

Therapy Chat Episode 313

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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy chat podcast, episode three 313.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** This is the therapy chat podcast with

[00:00:07] **Announcer:** Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:00:09] **Announcer:** The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional. And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

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[00:01:31] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to therapy chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And this week I'm interviewing therapists, Brenda Stevens LPCC. Who's the author of two books on narcissistic abuse, healing from narcissistic mothers, a daughter's recovery guide and the narcissism recovery workbook skills for healing from emotional abuse.

[00:01:54] **Laura Reagan:** This is a topic that people have asked me for you. To cover on therapy chat and narcissism. Isn't really a specialty area of mine. I certainly work with many people who grew up with parents who were self-absorbed emotionally immature and had narcissistic behaviors. And for me, I, I approach it from the trauma and attachment lens, but I loved my conversation with Brenda today, she talks about, uh, what it's like to be raised by a parent with narcissistic traits who's abusive. So you're going to hear us talk about what narcissistic abuse is, what therapists need to know about narcissistic abuse, how surviving this type of abuse affects children during childhood.

[00:02:44] **Laura Reagan:** How it affects adults who grew up in that type of environment. And what the process of healing from narcissistic abuse looks like. Brenda Stevens is a licensed professional clinical counselor in San Diego, California. She works exclusively with those seeking help in resolving their experiences of trauma.

[00:03:01] **Laura Reagan:** Brenda specializes in working with people who have been in relationships with nurses. And are recovering from the emotional and sometimes physical wounds. They have endured in their relationships. Brenda has been working with this population for several years and is providing groups, workshops, and trainings in order to make this topic more known and understood by practitioners and survivors of narcissistic abuse.

[00:03:23] **Laura Reagan:** With the use of EMDR parts work and an understanding of structural dissociation, Ms. Stevens is able to help those suffering with symptoms of trauma, complex, PTSD, and regular PTSD. Brenda's the founder and owner of Stephen's therapy associates, which consists of 18 therapists who have been trained by her to offer support guidance and a path toward healing for survivors.

[00:03:46] **Laura Reagan:** Abuse. She recently completed a three-year term as a board member and secretary for the California association for licensed professional clinical counselors. And she continues to offer support on panels and trainings offered by Cal PCC. Brenda is the author of the books I mentioned. Which are designed to help people understand what narcissists narcissistic relationships look like and how to recover from them.

[00:04:09] **Laura Reagan:** And she offers trainings to other therapists in recognizing and working with this population, which is woefully underserved. She holds a master's in mental health counseling from the university of Wisconsin stout in I've got links to her websites in the show notes. So let's dive right into my conversation with Brenda Stephens.

[00:04:32] **Laura Reagan:** My guest today is Brenda Stephens LPCC, who is the author of recovering from narcissistic mothers, a daughter's guide and her workbook, the narcissism recovery workbook skills for healing from emotional abuse. Brenda, thank you so much for being my guest on therapy chats.

[00:04:51] **Brenda Stephens:** Thank you for inviting me, Laura. I am beyond pleased to be here and, and grateful for the opportunity.

[00:04:57] **Laura Reagan:** I'm so happy that we have gotten together today. And I'm excited to talk to you about the subject because a lot of listeners have been asking for us to cover narcissistic abuse on therapy chat. So I was really excited when I found out about your work and. I know that our listeners are really going to enjoy this conversation.

[00:05:18] **Laura Reagan:** So before we get into it, can we just start off by you telling our audience a little bit more about who you are, what you do?

[00:05:25] **Brenda Stephens:** Certainly. So I'm a therapist in San Diego, California. I'm an LPCC, I have a group practice with some therapists that have also been trained in working with survivors of narcissistic abuse.

[00:05:37] **Brenda Stephens:** I train all of them as they come on board so that we have a pretty wide array of therapists that can treat people who are seeking therapy specifically for this type of abuse. And there are a lot of people looking for help for this. I wanted to mention, you know, it may not always be obvious that you have somebody or the person themselves may not know what they're experiencing.

[00:06:01] **Brenda Stephens:** And for me, It just started with, in my own solo, private practice. I just started having people come in saying, I feel like I'm going crazy. That was like the tagline for so many clients in a row. Just talking about their relationships with either, you know, a spouse, a friend, a parent just kind of turning their worlds upside down and they just didn't know which way was up.

[00:06:23] **Brenda Stephens:** But that was really the tagline that I was constantly hearing. I feel like I'm going crazy. The reality is get confused. Maybe that's a good word because they're constantly told something against what is normal or natural to them by the narcissist. So I just say that because I've heard this so consistently I'm hopeful that other therapists, when they hear those words or any variation of that, that they'll recognize that maybe this is what they're working with with this client.

[00:06:51] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So kind of a. Uh, clue that someone may have experienced narcissistic abuse is if they say they're talking about their relationship and they're like, I feel like I'm going crazy.

[00:07:03] **Brenda Stephens:** Exactly, exactly. Very common thing that I've heard many, many times.

[00:07:08] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. That's helpful. And like, let's start off by talking about that.

[00:07:13] **Laura Reagan:** Like what, what is narcissistic abuse and how has it, how has that specific type of abuse, emotional abuse different from overall emotional abuse?

[00:07:24] **Brenda Stephens:** That's a very good question. And I've had that asked a lot. Um, and I think the clearest answer I can give to that. Is that we can all be emotionally abusive sometimes.

[00:07:34] **Brenda Stephens:** You know, if we're in a bad space, if somebody triggers something, some old wound with that within us, we can lash out and be emotionally abusive. We all have that capability. Some people live in that mindset and are so not, I'm not trying to excuse it, but they can be so hurt from their own experiences that they lash out in ways that are reactive.

[00:07:54] **Brenda Stephens:** The difference between that and narcissistic abuse is the intentionality behind it. A narcissist is kind of living from their own pain from their history as well. But what they've learned is this kind of devious and diabolical really skill, um, for lack of better word in being intentional about their abuse.

[00:08:13] **Brenda Stephens:** So they really, they focus on kind of tearing their victims down. They focus on, um, you know, having the victim question, their own reality, you know, Gaslighting is a big part of narcissistic abuse. And that's one of the tools they use that I think is very different from other types of abuse. So I, I tell you, uh, you know, I saw a red car yesterday and they said, no, it was blue.

[00:08:37] **Brenda Stephens:** And then I'm questioning, you know what I mean? It's that simple. And those things that. Kind of chip away at your sense of your reality, your perception of your reality.

[00:08:46] **Laura Reagan:** Now, for someone who's growing up in an environment where their parent is that way now, I would think that that might affect someone differently from someone who doesn't have that childhood history, but then is in a relationship with a partner who's behaving that way.

[00:09:03] **Laura Reagan:** Am I right?

[00:09:04] **Brenda Stephens:** Absolutely. Right. Yes. Someone who grows up in a household where the caregiver is narcissistic, it gets this in a much more severe way because basically their reality is being created by the narcissistic parents. So they don't even have. The thought of, I saw a red car yesterday, the parent says it's blue.

[00:09:25] **Brenda Stephens:** Of course, it's blue. You know that there is no questioning that. It is just from the highest authority. And they, they learned to

not question anything. And then they take that into the world as they grow older and have no sense of who they are. They defer to everyone else around them for confirmation of what they believe in and confirmation, even of just who they are, they don't have, they don't have the opportunity to develop the identity the way a person who was not raised by a narcissist might. It's quite sad.

[00:09:56] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. And it, it, what I've seen is it's kind of like a brainwashing.

[00:10:02] **Brenda Stephens:** I could not think of a better word for that. It is brainwashing. It really is, you know, and surprisingly enough, um, I have actually had quite a surprisingly high number of people who had, were raised in cults come to me for it.

[00:10:17] **Laura Reagan:** That makes sense.

[00:10:18] **Brenda Stephens:** Doesn't it? Um, it's really surprised me after I got about the third to the third one. I was like, what is going on here? You know, and all of this, I kind of it's unfolded in front of me as I get clients coming in with these. But it's, it's exactly the same. There is a narcissistic element to the cult, at least the ones that I've experienced with my clients that trickles down to the parents and trickles down to the children.

[00:10:42] **Laura Reagan:** So yeah, like the cult leader is the ultimate narcissist and everyone else is like doing their bidding.

[00:10:49] **Brenda Stephens:** Exactly. The flying monkeys is they're called in narcissistic language and then the flying monkeys are so involved in it and sort of embedded in making the, the narcissistic leader of the cult feel superior.

[00:11:03] **Brenda Stephens:** And then they also get sort of a, um, you know, being next to that greatness sort of energy that they hold on to that it's pretty narcissistic themselves and then have these unrealistic expectations of their children. And also don't at least in the cases that I've seen, they don't protect their children, their children, the ones that I've worked with have been not only have the narcissistic abuse, but they also have been abused by other members within the cult and sometimes sexually and physically abused as well. Awful. It's just tragic.

[00:11:33] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. So I'm glad you mentioned that about cults that's a really interesting aspect of this, you know, It makes so much sense to me

that to work with someone who's been in a cult, you know, you would need to understand the dynamics of narcissistic abuse.

[00:11:50] **Brenda Stephens:** Absolutely.

[00:11:52] **Laura Reagan:** I wonder if you could talk about maybe first sort of marrying your first book, not to make it specifically about mothers, as your first book is about mothers, but can you talk about what the dynamics of a narcissistic family dynamic would be? So for someone who's growing up in a home where one of the caregivers is a narcissist, can you, can you kinda like lay that out?

[00:12:14] **Laura Reagan:** I think that would be so helpful if you, if you feel like that is easy to do in this space.

[00:12:20] **Brenda Stephens:** It is, it's so common and so repetitive within families where one of the parents is a narcissist. This will probably make sense to a lot of people, but typically if the family, if there are two parents in the family, one is a narcissist.

[00:12:34] **Brenda Stephens:** And one is an enabler. The enabler is a whole different topic, um, but can be very damaging, almost, almost worse than the narcissist sometimes because the children and the family can understand the narcissist and how to behave and how to be on your best behavior and their role in the family with the narcissist.

[00:12:53] **Brenda Stephens:** But the children also often rely on the enabler to protect them. And then the enabler isn't able to do that. The enabler is so entrenched in maybe keeping the peace with the narcissist or even trying to protect themselves from the wrath of the narcissist that the children are thrown under the bus, or they are just neglected or only sometimes attended to, you know, if the enabler has the energy and time to tend to the children, basically, um, it's really another dynamic that needs its own its own topic and time. But within the family structure, typically what you have, like I said, is one parent is the narcissist. One is the enabler. If you have children more than one child in there, you typically have a golden child and a scapegoat. If there's only one child that child can wear both hats, they can be golden child one day scapegoat the next day.

[00:13:46] **Brenda Stephens:** And I'll explain what those are, but with more than two children, the roles can be scattered. There's often a forgotten child. They, they tend to kind of fly under the radar. They, they just detach themselves

from the family. Um, the scapegoat is definitely the one that gets the blame for you know, everything, things that they probably have no control over, but, you know, the narcissists needs to project their negative feelings that they have about themselves. It's all they do. And project that onto someone else. And it's usually a designated child in the family. And then of course the golden child is the one that has figured out how to stay in the good graces. Um, you know, gets all the great, you know, works hard to get good grades.

[00:14:27] **Brenda Stephens:** They put maybe more mirror the narcissist just in subtle ways. I mean, not, they're not necessarily acting in a narcissistic way, but they, they, the parent sees themselves in that child. And that child gets a lot of praise, but there's also so much damage that goes on for the golden child to the expectation is so high and the results of not meeting that expectation are, um, devastating to that child.

[00:14:54] **Brenda Stephens:** They lose their place. And again, it's about identity and a child who's only identity as, as a golden child and falls off of that throne has no idea who they are. No, no idea what to do next. Um, they, they just crumble. Um, the scapegoat typically, if they lose their role, it's usually to bump up, you know, and they maybe get some more praise and, and things that they haven't done.

[00:15:16] **Brenda Stephens:** So it's not necessarily as devastating for them as it is for the golden child. And the, and the sad to me that, I mean, it's all incredibly sad, but that forgotten child, they just kind of float around on the perimeter and just are constantly trying to avoid any negative attention. And they're sort of in it, on, you know, on their own to protect themselves.

[00:15:39] **Brenda Stephens:** And the children often are pitted against each other. So there aren't supports there built-in with the siblings. That's a really toxic environment.

[00:15:49] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. So the children lose the safe relationship with the narcissistic parent; the protection and safety of the enabling parent, that's not consistent; and the comfort of the sibling relationship that doesn't get to develop where, I mean, and if you think about it like socialization, if you have siblings, then they're your first friends. They're the first people that you play with. And if you, they aren't safe either because everybody's just trying to appease the narcissist or avoid their wrath... Everyone's in survival mode, basically.

[00:16:26] **Brenda Stephens:** That's exactly it. They are all in survival mode and you're right. I mean, going to school, everyone, you know, or when they

start to socialize in any environment, everyone can look like an enemy or unsafe to a young child, and that just continues throughout their life.

[00:16:40] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So the teacher. And the fellow students, their peers would all be threats. And then I can only imagine the way that, you know, the child would be like blamed for reacting to that at school and labeled.

[00:16:54] **Brenda Stephens:** Um, so, so many different avenues in which this shows up and you're right, like in school then, then they're the odd one out.

[00:17:02] **Brenda Stephens:** They're afraid to make friends they're isolated. It's just tragic. It's it just spreads like venom. And to all different areas of everyone's life, who's involved with the narcissist to that degree.

[00:17:14] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So what, what are the, how do the flying monkeys fit in? Who are they?

[00:17:19] **Brenda Stephens:** So flying monkeys tend to be just close friends.

[00:17:23] **Brenda Stephens:** I, and I say "close" in air quotes because, um, the narcissist can't, they have really no self identity, you know, they just take on the identities that they learn and admire in other people. Um, so there are people, the narcissist tends to be very charming too, so they attract people and they do that intentionally as well.

[00:17:41] **Brenda Stephens:** And these flying monkeys are sort of, I think of them as being under the narcissist spell, you know, they only see this good side of the narcissist or even a vulnerable side of a covert narcissist and, and feel like they're, they're just there to support their friend and, and, you know, every, they believe every word that the narcissist says, which are often lies. They paint pictures of, you know, being hurt in a relationship when really they've been the one that's damaged their relationship and they, they, they get these flying monkeys on their side.

[00:18:11] **Brenda Stephens:** And to give you an example of what that is, I had a client who her, her husband had quite a few flying monkeys. They were all kind of into cars and, you know, they shared the same hobbies and he's this gregarious guy. You know, like to flash his money and, you know, it was really outgoing and friendly and it was sort of the top of the heap of these group of men when she had finally had enough and got a restraining order, started the divorce proceedings.

[00:18:39] **Brenda Stephens:** He would send his flying monkeys over to talk to her because there was a restraining order against him. So they would, you know, beg her to, you know, talk to him and not ask for child support. That's a big one. Um, and, and not, go through this, you know, have equal shared custody and visitation and all that.

[00:18:56] **Brenda Stephens:** So that is, uh, I think a really good example of what a flying monkey does. They basically do the bidding for the narcissist and it doesn't have to be just when it's a restraining order. It can be anything like, you know, I just wanted to call you and let you know how much he loves you. And he's, he's not really a bad guy.

[00:19:14] **Brenda Stephens:** That's the kind of role or the kind of conversation a flying monkey would have with the victim of the narcissist. That makes sense?

[00:19:21] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So in a family, would, are the children ever the siblings, are they ever the flying monkeys or is that, would that be like the narcissistic parents, friends or peers?

[00:19:34] **Laura Reagan:** I guess it could be both.

[00:19:35] **Brenda Stephens:** I think it can be both. It's typically more peers. Um, those tend to be the flying monkeys. The golden child will also be the flying monkey for the narcissistic parent, because they've just learned how to just be the yes person. Right. They're just always, yes, I can do that. Yes. I'll, I'll be there for you and they want to keep the peace and have everybody else just be the yes person.

[00:19:56] **Brenda Stephens:** So they can be the flame monkey as well. I wouldn't think the scapegoat or the last child would be.

[00:20:02] **Laura Reagan:** Okay.

[00:20:02] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. That makes sense. Yeah. Awesome. So what about, you just touched on it, but in a relationship that is not a family, but an adult relationship where one partner is narcissistic. Is the dynamic any different from what you described in the family example?

[00:20:22] **Brenda Stephens:** I would say, yeah. You know, and this is where the generational effects of this kind of abuse comes to play too. So typically I don't want to over-generalize, but I just want to say typically what I see is

someone who's the victim of the narcissist tends to be very compassionate, very empathetic, lovely, and kind, and, and that's not always an, of course they're not that way.

[00:20:45] **Brenda Stephens:** A hundred percent of the time we all have flaws, but they typically have this kindness about them. That the narcissist just zones in on. And I want to make it perfectly clear that people don't have a target on them. It's not that they, you know, they, we just, uh, I'm just a person who attracts narcissists.

[00:21:04] **Brenda Stephens:** That's not how it happens. A narcissist sees everybody as a victim, unfortunately for us. And I include myself in this because I have had these relationships. We are the ones that let them stay because we have compassion and empathy for them. And, and. We tend to look at them and, and see, see the sadness, or, or just see, or give them the benefit of the doubt.

[00:21:26] **Brenda Stephens:** Maybe that they're, they're really not bad. And those good parts that we see of them when they're doing the love bombing, which is that beginning phase where they're trying to charm you. And when you over, you know, are, and I use the term cognitive dissonance for this, and I know it's not the exact, correct term or the description of it.

[00:21:43] **Brenda Stephens:** But I think with narcissistic relationships, romantic ones, specifically, we hold on to that first love bombing phase. That that's the real person. Um, that is the person who presented themselves to us at first. And that's who we know. And then we start to see these abusive things happening over the, over the course of their relationship and what we want.

[00:22:04] **Brenda Stephens:** We want to believe it's that first guy or that first woman or whoever that first person we met when in reality, that mask is starting to fall off. That charm mask is falling off and we're really seeing the true person. And as a therapist, this is the hardest part of working with clients who have been in narcissistic relationships, because they desperately want to believe that that person who exclaimed all this love and, and, you know, sweetness and kindness to them is that person because if they choose and they typically do choose to believe the truth of the fact that the ugly part is really what that was being hidden in the beginning. That's really the person. And they go through this really particular kind of complicated grief in grieving, something that was never there, something that never existed. And I think I just, I strayed from your question and I'm really sorry about that.

[00:22:58] **Brenda Stephens:** Um,

[00:22:58] **Laura Reagan:** It's okay. Um, now I'm thinking like it's like they're grieving the fantasy of what they thought they were getting into and what they wanted it to be. And, you know, since it's a fantasy, they don't know it's a fantasy. You don't, that's kind of the nature of a fantasy.

[00:23:14] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And that's exactly it. And trying to, I mean, this is where, I mean, even the, the cycle, the grief cycle comes into play here because there is a lot of bargaining and denial and anger and all of the things that you expect with grief, but it's not really tangible for them. You know, it's this dream that they've been in, that wasn't really what they thought it was. And it's so hard to talk about grief in those circumstances with clients and have them understand that this grief process is really necessary for healing. You know, holding onto what if, if only I had done this, you know, that kind of thinking keeps them in that cycle and some people are comfortable there because the pain of going through the grief is too much.

[00:23:59] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. So, okay. So what my original question was there was about how the dynamics of partner relationships, where one partner is a narcissist are different from the family dynamics that you told us about where, you know, cause obviously there's no golden child and a partner relationship if there isn't a child at all.

[00:24:20] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah. Right, right. Thank you for getting me back on track with that. But yeah, the dynamic is a significantly different and really everything that a narcissist parent projects onto their children is all projected onto their partner. So that narcissist is, is giving all the praise they would give to a golden child and all the neglect they would give to the lost child and all of the abuse they would give to, uh, scapegoat, all lands on that partner. So, um, they, they, one of the other things I should probably back up a little bit about this, and I think this is funny. I hope you have listeners will find this funny too. But one of the things very first, when I started noticing this population come to me, was women telling me about these men that they were either married to or dating and how they behaved.

[00:25:08] **Brenda Stephens:** And I remember thinking is everybody dating my ex? I mean, it just sounded exactly like what I experienced with him and it started to occur to me. It's almost like they all have this playbook, the same playbook that they share. So the narcissist really has one way of operating. It's just depends on who their audience is.

[00:25:27] **Brenda Stephens:** And so back to your question, the way of operating is just projecting all of the emotions out on to somebody else. And the partner is typically the only one that gets the bulk of it. The narcissist, also goes to work and also has a friend group, and they do the same thing in those environments, but it's too risky to let it all out on, you know, at work or with their friends.

[00:25:50] **Brenda Stephens:** They, they understand this, that those, these people can come and go easily, or they can be reprimanded at work for poor behavior. But with a partner there's so much manipulation and so much kind of insidious mind games that go on with a partner. They've got their clutches onto that partner so strongly they let it all out on the partner.

[00:26:10] **Brenda Stephens:** So I hope that answers the question is different. The partner gets the the worst of it.

[00:26:16] **Laura Reagan:** Right. And it's so you were going to say about the intergenerational aspects too, and I I'm really curious about that. Cause you talked about, when you talked about the family, you said, you know, people who have these hurt places.

[00:26:30] **Laura Reagan:** And you know, one thing that I've seen in people who work, who I've worked with, who had a narcissistic parent, because I do work with people from a perspective of usually childhood trauma. So it's often about family of origin stuff, but also they often are in see, I see people who like, they grew up like this, and then they re-enact those dynamics in their adult relationships.

[00:26:54] **Laura Reagan:** They worry. Am I going a narcissist. Now, once they realize that their parent was they're like, I don't want to do that to my children, you know, because that's the big fear is repeating the same kind of behavior. And sometimes what, by the time they come for therapy, maybe their kids are like 15 and 18, you know?

[00:27:14] **Laura Reagan:** So it's not like they're, they have a baby and they're saying, oh, I hope I don't repeat this. They're kind of looking back and going, oh, I hope I'm not, am I an narcissist? And sometimes they can get really.

[00:27:26] **Brenda Stephens:** Oh, yeah. Down on themselves.

[00:27:28] **Laura Reagan:** Big time.

[00:27:29] **Brenda Stephens:** Definitely. I'm glad you asked that. It is so important. And I do see this a lot and I mostly work with women.

[00:27:36] **Brenda Stephens:** Um, it just happens that way. It's not a choice. It just, it was mostly women that come to therapy, generally speaking, and mostly women that come for narcissistic abuse therapy. But I see this all the time. You know, to go to the intergenerational problem. Typically, a child that grows up in a narcissistic home learns how to connect with people through that narcissistic lens.

[00:27:59] **Brenda Stephens:** You know, so having someone give them approval or acceptance is often very important to someone who's been scapegoated all their life. You know, they just want some one. They're desperate for that feeling of being accepted and loved. And the narcissist is so good at that with the love bombing phase, they come in there and they just hear the greatest thing that ever happened to me.

[00:28:19] **Brenda Stephens:** And I love you. And they typically get married really quickly too, just a side note.

[00:28:23] **Laura Reagan:** Well, this sounds exactly like the cycle of domestic violence that we learned about the honeymoon phase and all that.

[00:28:28] **Brenda Stephens:** It is exactly the same. So there is that intergenerational thing. There's also with the golden child. The same thing happens because the only way they've gotten to know themselves is when they've they've achieved something and they get the praise from it. And this is exhausting. Um, and it is the golden child that I see the most often being afraid that there's so much like their parents, their narcissistic parents, which if you think about it makes sense because they have been, the narcissist has seen that golden child is an extension of themselves. So the golden child only knows how to act as an extension of that narcissist. So when they get into their adult years and have their relationships and raise children, that's typically where they're operating from, unless they've done a whole bunch of therapy and understood this before.

[00:29:16] **Brenda Stephens:** It's gotten that far, but I've had so many mothers particularly come to me when their children are older with so much guilt, um worrying that they acted the same way that their parent acted towards them. And that they've destroyed their children and or guilt about not leaving their narcissistic partner, because that happens a lot too.

[00:29:34] **Brenda Stephens:** A golden child will end up with a narcissist. Or any child of narcissist will end up with a narcissist because it's familiar and that's, that's kind of how we do things in life. So that inter- generational piece comes from there. So then the mother is feeling guilty about how she's raised the children.

[00:29:51] **Brenda Stephens:** And maybe there have been some narcissistic tendencies because she just didn't know better. She didn't know. It's so important to remember that mother coming to therapy or that father, whoever it is coming to therapy, understanding what's happened to them. And taking the steps to stop it is huge. It's courageous.

[00:30:10] **Brenda Stephens:** It's a beautiful thing. They're breaking the chain of abuse throughout generations and it doesn't happen overnight. It's going to take a couple of generations for it to kind of be completely washed out. But it's so important for that client coming in and sitting in that chair across from the therapist to see that they're making a huge, huge step here.

[00:30:30] **Brenda Stephens:** And even though they may notice some tendencies that that doesn't mean they're a narcissist. The fact that they came to therapy and stuck with it shows that they're not a narcissist and narcissist doesn't stay in therapy very long. They might come because their partner told them to, but. They don't typically stick around.

[00:30:47] **Laura Reagan:** Hm. Yeah.

[00:30:48] **Brenda Stephens:** It's too vulnerable for them.

[00:30:50] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I mean, it makes sense if the person can't tolerate any like suggestion that they have a role in, you know, making someone else feel uncomfortable and mistreating other people.

[00:31:03] **Brenda Stephens:** Exactly. Yeah. And what they'll typically do too, and I'm not trying to be bashing anyone who has narcissistic tendencies.

[00:31:12] **Brenda Stephens:** It's just the behavior that we typically see in a therapist office. They will try to pull the pull. They will try to charm the therapist as well. And when it doesn't work, when a therapist can see through that, or if it's a, uh, opposite sex therapist, oftentimes that connection isn't going to happen, um, where the, the narcissist can charm as much as they would like to then they, that's why they kind of step out of therapy because they're trying

the same tactics with people who maybe, have a little bit more understanding of what's going on there.

[00:31:42] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, we hope so.

[00:31:43] **Brenda Stephens:** We hope so.

[00:31:48] **Laura Reagan:** Hey therapists. This is Laura Reagan. If you listen to this show regularly, you're hearing a lot about trauma and attachment, and you probably know these two underlying concerns are what drive most people to seek therapy, regardless of how the symptoms present. The good news is trauma's becoming a buzzword and that's great because more people are discovering there's a reason they feel the way they do, and now they can name what they need help with, but they need to find therapists who can help. And that's where you come in, join trauma therapists, networks, therapist directory now at the founding member price of \$33 a month. And you'll receive a beautiful listing that can function as a webpage.

[00:32:23] **Laura Reagan:** If you don't want to set up your own site, or even if you have your own, and you can include links to videos of yourself, blog posts and you're part of a community right now. We have quarterly calls for all members. Our first one happened in October and it was lovely. Everyone said they really enjoyed it, but I'm adding more content that will begin to be available March 1st, 2022.

[00:32:48] **Laura Reagan:** And if you sign up for February 1st, you'll be locked in at the founding member price of \$33 a month. February 1st, the price is going to go up to \$97 a month to reflect added value of these new offerings. And everybody who signs up as a founding member for \$33 a month, we'll get all that content beginning March 1st, as long as you keep your membership, I'm really excited about what's to come.

[00:33:13] **Laura Reagan:** We're going to have weekly live calls, four per month, and one will be a Q and a one will be focused on self care. One will be. Case consultation. And one will be training on a certain topic. Hurry on over to traumatherapistsnetwork.com to sign up and become a founding member of this beautiful community of wonderful, passionate, and skilled trauma therapists.

[00:33:39] **Laura Reagan:** We need you, people who have trauma or out there looking for you, and they don't know how to discern. That you specialize in trauma. So come on over to the trauma therapist network and get listed. Join our community and this movement, traumatherapistsnetwork.com.

[00:33:59] **Laura Reagan:** And this conversation is part of that. I think, you know, you, you talked about how, before we started recording, you told me how you're training therapists to work with people who are affected by narcissistic abuse, for that very reason, be able to identify it. And I think that's what, that's what people have been saying when they asked for this topic to be discussed on therapy chat that it's like, therapists need to know about this.

[00:34:24] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah, we really do. And, and just for the sake of our clients who are feeling lost and not heard, and as I mentioned to you before, um, it's, I have had a lot of clients come to my practice and say, you know, That they found a therapist that said that they knew what narcissistic abuse was.

[00:34:43] **Brenda Stephens:** They've gone to the therapist and never felt heard. Um, and really what it ends up being is I think the therapist understands narcissism, but doesn't understand maybe the complexity and the insidiousness. And I can't think of a better word than insidious for what this abuse looks like. So they, they tend to, they tend to inadvertently shame the client, because, you know, if my, if my husband says to me, I don't really like that lipstick color on you, there may be a whole history behind why he said that. Right. It can be a manipulation tool that no one's going to understand unless they have a whole story, which may be a long one, or they've been through it themselves.

[00:35:22] **Brenda Stephens:** You know, it, it really means something else about the lipstick. And so subtleties that I think that clinicians really need to be aware of, and that's what we hope that I hope to get the word out when we start offering trainings and the trainings that I do with the therapists on my staff, you know, to keep a keen ear out for these little descriptions that may not sound like a big idea to you, but your client may be saying, this is a huge thing.

[00:35:47] **Brenda Stephens:** He said this and I was devastated or I was in bed for a week because I was so hurt by it. Those are big red flags that I think we just need to be more aware of.

[00:35:56] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So using that example, what, what would it, the therapist let's say that you were the client and you said my husband said, I don't like that color of lipstick on you.

[00:36:05] **Laura Reagan:** What would the therapist who does know about narcissistic abuse do differently there?

[00:36:10] **Brenda Stephens:** Oh, that's a good question. I think really getting down to the meaning of it. You know, I would really want to, if it were me

sitting in the chair as a client, I would want my therapist to understand the, the levels of pain that, that comment brought, you know, and asked me about it.

[00:36:28] **Brenda Stephens:** You know, what does that mean to you? That your husband said something about that lipstick, and maybe it meant that every time she went outside, or every time I went outside, With lipstick on, he made fun of me or, you know it, but it's painful and it's typically layered and layered and layered. Um, when somebody brings it up, it can sound like an off, you know, just a, uh, a minor comment.

[00:36:47] **Brenda Stephens:** But it really isn't when you're kind of saying that to you, they're telling you that for a reason, it's not, it's not just conversation making, they're telling you that for a reason. And we have to be aware and explore that with them.

[00:36:59] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. That makes sense. It's just like, instead of, you know, just thinking.

[00:37:04] **Laura Reagan:** Like well, so what, what's the big deal about that, you know, like, and just moving on. Well, okay. So anyway, what did you want to talk about today in the personal, I mean, I just were like, well, why is that such a big thing? You're dysregulated because you're overreacting to something that they said, does that come up a lot?

[00:37:21] **Brenda Stephens:** Um, you have hit the nail on the head. I can't, I mean, I just feel this in my body when you said that, um, that happens so often and it is so incredibly invalidating for the client who has built up the courage to finally address this and what it might mean for them too, is like changing their lifestyle. It may mean losing their house.

[00:37:40] **Brenda Stephens:** It may, it may have so much more meaning than we even realized for them to walk through that therapy door or to get online and talk to their therapist, whatever the case may be. I'm so glad you said that there's so much weight to what could be behind that statement. That we need to recognize that. And that invalidation is what I see constantly, because a conversation like that has taken place, you know, and I, I'm not trying to shame or, or, um, disrespect any therapist because you don't know until, you know, right come to you, but the damage that can cause it's, it's, it's adding fuel to the fire. That's already burning out of control for the client.

[00:38:19] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. As I, as a, we talk about that, I'm thinking like that, that could re-traumatize the person, it could remind them of the

narcissistic partner or parent. Saying you, you blow everything out of proportion or you, you know, that's not what I meant you're taking, you're twisting my words or something like that, which is the gaslighting. Right?

[00:38:42] **Brenda Stephens:** Exactly. Yep. Yeah. Yeah. And that's, that's exactly what happens you know? I've even had people come to me to tell me that they went years ago to a therapist and gave up on it because of things like this, you know, because it does, it feels exactly like what they've already experienced. Well, that's no big deal.

[00:38:59] **Brenda Stephens:** Why are you getting so upset? You're too sensitive. That's a big one. You're too sensitive, you know, and, and again, that puts the blame back on them, which is already happening with their narcissists. They're taking the blame for everything that goes wrong. Nothing that goes right. But everything that goes wrong.

[00:39:14] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. This is so descriptive and helpful. And I think I want to give a good amount of time for you to talk about the healing process for people who've experienced narcissistic abuse, because that's really, you know, the focus of your second book. The workbook. Yeah.

[00:39:31] **Brenda Stephens:** And I know I said this to you. I'm really proud of the workbook, but because I, I, I think it addresses things that are helpful instead of continuing to shame the relationship or shame the narcissist, the workbook is helpful.

[00:39:44] **Brenda Stephens:** It's hopeful as well. And I think, I think it's important for people to recognize too, that, you know, the manual that we use, the DSM to diagnose people is very strict and rigid and has all of these criteria in real life as a therapist, what I see as narcissism on a spectrum, you know? So, um, you had asked before about, um, no contact, so no contact is definitely in the vocabulary that survivors of narcissistic abuse use, and it is an effective and necessary tool sometimes, not always. And there are shades of no contact, even well, no contact is pretty much that's it, but there are ways to build up to that or ways that you can handle your relationship before it gets to the no contact part. And the no contact part is really hard when the narcissist is a parent.

[00:40:32] **Brenda Stephens:** I think people are a little more receptive to the concept when it's a partner. When it's a parent, it seems off the table for a lot of people. But going back to the spectrum piece, I do have a client. Her husband is, was very, very narcissistic, sort of just put in his bachelor days, even after he got married, you know, hanging out with his friends, doing all of these things.

[00:40:56] **Brenda Stephens:** And when he was on deployment. She decided she, she couldn't take it anymore. It was very painful for her. Something really tragic happened within their relationship and she left. Her leaving devastated him. He was absolutely devastated. I would say he was on the lower end of the spectrum from narcissism.

[00:41:14] **Brenda Stephens:** They there's a therapist in Washington whose name I always forget, but he works specifically with narcissistic couples who have one partner as a narcissist and works with narcissists. Solely just with the narcissist. And despite almost going through the divorce phase, they actually have come back together, reunited moved back into the same house, continue therapy with this.

[00:41:37] **Brenda Stephens:** The wife stays with me and the husband has the therapist in Washington and they do couples therapy and he, the husband has become so aware of his narcissistic tendencies and noticing when he's coming from a place of the wounded inner child. And, and they're, they're just both lovely to work with, um, very receptive to therapy and they've been able to create a new relationship.

[00:42:01] **Brenda Stephens:** They, they have left the old relationship behind really when we're very intentional about when they got back together, that this is a new marriage, a new relationship, they even renewed their vows and they're doing incredibly well. It's not perfect. You know, there's still tendencies on him and she still has a lot of fear, but they work together on the problem instead of against each other because of the problem.

[00:42:25] **Brenda Stephens:** And that's beautiful because he was at a place on the spectrum that was workable for lack of better word. As you move up the spectrum, the harder that gets as the insight is not there for narcissists. Typically they're so vulnerable underneath, underneath kind of that facade that they put up, that they just.

[00:42:44] **Brenda Stephens:** They can't, like I said before about therapy, they just can't engage because it's just too vulnerable for them. And then when we get to the end of the spectrum where it's malignant or culvert, which is another topic in and of itself, but a full-blown diagnosable, narcissist, that's where we're going to go no contact, even if it's a parent. Because there's no, there's no wiggle room there because any chance they get any crack, they see they're going to try to seep in there with. With the venom and, and, you know, just kind of take over and return the relationship to the narcissist and victim relationship.

[00:43:21] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I've seen some people who've tried to do no contact and the narcissistic person that they had in their life just won't even accept it. Yeah.

[00:43:31] **Brenda Stephens:** They really won't, and this is, that's a good point too, because this is something I think I talk about in the workbook that the boundary of no contact or any boundary that you put up against your narcissist or with your narcissist is for you.

[00:43:45] **Brenda Stephens:** You have to remember that boundary is for you. It's not for them. You know, they may not put up with it. They may not like it. They may give you a bunch of grief and try to send their flying monkeys to convince you to talk to them or. Text you. I had a client that sat in my office one time and her husband didn't know where she was.

[00:44:00] **Brenda Stephens:** Didn't know she was in therapy, um, texted her 144 times in the span of 30 minutes. And this is really typical behavior. So they will put the pressure on like that. But you have to remember the boundaries for you. And I think that gets lost. Cause I've heard a lot of people say, well, he'll never, he'll never honor that.

[00:44:17] **Brenda Stephens:** Or she'll never let me. You know, go to a therapist or whatever the case may be. But this is where the ownership comes, where you start to kind of claim your identity again, you know? "I'm not going to tolerate this, so I'm not going to answer my phone, or I am going to block him." And that's hard for people to do, but it's really effective.

[00:44:35] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. And I think that the boundaries, you know, like what you were saying about no contact is sort of an extreme, but there are ways of setting boundaries along the way, depending on who the person is.

[00:44:47] **Brenda Stephens:** Exactly. Yeah.

[00:44:48] **Laura Reagan:** How important their role is in your life.

[00:44:50] **Brenda Stephens:** Right, exactly. And that, like I said, it's typically with a parental figure and that, I mean, just as an example of setting boundaries, along the way, I have a client who dreads talking to her mom on the phone, it tends to be like, um, a two hour phone call and many, many questions about what's going on with the client's life.

[00:45:07] **Brenda Stephens:** So what we did is said, you know, she would call her mom on the day that she typically talks to her and say, mom, I have 15 minutes for you. I thought I'd give you a call. And wanted to talk and when the 15 minutes up, oh, I have another obligation I have to go. And that's been incredibly effective for her.

[00:45:23] **Brenda Stephens:** And even not allowing the time for mom to go into the third degree about what's going on in clients' life. Their relationship is it's not the perfect mother and daughter relationship by any stretch of the imagination, but it's acceptable to my client. She can talk to her mom now with those boundaries around it, where she really dreaded it before and would avoid her before.

[00:45:43] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah. Those boundaries are incredibly important.

[00:45:46] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:45:47] **Laura Reagan:** And I can imagine if you grow up with someone as a parent, who's a narcissist, you don't get much experience being allowed to have any separation from them. Cause that's it, like you said that if you're the golden child you're identified with them and I think I made an assumption, I could be wrong.

[00:46:05] **Laura Reagan:** So you can correct me if so that, that the scapegoat is also, you know, the negative aspects of the narcissist's self-identity that they're projecting onto that child.

[00:46:15] **Brenda Stephens:** That's exactly correct. Yeah.

[00:46:17] **Laura Reagan:** So you're still just a little mirror of the parent to, to the parent, even though it's the negative aspects versus the positive aspects.

[00:46:26] **Brenda Stephens:** And that's exactly right.

[00:46:27] **Brenda Stephens:** And, and therefore the parent sees no separation between them and whichever child. So there, there are no limits to what they'll ask or what they'll expect. That's where the boundaries come in as an adult. And you're right as children, they just, they don't even have the luxury of doing that, but as they get older, they can start to do that.

[00:46:47] **Brenda Stephens:** And it's hard. It's not easy for. The the victim. I know that's not a great word. I just don't have a better one and I think it's

appropriate, but, um, it's a way that they can regain some power or have power for the first time ever, which is lovely.

[00:47:02] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. The whole victim thing. It's like, it's not necessarily that you're calling someone who's experienced this kind of abuse a victim, but at the same time, you're naming that they were victimized.

[00:47:15] **Brenda Stephens:** It's exactly. It's the victimization that I want to bring attention to, to everybody, because like I've said, we just don't recognize it well enough and it's devastating for the person who suffers with this kind of abuse. They don't ever get to find out who they are. Their life is always about pleasing somebody else or being worried of judgment of somebody else.

[00:47:36] **Brenda Stephens:** And that's a terrible way to live.

[00:47:39] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. So you mentioned boundary setting is an important piece to the healing process. What other parts of the healing process are there for? What does you know, I'm thinking something about like the healing, the emotional wounding that they've experience.

[00:47:58] **Brenda Stephens:** That's a really good question.

[00:47:59] **Brenda Stephens:** Really. So there's so many ways to do this. I mean, I think there, there are different, different modalities of therapy that can help with this, but basically what it boils down to is I feel healing that inner child, because that's where all the pain is stored. And people don't typically just wander into a narcissistic relationship as an adult, without some sort of childhood history that leads them there.

[00:48:23] **Brenda Stephens:** So in my opinion, like IFS, work EMDR to, you know, work on specific traumas that have happened. Any, anything that brings insight to the younger parts of you that have been wounded, I think are incredibly important. And I think the exciting part of the healing process is figuring out who you are, you know, having the opportunity to just sort of say, Hey, I had a client described this, that she still had this little tiny silver nugget of who she was before she married her narcissist.

[00:48:52] **Brenda Stephens:** And she started to see that grow as she started to see have the healing process. Continue. And that was such a lovely picture in my mind to hear her say it like that, that this part of her was still in there, but it had shrunk so small that she could barely see it anymore. And then as she separated from him from him, went no contact, she got back into old hobbies

that she loved. She was an entertainer and got back into singing. Engaged with her friends and it was just so beautiful to watch and she just saw that nugget grow and grow and grow. So I think that is something really, to look forward to. And it's a beautiful thing for the client to experience and for the therapist to see it's it's it brings hope that's.

[00:49:35] **Laura Reagan:** That is beautiful. And, you know, I think that one of the. That I really appreciate about what you're sharing is that, you know, there's a lot of discourse about narcissism. You know, we hear that word used so much and it's often just in a very, kind of a limited perspective, like narcissists can't change; of course they're doing that, that feeds their narcissism and stuff like that. But it doesn't, it doesn't allow for, you know, that the, that the person who's doing the narcissistic behaviors can change. And I feel like some of the work that's been out there in the past about narcissism for the person who was victimized by a narcissistic person just kind of makes it seem like dead end.

[00:50:17] **Laura Reagan:** Like, well, yeah, that's why you're like this because they did this and that's it. You know what I mean?

[00:50:24] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah, I do. And you know, the example I gave earlier, The, the client I have whose husband was lower on the spectrum, I think is something to really pay attention to. And even someone who is a little higher on the spectrum than he was, I think has hope.

[00:50:40] **Brenda Stephens:** I mean, I think there is hope for it. I think if you have a, oh, I almost said something, I would have regretted, but okay. Image of who, who might be like the ultimate narcissist in your mind, the malignant who really is just stepping on people. I mean, that person probably isn't going to change, but there a whole slew of people that are beneath that level, that diagnosable a malignant narcissist level that can improve, or they can learn to kind of get in touch with the empathy, even if it's a little bit of empathy that they haven't. And that's one of the things that defines a narcissist is very little empathy. But if there's some there, I feel like it can be built upon, you know, they can at least try to explore it a little bit more what they do have.

[00:51:25] **Brenda Stephens:** And I think that's a very helpful thing too, you know, it just depends on what, to me, the damage that's caused to the victim is really the measurement there. You know, whether or not they should go, no contact, give up hope, you know, whatever that choice is for them. And it's really a case by case it's, it's going to be relationship by relationship decision for them to make.

[00:51:46] **Brenda Stephens:** But I don't think by any stretch of the imagination, every person with narcissistic tendencies is a hopeless class. It just there's no black and white either or kind of thinking when it comes to people.

[00:51:57] **Laura Reagan:** Exactly, exactly. And so it's, it's not to say that people should work to repair relationships with someone who was abusive, narcissistically abusive to them.

[00:52:08] **Laura Reagan:** If they don't want to, they don't have to, but if they want, if they want some healing and they still want to have a relationship with that person, that they, there could be hope that the relationship could be repaired, even though, you know, you can't change someone else. But, you know, you may be able to repair the relationship or find a way to live with it,

[00:52:29] **Brenda Stephens:** Right, yeah.

[00:52:31] **Brenda Stephens:** If you want to, right. There's no rule that says you have to leave your narcissist, you know, and I think too, it, it boils down to boundaries and I talk a lot about boundaries in the workbook. The boundaries again are for, for you, you, as the person who's dealing with the narcissist and that's for you to protect what you need to protect within yourself.

[00:52:50] **Brenda Stephens:** And if you have those boundaries and you can maintain them and reinforce them within the relationship, you're probably going to be okay. You know? It doesn't have to be like a death sentence for the relationship. Boundaries are important, but they're important in every relationship, not just with one with the narcissist.

[00:53:06] **Laura Reagan:** Exactly. Yeah. Well, this is a very hopeful message and I'm so grateful that you're out there, both with these books, but the trainings that you're doing for therapists, I think are also going to be really valuable and. So, can you tell people a little bit more about what you've got cooking? Cause he said it would be starting up right around the time when this will be airing.

[00:53:29] **Laura Reagan:** So I'm sure people will be curious.

[00:53:32] **Brenda Stephens:** So our first penciled it in our first training will be January 7th and I don't have all the details worked out yet. We're still waiting approval from NBCC to give continuing ed credits. So as soon as we've got that locked down, which I anticipate happening at least the first week or two of December, we will start advertising and linking in our websites.

[00:53:55] **Brenda Stephens:** And we have two websites. How therapists can sign up to get the training on how to recognize and treat this population. So I'm going to be trying to get the word out as best as I can, um, through all of the avenues that I have, but I hope people will consider, you know, just learning more about this population and being available to treat them because they're everywhere, everywhere. They're in your churches. Um, this is another thing. Um, I have three clients who were the child of a preacher, um, which was really interesting to me too. So, I mean, I just want people to recognize that they're everywhere. The narcissists are everywhere. The victims of narcissistic abuse are everywhere, so therapists are needed.

[00:54:37] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. And so this will actually probably go live after January 7th, but will that be something that will be ongoing and once it goes live, so is it like a online based training or just monthly, you know, different offerings were coming out throughout the year?

[00:54:54] **Brenda Stephens:** I think it will be different offerings coming out throughout the year.

[00:54:57] **Brenda Stephens:** I would like to do these things in person when we can, I mean, the first one will be online, but when we can, I'm really looking forward to doing them in person because so many questions come up and with online I'm noticing. Um, I think I mentioned to you, I presented at a conference, the questions that come up, I don't get the time to answer them the way I want to.

[00:55:17] **Brenda Stephens:** And I really want to be able to stop in the, in the middle of the training and have somebody say, can you expand on that a little more? So we will be doing them in person eventually, but to start out with January 7th, when we have plan will be online.

[00:55:30] **Laura Reagan:** And are they going to be offered in San Diego or various places?

[00:55:35] **Brenda Stephens:** Various places.

[00:55:36] **Brenda Stephens:** We'll go all around the country. Yeah. I have a few folks on staff who are very well versed in treating survivors of narcissistic abuse. We call them SONAs and, um, they're very interested in doing the training too. We really, really want to get the word out. So, so this population can heal.

[00:55:53] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. Awesome. Well, I am so grateful that you shared your time with me today and that we connected so that you could talk to our audience about this. Thank you so much for coming to therapy chat.

[00:56:06] **Brenda Stephens:** Thank you for having me. I appreciate the opportunity.

[00:56:09] **Laura Reagan:** Let me give you a chance to tell people where, what are these websites?

[00:56:13] **Laura Reagan:** You said you have two, what are they?

[00:56:15] **Brenda Stephens:** So one and probably the most relevant one is just www.narctrauma.com.

[00:56:22] **Laura Reagan:** Ooh, that's a good one.

[00:56:23] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah.

[00:56:24] **Laura Reagan:** That domain name is worth some money!

[00:56:26] **Brenda Stephens:** Yeah. I was really lucky to have gotten that one. Yeah. And then our other website is stephenstherapy.com and it's spelled S T E P H E N S.

[00:56:35] **Brenda Stephens:** So stephenstherapy.com. And we'll have information on both websites about the training. Once we get the approval from NBCC.

[00:56:43] **Laura Reagan:** Okay. So I'm guessing anyone who wanted to work with you in California would find, use your therapy website to get in touch too.

[00:56:50] **Brenda Stephens:** Exactly. And the narctrauma.com. We do offer coaching through that site.

[00:56:55] **Brenda Stephens:** So for clients or really anybody who wanted help around this topic, Wherever they're from it doesn't have to be California. They can reach us through coaching or get services through coaching..

[00:57:06] **Laura Reagan:** Great, wonderful. Wow. Thank you.

[00:57:10] **Brenda Stephens:** Thank you so much.

[00:57:11] **Laura Reagan:** So let me just thank you again for coming to therapy chat and talking about all of this today.

[00:57:16] **Laura Reagan:** I really love talking with you, and I think that our audience is really going to enjoy listening to

[00:57:21] **Laura Reagan:** this.

[00:57:22] **Brenda Stephens:** I hope I really, truly hope they do. Thank you.

[00:57:24] **Laura Reagan:** Therapists. If your practice doesn't accept insurance, go to the super bill.com to get started with superbill, a service that can help your clients get reimbursed.

[00:57:32] **Laura Reagan:** Superbill is free for therapists and your clients can use the code therapy chat to get a free month of the service at thesuperbill.com. Also, you can earn \$100 for every therapist you refer after your clients complete the one-time HIPAA compliant onboarding process. You can just send us their superbills. Superbill will then file claims for your clients and track them all the way to reimbursement by helping your clients get reimbursed without the stress of dealing with insurance companies, superbill can increase your new client acquisition rate by over 25%. The next time a potential client asks if you accept insurance, let them know you partner with superbill to help your clients receive reimbursement effortlessly. Visit the super bill.com to get started.

[00:58:15] **Laura Reagan:** Today's episode was sponsored by trauma therapists network. Find information, resources, and connect with a trauma therapist near you. At traumatherapistnetwork.com. Trauma is real healing is possible. Help is available. traumatherapistnetwork.com.

[00:58:29] **Announcer:** Thank you for listening to therapy chat with your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:58:36] **Announcer:** For more information, please visit therapy chat podcast.com.