



Episode 17

Coping with the Pandemic

HCH Narrator 1:15

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, Los Angeles, and San Diego, California. Marnie and Duane co-created Helping Couples Heal, a comprehensive program for couples recovering from betrayal trauma, including an in person two day workshop, an online aftercare program, 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 honored 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.

Marnie Breecker 2:12

Hello, everybody, and thanks for listening to the Helping Couples Heal podcast. This is Marnie and I am here with Duane.

Duane Osterlind 2:20

Hello, everyone.

Marnie Breecker 2:22

So we're bringing you a little bit of a different podcast today. Because I think we'd be remiss if we just went ahead and talked about betrayal trauma and ignored the global pandemic that's occurring, you know, at this time.

Duane Osterlind 2:36

Right.

Marnie Breecker 2:37

And so we really wanted to acknowledge that if you're listening to this podcast, that means likely that you've experienced the impact of betrayal trauma, and that you have already been suffering. And you were already dealing with trauma prior to this, this global crisis. And so that would mean that likely, now things might be even harder, or there might be some more pain, more trauma and things might be quite difficult. And so we wanted to spend some time with you today just talking about self care, and the importance of how you can care for yourself during this time,

Duane Osterlind 3:14

Right? You know, with all of the stress of what's going on, all of the uncertainty, which adds to the betrayal and relational trauma, right, it's in a way, in many ways similar to that, it can be really hard to cope and really hard to deal with all of that. So we thought we come on and be able to maybe talk about some resources that you can do, ways to cope with the immediate stress of our situation. And we wanted to give that back to everyone who's listening.

Marnie Breecker 3:48

Yeah, so the first thing that I would want to mention happens to be the Facebook group that we started called Helping Couples Heal, which is a private, it's a private, but public group, meaning that if you're not in the group, you cannot see anybody who's in the group, and you cannot read any posts, but you can find the group. And so that seems to be a good help to the people who have found it already. And it's free and easy to access. And there are people from all over the world that are in that group. So again, if you want some support, you can go to the Helping Couples Heal Facebook page and just answer a couple of quick questions to get approved to join the group.

Duane Osterlind 4:27

Definitely. And we'll be posting resources in there and support and stuff like that. Pull all our resources together and help each other walk this path.

Marnie Breecker 4:37

Yeah, and something I've been thinking about a lot recently is now that, you know, even though I'm working from home, I still have more time on my hands than I did especially with the, you know, saving the commute in Los Angeles. I didn't realize how much time that really took. And so I want to use some of this extra time to be of service and I'm doing that in a number of ways. Personally and professionally. One of the ways in doing that is by actually getting a little bit more involved with that Helping Couples Heal Facebook page. So I went in the other night and I did a live video where I, you know, encourage people to ask questions or share concerns or ask me to address a certain topic. And I think I was in there for about 45 minutes. And people can actually see the replay by just, you know, clicking on that when you're in the group, but it was, I think, really helpful. And people seemed very, very appreciative and grateful for the connection, just being able to connect, and also to talk about the betrayal trauma, because I think probably what's happened is, with everything else going on, it's taking a backseat, and yet the feelings and the pain is still there.

Duane Osterlind 5:39

I think you're absolutely right, Marnie. And that's such a hard thing, because we have this crisis right in front of us. And that stuff does easily get pushed aside. But it is still there. And it still needs to be talked about and acknowledged. So if you're out there struggling with that, we want you to know that we see that. And we're doing our best to make connection and to create community and support. And, you know, I feel like, that's what we can give to the situation and how we can help.

Marnie Breecker 6:12

Yeah, we really want to be of service and continue to support people, even though obviously, we're not doing any in person workshops at the moment. And, you know, our offices are closed. So whatever we can do to continue to support you while you're out there and struggling, we want to do that. I also want to say that I recognize that for a lot of couples who have been struggling with the impact of betrayal trauma, that this could be a really stressful time because now you are quarantined together, right, and not really having as much access to outside activities and to getting space. And so this could be, I was thinking about this, this could be a really amazing opportunity for healing. And for the coming together and managing this together. It can also be, I think, a really difficult thing to have to manage at a time when your your relationship was already in a state of trauma and crisis.

Duane Osterlind 7:10

Absolutely. So there's a lot of challenges there to deal with that. So we also were talking about recording this episode. And what we wanted to do is talk about resources that you can use to help you through some of the anxiety and stress that come with this uncertain situation.

Marnie Breecker 7:34

Absolutely. And I think one of the things that we can do actually is put together a list for everybody who's listening of just some of the online resources that we know of. You know, a lot of our colleagues across the world are now offering all sorts of things online that weren't available before. Because we know that people are really needing resources and communities. So we will put together a list of resources. And you can find that on the Helping Couples Heal website.

Duane Osterlind 8:01

It's a great idea, we'll do that. So I thought we could just talk about some of the things that we're doing to cope with the stress of this, the anxiety of this, the uncertainty of this, and what you could do too if you're listening, and there's a lot of things that you can do to be able to just help yourself deal with that. One of the things that I've been doing because once again, I'm in the LA area as well, and I'm not commuting to the office either, is going out for a walk. And on that walk, I put my cell phone in my pocket. I don't listen to my podcasts, even though I love podcasts, I just take a moment to look at all the different colors out there. Right? So I'll walk maybe for 20 minutes. And I'll just try and look at all the different shades of green. So that's just a mindful thing that you can do and take yourself out of the stress and kind of the- sometimes we can get caught in our own thought spiral. So just doing something like that can be helpful in the moment if you're feeling overwhelmed.

Marnie Breecker 9:13

Yes, and speaking of going outside and taking a walk, a mindful walk, I would tell you that for me personally, that is my savior. Right now, I notice a huge difference in how I feel both emotionally and physically, when I'm inside for a long period of time, and then when I go outside, and I'm in the fresh air. And so we are allowed to go outside and to walk into run and to be in nature. And doing that every day, I think, is incredibly healing. And I also want to just say real quick because we will continue with this list of ideas for you for self care, that we also recognize that these things are going to be wonderfully helpful in moments but that doesn't mean that in any way it's going to alleviate all of the stress or that you know this is going to be a daily practice because I think doing all these things on day is definitely going to make a difference. But we're gonna wake up the next day and the situation is still gonna be the same until it's not. And so really having a self care program that you are doing regularly is really, really important.

Duane Osterlind 10:14

Right? So one of the other things that I've started doing more of is I love mindfulness meditation. So I've increased my mindfulness practice as well. So I've got the mindful walk. But then I also use, there's several apps out there that you can use that have mindfulness meditations in them. I've increased that as well, in my extra time to be able to cope with some of these overwhelming racing thoughts.

Marnie Breecker 10:45

And there are so many online exercise courses, yoga courses, lots of different type breathing breathwork courses, one of my favorite at home yoga teachers is Adrienne. And she can be easily found, her programs are all free, and they're on YouTube, you can just put in yoga by Adrienne, A D R I E N N E. And I've been doing her program for a long time. But I also noticed the other day when I was looking at an update from the New York Times, and they were giving some suggestions for self care. And actually, they suggested her so I was definitely onto something.

Duane Osterlind 11:23

Oh, that's awesome. That's awesome. Yeah, that's, I think that's a great, great idea as well. And then I was also thinking about just practicing gratitude. You know, one of the things that has been so amazing is watching people come together to help. And watching people do that, and having gratitude for those responses, those people out there that are just going out of their way to help their neighbor, maybe they have an elderly neighbor and so they're getting groceries for them, I've seen that the other day, so that they don't have to go out and risk their health. So just seeing all those things and noticing those good things, those heroes out there who are really helping and just having gratitude for that.

Marnie Breecker 12:09

Absolutely. And something that we did here on my block yesterday was we had a dance party, one of my neighbors from across the street organized this dance party, she sent out a text to a whole bunch of us that live really close to each other. And at noon yesterday, we all went outside, we all have kids, and she blasted the music from her side, from her house. And we all stayed in our own driveways. And we danced and it was really, really fun.

Duane Osterlind 12:33

Oh, that's awesome. So we can still have community, we just have to be a little bit more creative and a little more, like you said earlier, physically distanced. So that, you know, we keep each other safe, and we stop the spread of this pandemic. But we can still have community.

Marnie Breecker 12:51

Well, yeah, that's actually something I said to you, Duane, before we started to record about the physical distancing.

Duane Osterlind 12:56

Oh yeah, right. Right.

Marnie Breecker 12:57

I mentioned that now. So you know, the term that we're using for how we have to combat this virus is social distancing. And I read somewhere how, really, that's not the right term, because we need to be physically distancing ourselves from each other. But the opposite of social distancing, we need to be connected. We need to be social. And we need to have community, that's the only way that we're going to get through this.

Duane Osterlind 13:21

Absolutely. And then, you know, there's a lot of online groups that have now come about, and man in the 12 step community watching some of the people come together to get these groups online.

Marnie Breecker 13:35

It's amazing.

Duane Osterlind 13:36

Quickly and fast. It's just like, wow, that is amazing. And people just coming together to get it done. So that people can have support. So connecting online with people and online groups, I think is so important.

Marnie Breecker 13:50

Very, very important.

Duane Osterlind 13:51

Yeah, and to have that sense of togetherness, even though we have to be physically distanced.

Marnie Breecker 13:57

Absolutely. The other thing you can do is you can schedule zoom calls or FaceTime calls with friends. I think that that's, you know, one of the things I'm grateful for is a bunch of people from different times in my life, excuse me, different times in my life have been reaching out to try to arrange times for us to have like reunions, you know, on Zoom. So we can all see each other. And I say laughing, finding a way every single day to laugh. I think it's the best medicine and I know that I wouldn't be where I am right now. I wouldn't be alive if I didn't have my humor. I didn't find a way to laugh through some of the the real painful things in life.

Duane Osterlind 14:29

Yeah, definitely.

Marnie Breecker 14:31

And my last suggestion that some people might hate this idea, and some people might love it, is puzzles. So I've had a 1000 piece puzzle that I've been working on no joke for about a year and a half. And everyone who's come to my home has commented every time they come in, like you're still working on that puzzle, just give up, it's a really hard puzzle. And I finished it three days ago.

Duane Osterlind 14:52

Oh, that's awesome. So you're gonna have to get another one.

Marnie Breecker 14:54

I am, I'm gonna actually go on Amazon after we finished this recording.

Duane Osterlind 14:58

That's a good way too, think I think that's an awesome way. Because when your mind is racing and you have a lot of anxiety, you're in that fight flight, or freeze response. Sometimes your mind is racing, trying to find some solution to a thing that, really in that moment, doesn't have a solution. So distracting yourself in a healthy way, such as doing a puzzle, keeps your mind occupied, and gives you some relief from the distressing thoughts. So yeah, that's healthy distraction. I think that's so important.

Marnie Breecker 15:27

It's very... can we post a picture of my puzzle that I finished if I send it to you?

Duane Osterlind 15:33

Okay, we'll put it in the show notes. You can see Marnie's puzzle!

Marnie Breecker 15:40

Well, I'm very proud of it. And that's another thing, it actually made me feel good. Because truly, every time I get a piece, because this puzzle, I cannot stress how hard this puzzle was, every time I get a piece, I felt good. And I had to focus, I really did have to focus. So I could go, you know, a couple of hours sitting at that puzzle. And I think we need things like that, you know, pick up, pick up or order those books that you've wanted to read and haven't had time, you know, light candles, use your diffusers if you have them, you know or essential oils, if you like rocks and crystals and things like that, you know, this would be a good time to pick those up. And you know, journal, and you know, we're throwing out all these ideas. Obviously, some people are never going to do a you know, a whole bunch of these things. And other people are going to love the ideas. And so we're not suggesting you do all of them. But we do really suggest that whether it's these ideas or things that you've read somewhere else, or your own practices from your life, pre Coronavirus, that every single day, you make sure to carve out time to take care of yourself, and to connect with other people, and to really connect with yourself as well. And to allow whatever feelings need to come up. And I know for me, I'm generally doing pretty well. But I noticed in moments that I get scared, not for a very specific reason. It's just this collective unknown and uncertainty and knowing that people are suffering, and I have to attend to my heart in those moments. And you know, and be there and allow myself to feel and then come back to the moment and I'm okay. And gratitude, like you said, is you know, it's so valuable. It's probably one of the best gifts that we have.

Duane Osterlind 17:14

And I think you saying that is really awesome. Because it normalizes that this is scary. We should be a little scared. That's what's helping us take action. That's what's keeping us inside, to protect others, and doing this physical distancing. So we need a little bit of that, you know, and I think that's normal and good to feel. So I'm glad that you share that too, as well, just to normalize that, you know, we're human too. And we're all walking through this.

Marnie Breecker 17:44

Yeah, we are all in this together.

Duane Osterlind 17:46

And this is what I would say, if you guys have self care suggestions, go to our website. And in the comments, write them down, I would love to hear what you guys are doing, and how you are practicing self care or ideas. And I think so many other people can get something from your idea, it might fit for somebody or you might see something that goes, "I gotta try that, I want to try that". So I'd encourage you to do that. That'll be on the website under this episode.

Marnie Breecker 18:16

And you can also, if you do join the Facebook group, you can go in there also and it would be fantastic for people. In fact, I think I'm gonna go in there today and just make a prompt and ask people to share what are you doing to take care of yourself? How are you getting through these days? And let's all you know, support each other and give each other ideas?

Duane Osterlind 18:18

Right. All right, Helping Couples Heal listeners. We're thinking about you and our hearts go out to you.

Marnie Breecker 18:39

And to your families.

Duane Osterlind 18:41

And to your families.

Marnie Breecker 18:43

Stay safe and stay healthy and know that you are not alone.

Duane Osterlind 18:47

Absolutely. All right, everybody. Until the next episode, take care.

Marnie Breecker 18:51

Take care.

HCH Narrator 18:52

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're finding the podcast helpful, please support Duane and Marnie 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.