

Sandra Beecher Addiction in Marriage/ Family

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Speaker 1: Well, welcome to this month's Dive Deep interview. We are super excited to be talking about a subject that maybe is not talked about a lot proactively, and we really wanted to equip you to know maybe some next steps that you can take, as it relates to dealing with addiction in some way, shape or form. Whether it's within your marriage or within your family, and as a couple, you need to navigate that. So we have with us today, Sandra Beecher, and Sandra has spent 23 years in the space of addictions and mental health, and she is going to help us to understand Next Right Steps that we can take. So Sandra, welcome to No More Perfect Date Night.

Speaker 2: Welcome everybody. Thank you so much for having me, Mark and Jill. I'm excited about discussing this difficult topic. So whatever I can do to help, let me know.

Speaker 3: We are excited that you joined us.

Speaker 1: Yeah. So tell us just a little bit about yourself, your journey, and I know you're married. Obviously, this is a forum for married couples. So tell us a little bit about yourself, your family, and then how you got in this journey?

Speaker 2: So my journey is... It's kinda long, so I'll try to narrow it down to something short and sweet, 'cause when you get to be in the 60s, you've been through a lot. So my journey started out really... Always, even when I was a kid, I wanted to make a difference in life. I wasn't raised as a Christian. Yeah, we went to church. But I came from... My father was an alcoholic, and my mother struggled. They were both very, very young. So when I grew up, I really wanted to make changes in life. I wanted to be a police officer. I tried to do that. As we know, in the late 70s, early 80s, they weren't really hiring female officers. So that didn't work out for me. And then I decided that I wanted to work with gang enforcement, law enforcement. Anything that had to do with something that was really rough. I don't know why.

S2: But then I went to Lincoln Christian University, and my whole life changed. I became a Christian there, my whole view was different, but still the same as what God, I believe, had called me to do is to help others. So before that, I would say my life was pretty rough. I was kind of a wild child. I was born, and raised as a farm girl. So then when I moved to town, it was a whole new world for me, "Oh my gosh, what have I been missing", kind of thing. So I got married... We couldn't have any children, my first marriage. We decided that we were gonna adopt. So I started doing... An adoption, as we all know, is very, very expensive, so I started doing what you call professional foster care to where you could maybe adopt through that. So I did that for some 30 years, and just retired in 2013 from doing that, after 56 children, teenage boys, mainly.

Speaker 3: Wow.

S2: And then when I got married to my husband now, that I'm married to for 21 years. My husband before that, is deceased. He died at a very young age from coronary heart disease, and we had

adopted seven teenage boys. So my husband now... I had seven teenage boys, he had three children... Two boys, and a girl, the only girl of the family, and we adopted three together. So we have 13 children, with one being deceased. So our journey is kind of long and a lot of baggage. So, it's a great journey. I've learned a lot, and I wanna give a lot, and I have a lot of love for folks... And kids, especially.

S1: We just became foster grandparents. Our youngest son, and his wife have two little ones. They're one and two, and it has been a joy. We have thoroughly enjoyed the journey of being foster grandparents. And I don't know what will happen with that. But we're along for the ride.

S3: Yeah. Yeah.

S1: So you went back to school in your 50s, is that correct? Or late 40s?

S2: Yeah. I started... I don't know really know how old I was. I started at Parkland College in '90... 1990. I started my career with addiction in 1988. I started out at Chestnut Health System there in Bloomington, Illinois, and then I went to Parkland School to get my criminal justice degree, and did my internship as a police officer at Champagne, and then I transferred in '93 to... Well, it was Lincoln Christian College then, and then it changed over to a university later in my life, but I went to school some 20-some years. When you look at associates degree, too, and trying to raise kids, and work full-time, it takes two years... Takes four years... For Associate, four years, for a Bachelor, takes eight, and my seminary took me six. So it takes a lot of years to do that.

S1: It does, it does. Well, tell us your journey of... You're on this police officer journey. But you, obviously, there was addiction in your home of origin. So how did you end up doing addiction and mental health for 23 years? What drew you to that?

S2: Well, I think a lot of it was my home life, and my family, and trying to help them. And, as we'll talk about today, a lot of enabling, or a lot of trauma during that, and how do you help someone that one doesn't want help, and so... Starting out my career with young men, even working at Chestnut, I worked on the Gang Unit. For some reason in my life, it's always been things that I'm fearful of... 'Cause gangs, I was scared of them.

S2: And so, I started out on that unit, and they were the best group of guys. They were so good to me, and they were my educators. I still get people coming up to me at a very young age going, "Hey, if it hadn't been something that you said or done, I wouldn't have changed my life." And that unconditional love, or unconditional teaching, or even with families, always finding the best in someone, to give them hope. So that's how I kind of started out, and I realized that I really did need credentials behind my name, so that people would listen. 'Cause it's not only just about experience, but I also have the credentials, and I'm seasoned.

S1: I can see that. So, today's topic is actually very personal for us. First, I met you, Sandra, because we were trying to help a friend who was on a slippery slope with alcohol, and you were just so gracious. Somebody had told me that we ought to call you, you would know next steps, you would make recommendations, and I so, so, appreciated that.

S1: And then, we have a son that we adopted from Russia, that we have dealt with a lot of substance abuse and mental health issues. So that has affected us as a couple, because you're trying to navigate

something that you're not quite sure what that next right step is, and you may disagree on that. And we didn't have the benefit of someone that we could... We'd never received any education on this topic, and so that's why we thought, "You know what, this would be really good to talk about."

S1: So let's jump into just the anatomy of addiction. So help us to understand what happens when we become... And you said there's two types of addictions, there's process addictions, and then there's substance addictions. So, talk about... First, define those for us, and then talk about a little bit about the anatomy of addiction.

S2: So the process addictions, I always... How it's separated, there's really not... If you look at substance use as an addiction, whether that be alcohol or drugs, and you look on the other side of the spectrum, as far as what we call process addictions, it could be gaming, gambling, sex, food, internet, or even shopping and spending. So, if you look at both of those and you try to compare and contrast, there's really not a lot of difference in that addiction, except you're not ingesting a chemical, but you're still engaging that behavior. And as we all know, the more and more that we engage in a behavior, the more it becomes something that we do every day. It takes 90 days to stop doing something and change your mindset to not do it.

S2: So, for example, you take someone that's trying to diet. I know with me working at home, I'm not used to working from home, I've always been out, and go to work every day, but I found myself like always looking in the refrigerator. [chuckle] You do that for 30, 40 days, you start gaining weight. It's like, "What is the deal?" And then, the substance use is just inducing any kind of chemical or drinking. There's a huge difference, or you can't be drug tested for gaming, or gambling, or sex, food, internet, or shopping and spending. So, both can be devastating.

S3: Yeah, that is so true. And we've walked with so many couples who have struggled with various forms of addictions, as you've just described. So help us put ourselves in the shoes of someone who's dealing with substance abuse. What do we need to understand?

S1: Over even process abuse.

S3: Yeah, or even process. What's happening inside of them? What are they... What's the process look like?

S2: Well, I think it's complicated, because... Especially... Each individual is so different, depending on their background, depending on their history. I said earlier I've been doing this some twenty-some years and it's my strength, I love doing it. People... When you called me, I'd love digging into that. I always call it case management, and figuring out, as a whole person, really what is going on. So if you build that relationship with someone, and talk to them about something that is so devastating to them, especially if they're a Christian, there's so much shame and guilt that comes along with that. It's so hidden, they don't want anybody to know about it, because, you know, you beat yourself up. People don't wake up and say, "Hey, I wanna be addicted to alcohol. I wanna ruin my life, I want everybody to hate me." And you just... That doesn't happen. And looking through the lens from them, it's just so devastating.

S1: How do I get through this? How do I be honest with folks to tell them I have a problem? And, where do I get help to have... For them to change and make the necessary changes?

S1: That shame and guilt is huge.

S3: Huge.

S1: And we find... I mean, we in coaching marriages, even if somebody's not dealing with addiction or some sort of substance abuse or as you said, process abuse. One of the things that we find is, Man, shame is really damaging, and it is probably a piece that sometimes fuels addiction. Not everybody who deals with shame has an addiction problem, but, boy, we see that it hurts marriages. It hurts people in their own identity. And, I'm sure that you see it's ever present in that addiction world.

S2: Absolutely.

S1: Yeah. So, what are some of the fears that are going on inside of someone that, maybe, they're afraid to get help? Maybe they're still denying they need help. But, what are some of the fears that are going on?

S2: I think a lot of it is in our culture, that... I always use this. I do a lot of presentations, and there's one slide that I have used for years when I first started doing presentations, and it was... The slide was, How accessible is any kind of process addictions or chemical addiction? How accessible is it? People can walk across the street and get alcohol. Or, if you're young, someone will buy it for you. People can walk down the street these days where heroin used to be, "Oh my gosh, that's such a dangerous drug!" And it's so... Today, it's so accessible and acceptable. So, I use that accessibility, acceptability. People leave work, they casually drink alcohol occasionally, or on the weekends. Now, even during this whole pandemic, you see people doing what they call fairy dusting and leaving bottles of tequila on someone's door step, because they're home. So, you take all of that, and you have this predisposing genetic to where your father or your mother was addicted to drugs or alcohol. Any kind of genetic piece, could potentially cause you to start abusing any kind of drugs, or alcohol could. Some people can get by with it, with not using anything. For me, my father being alcoholic, I didn't want anything to do with alcohol. But, even though I had that genetic piece I'm prone to other. And, once you have an understanding of that, then you can be aware of it.

S1: Yeah, let's talk about that a little bit.

S3: Right.

S1: 'Cause we've really... We've dealt with that in our family.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Mark's father was an alcoholic. And then his father...

S3: Committed suicide, and my dad found him. But, I'm thinking there's a long history of those alcoholic tendencies in my family.

S1: And, just addiction tendencies. And so, that's something we've talked about even in our marriage. And, our marriage went through a terrible crisis 10 years ago, and alcohol was one coping mechanism you used during that season, that it was like a slippery slope. You were able to keep it

under control, but man, you were right on that slope.

S3: Yeah.

S1: So, talk about that a little bit more. What should, if somebody has alcoholism in their family genetic line, why should they be aware of this?

S2: Well, I think the more and more education that you get from that and understand who you are as a person, and how you're equipped; what should be red flags for you. I knew once I started educating myself and getting involved in helping others with how they can get help, and just more and more every day realizing for myself, is that I was addicted when I was younger. When I said I had that kind of wild child piece in my life, it was like, "Gosh! What is going on with me? What am I searching for? Why do I not feel comfortable with myself?" But, I think once you're aware of that and really understand your red flags, people can even hop from one addiction to another. Even though mine was chemical starting out, then I changed to workaholic. And, I'm a workaholic. I had two jobs. I had my own business at 25, and then when I got kids, it was like, How do I balance this? So, for me, with marriage, kids, jobs, all the things that we go through in our marriage it's all about balance, and really understanding ourselves and how we as an individual balance ourself in our marriage. It's just a pie. And, if that pie is spiritually slender over here, or you're working too much and the piece of pie is like this, that wheel is not gonna roll.

S1: Wow, that's a picture! I like that.

S3: Right, I like that too. Yeah.

S2: It is a picture. [chuckle]

S1: Yeah, it really is. Okay, so let's just say that we are the person struggling. And let's talk to that person for a moment. We know that maybe things are... Maybe we're just on the slippery slope, maybe we could stop. There's not yet maybe a physical dependency, but there's definitely an emotional dependency. Or maybe there is a physical dependency. So what would you say would be a next right step for someone that knows, "Man, I'm on a slippery slope"?

S2: Well, you know, I work for Gateway Foundation, which is a treatment center for residential and outpatient, all different levels of care. So without... Not promoting my business and who I work for, I have a lot of lifelines out there, and I think the first step is really being able to talk to someone. And that's the most difficult step because we have 14,000... If you go on the internet, we have 14,000 treatment centers, and people are all just, "Pay," or private counselors, "Hey, come to me." So I think the first step is really having that relationship with someone to be able to have that conversation, and be able to guide them to the appropriate place. There's so much stigma these days. I think that's the first thing that comes to their mind about getting help, "I'm not crazy. I don't want you to lock me up."

S2: Especially if you work with folks that have those career, police officer, airplane pilot, they don't wanna lose their... Or nurses, they don't wanna lose their licensure. It's a hidden addiction. Or in your marriage, you don't want your kids to know about it. "Oh, how will... If family or other people know, what would they think of me?" So it's that whole stigma that, "There's something wrong with me."

S1: Yeah. So really, you're gonna have to take a risk and maybe have a conversation with someone, and it maybe... Man, I had never even thought about the people that are in a job, in a career where that could completely change, be a game changer for them.

S2: Kinda look at a pastor, what would his flock think of him? A police officer can't say anything about mental health, depression, they'll lose FOID card. They would lose their whole career if they say anything about that. Or a military man can't say anything while he's in the military, if he's a lieutenant sergeant, the higher up his rank goes, "Oh no, I'm good." So it's that whole career that you've worked for all your life and, "Oh, I have problems."

S1: What would somebody do if they were in that place? What would be a first step? You said talk to someone. If they talk to someone there, that someone, are they... This isn't like where somebody has to report you or something like that. Who's a safe person for them to talk to?

S2: Well, I always say that private counselors. And when I talk to folks, I try to make it as simple as possible from the beginning, 'cause if it becomes so difficult for them, they're just like, "Hey, I'm fine. This is so overwhelming." But private counselors, somebody always knows someone or... For me, I have so many lifelines that if families are able to call me, I do it for... I'm not just locally, I'm nationally. I could get somebody on a plane tomorrow and get some help. But it's all about trying to find that right person that they can get involved in that relationship, so that they can figure out enough that what would be the most appropriate for them. 'Cause if you send them down on a wild goose chase, or say somebody's that's driving the bus, maybe it's more mental health than it is substance use, they're... We don't wanna put them somewhere or get them the help somewhere that it just sends 'em down a rabbit hole.

S3: So Sandra, is there a difference between helping... Or what's that line between helping and enabling? I think some people aren't really sure of the differences. And so can you help us see that perspective?

S2: Yeah, I mean, enabling has been used and abused [laughter] for so many years. Some people don't even like that word. But enabling is really taking control of someone and trying to fix them. So if you look, for example, of we... As loved ones, we always wanna help someone and help fix their problems, 'cause that's just what we are as helpers. But if you look at an example where, between enabling and helping... And keep in mind, each situation is different. Some people live in a domestic violence situation, and they're gonna enable to keep themselves safe. Children are gonna enable to keep themselves safe, 'cause they have to set the stage. But in just working with... It always seems like with... In a situation with families, it's so devastating, and if you've lived in that situation for so many years, it's scary for change.

S2: Which I think you have to look at it where, "Do I go and buy them a bottle of alcohol," versus "Well, I don't want him driving or her driving to get that bottle of alcohol 'cause then you're looking at maybe more consequences with the DUI." So what are you gonna do to control that situation? Is it enabling? You're gonna go get them the alcohol? But you really have to look at the situation. A lot of families look at it like the elephant in the living room. They just keep it controlled, they're in denial. But then on the other side as helping, what's really gonna help your loved one? We live with that when we have children, that tough love, and it puts yourself in a very difficult situation, but I would say it again and again, as many as kids I have raised, I would still be a helper and not an

enabler 'cause it's not going to help them at all.

S1: Yes, we definitely have seen that with our son.

S3: Right, we've had to find that safe middle.

S1: And I remember one conversation we had where... And we were in a different... We were in different places as a couple. I thought we should do one thing, he thought we should do one thing. And I remember the one thing that brought us together is we said, "Is what we're doing helping?" And we had to go, "Uh-uh. No. He's at the same place he was a year ago as he is now." So what we've done over the last year has not helped him. And so we have to make a determination and that really kind of pulled us under the... We still weren't sure what to do, but it kind of pulled us together to both go, "You know what, this..." I think we have been enabling because we weren't... We haven't seen any fruit from that help.

S3: Right.

S1: So let's talk a bit a moment about the people that are... They have a loved one, maybe it's your spouse, maybe it is your child, what might be... So we identified that if you're the one struggling, the next right step would be to talk to someone. But for the person that is living with someone or watching someone self-destruct in some way, shape or form, what might be a next right step for them?

S2: Well, I know in the past, probably 10 years, interventionists have been popular, not like you see on TV, but a loving interventionist where people can get together. I mean, families, when they get to the point where that's where they have to turn to as a professional to come in and help them, it works, but they're just spent, they're done, they've tried everything, and it's difficult for them to, even during this intervention, to say, "Okay, if they refuse treatment, or if they refuse to get help and make the necessary changes, what are you gonna do?" Are you gonna stick to your guns and say, "No, you can't live here," "No, I'm done with this"? What... Are you gonna follow through with what the consequences are, which is very difficult, especially when it comes to your kids. And... Did I answer your question Jill? What... I'm sorry, I got side-tracked.

S1: Yeah, well, I was just saying, what would be a next right step forward? So you said intervention, there are interventionists out there. If they... So let's talk about this. What is the best way for a loved one, or is there a best way, or is there some suggested ways to have a conversation with someone that you are concerned about? What are some things that are helpful to say, and what are some things that are not helpful to say?

S2: Well, I think things that are helpful is to really sit down and you have to set the stage for that. There can't be children running around. You either have to have a date night, you have to do... It really has to be planned because it can either be a lengthy conversation, and you never want it to be a cut-off conversation 'cause then you don't... You're not sure what one or the other one is feeling. But if you plan that, whoever is going to take control of that and plan it, and I think it has to be with a lot of love, "Where are we going? What are our goals? What have we lost throughout our time together, even with our kids? What has happened?" I think we can get so mixed up in chaos, in our chaotic lives that we forget about what direction we're going in. A lot of people, either they self-medicate to feel better or it's all about that seeking to feel better, that quick fix-it, "I want to feel

good." And we think that that's the direction that is gonna be good, but at the end of the day, it's so devastating. So I just think that having that conversation and being...

S2: Sometimes it'll end up in a fight, but at least you're planting the seed that, "I recognize that I either have a problem or you have a problem. Let's come to some kind of compromise of how we can fix it." I'm not saying everybody needs to go to treatment, but talk to a pastor. If that doesn't work, have a mediator, somebody that you can trust, and that it's all confidential. Substance use and process addictions is very, very confidential.

S1: Yeah, that's really important for people to understand.

S3: Yeah.

S1: And what I would also... One of the things I think I've just learned over the years and certainly learned as we've dealt with it with our son is, I think a lot of times when we get to the place where we're ready to say something, we're angry, like... Because we have watched this, and we're angry, but the problem is you go at it with anger and all that other that person's gonna do is they're gonna put up their defenses. And so what we want, what we have found is, and you just said, it's... You want to be sensitive, you want to address their pain, there's... I think that compassion piece is really, really important when you're having one of those conversations where you're trying to address it. And I think that's the hard part is because your own emotions are all worked up, and that comes out and it doesn't produce the conversation you wanted. So you've kind of gotta untangle yourself first, and then be able to have that. Would you agree?

S2: Absolutely, absolutely. I know... Not to tell you a whole lot about my life, but what that... In my experience, and in my history, we had... Our kids that came into our home had a lot of baggage, lot of substance use, lot of mental hell, their parents died of drug overdose. I mean, they just had a lot of baggage. And we had a kid that was using in the home, and it's just... You have to have those guidelines; you have to have those rules because everybody has them. "Why do I have to follow the rules and you don't?", kind of thing. But I think, again, just having that loving conversation with them and not power struggling with anyone, whether it's your partner, your loved one, but never power struggling but giving them a choice. I gave my son a choice, I said, "You can either get the help that you need and stop using in this house... 'Cause I could lose my career. If they raid this house and we all go to jail, all my work, hard work with all my licensure is gone. And I'm not gonna jeopardize that. Or you can just pack your bags and I'll take you somewhere where you wanna... Wherever you wanna go." That was the hardest thing I ever did, is dump my son out at a gas station and say, "Goodbye." And I can just remember my husband and I crying all the way home.

S2: But we had lost a son. That's just kind of that same situation. So when you look at that you're going, "Oh, my God, what if he dies?" But it's always going to be that way, you know? That's the only way we can be a helper is, follow the... We have to have those rules, and at the end of the day, it's either... It could hopefully turn out good for them.

S1: Yeah. And we had the exact, exact same situation that happened. And we said to our son that he needed to get help or he couldn't live with us anymore. And it was... I mean, at this point in time, he was 20, 21 maybe, and he said, "I'm out of here." And we happened to be at a restaurant, we had met him at a restaurant and he walked out of that restaurant and he was homeless for weeks on end. And that was so difficult.

S3: Yeah.

S1: We even at one point asked him if we could take him to the local mission, so that he at least would have a place to stay. He was unwilling to do that and...

S3: Yeah.

S1: So difficult. But I will say we're another four or five years down the road. He just mowed our yard for us yesterday, and we had a delightful conversation with him last evening, and not that he's out of the woods, he still struggles, but for those parents that are going, "I could never draw that line with my kid," I think it's important to realize that it may be the best help that they actually need.

S3: Absolutely. Yep.

S1: So good stuff.

S2: I know.

S1: Okay. So let's talk for...

S2: I know, and just to put an ending on that, my son too is... He is the best kid you could ever ask for. He just built a front porch on our house over the weekend. I mean, he is the best kid. Most of my kids are really good of course, I'm their mom too, so...

S1: I would expect you to be.

[laughter]

S1: Yeah...

S3: Yeah.

S1: Be a... Telling us... And be a bit biased, I would expect that.

S3: Yeah.

S1: So where does faith fit into the healing process of addiction and mental health? Talk to us about that a little bit.

S1: Well, I think that all of us seek that higher power, and we seek to be happy and good, no matter what. So with the faith, I think that we all, no matter what our denomination is, or where we've come from, everybody... We wanna be happy. We wanna be good human beings and when we're not, we hide. So I always say... Even folks that come into treatment... They're like, "Oh, I don't wanna hear all that God stuff." But if you look at any of the AA meetings or any of the self-help stuff, there's always that driving force for that hope, meaning, positive, being grateful. People that don't have a higher power or belief or have a faith, what are you grateful for? And if you look at these scales that tip... We always have the tendency to look at the negative, but how does that help

us? It doesn't. When you start looking at positive thinking, journaling or, "I made it through that," how did I make it through to that? That was a difficult time in my life. So I continue to always look at the positive in everything and people. Somebody has, always has something good in them.

S1: It's just, with the faith, it helps a lot.

[chuckle]

S2: Well, it does because we're trying to do it on our own strength. And quite frankly, sometimes when you're dealing with this kind of stuff, your own strength isn't enough.

S3: No.

S2: So you really have to tap into the strength that your creator will provide, the places where he fills the gaps. And I know Mark is a part of Celebrate Recovery, which is like a Christian AA type of a thing... And where they really tap into that faith piece of it as well.

S3: And that's been really helpful.

S2: Yeah, you started...

S1: I love Celebrate Recovery.

S2: Do you?

S1: I love Celebrate Recovery, oh yeah. Yeah, they're so... It's great.

S3: Yeah. Yeah.

S2: And we'll put a link in the notes for that for anybody that might find it helpful.

S3: Yeah. So we've explored a lot of ground today, and I feel like we're kind of doing a flyover. [laughter] But is there anything...

S2: I think we are.

S3: Yeah, is there anything that you really feel like we should add to the conversation? And I think that's really been the heart of what Jill and I were hoping for, is just to help people know how to start a conversation.

S2: Yeah, can you think of anything else you would add?

S1: Well, for me, I think that I've been a firm believer in support groups, and it doesn't have to be called a support group. It doesn't have to be, "Hey, this an addiction class," it's just a group of people that get together and try to help one another. And just building that relationship, even if it's a small group. And then they just get to talking and, "Hey, I've had that problem too," and trying to educate each other. And educating yourself, and knowing I've had families and individuals, I think the most important thing is try to look at the simplest things in life. We learn that as a Christian, to

get back to the basics. Jesus tells us that all the time that we make it so complicated. I'll talk to individuals, and I'll say, "You know, have you had a physical lately?" Just the simplest things of having a physical to make sure everything's okay. What about a schedule? We get so caught up in our lives, put a schedule on there. If you're trying to do something, have some goals, have some direction, have some... A grateful list. So, I think we just make it so complicated.

S2: So sometimes that's a next right step is, even just to put some routine into life. And, man, the grateful list, we've done that.

S3: Right.

S2: One of the things you do is you carry around, because you struggle with shame so much, you carry around that list of truths.

S3: Yeah. And I keep that on my phone. So if I'm struggling, pull it out and be reminded that I'm not who shame says I am, but I'm who Christ says that I am.

S2: Yeah.

S1: I think people struggle with the needed effort in recovery, and it's a journey and it's lifelong and it... You just gotta be intentional. Jill and I, we've become aware of a phrase about marriage, that marriage is like a boat. And if you're not rowing, you're drifting. And I think we could say that individually, that life is like a boat, and if you're not rowing, you're drifting. And you're not gonna drift into a good place.

[chuckle]

S2: So true. So we need to be rowing in our faith journey, we need to be rowing in our mental health journey, we need to be rowing in the relationships that mean the most. Really, it is hard work, that's what you're saying.

S3: Yeah.

S2: It's hard work, it's hard internal work, but it's worth it, because the outcome is worth the work.

S3: It's the desire we all crave. And that's what you help people achieve, honestly, is that desire that they crave.

S2: Yeah. That makes total sense.

S1: And I think we just have to be careful, as individuals that... At the end of the day, people ask me, "How do you do this every day talking to families 24/7?" And trying to get them to... Trying to help them and help them to understand what direction they need to go to, go in? And it's like I think you have to be careful in your own lives of... People can just suck you dry. And I'm not saying with my job or what I do, but I think in my personal life and with my family, there's just some people that just are so negative and can suck you dry at the end of the day where you have nothing left. So your own individual self-care, as well as your family... Again, that wheel as an individual and a wheel as a family to help it row or roll together in harmony.

S2: This has been a great conversation.

S3: Yes.

S2: And thank you for helping us do the drive-by.

S3: Yeah. Flyover.

S2: But important, important because, like I said, I don't think... We talk about this reactively; we don't talk about it proactively. And so I think that that's why we wanted to have the conversation with you, we knew you brought some incredible wisdom to the table, but we have one last question, and it's one we ask everyone who does an interview with us on No More Perfect Date Night, you are married, 21 years, and we would love to know if you have a favorite date night activity that you and your husband do.

S1: Well, it used to be, whenever we had 13 children that we had to put it on the schedule when our date night was. Even if we went parking, I think we got in trouble one time for parking out at the lake, and we're like, "We have 13 children, we have to get away." Not that we just wanted to stay in the car and just park and talk to one another, but our favorite date night now with all of the kids, and we only have our dog at home is we call it Wednesday Night Date Night. And Wednesday night was always our movies that was on, like Chicago Fire and things of that nature. So it was always pizza and a movie night for us. And we just look forward to that.

S2: That is fun.

S1: Very quiet.

S3: Yeah. Yeah, that's fun.

S2: And here's what I love about it, you have a set time and it's planned out. Like you know it... And that's one of the things we tell couples is, right now, you should have your date nights laid out through the remainder of the year, we're...

S3: That way you know it's gonna happen.

S2: Yep, and it's you're putting it on your schedule and then you're protecting it. So, my guess is something comes along on a Wednesday night that might be a nice thing to do, but you might go, "That's our special night. We're... No, I can't do that."

S1: You're right.

S2: So...

S1: Love it.

S3: That's important. Well, thank you so much, and this has been a great conversation. And so this is Mark and Jill Savage, signing off with Sandra Beecher, with a reminder that a real marriage isn't

perfect. A real marriage is two people being perfected. Thanks for joining us.

S1: Thank you.

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