

# Ep # 7: Guilt Keeps You Trapped and Spinning in Indecision. Time To Let It Go



## Full Episode Transcript

Welcome to the stay or go podcast where we're changing the dialogue around divorce so that no woman ever stays in her marriage out of fear. Get ready to dispel myths, learn life changing tools, and build a solid foundation in yourself from which to make your decision. And now your host, me, Britta Jo.

Welcome back, y'all. Um, early days of the podcast. And I just get so excited every time I sit down to record a new episode. So, I really love this, and I hope that this is something that I'm able to always get to enjoy. throughout the whole lifetime of this podcast and not just in the beginning. To start off, I want to give a shout out to any of the women that may be listening to this that are very empathic, like me, and are currently staying in your marriage because you don't want to hurt your husband by leaving.

Is this sounding familiar for any of you? I totally relate. This was a huge piece of what kept me in my marriage for so long. Feeling a lot of guilt around my partner's feelings and not being able to really separate and make a good choice for me without just so much anguish around that other person not liking my choice.

So I think it's really one of the most important things. It's like one of the top three things I end up coaching most of my clients on and I really want to break it down in this episode because it's so important for you to understand why this happens and ultimately how to overcome it. So to begin with the root of where this comes from is the P word.

You guessed it. Patriarchy. In the structure of patriarchy, which most of us, yes, patriarchy is, I'm going to be generous here. We've got some things changing over the years, but we are still absolutely living in the U. S. in a patriarchal society. And definitely our mothers and our grandmothers were raised in heavily, heavily, patriarchal societies.

In that world, we grew up seeing men making all the big decisions, making the choices they're the leaders, they're the providers, and typically women's roles were to be a support, right? They were in the background. They were the one taking care of everybody else, kind of behind the scenes. And in that role, you needed to be very responsible for other people's feelings and how you valued your contribution to society was how much are the people that I'm taking care of thriving in the world, feeling good about themselves?

Because if they're not, I've got to change something. This makes us incredibly vulnerable when we are going through divorce to partners who will guilt and shame us into not leaving them because this programming makes us believe if they're unhappy with the choice, if they're upset or sad about the choice, then it must mean the choice is wrong or we shouldn't make it.

So, I will have lots of clients that will tell me things like, I really don't want to get divorced because it's going to crush my husband. I really don't want to hurt him. I think he'll be devastated if I leave. Yet while they're saying this, I'm simultaneously watching them hurt, crush, and devastate themselves by staying in a marriage that is not aligned for them.

So today we're going to talk about how to change this, how to stop giving up a decision that feels right for you. to try and not hurt somebody else's feelings. So, first things first one of the foundational gems of coaching that I learned is knowing where our feelings come from.

And I want you to buckle up, because this might blow your mind, especially if you have never been exposed to coaching before. But everyone's feelings come from their thoughts. Unlike what you were taught growing up, you know, we heard from our parents, stop doing that, you're hurting your sister's feelings, or maybe from our teachers, you need to be kind, so you don't hurt other people's feelings.

Contrary to that, in coaching, we learn everybody is responsible for their own feelings. And I'm going to break it down for you. So, favorite quote by Viktor Frankl. He says, between stimulus

and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Okay, so stay with me. We've got a stimulus, and then we've got a response. So, what's inside this space in between those two? That's where we get the thought and the feeling. So, we've got stimulus, then we have a thought, the thought activates a feeling, and then from that feeling, we have a response. So, for example somebody says something to you before you even end up responding to them.

Your brain has managed to have a thought and activate a feeling that that response then comes from. And we know this is true because we can have the same stimulus with two different people and get very different responses. And I witnessed this just yesterday. I was in the car with my kids. We're coming home from some activity, trying to get food.

And I'm like, Hey, how about we go to in and out? So, there's the stimulus. I say, how about we go to in and out? My oldest son responds with, yeah, that sounds great. I love hamburgers. Where my middle son responds, Ooh, that's gross. Can we go to Taco Bell instead? So, what's the difference? Each person had a different thought and felt a different feeling about the stimulus.

And here's the thing I really want you to understand too is, in that instance with both of my kids, like where are these thoughts that they're having coming from? The thoughts that we think are often triggered by a whole slew of childhood conditioning, trauma responses, and beliefs that form our personality.

And the really great news is a lot of that can change with mental health work and rewiring your brain. It's really important that you do this so that your brain can help you rather than harm you and who you think you are. is active, actually way more pliable than you think it is. What we think of as our personality is actually more, it's like clay.

We can change it. We can use techniques to take stuff from our past and rewire it in our brains. But what's most important for you to understand with this is that Because of this concept, stimulus, thought, feeling, then response, a person's response to a stimulus is always about them more than it ever is about you.

And that's because their response is always going to be coming from their thought and their feeling about whatever the stimulus was. So, So we, another good example of this is like how different people handle trauma and actually you can think of it like research that shows how people come out of divorces.

Like there are people who come out of the stimulus of divorce and end up thriving and there are people who come out of the stimulus of divorce and end up really struggling. The differences between the two come down to the thoughts and the feelings they create as they go through that stimulus, which determines their responses.

So, I'm gonna, I'm gonna just repeat that again so that you can really let it sink in. Someone's response to a stimulus you give them, like a sentence you say, an action you take, is always more about them than it ever is about you. You are just the stimulus. They are deciding the thought, feeling, and response.

So I want to give you a personal example. I am, as I mentioned earlier, a very empathic, loving person. I have a habit of seeing the best in my partners and loving them all in from the start. And where this can sometimes get me in trouble is not taking the time to really evaluate whether someone is a truly aligned match for me.

And the good news though is as I've started, you know, over the last four years as I've been dating, I've gotten into the habit especially ever since getting divorced, on notifying any partners I have up front that if the relationship is not working for me or feeling like where my growth is, I am not going to stay in it.

My priority is to myself first and always, um, when I was writing this episode today, I was like, Oh my God, it's kind of like a Taylor Swift blank space moment. Like it's that kind of approach with dating, which is acknowledging from the start hey, ultimately. Love is a game. Life is a game. I'm gonna go all in and there's a chance we might win it, right?

Where she's like, it's either gonna be forever or it's gonna end up in flames. And you're gonna ultimately have to decide if the high was worth the pain. But do you still want to play or not? And I love that song because it acknowledges the reality all of us are in, which is love is never guaranteed.

Life is never guaranteed. A lot of us live in this delusion of thinking once we get married and have this piece of paper. We're guaranteed a happily ever after. You're not. Newsflash. It's never guaranteed. Someone can always change their mind and when you really get into loving someone, you realize it is a constant process.

It's always changing. It's always taking growth and investment to keep that connection strong. So, you would think that that might make me, telling my partner, hey, I am not you know, if this isn't working for me, I can leave. You might think that that would make me less invested in the relationship, but actually it does the opposite for me.

It allows me to go all in because I've been clear that I can always leave. Therefore, me choosing to stay is an act of true love. Because I'm not here out of coercion, I'm genuinely choosing for myself. And what's crazy is that I still have had partners who, even though I've given them the stimulus of being very upfront that it is not a guarantee and things can change, they still choose when the relationship ends to have a response of shock, betrayal.

And I get it this is humanness, but it's very important that we realize that is not on me. Us women, them responding with shock, betrayal, victimhood, that's not my responsibility. And

this used to really get to me and I still have to work through it often. Even in my relationships now, because it just, when this happens, it can feel like, ah, just like someone twisting that knife in your back.

But the work is learning to not be responsible for other people's feelings, because guess what? Those feelings can change in a moment. All that person has to do is change a thought and poof. Their feeling changes. I remember a client once telling me a story of like literally spending the whole day, she was determined to give her husband everything he could possibly want that day, just to see if she could like really be the person he wanted her to be.

And they'd had this amazing, awesome, fulfilling day. And at the very end of it, he's like. Oh, I really didn't enjoy being with our friends, that was kind of annoying. And she said in that moment, she realized, Oh, like no matter what. I do during the day, right? Cause she had scheduled choosing to have the friends come, which is something he'd said he really wanted previously.

She was like, literally, no matter what I do, this person can just choose to think I didn't like that and be disappointed. So, realize living in a world where you are trying to contort yourself into all kinds of different shapes to try and give someone a stimulus that'll activate a thought that keeps them happy.

is one of the most insane and totally unpredictable ways to spend your beautiful energy because you're investing in something that you have no control over whatsoever. Okay. So I want to give you some actual like examples of what this can sound like when your partner is doing it to you because it can be really sneaky when they do it.

So, it might sound like them telling you. I just love you so much, I miss you every day, I think about you all the time. Now granted, you know, this is while you're possibly considering divorce, things are not going well in your marriage, or maybe you've told them, like, I'm considering divorce, I don't know if I want to stay, I'm really struggling.

And they start bombarding you, I wish you loved me more, why can't you be happy when I love you so much, things aren't that bad, you're overreacting, we can get through this. I think you think the grass is greener on the other side. I think you have this fantasy about something that's just not realistic.

What you want isn't real. That's not real life. And coupled with all those words, there can be these actions of incessantly following you around and just not being able to stop talking about it. Texting you repeatedly, not taking no for an answer, love bombing you. All of this. This behavior can feel very confusing because it sounds like this person loves you and wants to be with you.

But I want you to remember, if he is trying to manipulate, shame, guilt, coerce, or pressure you into staying, even if he's using all of these pretty sounding words like, I miss you and I love you,

this is not the kind of love you want in your life. This is the very fucked up idea that we often think love is that is actually just a mask for deep insecurity, codependency, and lack of control.

And I like to think of this as like, this is just a human brain that's frantically scrambling to try and keep whatever it thinks it needs to survive. Even if that means that the other person across the table is going to suffer or be unhappy. And just know it can sound very confusing when they do it.

So, one of the best ways to think of this is this word called protest behavior which is something seen in children when they're growing up. And we've all seen this. This is when you go to the grocery store, your kid wants something, you tell them no, and they end up throwing this massive fit. Heads up, it still happens in adulthood.

And in coaching, we often refer to it as, being an emotional child. You have not. Moved into the space of emotional adulthood, which is where we take responsibility for our feelings and our actions. And by the way, this is like the majority of the population because so many of us whether we have this ability or not is directly related to how we were parented.

And in the show, in the, sorry, in the show notes, I am going to include an article that is all about protest behavior and parenting, highly recommend reading it because the reality is. Unfortunately, most of us were just not parented in healthy ways with our own protest behavior. And we, of course, carry those patterns that we learned in childhood then into adulthood.

So, if we don't go into deeper personal work to retrain these patterns, we will end up in relationships that mirror our childhood. And this is one of the core things I see in dysfunctional marriages, which is where we have this emotional childhood in both partners that's coupled with us simultaneously wanting our partner to parent and raise us in the ways we didn't get as a child, and then also trying to parent and raise our partner.

But here's The thing, take a deep breath with me.

It is not your job to help raise your husband.

Just feel what that's like in your body. So for myself, I have decided that I am done parenting and caretaking partners who are too afraid to go get professional help to do their own work on their own. I get it, guys. It's like, I am a bleeding heart as well. It is so hard to see somebody who you know is in pain and is hurting and needs help, and to not want to sacrifice yourself to be that person for them.

And we're all pretty fucked up from our childhoods, and the shit shows, of the parenting from the last two generations. But I just had to draw a line and say, I will no longer divert my passion and energy, you know, the passion energy that I have to create my one beautiful life into supporting a partner who is not also as deeply invested in his personal work.

Because this is what so many generations of women before us have done and I know why they did because in many cases That was the only choice to be the supportive wife behind a great man, but that is not the case any longer and What I want for my own life is to be a great woman standing side by side with a great man.

And this is a hundred percent possible. Because in adults who have done the work to be aware of their emotions and take responsibility for them, you're not going to see conversations. Like this attacking, coercion, manipulation, you'll see conversations where there is still a level of respect for the other person's individuality and their right to make personal choices.

Now, yes, there, there are going to be emotions there. There's still going to be, especially if this is like an ending of a relationship or an ending of a marriage, there's going to be sadness and grief and loss. But ultimately. That partner is not going to try to attack or aggressively convince the other person to change their mind.

And one of my really good friends Matt, I love this because he's always reminding me when I'm going through things like this. He's like, the partner you are looking for is someone who, if you were to come to him and say, I really just genuinely don't feel like this is a fit anymore and I want to pursue something else and I feel like that's where my soul is calling me.

You want someone who is so grounded in himself that he's not going to try to shame or control you when you're making a choice that is right for you. And instead he will own his own power and energy, lean back into his own worth and trust. And trust that either this will come back around, because anything that's meant to be will, or that there is a better partner for him that is more aligned.

Because when you love and know your own worth, which is what I'm looking for in a partner and what I want to offer all of you deserve to have as well, when you have that place of certainty inside of you, someone leaving you can, yes, be sad and heartbreaking, but it isn't life and self worth destroying.

So, be very wary of partners who need you in their lives, even if it's at the expense of what you need most in your life. Ultimately, gals, the work at the end of all of this, what's going to help you most are two things when you're dealing with a partner. that may be, using these techniques on you.

First, I want you to reaffirm your right to make healthy and aligned choices for you. That is your right. Here in the U. S., you get to decide if you want to stay married or not. You are an individual first, and a partner in your marriage second. Because what good is the marriage if we don't have the individuals in it?

And then secondly, it's letting your partner feel however he's going to feel. So this means he gets to be sad and devastated and destroyed if he wants to be. He gets to throw his life away

after the divorce. If he wants to, and on the flip side of that, he also gets to potentially decide to use this divorce as a catalyst to finally find himself and do his self work and become the man he really wants to be or not.

But these are all the rights that everybody as an adult has. And it comes back to understanding that we rarely get to control what happens to us in life. But we always get to decide how we respond to it. So let him choose how he's going to respond. You focus on making the right choice for you. There are other nuances to this that will help in the detail work.

I'm going to have podcasts in the future that are going to talk. It's just too much to put in just one podcast. But definitely if you have a partner that's, continuing to come at you, won't stop talking about it. Just really, really lots and lots of protest behavior. Ultimately, something that's going to help with that is setting boundaries.

I'm definitely going to talk about boundaries in the future. And then, and this is the piece, that even after, you know, even if you do decide to get divorced and you leave this marriage, it's ultimately the overarching work of healing people pleasing. Which, if you're people pleasing in your marriage, you're probably doing it in your relationship with your parents, in your relationship with your kids, in your relationship at work.

So this is really, the work of healing people pleasing is the gift that just keeps giving in all areas of your life. And I'm going to do an episode in the future that's talking about that. So if you loved the discussion today, if you found things that were insightful, I would love for you to go subscribe to the podcast, also rate it, because we are in the early days and every rating and download just helps tremendously with the algorithm on Apple and Spotify podcasts.

So, this has been so much fun. I can't wait to see y'all on the next episode. Till then!