get to heal with for a longer time frame. It's like 44 weeks. And I bring that up because last night, actually, I was in our group, and what we did is we did a self assessment. So periodically throughout the group's curriculum, there's a self assessment in there. And the way

that we wrote out the self assessment is it's a it's a wheel, and it's got various sections in this wheel. So if you're familiar with other forms of therapy coaching, they there's one called the wheel of life. And what I did is I took the wheel of life and I converted it over to what I call the wheel of healing, because there are very important parts of our healing journey that we need to be able to label, but we also need to be able to scale it. So when you're and I can throw this up as a PDF in our show notes, if anybody would like to see them and do it for themselves, it's a great assessment for self, but the first circle, so I actually give them three circles, and I ask them to scale their wheel of healing with self, with others and with God, because those feel like the three most predominant relationships for us, right? And so the first one we do is with self and as you guys have both been talking about the self esteem and all of this part of what we're scaling in, there is a couple things that really stood out for me. So, Bonnie, you had said trust. And I, in our group, I had one of our participants be my guinea pig. And you know, we filled out the wheel together as a group, and she got to trust and it was so interesting to watch the way she responded. The first one was self awareness. Like, how aware of yourself are you? And she was like, Oh, I'm pretty aware. Like, probably gave herself an eight or nine, feeling really good. Loved it. The next one was grief. How? What is your relationship like with grief? And she scored pretty high. And then we got to trust and she immediately went to, well, I don't trust other people. I don't trust them. This, this, this, and she's sharing all these stories about why she doesn't trust someone. And I said it's interesting, because the question I asked you was, do you trust yourself? And she slowed down, and the tears started to come to the edge of her eyelids, and she said, No, I don't. And she said, because I feel like I've been duped by all these people and being duped in that lack of trust with others and with herself has drastically impacted her self esteem. She does not feel confident to walk into most things saying, I can care for me. I've got my back. I can trust myself. And I think that that lack of self esteem and lack of trust with self right, it's kind of two interchangeable things here, affects recovery from betrayal trauma, because it limits our ability to have a voice. It strips us of feeling empowered. If we lose the ability to say to self, you're not crazy. You're maybe a little out of control today, but you're not crazy, right? Like to love yourself, and all of those things have to come in as we're talking about the RE, the recovery, or even discovery. I think that a lot of us could even share just parts of the story where our self esteem was super low. I mean, one of the tangible ways that self is my self esteem was impacted came in my body image in the very early days of understanding his behavior with pornography, I was like, I'm not enough. And I and I remember trying to this is such a backwards way of us doing life. But I remember me trying to reclaim my self esteem by asking him, What's your type, What's your type? And he'd be like, Oh, I don't, I don't know. And I'm like, that's crazy. You know, you're and I was like, belligerent that he knew what he was looking for. Right at the end of the day, what I was trying to do was secure some sense of esteem, some sense of self worth. And. Love in this relationship, which was so backwards, right and so wrong that I would want to be compared to, you know, computerized images and women who do not have authentic, real bodies, etc, blah, blah, and but I was desperate for some sort of value. And so when you see someone who's attempting to step into recovery and they lack confidence, they don't know their value or their worth, they don't really know who they are, because their identity typically comes from those around them, that's when you're going to see this lack of self esteem. And so, Pam, I love that you listen to your audience, because that's exactly what they were asking you for. Was say, can we start there? Can you remind me that I'm worth this work, because recovery is a lot of work, and so I get to be reminded that I'm valued, I'm beloved, and I don't want to over spiritualize this, but that I bring great value and worth to the world around me, and so for me to have to do the work of healing is important, but this definitely can suck the self esteem right out of you.

B Bonny 10:23

Absolutely you both are so eloquent and share so such good stuff. Yes, just wanted to affirm you both before I say, How does this lack of self esteem affect recovery. I think if I took what you both have said and kind of distilled it all down, I think it boils down to fear, without trust, without knowing who you are, it's scary. And then to what's recovery, like you said, Pam, what? What am I even recovering from? It's It's scary. We hear that. It's hard. So I just want to affirm and validate if, if all of this makes you fearful, you're not wrong. You're not your your feelings are valid. It is a place of risk this recovery. But I think the fear affects recovery because it makes it scary, because it's the unknown. But like Pam so often says, There are fruits, and the fruit of this risk is not just recovering who we were, I think, as you both were kind of alluding to this, not recovering who we were, but becoming more, becoming empowered. Yeah, I heard one of you say that empowered. So, yes, the self the loss of self esteem can hinder us from taking some steps at first, but I think at the the more you're in a group, the more you're communicating with other betrayed wives to know that your feelings are normal.

P Pam B. 18:16

Another reason that we lose that self esteem is, unfortunately where we are in the therapy world, just in the world in general, our feelings are invalidated, and we have such big, big, appropriately, large emotions around the wounding and the rupture of discovery, of betrayal, and very, very few individuals in the world know how to validate that. Immediately our partners are going to go, oh, it's not a big deal. What are you? You're overreacting, etc. And so that is a big core piece of who we are. Our lived experience is our emotions, God given emotions, and when you have a circle of people who aren't informed, you don't have that yet, hopefully our podcast is helping to change that, that our feelings being invalidated, our emotions. We're being told you're having the wrong feelings, you're having the wrong emotions. And so we question ourselves, and that can be a huge attack on our self esteem too, that, wait a minute, maybe I am overreacting, and why am I feeling this way? And we can beat ourselves up because we haven't been we haven't been validated that what we're feeling and our reactions are actually appropriate, unwanted, but normal and understandable under this under the circumstances. So.

B Bonny 20:02

Well, as we draw this conversation to a close, we'd love to offer you some hope. So Lachelle and Pam, what hope can you offer our listeners? So

L Lyschel 20:11

we were laughing and and a little a bit jesting before we hit record about that. We don't want to just give a spiritual platitude of Jesus loves you this we know which is true. It's still very true, however. Um, and to minimize the wrestle with self esteem. And I think about so many of my Christian sisters, my Christian friends, who struggle with the idea of having a self esteem, because there's also a piece to our teachings, potentially, that would say that having a high sense of esteem could be labeled as pride, right? Because it comes from our self esteem comes from the feelings of worth based on what we can do, our skills, our accomplishments, our status, our finances, the way we look, and how frowned upon those things can be. But I also

know that there is a there's a difference between pride and worth, and I don't, I hope that makes sense as I say it, that I get to do what I do because of who God is in me. I get to bring what I bring to any relationship or experience because of who God is within me. And that's really the value in the work, that's where I draw my esteem from. But I also think that much like my own kids, right? Like I have a daughter who's in color guard and she's a rock star, and her mom tells her that all the time, and so she gets to walk out on a field every Friday night with a great sense of esteem and confidence because her parents are telling her she's a rock star. My parent, my father, my daddy in heaven, tells me I'm a rock star. I'm allowed to walk through the world with that type of assurance that he sees all of me and can speak into who I am, and that enables me to have a healthy self esteem.

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Pam B. 22:34

The hope that I would leave is, you know, gee, I have the benefit of hindsight being 2020 and being able to look back and the benefit of knowing, talking to so many different betrayed spouses, and knowing so many things that are common to our experience that this place that you're in right now, if you are feeling that lack of self worth and self esteem is temporary, it's neurological, it's physiological. And our bodies do heal, our brains do heal, and we build experiences around that feeling, and there are ways to retrieve the beliefs about yourself that you may have lost, that it does happen, you're not I can guarantee you that you will not be in the same place down the road. It it does change, and there are resources that can help you out of that pit that you're in. And there's a there's a phrase that we say in some of the recovery rooms, talking about recovery work. And we say it works when you work it, and you're worth it. So work it,

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Bonny 23:54

the hope I would want to leave it revolves around the fear, the fear that you'll never find yourself again. You know the Bible, over and over says, Do not fear. But that, to me, personally, isn't enough just to tell me not to fear. The verses I want to leave with you is that you can be strong and courageous. You can do hard things. There's a lot of risk. It feels risky. It feels risky, but you, as God is telling you you're that rock star, you can take steps into hard things and and the hard thing might be letting yourself believe

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Pam B. 24:49

that you are worthy,

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Bonny 24:52

give yourself permission to just crack that door open a little bit that maybe God does delight. In me, so that's what I would want to leave. And especially Joshua one nine, and I have this above my sink in my kitchen. It's a big metal piece of art, and it says, Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. And I just want to leave that.

L

Lyschel 25:30

I'm going to make a plug for the song you say by Lauren Diego, literally the first the first lines are talking about her esteem, right? I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough. Every single lie that tells me I'll never measure up. Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low remind me, once again, just who I am, because I need to know. And then she goes in and she talks about what he says, versus what she's feeling, experiencing, etc. When we give ourselves permission to sit in that kind of truth, even when we're struggling to believe it, but we know it's true, it changes things much like all of you have already talked about. So yay, Lauren.

B

Bonny 26:19

She's one of my favorites, too,

P

Pam B. 26:21

and I think this is a case where you have to be careful with fake it till you make it. Because I never want anybody to fake emotions or fake that they're okay. But sometimes the behavior has to come, the actions have to come before our heart will open the door to allow ourselves to feel it and fake confidence, fake that you are feeling that worth and act as if these are times when I think it's really good to practice. Just practice it, pretend it. See what it feels like. Just imagine for five minutes what it might feel like if you were to act as if you have big, huge self confidence, self worth, self esteem. Try it on. If it doesn't feel good, take it off. Yeah, but play with it.

B

Bonny 27:17

I'm gonna tell kind of a side story, but it goes along great with what you're saying. Pam, my son got married about a year ago, and we were creating a Mother Son dance, and he wanted some choreography. So it wasn't just me, he wanted some choreography. So we did some digging, we watched some YouTube videos on dancing, and we practiced several times, and he called me, like, three nights before the wedding, and I we were talking about things. I said, So how you feeling? Are you are you nervous? And he goes, the only thing I'm nervous about is this dance. He goes, How are we going to get through it? I said, you pull your shoulders back and you act like you own that dance floor, because no one in there really knows the choreography that we've just put together. Just act like it's all supposed to happen. No one knows. Just just pretend. So it kind of goes along with that. It wasn't, it wasn't an earth shattering fake it confidence, but, but, and we got through great and it was a lot of fun. So it worked,

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Lyschel 28:32

and I witnessed it, and would have never known that you all were nervous. Yeah,



B

Bonny 28:37

he was super beautiful. Oh, thanks. Well, that wraps up this conversation around the validating that a hit of self esteem is real. It's neurological, it's you didn't make it up. And also, there's hope, if we have helped you in any way on your journey, you can help us by donating. We have a support hope for wives button, both in Libsyn and in our hope for wives website, and we will be back next week with a conversation around how to practically walk into building your self esteem. So thank you very much, and We'll see you later. Bye, bye,