WE CHAT DIVORCE

You're Not Crazy

A Guide to Recognizing Trauma Bonds and Reclaiming Your Clarity.

Inspired by our conversation with Dr. Nadine Macaluso on We Chat Divorce.

WHY THIS GUIDE

In this episode, therapist Dr. Nadine Macaluso joined Karen and Catherine to talk about trauma bonds — relationships where control and affection are mixed together in a way that makes leaving feel almost impossible. This guide pulls the most useful ideas from that conversation into one place, so you can sit with them at your own pace. You don't need to have listened to the episode for this to be useful to you.

A note: This resource is educational and reflective, not a substitute for therapy, legal advice, or financial advice. If you are in immediate danger, please contact local emergency services or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE EPISODE

1. **A trauma bond is a specific pattern, not just "a hard relationship."**
Dr. Nadine described two conditions that make a bond a trauma bond: a power imbalance, where one partner holds and uses more control, and inconsistent treatment — real cruelty mixed with real charm. That mix, more than ordinary conflict, is what makes the relationship so hard to leave.

2. **Financial coercion can look like care — until you look closer.**
Being told you "don't need" to work, or signing documents you didn't fully understand, can feel like being taken care of at the time. Many people only recognize it as control once they start gathering their own full financial picture.

3. **Fear and avoidance when trying to leave are normal — not a personal failing.**
Dr. Nadine named avoidance as the number one response to trauma. Even gathering a single document can feel enormous, and that difficulty is expected, not a sign that something is wrong with you.

4. **Real healing starts by turning the focus back to yourself.**
Naming who someone else is can only go so far. Dr. Nadine described the deeper healing work as turning the mirror back on yourself, understanding your own upbringing, attachment patterns, strengths, and responses — rather than staying focused on understanding your ex.

5. **You don't have to do this alone.**
"You can't build resilience in isolation" was named directly in this conversation as a guiding idea. People in a trauma bond are often isolated by design — finding the right support, whether a therapist, a community, or a financial guide, is part of how you move forward.

FROM THE EPISODE — A GROUNDING EXERCISE DR. NADINE SUGGESTED

Say this out loud, alone — in your car, or looking in the mirror: "I'm in a trauma bond. I'm in danger. This isn't going to get better. I need to leave."
Dr. Nadine noted this is meant to be said clearly and confidently, even though it may feel scary.

REFLECTION PROMPTS FOR YOU

These prompts aren't from the episode — they're offered here to help you apply what you just read to your own situation. Take your time. There are no right answers. Use a notebook or journal to write your responses.

1. Where do I see a pattern of control mixed with occasional kindness in my relationship?

2. What money-related decisions have I signed onto without fully understanding them?

3. What have I been avoiding out of fear, and what would one small step toward it look like?

4. Who is one person I trust that I could tell what I'm really going through?

ONE SMALL NEXT STEP

In the episode, Karen and Catherine described a client who gathered a hundred documents over time, even while afraid — and how much that mattered. In that spirit, here is one manageable step, offered by us, not a quote from the episode:

This week, find and set aside just one financial document: a bank statement, a tax return, anything. That's the whole step. Nothing more is required of you today.

IF THIS RESONATED WITH YOU

This episode wove together two kinds of support, and you're welcome to reach for either or both, whenever you're ready — there's no order you have to follow.

FOR THE EMOTIONAL WORK
Dr. Nadine offers free assessments, including a trauma bond assessment, on her website, along with her book Run Like Hell and her recovery community.

FOR THE FINANCIAL PICTURE
When you're ready, My Divorce Solution offers a judgment-free space to gather financial clarity — no deadlines, no filings, just support. Visit **MyDivorceSolution.com**.