

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (00:08):

I am so happy today to introduce my audience to my guest, Julie Starr. Julie is an award-winning social issues advocate for human rights and environmental protection. She has long been a dreamer and a doer trained first as a professional dance therapist. Julie moved into life coaching, founding the Possibility Life Coaching for Women. Today, Julie works intimately with individuals and groups of women who have experienced a husband leaving and are eager to move through the grief to live their better life. Julie's been there, done that and wants to connect to all of you. So I'm so happy to have you, Julie, thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Julie Starr (00:57):

Thank you, Elizabeth. Thank you for having me. And I'm excited to, to reach your audience to, for women who have had a husband leaving. It is an interesting phenomenon in the divorce spectrum. And, um, when I went through it, which was like 18 years ago, it was well actually 15 but three years before the official divorce. I really didn't know where to go, what to do. And now, you know, thank God for your podcast for, for the work of others. It's like people have a place where they can get the support.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (01:38):

Yeah, well, I'm so happy and I can't wait to share your story and your wisdom with our audience. So I like to start the podcast asking the same question of all my wonderful guests. What one word would you use to describe your divorce?

Julie Starr (01:55):

Okay, so I'm going to have to use two. And it is, I would call it because it was sort of double spectrum. It's horrendous awakening.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (02:06):

Wow. So yeah, kind of a mixture there.

Julie Starr (02:09):

The mixture that was horrendous was the legal maze. The money matters, the games that are played in the legal process, which was not just my divorce. There is a pattern. And as you said at the beginning, I'm an activist. And if I hadn't at 63, now my activist days are kind of, I've had it. But if I was going to be an activist for this issue, I would really get the courts. I'm in Canada. I think the states have different process, but it's, you know, I would get the courts to be less horrendous and more fair and hearing the truth. But the awakening part was the part that I really got to see who people are, what life is really about. And being a woman who, you know, I gave a lot of the ownership of money to my ex. I didn't learn about money. I didn't know about investing. Now, thank God for Barbara Huson, Barbara Huson Stanny. And for others like her who educate women. And I really saw, oh, money, isn't that difficult. It's just, you know, speak my language and I learnt it. So that was the awakening.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (03:33):

Beautiful. And I just want to let the audience members know that the amazing Barbara Huson Stanny was on the podcast. So check that one out. It was just a few months ago. So please make sure to check it out, as you said, she's brilliant. And I want to ask you, I love this by the way, the horrendous awakening. Cause I think it just absolutely brings into light the polarity of how it's so painful. And by the way, in the states, the court system is horrendous too. And then also the possibility and, be able to hold both of

those in psychotherapy. We call that the dialectic being able to hold both the golden. And, and so I love that you brought that idea up and I'm, I'm curious, I know that you work with people whose partners have left. I'm wondering though, now that you have this time to look back, do you look back and see, that there were things that were problematic or difficult for you not having a voice longer than you had originally thought when he said he wanted a divorce? Like, was it a little birdy in your ear that you weren't listening to kind of?

Julie Starr ([04:42](#)):

Yes. Well, it wasn't a little birdie. It was a big birdie. It was like Eagle, a beautiful Eagle. I see with women whose husbands leave, there's two categories. So the one that you're describing is me. I knew that our marriage was decaying. I wrote in my book, your husband left now what it's like, I wrote that I took us to seven different marriage counselors and a few of them were just for one or two sessions, and I really enjoyed watching the process and seeing how the therapists work. So I knew that it was really centered around emotional intimacy issues, but I knew something was up. So when he let me know that he was leaving, it wasn't like, oh, I never heard of this before, but it was still quite a shock. And, I went into the overwhelm. The other group I want to identify, and Vikki Stark, her book, runaway husbands is a wonderful book.

Julie Starr ([05:48](#)):

She also has planted heartbreak where over 60 women talk about their experience, wonderful book. And, those women have the experience from out in left field. Like they didn't even, they thought they had a good marriage and in the meantime he was having an affair or whatever on the side and no signs of anything. And then all of a sudden, you know, I'm on my way out and oh, we're going to the store and, yeah. So there are those two categories for myself. I was in the first part of just knowing that I needed more, but I, I have three daughters and I really wanted to make it work. And, you know, so we proceeded with that.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen ([06:35](#)):

So you brought up a really beautiful word, I think, to describe a lot of people's experience of the decay, right. That it's decay is a slow kind of wearing out of a relationship. And it sounds like you had the thought of it is decaying. I know that, but we're going to try to fix it. We're going to try to nourish it back to life, pulling him to all the therapists. Right. And I see, we see that a lot. I see that a lot with women, and I just really want to honor you that you, that you really tried. And that, an emotion that I like to share is that's so profound is the hope that you had hoped that things would change. And that that's a really special part of you and anyone who's felt that actual feeling of hope.

Julie Starr ([07:18](#)):

I love that you recognize that. And I think that hope, there's a wonderful new series on Netflix called The Chair. And at the very end, they have a beautiful poetry thing about hope and hope is something that holds people together, even hope after he left. And I had my three daughters and I knew I'm going to make this good. Like I took them to the park, I bought a photo shoot from a charity organization. We had a new photo taken of a family together because we are family. We are family. If he chooses to leave and, you know, move on, that's his choice. And this is what I emphasize for women. It's like, don't lose yourself. And there is a great sense of often an overwhelm of shame of unfinished business for the women who are left. And the bottom line is you can feel all those feelings, but know that you're okay.

And that okayness is within you. And you know, you're going to make it through. And it's a horrendous nightmare.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (08:31):

Exactly. It's a horrendous awakening, as you said. And I think it's funny that you mentioned the photo shoot. I did that too. The first year that I had kicked my ex-husband out, I, we did a holiday card and, I took it with me and my two very small kids, six month old and a two year old and, you know, as a sense of pride, but this is what I'm doing. I am accepting what's happening and I am raising these children. And I think that you're right. So often we think, we think about shame. I don't mean these kids don't have a whole quote, unquote family, but actually to have the pride that you're doing, this, that you're continuing on, that you're moving forward and you're creating this, this new family.

Julie Starr (09:12):

And I think it's also very important message for the children. I mean, your guys were little, little, they were little, mine were 16, 14, and 10. And, you know, I think children, there's a tremendous grief process that you go through when he leaves and the grief, you need to process it all. I always say, wait, till your kids go off to school or whatever, before you fall completely apart. But in my house, we always talk about feelings. I mean, my kids, I think it's sometimes they're like that. I believe in processing. So, you know, we always talked about everything, but I did hold my personal major distress till they went out. And then, you know, friend or my incredible life coach, Katherine would for 20 years now. And, I wanted to be empowered and to build myself up, but I feel that you cannot do that without feeling the grief, you know, falling apart and just, falling, not completely apart in front of the children. Yeah.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (10:23):

And I wonder just a little question in my head that I'm just throwing out to people that I think a lot of people experience, if you weren't met emotionally in your marriage, then you are more focused later on processing everything because you didn't have that opportunity to do that. And what that did to the relationship. So I think this idea of, I like to process things that you said I'm the same way in my family, is because I didn't have that for a very, very long time. And I saw the damage that could do.

Julie Starr (10:52):

I hear that. And for myself, because I'm an empath, like I am, I love Dr. Sandra Brown's work, and she talks about super treat women. I always thought, oh, maybe I'm codependent because I love to give and all of these things, but I could never relate to it. And I read all the books, but then when I read Dr. Sandra Brown's work, it was like, oh my gosh, this is me. It's called a super treat woman. And we have, it tests scientifically that we have over conscientiousness and over the bell curve. Um, oh, what's the other one tolerate toleration. So, I'm a great peacemaker. It comes naturally to me since I was a little girl, I love, I love giving, but I have learnt that I'm going to be more choosy in terms of who I give to.

Julie Starr (11:47):

Right. Sir Anthony Hopkins has a wonderful poem on Facebook now, which is, I have it here. Let go of people who aren't ready to love you yet. It's so worthwhile to get, because he really speaks to the fact that those of us who are real givers and love to give, we need to be more choosy about who are the ones. And I loved my ex husband, you know, I have no regrets. I was married for 18 years. I'm divorced now for 18 years. I have three incredible daughters that, a beautiful tribe of grandchildren who I just

bring me all my joy. So I don't have any regrets, but I do know that people in my life need to be more on the emotive.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (12:38):

And I liked that you used the word choose because I want people who are listening to understand that it's a choice who you interact with. So in my book, I have a whole chapter on friends and how to get the right support that you, you choose who to connect to. And that's a really important, even if someone wants your attention, you always have the choice whether to give it to them or not. So I think that's really an important message. So tell me a little bit, Julie, about, before we get into your healing, kind of the hardest part of your divorce, the part that really brought you to your knees, the most horrendous part for you personally.

Julie Starr (13:15):

Okay. There's no question what, right on legal maze, the legal maze is a, I think it's the ugliest place I have ever been in my entire years. And I've had cancer. I am diabetic on the insulin pump. I had a lot of different challenges, you know, those hallways, of waiting to see if I have to go to trial and just the lies that are, and it's not just my case. It's part of the legal system.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (13:49):

And did you have representation?

Julie Starr (13:51):

Oh, for sure. We always tell women if you can mediate. It's fantastic. I mean, I wasted my whole retirement savings and a trust fund. I had everything went and, because I didn't know what I was doing. And that's why in my book, I have tips of to do what I didn't do. I do tell women that if it is not, we're talking about your future finances, we're talking about child custody, we're talking about how your life is going to be, right. So if you cannot fully trust your soon to be ex to be upright and honest, then you must get legal representation. I mean, my ex got the legal representation before,

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (14:44):

But I think it's a really important, important message for people. And I feel like all my colleagues and I are trying to share this often, which is right now, if you, if you're listening and you're in the midst of the pain and the shock and the processing of finding out that you're getting a divorce, it is so easy to feel short-sighted. The trauma requires you to be focused on what's happening right now. And we lose sight of the future. We lose sight that in 18 years, right, in 18 years, you're going to be living somewhere and have grandchildren that you're going to want the money you might want the apart. You know? And so I see so many women in particular, give things away or not have a voice because of the discomfort of the moment and that it, because physiologically, we lose sight of the future. And so, you know, I just want those people listening to hear your story and, and hear and heed the advice of taking care of yourself for your future. Think about your future self, that she will look back and say, thanks so much for doing that hard thing of asking for this or speaking your voice or whatever it might be. Give yourself that gift.

Julie Starr (15:54):

Yeah. And when you were saying that, I thought of Barbara Huson's words, which is, self-care is taking care of your future self. I'm paraphrasing. It's like when you take care of your money, women need to learn about money. Women need to know that money is their friend not like, oh, you know, people

think, oh, it's selfish. Money is just energy that you're flowing that allows you to buy your grandchildren for me on the *Berenstain Bear* books on Amazon. So you want to have that abundance in your life. And the way to get it is to be smart, to have the right representation. I went through three different lawyers. First one, I couldn't afford them anymore. Second one same thing. And the third one just brought me to the end and the bottom line, the bottom line is if the other side has an aggressive lawyer and is taking you to trial, you need to have a lawyer who will match that energy, even if you are the type would just be kind.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (17:04):

I think that's a really, really good point, a good reminder that even if that's not who you wanted to hire, you know, the quote unquote shark, if that's who your partner has, you need to consider that. And I would also recommend that people go back and listen to the episode with Tina Swithin, who talks and does a lot of advocacy through one mom's battle about, the court systems, especially in the U S, so you mentioned, some of the psychological healing you received, but can you share a little bit about, um, you had a coach, what other healing did you receive to move through the process of the divorce? Anything else?

Julie Starr (17:38):

Okay. Because I was trained as a dance therapist and then I did my life coaching. So I'm the type of person, if you could see this room, it's like a gut bookshelves. I always say coaches are the best customers for courses and books and everything. So I've done. I probably have my PhD in many enlightened kinds of things. So I've done all that learning. And that just continued in the divorce. I, as I mentioned, I've had my life coach for over 20 years and she's just incredible. And what else did I do? I looked for good people, even good people like my bank manager, Sophia. She ended up coming to my house and helping me understand. Cause I had to get a mortgage to keep the house for the kids and myself, and just surround yourself with good people and get the help. Don't be afraid to get help. Family and friends are wonderful, but most often either they're not impasse or they're not able to listen to you without judgment. And there are so many sides to every story, but it's not even about sides. It's just about getting that hug that you need.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (18:55):

So, right. Exactly. And I would encourage people if you're, there's a chapter in my book about friends and the different kinds of tiers and, actually based a lot of that on Barbara Stanley's work. So tell me what was the part you could never see coming, but changed you for the better in your divorce process?

Julie Starr (19:14):

Hmm. Excellent question. I didn't see coming well, we had just finished a marriage counseling and I'd love checking out all these different techniques and, oh my goodness. The therapist was brutal to me. And I just sat in my car for an hour crying. After that session, we drove separately to the session and it was that night that he said to me, you know, Julie, I think you're right, because I had always been saying, mine was a cry for help, but you know, like let's get our act together, which I realized after he told me and that night he just said, Julia, right, we should get divorced. And that was huge, like shock in the book. I talk about how my heart went. I just literally physically felt my heart go through my legs and out of my body. And so that was an awakening for me. What was the original question?

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen (20:12):

I was just asking, what was the part you couldn't see coming through your divorce that changed you for the better ultimately?

Julie Starr ([20:18](#)):

I thank my ex-husband for leaving because I remember having a rabbi say to me, Julie, you're going to be happy. You're going to see that this is all for the good in the future, but I, at the time, as you said before, it's, you don't have that awareness. And in the end, may he be blessed. I am so much better off on my own. And I wish for the women who go through this, that ultimately they see that if it happened, it happened and not only accepting it, but seeing the good from it.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen ([21:02](#)):

I always like to talk about how it's a huge, brave move to accept when another person comes to you and says, they're not happy in the relationship anymore. That is a self-protective move to accept it and to say, okay. So I'm so glad you brought that part up. So I love to ask everyone this question towards the end of the podcast, which is, if you could go back to yourself back when you were going to those multiple therapists, maybe that moment where your heart dropped out of your body, into your feet, into the ground, with all the wisdom that you have now, what would you go back and whisper to that, that person?

Julie Starr ([21:46](#)):

I would tell her stand in your integrity and you are, you are going to make it through this and it's going to be good. I think there's no black and white in life as there's a little black and white, but not a lot of grays. So the gray is that some people do get hurt. My daughters had to adjust to a new life. And they're all incredible mommies now and doing their teaching and doing physiotherapy. So they've all gone on, but I think that in a divorce, like in any loss, any ending, there is pain. There is, you know, a transition and, would I choose it? No, but would I choose to have married my ex? For sure, because that's where I got all this grandkids and kids.

Julie Starr ([22:42](#)):

So, you know, it's a journey, but I love your take on positivity, especially for people who are struggling through that divorce process. You know, it's, the more you can hold onto yourself. I always call it unfiltered, um, unbridled, authentic being yourself. And when you hold onto that and because a divorce is a, is a dance, so there's a tango that you both play, you must claim your part so that in your next relationship, lay that out again. But it's never about one person. So, and especially when a husband leaves there is that overwhelming shame that he left you and you know, what's wrong with you and social interactions are difficult, but you will get through that. So the answer to your question is you are going to be okay.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen ([23:38](#)):

Yes, yes. I love that. And that's the message that so many people on this podcast want to share with their past selves and think it's so important for people listening who are going through it to know that you will be okay and you will move through it. And there will also be grief and pain. So Julie, is there anything else you want to add before we wrap up that we haven't had a chance to share that you think would be important for the audience to hear?

Julie Starr ([24:01](#)):

I think there's one point, which is a big point, and which does happen a lot for women who the guy leaves and that is, there's often another woman in the curtains. And either you know about it or you don't know, and women lose themselves to this. They think, oh, you know, often it's a younger prettier kind of person. And, um, for the women who are dating other dating, married men, the ones who don't know about it, you know, they don't know he's married, but otherwise, in my book, I have a little chapter for women who do that. But I think that in integrity, you know, if something has happened to you, the women who are left and I tell them, give the other woman, the scenario, your ex is behavior in this area, no energy power, or time of day. Why? Yes. First you thought like, oh my gosh, you can't believe this is your husband. But after that, it has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with your ex, with the other woman and what happens in her life. And you don't have to worry about it. So that's just one message I feel is so important for women to know.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen ([25:14](#)):

I really liked that about thinking also about being able to control where you put your energy. Sometimes I talk with clients about thinking of it, like a thermostat and just turning that energy down a bit when you're with somebody. So it's not, love that. Yeah. Thank you so much, Julie. It was so great to have you. Tell people the name of your book, how they can find it and your podcast, because you're so generously offering that if someone wants to have a free consultation with you, that you'd be willing to do that. So tell me the name of the book, how to find it and how someone can reach out to get that 30 minute consultation.

Julie Starr ([25:48](#)):

Okay. So I guess this is, you can't see this, but it's *Your Husband Left, Now What?* And it's on Amazon, Julie Starr and just go to my website. My business is called Possibility Life Coaching for Women. It's on Facebook, over 4,000 women there now and daily inspiration. And my website again is possibilitycoaching.net.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen ([26:18](#)):

Yeah. And we'll link to that in the show notes so people can get to it. And thank you so much for offering to meet with, someone who needs to talk a little bit about it.

Julie Starr ([26:27](#)):

I love it. I call it a clarity call. We look at where you are, where you want to be, and what's in between. In a half hour, we can't cover it all, but you can get an idea of kind of what's happening.

Dr. Elizabeth Cohen ([26:42](#)):

That's so great. Julie, thank you so much for being here on the podcast. It was an honor to have you, and thanks for sharing your story with everyone.

Julie Starr ([26:49](#)):

Thank you, Elizabeth.