



Episode I Introduction & Hope

Marnie Breecker 0:02

Hello, everyone. Before we begin today's podcast episode, we want to make an exciting announcement. We know that when couples are recovering from the impact of betrayal on their relationship, there can be a time where they feel stuck in terms of how to move forward with the sexual peace. How do we reintegrate sexuality after there's been betrayal, and that can be a really difficult conversation to have and a difficult process to go through. And so we've gotten a lot of feedback from our listeners who would like more help in this area. And so we're starting a group specifically for couples who'd like to start the conversation about sexual reintegration, and we have a fantastic coach. She's a sex and relationship and intimacy expert. Her name is Zoe Kors. You can learn more about her and the group at our website helpingcouplesheal.com. If this is a fit for you, please don't hesitate to reach out, we'd love to hear from you. Please remember that there's limited space so if you are interested, please reach out sooner than later so you can reserve a spot. Thanks, and we hope you enjoy this episode.

HCH Narrator 1:17

Welcome to the Helping Couples Heal Podcast, a place for healing and hope for couples impacted by betrayal resulting from infidelity and/or sex addiction. Your hosts are Marnie Breecker and Duane Osterlind, licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, certified sex addiction therapists, and founders of respected treatment centers in Long Beach and Los Angeles. Marnie and Duane co-created Helping Couples Heal, the most comprehensive in person and online resource for couples recovering from betrayal, and this podcast series is the first component of the program. Thank you for listening. Marnie and Duane are committed to helping you recover from the devastating impact of betrayal trauma and are excited to support you wherever you may be in your healing. If you've lost hope, you've come to the right place. Now, take a slow deep breath, and let's begin with the Helping Couples Heal Podcast.

Duane Osterlind 2:12

Hello, everyone, welcome to the Helping Couples Heal Podcast. Thank you for joining us, we are excited that you're here. If you are listening to this podcast, it may be because you have suffered a betrayal in your most intimate relationship. Or because you have been the one who has caused the betrayal to the person you love the most. And healing and recovery is what this podcast is all about.

Marnie Breecker 2:41

So if you are listening, if you are here, you are likely feeling - and I'm going to share these emotions. But they're not my opinion. These are the words that Duane and I have heard over and over and over again from the partners who have experienced betrayal.

Duane Osterlind 2:54

Absolutely.

Marnie Breecker 2:55

So feeling shattered, feeling broken, feeling numb, and devastated, and lost. And then on top of those incredibly powerful emotions, most partners are thinking things like "my life is over, there is no hope. Where can I go for support? How can my marriage survive this? Can I survive this? Will I ever trust again?" And so we created this podcast specifically for you. And what we hope you will get by listening to us is acknowledgement and validation, and support, and compassion, and understanding, and resources.

Duane Osterlind 3:35

So many partners, when they come to us, and they've had this kind of intimate betrayal. They're so devastated. They feel so lost, like you said, that we really created this so that people could know that they're not alone.

Marnie Breecker 3:52

Exactly. That's like step one, for sure. And then and then providing that sort of emotional support to you was the primary goal of the podcast. And then I would say the second goal would be also to provide you with tangible, concrete information and resources to help you navigate this path. So really a roadmap or a blueprint that can give you the necessary information about where to go, how to get help, and how you can heal.

Duane Osterlind 4:24

Right. So when they listen to this podcast, if you're out there listening, and you're going through this, this is what this podcast is about. It's about giving you that good information and professional information from our clinical experience and also our professional training that's going to help you walk through this. That there is actually a direction out.

Marnie Breecker 4:49

Yes, and we do know because, as we'll share with you shortly, we have a lot of experience in this field and we've been doing this for a long time. We have seen so many devastating people in our offices that come in without hope, feeling completely traumatized in a way that, in a way that you can only get traumatized by being betrayed by the person that you feel is the one that's going to be protecting you? Right? That's a big part of this, is that people come in the door who say, "I never in a million years thought that this person would, would hurt me, this is the person that I thought in this crazy world was going to always protect me. And now I found out that they didn't do that." And so as a result, they often feel as though they can't trust anyone. And if that's true, if that person can't help, then nothing else can make sense. It's sort of like believing your whole life that the sky is blue and then one day finding out no, the sky is red. And so not being able to conceptualize or make sense of your life anymore.

Duane Osterlind 5:51

Right. And so the partner is just completely, like we said earlier, feeling shattered. But I also want to talk about real quick, just why this podcast will be good for the addict, the person who's done the betrayal. It's also going to give you a roadmap of what you can do to help your partner deal with this kind of trauma. Because a lot of times, addicts, they're not out to intentionally traumatize their partner, but this kind of behavior does lead to that trauma. And then they don't know how to get out. So this podcast is also going to give you the information that you need to be able to help your partner heal.

Marnie Breecker 6:31

Yes. And actually, let's say, let's just mention as we will in every subsequent episode, that while we are using the term addict, and sometimes sex addiction, we're doing that for simplicity. But the reality is that this podcast series is for anyone who has experienced betrayal trauma in their relationship. And so that could be a one time instance of infidelity. Or it could be full blown sex addiction or compulsivity. It could be one affair or a series of affairs. But if you have experienced intimate betrayal, and that resonates with you, then you are definitely in the right place and we hope you will stay.

Duane Osterlind 7:10

Right. This will be a great benefit to you so that you will not feel so lost and alone out there.

Marnie Breecker 7:17

So let's first start with maybe me sharing how, Duane, how you and I met because I think that that will give some context for how and why this podcast series was created.

Duane Osterlind 7:26

Okay, okay. But should we first give them our names?

Marnie Breecker 7:30

Oh, yeah. That's a great idea. Thank you. So I am Marnie Breecker.

Duane Osterlind 7:34

And I'm Duane Osterlind.

Marnie Breecker 7:36

And Duane and I met many years ago, I think in 2009, when we were taking our training, when we were training to become certified sex addiction therapists. And since that time, we have had the opportunity to collaborate on a lot of cases, and to grow, not only as professionals and as colleagues, but perhaps even more important as people and as friends.

Duane Osterlind 8:01

And I think it's important to mention when we met too, that I think it's very important, one of the things that really called to me was that this issue was on your radar from the moment I met you, in our training too, you had a passion for this. And I was very much focused a lot on the addict. And with your passion for the partner, you really brought that into the mix. That has been incredibly powerful for me in helping people through this process.

Marnie Breecker 8:29

Thank you for saying that. Yeah, I had the benefit of being hired early in my career by Dr. Omar Minwalla who we will be, we've already interviewed him and he will be a guest on a future episode, which I think will be incredibly valuable for all of you who are listening. But that's who essentially brought me into the field. And he was one of the initial or original pioneers of the partner trauma model. And so for me, I was blessed with, with only having that information as I started to work with partners. So I never, I never looked at or conceptualized the experience of the partner as being anything other than trauma. I never pathologize them with things like co-addiction or codependency. And I think that that's what you are referring to when you say that when we met, you know, that's what you picked up from me, that partner trauma was really on my radar.

Duane Osterlind 9:18

Right? And then we were able to really work together to build this and create this and have a passion for this. So my name is Duane Osterlind. I'm a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Certified Sex Addiction Therapist. And I'm also the founder of Novus Mindful Life Institute in Long Beach, California, and also the host of The Addicted Mind Podcast, and I've been working in the area of addiction for well over a decade at this point. It's something I'm very passionate about. For me, addiction came early in a way because I went into rehab when I was about 17 years old. So it's always been a part of my life and a passion for me, to help people through it, because I understand it, and I've been there and I know how hard it is for people to get that kind of help. Also, I've had a fascination with why we do the things we do and healing the addicted mind, so to say. So I'm very passionate about this whole process.

Marnie Breecker 10:20

And I'm Marnie Breecker. And I'm also a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Certified Sex Addiction Therapist and I am a Certified Clinical Partner Specialist through an organization called APSATS, which stands for the Association of Partners of Sex Addicts, Trauma Specialists. And in fact, I was one of the founding board members for that organization back in 2012. And like Duane, I specialize in betrayal trauma and sex addiction. I started in this field a long time ago when I was an intern at an inpatient hospital, and I ended up spending a very large portion of my internship working with the sexual recovery program. And to be honest, I never thought in a million years that I would work with this population, I did not seek it out. But when I was working with the patients at the hospital, it was really easy to see the link to deep trauma and developmental trauma that had caused so much pain and had led to sexual addiction, and sexual compulsivity. And after that every job I found myself in, because sex addiction was relatively a new field, I ended up getting assigned to other clients who were struggling with sexual addiction and sexual compulsivity. And then I ended up getting hired at a clinic in Los Angeles to work specifically with partners of sex addicts. And at the time, partners were getting very little attention and support. And so my role was to facilitate groups and lectures and give partners the necessary resources that had really been lacking for so long. And that's, that's, by the way, the job where I was hired by Dr. Minwalla that I was talking about, referring to a little while ago. And now 10 or 11 years later, here I am. And here we are.

Duane Osterlind 11:58

So what inspired us to create this podcast, it's really quite simple. We knew that betrayed partners were really underserved. Not just that, it's that the addicts who have done the hurting, really wanted to know how to help their partners heal as well. And so our goal in creating this podcast was to provide that much needed information, and to share about how we help couples heal from betrayal trauma, and how we help them rebuild trust and intimacy in their relationship.

Marnie Breecker 12:34

So about a year ago or so, Duane and I had just finished facilitating our Helping Couples Heal Workshop. And we were talking and reflecting about the experience in the parking lot. And this was the conversation that really birthed this podcast series, because we were trying to brainstorm how we could possibly get this information out to more people. We realized that not everybody would be able to come to Southern California and attend a workshop in person. And yet, the participants that had taken the workshop often told us, "everybody has to attend this workshop, everyone needs to get this information." And so we were just trying to figure out well, how could we reach more people? How can we reach more partners? How can we reach more couples? How can we help more people? And the reality is that today, technology is really what is being used in order to reach more people, specifically podcasts. And so it was really in that random conversation that we had in the parking lot of Duane's office building that we decided that this podcast was something we really wanted to pursue. And I'm really proud of us for the commitment because it has taken a lot of time, and really a lot of commitment. And we both have a lot on our plate in our work and family lives. And yet, we are so passionate about this work. And we are so just so committed to supporting you on this journey. We have watched so many of our clients struggle through betrayal trauma and relational trauma. And we've seen such devastation. And we've also seen so much recovery and healing. And that's the part that likely, if you're new to this process, you haven't seen, you're only in pain and the thick of it.

Duane Osterlind 14:24

Right.

Marnie Breecker 14:24

Right. And so we really wanted to be able to be that voice for you and to come out and say yes, we know that it's devastating. Absolutely. We are not saying this is an easy road. In fact, we're saying the opposite. It is a hard road to navigate. And there are tools and there are resources and above all there is hope. And that is why we are here. Duane and I are here and committed. We are fiercely committed to supporting you in this journey.

Duane Osterlind 14:50

I think you said that great. Like you said, it's so important that there's healing on the other side of this. And there is that roadmap, and that's what this podcast can do for you.

Marnie Breecker 15:02

And a lot of addicts come into treatment, and they are taught immediately how to get sober and to stay sober. And of course, that's crucial. And we need that. I mean, there's no relational healing if somebody's still acting out and engaging in, right, in that betrayal behavior. But our workshop and our program was created specifically to add a missing component. And that is to give couples information specifically about partner and relational trauma and to provide concrete tools to help couples navigate this very challenging road. And oftentimes, as Duane mentioned earlier, when the addicts come in for treatment, they are not looking to deny their partner's feelings or to minimize or rationalize their behavior. However, that's often what happens. And if the focus is specifically on the sobriety, then there's that relational component that's just missed. And then people are left without knowing what to do. And it's really like being thrown out into the ocean without a life jacket.

Duane Osterlind 16:02

Right. And I think the beauty of this is that if both people look and take this work seriously, they can heal through their relationship.

Marnie Breecker 16:13

Absolutely. And, obviously, Duane and I very much believe in relational healing. I mean, the name of our program is Helping Couples Heal. So we do have a lot of hope for couples. However, we also want to say that there are going to be couples that don't necessarily make it. And there's lots of different reasons for that. But even if that's the case, as individuals, you can certainly heal, and you can certainly move on in your life to thrive. So this podcast, while intended, definitely for couples to work through this process and hopefully to come out the other side and heal and recover together, there's often a real opportunity for people to heal themselves and even heal a relationship that is not going to stay together in terms of a marriage, you know, maybe, maybe a couple will decide not to stay married, but they have kids, and you can go on to have a healthy relationship with one another. And you're able to co-parent in a way that is loving and healthy for the children and for the family. And so keep that in mind, too. We're not telling you that you need to stay in your relationship, we're not telling you that every single relationship is meant to, to heal within the context of a marriage or a committed partnership. However, healing is a much broader term. And we do believe that everybody listening does have the capacity to heal.

Duane Osterlind 17:35

Absolutely. So on that note, we recorded some quotes from individuals and couples that have gone through the Workshop, and we wanted to share them with you so you could hear it from their voices.

Marnie Breecker 17:50

And as you're listening, we think it'll become very clear to you very quickly if this podcast series is for you.

Duane Osterlind 17:56

So we're going to go ahead and play those right now.

Marnie Breecker 17:59

Okay, here's the first one. "Every time I was triggered, and tried to talk to him about the deep despair I was feeling, he would minimize what he had done, saying none of it meant anything and didn't change how much he loved me. Regardless of how hard I tried to explain it to him. He was incapable of recognizing that I was hurt about so much more than just the acting out."

Duane Osterlind 18:19

"My manipulation and deceit, especially the recurring nature, has traumatized her. Her feelings make sense."

Marnie Breecker 18:27

"I tried for two years to get him to understand the magnitude of what he has done. But he never took responsibility. Until we came to this workshop, he would get defensive and ask me when I'm going to move on. Now I can see that he really is trying to do things differently. Sometimes he still starts to get defensive, but now he realizes what he's doing and stops."

Duane Osterlind 18:48

"After attending this workshop, I now understand the gravity of her trauma and what I can do to help her heal."

Marnie Breecker 18:55

"Before the workshop, he got mad at me when I brought up my pain and hurt. He would defend himself and tell me all the ways I contributed to the problems in our marriage. It's only been a month since the workshop, but I can clearly see that he has a newfound understanding of my trauma, and seems genuinely committed to helping me heal. For the first time in years, I have hoped that maybe our marriage will survive."

Duane Osterlind 19:15

"I went from not knowing anything to being overwhelmed by the trauma I have caused. She has tried to tell me this in the past, and it's always fallen on deaf ears."

Marnie Breecker 19:27

"I have been raped before. And this was worse, because the person who hurt me was the one who I thought would always protect me. And what makes it even worse is that now when I get triggered, he often says I'm overreacting and tells me about all the ways I contributed to his infidelity."

Duane Osterlind 19:42

"I had convinced myself that my wife was overreacting and tried to minimize or deny altogether the damage I have done. But now I understand that this really is trauma and her feelings make sense."

Marnie Breecker 19:56

"When I'm triggered, he gets defensive and makes me feel like I'm crazy for being so devastated by what he has done. I was feeling hopeless but decided to go to the workshop as a last ditch effort. I am so happy I went because something actually clicked. Maybe it was from hearing the other wives say the same things that I've been saying to him since discovery over a year ago, he finally gets that betrayal trauma is real. And it's not just me."

Duane Osterlind 20:21

"I'm embarrassed that I needed a workshop to help me understand what my wife was saying all along. I'm so relieved that I finally get it."

Marnie Breecker 20:29

"I almost didn't go to the workshop because I had given up. For years, he refused to understand how much pain he had caused, that he had shattered all of my trust in him and that he continued to do that even in sobriety by minimizing my pain and telling me I was crazy for feeling this way."

Duane Osterlind 20:45

So here's the last one. "She tried to explain over and over that it wasn't just the sexual behavior that hurt her, but rather the ongoing manipulation and deceit. Until now. I thought she was crazy when she told me that she will never trust me again. But now it makes sense. Of course, she doesn't trust me. But now I know what I can do to help regain her trust and ultimately heal our relationship. For the first time, I have hoped that we can get through this together."

Marnie Breecker 21:18

Our hope for you, if you listen to this podcast series, is that you will understand that the experience of betrayal in the context of an intimate relationship is indeed trauma.

Duane Osterlind 21:28

And our hope is that you will both conceptualize her responses and reactions as trauma, and therefore treat them as such.

Marnie Breecker 21:38

Our hope is that you will rediscover deep connection with one another.

Duane Osterlind 21:42

And our hope is that if you need more support, you will come to our workshop.

Marnie Breecker 21:47

And most important, our hope is that you will find hope here.

Duane Osterlind 21:51

And healing.

Marnie Breecker 21:53

Thank you so much for allowing us to be a part of your healing. We have some really great topics and guests as we mentioned earlier, including two couples that will share about their own experience with betrayal trauma and relational healing.

Duane Osterlind 22:05

So in the next episode, we're going to jump right in and we're going to talk specifically about what relational and betrayal trauma is, and why it is so difficult to heal.

Marnie Breecker 22:15

And if you'd like more information about our Helping Couples Heal Workshop, or if you have comments or questions or you would like to suggest topics for future episodes, please visit our website at helpingcouplesheal.com. Until next time, take care.

Duane Osterlind 22:30

Take care.

HCH Narrator 22:33

Thank you for listening to the Helping Couples Heal Podcast, where your healing is the number one priority. If you'd like additional resources about betrayal trauma or to learn more about the Workshop, please visit helpingcouplesheal.com. If you are finding the podcast helpful, please support Marnie and Duane in continuing to reach others impacted by betrayal trauma by leaving a review on iTunes and sharing this podcast with someone you care about. Once again, thank you for listening. We're grateful for your trust and look forward to continuing to support you on your journey of healing.