

breaking-the-secrets-and-the-silence-with-susan-warner-taylo...

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SPEAKERS

Jennifer Malcolm, Susan Warner Taylor

- J** Jennifer Malcolm 00:10
Calling all women who are curious and called to be women warriors are rising in this day and age to heal and grow together. I'm your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome to the next episode of the Jennasis Speaks podcast The Transformative Power of Women's Stories where every woman has a story and every story matters. And I am excited today to have Susan Warner Taylor here with me on this podcast, and we have such small world connections. I'm going to read her bio first. And then we're gonna get into the small world connections and it's your story. So welcome, Susan.
- S** Susan Warner Taylor 00:48
Thank you. Thank you for having me.
- J** Jennifer Malcolm 00:49
You are most welcome. So Susan Warner Taylor is the director of institutional research and assessment at Baldwin Wallace University. With a doctorate in sociology. She taught at several institutions before moving into higher education administration. She has three adult children and nine grandchildren. She is also a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

The survivor who learned her abuser had molested other members of her extended family, Susan shares her experience because she finds strength in breaking the silence that too often surrounds sexual abuse. Welcome, and thank you for being willing to share your story today. Yeah, I'm happy to do that. For the audience. Susan, and I just connected probably back in December of 2020. And we were amazed at the small world connection. So I probably met Susan when I was around 11 or 12. Because one of her adult children, and I were in the fifth grade together at fifth sixth grade together. And I'm sure through parents, you know, coming and going and activities. I know Nathan was in basketball, and I was in volleyball and basketball. So I'm sure our paths crossed at that point. And then in high school when we were at opposing schools, I'm sure you were in the stands cheering him on. But also, I discovered that she works with my husband, Chad in the same department, and they cross pollinate a lot at balls University. So, so much fun to have you here today. Yeah, that small world is so funny, but meant to be. And it's Yeah, so from, you know, 30 years ago, when our paths first crossed to Nathan seeing some of the posts on my Facebook wall, about my sexual abuse story that I aired early in December, he just said, I think you should talk to my mom, because she's got an amazing and powerful story. And I think you too, would hit it off and down the rabbit hole we went.

S

Susan Warner Taylor 02:47

And that makes me so proud of my son that he says, Mom, you need to tell your story more broadly. So I was very thankful that he volunteered me up for this. Awesome. And I did text him this morning. And I said, Hey, I get to interview your mom today. And I'm sure he's back in school as a principal with his students, but he gave me like the thumbs up. He's He's cheering us both on today. Yeah, they have great kids. You're a blessed woman. We're gonna talk about just your childhood story that comes out in layers, layers of awareness, layers of healing, layers of empowerment. But let's just talk your story. So you start the story how you want to and, and I will interject with questions as they arise. Okay. Well, it's hard to know exactly where to jump into this story, because it is very layered. I always growing up. My memories are of me being a sad child. I never could really put a finger on why I was sad. But I don't remember a lot of laughter. I remember a lot of alone times. And my parents being concerned about why I was sad. I probably would have been classified as depressed in these days. But back in the 60s, they weren't classifying children in those areas. I mean, they did take me to a doctor who prescribed me some medicine that I took for several years that I I don't even really know why. I know my parents would take me to different places and think about putting me in some kind of school away from home. Nothing really ever came of that, but I was just kind of a sad child. Um, I later have figured out exactly what I was sad about. But while I was growing up, you know, just kind of the sensitive one and spent a lot of time alone. So, probably into my 30s. I got married early. I got married at age 19. I had my first child at 21. And I was I was happy. I mean, I was

I was not discontented. I found great happiness and motherhood that was clearly by my greatest achievement of life. And so I was happy being a mother and I had three wonderful children. And, you know, it was just kind of plodding along. And long in life, I was a full time homemaker, staying home with the kids full time, and doing what I thought I should be doing with my life. Somewhere, around 35, things started getting unsettled, unsettled. For me, I didn't know what it was, I couldn't put my finger on it. I watched a program on Oprah. Oprah was just coming into fashion at that time. And it was a program where she talked about being sexually abused as a child. And I thought, wow, that that's fascinating. And so I began thinking about childhood sexual abuse. There wasn't a lot out there on that, at that time, you know, it was just coming into fashion for people to talk about that. But for some reason, it stuck in my mind, and it stuck in my mind. And I seem to run into people all the time. That words sharing with me that they were victims of sexual abuse. And little things started coming back to me. little snippets of memories. And I would, I would stop and say, what's this? I mean, what is this about? I didn't have any memory of that. I had a memory of not really being fond of my grandfather, but not any memories of any kind of abuse. Um, I need to back up now and explain a little bit about my family. My mother comes from a family of 13 children. They were raised in the hills of West Virginia. And they were very typical Appalachian family raised in the depression. My grandfather was a sharecropper, he never worked a job outside of his own land or renting the land as a sharecropper. So it was not an easy life 13 children, and you raise what you can to feed them and keep them in clothing. So they became a very, very close family. They're very going to visit my relatives was our only social outlet as chill as children. So we, you know, we were there often to their house, they lived in West Virginia. It was the highlight of our year to go visit. We had a family reunion every year where every cousin came, I had 52 first cousins on it. So it was it was pretty cool. It was a it was a great time. And my my grandparents love to have us there. We took all all family vacations are spent visiting my grandparents. My grandfather did die when I was 15. So I have a lot of great memories. After age 15 of things that happened with the extended family. I just done as I got into this recovered memories that start to happen. I started to remember things that happened with my grandfather before he died. And they really did come back like flashbacks. I didn't know what to do with that. I knew that it was important for me to deal with it. So I was very fortunate I found a really great therapist who was willing to work with me through the memories. I started seeing her on a regular basis. And it was a safe spot for me to talk about these memories. And as we plowed through what had happened to me as a child, I came to realize that I was very vulnerable to have been chosen to be a victim of my grandfather's abuse. He he preyed on children who were very obedient, who were very compliant, who were pleasers, who were loners. And that was me. I was I was the only girl of a family of four or three younger brothers. I spent a lot of time alone. And when we would visit, you know, there would be opportunities of me being alone, the boys would be out playing and I was playing with my dolls or whatever. So I was a very easy

victim. And so from the very beginning, I remembered that my grandfather chose me to be what he called his special girl. You know, he groomed me from a very, very early age. I love this story, because there's always good parts of you know, relationships. But this is a story that was told to me from the time I could remember was we were in a Down visiting them. And we were went to see a parade. And I was on one side of the street, my grandfather was on the other side of the street and I was only about three years old. I stopped the parade by running across the street in front of me and to get to my grandfather, because I loved him. I mean, he's my grandfather. And he was very affectionate. So there was all of this built into me, probably around, but I think around at age eight, it began to become inappropriate touching. And I still believe that he knew what he was doing. He had groomed me to be his special buddy, we played croquet together, when I would go visit him. And so he started taking advantage of me sexually around age eight, this all came back as little snippets to me at age 35, as an adult, and it was very shocking, it was it was very difficult to deal with. As I continue to deal with the, the memories that came back, I realized how important it was for me to, to start speaking about them. I've never told anybody, I've never spoken about abuse at all to anybody. So I began with my immediate family, I talked to my husband about it. I talked to my mother and my father about it. And, to my great surprise, my mother and father were not surprised at the abuse. And when I sat them down the first time and said, I have something I need to tell you. I think grandpa abused me when I was a child. My mother's first reaction was I always wondered if something was going on. Wow. And so they were surprised, and I was surprised that they were surprised. We're talking about this deep secret from everybody. So my mother began to tell me that she wasn't surprised because Grappa was known to be an abuser, that he had been doing this his whole life. And that not only was he known to be doing that, but he had actually also abused her. Wow. And I was shocked. I mean, I had no idea, right. And she went on to say that she had tried to watch me very closely when we were visiting, so that nothing would happen. And she thought that she had taken care of me by watching out for me. But of course she hadn't. He was very clever. And he had found ways to get around that. My mother was very upset about it then felt horrible. My father also was upset, he felt bad. But he told me that when he was visiting whenever they went to visit with my grandparents, his major concern was to protect my mother. He knew my mother had been a father. So he was very concerned that that she did not get approached by her father as an adult. So he would always watch over and protect her. Because my grandfather was still approaching my mother as an adult with four children asking for sexual favors. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. So my dad took care of my mother and gave it a thought that he would approach me because they thought that they were taking care of me, right? What age was your mom young when your grandfather was abusing her as well. So from a young age, and then into adulthood, she was abused from the time she was young age until she left home as a married woman, and then you know, he's still continued to approach her she would tell me I could never go

into a bedroom and make a bed alone because I knew he would be there as an adult he you know, he never got any accountability for what he did. He just continued to rule this family. If you understand about Appalachian, you know, this is not this is not a unusual story. That's the way these families in the hills oftentimes lived. The patriarch of the family could do what he wanted to do. When it's interesting that you use in your story to the word grooming and how he groomed you because Amy Stack who did a, an episode with me in season one, she was sexually abused from the age of eight to 13. And she talks about how there's a grooming process. It is a it's subtle, it's a place where you're made to feel special and a place of gratitude. And it and for her it wasn't the immediate sexual abuse that happened. It was that grooming of making her feel comfortable and safe, and that there was a special relationship and you were helping someone out and you're being a good girl. And then the the physical abuse you know in she talks about how it started with himself gratifying himself in front of her and how she was uncomfortable but he was grateful and then you know how it continued to culminate, year after year, and you're using the same language that she used, which is very intriguing. It is it's so interesting that these men follow these distinct patterns. If you study this topic, you know, this is not an unusual story. This is how they all do it. They, they learn somehow to be able to do this. And my grandfather was very good at what he did, because he had multiple victims that he never got caught before he died, did anyone ever accused him of doing this? And what do you feel like it was at age 35? That these snippets of memories started coming back that was there something in your life at that point that triggered it? Or was it just maybe you were happy and content and you weren't worried? And you kind of let your emotional guard down? Do you have any idea of why those snippets started coming back? Well, I think that my life had been very busy up until then. I married young and I have three children. And that took a lot of time to be raising those children. And I also reached a level of maturity, that I felt safe to be able to speak my story. Um, I think the timing was right. They say oftentimes, it will happen when your children reach the age that you were when you were abused. So that could have been a factor in my oldest son was about the age that I was at, at the time I was abused. I have no idea what triggered those things happening. But I know that once they started, there was no going back. They had to come up once. Once I started to remember those memories that had been surprised, as your parents, your mom, not surprised your dad being protective of your mom, and understandably, so he's taking the right approach as a husband to protect his wife. And that even realizing that the abuse was always coming down to you. What was your emotional reaction besides shock, that they weren't surprised? Were you angry, disappointed, sad. All of the above? I was. I have a hard time being angry with my parents. My parents are great people. They look my mother is my best friend. And my dad is just the sweetest man he's passed on now. But I love my dad. So I had a hard time being angry with them. I probably still work on suppressed anger. But I think it was just more shock that that this had happened to them. As my mother began to talk to me about her own story.

Then she said, Well, you know, he's, he's abused everybody around us. We all knew it. Maybe you all knew, but I didn't know it. So she she started telling me the story that as she was growing up, there were five girls, eight boys and five girls. And the girls were kind of spread out there was two girls at the beginning, my mom was kind of in the middle. And then another girl that came later. So my mom was the middle of the of the five girls. And she said her sister, her sisters told her about him. And they all told her, you know, don't let them do this. But she was so vulnerable, because they had already left home, mostly by the time she was old enough to be abused. So she didn't have a lot of protection from her sister. So the older sisters protected each other. She protected her younger sister, but she was really the one that experienced the most abuse from him. And so then I was surprised that all of my aunts who I loved and knew, you know, also had this experience and, and my mom and I were talking she says, Well, we don't really talk about it. You know, we just we just know that it happened, but we don't really talk about it. And I said, my my I want to talk about it. You know, I want to know the stories. I don't know what happened. So my mom, and I devised a plan, where we would go and talk to all of my aunts about what happened with that. And that we would she would go with me, and, you know, be there as my protector. But we would ask our aunts to all tell me their stories. So that's what we started on that summer of my memories, was visiting all of my aunts and talking to them about the abuse that I experienced, and asking them to tell us their stories. I can't tell you, jack, it was so powerful. I still brings tears to my eyes to talk to these women who said I have never been able to say what happened to me. You were the first person that I've told these stories to. And for many of them it was I remember my one hand saying to me, I'm so glad you made me talk about this because I felt so guilty holding the story in for my whole life. So we spent you know, we would go around to different homes and have these conversations with these women. And then they would say, you know, I think something happened with my daughter. And so then it was a cousin. So I started adding cousins to the list, and visiting my cousins and hearing them all talk about their stories. And then memories coming back of my grandfather even approaching me for sexual favors with a cousin in the world. So, you know, there was all of these layers that happened that summer. Many of my cousins had been warned by their mothers to not let him do anything, which I found to be really interesting that my mother didn't warn me, but they did. And I don't know why that is, I really don't. And I think because my mother didn't have a sister close to her to say that, to have her give that help. But a lot of my cousins said, Yeah, mom told me never led him to never let him touch me. And they were able to stand up and do that I never was, I was always taught to be such a good little girl. And to be so obedient. The focus in my home was a very legalistic, religious upbringing. And that's what my parents felt was really the best for us. In hindsight, it wasn't good for us. But we were taught the most important thing to do was okay. You know, we had to obey, I didn't think I have the option to say no. Again, I never did say No, I never did. I always allowed him to do what he wanted to do. Because he is my grandfather. And he would say, don't tell

anybody, this is our secret. And I obey. I paid everything he told me to do. Other of my cousins were much stronger in being able to resist and to deny him access to them. So it was really interesting that summer to hear all their stories. As much as we spent the summer talking, we counted up that he had 27 victims in our, in our extended family, 27 of my aunts and cousins, had been abused by this man. That's what we know. Right? You probably had more victims than that probably in the community, outside, probably some neighbors, but of the ones that I talked to 27 of them.

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Jennifer Malcolm 22:27

So as you're hearing these stories from your aunts, and your cousin isn't giving you reassurance and like you're not going crazy, and they snippets are real, and I know you you've verified that with your mom and your father. Was there some type of like, okay, relief that you didn't make this up. But also, I'm sure there's shock. I'm sure there's anger of you know, your aunt's warning cousins. And you weren't warned? Like, what was that emotional? I had to be a swirling that of emotions going on in your heart and soul are feeling during that time?

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Susan Warner Taylor 23:04

Yeah, well, it was, it was pretty incredible. First of all, I had what is called dissociative of memories. So I would just associate during the abuse, evidently, that's what happened to me. That's how I coped with my abuse. I, as the memories came back, they came back disassociated. So I would be looking down upon myself being abused, that's how my memories came. They didn't feel real, because I had no feelings attached to them. So as I was getting memories back in this manner, of course, I questioned whether they were real, you know, I'm, maybe I'm making all this up, even if I don't have any feelings of it. And I'm viewing the memories as if it's a filmstrip. So then, as I talk to my cousins, and they said, Yeah, he did this, he took me here, this is what he said, You know, I realized we were all using the same way. He said the same thing to us, took us to the same rooms, you know, offered up the same explanations use the exact same words with me that he did with all of them, told us we were the only one that it was just him and I they had these special relationships. And they were all surprised to I mean, none of them knew that the others had experienced it. So that became very affirming to me. These disassociated memories that felt like they were happening to another person, were verified through the experiences of my beloved cousins. And me, I mean, we were able to hold each other up over our abuse because we now knew that it was real and that even though we had different reactions to what he did, We all could at least verify that our memories were real. They weren't something made up in our heads. So that was, I don't think a lot of people have that experience of such affirmation for what happened to them. What

sounds like it's affirmation and support and compassion. And that the familial your how family supposed to be support and validation and kindness that you guys were able to experience together. Right? I will say that there was a lot of pushback from some of the male members of the family said, This can't be true. But how can this happen? you all say this, and that, that wouldn't even accept our memories for many years, as truth, because they didn't see it. And they couldn't believe that of their father. So that was a difficult time for that for our family to deal with. That this patriarch, who, you know, he's called Pop, pop was able to do these things right. Now, pop was never that great of a father to begin with. He was physically abusive to his son. So he had a lot of rage and anger. And in my cut, my uncle's will tell you of stories where he would beat them and beat their animals. And, you know, he was just a very volatile kind of person. But they still had difficult time believing the sexual abuse, so it was really hard for them.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 26:29

And I can imagine if they're hearing it for the MSA, quote, I'm doing air quotes for those of you who are listening for the first time, you know, that would be hard to probably wrap your mind around if you were really that distant and didn't see your experience it. But there has to be that truth when the the stories coming out of you, your your aunt smells your your cousin's mouths are similar, same using the same language, same memory, same room to validate those experiences as well.

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Susan Warner Taylor 26:58

They all did come to me. They did they all came to accept it.

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Jennifer Malcolm 27:02

So then what did you do with all this? Because at this point, now you are in this knowledge base validation. This is true, you're hurting? You're all this is coming, I'm sure coming up to the surface. How did you cope with this? Did you get involved in church? Did you journal did you go into therapy? Like what did you do with all these emotions?

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Susan Warner Taylor 27:20

Yeah, so I was I was fortunate to have been involved with a Christian therapist who guided my pathway to recovery through Christian principles, that was really a great thing. She was also very closely associated with a in house treatment center called Rafa. I reached a point where the memories were very devastating. And I reached the spot. And I'm not very proud of it. But I reached the point where I did not feel that I wanted to live in, I had three

children. So I knew I couldn't stop living. But I just really lost the will to live. And when that happened, we all decided that it was time for me to spend some time in house treatments. So I went into the profit center for 30 days, away from my children, it was a hard decision to make. They were all little. And I was leaving them behind. And my husband had to work and we had to arrange for care for them. I had a sweet little cousin who came and stayed with my children every day while I was gone, and babysat for my children, which was very wonderful for me. But I did go to this treatment center. And it was it was based on a book called search for significance. And the whole treatment centered around finding significance for yourself in the love of God, not in what you are or what people have done to you, or how they have loved you or held you up. But in the fact that God loves you, and you are important. So that's that was a healing that I'm not sure I would be alive today unless I experienced, I was able to spend 30 days totally concentrating on what I needed to do. I needed to find myself I had lost myself. I think I lost myself when I was eight years old. So I didn't know who I was. I only knew what I thought other people said I should be. And other people said you should be obedient and kind and not speak badly of anybody and do what the church tells you to do. Right? So that's who I had been until I was 35. At 35. I decided maybe there's more to life, children and staying even was a wonderful experience. I so I came out of treatment and said I think I want to go back to school. I had one semester at college before I got married. So I said I think I want to go back to school and I was like, why do you want to go to school? You're 35 and I said I just think I do. So I started back at Lorain County. College, our little community college in town. And I had no idea what I was going to do. I just knew I wanted to learn. And I was so excited about learning. So when my daughter was a kindergartner, she started in kindergarten, I started Community College. And we went to school together for the next 10 years. She went to school and the kids went to school, and we did basketball, and I did homework on stadiums, benches and bleachers, and worked through the round. And it was a wonderful experience, I found out that I was a really good learner, that I had a really good brain, which amazed me, and that I could contribute to work to the world. And so I finished up on a kind of cute community college that offered a really great scholarship of all the walls and finished up my for my bachelor's degree there, went on with a assistantship to University of Akron, did my masters and my PhD there and went on to teach and it was, you know, a wonderful experience, higher education has been so good for me, and I love it so much.



Jennifer Malcolm 31:10

Well, it sounds to me, like, you know, from the time you were eight, and then you were married at night teen and you started motherhood at 21 just the obedient, you know, be compliant be kind rule as an adolescent teenager into the role of a wife, then very trans, you know, transferring that into the role of a mother, that at age 35, that you are able to

also pause and say, I need to find me, I need to be okay with me. And it takes resilience and strength. Because people you know, I'm 45 for me, I got my master's just last year, I went back to Baltimore also got my master's in business, analytics. And but for me, like going back as an adult into higher education is hard and it's humbling your your it takes grit because you have all these other responsibilities of home and life and family, and how amazing that you were able to find this strength and education, identifying that, hey, I am smart, I do have a brilliant mind. And to be able to create something that now has really just put your path in place.

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Susan Warner Taylor 32:18

It was it was so eye opening to me that there was world beyond what my church and my family had told me I hadn't, which was to be a good mother. Yeah. So it was really amazing to me, I was able to delve into the world of sociology, which I still love to this day. Because sociology asked all the questions, all the questions that I was never able to ask good sociology, let me ask all those questions. Somebody once told me sociology is the study of the garbage can a society. And it really is. But it was wonderful. It allowed me to explore all the dysfunctions of society as a group, not just you know, I could have done psychology that would have looked at the individual psyche, but I love the sociological aspect of family dysfunction, because I can talk about family dysfunction, knew about that. So I really enjoyed being able to use my sociology in my higher education.

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Jennifer Malcolm 33:17

Well I think that it's beautiful, because you not only were able to uncover the questions that you had been searching for, but then as a professor, and a higher in higher education, you're able to teach individuals how to ask those questions and that transference of education, that transference of empowerment, that transference of being able to stand on your own and be assertive, that's a powerful button to transition from and to,

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Susan Warner Taylor 33:48

It is, it was absolutely, and I also really fell in love with feminism, and giving women voices and and power and opportunities in life. My first job after my PhD in teaching was at a Christian University. So I went from, you know, this wide open field of sociology into a very narrow world of Christian education. But with all these ideas of feminism and sociology, that it filled my head for the last many years, it was, it was a great opportunity to be a Christian feminist at this university, and tell these girls there's more to your life than your Mrs. degree, you need to find another another option in life that's getting married and having a family is a wonderful thing but it you also have a brain and you have

opportunities to use that brain that God has given you.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 34:46

Beautiful and, and I love that because that is so my heart because I'm not anti men at all, but I am about women standing their God given rights to explore their identity to not have to give up their their past their present or their future. And I was listening to a podcast last week that, you know, under a lot of Christian tenants, it's, you know, leave and cleave and leave, leave your family and cleave your husband and give up your identity and your dreams. And, and it does not serve women well, because at some point, we're going to awaken it, whether it's, hey, my kids are now going to college, and for the first time, I have time, or it could be at different stages in a marriage, that hasn't served us well, because we've lost our identity and our voices in that. And yes, being a wife is an amazing role. I got remarried, you know, several years ago to Chad. And it's an amazing role to have. But it's a role in my life, with my best friend that I love playing with and exploring with. But I also have so many other identities as a woman advocate, as, as a business owner and entrepreneur, as a mom. And to be able to walk in those things is important. And having someone like you breathing life into with young women to say there is more than an MRS degree. And to explore that is powerful.

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Susan Warner Taylor 36:02

That's what I found for them, they, they did not understand that there was two ways to enter into a marriage, there was the way that they had been taught, which was being submissive, and the man being the head of the household. But there was also another option, they could enter marriage as equal partners, and share that experience. So that was so great to be able to introduce them to that life, and tell them, there's a different way to do marriage. And it might work better for long term better effects.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 36:37

That's good. So as you check your sociology degree, and you're talking about in the family dysfunction, how are you able to cut off that pattern of behavior? Because a lot of abused people become abusers, or they have some dysfunction? But how were you able are your family able to really just set the stage right, but how did your family deal with that, so it doesn't continue to go through the Appalachian trails abuse cycle.

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Susan Warner Taylor 37:07

So I really believe that the way that you have to deal with these things is by breaking out

of the silence. I was the first person to speak about my abuse, to other family members. And I you know, I don't take a lot of pride in that. But I do believe God's put me in a certain spot at a certain time with this family. That said, we have got to stop holding this as a secret. So we started talking about it. We get together every year at our family reunions, and we would sit around the table, and was always a topic of conversation. And so it no longer was this hidden secret. We had arguments about, you know, we had like that couldn't have happened from the boys and the men to the girls saying yes, this didn't happen. This is true. You have to accept this. So we had deep, deep conversations about it, about what it had done to our lives, about the dysfunction that it had brought to our marriages, to our families to how we parented and and we still to this day, we'll have conversations about that. My children grew up hearing me talk about the stories. And it was never a secret between my children. And I as we would approach different topics, that this was not something that was off the table that they could not ask me about. They still asked me about it, you know, I still have one of them companies say, Can you tell me some more about that? You know, I know you've talked about it. But I just like to hear some more about it. So we still there. They're all adults approaching their 40s, some of them in their 40s. And we still have conversations about it. My children were raised to know that there were not secrets and families that we don't hold things in, I was also a champion of them being protected and given the knowledge of how to take care of themselves or to come to me and tell me if there was ever anything wrong. So they were always careful to tell me if they felt that there was something weird about somebody. So it was open topic. I also gave them the tools to speak about sex. I didn't have the tools. To be honest, at eight years old, when I was first abused, I would not have been able to talk about it because I would have not known the bodily parts to name I just wouldn't, right. So because my mother never talked about those I hadn't. And I didn't know what those things were I didn't know what sex was. I didn't know what abuse was. Yeah. Children were able to give be given that information and protect themselves to do knowledge knowledge is power. gave them the power to do won. And now I see each of them in their own way, being champions of the underdog, I love it. I love that my my oldest son is a principal of pre K through first graders, and I love seeing him take care of these little children. My middle son is a missionary in Romania, and, you know, ministering to the Roma people and in my daughter's this champion of adopted children, because she has two adopted daughters and, and I love to see that, that the knowledge that they were given, and the the ability to break through the secret of our family has empowered them to really take on the cause of children that need help.



Jennifer Malcolm 40:43

That's amazing. I just got chills. And I just recorded yesterday with Lauren Brill, where we're talking about her sexual abuse as well. And part of it was educating children

younger and younger. In that, if you feel weird, and to make it not taboo, sex isn't a taboo topic. But it needs to be educated so that there was words of articulation, that there's safety built in a family unit that says, hey, that kind of just, I don't know that I feel weird inside because of what happened, and to be able to express that in a safe manner. And I love that you model that because what it validates what we were talking about yesterday, which was the need for education. And what you did is you did educate, and now your adult children are our advocates, for young people as well. And I think that is a case study of proof is in the pudding, that, you know, we you know, say okay, sex education starts at, you know, 11 1213 and naming body parts, but sexual abuse happens so young, and to be able to create a safe environment and safe space, with your children in an appropriate manner and a protective manner, to educate and to advocate for them.

S

Susan Warner Taylor 42:01

That's right. Children have to be taught to stand up for themselves. And they have to be taught that, yes, you can be obedient, but there's certain things that you don't have to obey. You know, if somebody tells you this, and they're an adult, and you think it's wrong, you need to come and talk to me about it. You know, I'll I'll help you decide if it's right or wrong. Right, don't have to just do it, because somebody tells that tells you it's should be done. And so my question before you went into your story, or this last piece was, do you ever regret finding out? And uncovering this? No, not there's not one piece of me that regrets that. I, I talked about my abuse. When I when I was teaching, I'm not teaching anymore, because I'm in administration. But when I was teaching, I would always do it a unit on family, on the family and the dysfunctional family. And at the end of that, I would say, tomorrow, I'm going to talk about my own personal experience. If you're not comfortable, you'd like to come to class, but they would all come. And I would tell them how important it was to to be open and, and honest with your family. And I had so many, so many students that would come to me afterwards and say, thank you so much for sharing your story, because this is my story. And they would tell me their story. And I would help them find a good place, a safe place to talk and get help. So many times, there was never a time that I told my story, that I didn't have at least one person come to me and say, Wow, I'm so glad you told me this because it happened to me too. We have to talk about this, we have to break the secrets in the silence. That's the only way we will overcome this horrible thing.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 43:43

And that has been thematic. As I record these podcasts, it's thematic about breaking the silence. And it's scary, that wall of fear is scary. It all It feels like it's through shame. It's through fear it's through. Is anyone gonna believe me? Am I crazy? Is it my fault, I actually

may have enjoyed some of the sexual experience because my body normally responded in an appropriate way but I was being abused. And so the confusion and the guilt and all this and is that piece of breaking the silence. And when you get through that veil, on the other side is freedom. And on the other side is voice and all that other side and it doesn't make the memories go away. But the healing and I love that you said before it heals your family. It's not coming out sideways. In your marriage. It's not coming out sideways into parenting. It's it's this healing aspect that that life giving force of voice and and healing and advocacy is now flowing versus suppressing so much anger, shame, confusion guilts any of that, that it allows.

S

Susan Warner Taylor 44:52

That's right. And it's a struggle. I mean, I still work on it. I still worked on it this morning. You know when I thought about Coming in during this podcast and part of me that there was this little niggling thought in the back of my head like, well, you shouldn't be talking about this to public people, what your family thinks, you know, this is, this is this is not proper to think about. And I had to fight that I had to fight that feeling, I had to journal it out, I had to say, This is my story. This is worth talking about. You are good enough person, you have stuff to give to the world. You can talk about the story, even though there may be people that wouldn't want you to talk about his story. But it's okay, you can do that. You know, it's always a daily, it's a daily struggle for me still, after all these years. I'm 67. So I've been working on this a long time.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 45:49

Right. And so as listeners, if you're if you're hearing what Susan and I are sharing, and you're feeling that those butterflies that nervousness in your belly of what do I do with my story, because I know after I shared my date rape story in December, I've had over 30 women who have come to me privately, Facebook messaging, camera, grab coffee and sharing their stories. Me too. And your story gave me courage to share my story. And even it was just with me. And that piece of creating that community of people that are safe. And to get through that veil of Susan, you sharing your story publicly today is going to give freedom and, and voice and courage to women who are struggling with wanting to keep it silent?

S

Susan Warner Taylor 46:36

Well, that's, that's why I do it. And not I mean, I don't get any personal satisfaction. It's a difficult, you know, you know, it's hard to talk about those things. But I still believe in so strongly that the stories need to be talked about, that it's willing to do that.



Jennifer Malcolm 46:54

That's good. As we wrap up, are there any closing remarks that you want to share with the audience, just from your wisdom and experience your education, to just kind of give as a gift to our listeners?



Susan Warner Taylor 47:08

Yeah, I would just encourage anyone that is struggling with these same issues, if they're worried about someone believing them, to find at least one person to talk to about it. Because it doesn't feel like it's truth, when you first start thinking about it, it feels like it's something you made up. But you know, we know that the majority of people that have these memories come back, it's not made up. So I would just tell them, to trust their memories, and to find someone to share that with.



Jennifer Malcolm 47:43

And we'll put a link to the book that you put the search for significance on our website, as well as other resources. I'm not a therapist, Susan's not a therapist, but we can put resources in front of you and help point in the right direction. But Susan and I are both advocates. And we are people that are willing, I know I'm willing to listen, I'm gonna I'm gonna throw Susan on the hat. To listen to stories and tell your story. So if you are hearing this and and want to share it, you can send me an email, I can connect you with Susan, offline. But we want to create this community where the silence is broken, and that you are able to walk into freedom and joy that you've never experienced. And as Susan said, She's never regretted never regretted opening that box of confusion that led her to her healing journey and allowing that truth. Truth always comes out at some way or another truth always comes out and, and it's okay and to have that community around you. Any other thoughts Susan, before we go?



Susan Warner Taylor 48:44

My favorite expression that was given to me by therapists, you my whole therapy is the truth shall set you free.



Jennifer Malcolm 48:50

Amen. Amen. That's beautiful. Well, thank you so much for joining me today, Susan. It's gonna honor y'all to give Nate Nathan a hug for me when you see him next.



Susan Warner Taylor 49:01

...to all this COVID stuff.



Jennifer Malcolm 49:04

Are all of you are joined us today, I hope that you are finding encouragement and you're finding a support system here for you that we're here for you. We believe you. And if you have that butterflies in your stomach, shoot me an email, Facebook message or something, and we'll get you connected to the right help as well. Alright, everyone, have a great day. Thank you. Bye bye. Thank you for listening to the Jennasis Speaks podcast. If you love the show, one of the best things you can do is to share it with a friend. Tell them what you like about it, how it inspires you and invite them to listen. Subscribe to the Jennasis movement to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.