



Episode 4

Roane and Eva Hunter: Time, Tears and Talking (Part 2)

Craig: Welcome to the Robertson and Easterling podcast. Thanks for listening. I'm Craig Robertson.

Matt: And I'm Matt Easterling. Craig and I are board certified Family Law specialist, or simply, we're professional storytellers. Together we run one of the most successful boutique law firms in Mississippi.

Craig: As divorce lawyers. We are creative problem solvers who work with real people during the most difficult seasons of their lives. So, sit back, relax, take a deep breath. Everything's going to be okay. You found us in what you're about to hear is going to help.

Matt: Our guest on the podcast today are Roane and Eva Hunter. This is actually a follow up episode to a previous podcast that we did. Roane and Eva are the founders of Lifeworks counseling. And if you did not listen to the first episode with Roane and Eva, stop right now and go listen that, but if you had the good fortune of listening to it, where we left off last time is you guys they're dealing with marital you know issues ultimately got divorced and remarried. That's where we ended the last episode, we'd like to pick up right where we left off. Thank you guys for being here again.

Eva: Thanks for having us.

Roane: Thank you, glad we're back.

Craig: Roane, I sent you, you know, social media. It's how we learn everything these days but I've known you for a while now and we were talking about when you and Eva got remarried and you told the story about how you knocked on the door of the retired Baptist pastor and paid and married you and what a beautiful moment that was. But I saw a picture of you and I question be honest with you the whether or not this marriage is actually valid, but I know you had the fortune of marrying your son, and now daughter in law and I don't think I've ever seen a photograph glow, like the photograph of you in that moment. And I've heard people talk about, you know, the moment same as if a divorce happens.

How was that?

Roane: Oh my gosh, it was pretty amazing in certainly to think that could have missed all of that. Boy it was...

Eva: And the same for me.

Roane: Yes

Eva: I thought the same way, that I was just so grateful that it did work out for us. And that Roane was willing and I was willing to really have the marriage that God intended us to have all along.

Roane: And yes, it was certainly an honor and a privilege that they asked me to do the... do their ceremony. And it was pretty darn special.

Eva: Sure was.

Matt: That's got to be a moment where it certainly comes together and you know that man it was worth it to put in the all the work that you guys did.

Eva: Yes.

Roane: Oh yes, absolutely. Hundred percent we say that often, we just had our first grandbaby.

Roane: Yes, our other son and his wife had our first daughter.

Matt: okay, that's precious.

Eva: Thank you.

Roane: And it's a granddaughter, we had two sons. So, this is a whole new world. And even driving down to the hospital when she was in labor. We looked at each other and said, it's all been worth it. Every step of the journey has been worth it.

Craig: So, have to know the grandparent name is what?

Roane: I am well.

Eva: I'm Lolly.

Roane: And I am pop.

Matt: So, is it cool if we just call you lollipop?

Roane: Yes, that's correct, absolutely.

Craig: He touched on something that I want to talk about because I think that's part of the you know, and I talked to my clients about this as one of the hardest parts about grieving a loss marriage is honestly your story is that hope of reconciliation is you know, nobody stands on the aisle, getting ready to walk down, to be married and things of this

is going to end badly and that really is, you know, with a death, there is finality. But with a lost marriage, there is always that hope that things could be restored to the way they were. And you guys talk to couples every day, and where that is their reality.

Roane: Yes, and we often, you know, we tell couples all the time and this might be bad for your business, but we always say, you know, even Jesus said, you know, like everybody thinks that adultery is the reason for divorce. But really what if you look at that passage, what Jesus said is... it is that was given by Moses, he said it is, and it is because of the hardness of heart. And we have seen, obviously, our own marriage, and many marriages heal from adultery. So, it's not the unforgivable unpardonable sin, but it takes two willing people to really put forth the effort into put that back together, but it's certainly doable.

Matt: You know, while every, you know, relationship is different, I know that I always tell my clients that I see adultery is more of a symptom of a problem a symptom of an already diseased marriage or relationship.

Eva: that's right? And, you know, so if you're going to fix your relationship, you have to address whatever that underlying issue is.

Roane: Oh, yes and in our certifying body, we're even our CSAT therapists, which is, it stands for Certified Sex Addiction Therapist, and we're supervisors. But our certifying body is the International Institute of trauma and addiction professionals. Because as you heard, if you listen to part one of the podcast, you know, there's a lot of trauma and Eva and my both of our backgrounds and so...

Eva: Before we ever even met one and other.

Roane: Yes, before we... Yes, we ever showed up in each other live all that was in place. And so as you're saying that those things were already in place that disease of trauma was already playing out in our marriage, in you know, any of the addictive type behaviors acting out behaviors, or just you know, that's what we call it acting out, you know, you're acting out of the pain and the hurt all the stuff that you brought into the marriage with you. And it's just you're blaming the other person.

Craig: Let's continue on in the story. So, when we left off before you guys had restored your life restored your marriage, but these days, you're working professionally with other couples who have had the same experiences that you have. So, how did you get from there to here?

Roane: Well, it only took us 25 years, to begin practicing to do what we're doing today. However, we started early on, just in a lay ministry setting working with, I started working with men, dealing with sexual brokenness in various forms, and Eva started working with partners of sexual brokenness.

Eva: Yes, after a period of time other some season...

Roane: Yes.

Eva: Years actually because we needed both to experience consistent action over time for our marriage, that we really what we presented was really real to other people we did we no longer wanted to live this double life, even in our marriage in our image, you know, we all have that false self and we really had to get to our true selves and live out of that and do that consistently.

Roane: Yes.

Eva: So, that was a journey really to get to, and we had two small children. You know, our really our devotion was to raise them. Get them to be the men they are today. Before we were and I really thought we would probably be counselors when we were retired from our careers, and our other career.

Roane: That's what she thought.

Eva: That's right.

Roane: I wanted to get a corporate role by the time I was fifty. And I did so. But yes, it was a journey. I mean, we were always involved in support group ministry.

Eva: That's right.

Roane: And just through that, working with others, even before we kind of, you know, I don't want to say get our act together, because we're still working on that. But as we just did our own growth, we just started giving back what we were learning along the way through our own counseling and then we began our graduate work in Atlanta, Richmond University and then when I'm moving back to Mississippi, in 2008 and then finished our counseling degrees here, and then started our private practice in basically October of 2012.

Matt: You guys, let's talk about process so, Eva you so eloquently talked about the fear and the emotion and the anger really associated with discovery. What happens when Eva Hunter 1990 walks into Eva and Roane Hunter office in 2020.

Eva: Well, we really begin to just hear what they want, where they are and what do they want? What where do they want to get to? We also highly recommend that they... and will say to them, you know, we need you to hang out with us for about a year. We're going to get you really involved in a healing process a journey. We do have a roadmap.

And we work together as a couple with a couple. However, we also split them up and do a lot of individual our work with the wife and Roane works with the husband. And then we bring them back together and sometimes we separate, but that's really how we work. We in our roadmap, the first thing we do is called Story of my Life. So, it helps them their questions that helps them go back and look at they begin to collect the dots to connect the dots. What set me up to be to marry the man that I married? Or the wife that I married? And what set me up to act out in the ways that I've acted out?

Roane: Yes, it's the process that we developed is just out of our own journey, because in 1990, we did not have any kind of a whole lot of direction and one of the things that we know, you know, because couples dealing with infidelity, and we put porn in that category, because certainly as a man, you know, sitting with wives when there's been, you know, the discovery of porn, from an emotional standpoint, she feels as betrayed oftentimes as if he has crossed flesh a lot.

Eva: Absolutely.

Roane: And so we just put that all in the same category. And so the couples, when there's been the, you know, the discovery of sexual brokenness, they are in a pretty severe crisis mode. And when you're in crisis, you really need a lot of direction, a lot of action steps in order to kind of stay focused on a process of growth and healing. And that's one reason, we have what we call our couple's roadmap of recovery from sexual brokenness. It's very deliberate, kind of a twelve step process that we take a couple through, that gives them It certainly gives them hope. It gives them action steps, it gives them tangible things in crisis mode, because it is severe emotional crisis.

Craig: What's the key Roane? What's the key to making that work, but often times we know that couples aren't on the same page. They're not both willing to put in the work. Maybe she is. Maybe he's not. Or maybe he is. And she's not. What do you think is the key element which could create success for a couple in that regard?

Roane: Yes, the key element is always going to be the willingness on both people's parts to do the work. I mean, she's got her work. And as Eva said, you know, and I'm using, I mean, there's obviously there are women that are betrayers as well. But I'm just using, you know, the man as the, you know, acting out party and the woman as the partner, but she needs to be in a group of other women that have walked that same path and research even shows that the brain heals when we're with people that have similar or like experiences and that's why the... I'll just use the term the addict cannot help in the partners healing. They can help in the comfort of the heart and certainly taking ownership and responsibility. But I think the key is the willingness and then it is consistent action over time. That's what the partner has to see in order for her to begin to feel safe, not trust because safety has to come first, before trust comes and it's all about her safety in the process. And that takes time.

Cassie: I hope you're enjoying our show. My name is Cassie. My job is to take care of the Robertson and Easterling clients. I love helping people. Listen, the lawyers in our office are some of the smartest people on it. I know that you're scared and emotional and that's totally okay. But when the planes going down, it's important to put your oxygen mask on first before you can care for those around you. Request a consultation from our website or just give me a call. Everything's going to be okay.

Can't wait to meet you. But until then sit back, relax and enjoy the second half of today's show.

Craig: Well, those people who are listening right now are hearing I think, a lot of hope from you guys. Do you have any specific examples of couples certainly not sharing any names because of confidence that they've also recovered from this? Are you guys unique?

Eva: No, we had multiple hundreds of couples heal.

Roane: Yes, we do not only just do we take a couple to the roadmap. We also have what we call their couple's intensives. And these intensives are not just specific to like sexual brokenness. They're open to any couple and it's a game changer. When a couple comes and does one of our intensives. We do two of those a year we bring in two therapists that are just nationally known and to the best in our business but the couples that have engaged in our entire process. And that would be our roadmap, that would be the couple's intensive. I do men's intensive. Eva will do partners intensives along the way. And then along with the groups that we offer, plus our men's coaching weekends.

I mean, we have the success rate of the couples that have done all of those things, is somewhere in the neighborhood of about a ninety-six percent success rate. And that's just an informal tracking of the couples that have gone through over the five-year period that we've had these, this process available. It's pretty amazing.

Craig: Let's talk about sex. You know, a lot of couples who are finding recovery from sexual brokenness, they have a hard time really engaging with each other in that way. And you know, there is an idea in the law of condemnation. And that is condoning bad behavior. And so we, as divorce lawyers have to warn a couple, are not a couple. We have to warn people that listen, I've heard what you have to say, we're not advocates for divorce, we're advocates for you. But I need to warn you that if you re engage in a sexual relationship with your spouse, then you are running the risk of forgiving what you know, you certainly can't forgive that which you don't know. But I said, on the other hand, I'm a realistic person, and I know how important a normal sexual relationship is in a marriage. And so my question to you guys is, how do you balance that because, you know, we have been designed and sex is part of the design, but when there is betrayal around sex that becomes, I would imagine, increasingly difficult

Roane: Absolutely. And one of the things that we tell a couple is like and Eva said this earlier is like, you know, we want you to give it a year before you make any life changing decisions. And certainly the sex piece in that, you know, they're probably going to be having sex. One of the things that we recommend a couple do early on, is a ninety-day period of abstinence.

And part of that is just resetting the brain, kind of clearing the chemicals out from all the sexual any sexual acting out behavior. And the focus during that time is on the emotional connection because most couples, they have more... most couples have a sexual connection and they lack an intimate emotional connection. And we're working on that emotional connection because ideally, sex would be the byproduct of the

emotional intimate connection, but in our world today, we've kind of got that inverted. And so, the process is what we use is called sexual reintegration therapy.

And that comes from doctors, Bill and ginger bakeoff. And they have a workbook that we use called the couple's guide to intimacy. And so we're getting the couple to really begin to focus on the emotional and relational connection and to take sex off of the table.

And so, if... and then we always say, you know, in a year's time, you will come to your answer. And that answer is going to be dependent on the amount of work that the offending party is willing to do and what your... what you see them doing will be your determinant, if they're just kind of, if they're not all in if they're kind of halfway working some like program of trying to, you know, do things different than that's an indicator, that person needs to be all in and would be being willing to do whatever it takes in order to change the behaviors in order to learn what intimacy is true intimacy, not sex and how to have a healthy relationship with another human being because ultimately, it's all of this comes down to attachment issues, and not knowing how to attach in relationship with someone else.

Matt: What advice would you give to somebody who maybe their partner is not bought in the process of reconstructing their relationship or fixing their relationship?

Eva: So, let's say the example is the husband is still just kind of playing around with his addiction. He may not be having an affair or he may not be. I don't know looking at porn, he may not be doing those things, but he's really not all in or maybe he has had a slip. And one of those areas the goal for the partner is to become a very well boundary woman.

But she knows, she begins to really work on herself and really value who she is and who Jesus says she is that she has. She's worthy to be with a partner who is faithful, and who is honest. And when we say honest, we really move towards living a life of rigorous honesty, there's no more manipulation. There's no more hiding behaviors, there's no more running behaviors. And so we kind of define what does healthy look like. And for both people, and then are you willing to live a life that's consistent?

Roane: Well, it's, you know, certainly the willingness is the thing and that's like, willing to get off of social media. One of the terms we use is like it's snacking, the you know, the guys on Facebook and again, I'm using the there's women that did cheat as well. But it's all these little indicators that you know, the partner is looking for, in order to see if he's really all in, in order to be able to like, you know, have ultimately all this is healthy boundaries.

Craig: Both of you have used the term boundaries. And for our listeners out there who might not be in the counseling world or might not be divorce lawyers like me and mad who hear the concept of boundaries. Can you explain it to the listener in a way that makes sense?

Eva: Well, I hope so. Boundaries are really what I will accept and what I won't accept they're really all about the individual. It's not about trying to get another person to do the right thing or do what they want them to do. It's really coming from the standpoint of will not accept that you are acting out with other women. I will not and if you choose to do that I can't control it. But this is what I'm going to do.

Roane: Yes, I think boundaries are just simply, you know, it's about who I am as a person. Oftentimes, it's like, you know, I've got to set a boundary with somebody. And it's really that's kind of counterproductive. It's really more about like Eva said, you know, who I am as a person. These are things that I will accept, these are things that I will not accept. These are my values; this is my integrity. These are things that I will do, these are things that I will not do. And then that becomes about me, and I can't control the other person. If you're going to do that. I know what I'm going to do. It's about me my values and my integrity, not about setting a boundary on another person.

Matt: You know, throughout this conversation we have kind of, it's been framed as one spouse being the bad actor and another person being the victim for lack of a better word. Of course, always tell people there is no such thing as a perfect spouse, there isn't anybody that is free from all blame. But sticking with that framework, what does the person who is the victim who has had this happen to them for lack of a better word? What do they need to know or expect or be willing to do in order to really fix the relationship? So, if the bad actor is all in and they're doing everything they can to fix this, the victim also has to have, you know, a willingness to move forward. What do you tell those people?

Eva: Well, they just have to do their own work and begin to focus on themselves and where did they come from? What has happened to them? Before the marriage in the marriage, what is it in me or in that person that has set them up? Let me say it like this. If I had been a healthy whole person, I would not have married Roane.

Roane: You would have run for your life.

Eva: And if he had been a healthy whole person, he wouldn't have married me. So, we have to figure out work on, you know, where did that come from? What has affected me? What set me up to be in a relationship with someone who is an addict?

Roane: Yes, we say that brokenness meets brokenness. We are equally broken. It's kind of one of the laws of attraction. We call it familiar love. It looks different. Eva's brokenness certainly looks different than mine. But if we could scale it out, it would be equal, because what we always say is like water rises to a total level. So, either had her brokenness that she needed to work on and obviously I had mine that I needed to work on, and that's the work and that's the growth and there's a difference between certainly a betrayed partner is a victim.

Eva: She's been victimized.

Roane: Yeah, she's been victimized. However, there's a difference between a victim and a victim mindset. And if the other person is willing to go all in and they're doing the work, then you know, chances are, I mean, even if they get divorced and this guy, and again using the man, if he's all in and she kicks him to the curb and goes and marries another guy, you know, do you want the known or do you want the unknown? And so if somebody is willing to do the work, then that's where each person wins.

Matt: What does that have to involve, like a true element of forgiveness? And in order to work back to building that trust?

Eva: Yes. And you know, forgiveness is a process. There's really two parts to forgiveness. The first part is, yes, I can forgive you. I want to move forward. Now, the second part of forgiveness is working through the impact that this has had on me.

Craig: And we like to tell people that you know what, seriously the discovery once something happens that blows up their routine, their normal. At that point, it becomes a little bit about information gathering. And that's what we're hoping to do in this podcast is just give people options give people different opportunities for what the journey ahead of them looks like Matt, and I don't encourage people to get a divorce, quite frankly, it's none of our business whether or not they decide to get a divorce or whether or not they move toward reconciliation, but we like to tell people there's nothing wrong with arming themselves with information. And Eva I think you have pointed out that there's nothing wrong with setting clear boundaries as well as I true.

Eva: That's true. I do want to... Craig I do want to comment on one thing that you said you use the word setting boundaries. And I would just correct that and it's more about having boundaries.

Roane: Identifying your boundary.

Craig: Right. The boundaries come from within not from some external source.

Eva: That's right.

Craig: Well, guys, we did it again. You know, I could talk to you for hours and hours. And thank you so much again for spending time with us. But I don't want to end the episode without giving our listener an opportunity to connect with you guys. Roane, what's the best way they can do that?

Roane: Yes, our website is the easiest way. And our website is lifeworksms.com. And lifeworks, is all one word. And then we also in process, we have an upcoming book that is going to be out probably the first part of next year. And the book will be "Sex, God and the chaos of betrayal, a couple's roadmap of recovery from sexual brokenness". So, that'll be coming up looks like first part of the year. We're excited about that.

Craig: Yes, thank you all so much, again for being here today, I can't wait to read the book and find out more about your story. We'll have to have you back again sometime.

Roane: Absolutely.

Eva: Thanks for having us.

Roane: Thanks, Glad to be here. Thanks guys.

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