

## Episode 38 - REBUILDING A MARRIAGE

I'm Diana Swillinger, and you're listening to the Renew Your Mind podcast. Episode 38, Rebuilding a Marriage. Welcome to The Renew Your Mind podcast. I'm your host, Diana Swillinger. A lot of us have tried to do the right thing all our lives. But we still feel overwhelmed and stuck. I believe that you deserve to get stuck and experience more joy, more peace, and more contentment. Regardless of what life sends your way, I'm here to help you renew your mind and make it all possible.

DIANA: Hey. Hey, everybody. Welcome, welcome. Um, I have an interview today. I'm talking to my husband, and, uh, he reluctantly came on. I mean, he wants to do anything he can to help me in my business, but he doesn't talk much. Anybody who knows him knows he's a man of few words. He's very selective. So that he's going to come here and share some words with you all is a big deal. Real quick story of our marriage to give some context. And actually, you'll hear more in the podcast interview itself, but my husband and I have been married for 28 years now, and about six or seven years ago, we were in a bad place. So you're going to hear us talk about kind of being separate. And we weren't actually separated physically. We didn't have a legal separation, but we lived in the same house, and we took a break from our marriage. So when we get to that part, I just wanted you to know that context so it made sense. All right, you all enjoy me talking to my cute husband Dan.

DIANA: Hey, everybody. It's great to be here with you today. And if you can tell from my voice, I have a big smile on my face because there's somebody in my little, um, recording studio office with me.

DAN: Hi. I'm Dan.

DIANA: The standard intro. You know what? You're the reason why I say hey, hey every time I start a podcast. Can you tell everybody why? Where did I get that from? That brilliant greeting.

DAN: Because when I go to work every day and the guys say, hey, Dan, I say, hey, hey.

DIANA: Like that. I wish I could deliver it like that. That's kind of hey. Hey, Dan. I'm having you on the podcast today because I talk about you a lot.

DAN: Yeah, you do?

DIANA: On the podcast? On my webinars, when I'm coaching. Because what I have learned in my relationships and what I've been able to apply is at the center of the tools that I've put together. So you just seem to always be a part of the story. Or usually. Or often, anyway.

DAN: Yeah, both good and bad.

DIANA: How do you feel about that?

DAN: Wonderful. Bring it. Go ahead.

DIANA: I told you all. Is this true? You said I can say anything about you. You're an open book.

DAN: That's right. Anything I said, go for it.

DIANA: Okay. And I'm also saying you can say anything about me today.

DAN: Oh, I always do.

DIANA: I'm like ho. I hope it's good. Could be anything. What's it like to live? No, uh, don't tell. What it's like to live with me? Okay, we'll skip that. Let's just go back to the beginning. How do we meet and how do we become a couple?

DAN: Okay. Well, we met when we were very, very little and we were neighbors down the street from each other. We lived down the street from each other.

DIANA: The end.

DAN: Yeah, at the end. That was it. We knew from there.

DIANA: How did we become a couple?

DAN: Well, uh, when I was about seven, I moved away from that court that we were living on together. And one of the neighbors we had was one of my best friends. So I would come back to visit him in the summertime or he would come out and visit me. Or sometimes we'd do both. Usually we'd spend four to six weeks together during the summer with each other.

DIANA: And this was I was in Wisconsin and your friend was in Wisconsin and you would fly by yourself?

DAN: Yes. From California, or I was in California for five years and then moved to Oregon. So west coast little kids used to.

DIANA: Just fly on their own all the time back then. It wasn't a big deal.

DAN: That's right.

DIANA: Yeah. Okay, so you saw me and it was love at first sight. Again when you came back to visit your friend. Right.

DAN: You saw me and it was love at first sight. That's correct. You're right.

DIANA: It's true. I admit I had a crush on you ever since I was really little. And then there you were.

DAN: Yes. I showed up and you saw me again. Yeah, that was it.

DIANA: So we were kind of though on and off again because you went back to Oregon.

DAN: I did.

DIANA: And I was here and there were no cell phones and no Internet, old landline, so we had, uh, telephones and letters. So I guess it was hard for teenagers to keep that up.

DAN: It was. And then I came back two years later to see you and see my friend, but to see you, see you. And we went out. We went out to a park one night and you broke up with me. The day before I flew back to Oregon, you broke up with me.

DIANA: Did I break your heart?

DAN: Yeah.

DIANA: Did something, uh I was selfish. I, uh, was a teenager.

DAN: That's true.

DIANA: But I guess I was selfish as an adult, too. But that's part of figuring things out in a marriage, I guess.

DAN: Oh yeah, we'll get into that.

DIANA: So we were on and off over the miles and then we got married. Young?

DAN: Yeah. Uh, I was 22. You were 20.

DIANA: I was 20 when we got married.

DAN: Baby.

DIANA: Wow. We have a 21 year old.

DAN: I know.

DIANA: Wow. So what was it like? Well, how would you say we've been married a long time now we're sneaking up on 30 years. It's coming in a couple of years. And, ah, we've done a lot of work in the last decade. But what was the first 20 years of our marriage like?

DAN: Well, we decided early on in our marriage that we could try to have kids right away when we're young, or we could enjoy each other's company and not have kids right away and just go do some things and travel. So we chose to wait to have kids and just get to know each other and enjoy our lives together with just the two of us for a little while.

DIANA: So it started good.

DAN: It started great.

DIANA: What went wrong? I mean, because the first 20 years, it started all right. We had some financial trouble and we were having babies at the same time, but right. I mean, we still could have been happy. What went wrong? Or is that what went wrong?

DAN: Well, going back to what was going on in 20 years, you just mentioned it. We had four kids, well, three in a row, uh, each two years apart. So that was a lot of our time and busyness in what we were doing. Um, I was running my own business, and you were helping me with that. So during the 20 years we were, I think, just kind of going through the motions what we created in life and what was going on around us.

DIANA: In life, I guess I'd add to that, like, the going through the motions part. As life was going on around us, I think we were just, like, bouncing in the waves of life going on around us. We didn't know how to handle financial troubles. We didn't know how to handle well, my sister died during that time, too, and I didn't know how to handle that. And business struggles and doing a business together and communication. Like, we didn't know what we were doing. We're just always reacting and responding and getting stressed and growing farther apart and resenting each other.

DAN: Right. I didn't think we knew how to get through situations that were difficult. I think we just let them happen and then let, uh, time go by to hopefully heal things and, um, I don't know if they healed things. Time just went by and we moved on, but everything was still there.

DIANA: Yeah. Right. I don't think we healed things. I mean, for me, I medicated myself with alcohol. I've shared that here and there with my listeners. At some point, maybe I'll just share the whole journey about that because I know people are interested. But instead of managing my emotions in a healthy way or trying to solve the problems, I would medicate just by drinking.

DAN: Right.

DIANA: How'd that help our marriage?

DAN: I don't think it helped at all. I think it just kept things where they were. I don't think it moved towards improving or more connection.

DIANA:: Yeah. And I think you were searching for some relief from your pain, too. What kind of things did you turn to?

DAN: Um, I've turned to the same thing. I turned to alcohol. Um, not in the same way, but it was definitely a buffer. And I think just part of my personality turned to arguing and yelling and being defensive.

DIANA: Oh. As my mom would say, turn your shame into blame.

DAN:: Oh, yeah, I was good at that.

DIANA: Whenever we felt bad about ourselves, I did it too. So here we had two people in pain where we were feeling shame about our own shortcomings, judging ourselves, and then blaming and judging each other, and then trying to escape by drinking alcohol. Or you would go out and go play trivia or Golden Tea at the bar, are hang out with friends, go to the gym in the middle of the night, even go to Walmart in the middle of the night just to get out of the house and get away from me. Because we got to a point where we just hated being around each other.

DAN:: And on the weekends, I'd go golfing just to get away.

DIANA: Yeah, well, we were miserable. And we got to a point where I was contemplating separation, and, uh, a lot of things happened. This is a short podcast, so we can't get into all the details, but we didn't separate, and we stayed together, and now we've rebuilt our marriage. But how did that happen, from your perspective? What changed?

DAN:: I think for me, what changed was I was, at the time, going through a lot of depression and anxiety, and it was coming from having, uh, a failing business and failing marriage and just not feeling like I was being the person that I wanted to be. But the things I would try kept failing and trying to do the right things, but do the wrong things. So it just kept compounding, and I had to get out of that. And I think eventually we met with a marriage counselor, and as we were going through things with him, I started to realize more and more things about myself and where I wanted to be and the things I wanted to do. And then there was another gentleman that mentored me through some things, and, um, I went through a book and just through spending some time with him. And as I was doing that, I started to realize some things that I wanted to change. Basically, take one step at a time, take baby steps into trying to be back into the integrity they wanted to be in.

DIANA: Yeah, that's interesting, because as I hear you describe that as we're talking now, and of course, we know each other's stories, but we don't always talk about them in this way. So as I hear you say what you did that m changed everything, you were focusing a lot on what you needed to do to be your own authentic self and be in integrity with the kind of man you wanted to be. And what I did was the same kind of thing. I got mentors from church, the women's ministry director, and another friend from church. One was a mentor, one was an accountability partner. And I started looking at how I was thinking about things. And one of the things we both started doing is giving each other space to have our own experience without making it about me. In fact, you taught me that, like, when you would get upset at something, and I don't mean upset in a bad way, just annoyed. We all get annoyed in life, right? And so you'd have a little annoyance, like, there's dishes in the sink, and I got all defensive, like, Well, I was busy. I was

doing this, I was doing that. I didn't get to the dishes. You're like Diana to. It's not about you. And I was like, whoa. And I think that same concept, like, you talking about your annoyance with the dishes was just about you, your thoughts, your feelings, and I could let you have that. I need to make it about me. Doesn't mean there was something wrong with me. And now I'd defend myself and blame you and create an argument. We just started giving each other space to be and be less critical and more forgiving and more gracious.

DAN: right. During that time, it wasn't necessarily easy either, because I'm very relational, and I feel strongly about us and our marriage, and I did at that time, too. But I knew that you had things that you wanted to work on for yourself. And I definitely knew that I had things that I wanted to work on for myself and find out more of who I wanted to be and what my integrity looked like and what my identity was going to look like. And in order to do that, I needed to just follow down that path and see what those things looked like and just develop who I was, and at the same time, let you develop who you were. So it was during that separation where I feel strongly like, I wanted to get back together. I want to do this, I want to do these things together, but at the same time, I need to see who I was and what I was going to develop into.

DIANA: Yeah, right. I think that's so important. I think before that, we were like, we need to fix this in the marriage, you need to respond to me this way, and I need to respond you this way. Not that we don't want to meet each other's needs. We do want to meet each other's needs, but we had to almost not care about that. I had to trust you'd be okay on your own, and you trusted I'd be okay on my own so that we could have space to do some healing and stop making everything be about the other person changing and just work on ourselves a little bit.

DAN:: Right. Well, during all that, um, I ultimately had my hope that we were going to be back together and build a strong marriage. But I didn't know that that was going to happen. So during that time, I had to just work on letting you be you and hopefully come back to a strong marriage. But I didn't know how long that would take, and I had to be patient. And in the meantime, while I'm being patient and hoping that she'll come back or will come back together, um, I continue to develop and realize what I wanted to become and what I wanted to be and what defined me. So that when we did come back together, I could show you who I was and say who I was and be more definitive about those things.

DIANA: Yeah, absolutely. And then when we came back together, everything was fine.

DAN: That was great. It was not.

DIANA: So we had this time where we were living together, but giving each other space and purposely not working on our marriage so we could work on ourselves. And then it came time where it's like, okay, what are we doing? So we're like, we're giving this marriage thing a try. We're still in it. And it didn't go so well, like, a lot of the time.

DAN: Right.

DIANA: But what was different now?

DAN: I think for me, what was different was that I wanted to, uh, let go of any hurt that I had from the past and get rid of being fearful of what our future looked like and to start living just day by day and enjoying what I have here and now.

DIANA: That's good. There's so many tactics and strategies we've used. Sometimes I forget them, but one of them is like, the past is over. We're here now. We used to be really good at, well, you always and last time, and I don't trust you because we're always pointing to the past, the past, the past, and that's why I'm mad at you now. We let go of that. They're like, you know what? A lot of stuff happened in the past. If we're going to rebuild trust, we need to live in the present moment. Mhm and I think we still do that.

DAN:: Right.

DIANA: What other strategies do we use to make things work?

DAN: I think that one of the big ones along the same lines as that is having the idea that things are always going to work out, no matter how tough it is. I mean, we go through struggles even now, and, um, we're not perfect. But just having the idea in the back of my mind that things are going to work out, it's like, okay. And then, uh, along those lines too, is that you have your perspective on things and I have my perspective on things. Ah, yeah.

DIANA: We kind of have a way of saying that we're like, uh, that's okay. That's a nice story you got going there.

DAN: It's a good story.

DIANA: Yeah. And I'm like yeah, I like my story.

DAN:: And you know what? You can be right about your story.

DIANA: And you're right about your story, Dan.

DAN:: That's right. Uh, and you know what? You might be wrong about your story.

DIANA: And you might be wrong about yours too. We're both right and we're both wrong.

DAN: Yes.

DIANA: We've learned some other things, too, along the way. Like last week's podcast, I talked about the science of gratitude and sharing gratitude with each other. We learned from Rick Marks. We get to share appreciations. Like, I appreciate, Dan, that you make coffee every day like, you make coffee every day. And I continue to share that appreciation with you because it's very, very important for me to have coffee in the morning. No, but you make it every day before I get up. And, um I'm so grateful. I don't take it for granted. I'm like, I wake up and I'm like, there's hot coffee because you made that for me. And you love me, and I appreciate it. And I appreciate you stopping the store after work to get groceries because I hate shopping. And I appreciate you watching a Hallmark with me and bringing home takeout. And we just keep telling each other now we're not focusing on all the negative because we could think negative about each other all day long if we wanted, and then we'd feel terrible, but we don't.

DAN: Another one is no expectations.

DIANA: Mhm.

DAN: Um, I used to have a lot of expectations. I expected you. I had my list.

DIANA: Yeah, I had a list for you, too. There's a lot on it.

DAN: I don't know if there was a lot on mine, but I had a list.

DIANA: Two things feed me and love me.

DAN: Exactly.

DIANA: So you don't expect anything of me?

DAN: No, I have a lot of wishes, hopes, and dreams. There's a lot of things I hope for, and I try and communicate those things that I'm hoping for, but I try not to have them be expectations.

DIANA: Well, does us being healthy mean that we have no more conflict, no more misunderstandings, and no more frustrations?

DAN: No, we have all of those things all of the time.

DIANA: When's the last time you were frustrated with me?

DAN: I was frustrated with you just, uh last night.

DIANA: Yeah. Uh, and I didn't expect you to not be frustrated with me. Speaking of expectations right. I'm like, Dan gets to be Dan.

DAN:: Right.

DIANA: If he's going to be frustrated, he's going to be frustrated. I wasn't listening to Dan. I was distracted and he was a little frustrated. Uh, that's valid.

DAN: Yeah. And I yelled, Whoops happens?

DIANA: Yeah. I mean, we're humans, right? I don't always understand you.

DAN: I Don't always do things right.

DIANA: Neither do I.

DAN: And that's okay.

DIANA: That's the difference. I think it used to not be okay. Right now it is okay.

DAN: I think pride got in the way a lot.

DIANA: Yeah. I think we want to feel secure. We want to feel appreciated, we want to feel loved. But when we want to feel secure, that's kind of like things need to be the way I think they should be in order to believe that life is okay. And so for me, I love to feel secure. I've had to let go of a lot of that. Like, if you're supposed to be getting done with work at five and you're not home at six, I don't start getting insecure like I used to. Like something's gone wrong, he's not doing it the right way. There's something wrong with our marriage. Or if I don't think that we should never have a frustration.

DAN: Right.

DIANA: Because if we have a frustration, I'll feel insecure, like something's wrong in our marriage. No, I don't do that. Part of being a human is all of it. And if I make it mean something's gone wrong, I'm going to feel insecure. But if I just make it mean we're human and nothing's gone wrong, I get to still feel secure. And then I don't have to try to change you and make you behave differently so I can feel secure.

DAN: Right. I mean, that goes back to that expectations too. Expectations makes me want you to want to do something. If I let that go, I don't have that expectation. Let you be you, then things end up being okay.

DIANA: Yeah. All right, well, now is the chance for you to give the ultimate Dan wisdom. What would your final words be to the listeners here? Whether they're in a relationship or a marriage, what can they do to improve their relationship? Or if their relationship is struggling and they're trying to save it, what's your big advice for them?

DAN: Hi, I'm Dan.

DIANA: Is that question too hard?

DIANA: Wow. Um, no. I mean, I can only say what's worked for me and what has helped for me, but some ideas that I know that have worked life is 50 50. Life is good and life is bad. People are good and people are bad. And if you just keep an open mind about things, then it's really going to help with your perspective on things. And in turn, that will help how you feel about people and how you view them. Um, one of the biggest things, obviously, is love. Just to love. People love others. And I don't know if we can do that. If we keep judging, having judgment, we're always going to be judging. But if we hold judgments to people all the time yeah.

DIANA: And speaking of judgment, I think what's kind of wrapped up in there is you and I have learned to be okay with ourselves and appreciate who we are and stop judging us. And when we've done that for ourselves, we've been a lot less judgmental of each other.

DAN: Right. And then I think another big one is humility and empathy. Again, emotional maturity goes along with that. But really looking at yourself and what part you played in the situation that just happened or happened the night before or whatever it was, because there's two people that were in that situation, and there's probably something that you could have done better or I could have done better if I'm looking at myself introspectively.

DIANA: Yeah.

DAN: So what did I do in that situation? Or what could I do better? Uh, and how can I have empathy and think about your side of what was going on?

DIANA: Yeah, I'd love that. Dr. Marks. Dr. Mark, go back and listen to relate well with Dr. Marks. If you want to understand more of what Dan's talking about with empathy and humility. And another two are goodwill and respect. He breaks them out in that, uh, podcast. And that's where we really learned to focus on that stuff, was from him. He was a big part of us saving our marriage.

DAN: Right.

DIANA: And then me becoming a life coach, I've learned a lot of tools and never tried to life coach you or teach them to you.

DAN: Sure.

DIANA: Usually not Usually not. Occasionally it slips out, but that's okay. Yeah. Well, I appreciate you being on the podcast so much. Like, more than you know. I know this has been uncomfortable for you. Dan's a little bit of an introvert you all.

DAN: It's 50 50. It's been good and bad.

DIANA: I'm like, let's record the podcast this weekend. Saturday, you ready? Uh, I need a little more time. Saturday afternoon, maybe tomorrow. Sunday morning. Ready? No. We got it in, though.

DAN: Uh, I'm here. I showed up.

DIANA: Thanks for showing up for me in our marriage. Thanks for being patient with me when I'm struggling and supporting me no matter what. Dan's my biggest cheerleader, you all. So I'm very grateful for you.

DAN: Uh, thank you.

DIANA: Love you.

DAN: Love you.

DIANA: All right, y'all, that's what I have for this week, a little insight into my marriage. I mean, there's so much more to the story, but that helps you see how Dan and I came from a bad place

and turned some things around. And we work at it every day. Every day. It's not a given. And we're going to be working on using tools that help our marriage for the rest of our lives. And I hope that it's been helpful to you, as always. If you have any questions, you can email me, connect with me on social media, and I have more tools available for you on the podcast website at [rympodcast.com](http://rympodcast.com), all right, y'all, that's it for this week. I will catch you next time. Until then, take care of you.

As an advanced, certified life coach, I help Christian women trying to live their best lives, but they still feel unsatisfied and stuck. I teach thought management skills that work so you can enjoy life again and step into who God has created you to be. Don't forget to head on over to [Rympodcast.com](http://Rympodcast.com) to get my free resources. Or a free coaching call.