

Ep_72_Avoids

Fri, Dec 20, 2024 12:06PM 24:39

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

emotional avoidance, coping mechanisms, trauma impact, avoidant attachment, painful isolation, self-compassion, partner empathy, communication barriers, detachment concept, reattaching self, safe community, recovery challenges, emotional connection, validation needs, healing process

SPEAKERS

Pam B., Bonny

P Pam B. 00:03

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

B Bonny 00:08

and I'm Bonnie burns of strong wives. We're so glad you're joining us. Welcome to another episode of hope for wives. Pam and I are here with you today because Lachelle had another obligation. So before we get started, we just wanted to make sure we don't say this often enough probably that we are not licensed therapists. We are ethically credentialed coaches with App SATs trainings and certifications. As coaches, we pick up on patterns, and one of the patterns we see in recovering couples is that the person with the problematic sexual behavior often exhibits being less able to emotionally connect and almost running from emotional connection, and that's what we're going to talk today about. So Pam, what are some reasons you think the person in early recovery is, I'm going to say the word avoidant. It's not necessarily what we're talking about, but they avoid connection. They avoid that emotional that emotional work. So what are some reasons you think that happens well?

P Pam B. 01:24

And I think this happens on a spectrum. I think we all experience it from all humans at certain points, but in our journey, there is a spectrum of that behavior when we understand that all addiction, this addiction, any other kind of addiction, is medicating emotions and thoughts in a maladaptive way, right? And so the very thing that they were running from in their addiction was emotions. And so it kind of makes sense that as they leave their old coping mechanisms, unless they have new coping mechanisms in place, there's still going to be an A lack of skills, a deficit of skills, or capacity to deal with big emotions. We feel emotions in our body. That's where it first starts. And if we don't have the skills to deal with that, then we we avoid what

feels painful. It can feel very painful. And so competing against that on the other side of that, on our side, is never, ever have we ever really needed emotional connection and communication from our spouse after betrayal? We need it more than ever. We need to know we're seen and heard and validated and acceptable and that we belong and that we're chosen, and that gets communicated through emotional connection. And so at a point where we need it most, our partner may still be in that place where there are those replacement skills of how to feel their emotions, how to communicate them, demonstrate them in behavior, they may, just may be completely lacking in those skills. I

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Bonny 03:31

mean, yes, there is the addiction that drives people to isolation and that feels comfortable. And two, I just, I'll just make mention of underneath that addiction, even when recovery happens, there could be an avoidant attachment style that needs to be processed. And there is absolutely there can be healing from that. Totally can be healing from that. So you're not doomed if you have an insecure attachment style of any sort, whether it's anxious or avoidant or the other various levels. So I just wanted to make mention of that there is healing from it absolutely. And

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Pam B. 04:13

we talked, we talked before we started about all the different causes, what could cause somebody to be avoidant, and so an avoidant or disorganized attachment style. There could be another trauma, there could be a personality disorder. There could be neuro day, you know, neuro, not neuro typical thinking styles that that causes someone to have a fear, and it is a fear of getting close. It's painful, it's It feels very uncomfortable for some of these people, very painful. So this is why I say there's a spectrum that. You as a betrayed spouse may experience in terms of this avoidance, to have close emotional connection, to even just avoidance on everyday topics.

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Bonny 05:17

Yeah. So how does a woman experience living with a man, let's say he's in early recovery, but he's still running. He's still even avoiding everyday topics. How does she experience that?

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Pam B. 05:31

Well, first, I want to validate that it's painful. It is painful. It feels lonely. It can feel the like the same emotions that we feel when we have been rejected or betrayed. It can feel like the same emotions. It can feel lonely. It can feel like sometimes. How do I want to say this? You know how you can feel lonely in a group of 100 people, right? It can. It can feel even more lonely in a room with the one person is supposed to have your back, the person that you've chosen to spend your life with, to be vulnerable and not have that mirrored back to you. Communication is transactional. I send a communication, I receive a communication. If I don't have something, my emotions mirrored back to me. I feel like a voice crying in the wilderness. I feel like I'm talking to myself,

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Bonny 06:43

yeah, yeah. And that is so painful to not feel seen and heard by the most important person in the world. To you, very painful I've had, I've heard of this, of stories of a woman who had been in an in house separation with her husband, and things that happened, and they'd come back to doing more of life together, and so she chose to be vulnerable with them. And then he says, Okay, I'm going to the library now. And so and so. I'm sure that many of you listening have experienced something similar to that, and so what when things like that happen? Pam, how can she stay sane when living with a man who doesn't have a skill set or he's just not connected to himself yet.

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Pam B. 07:41

I want to validate everybody about how painful this is, and I want to give you hope that you can get through this. You can learn some new skills. But I also don't want to sugar coat anything. I want to tell you it's hard, it's hard, but you can do it. It does require us to learn some new skills, some new paradigms, and to guard our heart. And so firstly, I would say self compassion number one, I would say compassion for yourself, first, for the fact that it is lonely, it is painful. It does feel like what you felt like in betrayal and rejection. It does feel like those things. Give yourself compassion and acknowledge that loss, live in reality. But I also want to invite you into having compassion for your partner. It's very, very easy, especially with social media and some of the groups that we have out there, it's very easy to become very resentful towards your partner and to become angry. And I want to validate the feelings of anger, because it is unfair. This isn't what you signed up for, but I want you to remember that it is not about you. His behavior isn't about you. It doesn't have meaning for who you are, and I would venture to say it probably doesn't even have meaning for how much he loves you and cares about you and wants to be with you. These avoidant behaviors are very often rooted in trauma, early childhood trauma, and so please try to see your partner's behaviors as not a reflection of you or anything you did or didn't do, and not a reflection necessarily, of something that is premeditated on his part. It's it's his coping it's a maladaptive coping mechanism, not excusing it. I'm not saying, Oh, you have to just put up with it, or you just learn to live with that. I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying, guard your heart. I. Guard your heart against resentment and anger towards your partner. Feel the anger, but it's the situation, right? So if you can have compassion for yourself first, and build compassion for your partner and whatever happened to him that led to these behaviors that's going to relieve you of a lot of pressure. The second thing I would say is, use your voice. Always speak the truth. Always say hey, when I asked you to text me when you're on the road and you didn't I felt sad. I felt lonely. Keep voicing that. When this behavior comes up, this is how I feel. That is you being emotionally available, that is you offering connection, that is you speaking your truth, and you need to hear yourself say it, and your partner needs to hear you say it too. One of the biggest lies they tell themselves is it doesn't really affect anybody else. What I'm doing doesn't really hurt anybody. And they need to hear that. Yes, their behavior has consequences, and if you can, and again, I know this is a stretch. Voice empathy. You can say, I see how hard this is for you when I want connection, and I see and I understand how hard it is for you, how painful it might be, and I want to support you through that. And staying in that truth, though of I see how hard it is. I want to help you, but my truth is, is that this hurts, this is causing me a lot of pain and stress.

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Bonny 11:58

Yeah, I think for me, in early recovery. I wouldn't say I had a ton of compassion, but I would say that I was accepting that this is where he was, and that I had no control over his work and his therapeutic, you know, his therapeutic healing. I, I had to accept that, and so I did have some empathy for where this addiction came from. I did not have empathy for the bad choices he made. But I, I, I hear you and that when we can get to that place of acceptance and not fighting against it, but speaking our truth and using our voice, we become empowered. And so their avoidance, like you said, has less meaning about who we are. I, you know, we grow up thinking our identity is informed by what we receive back from people. So if we're not receiving back love and care we're receiving, he's running for the library. I mean, that makes us. It can make us feel like we are unworthy. What's wrong with me, but that is not what's going on. And so kind of putting all those pieces together helps you detach. Do a little detachment, emotional detachment. You want to speak to some detachment. Pam,

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Pam B. 13:41

well, first I want to I want to echo back what you said. I want to mirror back to you one of the most powerful concepts in my own recovery. This really helped me turn a corner. If you're willing to look at another person's behavior towards you as a reflection of the state of their relationship with themselves, rather than a statement about your value as a person, then you will, over a period of time, cease to react, and you can choose to respond.

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Bonny 14:19

So we have a former episode on detachment, and I'll put the link in the show notes, but for now, Pam, why fresh us on on detachment? Just a little

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Pam B. 14:29

bit? You know? How do we define detachment and and there's a lot of different ways over the years, and the meaning of that word has changed, but ultimately, it's not necessarily detaching completely from the other person. It's more of reattaching to me, reattach to yourself. How do you care for yourself? How do you nurture yourself and love. Let go of wanting to have influence, control, control or influence over another person's choices and behaviors and just reattach to you more. And here's the other thing I'm going to say about how to deal with this is connect with yourself. If you can't get that level of connection with your husband, connect with yourself and connect with other safe people. And we're in a really good place with you know, my husband and I, we connect very well. It's amazing. Just want to give that testimony that I never thought that was possible. But I still need opportunities to connect with other people and with myself, and obviously, you know, with with Jesus and God, and make that connection. So as much as we really, really want that primary connection to be with our partner, he may not be able to do it today, and in the absence of that, there are other ways to connect with yourself more and connect with people who are safe, people who get it, people in recovery groups, right? Trauma Informed recovery groups, where you can connect with other women that are boundaried, but yet you don't have to explain your story to they get it. They're on the same

journey, and to be able to be seen and heard by other human beings that will reflect that back to you and share with you and help you feel seen and heard and known. So that's really important, connect where you can connect. So

B Bonny 16:53

what if he works? He uses his words to keep her at a distance. How does she stay sane living in that? You know, he uses negative words, he's hurtful tone.

P Pam B. 17:08

Oh, we just open up with that. That's abuse, yeah.

B Bonny 17:12

So how do we not put up with it?

P Pam B. 17:14

What boundaries? Boundaries? And you could just put your hand up, listeners, imagine me holding my hand up, saying, Stop. I'm not receiving that from you. I'm not receiving that from you. I am going to exit this conversation now, and the person that I want to talk to is the the man that wants this relationship, the man that said he was willing to do the work to become a safe person for me and to rebuild a new relationship with me, and when you can choose to be that person, I'd love to have a conversation with you, but Right now, I'm I'm walking away.

B Bonny 17:59

Yeah, love that. Well, I think we've explored a wife's experience, who has lived with a man who doesn't know how to connect, who actually kind of avoids it because it's uncomfortable. We talked about abuse. We've talked but I think the main, what a big takeaway I have, Pam, is what you said, that detachment is really re attaching with ourselves. I think that's, let's make a meme of that I love that it's meme worthy. I love it because I will say, when I started my recovery about 10 or 12 years ago, it was exactly that. It was not worrying what Dave thought of me. It was not worrying what the other church people thought of me, because I started to, I know I've talked about this before, take things off of my plate and not do things for people that I had been doing, and I was reattaching with myself, I was giving myself that time back for Bonnie and people people weren't happy with that and that I had to be okay. I had to be okay with that, but reattaching to myself and being okay with them not being okay built my confidence and I was empowered, because in the end, I heard God saying, Well done, faithful servant. Because restoring myself meant I had more to give to, more to not just busy work, I had more to give to more important things, you know, my family, other, just other things that would come up that that had deeper significance, yeah, so I Yeah,

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Pam B. 19:47

and how else do we grow? I mean, so I know that in my own experience, of course, hindsight is 2020, I was on a growth path, and then betrayal happened, and all of my personal growth, all. Of my education and the things that I liked to do and is learning to do, all of that stood still because and this, this happens, whether it's trauma, hyper vigilance, but my husband took up my entire view, whether it was safety seeking, Is he safe? You know, that's understandable, but I had to be able to pull the focus back to me, to what I am, in control of my voice, using my voice and saying, Hey, this is not okay with me. I'm here offering connection and being vulnerable, and you're not giving it back to me. That's not okay for me. That hurts and my need is, is that you would learn and push past and I'm going to quote, make a Jake quote here, hug the cactus. I understand this is hugging the cactus for you, but I believe you can do this, and I believe you want to do this, and I'm here to support you through that. But as for now, I need to focus on me, my growth, nurturing me. There's things I want to learn, there's ways I want to grow, there's people I want to connect with. So I'm going to do that. I'm going to take care of me.

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Bonny 21:14

Absolutely. I love that. Well, Pam, what hope shall we leave our listeners with

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Pam B. 21:23

everything's temporary recovery for your partner is not going to happen overnight. I want to validate you that the Lord knows you have these needs, and the Lord wants you to have your needs met in in marriage, and that while you're waiting, you're not waiting alone. You can go to the Lord and and lament. You are never alone. You're never truly, truly alone, and turn to the Word, turn to worship and turn to the rest of God's people, where you can you can be loved on, and you can be seen and heard known. And that this is temporary. Keep making your needs known. Healing is possible for your partner. Those are great, deep wounds that there are not going to heal overnight. And have compassion. Have compassion for yourself during this waiting period.

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Bonny 22:36

Yeah, I think the hope I would offer is to find community. I'm, I know I'm not usually the one talking about that. It's, it's Lachelle and you Pam, but, but community, when you're in this space, not getting any kind of validation from your husband, very little. It's community where women can speak into you. Women who really get it can speak into you, and can hold space and just sit with you in it and wait with you. And on the worst days, you reach out to them, and you can get through that day. And I will say that God has gotten you through every day up until now. So he's got you, he's got you lean into Him. Ask Him for resources. Ask him if you don't feel like you have enough safe community. Ask him where those safe people are. Ask Him to show them to you and but yeah, finding other people to speak into you when your husband isn't is so important,

P Pam B. 23:39

amen. It's a lifesaver, game changer for me. Yeah? Because isolation is the worst, yeah,

B Bonny 23:47

yeah, the rumination and the isol, the the rumination that goes with isolation can drive you crazy. So well. Listeners, thank you for joining us today. We hoped that this conversation enlightens you a bit. If you have a partner that's running fast and furiously in the opposite direction, and how important you are. Reattached to yourself. If we have helped you in any way, please leave us a positive rating or five star review with Apple iTunes, and we will see you again soon. Bye, bye. You.