

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Welcome to the divorce doctor podcast. I'm Dr. Elizabeth Cohen, the divorce doctor. I'm dedicated to breaking the stigma of divorce through my work. Divorce can be so isolating. Your friends and family might not understand what you're going through, but you're not alone. And divorce is not a failure on this podcast. I speak to real people who've gone through divorce and thrive through it. I talk about the struggles and the successes we explore with my guests, how the pain of divorce brought them realizations about themselves and their situations they wouldn't have had without this experience. I can't tell you how many clients have shared with me. That being reminded they're not alone. Allow them to get up in the morning and keep on keeping on. I hope listening to these people's stories will help you feel less alone with my 15 years of experience, as a clinical psychologist, working with people going through divorce.

I know the ins and outs of divorce and love talking about all of it. I'm thrilled. You are here and are ready to get the support you so deeply deserve. So let's dive in. So happy to have Judy gold here today as my guest. She has standup specials on HBO, Comedy Central and Logo. She has two critically acclaimed off-Broadway hit shows. She has two Emmys for writing and producing. She's the host of the hit podcast. Kill Me Now. She's appeared on the late show with Stephen Colbert and the Tonight Show. And most recently she is the author of the new and fantastically amazing book Yes I Can Say That: When They Come for the Comedians We're All In Trouble, which debuted as the number one comedy released on Amazon. It was also featured in the New York times book review. I am so honored and full of joy to have my dear love and friend Judy..

**Judy Gold:** Oh, Elizabeth, Dr. Cohen, what am I supposed to call you? You can call me whatever you want, you know, doctor. Should we, should we reveal that I have known you since you're 14 years old, please do. Yes, Dr. Cohen grew up down the hall from me and I like to think of myself as an older sister. She's also family and she's the godmother to one of my children, but really both of my children. But,

**Elizabeth Cohen:** And you know, when I'm thinking about it too, Judy. I'm thinking to myself, you know, I'm going to ask you some questions specifically about your divorce, but your divorce and watching how you moved through it with your kids was an example to me of how it can be done well.

**Judy Gold:** Oh my God, you don't know how much that means to me because it was, you know, I think, I mean, now of course it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. But going through that, I learned so much about myself going through it and what I'm capable of and about my strengths and all of the things that I had been so insecure or felt. I dunno, I felt not as prepared for things and it really proved to me, it really let me see what my strengths are and that I had them also. But it was painful, but you were really helpful through that. And I remember, can I tell this one story? A couple of years, I guess it might've been a year before we got divorced and it was not a clean divorce. It wasn't like, you know, this isn't working out, which I don't think it ever is.

It was a duplicitous, you know, horrible, all the bad things. And a year before that, we were planning on moving out of the building where we lived and, you know, in the building where you grew up, it's unfortunately not like this now. I mean, it is a little bit, it was a village, it was a village, it was a community, it was a kibbutz. It was what you would dream of an upper West side, New York city building to be. And we had found an apartment, a large apartment. I dunno, what was it? 14 blocks, uptown, you know, not a big apartment, not a big apartment and one bathroom and two sons and we were going to move and you put a note under my door and I kept it up on the bulletin board. And it said

it was one of those commercials where like, you know, they would show something like new card, \$10,000, new tennis racket, \$200 spending time with your family, priceless, you know, something like that. And you wrote a note that said new apartment, you know, \$4,000, more space, whatever, you know, neighbors who love you priceless. And I didn't move and I did not move. And we got divorced pretty soon, right after that, you know? And I cannot tell you how many times I thought to myself, thank God I didn't move. So I have,

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Oh my gosh, I have chills when you say that, because I just think about the importance of community, right? Especially when your life that you knew and that you thought you were going to have falls apart to be able to have that net to hold you.

**Judy Gold:** Right. It's like not only, you know, there are so many stages and, you know, the first of course is like the fact that the person you trust the most, or you tell your secrets to even, I mean, even if it's not the perfect relationship, it is the person who is presumably closest to you. It's the person you talk to, you know, do the pillow talk and, Oh, can you believe it is funny that, you know? And so for someone who is supposedly so close to you to lie, you know, it's like, wait, you, you not only question, Oh my God, who are you? You're not the person I thought, but how did I not know? Like, how did I not,

**Elizabeth Cohen:** I want to ask you about that because, so I want to ask you, I usually like to talk about how there are these, you know, so the divorce happens, but if we go back a little bit, right. There's always signs in the lies, right. You'd like even the lie, like, yeah, that was a very big lie that she did, but let's look back and think where they're smaller lies

**Judy Gold:** Yeah. See, the thing is, is that look, and I'm not going to say I wasn't perfect. I mean, I wasn't happy. And you know, in a way our relationship, I just won't want to say yes, that was the catalyst that broke the, but it wasn't perfect. It was, there was a lot of fighting and we weren't that compatible. We have very different lifestyles, but we sort of, I always thought of us as having this arrangement sort of like Bill and Hillary, you know, they work together, you know, they're both successful, but they have issues in their marriage, but she did great things for me. As far as having children, I think I would have waited, you know, and she was like, look, I'm having this kid with or without you. I mean, that changed my life, made my life so much better, gave my life purpose, you know? So I don't want to, yes, she did things and I was definitely a victim, but I wasn't perfect in the relationship. It wasn't like...

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Judy, even when you just said, like, maybe you wouldn't have had, have had kids or waited longer, like maybe you wouldn't have gotten out of the relationship. A lot of the people I talk to..

**Judy Gold:** I think we talked about this. I was never going to leave. And, and even though I was not happy, I wasn't going to leave. Cause I was never going to leave my kids and to this day, and we are on speaking terms, of course, because we're parents but have the same kids, but you know, I get worried that, Oh, it's funny because I'll wear a jacket. You know, I have this quarter, right jacket I got in the nineties in LA, and can I curse on this?

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Sure.

**Judy Gold:** I love it. Okay. But I'll see my ex and she'll be like, really with the jacket. And I'm like, and it's, and it's sort of this, like, you don't like change. That's why you didn't move. Yes. The space would have been better, but I wouldn't have had you down the hall or your parents down the hall or the other neighbors. I can't tell you how many times, you know, my lifestyle does not fit into a single parent life, you know? Cause I work at night and how many times I would leave, you know, thank God you were down the hallway and I'd be like, I'll, I'll come over and do my homework, you know? But yes, you know, once this thing happens and you have to really, it's like a mirror put up. Okay.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** If you remember that moment where you had to decide whether you were going to listen to this and make a change or stay, because I think a lot of people get like really that's a really hard moment.

**Judy Gold:** Yeah. Because I was so scared of the change. That's what the jacket is, you know, it's this, this, like, I'm not, I'm not letting go of this jacket. I love this jacket. I'm always going to love the jacket. And I, I do that with things I don't, you know, but whatever, I am sentimental to a fault, but yeah, I do remember thinking, well, how can we make this work just until they get out of the house as if it was a good environment to be in. And I was willing to take her back because it was what I knew and it was easy and it was the other was going to be so much work. And by the way, I had just turned 22 when I met her. Oh, maybe? Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And we had come up as we had met at a job and we had come up in our careers.

We're both, you know, taking off mine. I kind of put a little, I came back from LA when Henry was born, but you know, it forced me. I wouldn't have the life I have now if I was so that initial, Oh my God. And you know, feeling all the feelings, the hurt, the betrayal, the pain was so, Oh my God, I can't believe it. This happens to other people. This doesn't happen to me. And also, you know, there was this sort of we're lesbians and, and we were for most of our group, we were the first lesbians to take these steps of having a family. And we were always the, when people would come out to their parents, they'd be like, well, Judy and Sharon are gay and they'd be like, Oh, they are, you know, it was like, we were

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Model the model. Yeah. So here you were here. We were right. And I remember Jude, you saying to me so many times, am I going to be okay? Yeah. Is fear. Which I think so many people are going through a divorce can really resonate with, which is this fear that you're not going to be okay. Right. And okay. You know, is with her.

**Judy Gold:** Right. And especially when you start that young and it's like, wait, what? And I had been in my head being like, okay, when Ben is this age, I'll be that age. We can end the relationship. Will I still be like, I used to have these things in my head, like, what'll happen. You know?

**Elizabeth Cohen:** So part of you that knew you didn't want to be in it and it wasn't right for you, but part of you that was so comfortable and also got a lot out of it was so scary.

**Judy Gold:** Right. And it was easy. It was all I knew. And it was sort of like you work during the day I work at night, blah, blah. You know? So that initial and that's so true that I used to, I used to come over there

and be like, you know, but I'm so glad that I did that. I'm so glad that I was vulnerable enough to say, because

**Elizabeth Cohen:** You just said, that's what you learned, you learned about your strengths.

**Judy Gold:** Right. And so I thought to myself, because in the relationship I always felt put down, which is something that I wasn't that aware of. But I was so used to, especially with the way I grew up and I'm a comedian and it's like, it's all rejection. It's all, you're not funny enough. You're too fat. You're too tall. You're too Jewish. You're too gay. You're too. You know, I did a podcast yesterday and my guests said something that an actor had told her about, you know, if you can take all your humiliation, it was about humiliation because showbiz is really just being humiliated over and over again. And so, you know, you have this issue of self-esteem trust and then the self-esteem. And then, because I always felt incapable of doing things because I was told Judy, you know, you're not doing, you know, that's not how you, I was now by myself.

And I remember thinking I can't do that. I, you know, every little step was like, I did that. I did that by myself. Yeah. And I felt really strong. I started feeling like it. You know, I remember also thinking I didn't do it that way, the way she wanted me to do it, but I did it and it was fine. It's just as good this way. And you realize what matters and what doesn't matter. Right. You know, what's important. What's not, but you're right. Holding all those feelings in. And you know, because that was my fear. Am I going to be okay? Am I going to be able to do this? Am I going to do this with young kids? Yeah. That made me so much stronger as a person and made me feel that I was capable of taking care of these kids by myself. And sometimes I feel bad. Oh, I had a babysitter too. And I had this, you know, go back regrets,

**Elizabeth Cohen:** you know, you were a beautiful mom.

**Judy Gold:** Oh, thanks. But I did. And you know, also there's that other layer of seeing your kids in pain, the younger son Ben doesn't remember anything. He was like, whatever, you know? Cause he was in his, he was two and a half, but you know, my older son really definitely got the bulk of it. There was fighting before, but then this one moving out and then just, you know, the problem is, is that it's the hardest part is not saying anything bad about the other

**Elizabeth Cohen:** When you're going through a trauma. So I'm thinking of you and I'm thinking of you today and how you, you know, if you had a tale, tell Henry and Ben, you were getting divorced today, how different you would be because how resourceful you are now. But I think about you as having been basically belittled, growing up a little bit in your career, belittled in your relationship, and then somehow having to be the strong parent to be the guide. Like that is almost impossible. And I, I want to tell the parents who are listening, like if you feel like you're screwing up, like that's okay, like you are, you are dealing with one of the hardest experiences in life, you know,

**Judy Gold:** The best two words I ever heard during those times. And I would go to your parents' apartment and your mother was very helpful. And I would say, I do blah, blah, blah. I did this. And the two words that always comforted me somewhat. So what, yeah. You made a mistake. So what it was just like, yeah.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Yeah. It's so healing, especially because you had been told in this relationship for so long that everything were doing,

**Judy Gold:** We do, we're doing this wrong, right? Yeah. I'm like, Oh my God, the house is a mess and blah, blah, blah, blah. And then, and then she, and I didn't have enough food and I had a blah, blah, blah. And it was just, it's so simple. Right.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** But you kill one, you may never have learned that lesson. I think, unless you, you had separated from first of all, think about it

**Judy Gold:** Creatively career-wise I think that I probably, yeah.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Bit about how it might've opened you up, how creatively the divorce and letting go of that relationship,

**Judy Gold:** You know, it's so hard when you're a comedian and you're going through a trauma and you have to get on and your job is to get on stage and make other people laugh. And for me, stand up and having a microphone is so therapeutic that I feel so lucky that, you know, even today with politics and stuff, that really makes me crazy that I can get on stage and just, you know, rage, funny rage, and pontificate, and just be like, can you believe this? Like, and I did. It was so great. I had been writing the show with my friend, Kate Moyer, Ryan, who's a playwright, called 25 questions for Jewish Mother. And we had been interviewing Jewish mothers around the country about, we had asked them each 25 questions and it was, the journey had started with, you know, I was getting so much crap from the Jewish press, like when I was doing standup and stuff that I was perpetuating a stereotype and which I was just doing my mother and she was funny. And that's how she talks. And that's exactly what you said.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Which is like related to the whole topic of your book. But,

**Judy Gold:** And so, yeah, and so I was, we were interviewing Jewish mothers to see it first. It was to see if the stereotype was real. And then it became a journey of like, Oh my God, these women were so accomplished in their own way. And so individual. And when I got to, I told my story. And when I got to a point in my life where I had a question that I had asked them, I had them answer the question. And that was sort of the structure. And during this process of interviewing these women and writing the show and getting it up on its feet, we got divorced. And it was sort of the missing piece of this, this show, which was critically acclaimed in the times, it ran for many years, it became a show, but the show was really about not only acceptance of being, you know, a lesbian mom and you know, how do I fit into this world of Jewish motherhood when I'm gay? My kids are from anonymous sperm donors. I mean, I've done nothing in a traditional way yet. I, and can you still be a Jew? I mean, the show was so powerful in a way that, you know, kids would come and bring their parents and then come out to their parents afterwards. And at the end to say, you know, this didn't work out, but I got these great kids and it was really about acceptance. And I think

**Elizabeth Cohen:** That a level of vulnerability to that play that I, as someone who who's seen it many times that that was the piece where it was, it was vulnerable

**Judy Gold:** Right. That, and the fact that my mother, who was always very hysterical, you know, I tell the story of her brother being killed and why she was hysterical. His people we had our first review ever was like, why is her mother always hysterical? And we had to put that missing piece in as well. And you realize, Oh my God trauma. And so, you know, art has saved me and it's, you know, and I tell people I teach and I tell people, especially, you know, when you're going through this sort of, it's so funny. Cause you know, it'll happen in my class where someone's like, I'm getting a divorce. I'm like, Oh my God, this is so good for your show. But all right, I broke up with my boyfriend. I'm like, Oh great. So, but doing something creative, just writing, just doing something self-care wise is so important. And to realize, you know, it's not your fault. It's not, You, you know, people, all people, you know, you make mistakes, it really taught me that I was stronger than I thought I was. And that was, I think the greatest gift. And I have my own relationship with these kids. They know me as an independent person. I think they see us each as individuals. I mean, there's our positives like, Oh, so you know, I get this from her and I get that.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** They would have learned the message from Sharon couldn't handle anything. Your kids have a totally different view of you. And they wouldn't have had if you stayed together, which is transformative for that one.

**Judy Gold:** And also I'm in a relationship, Sharon is married to someone else. But I think also that I think seeing how we have both navigated, you know, our love life and our relationships have taught them things that they wouldn't, you know, they would have just seen two people in a marriage who were not happy. We're fighting, you know, it's not good. It's not good. The fighting's not good. I grew up in a house where it was a lot of fighting and not talking and fighting. And it's not a good way. It's better to see your parents as a whole person and not a part of something that's not working. Absolutely. So I always like to ask

**Elizabeth Cohen:** People, if you could go back and say to yourself, when you came into, you know, our apartment and stuff, like, am I going to be able to make it through? What would your now self tell that self as advice?

**Judy Gold:** Well, first I would say, you're going to be okay and you're good. And you are, you know, you're way more capable than you, you know, stop underestimating yourself. That was the big thing, you know? Yes, you have to grieve the relationship, but you also have to get to know yourself as a whole human being, you know, all those things that you might've leaned on another person for, or relied on another person more, or didn't pay attention to because they were going to take care of it. Now it's up to you and you can either resent it or you can be like, Hey, I can do that. You know? So it sounds like

**Elizabeth Cohen:** in some ways you went from kind of being asleep to awake about your, about yourself.

**Judy Gold:** Right. And I am very self-aware. I am very self-aware because I'm a comic and we are so introspective and I'd been in so much therapy. I am gullible. I realized I am gullible and I was blindsided

because I am like, Oh, okay. Now there were so many times that I trust people. I believe you're very loyal, very loyal that to a fault. And also the fact that I, you know, I think, I believe I, and I'm in the worst business for this, that people mean what they say. Well, it's part of

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Part that makes you such a loving and wonderful mom and friend and person to be in a relationship with because you are one of the most loyal people I know, and you're not alone. And I think that loyalty that keeps a lot of women in particular in relationship, right. It's not letting go because like, let's go to couples therapy again, let's keep working on this. Let's

**Judy Gold:** You gotta change the loyalty to yourself. Yeah, exactly. And so it's like, I'm being loyal to this person, but it's, it's a negative, it's coming out as a negative. It's not a positive. And it's like, yes, you're loyal. And that is a good quality, but you're being loyal to the wrong person. And it's, if you're not, it's not being reciprocated, you know, be loyal to your kids and be loyal to your, you know, yourself and that's it, you know? Like I love that. And it's also, there are messages and you can shove them under the rug. You know, if I could also go back and this is something people always say, what would you say to your younger self? This is the one thing. And it so applies to this, follow your gut. Whenever I had this uneasy feeling about anything in business, in anything. And I'd be like, ah, shut up, Judy. You know, like in my head, my gut was always right. You got to follow your instincts and your gut because they don't lie.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** And I want them to say they don't lie. So down the road, they're still going to be right. But ignoring it. I will tell you this as a psychologist: ignoring it is an act of sublimating your needs, but it is something that builds upon. It's not, it's not neutral. It's not like I'm not going to listen to my gut. And maybe I will. Next time, it's cumulative, every time you don't listen to it, the harder you iron yourself and the less likely you're going to get it.

**Judy Gold:** Right. And then you have to dig even deeper. Exactly.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** I'm so grateful that you're here. I wanted the last thing I want to, I ask all my guests,

**Judy Gold:** That's it? I love talking to you.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** We could talk forever. Well also, you know, the other thing that, the thing that I like to ask people at the end is just, you know, what's the part you could never see coming, but changed you for the better?

**Judy Gold:** Oh, that's a good question. The part I never see coming, changed me for the better, the easy answer is I have to say the thing that I can't believe. And it's so simple is that I am with someone and we laugh so much. Like I never have laughed. Like, yes, I want to kill her half the time. Yes. She's so anxious. And we have the worst fights and I want to kill her, you know? Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I have never laughed with like belly laugh, just so,

**Elizabeth Cohen:** And to get a comedian to laugh and

**Judy Gold:** To be with someone who laughs at my, like, I can't believe she, she wants to help. She wants to go to my shows. She wants to help me with the audition. I'm like what? You know, but, okay. So that is one thing, right?

**Elizabeth Cohen:** I never, you couldn't have known that you could be with someone or be deserving of that kind of

**Judy Gold:** It's. I think that, that the general thing is, is that I didn't see myself deserving a lot of stuff and I do deserve it. Yes. And you know, it's so hard to imagine yourself as you, you know, as an older person and like I'm. So I think about my mother, remember her, was it her, her 80th birthday? She said something like, I can't believe we're here. I remember, you know, when I was eight, you know, like it was yesterday and she is, had never talked like that. And I think now, like I'm 58, I just turned 58. And I think of when I was getting divorced. So that's 2004, 16 years ago. And I think of being this age and as someone who's sort of over their prime or no, there's so much more to do. There's so much more that isn't just it.

Okay. You had a marriage, got divorced, so many people get divorced. It doesn't matter. It doesn't make you a bad person. I think I'm so much wiser. I didn't see that I was going to be, it sort of made me, it made me do more. It made me know myself, more things being over. It feels like it really got things started for you. Exactly. Right, exactly. Right. And in a way that is so much more who you really are as someone who's seen you in both stages so much more authentically you and you used to say to me, aren't you so happy now, Judy, remember when you used to be? And I'm like, yes. You know, when you come out the other side and you see, you see yourself before, I mean, you don't get that many moments in your life where you're like a different person before and different person after, you know, it's out of a gift.

But when you look at yourself before I just have compassion. Yeah. You know, totally realize, Oh, you were doing the best you could. You didn't know. And this gift is a gift. And you know, once you get rid of the anger. Yep. That's the other thing it's got to work on getting rid of the anger and I didn't realize, you know, and we got to the point where we would go to the kids' baseball games or basketball games, and I'm sitting with Alyssa and she sitting with one of her girlfriends or her wife now, and people would say to us, wait, so the four of you are too.

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Yeah. And that photos that you have of all of you. I mean, it's, it's so beautiful.

**Judy Gold:** Right. And I think it's because we're lessbees too

**Elizabeth Cohen:** Judy, I love you.

**Judy Gold:** I love you.



**Elizabeth Cohen:** I'm so grateful that you are in my life.