

Loving on Purpose Podcast

with Bonnie Lyman

Episode 97 When You are Being Emotionally Abused by Your Adult Children

I'm Bonnie Lyman, and you're listening to the podcast, Loving on Purpose, episode number 97, when You are being emotionally abused by your adult children. Welcome to the podcast, Loving on Purpose. I'm your host, Bonnie Lyman. If you're having trouble navigating through your relationships with your adult children, if you are struggling to connect with them, or having specific challenges, you're in the right place.

Hello, my friends. I hope you're having a good week. I had an interesting day today. It wasn't my favorite. I think I mentioned we got a little puppy, a little Cavapoo, which we call Miley. And I love this puppy. In fact, I just had to spend 500 replacing some carpet that this puppy, uh, broke a pen and got ink all over part of it.

Luckily, it was at the top of the stairs in a little, I don't know, eight feet by eight feet area, so I didn't have to re carpet the whole house. But, you know what? I just love that dog still. There's no thought of getting rid of the dog. It's, there's a lot of thought of, Be more careful with your pens. And, anyway, I love this dog.

This dog sleeps on my bed at night, and I quite, I quite like that. Having had five kids, having a lot of energy in the house, a lot of that energy is gone. Even though many of them live nearby and I have grandkids, They are busy in their lives, and would I like them to come over more? You bet. But even just being a half hour away takes away from their schedule and what they prefer to do than to just come and make Mimi happy.

And so we got a dog. And it fills a gap, and it feels wonderful. But today, my dog had this, well, for the last several weeks, has had a very strange cough, and coughs up a lot of phlegm. And so I took it to the vet today, and he said, I just want to take some x rays, so come back in a couple hours. And all was well.

And I was confident and calm until I got a text saying that the doctor wanted Miley to stay for a couple more hours, and I thought I was going to lose it. Of course, my mind went to... The negative. And right then, my back was probably hurting, and it was about three o'clock in the afternoon. She'd been there since nine.

I was tired. And so, I, I broke down, and it was hard on me. The thought of something happening to this dear, sweet, little puppy was, Overwhelming to me, but I took some deep breaths and as I talked about last time, I didn't take as much time as I should have just to feel the negative emotion, but I got in the car and drove over to the vet's office because A couple hours had passed and I called for an update and they weren't answering the phone.

So I needed some information, so I took some action. If you didn't hear last week's podcast, go back and read it. Sometimes taking some positive action can bring us a lot of peace. But to

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make a long story short, They still don't know exactly what's wrong, but with some x rays and an ultrasound, they know that nothing major is wrong.

And that's what I needed to hear. So that's my life with me and my dog. So I hope you're having a good day. I hope you Are watching your thoughts and seeing which parts of your life that you do want to control, not only control, but what do you want to create in your life?

I think of you, especially at this time of year with the holiday.

And one of the biggest things we do is we compare and we hang on tight and listen to what other people are doing for the holidays. And oftentimes it seems a lot more ideal. And more of what we were hoping for to be happening in our lives during the holidays. And I'm happy for those people where family want to get together.

And I'm sure there's drama in every family. But mostly there is peace and happiness and good times and lots of cousin times together. But that's not who I work with. I work with the women that are hurting. And when I'm coaching, I can't hurt with them. Because if I do, I can't help them. But I, I want those that are listening to know that I do what I do because it hurts me that you are hurting when there could be a way out.

There are options out there not to be hurting. But it takes stepping outside of the box and taking some actions that you never thought you ever would be taking. Or to be looking at what's going on from a different perspective and have different thoughts that will cause you to have different feelings.

So what I'm going to share with you, I, I hope it's helpful to those of you. That are emotionally abused by your children. And I know that there's a lot of that going on right now. I'll get into it a little bit later, but the thought just came to me that these adult children are often emotionally abusing themselves.

And they react in a way where you get the brunt of their frustrated pent up feelings. I talk a lot about when I say love always wins. And I honestly believe that even with abusive children. If we can still love them, but still do some of the things that I'm going to suggest to you that in time their hearts may turn, but your heart will always be in the right place because we, we have been asked by one greater than us.

To love everyone, and I think that is for our benefit, that if we aren't loving people that are difficult to love, we will always be in some state of, um, disappointment, revenge. We will not be in a state of peace. But when I say love always wins, and we need to learn how to love everyone, that doesn't mean That you choose to be your child's punching bag.

And I'm going to say this three or four times in this episode. You can love your child and yet dislike their behavior. You can love your child and not want to be around them. And sometimes

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you need... To do that, because we can only be punched so many times. Um, yes, we could do the work. When I say punched, I don't mean physically, but emotionally.

Being abused, taking their frustrations out. On you, you, if it was once in a while, you could do the work and be able to remain in their presence. But when it is continual and excessive, there, there is no reason to be around them. I want you to think of your children as adults that aren't related to you, your friends, your neighbors, people you've just met.

Would you go to a holiday dinner with them if they were always disagreeing with you in a very demeaning way every time you voiced an opinion? Would you go if they criticized you or made fun of you the whole time they spoke to you? Would you go and share a holiday dinner with them if they completely ignored you and avoided you and maybe gave you demeaning looks?

Adult children that are abusive to their parents try to put them down. Maybe they accuse them of overreacting. to everything if they, if the parents disagree with the child. Would you want to go to dinner with adult children that gaslighted you? Gaslighting is a technique that undermines a person's reception of reality.

They tried to get you to think you're losing your sanity by trying to convince you that things happened that didn't really happen. As in, remember that time you told me you didn't love me.

I mean, maybe you said that, but if you know you didn't, they're, they're kind of playing maybe on your age and trying to convince you that you did say that and you've just forgotten.

A common one for gaslighting is that you were a bad mother and you're the reason their life is messed up. You know you weren't. a bad mother if you never intentionally got up every day with the idea that you were going to be a bad mother that day. If your child treats you this way, why would you want to go have a holiday dinner with them?

And if you decide, no, but I still want to go, ask yourself, what is the reason? Do you have for wanting to go then ask yourself? Do I like my reason for going? You may be strong enough and have the confidence and know you are a good person. You may want to go just to be able to see the grandkids and that is a pretty strong reason to go, but not just because to see the grandkids on Thanksgiving or Christmas, you are responsible for taking care of your own needs.

and getting your own back. It's not your child's responsibility to make you feel good, even though it would be nice if they did. I believe there are five reasons why Children abusively treat their parents. And remember, it's not normal for adult children to be unkind and demeaning and use their parents as a punching bag.

Number one, they may have a mental illness. And in this case, you may be able to look past their behavior and feel compassion for them and understand they can't always control themselves. In this case, it may not be a problem to go Because of knowing your child can't

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always control his behavior. I'm, I'm thinking of people that have Tourette's, or maybe somebody dealing with PTSD, or some other trauma in their life.

Maybe they're predisposed to having a hot temper.

But we are different in our limits as to how much abuse we can withstand, even if we have compassion for the mental illness. So there is no right or wrong decision here in this case, but it's okay of when you have had enough to leave.

Number two reason of why your child is abusive to you, your child blames you for his or her problems. So they take out their frustration and their anger on you.

A third reason a child may be abusive to you is they're trying to manipulate you. by trying to make you feel guilty about how they were raised. They may think that is what is causing all the other problems in their life. Is they were not raised right or they can remember things when we were being human and maybe not our kindest self.

They may feel you neglected them by going to work and maybe you were a single mom or the sole provider for the family, or maybe they accuse you of favoring other siblings or another sibling over them.

Number four is

she or he. has a high need to be controlling in this relationship. So in order to be controlling, the only way they can see to do that is to go to extremes, to put you down, and they feel like They're putting you in your place and that they are the ones that know better. It makes them feel in control of you and superior to you.

This may not be diagnosed as a mental illness, but it's definitely not what an emotionally healthy person does. And number five. I believe is the most common reason for adult children to abuse their parents is that life is not going well for them. There is something in their life they can't figure out how to resolve.

They are hurting, and so people that are hurting hurt other people. People that embrace their problems and have a fair amount of success in their life, let's call them mentally healthy people. Don't treat others as previously described. People that are hurting hurt other people. And they feel safe hurting you because they subconsciously believe you will always love them.

They feel like a victim. Victim to their lives. They feel like a victim to what's happening in their lives, and every victim needs a villain. And you got chosen, but no one deserves or is expected to be abused or put up with abuse by another person. You can still love that person, but choose not to be around them.

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So what do you do? What are your options? Some advice from Jeffrey Bernstein in an article in the magazine Psychology Today is to remember the good days of their youth and be above them and look past the manipulation that they are trying to do to you and to have thoughts that will cause you to cling to hope that this is only temporary, that things never stay the same, that things will get better.

So that is an option we have. That can help us still love them, but not accept their behavior or want to be around them. Is their behavior heightened when in a larger group of people, especially in a group of family members? Do they have something they feel like they have to prove? And so, they prove it by...

being abusive to you. So an option would be to have them over for dinner separate than the holiday dinner or go out to dinner one night. But let's not get so fixated on it's gotta happen. on Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day. Maybe it's more appropriate to have that one on one relationship because they don't have an audience to prove whatever worth they're trying to prove.

You could have a group. Or an individual activity with each of your grandchildren. If you want to have that cousin time, then see how many you can get together. Maybe it's in between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Or you find opportunities to have one on one time with those grandchildren. Because there's nothing sacred about Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day except when we start to look at what many of our friends are doing, and then we compare, which leads to despair.

Another thing on the very holiday, if it doesn't work out that you want to go where these abusive children are going to be is to have a dinner at your house with maybe some people you know or friends who have no family to share the holiday with. Joseph Grenny says, I have some children that don't want my help, but I can find a lot of people out there that would love to have my help.

So there's a lot of people that

would love to be around you and who are not going to abuse you. Is being a martyr helping you love your child more by thinking everybody's going to talk about me if I don't come, or I just need to toughen up and go? Again, do you like that reason for going? But ask yourself, are they going to love you anymore?

Are you going to love them anymore by going, perhaps having some space from them is emotionally healthy for both of you. There is always a choice. There is no wrong or right way as to what to do to benefit your relationship with your adult child. Only you can decide what's right for you. You are a child of God.

And that means you are important. You can choose not to let people tell you otherwise. You can't control anyone else. But when it's your adult children that are putting you down and trying

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to manipulate you, you have the choice to not be around them. And you can figure out how to communicate that to them in a loving, kind way.

And that may look like not giving them the real reason for not showing up at a holiday dinner. It will always be your responsibility to love your children. To love children that are abusing you. You first have to process the feeling of feeling so hurt when that happens. And I feel most of us don't really know how to process.

a negative feeling. But any coach that has been certified through the Life Coach School, as I myself have been, can show you how to do this. Every client I have taken through this process I ask them, how do you feel now? And they say, I feel so much lighter. So we really need to get that technique down.

So you first, you process feeling hurt. You process the negative emotion.

And then you recognize. Love yourself as being important and of great value. Not perfect, someone that has value and is important, and yes, has some flaws.

Loving yourself will help you find a way to excuse yourself in a very loving way. from being in your abusive adult children's presence. Try not to have judgment toward your child, because when we judge another person, that only hurts us. It doesn't feel good to judge another person. Now, compassion for them will cause you to feel better and be the person You want to be.

Remember, happy people, emotionally healthy people don't abuse other people, especially their parents. But if you feel like you have value and you are important and you handle most problems pretty well in your life. Then you don't need to be abusive to your children. Being defensive and being revengeful never solved anything that was of any worth.

Don't blame yourself. Don't blame yourself for being the cause of your children abusing you. Remember, you are a child of God and you are important. You don't have the power to make someone act a certain way. So there's no way it is your fault. There is nothing you could have ever done that would cause them to justify abusing you.

It's our responsibility to love ourselves and take care of ourselves emotionally.

And remember, you have to have real hope. Not false hope, but real hope.

To feel. And to think that things will get better. Or at least think it's possible things will get better. And you will never have any regrets. If you don't give up on these kids and you just keep hoping and assuming the best,

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you will only have regret if you stop loving your abusive children when you stop trying to figure out not how to get them to not abuse you, but how to be the best mother to them that you can be. I feel that when these children are struggling in such a way that they act in almost evil ways, they need their parents love more than any other time in their life.

I know the holidays can be tough on a lot of you. Choosing to love someone despite their behavior is a gift you give yourself. It is also a gift that Jesus Christ gave us when he atoned with his suffering for all the evil things men do in the world. The gift is by him being able to do it, he passes that power on to us to forgive people and to love people that don't deserve to be loved or forgiven.

No one else was more unjust. abused than Jesus was, and yet some of the last words he spoke in mortality was, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Finding something to love about. In another person is always an option, and you can still love them and dislike their behavior. You can love them and choose not to be around them.

I wish the best for you, and I can't wait.

If you like this, this episode and you felt it was a benefit to you, I ask you to share it with somebody that perhaps it could also benefit, but if you're still feeling kind of stuck in that, you don't know how to apply what was talked about or where to start. on, on changing your thoughts, on changing your perspective, on bettering your relationship, get on a call with me and we can have a discussion and I can tell you how to apply it and where we start and then you get to decide what you want to do.

About this relationship that maybe you're struggling with with your adult children. There is no reason to go on the rest of our lives struggling with our relationships with our adult children. Let's assume the best. Let's assume that we all love each other and we're just trying to figure out how to maintain our own boundaries.

and respect another one's. But I can help you with everything. So just go to bonnieleiman.com and book a call. I can't wait to hear from you.