

JJ West 0:00

Welcome to the every man's battle podcast show where we talk about all things related to sexual integrity and sexual addiction. I'm JJ West, and I'm here in studio with Doug Barnes.

Doug Barnes 0:11

Hi, JJ.

JJ West 0:12

Hey Doug. So if you want to dig further into the topics that we cover on this podcast, we invite you to check out newlife.com/emb. Or you can download the New Life app. Or you can call 1-800-New-Life, which is 1-800-639-5433, to get further information. So today, Doug, I want to talk about the stigma of counseling. I think that there's already a stigma about counseling for some people, and certainly in in certain cultures, there's a more of a stigma, but especially when we start talking about sexual integrity issues, when we start talking about our sexual behavior or sexual acting out behavior, our struggles sexually. Boy, it's hard to talk about those things. And the idea of going to talk to a professional may sound daunting.

Doug Barnes 1:10

Well, of course, I mean, why? I mean, I don't talk about this with anybody, why would I want to go talk to a perfect stranger,

JJ West 1:17

right,

and pay the money pay for it? To have an uncomfortable series of conversations?

Doug Barnes 1:22

Right, right. I mean, who knows about no one, my best friend, my Bible study group, my men's group, my home team? Yeah, I keep this if I'm isolated, then why? Why would I go and put myself into that embarrassing position of sitting in front of a perfect stranger? And talking about this very uncomfortable issue?

JJ West 1:51

Right. Right, the intimate details of my life. I want to keep that. I want to keep that hidden.

Doug Barnes 1:57

Yeah.

JJ West 1:58

I want to maintain tight control over that area of my life.

Doug Barnes 2:03

Right?

JJ West 2:03

Yeah. Except that I have to look at my track record, I have to look at what's happened. In my life, when I've used that approach. I'm going to keep a tight lid on that. I'm going to manage that myself. I'm going to keep all of that, hidden away. What has that produced? And I can say for myself, that what that produced was a lot of dysfunction. It produced a lot of brokenness. And I felt tremendous shame. And, and I felt really hopeless. I really felt like, gosh, there's I've just never gonna get better.

Doug Barnes 2:45

I'm the only one

JJ West 2:46

and I'm the only one. Right, right. Clearly, I'm the only one who's struggling at the level that I am dealing with the stuff that I'm dealing with. Clearly, I'm it so, so, And it just it didn't produce anything good. When I when I kept it all to myself, when I stayed isolated, when I was putting on the mask pretending everything was fine. And it really wasn't. It was it was producing a whole lot of pain, and brokenness and shame and, and a lack of authentic connection in my life.

Doug Barnes 3:21

Right? Well, I mean, who, who wants that? When I'm, when I'm dealing with the shame of my acting out? You know, I don't, I don't even know how to be authentic. I know how to hide. And I know how to isolate and to be alone. But to let someone know me, that's not gonna happen.

JJ West 3:44

Yeah, yeah.

Doug Barnes 3:45

I mean, that that only only when we become brave and, and courageous enough to admit that we have an issue, there's a problem. My life is not the way I envisioned it, and thought it was going to be.

JJ West 4:01

right. And quite frankly, for a lot of us. It's not, I get to a point where I'm brave enough to finally admit, bring it out into the light, it gets brought into the light into the light for me.

Doug Barnes 4:15

Right? outside forces

JJ West 4:16

by outside forces, I get discovered, my stuff gets brought into the light. And, and I think for most of us when we're still in our addiction, right, when we're still active in our acting out behavior,

we dread that the idea of being exposed sounds horrible.

Doug Barnes 4:35
If I only knew right If I only knew me

JJ West 4:38
what like what I want I'm going to do everything I can to keep myself hidden because if you do if you knew the real me what

Doug Barnes 4:44
you would reject me

JJ West 4:45
you would not love me you would be you would, you would be disgusted by me. And so so that idea of being outed, of this being known, was terrifying,

Doug Barnes 4:57
Right.

JJ West 4:57
And I did everything I could to keep it hidden. Right? And what we didn't realize is that God had a plan to bring our lives into the light. Because that was the only way we were going to experience freedom. Right? There was this, Sharon Hirsch has in her book, The Last Addiction, The Gift Of Getting Caught. There's a real gift in that for us, because we suddenly find out, Oh, you can know me, you can know all the broken pieces of me and still love me. Right? I didn't think that was possible,

Doug Barnes 5:35
Right.

JJ West 5:36
But but me getting caught and walking through the recovery process allows me to see them. Right?

Doug Barnes 5:44
Well, but if you think about how much energy how much energy do I use, in preserving my anonymity? How much energy I use in staying hidden? How much energy I use in isolation and in hiding? Imagine where I could use that energy for something good, something beneficial, something profitable, rather than something in a defensive way in my life? Because that's why I've used it.

JJ West 6:24
Yeah.

Doug Barnes 6:24
And I've wasted a lot of energy doing that. When once once I'm outed.

Right. It's almost like I can float on air.

JJ West 6:35

Yeah.

Doug Barnes 6:35

Because the weight, w e i g h t, the weight of all of that stuff. Ever. So temporarily, even if it's for a little bit has been taken off. And I feel like I can fly.

JJ West 6:51

Right. And in that space, when I'm no longer, you know, being crushed by the weight of shame, I have the opportunity to, to pursue something that's going to help me something that's going to lead to my healing. Now, I don't know about you. I grew up in a family man, we we not only do we not talk about things, we certainly didn't talk, nobody went to counseling, that was just was not a thing. And never even heard of counseling until I was I think it was either in college or just after college before I even heard that this was a thing that people did, that people went to professionals to help them with the problems in their life, the problems in their marriages, helping them to, to overcome behavior patterns, that sort of thing. Right. So it was a brand new concept to me. And I think, if I remember correctly, it was introduced through I was reading, I was reading several different books, because I knew I had a problem. I know it was broken. I knew I wanted I wanted to change, I wanted to be different. I didn't know how. And as I'm reading these books on how to deal with your sexual integrity issues, that that idea that concept of counseling kept coming up, like, Hey, you could you could go talk to a professional, you could go, you could start doing individual counseling, or you could start doing couples counseling. And oh, okay, well, what is this? And, and, and I'm wondering for you, how did the idea of counseling come? Because for me, it was way before I even considered a career in counseling. Right. So for you, how did that come about?

Doug Barnes 8:31

For me, the first, the first concept of counselor, even the connotation of it says school counselor, right? I mean, when you hear that, right, it's like, okay, oh, I've got classes to take, I've got to get my schedule done. Blah, blah, blah. Yeah. The first counselor I saw was after my dad died in 1983. Long time ago. And it seemed for me, it seemed a natural to transition. Because I couldn't handle the feeling the intensity of the feelings I was feeling. I was angry as you could imagine, going through the grief process, right? And so I'm but I'm taking it out on other people. I'm, I'm ugly to other people I'm being and so for me, I welcomed it, because I'm going you know what, I I'm jacked up here. Something's not right with me. And so we got to talk through a lot of what was happening with me, and how to really grieve properly and how to grieve. A situation that I had no problem when I was 21 years old. I mean, you know, I was in college.

And so something that devastating at that early of an age left a huge imprint. But it taught me that there are other people out there who might know a little bit more than me and they can pass their wisdom on to me.

JJ West 10:03

You know what I love about that story, Doug, is the fact that, you know, this was just normal stuff of life. Now, I don't mean normal, like, not an impact, right? It's significant when we when we experience loss, but that's something that everybody experiences. Everybody experiences the loss of a loved one, everybody experiences disappointment. It's, you know, there's, there's some, I think there's a fallacy of belief that counseling is just for crazy people. Right?

Doug Barnes 10:32

Right. Right.

JJ West 10:33

It's just for for people who are so you know, wacky, so crazy. So such a misfit that they can't, they can't function in normal society, so they have to go to counseling. But for us normal folk, we're doing fine, we don't need it. But no, actually counseling is helping me to adjust to the normal things that come my way in life, the stuff we all deal with, but we deal with in different ways. And, and, again, they're the they're very powerful, like the loss of of a parent. Or for some, it might be the loss of a child, it might be the dealing with the the aftermath of abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, it might be dealing with the fact that I have this addiction that I wanted to get rid of, and I can't. So it's it's counseling really is for everybody, isn't it?

Doug Barnes 11:28

I think so. You know, we live in a self help world, you can go to your local bookstore, and you see the humongous section of self help.

JJ West 11:38

Yes.

Doug Barnes 11:39

That's a little bit of a misnomer to me. Because in all of those books, I can read how to do something. But then it's all up to me to do it. And so most people can't say this about everybody, right? Nothing is all or nothing, as you say. But for most folks, doing something to that magnitude on their own is, is a huge endeavor. So going and seeing a counselor or therapist, a coach, we all had the same same thing in mind about helping. We get accountability, we get an objective look, we get someone who's who's not affiliated with us in any way that that can look at us from, from an objective point of view, and give us tools and tricks and tips on how to adjust our life to live more healthy.

JJ West 12:44

Right. It's, I always use the phrase, you remember the old phrase, you can't see the forest for the trees.

Doug Barnes 12:52

Right.

JJ West 12:53

Right? What counseling does it's it's somebody who's far enough outside my forest, they can point out the trees that I can't see, because my nose is pressed against the one that's right in front of me. Right? I can't see what else is out there. But a counselor allows me to point out these other trees, so I don't get tripped up on the same stuff over and over and over.

Doug Barnes 13:15

Right? Yeah, right. Yeah. So seeing a counselor. I've seen many of them. And especially over the past 18 years, I realized how really jacked up my life was I kept messing up relationships, and I kept pissing people off, I kept losing friends. And I'm going something's not right about this. And so inside of me, I realized, I need I need help. I can't I can't navigate this all by myself.

JJ West 13:50

Absolutely.

Doug Barnes 13:51

And that's what led me to seeking help outside.

JJ West 13:54

Yeah. So Every Man's Battle Podcast, we're talking about the stigma of counseling and some of the faulty beliefs we have about counseling that might get in the way of us taking advantage of it, pursuing it. And you're here with with Doug and JJ and and Doug just talked about how he has gone to different counselors over the years for a variety of reasons. How did you find a counselor? How did you How were you able to locate one that worked for you?

Doug Barnes 14:29

Well, there are a couple of ways. One, obviously, the most obvious one is 1-800-New-Life there's a network. In fact, I've seen two or three of their counselors over many years. 1-800-New-Life, right? 1-800-639-5433 I've looked on my insurance. There are different websites out there Psychology Today, better help, Self help.com There's, there's there's other ways of finding it. The best way to find a good good counselor, in my opinion is to ask somebody you know,

JJ West 15:04

Yes.

Doug Barnes 15:05
A personalized referral is the best.

JJ West 15:07
Yeah.

Doug Barnes 15:08
Because you get one on one, hey, this helped he or she helped me with this or this or this,

JJ West 15:14
Right.

Doug Barnes 15:14
They had this demeanor, they had this bedside manner, they can talk to you this way. That was the best thing for me.

JJ West 15:20
Right? Yes.

Doug Barnes 15:21
Because that helped me then understand, because I trusted this person.

JJ West 15:27
Right.

Doug Barnes 15:27
So they gave me some really good suggestions. And that's, that's how I found a couple of the therapists I've seen over the years.

JJ West 15:34
Absolutely. Yeah. So it's gonna be like people in your small group at church, it's going to be...

Doug Barnes 15:40
Bible study.

JJ West 15:41
Yeah. Friends from Bible study, maybe it's the pastor of the church, if you're in a really small church, you may go to the pastor and say, hey, you know, I'm having this issue, I need to talk to someone who do you recommend, but I love the fact like you said, you know, you can use some of the digital resources as well, like calling 1-800-New-Life, go to the website, because they, all of those counselors that are on that network, have already been vetted. Right, that you know, that they have the licensure that they are supposed to have, they've done the training that they needed to go through in order to be credentialed to, to work with you,

Doug Barnes 16:16

you know, and one of the things I want to, to also bring out here is that this isn't about how about how sick I am or about how, how crazy I am. This is me simply understanding that I have a need. And, and I need help, I might need a little bit more help than my best friend, I might need a little bit more objectivity, than my home team, men's group, my, my church group, I might need something a little bit more objective, because of the I don't know, it'd be my family of origin issues, my attachment issues, my shame issues, my whatever issues I've had, but I want to make sure that I get someone objective that works for me, because there are lots of lots of therapists out there. Lots of counselors out there lots of coaches out there. And it's okay to shop around for the right one,

JJ West 17:18
right.

Doug Barnes 17:19
It's not, it's not the there's not just one,

JJ West 17:23
right, you don't have to stay locked in to the first person that you find. Because well, I've already already signed up with them know if that's not the right fit, or they're not, they're not really trained in the in the specific area that you're wanting.

Doug Barnes 17:35
Exactly

JJ West 17:36
Yeah, yeah, without a doubt, find one that is the right fit for you.

Doug Barnes 17:40
Right,

JJ West 17:40
without a doubt. And, you know, to your point, you said, you know, it's not again, not just for the crazy people who need help, it's all of us who need help, it's actually an indication of craziness is an indication of, of mental disorder, if I need help, and I refuse to ask for it. No, no, no, I can handle this even though I can't.

Doug Barnes 17:59
right.

JJ West 17:59
No, no, I can lift this house, but I can't, right. I'm I'm actually displaying an a mental disorder by refusing to ask for and accept the help that's available to me.

Doug Barnes 18:12
We call that resistance.

JJ West 18:16
Absolutely. So So let's say that I'm in an area where I, it's a small community, and I don't know if there are any counseling resources available to me, or I'm so isolated, I don't have any friends to ask who they've gone to, whatever, are there any other resources that I can use, that I can avail myself to? That will help me to look at my sexual integrity issues that will help me to, to not just my behavior, but also my, my lack of connection?

Doug Barnes 18:54
Yeah, I would, I would start my search online and just start Googling and start, start looking, start looking and calling and asking questions and asking, like for a sexual integrity counselor, okay, I would ask what their credential is, I would say, what, what kind of books have you read on this? What kind of sessions do you do? What percentage of your practice has to do with sexual integrity? What training have you had? Do you have any credentials in certain areas?

JJ West 19:30
Right?

Doug Barnes 19:30
And these are we are we're consumers in that in that way. And so I'm looking for the best fit for me, just by talking with them, will they spend 15 minutes with me so that I can hear their voice or I can see them on on a zoom or FaceTime or whatever video application they have. Can I can I look at them and say I could be comfortable with this person?

JJ West 19:54
Absolutely.

Doug Barnes 19:54
Does that make sense?

JJ West 19:54
Absolutely. Without a doubt, yeah. And then the only other thing that I would add to that is You know, if you are at the very beginning of this journey, where you know that you need help, you've tried and failed and tried and failed and tried and failed, and you're frustrated with your lack of progress, one of the resources we would want to point you to is the Every Man's Battle Workshop, because that's going to basically take about three to four months of counseling and condense it into a weekend. It'll, it's a, it's a huge Kickstart to this journey. It's not, it's not the end, it's not you go to the workshop, and you're healed and everything's fine. But it's, it's a great way to start this journey. And it's going to give you

connection to other men, it's going to, you're going to, you're going to have a an experience that weekend, where you are learning how to do authentic relationship and be vulnerable with other men, which all again, set you up for a much different experience in counseling than you might otherwise have. So if that's you, we would invite you to go online, visit Newlife.com/emb Download the website, or download the app or call 1-800-New-Life to find out more information. We're so glad that you are listening. We're so glad that you are at least investigating the questions of whether or not I need to do something different. We say it all the time, right? People change when the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of changing. So if that's you, if you've gotten to the point where the pain of staying the same living your life the exact same way you've been doing for all all this time, it's gotten it's gotten great enough that you're ready to make a change. Give us a call.