



ESTRANGEMENT: TURNING PAIN INTO PEACE - MY JOURNEY

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ESTRANGEMENT SUFFOCATES!

I know because I've had my share of estranged relationships throughout my life. It's often referred to as the silent epidemic because you feel shame and suffer in silence rather than dealing with it and moving forward. You wonder what is wrong with you, and even question your true identity. Lies you believe keep you stuck. I believed them for a long time.

My mother once said, "You've had a lot to overcome." She is right. And I did overcome, and it is my sincere passion that my story will inspire and encourage you to keep moving forward, expose the lies you believe for what they are and find your true identity and the peace you desire.

As I share my story, I will start by saying that most of my estranged relationships are restored. I'll share painful memories but I write to inspire and encourage and not to bring shame or judgment on anyone. So often, women are expected to remain silent and not share their pain. We must. It is healing and healthy if it is done right. It took me a long time to work through many emotions. Shame, guilt, resentment, anger, blaming, unforgiveness, judging & grief. And I did work through those over many years. As a Christian, guilt & shame particularly suffocated me because of sinful decisions I had made. Feeling unworthy and unloved, I abandoned the faith I had known growing up.

But it's not all bad - there is hope! I'll share how I found healing, forgiveness, my true identity and lasting peace. So here goes.

Mom was faithful in ensuring she and her girls were at church on Sundays. We were involved in youth groups and I believed I was a Christian. I would learn that my true identity would come as a result of a personal relationship with Jesus - one I had yet to discover.

My biological father abandoned me and my mom when I was an infant. The father I knew adopted me when I was young, and I wasn't aware of that until my parents told me as I approached my teenage years. My family, like many in that era, didn't talk about such things. So, I was shocked when I learned the truth. I had three sisters who I had then discovered as half-sisters. I would later learn that I had another half-sister that was my biological father's daughter. It was a convoluted mess.

My relationship with my adoptive father was strained through adulthood. He had a mean streak, and I was sometimes the recipient. Today we would call what he did abusive. I will share later our reconciliation and how I learned how his own upbringing affected his parenting. Both fathers tainted my image of a dad and consequently of a loving God, and it would follow me for years.

Curiosity created in me a desire to meet my biological father, which I did when I was a teenager. I had heard terrible things about him, so I wasn't sure what to expect. He was short like me. He had an ego. And he was honest about his actions which I appreciated. I was glad I met him, but I didn't want to pursue a relationship. I was caught in the middle of a three-way rift between him and my parents. It was just easier to move on, and that was the end of it until I was married with a child.

THE NEXT WAVE OF ESTRANGEMENT WAS DURING MY DIVORCE.

And then the next chapter began – I got married at the ripe old age of 16 (almost 17, friends). And no, I wasn't pregnant. I think my parents didn't object because he was a nice man with a respectable job and seemed stable. And I had been in the height of teenage rebellion.

You can imagine a 16-year-old and 19-year-old marriage – both bringing their own demons and baggage into the relationship. A friend recently said, "A kid marrying a slightly older kid." And that was an accurate assessment. We had our issues as one might expect. And neared divorce more than once. But out of the troubled marriage came two wonderful kids. A biological son and an adopted daughter who was 4 when we got her.

As a family, we attended church, volunteered and I even taught Sunday school, attended bible study and volunteered to help my son's youth group church camp. I knew about God but I didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus early on. I had head and not heart knowledge of who Jesus was.

Yet somehow family and church connections kept us going for many years. We were what many thought was just a perfect little family, but we were far from that. We put up a good front for many years and we did have some good and happy times. But in the end, that wasn't enough to hold us together.

Years later, I met someone who had become a good friend. That's all we were for several years before we crossed the line. That became the catalyst for me seeking a divorce. I learned that my ex-husband had also been unfaithful, but all the blame would be placed squarely on me, because that wasn't well known, and I was the one who left. It was a sin with serious consequences looming.

My family wasn't pleased with this news. They understood the divorce as they had seen the issues we faced. But the affair compounded everything and like most divorces, the most negative impact is usually on the kids. That was true in my situation. Our divorce was far from amicable. It was ugly and our kids suffered greatly.

I want to be clear. The affair, divorce and remarriage in my case is sin according to the Bible. Though I'll talk about forgiveness, healing, restoration and blessings, it does not negate the fact that it was sin. No amount of justification can change that fact.

WHEN YOU INITIATE A DIVORCE IN A SMALL TOWN WHERE YOU ARE WELL KNOWN, YOU BECOME THE VILLAIN.

And that's what I was to many people. The reputation I had garnered was gone. Decisions I made had consequences yet to be revealed. My daughter did not want to move to Arizona where I would be living. She had friends, her school & sports. Through conversations with her and her father, she expressed her desire to stay in Colorado and great resistance to moving. I agreed to allow and not fight it and we worked out a coparenting plan that seemed to work for all of us.

My family didn't agree with this decision and felt that despite her wishes, she needed to go with me. Our already strained relationships were worsening.

Within a year of that decision, I was going to remarry. The man who had become my best friend and soul mate. We had set a date. A week prior my ex-husband was killed in a one car rollover. He made a decision to drive home while under the influence. He never made it. It was devastating to everyone - my kids, his family, my family, and me.

Grief and guilt overwhelmed me. I would be walking back into this situation where I was not wanted and had no idea what awaited except that I needed to be there for my kids. The grief and pain they were feeling was intense. My ex-husband's family filled my former home. I wasn't welcome there and so we met the kids where we were staying for the duration. I remember my mother saying she had been in the house when she overheard his family express shock that she was there. I began to wonder if I should even be there.

Grief hung in the air and so did hatred and blame toward me. I understood why they felt as they did, but it was painful. And I wanted to comfort my kids. It was a no-win situation, as I was an outsider in this horrible time for my family.

The funeral was coming and the elephant in the room was our daughter. She hadn't wanted to move and now she was going to be forced. My ex-husband's family lobbied for her to go and live with them. We felt she needed to be with me. Several of us sought the counsel of a therapist who agreed it would be best for her to be with her mother.

As my daughter came to live with us in Arizona, we were starting from a place of anger, blame and grief. She had heard the venom spewed about me. The blaming of me for her father's death. Conflicts were frequent. Within the next 18 months I reached out to the adoption counselor that had put us together. He gave some helpful counsel. As the next year and a half wore on, it was clear that she would make good on her promise to run away if I didn't do something to put distance between us. A decision had to be made.

I let her go to live with my ex-husband's niece. A move that would become permanent. Her requirement was that I sever my rights and allow her to adopt. I made the decision. A very painful time in my life. And hers too. And met with total estrangement by my family angered that I had given up on my daughter. That estrangement lasted several years.

I FELT LIKE A TOTAL FAILURE.

I began to believe what everyone else had said about me. I felt like a bird that was created to soar but whose wings had been removed. I was grounded with no ability to fly, covered in mud and mire and my head hung low to the ground. Shame overwhelmed me. I was living with consequences of decisions I had made, and they were painful to me and so many others. My effort at trying to be a good person was in the abyss. Unwelcome with family and friends, I was sure God didn't want me either. I was at my lowest point.

And that's when I remembered some of my church days and sensed God pulling me back to him. How could I? Didn't he hate me as much as they did? I had made such a mess of everything that it seemed implausible that he would forgive me. Deep down I wanted a relationship with God. But I doubted he wanted one with me.

Now I'll pause and say that growing up, my mom was a godly woman. She had been raised a Christian and church was part of her life and she made it part of ours. I am grateful for that heritage. But at this juncture, I had engaged in sinful behavior, got a divorce and was in a tangled mess. I had been judged, hated & abandoned by people who I knew to be Christians and though I understood their anger, I struggled with the rejection. And up to now, I frankly wanted no part of it anymore. I believed in God, but I was sure that he wanted nothing to do with me. Would he reject me too? Little did I realize how much he was pursuing a relationship with me. I realize as you read that you may not be a Christian or have any desire to know God. You may be repulsed by my sin. I understand. So was I. But God is faithful - even when we are not.

My husband had also gone to church, but to him it was a religious experience. He enjoyed going and he was musical so loved singing. But it wasn't life changing. We began going to a church, and looking back at how we landed on that doorstep seems like a miracle. It was God's divine intervention. We made new friends and John began to golf with the pastor. I also sought counseling there. We got involved. It felt good to be in church again. I realized that I had one place to go with my life and that was to my knees. I had made a mess that only He could fix.

That's where I encountered a God who was pursuing a relationship with me. A God who stood with open arms waiting for me to turn around to his embrace. A God who accepted my confession, forgave me, and loved me despite everything. While we were there, my husband discovered that being a Christian wasn't a religion. It was a relationship. He gave his testimony in Church on an Easter Sunday. His life changed for the better that day. And so did mine.

My identity changed as I exchanged the vision of God that I held previously to who I now knew he was. My old life was full of painful memories. My new life was as a child of God - loved, forgiven and restored to Him.

I had not been faithful but God was. It was a new beginning. A chance to live as a different person. An understanding and forgiving me. New eyes to see things from His perspective. New ears to hear differently. Transformed, I was ready to live again.

AS YEARS PASSED, I LONGED FOR A RELATIONSHIP AGAIN WITH MY FAMILY.

John had estrangement in his life too. We both missed our families, but it seemed hopeless that we would have those relationships again. Holidays were mostly spent with just the two of us. Grandchildren were born and there was no one except each other to share the joy. It was a gut-wrenching time filled with intense emotional pain. It was a blend of joy in our new relationship with God but disappointment that our families were still estranged.

But with God there is always hope. I learned that when wronged, people seek revenge, but God seeks restoration. Eventually, one by one over time, our families reconnected. Now, I'll tell you, once a relationship is severed and reconnected, it isn't the same nor should it be.

I love the paper story. Have you heard of it? Two sheets of paper - one representing you and the other a loved one. Mostly I've seen this with husband and wife but it can apply to any close relationship. Glue the papers together and let them sit for a minute or two. Now try to separate them and what you'll see is the pages torn and ripped apart. That's what happens when loved ones committed to one another are unfaithful or reject the relationship. Initiating no-contact seems easier to some. But that's a lie too. When reconciliation comes, you can't go back to the relationship as it was.

You don't want the relationship that created the rejection. They don't either. So, it was important to know that this was going to be a rebuilding time in my family and his. It would take prayer, love, forgiveness, acceptance, establishing healthy boundaries and patience - lots of patience.

Forgiveness is the fundamental key to healing and peace in broken relationships. It's also the hardest. I knew and owned my part and apologized to my kids & others for the hurt I caused. I also had to learn to forgive abuse, rejection and judgment. It isn't an easy endeavor and I learned that it's a process. It's not a one-and-done decision. And it doesn't mean an automatic reconciliation of a relationship. Forgiveness is what God commands us to do. He says to forgive as you've been forgiven. Well, how could I not forgive others when God had forgiven me of so much? I asked God to soften their hearts from estrangement to reconciliation. He said, "I can do that, but first I want to soften yours." Ouch!

My relationships with my family are now stronger than ever. All bitterness, anger, blaming - it was gone. God had strengthened our relationships with one another and with Him - as only He can do. It produced amazing peace that I had never experienced previously.

You don't feel those that hurt you deserve forgiveness sometimes, but God showed me that He had forgiven when I didn't deserve it, so how could I not forgive? It was the most freeing thing I have ever done.

IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT THE GENERATIONAL CURSE THAT SOME SPEAK OF IS REAL.

How far back do you go when confronting things that have happened to you? My grandfather did terrible things to my adoptive dad. Who knows what may have happened with my grandfather's childhood. My biological father hurt my mother terribly and that affected me. Eventually, I learned I had to forgive for my own peace. Holding a grudge and bitterness only led to more angst and grief. I wanted to be done with it.

As I stated early on, my mom once said, "You've had a lot to overcome." And that's the beauty of my story. With Jesus, no matter what your past, you can overcome. My biological father and I reconnected. He owned his part which I appreciated and although we were never close, we had a relationship and I learned more about that side of my family.

My adoptive father and I healed our broken relationship. It really was nothing short of a miracle. It was through his stroke and illness that we reconnected in a deeper more meaningful way. He had given his life to the Lord and become a changed man. Forgiveness flooded our souls and God restored joy and peace within our relationship.

My daughter and I have reconnected and are working on a new relationship. She has done well and is married to a wonderful man who adores her as she deserves. She has worked hard to overcome all that has happened in her life. I am immensely proud of her and grateful to the ones who raised her after me and gave her what I could not.

My son was an adult following graduation and out on his own when the divorce occurred. Any attempts to "mother" him were rejected and he set out and made his own mistakes before settling down, marrying, and having two children. He's done well and I am proud of him, too. He and I were estranged for quite some time. He hadn't dealt with the demons in his life - some caused by me - and that made me sad. It hurts when you know your own issues & pain caused the same in your kids.

He told me that he blamed me for the divorce and death of his father. I know the pain of having an adult child who doesn't want a relationship. It hurts beyond description, but I learned how to accept it without allowing it to cripple me emotionally. God didn't want me to hold anger, resentment and bitterness. He wanted me to forgive and to hold space for him to process things in his own time.

In some of my counseling, the therapist said to me "Don't you dare take on the guilt of your ex-husband's death." It was a heavy burden I had carried up to that point. I realized that my son blaming me was partially misplaced anger and grief and that he would have to deal with his dad's decision to drink and drive. As a mother, I wanted to fix it. But I couldn't. It was incredibly sad but the therapist's advice gave me some space to begin to heal from that accusation. He has dealt with these things and I'm proud to be his mama and to once again have a healthy relationship.

REMEMBER THE BIRD WITH THE CLIPPED WINGS?

Estrangement, as I've said, causes intense shame and guilt, isolation, and emotional pain so strongly it weighs you down. You miss family celebrations and feel like an outsider in your own family. God showed me that although the family estrangement I experienced was painful, my chosen estrangement from Him created pain in His heart. I had turned my back on God and when I realized that in spite of that, He still wanted a relationship with me, it was life changing.

It was as though; he took that muddy, matted, tarred, feathered soul, and gave me a new wardrobe. Brand new, clean, and streamlined ready to do that for which I was created. He gave me new wings and then he lifted my head and said: I created you for a purpose and put dreams and desires in you. You've been weighed down by guilt and shame and now that you realize that I've taken that from you, you're free. You can hold your head high because you are my daughter, loved, accepted, forgiven, and pursued. So put that past behind you, learn the lessons and take off because you have remarkable things ahead.

And do you know what? I did! That new perspective and confidence fueled the passions inside. The restored relationships with my family was very special. Getting to know my husband's family was equally blessed. Together my husband and I started two businesses and built them from scratch to highly successful companies. In those we were able to help a lot of people realize their dreams and goals too. It was rewarding and fulfilling. I've held leadership positions that have had a positive impact on other people and entities. Had I remained stuck in self-pity, mired in shame and guilt and lived life apart from God, I know it would've held me back professionally too. A life apart from Jesus affects every aspect of one's life.

Now, hearing all this, I don't know where you are in your spiritual relationship with God. You don't have to agree with me, but it is my journey. It was my encounter with Jesus and it changed the trajectory of my life. It secured where I will spend eternity.

And on December 24, 2017, in a Christmas Eve service, I sensed God telling me to tell my story. I had no idea what that looked like and I've been working on it, listening, talking with pastor/teachers, praying, and allowing him to do some work that I needed to grow in my faith and relationship with Him.

And the result is that my passion and purpose is to help women like you. Women who have been or are in estranged relationships. Who wonder if God loves them or wants a relationship. One of the gifts God has given me is encouragement and no one knows more than me how much that matters when you are estranged from God or anyone else.

GOD CAN USE YOUR SIN AND PAIN FOR HIS GOOD.

Estrangement. It threatened to destroy me and every relationship I had. And I fought hard. But as hard as I tried, it wasn't enough. I needed God who said in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you; plans to prosper and not harm you. Plans for a hope and future."

If he created me and had a plan and purpose for my life, then I needed him to help me figure it out. And he did. I discovered that God is faithful – always. Even when we are not.

Where are you in your family relationships? Whether you are at fault or not, estrangement is painful. Even when you've worked through a lot of it, triggers come and threaten to take you down again. Your wings are clipped, and your head is hung low. Your self-esteem feels shredded. You aren't even sure if you want reconciliation, but you know that you want the guilt and shame to go away. You want peace. You want to feel loved and accepted. I know because I felt all of that. And it was only through surrender to Jesus and accepting Him as my Savior, that I found wholeness and peace.

God used my sinful past and pain to bring me into a relationship with Him. He often uses our past once we are His children to fulfill His purpose for our lives. It was my past experiences, His Spirit and gifting that caused me to see His purpose for me. To help other women in estranged and broken relationships. To rediscover Him. To find joy and peace that only He can offer. That is the passion and joy of my heart.

“Forgiveness was elusive and I never thought it would be possible for me. I wasn't the one to leave the relationship. I was just a kid when my father left, and I didn't deserve to be rejected. I thought forgiveness meant reconciliation and I wasn't sure I was ready for that. I was deeply hurt and didn't feel he deserved my forgiveness. What I learned is that nothing would change in my mind to give me peace until I was willing to pursue forgiveness. He may not deserve to be forgiven, but I deserve peace and if forgiving him would give that to me, then I was ready to move forward. That freedom brought profound peace and an end to the cycle of negative self-worth, blaming and staying stuck.”

— ROBIN A

YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY GROUNDED. HE CREATED YOU TO SOAR.

Together we'll discover how you can overcome guilt and shame, learn the process of forgiveness, and find the amazing peace you desire so you can be free of the emotional pain.

I want to help you lift that beautiful head and see the incredible woman that He created you to be. To help you dispel lies you may believe about God and to learn your true identity in Him. And to find peace in Jesus, and discover your passion – your unique calling so that you can leave the mark on this world that only you can.



DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH ESTRANGEMENT AS I DID?

Are these questions you ask yourself?

- Who am I really? What is my true identity?
- Am I a terrible person?
- Could God reject me too? Does he even care?
- Do I even want to reconcile with the estrangement?
- What does forgiveness look like?
- How do I manage these triggers that come out of nowhere?
- Will I ever have peace with this?
- Is the pain holding me back from what I really seek in life?

If so, then I am here for you. I'll be your advocate and listen to your story. Sometimes, you need an outside person to help you move forward. I knew my friends were tired of hearing my sad story, and I didn't need sympathy. I needed Jesus to get unstuck and move forward.

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As a church goer most of my life, I was broken-hearted to realize that there was no permission to share my pain and brokenness. I felt I did not fit the model they taught and so I lived with my secret estrangement until I discovered Becky and her story. She helped me rebuild my self-esteem and learn the truth about who I am and as a result it's set me on a path to move forward with my estrangement in a healthy manner.”

— DONNA B

WHAT'S NEXT?

BLOG & PODCAST

Some days you just need some encouragement. And that's why I created a **blog** and a **podcast**. Some enjoy reading and others love to turn on a podcast while commuting or exercising. I offer insights, hope and strategies when dealing with the issues of estrangement. It's a way to stay in touch without making a commitment right now.

CONNECT

If this speaks to you, then here's how you can connect with me online:



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email becky@beckykolb.com

REACH OUT

Reach out to me to see what coaching is and how I can help you. **I offer 1:1 coaching to help you move forward when you are stuck.**

Are you ready for a discovery connection to see what it's all about? **Fill out this short form** and let's get to know each other a bit. You have assurance of privacy and complete confidence in what you share with me.

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