

Kathy coaching

Sarah: [00:00:00] Welcome to the Peaceful Parenting Podcast. I'm your host, Sarah Rosensweet, mom of three young people, Peaceful Parenting Coach, and your cheerleader and guide on all things parenting. Each week, we'll cover the tools, strategies, and support you need to end the yelling and power struggles, and encourage your kids to listen and cooperate so that you can enjoy your family time.

Sarah: I'm happy to say we have a great relationship with our three kids. The teen years have been easy and joyful. Not because we're special unicorns, but because my kids were raised with peaceful parenting. I've also helped so many parents just like you stop struggling and enjoy their kids again. I'm excited to be here with you today and bring you the insight and information you need to make your parenting journey a little more peaceful.

Sarah: Let's dive into this week's conversation.

Sarah: Hey all welcome back to another episode of the peaceful parenting podcast. Today's episode is a coaching episode with Kathy. Kathy is the mom of a seven year old little boy who is neurodivergent. Kathy herself is also neurodivergent and she reached out because she was going [00:01:00] through a hard time. She'd separated from her partner, her, her son's dad. And she was really looking for some support around that and how to help her son, who was having a hard time with the separation.

Sarah: And she was having trouble also navigating things with her her son's dad. So we talked about some ways to help her with that. And also just general support. And when we came back it actually took us a few months to come back and report part two. And she had some major changes that happened since part one and part two.

Sarah: So this was a really interesting conversation that did not go where I expected it to go and interesting coaching call. And I think that you will really enjoy. I don't know, maybe enjoy is the wrong word. I think you'll really be impressed by the work that Kathy is doing on herself and has been doing on herself. Without much support from, you know, either professionals or from friends or family. She's really been working hard and, and I think it [00:02:00] was inspiring.

Sarah: I enjoyed listening to her process and learning from her. And this was a little bit of a different, a different kind of call. One thought that I think that you will That you'll get a lot out of. So have a listen, if you would like to be on the podcast, please reach out to me.

Sarah: I am looking for some coaching coaching volunteers who want to get free coaching in exchange for being on the podcast. So please reach out if you're interested in being on the podcast, and if you love the podcast, please share it with a friend. We reach more people that way. And we can really make major changes in the world by sharing peaceful parenting with people who need. To know about it.

Sarah: Okay. Let's meet Cathy. Hi, Kathy. Welcome to the podcast.

Kathy: Hi, thank you for having me.

Sarah: Yeah, it's a pleasure to meet you. So just tell us a little bit about who you are.

Kathy: So I am a, an autistic PDA mom that was diagnosed late in [00:03:00] life and well with autism, but PDA is not recognized. I'm in the U. S. so it's not recognized here as a diagnosis but very much know it's a real thing.

Kathy: And I also am a mom of a seven year old who is also diagnosed autistic and pretty sure that he's also PDA. And so I'm just, Kind of trying to navigate how to, um, learn more about all of that for myself and for him and support him. And then I recently became kind of like single mom in, so me and my husband are separated and living in different homes and I wasn't At first looking into divorce or anything like that, but things have become kind of more challenging and financially and, and there's been kind of threats coming from his way about wanting to fight for full [00:04:00] custody and stuff like that.

Kathy: If I couldn't financially. Keep supporting him and what he's doing. And so yeah, I'm trying to now look into all the legalities of it as well.

Sarah: Well, that's a lot, Kathy. And for anyone who's listening, who doesn't know what PDA is, it's it's an an acronym for Persistent demands for autonomy is one way people say it, or also pathological demand avoidance.

Sarah: I prefer the first one and it basically, it's a profile of autism where a person's nervous system gets triggered by threats of, threats against their

autonomy or any demands on, on them. Would you say that's a fair a fair definition?

Kathy: Yeah. It's pretty much, yeah nervous system.

Kathy: I mean, as far as I know and the way I look at it, yeah, it just has to do with the nervous system being very sensitive to demands and, um, expectations, [00:05:00] societal expectations and just causing. Instead of just kind of your typical autism meltdowns, more of like a panic attack type of

Kathy: Yeah. So, and I've heard it described as a nervous system disability as well.

Kathy: Yeah. Yeah. That's pretty much it's, it's very, very sensitive nervous system and creates a lot of A lot of anxiety towards anything that is, even if it's just, like, a perceived expectation, even if it's like, you know, you're, you're told that they're not expecting you to do something, but there's that perception that, like, it's not true or they really are, like, Expecting it or just it is expected in general, usually like it still causes enough anxiety to really just really shut you down [00:06:00] or make you want to flee and it does a whole fight or flight response.

Sarah: Right. Right. Well, that's that's tricky. That does sound tricky, especially if your son also is PDA. So how can I support you today, Kathy?

Kathy: Um, so I mostly just don't have a lot of support for the areas of navigating the legalities and like family law and like and just, you know separating, you know, like me and my husband were together since I was 14.

Kathy: I'm 37 now. So we were together for a very long time. And he, I also suspect is, so he also is diagnosed autistic. And I suspect he's PDA as well. And it he has a lot of, both of us have a lot of childhood [00:07:00] trauma and stuff that we have to work through. And I just feel like I, I'm in a place in my life where I'm more accepting of it all, and wanting to heal, and all of that, and he is just not quite there yet

Kathy: and so, yeah, it's just, I was kind of hoping with the separation that that would kind of make things more real for him and to see that, like things are worse than he thinks they are and that maybe he would take more action towards working on the trauma and, and he'd be able to kind of catch up faster.

Kathy: And then the hope was that he And I could then get back together, you know, at some point and kind of work on all that together. Cause we very much grew apart, but it just doesn't seem to be going that way. And so, yeah, [00:08:00] it's just, it's hard to know kind of where to go and what to do about all of it and how to interpret it all.

Kathy: Just cause I've never had to deal with, with this portion of like actually separating.

Sarah: That sounds really tricky. I'm, I'm I'm not sure I'm the person to help you with the separation issues or legal, the legal issues. I hope that you get some support around that. Are there, are there things that are coming up in your parenting that I can support you around?

Kathy: Okay. So with that is like, how do I cause that's been a very, very hard part of this process is seeing how it's affecting our son. And because our son Does really love his dad and is in You know, this is all hard on all of us. You know, my son and, and my husband kind of put this idea out to my, [00:09:00] to our son that this is all because of me, like, this is all happening because of me.

Kathy: And it's like solely my decision. And so I have my son coming to me just. asking me like, when are you gonna decide to, to like, get back together again? And when, you know, like he, and, and because he's seven and, you know, he only is, You know, developed so far for that kind of understanding. I don't really know how to go about things in like trying to explain to him that, you know, I tried telling him it's not just me, you know And that it, you know, is his dad, like there's two people in a relationship.

Kathy: And so both sides have to put in work and both sides have to be helping each other out and provide each other support. And I need more. support from daddy in order [00:10:00] to have the relationship work.

Sarah: So, so Kathy, it sounds like, first of all, it, it, from everything you said, it sounds like you have a lot of compassion for your, for your husband.

Sarah: Even though it sounds like things are difficult and for that, I really commend you. It's hard to it's hard to keep that when you, when you're, when there's disagreements and, and difficult things happening. And I also hear that you feel, Sort of torn between you know, your son not understanding what's going on with you and his dad and feeling sad about that and wanting him to understand.

Sarah: However, I think we have to be really careful to not that there it's okay to not tell him all of the things that are going like to not try to explain it to him so that he understands because he's only seven and and he's not going to understand what's going on. Sort of the ins and outs of a grownup relationship.

Sarah: So I think rather than trying to talk to him about, you know, relationships and how both people have to try and all of that stuff, I think that I would just have one message that you want to give him. [00:11:00] And the one message is no matter what happens with me and daddy, you know, we're, we're grownups and we we'll figure this out are still actually, okay, I'm gonna change that to two messages.

Sarah: We're grownups and we're going to figure this out in a way that, works out the best for us. And no matter what happens, we love you. And that's never going to change. And we always are going to love you. And that's the most important thing. He'll always be your dad. I'll always be your mom, even if we're not together.

Sarah: So I think you really want to avoid trying to. Explain things to him or give him any details because I think that'll just confuse him and make him feel like that there's something that can be done. Do you know what I'm saying? Like, I mean, maybe there is, and you and your husband might work it out, but that to put it like super bluntly, that's not any of your son's business.

Sarah: So I think I would just really, every time he asked you questions, I think I would just empathize. It's so hard, isn't it? you know, having me and daddy not living together. I bet you miss daddy when you're with, when he's not here. And I bet you miss me. What is your current arrangement anyways with the custody?

Sarah: What where's [00:12:00] what's happening with him?

Kathy: So we haven't even this is all very new, like it's very fresh. So we haven't even talked about Or like worked any kind of schedule out or anything like that for

Sarah: spending time. Like his dad isn't living with you anymore.

Kathy: No, but like he went

Kathy: over

Kathy: for Christmas

Sarah: Even when, after they split up lots of families, do you find that they can spend holidays together?

Sarah: So that's something that, that you could. You know, experiment with as time goes on and see if that works out for for, for you all. But so right now there's not like a set schedule, but he is spending time with his dad and he is spending time with you.

Kathy: Yeah. Like I've been just trying to get him and, or get us together for stuff and keeping dad kind of involved and everything.

Kathy: I was kind of hoping that like dad would reach out, like, More to him and stuff, but he hasn't been. So I've just been like calling [00:13:00] him through like video calls and letting them talk so that he sees dad. But I also, anytime I ask my, you know, our son about like do you want to talk to daddy or, you know, do you, should we call daddy?

Kathy: Like he always says no. And he always, and whenever, like I say, do you want to go like visit daddy? Like you. He doesn't want to, and I, I think it's because he doesn't want to say goodbye and leave. And so it's just easier just to not go, but then he talks about, you know, that he misses him and stuff like that.

Kathy: And so I, I did You know, his dad told him that he was looking to look for a cat and my son loves cats. So I, I put out the idea of him helping him find, you know, look for a cat. And so we are setting that up that they're going to go out together and look. For, you know, our son, son's going to look for or help daddy look for a cat.

Sarah: Good. So it'll make it a lot easier [00:14:00] for him to go

Sarah: visit his dad, maybe if he's got a cat there.

Kathy: Yeah. So so, you know, like I'm trying to find ways for them to like spend time together and stuff, but it's just been kind of all on my side, taking care of it all. And the only reason I was even, cause I was trying to take the route of just not saying anything to my son or like explaining the, you know, what's going on or details to my son, but you know, I, I also, I could only control what I do and say, I can't control what dad does and says, and dad had already kind of Kind of put out the idea that it's all like, everything that's happening is solely my decision.

Kathy: I decided for that and it's only, and so that's why my son, you know, like our son kept coming to me and, and just like asking me like, well, when am I going to decide to, to, you know,

Sarah: right. I see what you're saying. So you were trying to

Sarah: explain, cause of trying to do damage [00:15:00] control of stuff that your husband had been saying to him.

Kathy: Yeah, exactly. Like I was just trying to let him at least have him understand that it's not just me. You know, that it's not solely my decision. Because he knows that when it's up to me, like I will get things done. But when it, when things are up to dad, They don't necessarily get done. There, there, there's been a lot of like, not like no follow through on his end.

Kathy: Quite often that my that our son has seen.

Sarah: Sadly, that's something that your son is going to become more and more aware of as he gets older. If, if your husband doesn't make any changes and you know, I think that That even if your husband is saying things like, well, if mommy would, you know, blah, blah, blah, we would be together.

Sarah: I think that you can still say to your son, you know what, this is, this is something between me and daddy and it doesn't have anything to do with you. Because even if you're, even if your husband is trying to, you know, Get your son on side or, or [00:16:00] say things. I think you can still, I think you still should sidestep that discussion, right?

Sarah: Rather than trying to explain your side to your son, because I know it's tempting because you don't want to be the one who's like taking the falls, like that, you know, the quote, bad guy. But, but anything that you do that is going to try to explain to your son is going to be drawing him in more to what really is an adult problem.

Kathy: Mm hmm.

Sarah: If that makes sense.

Kathy: Yeah, and I feel like if it was just up to me, like interacting with him, then it would just stay that way. But that's, that's where, like, I have only half of that control. I know. It's so important. And

Sarah: I think you can say that to your son. You can say, you know what, daddy should, daddy let me see.

Sarah: I want to be, I want to be diplomatic about this. I was going to say that you should say daddy shouldn't talk to you about that stuff, but I don't think that's the right thing to say. I think you want to say something like no matter what daddy says, this is still this is still for me and daddy to work [00:17:00] out.

Sarah: It doesn't have anything to do with you. I really think you should still go to, you know, have that be your position that That even if daddy's saying that it's still between me and daddy and it's not for you to worry about or think about

Kathy: Yeah, and he he definitely like is is very aware that that dad doesn't follow through a lot because as soon as I say I said that it wasn't solely up to me that that there was, you know, there's two of us in the relationship and that, you know, he is you know, part of it as well and stuff has to be be done on his end as well, or, you know, we need to support each other and And then he was like, he, he stopped asking at that point when, once he knew like, Oh, now if, if it also has to do with daddy having to do something, then it's most likely not going to happen, you know, and so he stopped asking.

Sarah: Right. I think [00:18:00] you want to keep letting your son know that this is a mommy and daddy issue. That it's for grownups to work out their problems and their, you know, their challenges. Maybe I would say challenges and relationships.

Sarah: And it's not for kids to need to worry about. And no matter what daddy loves you and mommy loves you and he'll always be your daddy and I'll always be your mommy. And, and then also, you know, empathize that it must be hard for him to You know, have this happening. Is he showing any signs of having a hard time or how's he taking the whole thing?

Kathy: Yeah, he's he's been very sad about, about it all. You know, he'll just randomly start saying that he Like he'll be really upset about something and then you know, I would be trying to like consolidate him and just like empathize with him and talk with him and then he starts saying you know, like it's no longer about [00:19:00] like whatever just initially happened.

Kathy: He starts saying that he misses daddy and any, any like, you know, starts crying and says that he wants to, you know, spend more time with daddy and

that he really hopes that in our next home that we'll all be back together again. And yeah, it's just it's really, it's really hard.

Kathy: For me to hear all that and And anytime he says that around dad, that's when, you know, he, he kind of starts, you know, or dad comes to me and is saying like, this is, you know, affecting him. This is, and so like using him as like a tactic of like, you know, like, like we need to not be doing this and be separate and, you know, like doing everything he can to get us back together and using any.

Kathy: Any tactic you can and using, you know, our son being sad about it, you know as one of those,

Sarah: I guess it was about, month or two months ago, I [00:20:00] had somebody on the podcast who was talking about about divorce and what the best things, But the best thing is for kids when parents are getting divorced.

Sarah: And one thing she was really, really clear on, and this is something that I think would be helpful to tell your husband is that it's really bad for kids when they feel like they're in the middle. It's really, really bad for their, for their psychology and mental health. And they're growing up if they feel like they're in the middle of their parents.

Sarah: Which is why I was saying that, you know, that you keep wanting to say to To your son that this is a mom and dad thing to work out and it doesn't have anything to do with him. Right. And so I just I heard somebody say once that when you're getting divorced, you have to decide, I mean, this is a little bit silly, but you have to decide if you.

Sarah: Hate your ex or you love your child more, right? Because if you're really trying to hurt your ex, then your child is going to be the the thing that gets the most damage, right? So I, I think if, I don't know, it sounds like you two talk a lot, you and your husband at least have like some communication [00:21:00] going.

Sarah: So maybe just reminding him, like, we really have to make sure that our son doesn't feel like he's in the middle and that, that That we work this out just between us as grownups together.

Kathy: Yeah, I, so that's where where a lot of issues come in is that he has kind of I guess anything that any information that's coming from me to my husband

doesn't get taken seriously or You know, like on his end so communication with me and him has been really difficult because I never feel heard.

Kathy: And anytime, and I just feel very dismissed every time. And so it's just hard to even talk with him. And anytime I try to like say things like that, you just suggested you know, he'll, It, he's not in a place and that's why I had to move away. Cause he's, he's just not in a place to hear those things.

Kathy: If they're coming from [00:22:00] me, like if it's coming, there's so much kind of trauma between us over the years that he has lost like all trust in anything that I say. And and so like talking to him, just. It's it feels just like a waste of energy. Cause I feel like most of the time at the end, like I didn't.

Kathy: Get any, anything I wanted across in, in the conversation and, and yes, and it just, and I just get out, come out of it very like depleted and very depressed. And so it's just hard because like, I want to reason with him and, and like, tell him those things.

Sarah: That sounds so tough. I mean, and

Sarah: this is sounds like one of those situations where, you know, You don't have any control over this other person. As much as you wish you did and you wish that you could get him to listen to you or take that that, you know, the suggestions that you're offering. So I think really just focusing on how can you support yourself [00:23:00] and how can you support your son, right?

Sarah: Supporting your son with helping him through that sadness, empathize with him, empathizing with him, answering all his questions with, you know, mom and dad are going to figure this out. We're going to, we're going to Take care of you know, I don't, I guess you don't want to say in a way that makes them think you're going to necessarily get back together, but that's not something that you need to worry about because this is a grownup problem.

Sarah: And really just try to like let him know, and, and as I keep saying, your dad still loves you. I still love you. And just trying to really keep him focused on his, his childhood. Right. Like so you taking care of yourself, you taking care of your son and you know, Yeah. I wish that I wish I had, this is one of those times I wish I had a magic wand where I could change your, change your husband for you.

Sarah: What are you doing to take care of yourself, Kathy?

Kathy: Just really trying to reach out to as much support as I can. Just because I don't have family or friends nearby. [00:24:00] So I've always kind of had to. And then, you know, without the support from my husband and that support has been lacking for a very long time.

Kathy: So I've, I've always had to look elsewhere for support. So it's just been kind of Me looking for other ways to, to get support and not feel so alone in it all, because that is kind of what builds the most anxiety for me is feeling like I don't have any help with, like if I run into something so yeah, it's been mostly just trying, trying to Find support in any way I can to hopefully give me enough or like relieve enough anxiety that I'm able to do more for our son and for myself.

Kathy: [00:25:00] You know, like I, I want to set aside time. For self care and stuff like that. But I, it's a really hard thing for me to do, so it's all just. And then just, just staying positive and moving forward and, you know, being very, uh, quieting, quieting down all the negative inside talk and all of that.

Sarah: You have a great attitude, Cathy. Like,

Sarah: you really do. You really have a great attitude of, of just trying to be positive and taking care of yourself and your son where this is, when this is all happening.

Kathy: Yeah, it's well, I mean, I figure like if I don't model that, then, you know, it's not good for our son to see, you know, like, it's good for him to see that.

Kathy: Kind of way of living versus, you know, going spiraling downward and, and stuff, [00:26:00] because things are always going to go wrong in life and stuff is going to come up and, and it really makes a big difference how you. Like, take it and what you do with it. And I, I know from past experience from both me and dad that we have gone down the negative spiraling route and ended up in, you know getting institutionalized with, you know, all, all of the, like, thoughts of, like, you know, suicidality, And all that.

Kathy: And so I know how easy we're wired to go that way. And so I've chosen to completely change that around. And now that I'm like very self aware of when it's going that way, I know how to turn it around and start going back the other way. And I'm hoping that. In the times where those thoughts may pop up in our son's life in the future [00:27:00] or at any point in his life that he can see that there's another way to go besides down.

Sarah: Yeah. Well, it sounds like you're already really undoing some of the or not you're, you're avoiding the childhood trauma, having your son have the childhood trauma that you had by all these changes that you're making. Yeah. Yeah, which is amazing. That's the goal. Yeah, and you know, and, and we don't have to think about you know, breaking every single generational cycle, but, but breaking a lot of them will still make a huge difference.

Kathy: Yeah. And, and my parents have come a long way in their understanding and, and kind of Changing lots of stuff that they do that, that used to be really you know, hard on me, they don't do it around my son you know, or in any time they come visit, they're very careful with everything and they ask questions before like doing anything and my [00:28:00] in laws are doing the same but But yeah, my, my husband still isn't quite at the place of like letting them back in his life.

Kathy: But I've I'm, I've been at the place of, you know kind of re allowing the process of, Both parents, you know, in our, in our lives and in a positive way. And, you know, it's been really good for our son. So, yeah, it's just, it's just I think we're just in different. You know, places in life and and unfortunately so much trauma has happened between my husband and I, that like, I used to think that I could control his, you know, and like force him to like You know, change the way he thinks and, and all of that, like, I, I'm very aware now looking back that I was really trying to change him and control that and then, you know, till I [00:29:00] realized that that's not something I can do.

Kathy: But he's also not willing to look past that point and still feels. Yeah. The other way. So as I said, focusing on yourself and on your son and on what you can do for yourself and what you can do for him, I think is, is going to be, it's, it's going to be enough. I think it's going to be enough and, or it's in, and it's all you can do.

Sarah: Right. Yeah. I also want to remind you that I know you're in my membership and I've never seen you come to office hours before, so I want to remind you that you do have that weekly support, a touch base with a community to, to You know, to get that support.

Kathy: Yeah. I, I, I've been very very busy trying to catch up on a lot of things.

Kathy: Because there, there were a couple or several weeks of illness between me and my son. And so, and while we were doing this whole move and we had the holiday, I got very behind on everything. And so I'm trying to, and at the

same time, trying to get [00:30:00] him Set up with different way of schooling because he's having a lot of school refusal as well.

Kathy: And so, yeah, I just have a lot of things going on.

Sarah: So I don't want it to feel oppressive. Like it's a one more thing you have to do, but you just do have a community of parents who really get it. And who will if you do want to drop in even for a few minutes and, and say hi and get some support and office hours, we're there for you.

Sarah: And you and I will check in in about three weeks or a month just to see how things have, have been. I mean, I don't imagine with your situation, we're going to have any you know, night and day changes in a month, but we'll still check in and see how if you were able to manage to get your son, you know, to, to avoid.

Sarah: Talking about the details, even if your husband is bringing them up and really just, you know, give him that that you know, affirmation that it's really, it doesn't have anything to do with him, even if it's hard and he misses his dad and, and all of that. So hopefully we'll, we'll touch base in [00:31:00] three weeks or a month, see how things are.

Kathy: Yeah, I, I really appreciate any advice because I'm really lost with how to go about everything. And so yeah, I'm definitely going to do my best, at least on my end, to to really, you know, Keep it that way. Good in our conversations. Yeah.

Sarah: Just, you know, I think kids just want to make sure that they still have their parents in terms of an end of it.

Sarah: You know, my dad is still my dad. My mom is still my mom. And there is that grieving that they go through when when parents split up and just really, you know, being there for them. I, as I know you have been with compassion and empathy for that sadness and making sure he knows nothing's changed and your dad's still your dad, your mom's still your mom.

Sarah: We don't live together anymore and this isn't a problem that you need to, to try and figure out our relationship. Yeah. And, and if you, if your, if your husband does try to [00:32:00] talk to you about these things, just, I think you just keep saying to him, even if he, you know, feels like he's not listening. Let's not put our son in the middle.

Sarah: Let's not put our son in the middle. Let's not, you know, that kind of thing.

Kathy: Yeah. Cause he keeps wanting to like have conversations around our son about it. And I keep telling him like, I don't want to have conversations about it around him.

Sarah: Yes. And I think it just gets good. That's great. Just try and hold that boundary.

Kathy: Okay.

Sarah: All right. We'll touch base again in a couple of weeks or a month.

Kathy: All right. Sounds good.

Sarah: Hi, Kathy. Welcome back to the podcast.

Kathy: Hi. It's glad to be finally be back.

Sarah: I know. I was just going to say it's been a while because we had scheduling challenges and we finally, I think it's been a couple of months, maybe instead of a few weeks, like that we usually do a few weeks on the podcast, but in some ways, since your, your situation is kind of complicated, maybe a few months is better to get a sense of.

Sarah: How things have been. So, so we talked about supporting your seven year old [00:33:00] son through the separation between you and his dad. And we talked about some strategies around that. So how have things been in that area?

Kathy: So a lot has changed.

Kathy: So we have gotten back together.

Kathy: And and so that's kind of been a lot of the delay has been just because I've been moving back in because we had separated and we're living in separate homes. And so now it's working towards moving back in together. That is a big change. Yeah, and then my son recently got super burnt out in school and I had to go through multiple IEP meetings trying to accommodate him more and try to just make school easier for him.

Kathy: We tried doing, you know, cutting down his days and hours and it just school did not feel safe anymore for him. So it was just really difficult.
[00:34:00] bad school refusal to the point where it was affecting his sleep. Like he was refusing to, to go to sleep on the nights before he knew the next morning was going to be a school day.

Kathy: And so that's when I finally decided, okay, we're just going to have to you know, pull them out and homeschool them. And, and I've never done that before, so I never really like looked into it too much. And so I kind of had to start that whole thing at the same time. Yeah. So yeah, it's been, it's been busy and just going through a lot.

Kathy: And so it's been hard to, to make time for, for, you know, for other things.

Sarah: Yeah. It sounds like it. Is it feeling like a, I mean, obviously I guess you wanted to get back together with his dad, but it's, is that feeling it's going well and, and how has your son been through that whole process? I imagine he'd be happy, but it also be maybe a little bit confusing about what's going on.[00:35:00]

Kathy: So he at first it was well, he was, he was very much I guess because I took him with me and we were like, you know, living in separate homes and, and so he wasn't like spending a ton of time around dad and then dad wasn't really like I'm sorry, I'm getting over a cold too. So a lot of throat clearing.

Kathy: But yeah, dad wasn't really like communicating very much and stuff with him and so I think with him not being around like our son kind of forgot all the things, all the like little things that would trigger him. You know, all he could really think of was just kind of that he was sad and he missed dad and all that stuff.

Kathy: And so when we first decided to, you know try and work things out and moving back in together there was a short time where he then kind of started remembering [00:36:00] the triggering things because they were happening. And so that kind of like, oh, I miss him so much. And like, he kind of was. Kept kind of telling me like, Oh, you're going to regret like leaving.

Kathy: And he like, you know, it was, it was very confusing for I know like,

Sarah: when you

Sarah: say that sorry to interrupt you, but when you say the triggering things, you mean things that your son would do that would annoy your husband like that, those kinds of things

Kathy: things, things were well back and forth. So like But mostly things that dad would do that triggers both of us, you know, so like me and my son would have lots of triggering moments and like any time and that's kind of why I had to like escape the environment was because anytime dad was around, it was just tension.

Kathy: It was just not. enjoyable at all. And it just was triggering and every [00:37:00] interaction just was getting worse and worse over time. And so but you know, because we were separated for some time and all he could really think about was like, you know, dad's gone all of a sudden and he's not like, I'm not interacting with him.

Kathy: And if he had spent some time away from from him, like long enough that he kind of forgot about all the little things, maybe

Kathy: realizing his dad a little bit when he was, he wasn't living with him every day. And I was like, remembering only the good things are idealizing him a little bit.

Kathy: Yeah. And kind of like being upset with me and kind of.

Kathy: Putting all the blame on me and also because that idea was kind of put into him by dad as well. That like, Oh, this isn't because of me. This is, you know, like this is your mom's decision and you know, she decided to leave and all this stuff.

Sarah: So what are

Sarah: your strategies for you know, I mean, you split up for a reason, right?

Sarah: And now you're Is it feeling okay to you? Do you feel like there's like enough change or what are your strategies for working on those things that are hard for you [00:38:00] and your son?

Kathy: Yeah. So so when I was finally able to, to separate and have a lot of time to really cause my, my biggest issue with Kind of feeling stuck in the environment that I was in and needing to leave was like I, I was just always so on edge and I never was able to focus on my needs.

Kathy: And. And, and like prioritizing myself and I just felt guilty ever even thinking about it. And so and I knew it was because of the environment I was in. So that's why I was like, you know, this is something I really need to do that I really need to work on is to focus on myself and prioritize myself and, you know all that kind of stuff.

Kathy: Cause I've been trying to do a lot of trauma work, but if you're stuck in an environment that's. continuing the same narrative, negative narratives. There's, [00:39:00] it makes it almost impossible to rewire your own brain, you know, in that situation. So and, and so it worked, you know, like leaving for a couple months And being able to, for the first time, really prioritize my own needs and just having, like, love and respect for myself, and feeling worth in all that stuff, you know, because those were all things that weren't existent, really

Sarah: Because you two had been together since you were really young, right?

Kathy: Oh yeah, we're high school, yeah, high school sweethearts, so.

Sarah: So you, you use that separation time to get some perspective on who you were and what you, you know, sort of where, where how you deserve to be treated it sounds like.

Kathy: Yeah. And, and so with being away and at the same time I've been like doing my own studies and wanting to work in trauma [00:40:00] work.

Kathy: And so I was at the same time of like, moving out and being separate. I was going through my schooling of learning about more about trauma and stuff. And and so. But doing that at the same time, I was able to kind of well, once I was able to really provide myself with a lot of this, you know, um, self compassion and all of that and self empathy from, you know then I was, Once I was able to do that enough and receive enough of that I was finally able to kind of break free from like only being able to focus on that, you know, because I could now.

Kathy: Kind of like I've been fulfilling those needs and so now I can kind of look elsewhere outside of that because I was really stuck there for quite some time. And then [00:41:00] it allowed me to then begin to empathize with my husband because I didn't even realize that I was never even able to do that because I, in order to be, be able to provide, Empathy for someone else, you need to receive it yourself.

Kathy: Yeah.

Sarah: And I

Sarah: just want to highlight that because that is such a good lesson for parents, right? Who are trying to empathize with their kids, but if they're not working on their own self compassion practice and, and you know, empathizing with themselves, they're never going to be able to really empathize with their kids.

Kathy: Yeah, exactly. And, and so all the kinds of stuff that I've been learning, you know, to support my son, I realized like, you know I need to apply this to Just people in general, not just, you know, our son. And so then, you know, that's when I was trying to apply it to myself and give myself all that grace and compassion and [00:42:00] empathy.

Kathy: And then once I was able to do, you know, enough of that, then I was able to start looking into applying it towards my husband and understanding his, you know generational trauma that he's gone through and everything, it all just kind of started making sense. Right. And so yeah, then I kind of, um, I wrote up like a like a little love letter.

Kathy: Relationship contract thing that like, because basically I was like, okay, you know, we don't have to fully agree with each other on like the ways of like how to do things as long as we're both working towards the same outcome. Like we can try and. Figure out a way to work together to get there. I love that.

Kathy: And so you know, I just kind of spoke with him and, and we tried to figure out like, okay, is, do we have the same, are we [00:43:00] working towards the same thing or do we want the same end goals? And, and so I was able to figure out that, yes, we did want the same end goals. We just didn't really agree with all the ways of getting there.

Kathy: And so I said, You know so that's why I wrote out this kind of contract that is basically just kind of saying that that we really needed to like focus on our communication because our communication is very toxic, both of us on, from both sides, you know, we both gaslight each other. We both do all that stuff and, and it's all trauma responses.

Kathy: So but we're adults and we, we need to be able to Catch ourselves and be able to like say something in the moment without it being, being like taken defensively and and being able to kind of resolve it in the moment. And, and and so I just kind of wrote out that, um, like ways [00:44:00] to have like you know, respectful communication with each other and how like it's it's not gonna be perfect.

Kathy: It's not about perfection, it's just about you know, continuing to improve and we're gonna make mistakes and that's okay. But we need to be okay with the other person. mentioning that it's happening, you know?

Sarah: So how's it,

Sarah: how's it all working out?

Kathy: It's, it's been a slow progression, but there's been progression good.

Kathy: So, and I kind of knew it was going to be slow progression, especially because We are like lacking like medical health providers that can kind of assist in the situation. It's been hard because so the fact that like I had to pull our son out of school to homeschool him full time [00:45:00] means that, you know, he's basically around 24, seven and, um, and so we don't get a lot of, and we don't have like a lot of like family and friends or people that we can kind of, um, utilize for watching him.

Kathy: And so it makes it hard to kind of have that. Those more, um, intense, you know, relationship communications and stuff, but we've just kind of been finding little ways here and there and and it's, it's been it's been hard, but it's been improving.

Sarah: That's great. And you know, the, the peaceful parenting tools and the approach is really just relationship tools. And it sounds like you're sort of doing like a DIY marriage fix and, and healing journey, which is amazing. And just, you know, keep coming back to the peaceful parenting tools of you know, I, I, some things that come to mind that I think are helpful in relationships are, [00:46:00] you know, being curious.

Sarah: And assuming positive intent, and unless you know differently really leading with empathy those are, and also the most important one I think in relationships is to stop, drop, and breathe. That you, you know, you can't solve anything. I finally, I don't know how many years it took of fighting with my husband to realize that we never once, Solved an argument during the argument, but never once because you're too hijacked, right?

Sarah: You can't think clearly and when we finally started saying like let's talk about this when we're both calm and take a break a lot of times that We didn't even need to go back to the issue because we were only upset because we were upset

Kathy: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And I, and I know that one was a very difficult one.

Kathy: Because I was always I'm always the one who has been like very self aware that things are getting too heated for, for me and I need to take a break and come back to it. [00:47:00] But it was, it was very hard. For him to like accept that and, and it was kind of like, he had the worry that we weren't ever going to come back to it and didn't like leaving things unresolved.

Sarah: I

Sarah: can totally relate to that. And I think it was like my husband would often try to walk away or, you know, shut the door or whatever. And, and that would really activate my abandonment fears. You know, and that, that maybe is what's happening with your husband as well, is that he, you know, in those moments feels.

Sarah: Like you're abandoning him or something.

Kathy: Well, he told me that it was he cause he's doing much better with it now. But he said his biggest struggle was that he was he viewed it more as like, I was trying to get out of the conversation and I was using it kind of as an excuse to, to be able to step away.

Kathy: And that I would just like, Conveniently not remember to come back to it so I would never get addressed [00:48:00] again. Right. And so I had to just kind of tell him like, you just need to trust me that when I say like, I just need a break now, and we will come back to it, that. We will come back to it. 100%.

Kathy: And that's the word I was thinking of is that it takes trust to be able to take that pause and know that you will come back to it.

Kathy: The other person, you will hear the other person. But really just that trust factor.

Kathy: Yeah. And I know that we had lost a lot of that for quite some time. And so, but that was kind of one of the things that was in the contract of, like, if If we are going to have a relationship we need to be able to have that trust and that honesty and you know, it's, it doesn't work without it.

Kathy: And so and that's why I wanted to like have it in writing and have it just very, like as clear as I can to be able to kind of like Refer back to if needed to

kind of, you know, because [00:49:00] sometimes you can get over time you tend to forget and, and lose sight of things. And then you kind of have to like like regroup and get back to it, you know, and kind of remind yourself of like what you're.

Kathy: What matters, what you're working on. Cause you know, life happens and you get, you know, there's lots of overwhelming feelings. And so you can lose sight of things that are important. And sometimes you just need a little bit of a reminder, but I knew that like, if I don't have. Something very like concrete and written down like that.

Kathy: I wouldn't later be able to give a good reminder and to ground us back to that, you know, space.

Sarah: Yeah, and

Sarah: I think that's really helpful in parenting as well as your relationship. And I love that you did that. But I think sometimes unless we're. We're always recommitting to being peaceful and practicing the tools.

Sarah: It can be really easy to just fall off the wagon and forget [00:50:00] what you were trying to do.

Sarah: Thank you so much for the update. And I really appreciate you sharing that with us. And I think everyone's gonna, you know, be able to take something from that. So I appreciate it. Thank you, Kathy.

Kathy: Yeah, of course.

Sarah: Thanks for listening to this week's episode. I hope you found this conversation insightful and exactly what you needed in this moment. Be sure to subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast platform and leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. Remember that I'm rooting for you. I see you out there showing up for your kids and doing the best you can.

Sarah: Sending hugs over the airwaves today. Hang in there. You've got this.