



Episode 14

HOPE

with Domestic Abuse Survivor

September Burton

Good morning! Welcome to Toni Talks -- Humanity Matters. I'm Toni Julian, your host today, and I have a special guest who, much like myself, is a true survivor. Her life has been upended, and she reached out so she can help inspire others through sharing her story of abuse by what she calls 'the nicest guy you'll ever meet.' The good news is we heard you talk about your healing journey. So I would like to welcome you, September Burton, to my show.

September: Toni, thank you so much. I love your show and I love everything you're doing. It's an honor to be on your show. Thank you.

Toni: Thank you. I'm really, really pleased you're here. One of the things that I think about when people are willing to share their story, as I have, is that we have a lot in common and that it takes a certain amount of bravery. It really does, because part of it is that we're having to share our past and the things that have damaged us in a way, and maybe that's too strong of a word, but there's so much to overcome. And so what I love is your story, and where I'd like to start is, to talk about the frame of reference of what has happened in your life and why you're on my show, what you can share with us about that. And then as we go through it, move forward into some of the real positive aspects of how you've overcome it, how you are healing. And healing is a process, right? And those types of things to share with people so that we can inspire them. And as you and I talked about on the phone, as well, is you don't have to be a domestic abuse survivor, or other types of abuse survivors, to get a lot out of this conversation, because we all, as women, need this. Like as long as there is not pure gender equality throughout the world, all women need to hear this. So with that, let's start at the beginning of your story. What would you like to share?

September: So frame of reference, basically, I was in a relationship with an attorney. We had several children together. We were together for about five years. And at the end of the

relationship, he started recording me all day, every day, and using those recordings to learn my triggers, really study my biggest areas of insecurity and really learn how to manipulate me and get me. And he pushed me past my breaking point. And it was all very intentional because he knew that he was done with the relationship because I had stopped seeing him as a god. (Toni: Shame on you!) There's a funny meme out there that says my ex and I split up for religious differences - he thought he was God, and I didn't! So, when I started seeing, and saying, I have needs too, you know, my needs need to be met, things like that, he couldn't handle that. So he set it up. Like I said, he's an attorney, and he knew exactly what he needed to get me to say, what he needed to get me to do in order to basically go to court and get full custody of our kids and leave me with absolutely nothing. He took the home, he took the cars, he took the money. He took it all. I got literally nothing. He left me with a permanent spinal injury, but the courts ruled that I was guilty of domestic violence and he was not. And then after the separation, he started stalking - he was hacking into my home security system, making it so that he could turn off my system, unlock my front door and literally just walk in without anybody having any idea. All kinds of stalking behaviors. And so finally, after about seven months of being stalked, I fled. I just simply couldn't take the fear anymore. I took something called the mosaic threat assessment, which you can get online. So if you're in a situation where you're fearful, you can kind of use this to assess your level of threat. And I hired a domestic violence investigator, and she told me to take this assessment and he scored a nine out of 10. And I already knew intuitively that I was in danger, that my life was in extreme danger at this point. And so when I saw that, like that quantitative actual number on the screen, I was like, I gotta get out of here. I had some friends help me out, got me out within a few days and got myself to safety. He did find me. I went to Hawaii at first. He did find me in Hawaii and so I've since left there and at this point am still living in hiding. So that's kind of the background, the main points of the story right there.

Toni: Wow. So the things that you're bringing up are psychological abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse. What other ones can we identify?

September: There was some spiritual abuse, there was sexual abuse. I have a therapist I still work with, and she pulled out a list of every type of abuse that somebody can do to another person. We went down the list and we checked off every single item. There wasn't a single one on there that didn't happen during that relationship. So that was kind of an eye opening thing.

Toni: That's incredible. My heart just goes out to you. That's a lot to go through. And you're a strong woman for really removing yourself from that situation. And I can imagine that level of fear. I've had some similar things going on in my life; not quite like that. But if you look at all those different parts and what about him, do you think, made him want to continue with the stalking after he got what he wanted? Was it just to punish you, like was he sociopathic in a way. What was going on, do you think at that point?

September: Well, I think when you think about the seven months of recording all day, every day, while still sleeping next to me, talking about the future, saying, 'I love you,' things like that - that is sociopathic behavior right there. So, you know, I'm obviously not going to diagnose him; I'm not a mental health professional. I just know my experience. I do think

that we are getting into some sociopathic, pretty scary intensive stuff. And what made him want to keep doing it? I think it's control. Stalking is about control, and I think that's one of the misconceptions. People think that a stalker just wants to be with this person. No, a stalker wants to be with that person so that they can control that person. And so when you're talking about stalking, - you know, he hired a mental health professional during the court investigation stuff, while it was all going on, and she got on the phone with me and she was telling me how much he loves me and what a soft spot he has for me. And I was like, okay, you have a PhD in psychology, he is destroying my character in court, I mean, ripping me to shreds, and he still has the capacity to give you the impression that he's still in love with me? And you're not picking up on this? Like that is scary. I mean, that's just scary right there.

Toni: Right. To trick a professional who should recognize these things is - he's good, right? He's really good at this, clearly. (September: Very scary.) So you talked about fear a little bit, and that must've been horrifying, terrifying. How did you start to find your grounding, your bearing and say, okay, I'm going to make changes? In our phone conversation, you used the term flee, which is you are afraid for your life. What helped you think about, okay - I'm going to start here and to pick myself up and - where was that turning point for you? What kind of techniques, or tips, or thoughts, did you have that helped put you in that situation?

September: Listening to my intuition, really trusting my intuition on a very, very deep level. I've always trusted my intuition, but this really has solidified the important stuff, trusting those gut instincts. Another thing was I had women supporting me. I had women backing me up. The reason that I was able to flee and get out the way that I did was because I was big in the networking world. I love networking. And I had been at an event, and there was a woman there and she saw, you know everybody could see that I wasn't okay. I would put on this smile and I would try to pretend that I was okay, but it's pretty easy to see past that when you know somebody. And so we were at this event and she pulled me aside and she said, look, I've experienced stalking. I know what you're going through. She said, I know people, and if you need help, I'm a phone call away. And I thought, okay. And kind of thanked her and went on my way. And that was right about the time when I did that mosaic threat assessment; it was a couple of days after that. And I saw that I knew I was in danger and I finally just called her. I couldn't take it anymore. I said, I need help and I need help now. And so she really was one of the biggest players in getting me out of there. So the support of women - and that's really kind of one of my foundational pieces at this point, because of everything that I've been through, because I heal with women backing me up and supporting me. The support that you get when you reach out to other women, especially other women who have experienced it and can empathize with you and understand what you're going through. There's just nothing in the world like it. So I think that when women heal together, there is just this magical, intense power that it's like it just makes me want to like jump out of my skin because it's so cool. So getting a support system of women in place is really important.

Toni: I really love that. And especially what you say about intuition. And I think for women, and this is just what I've seen through my life - my observation is that women were kind of taught to suppress that. Not kind of taught, we *are* taught to suppress that, and the way our

society is set up is it's male dominated. It has been for thousands of years and women have been considered to be the supporters of men. And I'm gonna get a little bit of religion here. I don't really want to take it down this path, but basically women came from the rib of Adam and we are a subset. We're really not a subset. And I think when you look at these types of abuse, it's directly proportional to the amount of gender equality there is in that particular part of the world and when there's equality, there's less abuse. And when there's no equality, there are all kinds of horrific things that happen in other countries, especially, but these women that are in these other countries are like – intuition, what's that? It's completely shut off. But you and I, we go through our lives and we hear our higher self-talk. And when we hear, when we're in touch with that - I am also clairaudient, so I do hear a lot, and that can be considered intuition or something very spiritual. And I think we all have that ability, but we shut it off and we all have those answers if we listen to it. And if we hear little flags – what is it about us women that we'll disregard that because he does that, he did that for me, so therefore that part of what I'm not happy with, or what makes me feel small, doesn't apply, or we tend to make excuses for people. And I work with a lot of women, and I have actually a group it's called Group Hug on Facebook, where I have about four or 500 people, and most of them are women. And it's just a place of support and lifting people up. And there's so much power in that. It's only probably about six months old, but I'm watching it evolve. I had a text the other day where woman said, thank you for helping me get my self-esteem back. Nice. So you know, the things that we do, September, like the impact of this conversation that we're having and the work that you go out and do, and people that you talk to, and the women that you're talking about in these supportive women groups, just the impact that you make - you could say one thing to one person and that could change their life. So we women do need to stick together. I am a huge believer of that. We can't wait for governments to control things, we can't wait for men to control things, we can't wait for anybody to make these changes, except for right here, right? Each individual person. And coming together is super powerful.

September: I think it's super powerful because we encourage each other's intuition. And I think that when we listen to our intuition, that's when our whole worlds change. If I had listened to my intuition about this specific relationship, I would have gotten out of it within probably two months of getting into it. If I had listened to my intuition.

Toni: I was going to ask you about that. Looking back, were the signs there? Your intuition was telling you this isn't a good deal for me?

September: Yeah, absolutely. My intuition was telling me that the red flags were not red flags. They were flashing neon lights.

Toni: I always say that if we don't learn things the first time, God will whack us upside the head. Like, okay, get this! Like you've been through this. Not that you have, but I don't know - were there other relationships in your life, do you think, that might've kind of been down this path before?

September: Absolutely. I was married. I got married at 24 years old and he was definitely on the spectrum of narcissism as well. So yeah, I did it twice. But what worked for me the second time, actually getting out of the second relationship, was that I found a therapist

who was a woman and was supportive of intuition and those kinds of things. And so that was really the key for me. She was really the driving force behind okay, I am being abused and I don't need to be abused and I want to get away from this so that I stop being abused in my life. And so finding a good therapist, I'm a huge fan of that.

Toni: Yes. So between a therapist, supportive women and listening to your intuition, those are like the three main things that have helped you. (September: Yeah.) Do you meditate? Like how do you tap into your intuition, what works for you?

September: I do meditate. I do a centering exercise that I do at least once a day. Sometimes my goal is to get up to three times a day just because it's so powerful. But for some reason, I think that we kind of do a little bit of self-sabotaging where you're not quite ready to be back healthy yet, and I don't do three times a day yet, but I do the meditation. It's incredibly important to me, and there's such a huge difference in my world and in a way that things happen when I do it, as opposed to when I stop doing it for a little while. Another thing I do is breathing exercises, because one of the things that I've learned is that victims don't breathe, especially when you have PTSD, which you know, if you've been through a situation like this, you tend to develop complex PTSD. I had a friend who was a yoga instructor at the juvenile detention center in town, and she told me - she was the one that really brought this to my attention - she told me that when she would go do these yoga sessions with these kids, she could always tell who had PTSD because they would usually kind of sit back in the corner and not wanting to participate so much. But then she would start doing the breathing exercises and they would start to yawn. And she said that people with PTSD, if they watch other people breathe, they yawn because we don't breathe. And so when we see other people doing it, that's like a reflexive thing, like, oh my body does need oxygen. Breathing exercises are really, really important because I still hold my breath. And I notice myself doing it frequently - I hold my breath.

Toni: Yeah, I do find myself sometimes holding my breath or sometimes shallow breathing. I have a personal training background, and the way that the muscles constrict in our body, it just doesn't allow any oxygen in. It actually gives us different imbalances and things in our body from a physical standpoint as well, over time. And I do have PTSD, right? And I have worked through that as well. You know, it's like when you're always on edge, you're always waiting for something to happen, you don't breathe. You're ready to respond and isn't it exhausting, September, to be on alert all the time?

September: Exhausting. It really is.

Toni: How are you sleeping? Are you sleeping better?

September: I slept really well in Hawaii. Where I am now, I'm not sleeping as much and I'm not sure why. When I fall asleep, I sleep fine through the night. I have a lot of vivid dreams. Last night I dreamt about lions, which I actually think the lions were really, really cool cause they were kind of watching, observing. And I think that that's a sign of power and courage and things like that. So I took that to be a very positive thing. But yeah, a lot of dreams. But I talked to friends who do dream interpretations and things like that, so I'm always analyzing

the dreams. Like, what does this mean? Is this good? Does this mean I'm on the right track kind of stuff? So I love this stuff, but that all goes back to intuition.

Toni: Sure. It really does. And do you journal?

September: No, not right now. That's another one that I know I want to be doing, but I'm not there yet. I'm not sure why. One of the things is that I'm always on the go, like I never watch TV, I don't watch movies, I just don't sit down. I'm always moving forward doing something. And so for me to sit down long enough to journal is asking too much.

Toni: Yeah. I'm a long time journaler, and I'll go through phases where I'll feel like it'll serve me and I'll need to write down those dreams that I had. And I know they were very meaningful and very vivid, or I got a visit from my guide or whatever. And then in other ones, someone will tell me something very deep that I needed to know that or that I knew or suspected, and that's my validation. You know, someone would come into a dream. Like I have a girlfriend who's super sick. She's been bedridden with MS for a couple of years, and she said something to me in this dream, and I just looked at her and I said, I know, I know. And then her husband said something like, I know. So it was cool. This journaling shouldn't be a chore. I kind of feel like it should be organic, and when it serves us we know. I know I'm in this phase right now where I should start writing again. I started journaling a little bit - just dreams or thoughts or things like that. And what I love about it - and this may or may not be for you personally, you're doing a great job at working through things - but I think for some people, like for me, when I journaled and I've looked back and see, wow, I've grown so much in this year! Or like, oh, that's so interesting. I've developed my intuition, it's so much stronger, and I'm listening to this and I'm hearing that. And you can look back and see progress, which I love, because I just kind of think we could look at where we are right now and we can think, oh, in a year, I want to be here. Like for you, you want to have your children back and you want to have your life back. And the things that were taken from you that are yours, that you deserve are not there right now. And so we can envision these things moving forward, but looking back, sometimes we kind of lose track of where we were. We know where we were, but where our mindset was. And when we journal, we can capture that. I feel, especially when we hand write, like we capture parts of our spirit that would only be there if we hand write it.

September: I completely agree with you that you do. There's something about hand writing it out that's very special. And then I also think that it unclogs some of your blockages and things like that. Like if you just keep writing and writing, it can help unblock that stuff. So I have done - there's a system of journaling called morning pages. Have you heard of that one?

Toni: I have not, September. Why don't you explain that to me and our listeners?

September: There's an artist who wrote a book and her name is escaping me at the moment, I'm sorry, but she has a protocol called morning pages. And what you do is first thing in the morning, as soon as you wake up, you write three pages, and it's front and back. You just write and you just simply force yourself to keep writing. And she says that the first third is fairly easy. And then the second third becomes a little bit more challenging, but that last

final page is where you start to unblock. And that's where you're just writing any random thing that comes to you, kind of trying to focus on the positives and the gratitude and things like that. But it's really just about unblocking yourself. I've definitely done that over the years at different points in my life. And it's powerful, very powerful.

Toni: That's another great tool for people to explore, I think, and I've heard of people sitting down in the morning and just having that regimen and religiously, like really religiously, writing and that it does unblock a lot. And it's interesting to see how it changes people's mindsets. This may be a little bit off topic, but do you feel that when people do that, it puts them in a better state of being able to cope with stress of the day and just kind of normal life things? That our perspective kind of puts us on a higher - bigger picture, right? Instead of getting into the nits and being concerned about these little things and spending all this energy on things that maybe don't matter all that much. Do, do you feel like it is, in itself, centering and grounding?

September: I definitely think it's centering and grounding and elevating and all of those kinds of things. I think that acceptance is a huge part of it. If you're angry, it's perfectly okay to write angry. Like there's nothing wrong with that. You never have to go back and read it. Nobody else ever has to read it. You can burn it if you want to. I do think that there's a lot to be said for gratitude and for looking forward and focusing on that. It rewires your brain. Accept if you're sad and you're sobbing as you're writing this page. Just accept that that's where you're at right now and that's perfectly okay. And I think that acceptance of where you're at right at this moment is a huge piece of moving on to the next phase. It's okay to be where you're at. If you're really angry right now, being really, really angry right now. It's totally okay. And then once you get past those emotions of that anger, and then you come to a different place. And I think it gets easier to get to that place of gratitude and that place of positive mindset and things like that.

Toni: Yeah, that's beautiful. I mean, what we're really taught growing up is that we're supposed to be quiet, we're supposed to not be angry, we're supposed to be happy, we're supposed to accept everything. You wrote something to me, which I loved, in your email to me - you said, 'I believed it must be my fault that I was being abused. And if I were only better, smarter, skinnier, quieter, wealthier, and so many more 'ers,' you would stop abusing me and we could be happy together.' And so much of that is like our emotions. You weren't allowed to show any of those emotions. You couldn't be angry, you couldn't be frustrated. You had to fit into this very small little non-realistic sliver of what he felt was perfect. And that happens so much in society.

So I love acknowledging our feelings. They're all our feelings, right? And you can't lose an argument by saying, 'I feel this way.' I think this is a great tool for women. I feel this way. Nobody can argue that because of, well, wait a minute - no, no, no - I'm not talking about fact; I'm saying I feel this way and you can't argue how I feel only. One of my hot buttons! I have a member of my family who always used to tell me how I felt. And he was a man, a male sibling. I'm like, 'no, you can't tell me how I feel. You can't tell me how I think, what I think - that's not your jurisdiction.' Right? So we women need to get that in our heads right away, teach our daughters.

September: And that's exactly what my abuser would do. He would tell me how I feel. He would tell me what I'm supposed to think and what I'm supposed to do. But with him, it was like living with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. And I never knew on any given day who was coming home and what he wanted me to be like with the 'ers' that we just talked about. It was different every single day. And I never knew - am I supposed to wear more makeup today? Am I supposed to not wear makeup today? I just never knew what it was that he was going to want me to be that day. And so that's part of the control – it's confusing your mind. It's all about trying to control you.

Toni: Last night I was watching this program that was really interesting. It was about, I think it was a company called Nexium? Nexius? Something like that. And it was kind of cult-like, but it was about these women, especially, who would be brought into this organization under the pretense of how to be your best self, you're going to be this, you're gonna be that, lots of training and to really push through pain. I mean, you only grow when you're uncomfortable. And so it taught this group of women, and some men were there too, but it taught them to disregard their intuition, to disregard their feelings, to just listen to this leader of this organization who probably had one of the highest IQs in the world. This man was just really brilliant, so people and were so impressed with him. And it turned out that there was a secret society where these women were just fighting their intuition, tamping it down, saying 'I don't feel comfortable, there's something wrong with this.' This man would control their diet. They became emaciated, they were exhausted. They were only allowed to sleep two, three hours a night, so sleep deprivation. It's a series I have way more to watch, but the way that it ended was a photograph of a brand. These women were branded to be followers, devoted followers of this man for life. And there were sexual things that went on, of course, but they were physically branded. This is in the United States; this isn't in some country where they do genital mutilation and things. It's here, and these women allowed it. Oh my goodness. So yeah, so much of this is this indoctrination of disregarding that intuition and being isolated from people that live a more balanced life. And it's just absolutely crazy. So moving forward, what keeps you motivated now, in spite of everything that you've been through?

September: What keeps me motivated is getting my life back. There's a knowing in me. I worked with an energetic type healer recently and she said, 'I want you to do a little bit of homework and study the word hope and see what the word hope means.' And the definition that I found for the word hope that I absolutely love, is confident expectation. And I thought that was so much better than what we think hope is, like some fluffy, no substance to it type of a word. But when you think of it as confident expectation, I can say, I hope I get my kids back, because I confidently expect that I will be with my children again, very soon. And so that's a big part of what keeps me going. Recently I've started taking back every piece of my life that I can take back right now. I'm taking it back, and that's been a big, a big thing. That's a very recent thing. This healing journey is very much a journey and so taking back the pieces of my life that I can take back right now. Another thing that I've really discovered is feminist poetry, and there are some feminist poets out there who their stuff just like pierces straight to the center of my heart. (Toni: Wow! Cool!) It makes you feel like you're just on fire and you can fight this patriarchy and we don't have to be held down anymore. Yes I am powerful. I am a woman and I am as powerful as it comes. One that I really love and I'm just

going to paraphrase it, but it's basically saying, there are dragons in this world, but what they don't know is that we'll always be ready with coal wedged between our lips and a match wedged between our fingers. Part of the reason that I speak is because my power is in my voice. And so speaking out and helping other women and hopefully inspiring other women to get out of these abusive relationships and know that they deserve a better life than this. That's a big part of my power and my taking my power back and restoring my life. So I love that one because yes, I will breathe fire, and I am breathing fire by speaking out and by sharing my story. Yes, I went through hell but it's okay. It's okay. And now I can take my story and I can help others. And so that's where I'm at. So the feminist poetry, I just love it. It's great stuff. There's also a book called "Women Who Run with the Wolves." Have you read that one? (Toni: I've not, but I will.) That one is a powerful book. Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes is the name of the author of that one. And so I think that every woman on the planet should be reading when you're running with the wolves. It's a great one. It talks a lot about intuition and how powerful your intuition is and how to respect your intuition and things like that. How to respect the more wild side of your femininity.

Toni: I love that. I think for people it could be poetry, right? I know I get fired up through music, songs – don't try to hold me back! It's wonderful. And I do totally agree with you. Like the power of the voice is so strong and women need to speak up. We need to not be afraid of what people think of us, how they perceive us. And one thing that COVID has kind of done for me and – you've probably been in kind of the COVID state, in a way, lot longer – is that it has given us time to just kind of re-center, reflect and pivot, and I love opportunities to pivot. When you have time to really be in touch with that intuition and do some of these things for ourselves. I want to ask you about your self-care and your nutrition next. The things that we can do for ourselves and just even taking a little bit of time out of our day, maybe a half hour or 20 minutes or 10 minutes to meditate, or listen to something that moves us and inspires us. Yoga or whatever it is, but doing these things where you can re-center yourself, reconnect with yourself, ground yourself. And I have lots of techniques and tools, as well, for that from spiritual, energy healers and things that I have learned over the years, but would you share with us some of the things that you do to take time out for yourself for self-care and self-love and just acknowledging your beautiful spirit of a person that you are?

September: Yeah. So one of the biggest things that I do - I'm all about food. My background is in nutrition. Every single time that you eat, that's an opportunity to love yourself. That's an opportunity to give yourself this self-care. You have to eat either way. So why not take it as an opportunity to say yes, this is my self-care practicing time, and I'm only going to feed my body nourishing healthy foods, because I love myself enough to know that I deserve to have a healthy body and a healthy mind. And I think one of the things that we don't really talk about a lot, but inside your body, emotions are tangible. They're molecules, they're real, and they can get stuck and they can get clogged. So eating well so that your organs are filtering properly and they're functioning at top notch, that actually helps to get the emotions out of you. Yes, I lived in fear. I lived in terror. But do those emotions have to be stuck in my body? Not unless I choose for them to be. So that's a big part of why I eat a lot of greens and a lot of vegetables and things like that, so that my organs can stay clean, continue processing those. Another thing that I love to do is walk. I don't know if a mental health professional

would agree with me on this or not, but are you familiar with EMDR therapy? (Toni: No) It's eye movement therapy.

Toni: Oh yes! I just didn't know what it was called, but I have seen that before.

September: Yes. It's EMDR. I don't remember - eye movement something. Anyway, I believe that walking might be the original form of EMDR because the whole theory of EMDR is to take the emotion back and forth between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. So when you're walking, it's back and forth, very rhythmic back and forth, back and forth. So I'm walking 15,000 steps a day. Sometimes 20. Yesterday I had a very anxiety, emotional day. And so yesterday I was at 23,000 steps. So I'll do that just to process the emotions, just to keep them going, see that rhythmic back and forth, left and right hemispheres of the brain, just to keep it going. And it's such a simple thing. Obviously that took a while yesterday, but that's not the norm for me, but just keep your body moving, keep those things going. I think it's important back and forth. I don't understand the whole theory and premise behind it, but it makes a difference. So that's another thing that I do. Like I said, the breathing, the active meditation, just a lot of acceptance and a lot of observance. I'm very aware of, how am I feeling today? Where am I at today? And if I have a day with a lot of anxiety, then I'm going to do something to help calm down the anxiety. I'm going to take some supplements that help process anxiety feelings, or I'm going to do a lot of walking. I'm going to be very careful with what I eat that day. So just a lot of observation. I'm constantly learning about me. I'm a student of myself more than anything. So just really paying attention and again, going back to the poetry and feminism and surrounding myself with strong women who are powerful, who are expressing that power. And that means listening to podcasts like yours some days, that means reading the poetry some days, going out with friends who are on that path. Surrounding yourself with people who really are taking that power back. There are a lot of social media accounts where women are very very powerful and speaking out on their social media accounts. There are so many different ways in our modern world to find those women who are on the same wavelength as you. I think that surrounding yourself with that is really incredibly powerful and incredibly healing. It gives you permission, I think, to express that side of you.

Toni: Yeah, I think it's nice when you see other people doing it, it makes you feel safer. Like, okay, I'm not the first person to express myself. This person did it. And it's funny because I think it kind of goes back to fear – if I say this, then something bad's going to happen. Well, I've said things – hey, just saying what was on my mind! That's cool. But for women, little steps, right? You can kind of speak your truth in little steps. You don't have to come out from being in this shell and just trying to meet other people's expectations. What are your truths? And really being honest and being in touch with yourself and sharing that. One thing that I learned that I thought was so wonderful, and this is after a few years of being married, and it was that okay, I have a little bit of an issue with this but I don't know how to say it yet. And so I would start to say, oh, I'm a little uncomfortable with that, but I'm not exactly sure why. I need a little bit of time to think about my feelings around it. So we don't always have to have the answers, right? We don't always have to have this, but we can speak our truth and speak out. And the power of that voice is so powerful. Then when you see other people doing it, you're like, okay, they did it and they're fine. They did it, and they're respected.

Look at all these women that are being respected for speaking their voice. And so many of us can be tamped down by saying, oh, you're just a woman's libber. I mean, that's just like the old 1970's way of slapping women down. You're a women's libber. Oh, you're a bra burner or you're a tree hugger or you're whatever - these labels come out and get put on us. And it's like, forget all that. And especially, usually somebody like me, who's lived through those eras and the younger women now I think are a little bit better, but I want our daughters - did you have daughters, September, or sons?

September: Yeah, five daughters and two sons.

Toni: Five daughters and two sons! Wow, that's beautiful. So we want our children, our daughters and our sons, to understand that we women need to speak ourselves. For your children, I wonder about their perspective on this and how they're going to view women after you come back to your strong self and get your life back, that'll be interesting. And you don't have to talk about it, but it just is a thought that kind of came to my mind about the role model aspect of it, right?

September: Yeah. And I think about that a lot. Like I was saying with the acceptance, there is this harsh reality that I have to accept that I may not raise my children. There is that possibility that I may not ever, until they're adults, until they're grown and they seek me out. There is that possibility. But one of the reasons for my speaking out and doing interviews like this and having my blog and all of those kinds of things, is because they're going to seek me out. There's no question about that. I'm their mother, and I'm going to have an influence. And when they do, no matter how patriarchal brainwashed they've become, they're going to start to ask questions and they're going to say, Oh, mom saw things a little bit differently. Oh. So that's one of the things - this is setting things out for my children.

Toni: That's for sure. Yeah. That's absolutely beautiful, because to be that strong female role model, like your girls will need that. They will absolutely need that. They can listen to all these podcasts and the things that you're doing. And maybe you'll write a book, who knows, but to be able to have that in a tangible way, and also getting a glimpse of you now, a glimpse of you now. They'll have that part of you versus missing it. You will have all of that, which will be really wonderful.

September: You were asking about the journaling and while I would like to sit down and actually write it out, but the blog, the social media stuff that I post, these podcast interviews, I'm doing some TV interviews now - all that is journaling. It is capturing the journey of the healing process. And when I first left, I knew I would always speak because I've always known that a big part of who I am is speaking out. But when I first left, there was a lot more anger in me at the time. There was a lot more pain and I had to work through some of those emotions before I got to the point where I felt comfortable speaking up. And it's kind of interesting because even in the interviews, at first it was all about the story. It was all about, this is what happened to me, and now it's kind of evolving as we go along. It's evolving more and more where when I talk, I don't want to talk so much about the story. I'll give you enough background so that you know I've been through too much, but I don't want to talk about that anymore. Now I want to say, okay, how do we move forward? How do we

empower other women and strengthen other women so that we can all start to rise together and really move our society into a new place?

Toni: Yeah, absolutely. And that's such a great sign of you growing and healing is that you don't want to be in that anymore. You've dealt with it, you've grown beyond it. And when we were on the phone last week, you were saying it's really just been a short period of time that you've come to this point of being able to release that anger. And so that anger, those types of emotions are very low energy, heavy energy. And we do want to release those. We don't want to keep those in our body. We welcome light and happiness and joyful things. We only have so much space. And so all those things block, right? All those things that we stay in block all the good things that could come into our lives. I'm so happy to hear that you have gotten through that. There was a gal that I knew, probably 15 years ago, but she had gone through a divorce and her husband had left her for this younger woman that he had met on a train and she was just bitter and angry and, a year later, bitter and angry. And I was like, oh, I know, I feel it, but it's really hard to be around. And especially as a friend, when you're trying to help somebody through something, the goal is through something – it's not stay in it and listen to it and let that person wallow in it forever. A good friend would not allow that, but everybody has their own way of healing. I know another gal who has lost some people in her life and it's still sad. And I lost my father three years ago. We were so close, my Papa, and so that's sad too sometimes, but to be able to take those emotions - and I'm sure things kind of like come in waves for you too, right? It's not like, okay, I'm through this and that's done. Like you said, you had a harder day yesterday, kind of a more anxiety ridden day yesterday. I think it's natural and normal for women to say, you know what? It's not black and white. It's not this complete constant path. It's like waves and whooshes and you know, it's all over. And that that's the human experience. I think if we can look at these things that happen in our lives - I've talked about this a lot in my podcast - is look at every experience, whether we view it as positive or negative - all kinds of really hard things to deal with - is that they are human experiences and they are, I believe, designed to teach us something. So we can either take something from that and move on with it and help people, as you're doing, or we can just say, oh, that happened to me and live like we're still in high school. Those were my favorite days. Those were my best days. And I see people like that too. And that saddens me. But it's really what we do with it, isn't it?

September: It is. It's absolutely what we're doing with it. And I think that we, as women, are designed to want a better future. I think that's what we're all about. Nurturing children and raising children. That's sort of what we're wired for, in a sense, no disrespect to any woman who chooses not to have children. I have a lot of respect for women who choose not to have children. But we are, I think, we're sort of designed and hardwired to be looking towards the future and how do we make the future better? And like I said, that's just a big part of raising children, which is a big part of what makes us women. So gathering women, circles of women, getting together, we strengthen each other and we move toward the future, a better, more light-filled future.

Toni: Yes, very light-filled. So if any of our listeners are in some sort of a situation where they're questioning it, they can go to take that test that you suggested. Can you say the name of that again?

September: It's the mosaic threat assessment. You'll find it.

Toni: Great. That is good to know. And then what are some of the first signs? Let's say a woman is in a situation right now and she can't maybe pinpoint why she's not thriving. What are some of the things she can ask herself to start to identify, am I in an abusive situation? Some abusive situations are very extreme, like yours, and some are very kind of covert, right? And so some women may not recognize some of the early signs or maybe they've lived with it so long they just don't really recognize it, because that's our familiar, right?

September: Yeah, for sure. I think one of the things that happened for me was that a girlfriend ordered me a book. We were out at lunch and I was talking about my relationship and some of the stuff that was going on. And she said, there's a book I think you need to read. And so she actually got on Amazon right there and had it sent to my house. And when I got it and I started reading it, it validated all of my emotions. And so I think reaching out, even if that's on social media, finding some people who have been through and experienced some of the questions that you're starting to have in your mind. Getting validated, I think, is very empowering, which is why they want us to stay quiet, because the more we speak, the more we validate each other, the more we empower each other. But if you're asking yourself if you're in an abusive relationship, you can be pretty confident that the answer is yes. I mean, if you even have that question in your mind, you can be pretty confident that the answer is yes. And so then what do you do with it? I think that one of the challenges that we're facing in our society right now is that we're taught that if he ever lays a hand on you, you get out, no questions asked, like you're gone immediately, right? But we're not taught that about psychological abuse or emotional abuse or financial abuse. And the reality is if your partner is abusing you in any way, he's willing to abuse you in every way. So it's just going to escalate over time. And so if I had paid attention to the red flags and watched that - one of the first things that he did to me was he humiliated me in front of his friends. And it was just a snide little sarcastic comment, but it was very - and he knew what he was doing, that it was going to humiliate me. He knew what he was doing. And then, you know, in the court case, I mean, my God, he smeared me so bad. He said the most horrific, awful things about me. It's like if he was willing to make that one comment in front of his friends, of course he was going to be willing to do that to the courts later. I mean, of course it makes perfect sense that he has no respect for my emotions, any of that stuff. So of course he was going to do that. I really think that we need to push forward the message of if he's psychologically abusive, if he's emotionally abusive, if he's financially abusive, get out, get yourself safe. I think that financial abuse is too big of a piece and we really need to focus on women being strengthened with money and empowered with money. There's so many great resources coming up more and more all the time. Suze Orman is huge about that. Suze Orman has written books and podcasts and she's all over the place. She's really big about stopping financial abuse and empowering women with money. So I really think that getting that out there, that if he's abusing you in any way, he's willing to abuse you in every way. So if you see abuse, get out - any abuse whatsoever, just get out.

Toni: Amazing point. You know, it goes back to one of the things that I learned just in dating. We kind of learned this as we're 16, 17, 18 years old, in our twenties, start dating, start getting interested in guys. And, and it was, oh, he dumped his girlfriend for me. I'm like,

you're kidding me! Don't you realize that if he dumps his girlfriend for you that he might dump you for the next? Once they're capable, they're capable. Here's another one. How do they treat their family? How do they treat other women in their lives? Those are all signs, aren't they? How do they treat their mother, their sister? Do they have respect or do they treat them badly and do they put them down and do they disrespect them in ways? Right?

September: Absolutely. Those are all signs and they're all things to watch out for and pay attention to. I have a friend who is a male and he's a very enlightened type of a person. And he told me one night that men follow women. And that's always sat with me. I think he probably said that to me six or seven years ago. And it's just really stuck with me, men follow women. And I think that one of the fears that we have is that if we all stand up and are empowered, then we won't need men anymore. And then we won't have relationships – we'll all end up alone, right? But I think that the men will catch on very quickly and, they'll say, okay, I better be a respectful, decent human being if I want to be with a woman, you know?

Toni: Yeah. Step up men, step up! My husband follows me all the time. I think in a marriage or any relationship, regardless of it's man-woman, woman-woman, man-man, whatever it is, that there is that mutual respect and you expect the best out of each other. And I have the saying, I call it one plus one equals three, which is the two of you together make something greater, a greater sum than you are individually. So that's when I feel like I know there's a great match. Not that there's not ever disagreements or feelings hurt or those kinds of things. We're all human. But I just think, to be in those kinds of relationships that women have to be in a place of confidence and of standing up for themselves and using their voices to be able to find that, like attracts like, to be able to find that person that meets them where they are. But together you expect the best out of each other and not something unrealistic or what you were put into, all one-sided, not healthy for you, but there is a healthy balance that I think we can all have if we're in that right space to attract it.

So how can people reach you if they want to be able to connect with you, to follow you, your blog? I would love to share that with people. You're just such a joy and you are full of bright light and inspiration. And I would love for everybody that listens to this to be able to continue learning from you and to watch you grow on your journey and get your life back and – it'll happen; it might take some time, but it'll happen, right? How do we reach you September?

September: Well, thank you. I appreciate what you just said. My blog is Septemberburton.com. And social media - I'm on Twitter, September Burton. Instagram is [SeptemberMBurton](https://www.instagram.com/SeptemberMBurton), Facebook September Burton. So all of those places. September Burton is a pretty unique name, so I'm pretty easy to find that way.

Toni: It is. And I told you on the phone too, I love your name. And it's just such a calming name and it's so unique. I know a lot of people, and I mean a lot of people, and trying to remember names is real hard, but for you, September, it's so easy to remember. Now I have a face associated with your name, which is lovely. So people can do that and follow you. And I know we talked about kind of what's next, and I know you can't share a lot, but if you could share with me why you can't share that might be useful here too.

September: Yeah, so what's next - I definitely have things in the works to go take back my power and take my life back. But obviously I'm not going to share all of my strategic plans on a podcast publicly, but there are things in the works and I have every intention of going and getting my life back.

Toni: That's great. And just a little bit of sidebar is that I have, in my marriage, it's a blended family, and we have my natural older daughter - she's 32. And then my husband's natural daughter is also 32. We met when they were five years old and they were in kindergarten rolling around on the floor, like little bear cubs, so adorable. And I looked up like, who is this man? And I put out my hand and I said, I haven't met you yet - because I knew I was destined to meet him, and he knew he was going to meet somebody - that's that intuition. We both knew when we met each other that we were meant to be together. And we saw our daughters rolling around on the floor. And then he also has a son that was, I think, like 16 months younger. And then we had a child together. So it's a yours, mine and ours family. And our youngest is 21. And it was just so interesting - blending a family is so hard. And so I did go through that situation where the girls, or that my husband's natural children, looked at me like maybe didn't trust me, that they were being told things that weren't true about me. And I just always considered myself to be just another person that loved these two children, right? And I never differentiated between the kids like, oh, these are my husband's kids and these are mine. There was none of that. It was always my husband and I to working together for a unified family, and it was really hard because they thought things about me that weren't true. And it wasn't until later until they were in their twenties that they thought - oh, that's not true - Toni's really not that way. She's not superficial. I'm one of the least superficial. I go pretty deep with people that I know. And I follow through on everything and I do have integrity, great integrity. And I really pride myself on that. And so they really were being told a different picture than living with us. We had them half the time for week on week off; they were told a very different picture. And so I think they were like not trusting their intuition. I think they had to disregard what they were seeing. And it was only until later that we started - cause we always had love for each other; that was always there and there wasn't really conflict between us, but it was more like, I feel like I'm kind of under a microscope and I feel like they don't - the relationship could be so much stronger and it wasn't until they were in their twenties that they came back like a thousand fold in the relationship with me. So I'm thinking that perhaps with your children - your children, I'm sure are smart. I'm sure. I don't know what ages they are, but I'm sure that that at some point you will have a very rich relationship with them.

September: Well, I really appreciate everything that you just said because it's so inspiring to me. That's one of the reasons that I trusted walking away and fleeing because it was - the decision at the time was, are my children better off with a mother who's dead or with a mother who's far away? And obviously there was a lot that went into the decision to flee. Everything that you just said was a big part of it. I know they're going to be lied to about me. I know that they're going to be told things that just simply are not true, but they're gonna be able to see at some point, they're going to be able to see that these things that they were told are not true and mom's not crazy. And mom's actually a really good person. So thank you for what you just said. That means a lot to me.

Toni: Yeah. I think that you will be in a really poised position and a grounded position to help them heal. I'm very intuitive. I'm listening to my intuition around you right now, and that's kind of what I'm seeing for you. You're really a beautiful person. I'm kind of tearing up right now. You really truly are, and you deserve that and they deserve to have you, there's a place where that will happen and will be maybe even better than if you had stayed, right? You showed them how to take care of yourself.

September: Yes, and how to walk away from abuse. In Hawaii, I said something to a friend about walking away from my children and she said, no, no, no, no, no, no - don't ever say that again. She said you walked away from abuse. You did not walk away from your children. Absolutely. And that's what I hope that my kids get out of this. If there's abuse, walk away, just walk away. I needed to walk away.

Toni: But they'll know your story. Yeah, I see great love there. Well, September, it has been so wonderful having you here. I really appreciate your time, your story, the vulnerability. I wish you safety and happiness and just the joys, enjoying the simple joys in life right now. Right? Rebuilding. And if I can ever help you in any way, I am here a thousand percent. And I'm sure all my male and female listeners will get a great deal out of this. I predict this will be their favorite podcast yet!

September: I loved this conversation. This was an absolutely amazing conversation.

Toni: Thank you. And you know, frankly, of the people that reach out to me, you're the first one that I thought, yeah, I think I'm going to respond. I just knew it was the divine intuitive. It absolutely was. So thank you so much. And thank you to all my guests for listening to Toni Talks -- Humanity Matters. And feel free to visit September's website. I will be posting it here so that there's a direct link to you and all of your goodness. And also my website for tools and resources, such as the books I've written, blogs, podcasts, and my Toni's protein meals, which are my balanced macro healthy meals for strong body at any age. And I'm going to send you a little care package, and we'll talk again.

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