

Announcer: [00:00](#) Welcome to a teaspoon of healing where we explore the pathways to wellness and vibrant living. Listen to personal stories of healing and interviews with experts. It's time to open a doorway to healing in your life through positive changes. Here is your host, Dawn DiMare.

Dawn DiMare: [00:22](#) Hi, I'm Dawn DiMare and you're listening to a teaspoon of healing. This is episode 13 of the podcast. Today's topic is healing from toxic relationships. My guest is attorney at law, Cindy Lee Cannon, a certified family law specialist practicing and Laguna Beach, California. She has experienced with divorce cases, family law, and also has personal experience recovering from toxic relationships, so she has several steps to guide you through surviving and thriving after experiencing a toxic relationship and a toxic relationship. Doesn't have to be a spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend, although they often are. Toxic relationships can be family members, parents, siblings, coworkers, bosses, even friendships, so I'm sure many of you out there have experienced toxic relationships are in one right now and are wondering, how am I ever going to get out of this and how am I ever going to reclaim myself worth? Well, we're going to help you with that.

Dawn DiMare: [01:32](#) If you are currently in a toxic relationship, it can feel really isolating and this is not a gender specific thing. Men are victims as much as women and again, you are not alone. It can feel really isolating and scary and like you can never get out, but you can and Cindy is going to provide or steps or reclaiming self worth after post traumatic stress disorder, which actually does occur after being involved in a toxic relationship and her experience as a family law specialist dealing with lots of divorce cases. She has a lot of experience dealing with this, so stay tuned for that and don't worry. There is help out there and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. If you want to listen to more episodes of the podcast, download transcripts are show notes or read. My blog is a teaspoon of healing.com. This podcast can be heard on itunes or android, Google play, and now stitcher

Announcer: [02:31](#) This podcast is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Please consult a physician or other health professional before undertaking changes in lifestyle or wellness habits. The author claims no responsibility to any person or entity for any liability loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly as a result of the use application or interpretation of the information presented here.

Dawn DiMare: [02:53](#) And before we get into our interview, let's hear from one of our sponsors, Goff tours.

Announcer: [03:05](#) Hi, this is Goff,owner of Goff tours, specializing in standup paddle boarding or surfing lessons. I even do snorkeling. You can reach me here in Orange County. Has what you're looking for. You can contact me via email at gofftours@dot com or mobile number is nine. Four, nine three, three, eight, five, nine, three, seven Goff tours.com.

Dawn DiMare: [03:38](#) Hi, I'm Dawn DiMare and you're listening to a teaspoon of healing. I'm here with Cindy Lee, cannon, attorney and certified family law specialist based in Laguna Beach, California. Hi, Cindy.

Cindy Cannon: [03:50](#) Hi. Good morning. Thank you for having me.

Dawn DiMare: [03:52](#) Sure. How are you doing?

Cindy: [03:54](#) I'm doing very well. I am a family law specialist. I've been practicing law in California for 28 years and I work with families going through divorce and other difficult situations and I am very happy to be speaking with you today about recovery from a toxic relationship as can be easy to do and it's so hard.

Dawn: [04:25](#) I'm so glad that you're here because it's going to help so many people who are going through this. So you have experienced professionally and possibly personally with this issue.

Cindy: [04:34](#) Oh sure. One of the reasons I ended up practicing family law was because I have a background myself of a childhood trauma and I was drawn to my practice area, my specialty because I get to help a lot of people who have had similar journey to my journey.

Cindy: [04:58](#) So it has been really rewarding and a lot of people say, wow, that must be very stressful to do what you do. But it's intense. But it's actually very rewarding to be able to help people move through a difficult time in their lives and then recover and be healthy and happy despite a traumatic childhood. And that can't be easy.

Dawn: [05:22](#) And a lot of this does come from childhood, like you said, so we'll touch on that and you've been practicing for 28 years and I'm sure you've had a host of experiences and of course you can't talk about any particular clients and I'm not going to ask that, but do you find many people coming in are seeking to

either get out of or to heal from a toxic or abusive relationship that they're divorcing from?

- Cindy: [05:47](#) Well, certainly not every divorce involves a toxic relationship. People can grow apart. There are different reasons people end a. But I can say that a good number of people who end up in divorce court, especially in cases that are litigated in divorce court as opposed to settled or mediated outside of court, involve toxic relationships. Both parties may have certain issues, but the dynamic is very toxic. Uh, you can have one parent using the children as pawns a or another parent, alienating the children from the other parent. You can have an attitude where one party decides to exhaust all of the family's assets fighting simply to spite the other party. And you can have relationships that have somehow persisted for decades with one of the parties being subjected to emotional abuse and sometimes a domestic violence as well. That's got to be so hard to handle, but it's so good to have somebody like you. It's good to have a good supportive place to go to help you through that process.
- Dawn: [07:12](#) That's for sure. To have somebody. You're very warm. I can tell you're very warm and while I know you personally, so I know that you're a very warm person and it must be really nice to have somebody to come to who's warm and accepting in such a challenging time, especially if you're litigating a divorce. Do you also do mediation or do you mainly just handle the litigation cases?
- Cindy: [07:34](#) They are not mutually exclusive by any means. In fact, what I find is that we'll have a difficult case where sometimes there's a bonified legal issue that needs to be litigated before the parties can sit down and settle because there's a dispute, for example, over a contract or something like that, and after that the parties will go to mediation. So you can have a case that involves a little bit of litigation and then ultimately resolves in mediation or settlement conference has very common, actually most cases do settle the ones that don't often involved that really toxic type of relationship.
- Dawn: [08:21](#) Now you said this is something that can happen from childhood. You want to talk about any of your experience. I'm sure it's with this personally. And do you mind me asking this question?
- Cindy: [08:30](#) No, no, not at all. I had a traumatic childhood myself. I'm sorry. It's more common than people realize. So I, I grew up to become an adult with ptsd, just like a war veteran and what's called complex ptsd as well. PTSD is caused by one really traumatic event in, in childhood, whereas complex ptsd is

caused by chronic abuse or neglect at a young age. You can get both PTSD and CPD after childhood. Of course. Um, I like our veterans or I'm in an abusive relationship. I meet clients every day that are expressing the symptoms that I recognize the symptomology. I'm depressed. Um, you have issues with not feeling like a worthwhile person, things like that.

- Cindy: [09:32](#) Now the good news is you can recover, I sure did, and one thing about overcoming abuse and PTSD, something like that, it makes for really interesting, authentic people. That's a gift and really at the end of the day, that's all we can hope to take from an experience like that is make it a gift. You know, you now you get to live a little more intensely. I find that my playgroup who I hang out with is a different kind of group than it used to be when I was younger before I did my self work, but I can explain about that or what kind of software.
- Dawn: [10:16](#) You mentioned self work maybe. Do you have any tips for other people that are, that are going through this and they want to transition from that space into a more vibrant and thriving?
- Cindy: [10:26](#) Absolutely. Absolutely. I have come up with my method for recovering from a, in my case, PTSD and uh, it, it, it's caused from a toxic relationship.
- Cindy: [10:40](#) In my case, it was a toxic family that I grew up in, but it can be also a toxic relationship with a spouse or as an adult, an adult relationship and and people even have these relationships in the workplace. We'll definitely. Toxic workplaces. Absolutely, absolutely. Definitely.
- Dawn: [11:05](#) What are your steps to reclaiming your self worth for recovery from a toxic relationship, be it a family relationship or with a spouse or toxic girlfriend or boyfriend,
- Cindy: [11:18](#) and I want to be clear. You can be a guy and have a very toxic spouse or girlfriend. It's not just men who can be toxic. There are plenty of toxic women, so if I use masculine pronouns, please know that it's certainly not specific to one gender, absolutely, but for recovery, my steps are these, number one, I don't look for a new relationship realized right when I recognize red flags bit with a family member, spouse, whatever, and I exit the relationship, which is difficult to do or I'm helping somebody do that.
- Cindy: [12:08](#) I know it's difficult to do. You get a trauma bond, bond you think is love or friendship, and really what it is is trauma, almost

like Stockholm Syndrome, but number one, don't look for a new relationship is it's me time and then I have to really do some self checking, figure out how I ended up in that situation in the first place. Don't go out and rebound. Don't go out and look for another relationship right away. Introspect, self-reflect to help with that. I meditate and I use positive affirmations every day, good and that I find very helpful. I record my own and then play them. The next thing is take care and it sounds obvious, but if you're suffering from something like ptsd or see ptsd, it's something that gets overlooked. Take care of your health. Absolutely. I make sure that I eat clean food. I exercise every day.

- Cindy: [13:18](#) I walk in nature every day. Then some really basic things that I find specific to ptsd sufferers. Make sure you make your appointments for your regular checkup. Make sure you go get that mammogram if you're a woman or your prostate checked if you're a guy, because I've seen that people who have overcome abuse in their life tend to neglect their health more. Just an observation. So I make sure I do that and I give myself a lot of alone time. I like to spend a lot of time just being with me, getting reacquainted with myself.
- Dawn: [14:04](#) That's really important, right? So reacquainting with your own self, not what somebody else has projected on you.
- Cindy: [14:12](#) Enjoying my own company. That's a big thing. Now you have to be careful though because you don't want to isolate that. That's true. I going to be choosing, choosing the people that you socialize with too as well. When I find myself isolating too much, what I'll do is reach out and call a good friend and and just talk on the phone and and enjoy that support and the camaraderie that, that sort of thing. And, and by the way, these steps that I take for myself or the kinds of things I encourage my clients who are going through a separation from a toxic situation, I encouraged them to do the same types of things. So the alone time, but not isolating. That's another thing that I find is helpful for me. Another thing I do is I Journal and one reason I like journaling is I can write down my thoughts and then I can read them back a few weeks later and I can check and see if I'm gaining clarity, have I made progress? Whereas my head out today about that situation as opposed to where it was three weeks ago.
- Dawn: [15:28](#) That's a great idea and that's a way that you can compare situation.

- Cindy: [15:33](#) That's a really good point and I'm always surprised when I read back what I have journals. I wrote that memory of writing half the stuff. I have journals to write it now. Yeah. It's like, wow, I wrote that. Really? I don't remember writing that, but it is actually very helpful. Now another thing that is helpful that's been helpful for me and my clients have been helped by this as well, so they say is education. Um, I educate myself and not just on the toxicity and other people, that's the part that we like to educate ourselves about. Say I can recognize your toxic red flags a mile away.
- Cindy: [16:21](#) That's the heart that we enjoy educating ourselves about, but the thing that is really important, um, to educate ourselves about our own issues. I was wondering, I was going to ask, how do you know if you yourself are being toxic even if you don't mean to be? No, maybe it's not someone else that maybe there's something that maybe from your past or. Absolutely. How do you. How do you work through that?
- Cindy: [16:44](#) Oh, I'm quite sure I've been toxic at periods in my life. I am grateful that I'm not toxic now. No and no. Self awareness is a big part of everybody's journey in life. And I educated myself when I felt strong enough from taking those other steps that we discussed when I had enough time with myself, when I was feeling good enough after I journaled for a long, long time and read back my thoughts, I said, okay, what's going on with me? What's going on with me? Went back to those childhood wounds. Seeing how they tend to trigger that. That could pause, add entanglements with people that I shouldn't be entangled with or just trigger me. I find that sometimes even now and I'm not, I'm pretty strong now.
- Cindy: [17:48](#) I, I have a good amount of self aware and thankfully now I've done a lot of self work. I know what my issues are, but I'll find that even if I happened to casually and counter a toxic person, a negative person, it can trigger those old wounds.
- Dawn: [17:48](#) Really?
- Cindy: [18:09](#) Yeah. Yeah. It's very unpredictable. Even when you recover from it, how do you.
- Dawn: [18:14](#) And when you encounter a negative or toxic person or somebody who activates, who maybe triggers those feelings within you, what can you do to avoid, especially if it's somebody say you work with that person, say somebody works directly with that person. It's hard to avoid them. How they can do that

- Cindy: [18:30](#) . Great question. Yes. And that that's a big deal because at first of all, recognize what's going on. Okay. Know Myself. It's like, wow, that's triggering something. Stop. Take a moment. What is a rational reaction or am I overreacting because it's triggering this old wound. Okay, and then if you truly recognize this toxic person, you have to minimize your interaction with that person. Any required or necessary discourse should be very practical. What is necessary. For example, if you have a couple, I'm in a toxic relationship. They've now separated, but they share custody over children. That's the prime example and there are methods that you can employ if it's really triggering you. One is called gray rock where you deal with, don't give any type of emotional reaction to the person who's triggering you. Okay?
- Dawn: [19:37](#) Okay, I see. So you just become kind of like a gray rock.
- Cindy: [19:40](#) Exactly, exactly. You're definitely, as I said, gray rock. I'm not going to react. I'm not giving you any emotion because people will feed off the negative emotion.
- Cindy: [19:54](#) You're exactly right. So gray rock is one. And then the other one, which might be better for some people, especially in a professional environment, in a work environment, we call it medium chill. Okay. And what's that medium chill that is just. Yeah, sure. Whatever the attitude you're conveying is indifference. Okay. All right. And it's like, yeah, I'm fine. You have no effect on me. Okay, good. That's good. Alright. Be Easy to do, but it's good. Right? Those are helpful.
- Dawn: [20:27](#) When when you encounter in life, you can be anywhere really and encounter someone who's really negative, who just blunders on your boundary and it it's offensive. And how do you handle that? Right. I think were good tips. The gray rock and medium chill. I like those terms. What are some other steps that people can do to recover?
- Cindy: [20:56](#) I find one step very important, but it's a little counter intuitive and that is forgive yourself and the reason is, um, if you were in a toxic relationship and the abusive relationship, be it as an adult, as a child or both, there is a lot of shame in that and a shame is a really toxic feeling, but we have to deal with it to heal and feel truly good about ourselves and recover and go have our best, most joyful, happy, healthy life.
- Cindy: [21:33](#) Right? So I forgive myself for becoming entangled in that bad relationship. I forgive myself for whatever has caused me. Shane and I again, I do that by meditating. And it is counterintuitive because when you become an meshed with a

toxic person, you didn't do anything wrong. No. The fact that you might on a subconscious level attract a toxic person into your life because you have PTSD or something like that. And, and, um, toxic people, they have a sixth sense for honing in on people who have been through something like that. So it's not that you did anything wrong. Forgiving yourself is so important because you have nothing to be ashamed of. It's because you are not at fault and that's really, really important. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Anyone the smartest, most competent, hardworking, responsible person can still become entangled with a really toxic person. So forgive yourself. It's not your fault. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Nothing. Nothing very important. When I feel that I've really forgiven myself, you know, I do that again with meditation techniques. I'm a big fan of meditation. The final step, and it's also the hardest one is forgive your abusers. That's got to be hard. It can be, and I mean personally, I'm better at it some days than others.

Dawn: [23:22](#)

How do you do that? How does someone do that?

Cindy: [23:24](#)

Well, I can tell you how I do it and everybody has to find their own way because it's so personal. It's so personal. I can talk about abuse that I suffered as a child. Okay. That's, I guess there's nothing harder than that, right? So what I do is I meditate and I envisioned myself surrounded by white light. I had myself in the white light and then I try, I, I visualize it. I, I try and give that light some of that light to my abusers. Okay. So I tried to send them light when I meditate and recognize that everybody's on their own journey. People are toxic and abuse and hurt others. Um, oftentimes, unknowingly, and even when it's intentional, they do it because most likely they've been abused themselves. Yes. And I want to forgive them because I want that release.

Cindy: [24:34](#)

I want to be free. I want to be light. I want to live in the moment and be happy. So that's how I do it. I send them like when I meditate. That's wonderful. That's wonderful. But I could see how that works. I can see how that would be helpful. Yeah. That's how you do it. And so it's the same thing if you're going through a toxic divorce and it's really hard because you have a spouse that is literally abusing your child. What can be worse than that? I probably can't. You have to get help for your child. Right? And then you have to find a way to help yourself, right? When you recognize the other person as someone who's also struggling and in and work on the forgiveness, you still have to protect your child, but it lightens your load. I can,



Dawn: [25:36](#) I can imagine.

Cindy: [25:38](#) Even those can be the hardest thing to do. It's terrible. It's very hard. That's what I do.

Dawn: [25:45](#) What do you have any organizations that you know of that people can reach out to if they're victims of abuse or if they believe that their partners abusing their child,

Cindy: [25:55](#) Besides obviously talking to an attorney or talking to the law, but there is a great deal of help available online now. There are abuse support groups depending on what your personal issues are. There are 12 step programs available for survivors of abuse and I have met amazing people through programs like that. One thing I've learned is that connecting with people with similar experiences is really helpful. You realize how many people have been through what you've been through or even worse. I'll give you an example. I went to 12 step program, uh, many, many years ago, um, and I met the most lovely woman I really admired her.

Cindy: [26:53](#) She was cultured and educated and elegant, soft spoken, and just a really nice person who I wanted to know more about as it turned out, she had grown up in Ceausescu's Romania.

Dawn: [27:15](#) Oh Wow.

Cindy: [27:16](#) And she was a Romanian orphan and as a toddler for stimulation, she would bang her head on her crib.

Dawn: [27:26](#) Oh my God.

Cindy: [27:27](#) Yeah. She eventually escaped and came to the United States, right. Um, as a young adult and became a highly functioning professional who's capable of helping other people. And I remind myself of the stories of people like my friend, how resilient we really are. If you just pull that inner strength out of you, um, it's there already. It's already in you. We all have it to one degree or another, we have to tap into it.

Dawn: [28:08](#) Well that's, that's an amazing story. I can't imagine going through that and how resilient she is.

Cindy: [28:14](#) Right. And what she overcame, and, and I think we touched on it at the beginning, survivors of a traumatic experience like that, especially childhood, are the most interesting, authentic, really beautiful people. Yes. That you could ever want to meet. And so

that ultimately that's the gift of abuse. That's a good way to look at it. It is a gift that was given as a gift.

- Dawn: [28:44](#) Yes, it is. Now, do you have anything else that you want to add?
- Cindy: [28:48](#) Sending love and light to your audience. Thank you for listening. Take good care of yourself. Take care of yourself. When you're going through something, recognize it for what it is. Take it seriously and take what steps work for you and be kind to yourself. Be Good to yourself. Definitely working people.
- Dawn: [29:11](#) If they want to reach you, either they want an attorney or if they want more information about you, where can they reach you?
- Cindy: [29:17](#) I'm on the Internet. I'm on Google.
- Cindy: [29:21](#) You can then. Right. Go ahead and put. My name is Cindy Lee Canon in any search engine. They come right up. My office is in Laguna beach. I help people with family law disputes that those are divorce cases, custody disputes, post-judgment, parentage matters. I do a lot of domestic violence cases. I also do, um, marital agreements, premarital and postmarital agreements. I'm happy to chat with anyone who is going through something similar to what I went through or what my clients go through and know you're not alone.
- New Speaker: [30:00](#) That's wonderful. Well, thank you Cindy so much for being a part of this podcast and for sharing your experience.
- Cindy: [30:07](#) Thank you. It's been a pleasure.
- Dawn: [30:10](#) It's been wonderful having you and I know that people out there will benefit from this and if any of you have any questions for cindy, you can google her and contact her or you can go on my website, [teaspoon appealing.com](http://teaspoonappealing.com). I have a contact form, so if you have a question or you want to some advice for Cindy, I will send it over to.
- Cindy: [30:28](#) Well, thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you very much.
- Dawn: [30:35](#) Thank you for listening to this episode of a teaspoon of healing. If you have any questions for me or for Cindy, visit my website [teaspoon of healing.com](http://teaspoonofhealing.com). Click on contact and I'll get back to you while you're on my site. You can download transcripts of previous episodes, listen to previous episodes, read my blog or read show notes.

Dawn: [30:58](#) Tune in next week I'm going to be talking with Reiki Joe again, and we're going to be talking about what you can do to charge yourself up when you're feeling sluggish. Have a great week.

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