

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 44

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Dr. Dana Saperstein - Forgiveness

Dr. Dana 00:11

There are two basic motivating forces fear and love. When we're afraid, we pull back from life. When we're in love, we open up to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance.

Fear Me Out 00:30

Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California, this is the fear me out podcast. We're not your typical Self Help Program. Our show takes a deep dive into those psychological issues that affect us on a daily basis. We hope to shift your perspective and have you experiencing emotions differently. Now, here are your hosts, Kim Fauskee. and Dr. Dana Saperstein.

Kim Fauskee 00:52

So this conversation, or topic, I should say, actually started by me asking, is forgiveness a learned skill? And that started a hour long dialogue between pain and I in terms of the word forgiveness, and whether that's actually just a semantic or somebody can actually truly forgive or not. So I'm gonna pass it over to Dana, real quick here, in terms is is forgiveness, a learned skill?

Dr. Dana 01:30

I think it's something that we need to be taught. So that would buy be debt, by definition be something that we learned, I think that if you develop a conscience, then your conscious will dictate some reaction to hurting someone else. And I'll also help you feel what's required for someone else in order for you to forgive them. So yeah, I think it's taught but I also think that in the innate development of your conscience, that is something that comes quite naturally.

Kim Fauskee 02:07

So since you and I've had this conversation, and decided that it was important to do a podcast on this actual subject, I actually went and did some research, which I tend to do on a lot of these topics. And it was interesting to find that the research is all over the map in terms of or people's opinion, then there's actually academic research on forgiveness, and then their secular opinions on on forgiveness. And, surprisingly, to me, it was all over the map. And so, you know, I started asking friends about it, acquaintances about it about the term what they thought about it. And I think I've come personally to a completely different conclusion about whether you can actually forgive, or it's just a pleasantry that we've learned throughout our life, in terms of how to interact other people, and that maybe forgiveness really isn't a thing. And it's just magic fairy dust. So I know you probably have an opinion on that, before I become the complete contrarian for the next 58 minutes on the on this subject, and maybe you can convince me otherwise that forgiveness is actually a thing.

Dr. Dana 03:34

I think that the concept of forgiveness is actually really important for own well being. I think that forgiveness takes three different forms in our life. One is forgiving people that have harmed us. I think that another type of forgiveness is us asking for forgiveness, in relationship to those that we have harmed. And I also think that the concept of self forgiveness is really important. So all of those three types of forgiveness, in my mind are are actually really, really important concepts.

Kim Fauskee 04:09

So I don't mean to interrupt your train of thought there. But in there was one article that I had when I was doing the research on this was one article that had three aspects of forgiveness that I thought were interesting in it, exoneration forbearance, and release, only one of which I kind of agree with. Okay, so

Dr. Dana 04:34

that's more of the process of it as opposed to a description of the different types of, of, you know, the different types of forgiveness because I think it's very different to forgive someone else than it is to forgive yourself. And I also think it's difficult also to take responsibility and ask people to forgive us. I think it's easier sometimes to forgive There's that it is for us to forgive ourselves. I think that most people are particularly hard on themselves and have a great deal of difficulty letting go of their self criticism and, and self loathing, I guess for lack of a better way of putting it. So it depends on which one of those three you want to start with. Because I think that the process is a little bit different for each one, I do consider it to be important, because quite a few years ago, I had a dream that I've mentioned in the podcast before where God came to me to tell me what God's purpose was in my life. And just to remind everybody, the first purpose that God told me in my dream was for me to feel love, whenever I choose, that God is always there. And that all I have to do is ask for that feeling of love and connection. And it's always available to me, the only time I won't feel it is if I turn away. So that was concept number one. The second one that has to do with forgiveness is that God told me that the hardest thing for most human beings is to forgive. And so part of what God said is that I'm here to help you forgive yourself, and for you to earn the forgiveness of others that you've harmed, and do the best you can to forgive the people that have hurt you. So from a spiritual perspective, I got the message that it's really, really important. The third aspect of my dream was to help me in my work, but for the purposes of our conversation today, the concept of forgiveness has been something I've thought a lot about since I had that dream, and I've worked really hard on in my own life is especially to ask the people that I've harmed or forgive me, and even if I don't even know who those people are, that I sort of put it out into the world, that God would sort of be my messenger to give those people that the message that I would like to take the pain back that I might have caused them and that I am fully willing to take responsibility for the harm that I've caused other people, of course, my life, especially when I was a kid, being a bully, and not being a very nice person, I feel very badly about the way I acted as a child, it's been a little harder for me to forgive some of the things that have happened to me, especially when I've attempted to engage the person that hurt me in the conversation. And I'll let them know as gently as I could, that they're, that they hurt me. And that I have suffered deeply as a result of the way that they treated me or didn't treat me. I think about my mom, in this case, in that she was never able to take responsibility for any of the ways that we lived with each other. She always saw herself as a victim. So no matter what kind of conversation we had, it was always about her being victimized, and my feelings really didn't matter. So I remember, at her funeral, everybody was, you know, talking about what a lovely woman

she was and how sweet she was, and should kind to us and then everybody wanted to go out for dinner afterwards. And I couldn't go, I did not want to celebrate my mother's life. And as soon as I walked away from the funeral, I was overcome with the most intense feeling. And I screamed at the top of my lungs, I hate you. And I felt like I was like a four year old kid. And it actually felt really good to be able to say that from the four year old perspective, and I started crying. But really I understood that moment that the damage she caused was really, really severe. And that I never really felt like I had a mother. So I don't I'm not sure how to, to conceptualize whether I forgiven her or not, I don't think about her. When I think about her, I don't feel anything other than I never had a mother. But I don't know whether I've been able to forgive her. I know I've been able to forgive my dad because when I think about him, there was a time I was quite angry with him and really hurt by his absence. But when I think about him now I just kind of miss him. I wish we could go off for dinner and hang out. So that to me feels like forgiveness. When I think about being molested as a kid, I don't have any emotional reaction to it at all. So I know that I've diffused trauma, I don't know if that means I've forgiven the person that molested me because I don't think about him. But I don't feel a charge in relationship to that trauma. So I mean, that's kind of how I conceptualize the the notion I most of the research I did. The thing that I liked the most about what I read is that if you take the whatever time you need in order to heal the wounds that were caused by somebody who harmed you. And you come to a place where you can really accept what's happened and it doesn't have an emotional charge because you've released the pain that forgiveness is built into that process. Because the person is no longer a reference point in your life. And that is described because what happens when you forgive someone?

Kim Fauskee 10:03

I think you make a very good point there because I don't I don't think people intellectualize it that way. I think that they have to actually have that, that moment with that person, right and ask for forgiveness or that person, providing the forgiveness, to actually be able to conceptualize that, in terms of not holding that bandwidth any longer, or those negative emotions inside of them. I fully understand where you're coming from, because I had a similar, you know, similar experience with my father. And if, you know, again, at nauseam for people that have listened to this podcast from day one, they've heard this story is, you know that I was emotionally physically abused by my father. And people would ask me after he passed, did you get the chance to have forgiveness for him? And then I think they've asked it both ways, one for me saying I forgive him. And or him saying, I'm sorry, to you. And like I've said on the podcast, and Dana, you know, really well, is that? I think that was the question to me was, why do I need to do that? And why would I want to do that? Because no matter what he would have said to me, I would have thought it was veiled. And that it wasn't true. Right, and it wouldn't have helped my healing process. And I didn't think it was for me to forgive him for what happened in that way. So when you talk about, you know, thinking about him, you know, 20 years ago, three years ago, think about him today, I don't really have any emotion about it. You know, I'm not angry about it. I'm not sad about it. Certainly not happy about it. But it's, I'm really, at a point where I'm very indifferent about it at this point. So, you know, I fully understand, you know, that that concept of, of what you were talking about, of not having any this negative charge of motion, involved in that remembrance, or that trespass or those incidents. But when we're talking about those three aspects of forgiveness, and exoneration being one of them. I don't think as an adult, how that can be actually possible. I'm not sure what you mean, when, when, because if you're if you're having to have those three aspects that I that we, that I had mentioned,

exoneration being one of them that that means that you're fully absolving that person of any blame or anything that happened.

Dr. Dana 13:07

And that's hard. That's a hard sell that one that's a

Kim Fauskee 13:09

hard sell. So we're not five year old kids anymore. In the playground where somebody ran me over, took my ball, got it back, they said, I'm sorry, and you just move on with your life. Adults on to that, right. And again, I don't care how trivial it is, or how sinister it is. We have a hard time moving on. So again, in in getting a little bit off of what we're talking about here. But if something happened in us is an example where maybe you're your wife, or let's not use Susan, but let's use your best friend, okay? Somehow he violates your integrity, or there's an integrity issue. And or he violates your trust. Right? And then you call him on it. And he says, Oh my God, I didn't realize it. Mate probably wasn't malicious. But in and he said he's sorry. And you, you accept that and whatever way you accept it. I think the natural inclination for people is that the relationship just goes back to the way it was.

Dr. Dana 14:25

Okay, I'm not sure that's possible.

Kim Fauskee 14:27

But don't you do you agree or disagree with me that for most people that there was some violation of whether it's trust or integrity or whatever the issue was, wherever it was, it caused you physical pain, it caused you mental pain, whatever, and the person says, Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. I didn't I didn't realize that. I'm sorry, I caused you pain or whatever. I think the expectation for most people is that it just goes back to the way it was before.

Dr. Dana 14:56

You know, I think you're right about that. But my concern is that that doesn't take take into consideration the fear that you have that it could happen again. And that there's, we have to figure out a way to manage that fear, in order to be able to trust the person moving forward, because most of the things that happen are a violation of your trust, if you look at it from a deeper perspective. So not only whatever happened or didn't happen cause damage, it also erodes your feeling of safety and, and security in relationship to that person. So when you say, going back to the way it was before, I don't know that that's possible, it doesn't mean you can't still have a really good relationship with that person. But I do believe that sort of in the back of your mind, that person needs to re earn your trust and your and that feeling of safety can come back over a period of time, when the person demonstrates that they really do understand that they've hurt you, and caused damage. You can I think people can learn to trust each other again, does it bring it back to the original place? No, but no relationship ever stays in the same place anyway.

Kim Fauskee 16:01

So so let me go to let me go something to something that you deal with probably, on a fairly regular basis within your psychology practice and therapy practice is couples where one has stepped out or

had an affair on the other. Right. And we I think we've talked about this in in relationship episodes, where that isn't necessarily the nail in the coffin on the relationship that people actually can come back from from adultery and actually have a relationship going forward. But I think that's a good example of and I hate to say this, but but the person that was aggrieved has this card in their back pocket. I mean, it's, it's a trust issue, right, and trying to rebuild that trust, managing the fear that it probably, or could happen again. But then that other person kind of has this, this card in their back pocket that can bring out and use, even though that they've said that they forgave them. I still think that people like to put that card in their back pocket and bring it out at the right moment to use it against them, and reserve the right to use it against them when they see the fit. You know, come on, not my being really cynical today. No, I'm

Dr. Dana 17:21

just not 100% convinced that it's used as a weapon. Usually, it's used as a an expression of the fact that the person is still really scared that they're, you know, sometimes people say, Oh, well, we've been watching this movie, and there was adultery in the movie. And it triggered me, and I got really mad at my wife or my husband, and you know, then it came back up. But I don't think it's a it's a deliberate, taking something out of your back pocket to harm the person, I think it's more of a reaction to feeling to having those feelings reawakened inside of you. But to answer your question about infidelity as a tough one for people to get by, I know I've met people that have stayed together under those circumstances, but in my experience, the relationship never goes back to the way it was. Because there are certain things that happen that are such a betrayal. And it undermines the trust and the the sense of security that people had to such a degree, it's really hard to come back. It doesn't mean that you can't come back to a degree that's necessary to keep the relationship going. But like you say, it always lives in the back of the person's mind. And they, there's generally speaking, it can get triggered over the course of time, and come back in an ugly way. Because, you know, we're as human beings extremely vulnerable, whether we're willing to admit it or not, and the things that affect us, they affect us, especially if we really love somebody. And coming back from that kind of betrayal is really, really difficult.

Kim Fauskee 18:53

So I want to I want to circle back to something you had said earlier about processing. And you and I talked before the pod cat podcast about this, because I said is really forgiveness really a thing? Or is it just a word? Because if instead if the sense is that we're just processing that, that we've been aggrieved, or we've had this trauma perpetrated upon us from somebody else, don't we just process what happened to us and just go on with life? I mean, what so I'm trying to say is, does the word forgiveness actually really matter? Because in our head, we're still processing, whether we want to maintain or stay in that relationship. Is that relationship change? Or am I just gonna move on from this?

Dr. Dana 19:40

You're raising a really good question, Ken. Because I've also met a lot of people that say they've forgiven things that have happened. And I think it's an intellectual concept for a lot of people, not an emotional one. And so I don't buy it, because intellectually you can say you forgiven the person until you're done. blue in the face, but it doesn't change anything unless you process the emotion deeply. Whether you want to call it forgiveness or whatever adjective you want to use to describe Word brings you. I don't think that's the point. I think that that the most effective way that you and I have found for

people to come to terms with whatever it is that's happened or didn't happen is by dealing with the pain associated with it. And getting to a point where you can diffuse the emotional part of the, the situation, and then it's no longer in control of you. How you look at it in terms of the other person doesn't really matter. I think it matters way more how you live with it inside your own body. So again, you can't make whatever's happened like it never happened. But you can certainly get to a place where you can, in quotes, forgive the person because it no longer has an emotional charge inside your body. I think that that term of forgiveness is just a term that's been used to describe what it's like to get to a point where, where you're no longer emotionally charged by what it is that either happened or didn't happen that created the pain in the first place.

Kim Fauskee 21:08

I don't know if this for a fact or not. But I'm assuming that probably the concept of forgiveness came from organized religion.

Dr. Dana 21:16

Well, when I looked up forgiveness, as an example, before this podcast, almost everything I saw was written from a Christian perspective, I found a bunch of podcasts are all about Christian forgiveness, and the fact that the Bible demands that of you, and you have to do it and, and that if you don't do it, you're a bad person, and on and on and on. So it shames people into forgiveness in a way that I'm not sure it's real, because it makes you a really terrible person if you don't. But that's a different matter altogether. I mean, you and I have a very different sort of notion of spirituality and God that doesn't involve being punished for being a bad person, and sin and all that other stuff that, that plagues people when they don't do what they're supposedly supposed to do in the name of their religion. So my notions of forgiveness is complicated, because I'll be honest with you, when I hear stories from people that have been horribly sexually abused as an example, I really don't believe that the person that committed those acts should be forgiven. Because what those people have done is so far beyond what any human being should ever have to endure at the hands of an adult? I don't, I have a really hard time imagining that it's okay to forgive that person.

Kim Fauskee 22:33

So So let me ask you, then, because it's in the media all the time, somebody's family was killed by a drunk driver, or murder or something. And the surviving family member or family members, say I forgive the perpetrator. Now, again, that could be a faith based forgiveness, because they're faith based people. And that's what they've been. And sorry, folks, this is for lack of a better terms conditioned to do, right? Or why why would they say that? Why,

Dr. Dana 23:10

first of all,

Kim Fauskee 23:11

is it a project? Is it a projection, it's not a projection? Or, or is it just a, a way of trying to make themselves feel better about what happened,

Dr. Dana 23:20

I think that it is a way to look, the the whole goal is to is to be able to get to a place where no matter what has happened or didn't happen to you, or for you that you can get to a place where it stops haunting you, and you can go on with your life. And that's what we call forgiveness. If that is genuine, and it really works, and the person can in within their soul, look in the mirror and really feel that they've been able to get past their family member being killed or, or their child being raped or whatever the situation may be. My response is, if it's real, I say more power to you. Right, you're a better person than me. Because when I hear these stories about the things that happen to little kids at the hands of adults, I just find it really hard to imagine that that person deserves to be forgiven for their for their actions, not that I don't spend most of the time with somebody who's been abused, trying to help them get to the place where it becomes neutral inside their body. And that is no longer a reference point. And it's no longer something that creates symptoms within the person. And the number one they stopped blaming themselves, because all children blame themselves for whatever happens to them, or doesn't happen for them that creates pain. So my goal is to help you forgive yourself and to recognize you've been blaming the wrong person all this time. It's kind of like those people that have been in jail and they do DNA testing and realize, holy shit, we got the wrong guy here or the wrong woman here. So I do a lot of work to try to help people forgive themselves for falsely accusing themselves because that's just what we do as children. So that kind of forgiveness I think is really necessary. With that comes in, and be able to understand that the person didn't do anything to cause it. And it's not their fault, and they were just an innocent child. And they were just trying to do the best they could living in a world that they should never have been exposed to with what they were. So I don't know what to say about that type of forgiveness, because why should somebody who deliberately does something that heinous to another person, be forgiven? And for that person be told, you know, I don't blame you anymore? You're off the hook for whatever it is you did or didn't do. As long as that person feels at peace within themselves a victim, then I'm okay. As far as that goes. I don't know it needs to be extended any further than that. Well, the

Kim Fauskee 25:44

interesting thing is when somebody does that, though, and especially in a public forum, and forgives these, these tremendously grievous acts, that that I agree with, you shouldn't be forgiven. The public anoints them with sainthood, for doing that,

Dr. Dana 25:59

yes. Yeah, I listened to a woman this morning, whose daughter was viciously murdered by a homeless guy. And she adopted the guy and started visiting him in prison, and got to a place where she actually forgave him, and then adopted him as her son. I don't know how to think about that. I don't know how the fuck she did that. But she sort of seemed genuine in saying that, that he that she forgave this guy for killing her daughter. Now, she didn't say was easy. I'm not trying to make light of the situation, it took her years to kind of come to terms of that. But from her Christian perspective, she was felt compelled to try to save this guy from himself, and to take him on as a, as a misguided person and try to help him heal. And it seemed to really help her in some way to do it. From that perspective,

Kim Fauskee 26:49

it's interesting, because my conscious is fighting with with itself right now by thinking, Should I bow to this person? Or should I say, You're absolutely crazy?

Dr. Dana 26:57

Well, I all I thought was, you're a better person than me. Because if somebody ever did that to my kid, my first inclination would be to want to kill them. Right? Right. If somebody raped my daughter, my son, I mean, I wouldn't be able to control myself. There's no way.

Kim Fauskee 27:12

Well, that's the nature versus nurture, right? And then that way,

Dr. Dana 27:15

and I know that, that that wouldn't solve the problem. But it's, it's hard for me to accept that, you know, anybody in harming my family? I don't think I'm a murderer. But I'm capable of murder.

Kim Fauskee 27:27

You protect your family, right? I

Dr. Dana 27:29

mean, that's me, you come to my house, and I have to kill you to save them. I'll do it. Right. Right. So again, it's really it's a complicated now. And then there's a whole nother level on top of all this. What about the people in the world that take great pleasure in harming other people as a way of making themselves feel powerful and important? What about those people?

Kim Fauskee 27:52

And are we talking people with personality disorders? We're part of that segment is people of her side as well. I think.

Dr. Dana 27:59

I know, it doesn't go without saying that. In my mind. It goes without saying that if you really like hurting people on purpose, you're either a malignant narcissist or a sociopath, right? And psychopath or a psychopath? Right. Should those people be forgiven?

Kim Fauskee 28:18

Again, if the end, yeah, I know, this brings up a bigger question. But if the intent was malicious, it's not always malicious, then no, absolutely not. Well, I mean, look, there was a show once because it's impossible to forgive somebody that had malicious intent. i That's my feeling.

Dr. Dana 28:35

Well, there was a show once on Showtime called Dexter. I don't know if you remember that. That shows awesome. It was an amazing show. But what I mean, the premise was that the person that worked in the forensic part of the police department, killed people that got away with killing other people. So the only people that he kills his ultimate vigilante, yeah, the only people that he went after to punish were the people that got away with really horrible crimes against other people. Right. And it was really fascinating, because it's the only time I've ever seen that sort of concept. And so people really liked Dexter, because he appealed to the four year old and all of us of getting revenge against the

people that hurt us, or get away with the crimes they got away with, because he never killed anybody that wasn't guilty of doing something horrible to another person.

Kim Fauskee 29:26

Yeah, I'm had to go back to the concept of being the four year old that wants to get revenge because I don't think the four year old wants to get revenge. I think it's the 40 year old that wants to get well yes, but

Dr. Dana 29:35

we all the 40 year olds have four year olds inside of them that have the impulse to hurt when they're hurt, right. They hit back that never goes away. Right. So you know, hopefully most of us have control over that impulse. But I, but again, getting back to the question that I was asking you is there's a guy right now that started a war for his own pleasure, because he wants to feel powerful and he wants so it's An

Kim Fauskee 30:00

occupation not a war. Well, whatever not to I'm kidding. That's what he's,

Dr. Dana 30:03

well, you know what, it doesn't really matter what he says because he enjoys hurting other people rejoice killing other people, right? It makes them feel really important and powerful.

Kim Fauskee 30:12

Well, we I mean, politics aside again, but we had a president four years ago, same thing that had to say, that didn't mind demeaning, who was against him,

Dr. Dana 30:23

was on purpose, not just to meaning if he had the if he lived in a different country, right, and you could get away with it, he would have killed as many people as you. Yeah. And he has encouraged people into violence, right. And he's encouraged all of us to hate each other, and to hurt each other. Because we don't agree with each other. And it's a great way to divide and conquer,

Kim Fauskee 30:43

we probably just lost all of our religious and

Dr. Dana 30:48

because I think it's important for the under for people to understand that there are certain human beings that take great pleasure in harming others. And it drives it gives them a really strong feeling of power and admiration. And when we're talking about the concept of forgiveness, conceivably, if you're a God, connected person, everybody should be forgiven no matter what. Right? If you're a Catholic person who go to church, and no matter what you've done, you confess it and you get to walk away with a clean slate. I'm just wondering, that's 100 just wondering, you know, how do you forgive people who take pleasure and in killing and hurting other people? Is that a forgivable act? Because I can't forgive it? No, I can't forgive it either. So that makes me in quotes, an unforgiving person.

Kim Fauskee 31:41

So so this is probably fodder for another podcast, but we live in a predominantly Christian world, right. But violence and and acts against people are at an all time high now. Right? And, and again, this is probably off topic. But But again, if we're actually talking about forgiveness, it's a learned behavior, right? It was predicated upon Christianity. And Christianity is still the predominant religion throughout the world. Why and in the 21st century, has violence and acts against other people and the ability to demean other people started to be okay, again.

Dr. Dana 32:30

Well, because again, the person that was in charge of our country, through his words, and his action showed that that's how you handle situations that you don't like. And supposedly we're supposed to admire the person and look at them as being an example of how we should live our life. And if you look at it, how many people have started killing kids at school and, and all of that stuff has increased tenfold as a result of, of Trump saying to people, if you if you don't agree with something, then damage the other people that you don't agree with, brings all the lunatics out with their guns to kill people that would normally maybe be able to check their behavior a little bit, because they've not been taught that that's okay to do.

Kim Fauskee 33:08

Isn't it all fear based?

Dr. Dana 33:10

Well, it's all fear based, but it's really a very, very, very smart strategy if you want to undermine the society and control it. Because if you can divide people, you can conquer them. If everybody's unified, it's really hard to get away with, right with taking over. And if you look at it from the I was reading an article about the division in the in the evangelical Christian society, between the people that understand Trump's nature, and the fact that he's caused unChristian behavior to the nth degree, and those who love Him, and look at me as a second coming, and they forgive all of the stupid shit that he said and done. Because he does what he does what they want him to do. Right, he got rid of abortion being legal, and he's trying to get rid of gay marriage. And, and, you know, he's supporting a super conservative agenda. And so those theoretically, Christian people are willing to forgive anything, in order to have power and control, whatever it is they want to control. So it just makes it super dangerous. And it's really frightening. Because, you know, again, if you can appeal to people's impulsive little kid, and encourage them to act from that place, you're gonna be able to control them. And that's all that is all about for him as being, you know, the dictator of the universe of the most powerful conceivably country in the world, and to be able to do whatever he wants whenever he wants it. And I don't think that most people understand how dangerous that is. And I don't care what your politics are, because that's not what I'm talking about. Because, you know, most people are getting into politics have or they're narcissists anyway. But it just depends on how you express that type of mental ill This, but getting back to the concept of forgiveness. Please try to convince me that I should forgive people that go out of their way to undermine our world and hurt as many people as possible, and really enjoy that feeling. How do I forgive that? How do I? How do I digest it and be okay with it? Because that's what theoretically, we're being told that we should do as a forgiving person,

Kim Fauskee 35:22

I guess you have to have that conversation with God. No. So I wasn't being facetious by saying that, I'm just saying, if you're struggling with that concept, right, and you're feeling, some level of guilt that you can't get to that level of forgiveness that you think you should get to. Right. And I think you have to have that conversation with God or the higher spirit that that you pray to?

Dr. Dana 35:47

Well, so then again, Kim, you're bringing up a really important concept, which is that ultimately, in order to forgive, we have to turn over the pain to God. Yes, and that God will help us come to peace, in the face of the trauma and pain that we suffer, which I really do believe is the ultimate answer. But it's hard for me to do that in this situation, because I'm not sure I want to forgive people like that. Because I don't want to give them permission to keep it up.

Kim Fauskee 36:20

Well, it becomes a personal choice, right? That I mean, we're not trying to tell you what's right or wrong on this podcast, and that, you know, one size fits all, I think it becomes a personal choice of if you're feeling that you need to get to a certain place, then this is probably the way to get there. Okay. So then I don't know if you agree with me or not, you know, I

Dr. Dana 36:44

think you're right. But then what you're now you're you're contradicting yourself a bit because now you're saying that forgiveness is possible under all circumstances, if you if you can get to a place where you're where you're willing to accept that that's what is important about life. Well, I

Kim Fauskee 36:58

I am contradicting and only from the semantic standpoint of if you're using the word forgiveness is as as something Yeah, in that way. But, but again, you know, I don't want people to sit there and think that, that it isn't a thing, that I've convinced everybody that it isn't a thing. I think that it takes a little bit more intellect about what you want to get from it than just saying it right, because I think we've been conditioned from whatever age that we learn the difference between right and wrong, and saying I'm sorry, and that it's become just a commonplace pleasantry to say that, and we don't even think about why we're saying it. Right. Usually, and that, we just assume that it's accepted by the other person, and we just go on.

Dr. Dana 37:54

You know, Kim, I can't tell you how many people have said to me, you know, I forgiven my mom or dad, you know, they beat the shit out of me when I was a kid. And it was really horrible. And I was terrified, and on and on and on. But it happened a long time ago, and my person that my parents is not like that anymore. They've they've understood the error of their ways. And yet, one person I'm referencing in my mind right now is in an abusive relationship with their spouse. And the person doesn't make the connection between being abused as a kid, and the abuse that they're suffering right now. Because they've convinced themselves they've forgiven and, and gotten over the trauma of having the crap beaten out of them as a kid, and now they're in an abusive relationship, in what way? Has they

resolved that trauma? And so how could they have forgiven the person if they haven't resolved the pain that the person caused in the first place? Because they're living in the adult version of it?

Kim Fauskee 38:49

Well, and again, I mean, we've, we talked about this a little bit during a relationship series. And we'll use the, you know, the spousal abuse piece of where victims tend to minimize, you know, the trauma and hurt that's been placed on them. And the abuser saying, I'm sorry, I won't do it again. And then it happens again, and I'm sorry, I won't do it again. And then it happens again. And that for whatever reason, and then that's a whole nother episode that we will get to at some point, that person stays in that relationship. Yes. And will will tell family and friends that know that it's happening to them. I know he won't do it again, or I know she won't do it again. Right? It's gonna be okay. And then it happens again, and then it happens again, and then it happens again. Right? And then somebody ends up in jail or somebody ends up dead.

Dr. Dana 39:41

So if somebody said to you, I forgiven someone so with their life doesn't reflect that.

Kim Fauskee 39:49

I yeah, I yeah, I don't know. I thought you were going to ask me if I actually would believe them. And I and I would say why don't really pass judgment well Again, at least I wouldn't pass judgment in a verbal way on them, but maybe in my head, I would but I don't know what the answer is I want to go back to the the second aspect of forbearance in terms of dealing with forgiveness, and again exoneration, I have a hard time wrapping my arms around in forbearance is another one, I have a hard time wrapping my arms around, because that means it's either it's either based on self control or tolerance.

Dr. Dana 40:31

So what's your definition of forbearance?

Kim Fauskee 40:35

It's like, like, to my, to me, it's like, okay, I understand that there are going to be certain things that are going to happen in my life, that I'm not going to, like, somebody's going to hurt me, somebody's going to cause me pain. And I have to be tolerant of that. That it's, that's just something that that is naturally going to happen to me. So part of that is, you know, I got to exonerate, I got to be tolerant of that, because it happens to everybody in life. And if I'm really, truly going to forgive, then I have to be tolerant of that fact. Do I have to be tolerant of somebody maliciously?

Dr. Dana 41:11

grieves me? Well, according to that definition of forgiveness, the answer's yes.

Kim Fauskee 41:16

This is why pick this is why I pick these three, because I disagree wholeheartedly with two of them. And we'll get to the third here in a minute. But you know, it was it was interesting how those three things and and mostly things showed up in a couple of studies. For for people to forgive, and I'm like, Okay, I don't understand the first two. So if I can't get past the first two, then apparently I can't forgive.

Dr. Dana 41:40

Well, by that definition, that's true.

Kim Fauskee 41:44

Did you have a different definition of forbearance or see it played out in a different scenario, and forgive

Dr. Dana 41:50

not for bears, but the concept of forgiveness, I don't think that rationalizing the other person's behavior, making excuses for them understanding that they were abused as a kid and on and on and on. That's not my path to forgiveness, because I don't care what the reasons are for what you did or didn't do that doesn't. You know, if you run me over by accident, it doesn't hurt any less than if you do it on purpose, except you're a dick if you do it on purpose.

Kim Fauskee 42:14

And so it's interesting, you brought that up, because when I had a discussion about this with some friends of mine, one of them actually brought that concept up, if I have to, in terms of me being able to forgive, I have to understand who that other person is, what happened in their life. Right? And why they did that. And I'm thinking to myself, really, that? That gives them a pass?

Dr. Dana 42:39

Well, for some people, apparently it does help. I mean, when I was talking to my wife about though, she said, Well, what about if the person didn't mean that? What if it happened by an accident? What if I killed your your son by x? Well, I

Kim Fauskee 42:51

get that if if you've confided in somebody and they were talking to a mutual friend, and it slipped, and they said something that you said in confidence to them, and they didn't really mean to do that went Oh, shit. Yeah. Now they feel really guilty about it. Yeah, I can see it in that way. But again, going back to the concept is you can't erase history, right?

Dr. Dana 43:12

You know, and I don't think you'll ever trust that person fully, again, until the passage of time goes by, and you recognize that they do understand the error of their ways. And they're going to make amends for, you know, for making a mistake.

Kim Fauskee 43:25

So they're on double secret probation for a period of time until they get back to a place where you're like, Okay, I'm confident that it may not happen again.

Dr. Dana 43:33

I've never met a person Kim that doesn't keep score of what goes in and out of their life, well

Kim Fauskee 43:37

see this little person well, that's what I was telling you about earlier in the podcast about putting that card in your back pocket in terms of the the infidelity that the person that the infidelity was the victim in that. I can't believe that they don't keep that card in their back pocket. Well, they do the same thing, like we were just talking about in this example, of like, you know, we're holding all the cards until you can prove otherwise.

Dr. Dana 44:04

Well, and I'm not saying that the person doesn't keep the card in their pocket. I was just saying that they may not bring it out as a weapon. Right? Okay, that it may just be a reaction to being triggered. Based on the trauma as opposed to be a deliberate, I'm going to take this out and hurt you now, because you're a dick and I want to cause you pain,

Kim Fauskee 44:20

you got to figure out how many cards I got my back.

Dr. Dana 44:23

I think it's different being proactive than it is being reactive. Okay, that makes sense. And that's what I'm talking about is reactivity, as opposed to you waking up this morning thinking, Okay, today's a day, I'm gonna pull that card, I'm pulling that card and I'm gonna fuck you as much as I can. Because you're, you deserve it because you're a bad person retribution. Because if you really feel that way about the person you're in a relationship with you don't belong in the relationship.

Kim Fauskee 44:46

So before I get to the third aspect that I actually agree with, I want to talk about a term that is readily used out there and I remember my, my, probably my mother telling me this forgive and forget

Dr. Dana 44:59

it. Yes, I think that that's something that's really common.

Kim Fauskee 45:03

Yeah. So I get it that it's common. But again, based on what I've said, at nauseam here about, it's impossible to forget the trespass that happened to you, especially as an adult. That that again, that is just placating. What happened to you. Right? Forgive and forget. Okay, so I, so if I forgive you, then I forget what happened to you. And again, again, I'm sorry to repeat myself again. But we're just going back to the way the relationship was before this happened.

Dr. Dana 45:38

Well, I think that when people say stuff like that it's platitudes. It's not real. No, it's

Kim Fauskee 45:43

not. And again, there's the magic fairy dust, sprinkling on it to make sure everything's okay.

Dr. Dana 45:48

I knew your mom, she never forgave you, or forgotten anything that you ever did, or didn't do that, that she took issue with, right? Never for a second, she spent her life telling you what a terrible person you are, and, and I'm not defending you against your father's wrath. So I don't know where the how she came up with that idea. But it was a platitude. It had nothing to do with anything.

Kim Fauskee 46:09

Well, I think it's one of these things that that's just planted in your head that you don't really think about. And it's it's a way of absolving you or absolving the other person. And just moving on.

Dr. Dana 46:24

Yeah, so then you don't have to deal with the pain that was created by whatever took place. Right.

Kim Fauskee 46:29

So now I provided an excellent segue into getting into the third aspect of forgiveness, which which is release, which I actually agree with, right, because it, it goes back to what we were you had said earlier, what we had talked about earlier, was really all you're doing is processing the trauma that happened to you?

Dr. Dana 46:50

Well, but you make it sound like that's a small thing.

Kim Fauskee 46:53

Well, no, I'm not I'm not trying to minimize it, in a way, but again, it's it's that processing, what I'm trying to say is we're processing that what happened to us and going through those emotions, getting through it, and then releasing it right. I agree with you. It's not an easy thing. And it depends on how bad the act was, or how bad the infidelity was, or how bad the you know, your integrity was violated or whatever, the situation or your family was killed or or whatever. I mean, there's obviously different ways of processing and, and different needs to have that process through that. Yes. So. So again, I'm not trying to minimize that, I just want

Dr. Dana 47:40

to make sure that was super clear, because I think it's one of the hardest things to do. Sometimes it can take years to be able to release the pain of a extreme violation. And yes, the ultimate goal is to get to a place of neutrality. Okay. And I think that that equals our society's view of forgiveness.

Kim Fauskee 48:01

So forgiveness doesn't necessarily have a timeframe,

Dr. Dana 48:06

not in my way of looking at things. I mean, I think it's sometimes it takes a really long time to forgive. Or to get to a place where you can live with whatever it is that. And again, I keep saying the same thing, because it's not just things that happen. It's things like not being protected was not something that happened to you or something that didn't happen for you, which causes as much damage as the person that was hurting you not being protected. So I think well think about your own situation, or

minded thinking years to come to terms with the trauma that you and I have suffered. It didn't happen quickly.

Kim Fauskee 48:40

No, I mean, there would have been and again, I'm not a I'm not a organized, religious person. So you know, I didn't have any preconceived notion of what forgiveness was. Right. And again, nobody in my treatment of trying to get around PTSD and everything that and the trauma that happened to me. Nobody even brought up the concept of forgiveness. Forgiving my and again, you in we'll get to it before we end this podcast, because I think it's an important piece. And you said it early on, which we haven't hit on sense is about forgiving yourself. Yes. On that which I think and I asked people that same concept that could intellectualize this, this topic on forgiveness. I said, is it important to forgive yourself first before you can forgive other people, and most people either hadn't thought of it or or didn't think you needed to do that to forgive somebody else?

Dr. Dana 49:39

Well, it's extremely important because in my mind, again, it depends on the nature of the crime, but nothing ever happens is in a vacuum. So if you're in a marriage with someone and that person is unfaithful to you, it's probably a really good idea to take a look at how faithful you are to yourself. And whether you were bringing up the things you needed to in order to feel a deep connection with your partner, or whether you were making excuses and just trying to keep the peace and not taking responsibility for what was happening in the relationship before the person went outside the relationship to violate the trust, because what I've found is not that the person has four, because I don't mean it from that perspective. But a lot of times, people that have that get betrayed, have a have a history of betraying themselves without even knowing it sometimes. So you have to get to a place where you're willing to acknowledge to yourself that you have some responsibility. And you have to be willing to make a commitment that you're not going to betray yourself moving forward no matter what. Because I think people take our lead, whether we're aware of it or not on an unconscious level. So if I sense that you're not committed to yourself, and you're not loyal to yourself, why do I need to be loyal to you? You don't set that example. You know, that's not something that you require, from the people that you love. And so that is something that people have to come to terms with is that, and I'm pleased that nobody asked for being betrayed in this way. But that doesn't mean they didn't make the contribution to how it got to that point.

Kim Fauskee 51:13

No, I agree with you, I think in the in the same aspect of, of understanding the perpetrator and why they grieved you in some way, trespassed you in some way violated you in some way. It's the it's kind of the same question that you have to ask yourself, as well as how did I contribute to this? Right.

Dr. Dana 51:40

But that does not apply to children. It doesn't apply to children, because there's nothing a child has ever done to deserve the abuse that they've suffered.

Kim Fauskee 51:50

Yeah, because generally, it's not a one person dance as an as an adult, that somehow that we probably contributed to that behavior in some way that doesn't absolve the perpetrator of the abuse, or the or the action, but still, you have to check yourself, I think, well, and

Dr. Dana 52:08

I've met lots of people that were blamed for being molested as children as an example, that somehow they asked for it, or they deserved it, or, or, you know, God told the priests that it was okay. And that's part of, you know, whatever, all the stupid shit that people say, in order to justify their behavior. And I always want to make sure that people that have been victimized in those ways that they did nothing to cause the situation, and that they've been blaming themselves their whole lives because they were children and told that it was their fault. But that type of forgiveness is really important.

Kim Fauskee 52:42

So is it possible to unfuse or fontanelles, and go back to being four or five year olds on the playground and having somebody abuse us? And in that person saying, I'm sorry, and just go on with your life, like nothing ever happened is is that possible?

Dr. Dana 52:57

Well, I'm I don't I don't know how to answer that question. It depends on how severe the abuse was, I guess, and how much damage it caused. I'm hoping that the children that I bullied when I was a kid, have gotten K bullies themselves, well know that I got that I my hope that they could forgive me has been achieved, I don't know, because I don't even know who most of those people are. But I certainly sat for a long time with my eyes closed, trying to picture all of these people and telling them that I was happy to take the pain back. And that I was very misguided person and could they please try to forgive me for my pain and the fact that I took my pay down on them?

Kim Fauskee 53:41

So I think I think it's important, as we conclude this conversation, I think it's important because we kind of tore apart the term forgiveness in many different directions and, and either didn't disprove or are approved that the term actually exists. So, again, we'll agree to agree this time that debt forgiveness actually is a thing, okay? And that it's possible to happen. But I want you to kind of recap for us, how you can actually forgive

Dr. Dana 54:18

while you're talking about forgiving others or yourself, or asking others

Kim Fauskee 54:22

let's, let's talk number one about forgiving yourself. Okay. And then let's talk about the act of forgiving others.

Dr. Dana 54:29

Okay. I think that forgiving yourself is really hard for most people to do. But I do believe it's essential that people come to terms with Well, here's the difference. I don't necessarily want people to focus on blame. When it comes to the things that have happened. I talk more about the concept of responsibility.

And that depends really on the nature of the crime. If somebody molested me They did it on purpose. They deserve to be punished. Somebody that harmed me, unintentionally, like my parents, they never did anything purposefully to try to harm me. It was their own neglect and craziness that cause my feelings of neglect and loneliness and all of that. So my idea was not to blame them, but to hold them accountable, let them be responsible for it, and the only thing that's required of them is to make restitution. Now, sometimes that happens, sometimes it doesn't. I did the best I could to talk to my parents about all the things that came up in the course of my therapy, I was lucky they were alive, and they were actually willing to listen to a certain degree, I got further with my dad than I did my mom, he actually showed me that he was quite sorry about the neglect, and we cried together. And it was really, we had some very sweet moments of trying to come to terms with his life, my life and our life together. I tried that with my mom to a certain degree, but you couldn't get passing herself as a victim. So she was not able to take responsibility for her neglect, and her anxiety and all the things that that were a part of our relationship. So it was a little bit more difficult to, quote, forgive her. But forgiving myself, was relatively, I guess, in a certain way, easy to do. Once I understood that I didn't ask for any of this, and I didn't cause any of it. I was an innocent, really not always sweet kid. But you know, everything that I did was a response to the terror that I was living in and, and insecurity that I felt because of the way that my family lived in the world. And so once I came to understand that I went through the sorrow, of all the loneliness, and all the, the terror that I felt, and all the ways that I expressed it, and so on, and so forth. And I do feel like I came to terms with that to a large degree. Because I don't dislike myself, I don't think I'm a bad person. I know, I'm not an easy person to live with sometimes, and I joke about that, but it's not because I think I'm a bad person. I don't, I don't feel like my self esteem is damaged anymore. I don't think I'm the shit. Like, I'm the greatest thing that's cuz I don't, you know, I don't have a big ego. I like being invisible. And I get uncomfortable when people pay attention to me. But um, but I don't feel bad about myself as a person as a result of all the work that I did to heal the pain that lived inside my body.

Kim Fauskee 57:31

Okay, so you've cleaned up your own house. But so now, when let's talk about forgiving others, okay, now, that was part of the process. Yeah, that no, I was talking about that had to be the initial process before you can forgive others. I think we made that clear during the podcast. But we did talk about so much stuff here. I just want to start with yourself and then move forward, then move forward. And so now we've cleaned up our own mess. And now we're learning how to forgive others. So how do we do in a nutshell, how do we do that?

Dr. Dana 58:01

Well, if your parents are alive, or whoever it might be, I'm not just saying it's parents that cause harm, but whoever it is, your spouse, a friend, or co worker, whomever, right? Firstly, you have to measure whether that person is capable of taking responsibility for themselves. Because if you got a narcissist, or somebody with a personality disorder, they forget to harm, don't bother, it's gonna be, it's gonna be cool, it's going to be counterproductive, you're just going to get more pain. But if, in fact, it's true that the person that of the created the pain is willing to take responsibility, then the process is relatively simple. You talk to that person and try to work it out with them, and let them know that you're not looking to punish them. But you just want to make sure that they understand that the way that they've behaved or didn't behave, caused you a lot of pain, and are they willing to take responsibility for that. But even if

your parents not alive anymore, you can still or the person who's not you can still do it. You can picture that person in your head. One of the reasons why hypnosis works so well, is because you can get a really deep connection on whatever level you want with someone despite their being alive or not. Right, you get the feeling, right. Yeah. So it's a process of being able to let whoever created the harm, to be responsible for the, for the harm, not to punish them, but to take responsibility for it. And I find that most of the time that works really works really well and experienced with my dad after he passed away when I was sitting in the car. And I just pictured him in my mind. And I, I said to him, you know, I just want to apologize to you for being such a pain in the ass as a kid. Because I know that I was, I was not an easy kid to raise. Now I understand that most of my uneasiness and pain in the ass was because I felt so scared and, and insecure. But that doesn't absolve me of how difficult I was toward my parents. And I just got such a sweet feeling from my dad in that moment, that he understood that he was not I'm carrying any sort of anger and resentment toward me. And I got the same feeling from him that you know, could you please forgive me for my, my blindness and my inability because of where I came from and all of that stuff. And it was such a lovely moment. Now, am I psychotic? Was I just imagining it? Who knows? All I can tell you is that it doesn't matter worked. It felt so good afterwards, I just felt like, Oh, that was such a sweet moment. Even saying it right now. It feels like a sweet moment. It just feels like you know, my dad and I are sort of at peace with each other. That's a sweet moment. That's forgiving him and him forgiving me and, and us being able to kind of not to just live anymore, but at least there's peace there.

Kim Fauskee 1:00:47

So forgiveness is more than a word. It's a conscious effort,

Dr. Dana 1:00:50

and a feeling and a feeling. Yeah, it's not an intellectual concept. It's a feeling. It's not in my definition of it. I think where people mislead themselves as by by using it as an intellectual concept. Oh, I forgiven that person. Or I know I have to forgive them. So I forgive them. And I'm just gonna go on everything's me.

Kim Fauskee 1:01:09

Well, that's why I was saying earlier in the podcast that is this Learn pleasantry. Right, that we're just conditioned to say I'm sorry, no matter how bad or how little it was, but in that we just go on with our lives. That's the whole forgive and forget thing, right. But that's not what really happens. But I will tell you,

Dr. Dana 1:01:27

though, Kim, as a person, I have not evolved to the point where I can forgive people that are continuing to do harm on purpose. I can forgive those.

Kim Fauskee 1:01:35

And again, I don't think that's a place we need to get personally. Okay. But I'm just saying that, you know, ideally, but some people may, some people may disagree with that, and they need to get in need to get there in their life, right?

Dr. Dana 1:01:48

For whatever, I can't figure out what the formula is to get there. Yeah,

Kim Fauskee 1:01:51

my life's not going to change by not getting there. Or I'm not going to have you know, feel better about myself. Or my life is going to change in some grandiose way, because I've attained this higher level of forgiving, okay, you know, I think I'm a very decent person, I live my life with integrity. I placed trust in others, I have faith in myself, I have faith in others, I have faith in God, I have faith in the universe. And like everybody, I've, you know, I've been violated, here, I've forgiven those people that I feel that I've should forgive or deserve to be forgiven in the way I forgive. Right? In that way in. And again, it was a conscious effort for me, and processing through it to determine whether that person was going to stay in my life or not, right. So anyway, probably everybody is tired of hearing about the word forgiveness at this point, and, and you're gonna strike it there from vocabulary after hearing this podcast. But, you know, again, you know, these are important subjects for people to think about, I think it's just one of these things that that again, going back to we don't really think about. And it's an important piece of our life and important piece of our being. And I think it takes up a lot of space in our heads. So I hope that our listeners got something from this today and actually take that forgiveness seriously in forever way they want to forgive people in their life or things that happen in their life, that they can take some of this application and hopefully it helps them

Dr. Dana 1:03:37

well, and even if we just get as far as encouraging people to forgive themselves.

Kim Fauskee 1:03:42

That's that's your already around the corner. At that point. I

Dr. Dana 1:03:45

think we've achieved the purpose of what you and I are after, which is doing the work that it takes in order to come to some harmony within yourself. Exactly. Thanks, Dana. You too.

Fear Me Out 1:03:56

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