

**Dr. 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 a 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.

Jill Sherer Murray is an award-winning author and journalist, a TEDx speaker, and founder of Let Go For It, a lifestyle brand aimed at improving people's situations through the simple mantra of letting go. Her TEDx talk titled "The Unstoppable Power of Letting Go" has almost 3 million views on YouTube and breaks down her own journey of letting go in order to successfully move forward. She wrote her bestselling book, *Big Wild Love: The Unstoppable Power of Letting Go*, which was released in May for the many people who reached out to her after her Ted talk and to give advice and inspiration. Jill spent a year setting improvisational comedy at the famous Second City training center in Chicago and another five years writing a popular blog called Diary of a Writer in Mid-life Crisis for the former *Wild River Review Magazine*. She also let go of just about everything to put her weight in *Shape Magazine* 12 times as part of a year-long assignment to document her weight loss journey for millions of readers. You can learn more about her at [www.letgoforit.com](http://www.letgoforit.com).

Jill, I am so happy you're here and I am so honored that you would come and talk about releasing and letting go of relationships. When I saw your Ted Talk, I was moved to tears, and so touched by how you talked about your transition. So I know the audience will be so lucky to have you and learn so much from you today. So thank you for being here.

**Jill Sherer Murray:** Oh my gosh. I'm so happy to be here. And that is so, you know, I'm always so happy to hear that because I think, you know what, I was stuck in my relationship. I always wished that I could have like, you know, pull the phone out of my pocket in my back pocket and like, look at some strange woman up on the stage, like, you know, talking about her massive dating failures, but you know, it would have made me feel so not alone. And like, you know, empowered to look at this person and just say, Hey, if she could do it, maybe I could do it too. And so I always appreciate it, so thank you. And I'm so happy to be here cause you know, I love you and I love talking to you and, and I think, you know, we have so much, we have so much to talk about, so, so much. Thank you for having me. Thank you.

**Dr. Cohen:** I'm so happy. So I like to start out the podcast by asking people, what word would you use to describe the ending of your relationship? Like what's the word you would use when you reflect on it?

**Jill Sherer Murray:** Oh, that's such a good question. Like the one word that I would use to describe the ending of my relationship is love. And I know that sounds really weird, but you know, I left, I would have to say that's probably the first relationship that I ended in a space of love. I loved this man who was a good man and you know, he just didn't want what I did at the end of the day. He did his best, you know, and I felt love for myself for the first time, really in a deep and different way than I ever thought it would happen. You know, I'd spent so much of my life trying to love the way I looked and trying to love the size of my jeans and trying to love the way that I, you know, ran beside everybody else and kept up or, you know, try to love myself professionally by, you know, being successful. But I never really took the time to love myself in a way where the actual internal talk track in my mind was "you deserve better." And when I say better, I don't mean this as a referendum on my ex. I mean, you deserve better in the sense of, you deserve to have what you want in life and you deserve to know that what you want is available and possible. Yes for you too, not just for everyone else, but for you too. And you know, I felt like my ex, he really gave me the opportunity to find my way back to myself in that way. And I will forever love him for it. And, you know, while there was a lot of, you know, I don't want to be Pollyanna and say there wasn't a lot of pain in that breakup and pain in that relationship and disappointment and heartbreak. Um, because there were all of those things too. But if I have to think about how I left it, definitely the word I would use as love.

**Dr. Cohen:** Wow. And I love that you're bringing up this love and care for yourself because that's ultimately exactly what both of us teach. That if you love yourself, any pain and struggle will be worth it because you get a deeper knowledge of yourself and a lot of women and men who listen to this podcast are in the position of considering whether to leave or whether to end a relationship. And I always like to remind them that it takes a long time to figure that out. And so I want to ask you, when did you start having like, that little bird in your ear? You know, that little sound like maybe this is not happening. So like when did you start feeling that? And then also, can you just tell us, like, you know, how long did it take until you actually did that? Because that first sound can--

**Jill:** Yeah. Well, you know, I talk about this a lot in my book ever on the subject of epiphany is because they fascinate me endlessly and I have just, I love the whole notion of epiphanies. I just even think the word is so poetic and prophetic and--

**Dr. Cohen:** Right. It's like, Oh, that's so luxurious.

**Jill:** Yeah, exactly. Yes. And I just, you know, I always talk about it in the sense that, you know, we have, we have an [inaudible] about what we need to do in any situation, but especially in law far before we're ready to take action on them. And I think, you know, I knew very early. I mean, I was with my ex for 12 years and I knew very early on in that relationship, I would say even a couple of years in that it was probably never going to get me where I wanted to go, but I didn't like that. My conscious mind didn't like it, my subconscious mind chose it.

**Dr. Cohen:** Great distinction. Right. There was something about it that was comfortable right.

**Jill:** Right. Because when I met my ex the person I had dated before him, like, was awful and promised me the world, ripped my heart out of my chest, threw it in the road in the highway, watched the trucks roll over it. I mean, it was the worst, it was a horrible experience. And I think when we have those experiences, we go into self-protection mode. So we choose things that will never put us in harm's way. I chose someone who would always keep me on the back road, who would never put me on that highway. And he was wonderful. He was a great person, a wonderful man who I knew very early on was never going to want what I did. And that was the struggle, right? It was like, in my mind, I was like, why aren't you doing this? And in my subconscious space of, you know, limiting beliefs and a need to protect, I was like, no, no, it's perfect. And so the battle I was really having was constantly with myself. It was almost like he was just there, you know? Like he was just there. He could've been anybody.

**Dr. Cohen:** So glad you bring that up because I had a similar experience in my divorce where I always talk about it. Like, I didn't allow him the dignity to be who he was, because I didn't want him to actually take control and be there cause I wanted to be in control. But then I could crap on him all the time for not being there. Like I created this situation that worked perfectly for me because I look like the victim, but really I was also the one who wasn't fully letting him in.

**Jill:** Right, right. Because not all parts of us are not aligned. Exactly. And, and so I always knew there were many epiphanies along the way that I just ignored because I didn't like them. Didn't want to see them, thought I could change them, convinced myself I could change them, defense myself. They didn't matter. Convinced myself I should settle. Convinced myself I could change him. Convinced myself I could change myself. Not in going for what I wanted, but that I could be okay with less.

**Dr. Cohen:** Right. Yeah. I'm okay with this. Right. Like with a lot of the women I work with, like, "I'll just wait until my kids go to college. I can tolerate this long enough." Right. I think you might've talked about this in your Ted talk, but like "I have really good friends. I don't need that all from him." Like all these excuses kind of.

**Jill:** Right. That's right. And you know, we make those excuses because we're afraid to make those excuses because we don't believe we will ever find what we really want because we don't believe that we're worthy of what we really want. Right. Because we feel like we should be lucky for what we have and we all do it. We all do it because letting go is hard. It's painful and it's hard. And you know, the things we need to let go of, we don't even know. You know, we think we're letting go of a person. We're not really letting go of a person for letting go of a dream. We're letting go of an idea. We're letting go of something. We thought we had something we thought we could, you know, grow into. We're so busy looking at what we're letting go up outside of ourselves that we're stuck there. I know it took me a really long time to stop looking outside and say, what do I need to let go of externally? No, it's not. It's not weight. It's not another person. It's not a situation. What I need to let go of is the way what I'm holding on to about the way I see myself, right? The questions in the mirror that we're all that we don't reflectively do.

We don't reflexively. We're not reflecting like, Oh my God, I'm scared. I better get in the mirror and ask myself what I'm holding onto. Like right.

**Dr. Cohen:** I think it's because when we've evolved as you and I have talked about so many times to really focus on safety. And if you think about biologically, you know, we have to look around us to see if we're safe. And so if something-- we look around to see what's threatening, and really now we have the luxury to look. But back when we were living in a much more dangerous time, right, we didn't have that luxury. And so this is actually a behavior that we need to learn to do. It's our next phase. I think of evolving, instead of focusing on the outside to focus on the inside. Can you tell the story about when those epiphanies came to a head and you?

**Jill:** Yeah. You know, I had so many of them, but the really big one and the one I talk about in my book and my Ted talk is when my ex finally agreed after 12 years to go look at a condo that was for sale to see if we would move in together, which was really an interesting thing for me, because I never, the realtor was a friend of mine and I was like, he's never going to go for this, but he did. And so I went, I was so excited. I was waiting for him and he wound up not showing up. And then he, you know, he called again and said, I'm really sorry. I will be there this time. And then we did it again. And he didn't show up again, which was not at all typical of him at all. And I was like, no, this is like trying to like, you know, get unpregnant or like put the baby back. You know, this is the one I can't unsee. And so it was like, like in that stranger's bathroom where I was crying my eyes out, looking in the mirror, like, who do you want to be? Do you want to be that person? Do you want to be that person that is okay because you know, time goes by very quickly and very slowly. And we don't, we don't realize time passing when we're stuck somewhere. We think we have time. I have time for this. I don't have to do it today. I don't have to. Before you know it all these years have passed. And I felt that so acutely in that moment, I thought, okay, this is really a decision time. And it's either going to be him or you, who do you choose? It's him or you.

**Dr. Cohen:** I have chills, Jill. I mean, just to think about that, how many people out there have that moment of like, is it him or whoever you partner with or me.

**Jill:** Right. And we have to choose ourselves. It's not selfish. It's not us being selfish. It's not us being inconsiderate. It's not us being, you know, singularly focused. We have to choose ourselves. And I knew at that moment, I had to choose myself and I will tell you that I did choose myself. And I will also tell you that I did not the next day say I'm done. I'm out. I'm leaving from that epiphany moment. It is a process. It takes time to let go. If you are not taking the time that you need. When you know, when you have that moment where you realize I have to let go. Now, if you are not taking the time to think about how you do that in a thoughtful and strategic, in a way that honors you and the other person and the other people involved, then you're not, it's not going to be lasting and you're not going to do it because it's unrealistic to think that I'm going to let go of a 12-year relationship. I'm going to let go of a 12-year marriage where there are children, and there are families, and there's work. And there's tomorrow because I had this big epiphany today. No, it does not work that way. And it took me another full year, to actually make the break like physically separate.

**Dr. Cohen:** Oh, I love that. You're saying that Jill, because it is so people that I work with, they feel so ashamed, right? If they had that moment in, at the condo, and then let's say like three days later had sex with them again. And it's like, no, no, you don't have to. This is all part of the process, right? There is, this is not a movie. This is not a movie. This is complicated with mixed feelings. He's a good guy. Let's say my example. You're still talking to him like this is going to take some time. And I love that permission that you're giving people because I think people get stuck on that so often. And to look back and look at it is going to take you some time.

**Jill:** Right? That's right. It's not like you say, you know, I need to move. I'm going to sell my house. I'm gonna sell my house tonight. I'm going to wake up tomorrow. Everything's going to be out and all set up in the new house. Like it just, it doesn't work that way. It takes time to let the epiphany unseat you. It takes time to actually listen to it and figure out how you're going to deal with it. How are you going to respond to it takes time to look back so you can look forward? High to figure out who you're born to be without this person. Like I remember once I moved on and I met my husband and then I went to a wedding and I saw an old friend I hadn't seen since I left my last relationship. And I said, is it weird to see me here with someone else? And she was like, yes, it's bizarre because our identities become so intertwined with this other person. And so we have to give ourselves, you know, the opportunity. It can't be about shame. We're living life. We're just worth figuring it out. You know? No one-- it's like buying shoes. No one could tell us if our shoes fit. You know, like we're figuring out how we're becoming, how we're evolving, who we are. And this can not be a matter of shame. It is a matter of shame. That's where the focus needs to be. That's where letting go needs to happen. That's where the big wild, the cultivation of big, wild love needs to come into play. There is nothing along our journey of right and wrong. That's bright and wrong when it comes to making choices about what's right. For us best for us.

**Dr. Cohen:** So smart. So what you're saying, what I hear you say is that if we think about this all as a journey, you approach letting go, right? Each moment, like each-- let's say shame comes up or fear comes up. So you approach letting go of those, as opposed to having to do, they take a huge bite of this whole on the way. Right?

**Jill:** Right. It's always an opportunity for questions and self-understanding. In my opinion, if I'm feeling shame about something, my question is, why do I feel shame? Why do I feel ashamed? I'm a human being. I'm evolving. I'm figuring my life that I'm growing, I'm changing and I'm making new choices and I'm figuring things out. What is there to be ashamed of? Why do I feel the shame? Because shame is going to set me back. The shame is going to keep me stuck. The shame is going to keep me in a negative space. I'm not saying those aren't absolutely normal feelings. Of course they are. We all feel shame and fear and all those universal feelings when we're at that precipice of, you know, the jump. But, but, you know, we have to, like, instead of saying, I feel so ashamed and launching into that negative talk track of self-loathing and you know, what, all the things we don't deserve as a result of our shame, we have to give ourselves that grace that, you know, okay, I feel this way. Okay. First I'm gonna allow myself to feel that way because I'm not going to talk myself out of it. And then once I'm done feeling all the things I need to feel about that shame, I'm going to stop and say, okay, now where's it coming from?

Where's it coming from? Why do I, and is it, and do I really, is it really appropriate? Like, should I really feel shame? And is it my voice? Is it my voice that I'm shaming myself with? Or is it someone else's voice that is shaming me? Is it my mother's voice? Is it my ex's voice? Is it my church's voice? Is it my whoever else? You know, uh, Janine broth calls them all the crazy aunties in the attic.

**Dr. Cohen:** Yeah. I love that.

**Jill:** I love that too. It's like, whose voice is shaming you and I think those are all opportunities.

**Dr. Cohen:** Yeah and I love, Jill, just one thing that I hear you saying so about this is about taking it slow, you know, instead of feeling, and the divorce process, in particular, can be so sped up, especially by lawyers and my parent coordinators and really remembering like, no, no, you set the tone and you take this as slowly as you want. And as for you to be able to process and experience and move through the different feelings. And I think that's such a good reminder that it talking about, we talked earlier about doing the external like you are the conductor of this train. You decide how quickly and how slowly it goes.

**Jill:** Right. And I think, yes. And I think that's hard for people because they don't believe that they can trust themselves to make good choices. I don't think they can trust that they really are in charge of the train. If they are feeling unseen, unheard, victimized, shamed, you know, who am I to be in charge? Who am I to think that it could be about me at all in any way, shape, or form? Who am I to think that I'm driving the bus, that I can take it at my pace. Like all of those questions to me are invitations to keep digging, keep figuring out what is it? Where is that coming from? And I know, of course, they're in capable hands with you because you know what you're doing, this is what you do. This is what you do is you work with them to do this. But I guess from my perspective to me, it's like, these are all triggers. These are all opportunities that these thoughts are in your head instead of beating yourself up and staying on that long talk track that is not taking you anywhere. Good. It's a question of why do I feel this? Because it's the underlying payoff, the underlying reason, that is the reason for all the things we have, we ultimately invite back in. And so these hard moments are like, right of passages that we, what we need to use to go in, even though they're hard. And it's really hard in divorce because, you know, you've got lawyers who have their one agenda and you've got X's who have another agenda and all the people have their own agenda. So it's really hard to make yours the most important. You at least have to do that for yourself,

**Dr. Cohen:** --for yourself. Exactly. So I'm wondering if you just mentioned this. So this is a great segue. You just mentioned kind of the painful parts. Can you share with us kind of, I ask people to share for me, it was like my, I'm on your hands and knees moment. Like, what was the hardest part of the ending of the relationship for you that had you on your hands?

**Jill:** I could not imagine my life without this person. I just could not imagine it. I could not imagine what it would be like to not have this person in my day-to-day life. And I also was going

through a sense of how could you stay for so long? How could you have allowed yourself to get to this point? And then what's to become of you? What happens when I leave this bathroom? What happens? I get back up off my feet and can I trust myself to do what I feel so urged and compelled to do right now at this moment, will I have the strength to do it? And how do I do it, all these feelings and these questions and these things? I had no idea I had no, you know, I talk about Tiffany's in my book and there's one section where I say, like, I think, you know, it's really divine wisdom that allows us to actually listen to our epiphanies because if we actually knew what came after them, we might not, because there's just, you know, we don't know, but I think I was on my knees with grief because you know, it's death, it's death. And you know, you know that it's death and it's, it's the same way you feel when you see someone who knows about to pass. And, and it just, you know, it really takes you by the throat. And especially because, you know, if you don't have a script or you don't have a way to light the path forward, then it's very, it's again, it comes back to safety. It all feels very unsafe. What's to become of me now.

**Dr. Cohen:** You said, you know, this also, like, can I trust myself? You know, a lot of people I work with, that's a big piece of learning to trust yourself again. Maybe because you stayed, but also because often the people that I've spoken to their ex has, you know, basically kind of whittled away their belief in themselves.

**Jill:** You know, I think Elizabeth, and this is why I titled my book, Big Wild Love, because I think everything, everything comes back to that. Comes back to the way that we understand and love ourselves. Because if we understand those beliefs, if we understand what's driving us, if we understand who we are, what we want, what we know is possible for us, what we know, what we believe, what we know, what we deserve, if we create. And it sounds, you know, you read it everywhere, empowering the neat waves. Okay. But it's true. If we know that no matter what happens to us in life, we'll always be okay because we have ourselves, and we know what we want, and we're not afraid to ask for what we want, and we don't feel compelled to settle or stay where we don't belong or have less than we think than we deserve, because we know we deserve better, that's just freedom that self-trust just becomes very organic and reflexive has, we know instinctively, this situation is not right for me. I'm going to leave it or not even getting involved in it in the first place we know instinctively, I am fine if I'm on my own, because you know what, there are a million ways to be happy in life. And I will always take care of myself. And that's kind of how I started over with the idea of no matter, you know, I'm 42. Like if I ever get married, if I don't get married, I'm going to be happy because there are a million ways to have a happy life, and I know that no matter what happens next, I've got me and I can choose well for myself. And I'm never going to be in a situation where I find myself settling for less than I deserve. And that's where that, because I too have a lot of women, that'll say to me, like, you know, I really like him, but I don't trust myself. I don't, I don't trust him. I don't trust him. I don't know how I can go back out and trust another person. And it's never a bad, another person, never right.

**Dr. Cohen:** Always about yourself and why, why? And to what I know you do with women and I do too, is like to dig into where was the breach? Where did you stop trusting yourself? And how can you build that up? Right.

**Jill:** Right. And that requires you to actually know things about yourself that you've been avoiding. Yeah.

**Dr. Cohen:** Yes. Which is easy. As we talked about earlier in the podcast, which is easy to do when you're focused on other people, like it's easy to not focus on yourself when either the person is, brings them so much drama or you're constantly trying to manage them. You know, part of the hard thing I think is, you know, it sounds really nice. Like I should have time to focus on myself. That was hard. The first time I had to do it, I had never looked at myself. That was hard. Right.

**Jill:** Well, yeah, because when we look at ourselves and we're forced to figure out like where the tracks turn, that often involves people we love. And while it's hard to know certain things about ourselves in the sense that once we know that we don't want to go into that, that feeling of I should have known better, or how could I let myself do that? Or how could I let myself think that what we go into the area of, Oh, you know, like, and I, listen, I talk very freely about this. I mean, a lot of my poor choices in love and, and dating when I was younger was because I always felt like I had to be perfectly thin and beautiful in order to be loved because I had a very critical mother and I love my mother. She's a wonderful mother, but it was really, really hard on me. And she instilled a belief system into me that the most important thing was to be thin. If you're thin, you deserve all the love in the world. And if you're not, you don't, that was my interpretation. Right. As a child, as a young child who couldn't understand why a parent was angry, if I was eating cake, or if my jeans were tight or if, you know, whatever, but you know, when you, when I did my own journey inward, and I understood that, then that triggered my need to let go of my mother too and not let go of her as my mother. I love my mother. I see her all the time, but let go of her mistakes, let go of her influence, let go of the feeling of what she might have done to hurt me without knowing. And once I could let go of all the bad, I could come around to always be looking inward. And to also let go of the idea that I have to be a certain way of 40 to someone else's rules.

**Dr. Cohen:** Right, and to start understanding what your rules are for being loved. I mean, that's what I think also so fascinating. It's like when we take in all these people's messages, which we do, right. You know, we're crowding out our own and I've had this experience so often where I'll feel something and then I'll think, wait, that's not my feeling. That's someone else's like, I'm actually okay with all of this, it's this, you know, my parents or my act like someone who has taught me this or society. And so really knowing what your, your yeses and your nos are, that takes work that really, really takes work well.

**Jill:** And not to, this is not meant to be a political statement, but like, I mean, there can't be two precedents at once. Right?

**Dr. Cohen:** Exactly. Exactly. There could just beat up that's okay. That's okay. But it's right. We just can't have it. Yes.



**Jill:** Our own president has to come from us.

**Dr. Cohen:** Yeah. So I want to ask you Jill. I love, I always ask people this question at the end of the podcast, because I think it's really a fun one. If you could go back to you in that bathroom, let's say, with the wisdom that you have now, what would you say to your earlier younger self?

**Jill:** Okay. The one in the bathroom or the one even before?

**Dr. Cohen:** Either totally up to you.

**Jill:** Oh, well I would tell my younger, younger self to relax, chill out. You know, this is your path. No one ever gets ahead by looking sideways, which I always say. And you know, if I could talk to myself in the bathroom, I think I would just say, it's going to be okay. It's all going to be okay, it's a gift. It's a gift. It's a football. Take it, take the football and, and run with it, you know, and don't be afraid and don't be afraid and don't look back, you know, unless it's in a productive way, don't no regrets. Just keep going. This is what life is. Life is a series of ups and downs and lefts and bright. And, and I believe that if we're doing it right, we have joy and we have heartbreak and we have loss and we have gain and we have, you know, grief and sadness and, and moments of being full and moments of feeling empty. We have it all.

**Dr. Cohen:** And what do you think she couldn't have seen coming that was chicken to change you for the better? Like, what do you think she didn't know is heading her way?

**Jill:** I don't think that she had any idea of all of the amazing goodness that was always, always there waiting for her to choose it.

**Dr. Cohen:** Yeah. It makes me emotional to think about her. Yeah. Yeah. You know that she had it all right there and she was going to have this journey with, that would involve some pain, but would also have her see her worth in a way she never had before.

**Jill:** Yeah. You know, I always say that letting go in the short-term is really hard, but it's the way forward in the way back to ourselves. And you know, I don't think I could have envisioned any of what happened after. And I don't think I would have wanted to. I mean, you know, we take life day by day, you know, we, you know, always say like one of the joys and one of the horrors of life is that we just don't know. Right. Right. So I would've, I would've, you know, as I did in that moment, I would've put my arms around her and I would've just said, you know, it's your road to pave. So yeah.

**Dr. Cohen:** Yeah. I love that. It's your road to pave. And I, I wanna, I guess that's a great place to leave off. Cause I just want to say to everyone listening, like we're sharing our stories, but it is your road to pave. Yes. And always has been that's the turn, you know, it's like there are endings and there are beginnings, there are open paths. There are paths that go a dead end. And when we get to them, what do we do? We turn around and we find the next path. That's it. That's how it works.

**Dr. Cohen:** That's how it works. Just like a hiking trail. Right. I always say are like the GPS, like someone, I think it was a Buddhist teacher said the GPS, when, when you make a wrong turn, it doesn't say just stupid idiot. It says reroute.

**Jill:** Exactly. Exactly. Yes. Gently, exactly

**Dr. Cohen:** Thank you, Jill so much for sharing your wisdom vulnerable and open with your story. It was so helpful and so beautiful, and just remind people where they can find you. I mentioned in the beginning, but--

**Jill:** Yes, you can find me at [letgoforit.com](http://letgoforit.com).

**Dr. Cohen:** Great. And I couldn't recommend her book more. Jill, thank you so much for being here. It was so great to have you.

**Jill:** Thank you for having me, you too.