

DISARMING HUMAN DEFENSES - EPISODE 186 - WITH JEANNE BUNKER

[00:00:00] **Sue Marriott:** Hey, welcome to Therapist Uncensored, Jeanne Bunker.

[00:00:08] **Jeanne Bunker:** Hi, Sue. Very happy to be here.

[00:00:11] **Sue Marriott:** This is going to be an incredibly timely conversation about aggression and women in particular. Given that this is the week after Roe versus Wade was overturned and found unconstitutional by the Supreme court.

[00:00:27] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yes. And it has definitely stirred folks.

[00:00:32] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah, definitely. So before we get into that, which I want to get into all kinds of things around aggression - healthy aggression, how aggression is a defense against intimacy, and what it looks like in women specifically, but let's start by saying hearing a little bit more about you.

[00:00:51] **Sue Marriott:** Who you are and how you got interested in this subject because you've done incredible work. You have done several panels, workshops, chapters and book articles. You're the expert on women and aggression.

[00:01:11] **Jeanne Bunker:** Oh, definitely one of them. And I definitely feel passionate about it.

[00:01:16] **Jeanne Bunker:** When we had talked before you had asked me, so how did you even think of getting interested in this? And it actually wasn't intentional. It was almost an accident I was out of school. I had my own practice. I had a full practice. I had full groups and I wasn't able to pay my bills and they couldn't figure it out.

[00:01:41] **Jeanne Bunker:** I was very frugal. It's not like I was a crazy spender. I started working with someone who was very good with aggression and finances. And I realized it was an issue for me not being comfortable with my own aggression, ambition and assertiveness. And so I spent a lot of time learning about that so that I could actually have a reasonable life, pay my bills, have a practice, have some sanity.

[00:02:09] **Jeanne Bunker:** It got me really excited about how we undermine ourselves by not utilizing our aggression, but also how we undermine ourselves by turning it against ourselves.

[00:02:21] **Sue Marriott:** Oh boy I can relate to that.

[00:02:24] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. That gets us all into the the idea of the narcissistic defense. I don't know how technical to get here, but it's the idea that when we don't feel comfortable expressing our aggression externally, and that doesn't only mean anger, it means a life force and energy that moves us forward.

[00:02:45] **Sue Marriott:** What do you mean by that? What's the, what's the basic definition of aggression from your perspective?

[00:02:54] **Jeanne Bunker:** That's a great question. Aggression is often thought of as a way of acting out of anger, but the way that we use aggression - a modern analysis on aggression is

[00:03:07] **Jeanne Bunker:** the idea that it's a life force/energy that propels us forward. Now it can be constructive. It can be destructive. It depends how we choose to utilize it. And sometimes it has unforeseen consequences where there might be something destructive that happens, but it wasn't an act of destructiveness. So it's an energy and it's necessary.

[00:03:31] **Jeanne Bunker:** If we don't have a way to express it, get it out of our bodies to discharge, we will turn it against ourselves. And we see this a lot in folks who grow up in homes that might be abusive or use anger to subjugate family members in order to manage the feelings of the terror, the anger, the anxiety that comes in that kind of environment. That person, that child, might learn that they can only attack themselves.

[00:04:09] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah, because if they were to attack an adult, it would endanger their life.

[00:04:14] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, absolutely. It definitely makes me think of just the concept of identifying with the aggressor so that, you know, yeah. "My dad hit me, but it was because I backtalk him." Mm-hmm and you know, like that.

[00:04:36] **Sue Marriott:** They let themselves feel all the feelings you just mentioned of the terror and helplessness of what they would feel if they weren't putting themselves in the position of the perpetrator, basically.

[00:04:47] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right. It's it's also a way for them to feel like they have some agency.

[00:04:52] **Sue Marriott:** Absolutely. Yeah.

[00:04:53] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. I actually think of it more that way usually than aligning with a perpetrator, but it works either way.

[00:05:00] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right. And depending upon which model you're using, you might talk about it differently.

A couple of things, well, one is the discharge has to happen, but it happens towards itself because of the terror of what would happen around expressing their aggression. That sometimes it's terror, that they're so aggressive, they could kill someone and then their own life would be in danger.

[00:05:42] **Jeanne Bunker:** And some of it, and all of this is working on a pre-conscious - it's not like the child decides, "Okay, I'm going to attack myself." It ends up creating a false sense of safety in relationships, you know, as long as I don't rock the boat, we're good. Mm-hmm and they carry this into adulthood. Like you probably see this a lot with couples.

[00:06:06] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, I, I see this in myself.

[00:06:10] **Jeanne Bunker:** I missed my own first patient around this, you know the saying that you should be your favorite client as a Therapist?

[00:06:21] **Sue Marriott:** It's true. Totally true. Totally love what you're saying about it being preconscious, that this is so early on, it's kind of baked in.

[00:06:31] **Sue Marriott:** And so a lot of times this is one of the great things about group is sometimes you don't even hear it yourself, but when you're saying things out loud, other people can begin to help you recognize that you're attacking yourself - and help intervene in that.

[00:06:48] **Jeanne Bunker:** Well, and this links to the idea of learning as implicit or explicit.

[00:06:53] **Jeanne Bunker:** You know, which you're really familiar with. And I often think of this as the implicit learning, cause like you said, you don't even realize you're doing it. It just feels true.

[00:07:04] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah, yet you would never say the kinds of things that we say to ourselves, to a friend or to or anyone, but like for us - we can be the idiot.

[00:07:14] **Sue Marriott:** We can be stupid. We can be worthless, you know, and some of it isn't even in words, right? I might not think I'm worthless. But it could be a base that I'm just sitting on. And you know, we talk on the show about internal working models and attachment representations.

[00:07:36] **Sue Marriott:** This is exactly what we're getting into here is these very early, so as you're walking us through, there's high distress threat happening. The child can blame or recognize even that they're in danger or have any kind of organized way of recognizing that and the danger and the bad or the harm is out there.

[00:08:00] **Sue Marriott:** So then it flips onto ourselves. We grow up with this identity of this being something wrong and it's so interesting to talk about. I hadn't thought of that particular thread related to aggression specifically, but it certainly is.

[00:08:17] **Jeanne Bunker:** I can say, and it's where we first learn to fear our own energy, you know, and to turn it against ourselves. If there is that unsafe environment.

[00:08:28] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. And you were starting to talk, I don't know if we got derailed or if you had finished talking about what aggression really is.

[00:08:37] **Jeanne Bunker:** I think as a working definition, like just initially that's helpful. I think it's important to distinguish it from anger. Yeah. A lot of people confuse the two. Anger is an emotion. It's something you feel there's no requirement to act or discharge or do anything else with it.

[00:08:57] **Sue Marriott:** Well, that depends on that.

[00:08:58] **Sue Marriott:** Depends on who you are. Sometimes again, those things can get so collapsed that.

[00:09:06] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yes. Right. But for our purposes, it's helpful to tease them out a little bit.

[00:09:11] **Sue Marriott:** I totally agree

[00:09:12] **Jeanne Bunker:** So that we can talk about aggression. So if we think of anger as something that can energize us or as you were saying, collapses upon as aggression.

[00:09:24] **Jeanne Bunker:** So it all becomes one thing we can think of still having some choice around how we express that aggression. You know, it's typically thought of as sort of the acting out expression of anger, but actually it doesn't have to be that impulsive. It doesn't have to be destructive. You might feel angry about something like we started talking about the overturn of Roe V.

[00:09:49] **Jeanne Bunker:** Wade. I'm angry about that. A lot of my clients are angry and terrified and all kinds of feelings about it. And yet we're not going go out and destroy things. We're gonna figure out how to use that aggressive energy, that life giving energy to propel us forward and hopefully to work for human rights.

[00:10:11] **Sue Marriott:** It's very interesting because that, that does bring up that without the anger.

[00:10:17] **Sue Marriott:** There's this aggression, you know, these things are happening to us, but also there's a feeling of hopelessness. And so it's almost like this goes back to what you were saying about it. Being a life force that without the anger there, you know, there's despair.

[00:10:36] **Sue Marriott:** There's the passivity, there's the giving up. So it's, I think it's a really good example.

[00:10:41] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah, which is defense. Yeah. You know, going back to your original theme, I think that when we go into despair, it's a defense against life. It's a coping mechanism. Like, yes, things are very bleak right now. And I teeter on that edge of despair and hopelessness often around our political world and just how divided we all are.

[00:11:04] **Jeanne Bunker:** We cannot find common ground. I do feel I identify with that despair and I recognize it as a way to back away from my own accountability and process.

[00:11:20] **Sue Marriott:** I think that's actually so powerful because by using the anger, it gives us the action. It gives us the energy. But to have that energy, then we feel all of these feelings that you don't feel when you're in despair.

[00:11:37] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm. So that certainly fits with the defense of despair, but also like just this man right now, how do you regulate the assaults and the guns and the climate and the- you know, all of the incoming aggression?

[00:12:01] **Sue Marriott:** Like that's I think a lot of times when people think of aggression.

[00:12:05] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yes, they do think of that. And that is, I consider that a perversion of the idea of aggression.

[00:12:13] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, great. Say more.

[00:12:15] **Jeanne Bunker:** Well, if we only think of aggression as people destroying other people, then we get afraid of aggression and we back off and we're like, "Oh, I'm not aggressive like that.

[00:12:29] **Jeanne Bunker:** That's not me." And then we lose our power and our efficacy moving through the world. We have to dispel this idea that aggression is only violent. This is a silly trivial example, but maybe it will help people understand, like it takes aggression to walk across your kitchen and get yourself a cup of coffee if you want it.

[00:12:54] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, interesting.

[00:12:55] **Jeanne Bunker:** Like you are having to push against your own inertia. You're having to connect with your own desire, your own energy, your need to take action.

[00:13:09] **Sue Marriott:** That's interesting. It's such a trivial thing, but I think it normalizes it a little more. I love that definition. And it makes me think of that original example you gave of where that you were living a life. And also I wanna talk about gender differences and what that looks like. What are some other examples of again?

[00:13:46] **Sue Marriott:** So we're separating out: Anger is one thing. It's an affect, it's an emotion. It's often tied. It's often tied to story. Like the way we think of it is a pure feeling - is just short. Like you just have the feeling and it kind of dissipates, but then we tell story around it. "I can't believe she did that to me again."

[00:14:05] **Sue Marriott:** Right? The narrative. And so now I'm building up and stoking my anger.

[00:14:10] **Jeanne Bunker:** But we can do the same thing with despair or sadness.

[00:14:14] **Sue Marriott:** Yep. That's true.

[00:14:14] **Jeanne Bunker:** Like as soon as we build that narrative, we're just reinforcing it and you know, then we're lost.

[00:14:21] **Sue Marriott:** That's true. And anger, just being one note on the keyboard of all of these feelings.

[00:14:26] **Sue Marriott:** So just like your point, we can do the story with any of them. But what we're trying to do is separate out and just like hitting the keyboard of just the note of anger, right? Anger. This is how it sounds. This is how it feels anger and like getting like helping us identify how/what that even is in our body?

[00:14:47] **Sue Marriott:** Like you said, so many of us are afraid, really terrified of it, really afraid of it. We don't have healthy models on how, you know, to express it.

[00:14:55] **Jeanne Bunker:** And when you say it, you mean aggression, right?

[00:14:57] **Sue Marriott:** No. Well, I'm talking about that. Well, I was going slower around like, just even the feeling of anger, being able to feel it is also very frightening, I think.

[00:15:08] **Jeanne Bunker:** But I'm trying to separate that out so that we don't always think about anger

[00:15:13] **Jeanne Bunker:** when we think about aggression.

[00:15:16] **Sue Marriott:** Okay.

[00:15:16] **Sue Marriott:** Okay. So say more

[00:15:18] **Jeanne Bunker:** those two are often paired and I think that is the most common way of understanding or sort of the most familiar way of understanding aggression - is linking it with anger, but I would rather link it with desire

[00:15:35] **Sue Marriott:** I was just gonna say lust.

[00:15:37] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yes. Well, and not just lust for not just sexual desire, but desire for all kinds of things..

Where do you wanna be in your life? What do you want for yourself? You know, can you structure your business the way you want to? Can you structure your family the way you want to?

[00:16:02] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, that's great.

[00:16:03] **Sue Marriott:** So, and each of those are still on the keyboard, each of those feelings, desire, whatever it is. Okay. So that's, it, that's a feeling in and of itself that sometimes is hard to feel even to let ourselves feel desire or know what we need. Mm-hmm . And then, and then the, the concept of aggression being tied to helping us get, helping us address these things that we're coming to understand about ourself.

[00:16:24] **Sue Marriott:** Is that right?

[00:16:26] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah, mm-hmm . Yeah. And I would throw in one more ingredient that is, is really important, which is courage. Nice. You know, it's, I, I write about that in my chapter too, that ambition is linked to courage, desire, and aggression, and I think of courage all the time and how, how brave we have to be to sort of muster, uh, the willingness.

[00:16:55] **Jeanne Bunker:** To actually take some action that isn't just destructive mm-hmm , but there might be some emotional or physical risk.

[00:17:04] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, that's I love that. Well, it makes me think of even just like boundary setting. Yes. So can you give an example of like some health healthy, like courageous, uh, healthy aggression related to knowing that not, not anger, but that I want.

[00:17:20] **Sue Marriott:** This person to leave me alone.

[00:17:25] **Jeanne Bunker:** well, I was actually thinking about intimacy in relationships until you said, I want this person to leave me alone. do.

[00:17:40] **Sue Marriott:** No, uh, just everyone. No. Um, so our listeners probably know if you've heard the podcast very long that I attend towards the more avoidant, dismissive side. So she just totally caught me on that one. But, uh, versus with the idea of desire, also the aggression to go after that closeness. Yes. Or to take that risk or to a, you know, make the move or whatever it is mm-hmm

[00:18:03] **Sue Marriott:** Um, but I was actually, I think one of the things I was channeling with the want, this person leave me alone was. Idea of women and aggression and how that we can use, we can cover that up and use niceness when someone's being aggressive with us. Okay. Um, and, and then also get, like, get distorted with like a healthy boundary or a normal.

[00:18:23] **Sue Marriott:** um,

[00:18:24] **Jeanne Bunker:** what do you mean by that part?

[00:18:25] **Sue Marriott:** The story, like, you know, oh, the, you know, me, uh, why are you so mean? Or why aren't, you know, I just said you were pretty mm-hmm um, right. And then it becomes about her aggression. Mm-hmm . right. Um, so this, I, I just am interested. I know that you have written some about women in aggression, specifically mm-hmm and how complicated it is to be able to

[00:18:48] **Sue Marriott:** harness well.

[00:18:48] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right. Well, it's super complicated because of misogyny. Yeah. Internalized and in the patriarchy, like it's every level of life we have to deal witho. Including in ourselves, like how many women feel guilty when they say no to someone who shows sexual interest or who is just like, oh, what a pretty, why don't you smile?

[00:19:12] **Jeanne Bunker:** Why aren't you smiling? Like that is one of the most common, emotional assaults and intrusions that women experience.

[00:19:19] **Sue Marriott:** I love you calling it that I love you calling it that. Mm. And that's one of the benefits of sorting out these differences between desire, anger, aggression. Mm-hmm right. That like, no, that's an assault.

[00:19:33] **Sue Marriott:** That's not kindness. That's

[00:19:36] **Jeanne Bunker:** that's cause they want something like, they want you to smile for their pleasure. Yeah. They're not interested in your wellbeing. Yeah. They're not like, Hey, you're not smiling. Are you all. right. Do you need something? They're like, oh, you should smile. You have a beautiful smile.

[00:19:50] **Jeanne Bunker:** I'll feel good. You smile. Mm-hmm

[00:19:53] **Sue Marriott:** mm-hmm oh, gives me the chills.

[00:19:56] **Jeanne Bunker:** I almost got really vulgar just then, but I cut myself. Wait, wait. This is being recorded. I'm

[00:20:04] **Sue Marriott:** no vulgar. Vulgar is okay. There's no FCC or anything on this. So speak for, remember it's uncensored. You can censor yourself. well, we, we need that. So again, so healthy aggression.

[00:20:18] **Sue Marriott:** Yes. Um, so keep going, say more about like, even like using vulgar or mm-hmm , um, you know, playing off this idea of being intruded upon by someone's desire. Uh mm-hmm

[00:20:32] **Jeanne Bunker:** uh, well, if we use this example that we've just been talking about, someone says, why aren't you smiling? You should smile. And then the woman might say, no, leave me alone.

[00:20:43] **Jeanne Bunker:** I'm in my own space. Or just saying bug off, whatever and carrying on. And if there's that pursuit, I use the word assault really specifically and intentionally because there is a way that. It sort of attacks our

personal space when someone comments on our body, whether it's our smile, our breasts, our body in any other sexual way, there's a way that women's bodies get to be commented on in any setting by anyone and that's assaultive.

[00:21:18] **Sue Marriott:** Hmm. Ooh.

[00:21:19] **Jeanne Bunker:** And the more we can stand up and say, you don't get to talk to me about my body. I didn't ask your opinion. We're not in that kind of relationship. Until we can have that as more normative, we're gonna keep dealing with being assaulted in these ways.

[00:21:35] **Sue Marriott:** Okay. So then the woman is able to say that mm-hmm and then that backlash probably internally too, but also societally for sure.

[00:21:44] **Jeanne Bunker:** Oh yeah. You you're being a bitch, you know? Yeah. Why did you, why are you being such an asshole? Like, and really the, the subtext is I want you to suck my Dick. Yeah. You know, that was the vulgarity I was gonna, I centered myself with. Cause I, I had, that's the comp that's the compulsion it's like, right. Take care of me to take care of me.

[00:22:05] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right. You know, whatever that means. And uh, it's, that's just one level of Theo.

[00:22:14] **Sue Marriott:** So let's, let's imagine a listener out there that has done this a bunch of times, like commented on someone's smile or said, Hey, you know, and they're saying, they're saying right now, wait a minute. I was just being nice. I was just being nice.

[00:22:28] **Sue Marriott:** Like what, you know, what's up with this that everybody's gets so mad because I compliment.

[00:22:35] **Jeanne Bunker:** well, I would ask you to do some soul searching listener out there, do some soul searching about what's motivating you to make that comment. Are you actually interested in that woman's wellbeing or is there something you're seeking for yourself?

[00:22:52] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah, because it makes me uncomfortable if she's not smiling. And so I want her to smile, so I feel better. Right?

[00:22:59] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. But then the next question will be, so what about that makes you uncom? Like what in you do you have to deal with to be able to tolerate someone else's humanity.

[00:23:12] **Sue Marriott:** Nice. Mm-hmm and much easier just to say smile

[00:23:19] **Jeanne Bunker:** yeah, but that that's also assaultive mm-hmm mm-hmm yeah, no one likes to be told how they feel or how they should be like that.

[00:23:30] **Jeanne Bunker:** Like, we don't do that to men. Mm-hmm we do that to women. I think we do it to people who are non-binary or not cisgendered because people are uncomfortable and they make comments. Mm-hmm like, oh, are you a, why don't you smile? It's okay. You're doing right. Mm-hmm but it's, it's so controlling. Mm-hmm like, I can feel myself getting hot.

[00:23:57] **Jeanne Bunker:** Just talking about,

[00:23:58] **Sue Marriott:** yeah, no, me too. It's just, like I said earlier, I was like, it gives me the willies a little bit. Yeah. So what about though? Aggression let's do aggression, um, more where you were going, which is, uh, towards closeness and connection.

[00:24:11] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right, right. sorry, Sue. I just went with you there.

[00:24:15] **Sue Marriott:** You went with me, right.

[00:24:18] **Sue Marriott:** And well, you know, there's a lot of listeners that are gonna totally, I mean, believe me, I know that this is resonating and I also was imagining getting people's backs up, which is why I wanted to kind of go through like, okay, now hold on a minute. And your instruction, which is one. Do your soul searching.

[00:24:32] **Sue Marriott:** And then as you find your need and your discomfort to do more soul searching, which is like, what's that about? And can you expand your window of tolerance to, to, to handle your discomfort? um, which in a sense is another form of aggression, like you're, but in a, a healthy way, like mm-hmm, stopping yourself, setting your own boundaries.

[00:24:54] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm um, of your impulse to act. Yes. And being able to hold is, would that be an example of aggression, of a healthy use of aggression?

[00:25:05] **Jeanne Bunker:** I think so. I think setting boundaries with yourself is, is okay to call that aggression. Um, if we say that attacking yourself is misguided aggression then or destructive aggression.

[00:25:16] **Jeanne Bunker:** Why not? Yeah. Yeah, yeah. But I was thinking like, that takes me into a lot of different parts. So I'm gonna try to wrangle myself and focus on what you asked about intimacy also. So we were talking about courage. Aggression, um, and desire. So if you're in a relationship, a friendship, marriage, romantic, not whatever.

[00:25:40] **Jeanne Bunker:** Um, and there's something that's going on. That's not working. Uh, a lot of times we just go along. We're just sort of like, okay, well it's not that bad, you know?

[00:25:50] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah. I, I don't wanna hurt their feelings.

[00:25:52] **Jeanne Bunker:** I don't wanna hurt their feelings, feelings, but then if we don't hurt their feelings, if we, if we use that as our guiding light, if you will, to not hurt someone's feelings, then we end up pulling away.

[00:26:05] **Jeanne Bunker:** We're not as intimate. We're not as available. There's not as much life or vitality in that relationship. And. The relationship is damaged. The other person will experience it, even if they're not conscious of it. So the, um, the aggressive, courageous full of desire way of dealing it with it would be to step into that discomfort and that fear of hurting their feelings and be able to say, Hey, I need to talk to you.

[00:26:38] **Jeanne Bunker:** This isn't working. I'm anxious telling you about it. But, um, our relationship is important enough that I'm willing to risk it. And I mean, that's a very small kind of gentle intimate example.

[00:26:54] **Sue Marriott:** That's a wonderful example.

[00:26:55] **Jeanne Bunker:** All the pieces that go into telling the truth to someone you care about.

[00:27:02] **Sue Marriott:** there's a very powerful

[00:27:02] **Jeanne Bunker:** service of the relationship

[00:27:04] **Sue Marriott:** and service of the relationship.

[00:27:06] **Sue Marriott:** Right, right. Because that's a much more vulnerable move. Yeah. Because this idea of this idea of, oh, it'll make them uncomfortable or it'll, it'll hurt their feelings. It's like, no, I can't bear the. Because it's the same thing. If I study, why do I have to, why am I worrying about their feelings? And so if I do hurt their feelings, what does that mean to me?

[00:27:26] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm so it's kind of, I guess the same thing. Yeah. So that as we do that work around, like, um, I think what you were just saying, is it compromises? Okay. So I can think that I'm not hurting their feelings, give something up. In the relationship. And then the relationship is even on a mini, like a MI ni level mm-hmm compromised.

[00:27:46] **Sue Marriott:** And then you times that by how many things mm-hmm um, and so you said there are a lot, a lot goes into it. The example you gave of moving toward yes. In saying those things, can you say a little bit more about that, but what about what you mean by a lot goes.

[00:28:01] **Jeanne Bunker:** Well think of how much energy it takes. Like you have to have and all the different components of your psychological awareness.

[00:28:10] **Jeanne Bunker:** You know, you have to notice that you're having these feelings. You have to notice that you're withdrawing. You have to notice that you have a desire for this relationship. So there's a lot of pieces that have to really be on board. and then you have to be able to tell yourself, at least a lot of my clients.

[00:28:30] **Jeanne Bunker:** And historically I have found myself in this position where I've been like, okay, it is worth it to me to risk this. Even if it means losing the relationship, because this isn't good for anybody. Mm. And to step forward. So think of how many different moving pieces there are. So maybe all the different pieces of self-awareness.

[00:28:52] **Jeanne Bunker:** All the different pieces of actual relationship issues and then choosing not to manage the other person.

[00:29:00] **Sue Marriott:** Like just that, that whole you're exactly. Go ahead. Well, you're trusting the other person to manage themselves.

[00:29:07] **Jeanne Bunker:** Well, sometimes you can't get there though, right? So you have to trust yourself to be okay, even if they can't manage your themselves.

[00:29:14] **Sue Marriott:** All right. All right. That's good.

[00:29:19] **Jeanne Bunker:** I mean, ideally you can trust the others.

[00:29:24] **Sue Marriott:** Well, I, I kind of just like that language, but I like what you did with it more, but the idea of, um, it's, it's belittling to the other person to not, to, to use them for us, not to be courageous and say the truth. Um, and it's treating them. It's a trap. Like that's what I like.

[00:29:40] **Sue Marriott:** They're, you're, you're holding them in higher esteem in a sense to make that risk. But again, I like what you're saying is like, it's not about that. Like, they. collapse or get upset or get angry, or what have you. And it's more of, you're trusting yourself to be able to manage their feelings, as you tell your truth, right.

[00:29:59] **Jeanne Bunker:** Manage yourself in the face of their feelings.

[00:30:01] **Sue Marriott:** That's right in the face of their feelings. That's right. Mm-hmm the other thing about your example, as far as the different pieces is like you had all those things that added up, but then also. You had your hand out, like you were aware of working to co-regulate the other person you you're, we're not, you know, you're not just walking around telling your truth, you know what I mean?

[00:30:20] **Sue Marriott:** No, that shirt, that shirt looks terrible.

[00:30:24] **Jeanne Bunker:** well, that's where we get. Okay. That's where we get into the difference between, you know, creative and constructive versus destructive expression of aggression. You know, I, I like to think of it. if I'm, if I'm gonna be aggressive in a relationship, I wanna hold that relationship in my mind and hold that person in my mind.

[00:30:46] **Jeanne Bunker:** Like, I don't want to intentionally do damage or even just thoughtlessly do damage. I wanna remember like, oh, I care about this person. Mm-hmm, , I'm invested in loving this person. So I'm gonna say this as skillfully as I can and still tell the truth.

[00:31:06] **Sue Marriott:** That's beautiful. And. That's gonna so much increase the chance of that going well.

[00:31:12] **Sue Marriott:** Is that you're right? That, that they're gonna feel your safety. They're they're gonna feel that they're being held, even if it's a little embarrassing, whatever the information is or whatever it is that makes it hard to hear. Yeah. Um, that you're really. You have your hand out both, you know, I'm thinking like your hands on your heart, like you, you're taking care of yourself and you're taking care of the other person at the same time.

[00:31:36] **Sue Marriott:** If they'll let you. Yes. And another, another thing that I think of is, um, those moments of do I, do I say this? Do I bring this up or not? And I really like how you said, like I'm holding the relationship mind, like. Is this relationship worth investing in the vitality of it in a sense, but sometimes the way that my mind goes is it's like, if we're gonna have a fight, , I'd rather have this fight than that fight.

[00:32:02] **Sue Marriott:** meaning, meaning the truth is out there, whatever the truth is. Mm-hmm and if that makes us uncomfortable, that's a better, I've still moved the ball in the direction. Um, intimacy and vitality mm-hmm because now, now we're, it's a two party system, um, jumbling around, you know, uh, what's the, you know, rumbling, I think Brene brown talked about rumbling rumbling, um, with the right thing.

[00:32:28] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm um, yeah, versus like you said, if I withdraw or whatever, It's a different kind of danger for the relationship mm-hmm , but they're not, they don't even, they don't get the benefit of knowing of having the data to know what's happening.

[00:32:43] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right, right. Yeah. You've essentially kicked them out of the relationship and decided you're just gonna do it by yourself.

[00:32:50] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm right.

[00:32:52] **Sue Marriott:** Well, That's so true. Right. And that's, you know, going to attachment like the folks, those of us who sort of learned to count on ourselves more than mm-hmm, assuming that people are gonna be there for us. Mm-hmm then that's a very easy, you know, we just, it's almost like it doesn't occur that, oh, this is actually useful information for the person.

[00:33:11] **Sue Marriott:** Um, Relationship bonding versus just a burden or trouble or, you know, why drag them into this? I can handle it right.

[00:33:21] **Jeanne Bunker:** Well, and historically we had to handle it, right? Yeah. It's it wasn't an option to do it any other way. So of course we go there

[00:33:31] **Sue Marriott:** and so, but in the new secure function, Relationships that we're trying to, so to develop, we're nudging ourselves towards,

[00:33:39] **Jeanne Bunker:** we can do it.

[00:33:40] **Sue Marriott:** Yes. It looks like these great examples of bringing in the aggression, including, okay. Can we talk about aggression as the receiver mm-hmm so somebody comes to you.

[00:33:50] **Jeanne Bunker:** What, what's your question? Or what's your thought?

[00:33:52] **Sue Marriott:** Well, I was thinking about like receiving feedback is hard.

[00:33:57] **Sue Marriott:** Oh, It's super vulnerable. Mm-hmm um, and it occurred to me that aggression might be helpful, like thinking in terms of like harnessing our aggression for what we want as a receiver might be helpful.

[00:34:11] **Sue Marriott:** So do, does that spur thinking?

[00:34:14] **Jeanne Bunker:** I thought of it exactly like that, but I like that idea ideas too. That's um, it, what comes to my mind is a certain kind of STD. And willingness to hold onto yourself, sort of no matter what the other person is saying and be like, okay, I am going to aggressively hold onto myself.

[00:34:35] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. I'm gonna invite whatever they're saying into this neutral area in between us before I decide how to, or what's taken in, you know, love it. I think it, it requires us to be less reactive. And, um, more considering of the feelings we're gonna, we might instantly feel angry. We might instantly feel scared or hurt.

[00:34:59] **Jeanne Bunker:** All of that is fine. And we can even put that into words and we can still consider what's being offered to us. Informationally mm-hmm . Ooh. But yeah, I feel like that idea that it's, uh, aggressive energy or really claim yourself like this is I'm it's I'm

[00:35:16] **Sue Marriott:** okay. Yeah. Which is part, I think of what you're saying is it's a resource.

[00:35:21] **Sue Marriott:** it's a resource that we've denied ourselves. And it, it has crazy stories about, um, culturally and probably within our own family systems. Mm-hmm um, so I think part of your work is like let's free that back up. And yes, reclaim healthy aggression. Mm-hmm

[00:35:39] **Jeanne Bunker:** uh, and also to know it's gonna be messy a little bit, you know?

[00:35:43] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. We're not gonna come out of the gate being all totally competent and like, oh, I can do aggression no matter where I am, no matter what I'm doing, like, no, right. We're gonna be messy and right. We'll have to repair and we have to figure out how to continue to risk mm-hmm

[00:36:00] **Sue Marriott:** mm-hmm well, that's another this idea of the receiver.

[00:36:04] **Sue Marriott:** Having aggression mm-hmm, you know, one of the things that can go wrong with this is so partners approaching maybe unskilled, right? Maybe they haven't heard this episode. So they're very unskilled and, um, But so as the receiver, if you go under the table in a sense, and just go into that again, the story, I guess, but the fear of like the other, person's gonna, their aggression's gonna look gigantic and big and scary kind of even monstrous mm-hmm versus if, if I can, as the receiver hold.

[00:36:41] **Sue Marriott:** Hold myself into this kind of more adult wise mind place not go onto the table, but it's it'll I think it feels aggressive to not do that. Mm-hmm it feels like, Ugh, you have to push yourself back into engagement. Yes. Um, And, but from that place you're standing and now you're, it's just two people standing that you don't have a monstrous, aggressive person and a mm-hmm and a scared person under the table.

[00:37:06] **Sue Marriott:** You have two people that are having feelings and, and, and making actions towards one another, you know, face to face. And that's a lot less scary mm-hmm so that that's just occurs to me around.

Harnessing aggression is a resource. Yeah.

[00:37:22] **Jeanne Bunker:** And I love the way you described that. Like pushing yourself up to engagement.

[00:37:26] **Jeanne Bunker:** Mm-hmm like it takes that sort of energy and intention. Again, it, all that consciousness we talked about that it takes to express your aggression. I think we're, we're fleshing out more all of the consciousness that it takes to receive it and to be able to engage.

[00:37:44] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah. Yeah. So can you, would it be, I mean, for me it would be helpful.

[00:37:49] **Sue Marriott:** Like, let's do another scenario where somebody's coming at. You Uhuh, but they are absolutely not skilled. They are overshooting their aggression. It's an assault. It's, it's, they're giving you feedback. You didn't ask for, you know what I mean? Like. your first reaction would be back on your heels or to be, you know, mm-hmm so what, like just kinda, you walk us through a little bit about when you're faced with aggression, how to harness it and use it in a way that mm-hmm we, we, you know, that we're promoting right now kind

[00:38:19] **Sue Marriott:** of healthy aggression.

[00:38:20] **Jeanne Bunker:** Well, if it's a relationship, like if it's, if it's a relationship that matters and you wanna stay engaged with the person, and you're not just saying F off, then you it's a D. Thing, like it's a different set of skills. Right? Right. So I'm going with the assumption that this person's coming at me with really unskilled aggression, but it's someone I care about.

[00:38:41] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. Perfect. So we've got a relationship. Yep. So I'll notice that I feel. angry and scared and hurt. Maybe, maybe all of those things. Um, uh, and hopefully if I can use my own aggression and energy to hold onto myself, I'll be able to say, Hey, I, I hear that you have a lot happening. Can we go slower? Like, I, I can't take it all in right now and I really wanna be with you in this.

[00:39:09] **Sue Marriott:** And so then they talk over you

[00:39:11] **Jeanne Bunker:** like, so again, can you slow. So what would they do then soon?

[00:39:18] **Sue Marriott:** Like, so let's just say let's okay. Let's just say that they feel your boundary, which threatens them. So then they really they're like, but I'm not finished.

[00:39:26] **Jeanne Bunker:** And I hear that, but if you don't slow down, I'm not going to engage with you.

[00:39:30] **Sue Marriott:** Ooh, that's good.

[00:39:32] **Jeanne Bunker:** Like I'm interested, but I'm not interested in receiving your assault. Yeah.

[00:39:39] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah. So internally, I don't know if y'all could hear the energy difference. There that's actually what that was. No, it was what I was going for. Yes, that was, it was, it was totally what I was going for. Is that like, um, to have that capacity,

[00:39:52] **Jeanne Bunker:** you can voice,

[00:39:53] **Sue Marriott:** you can use the pick that's right?

[00:39:55] **Sue Marriott:** Because sometimes we have to match it in order to deescalate it. Yes, we have. we have to match it in order to not to have it blow up. That's not the idea. And your words were beautiful. Example of your force

increased just a little bit because I wasn't listening and I was mm-hmm , you know, dysregulated and mm-hmm and doing too much, but your words.

[00:40:17] **Sue Marriott:** what that's, to me, what makes the big difference is your words were, I want to hear you, you've got to slow down of some, it was something connecting. I don't even remember what the words were, but they were good. Um, so I think that's just such a great example of like you, there's the difference between the force of the energy mm-hmm and being able to harness it and be on behalf of the relationship, um, versus just, and on behalf of your.

[00:40:41] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah.

[00:40:42] **Jeanne Bunker:** We're not into sacrificing ourselves to,

[00:40:46] **Sue Marriott:** yeah. So is there anything, um, just from your own personal journey that like, um, other examples or the other thing that I am interested in is this notion of, um, again, I don't think when I think of patriarchy, I don't think of it just gendered just men, you know, the war between the sexes.

[00:41:05] **Sue Marriott:** I really think of it as a power structure. Yes. Um, there's, there's the power over versus the power with, and so men, um, biologically born men, men, um, you know, those who identify as male as they go, mm-hmm, , there's a different socialization around specifically around aggression than there is when, um, Call ourselves female.

[00:41:31] **Sue Marriott:** Yes. So did you wanna SP would you speak a little bit to that? Because I think that that's certainly, I guess again, timely, but also, um,

[00:41:41] **Jeanne Bunker:** well I think so we've been talking about it in a lot of different ways already in that. Yeah. You know, women are supposed to be compliant in pleasing and be concerned with, um, pretty much everyone else's needs except our own.

[00:41:57] **Jeanne Bunker:** Um, and that, that. That's a part of thwarting, our own aggression. Um, an example that comes to mind is sort of, you know, the classic research that's been done about who will apply for what jobs are you familiar with this? Like how no, how men will. I wish I could remember the citation I can't right now, but how men will look at job opportunities and they will be like, okay, I can do like.

[00:42:25] **Jeanne Bunker:** 70% of this I'm gonna apply. Mm. Whereas women will look at jobs and unless they meet at like 110%, they feel they're not qualified. Mm-hmm . And to me, that that's sort of a. Classic difference between the genders, you know, between the socialization, around what you're entitled to shoot for. And what's good enough versus, um, yeah, I can do that or I can learn it.

[00:42:55] **Jeanne Bunker:** It's fine. Mm-hmm , you know, there's such a different attitude in that mm-hmm

[00:42:59] **Sue Marriott:** mm-hmm yeah, just naturally speaking. Well, and then I'm also thinking about all the safe. that are responding to these things. Yeah. Um, but they were still socialized in this way. Yeah. But, um, so I don't know if there's anything for us to say about that, but like using healthy aggression on the behalf of women on behalf of, you know what I mean?

[00:43:24] **Sue Marriott:** And. I don't know what, that, it's not a very well formed question, but I was just thinking in terms of, um, partly separating out that it's not male versus female, but also, well, it's also internalized.

[00:43:38] **Jeanne Bunker:** Yeah. But what were you saying?

[00:43:40] **Sue Marriott:** Well, no, well, I guess that's part of what I mean is, but if you've been raised not to internalize the shame around it and that you're supposed to be, as a matter of fact, you're supposed to make a move.

[00:43:50] **Sue Marriott:** You know, like, um, because otherwise she'll think you're a wimp or that she'll think you're whatever. So there's a different script running mm-hmm um, So I was just thinking about like the benefit of this millions of bodies out there that have been, have more entitlement to mm-hmm healthy aggression.

[00:44:13] **Sue Marriott:** Like how could we, how could we turn that into a force for good for us, for which it's not just women it's for society, you know what I mean? Mm-hmm um, it's like, you don't really hear, you don't really hear the. The aggression as a protective force from a social standpoint, you know what I mean? Am I, have I lost you

[00:44:36] **Jeanne Bunker:** keep talking like I'm, I'm almost there, but not that.

[00:44:39] **Jeanne Bunker:** So keep talking.

[00:44:40] **Sue Marriott:** Well, me, me too. I'm almost there, but not quite so I guess what I was just forming as I was talking, was thinking about. these, all of these bodies that have been, and, you know, have this, I won't say a healthier, but a more entitled sense to what they want. Mm-hmm um, and we have this more patriarchal force.

[00:45:01] **Sue Marriott:** That's taking power away, taking power away. Yes. Taking power away and all these different ways. Uh, but for the safe. Men mm-hmm, the safe men that have, have this history of entitlement to what they want. It's like, God, I guess I was just sort of thinking, how do we mobilize that on our behalf?

[00:45:20] **Jeanne Bunker:** Ah, okay. You know, I think I'm starting to understand.

[00:45:22] **Jeanne Bunker:** So when you say safe men though, what do you mean? Like who, who. Would you identify as safe men? Just generally speaking, what does that mean?

[00:45:32] **Sue Marriott:** Just, yeah, generally speaking, it would be men that are outside that, that are resisting the patriarchy. Okay. That are, you know, that want to get out of that power structure.

[00:45:42] **Sue Marriott:** Okay. Um, that is based just on, you know, their physicality, which is nonsensical. Yes. Um, so that's, that's

[00:45:51] **Jeanne Bunker:** go around. Okay. I think I'm starting to understand, like, you're talking about all. In a lot of ways. Yeah. How do we mobilize, um, people who aren't, uh, struggling in the same ways to help this change, this societal.

[00:46:11] **Jeanne Bunker:** Um, change happen. Mm-hmm it reminds me of a lot of my work with the LGBTQ community throughout the last, you know, 40 years. And just what that looks like, um, as part of that community and as finding allies and being an activist and how do we work together? I think it applies to my role as a white person.

[00:46:36] **Jeanne Bunker:** How can I be a good all. In the face of racism and white supremacy. And how can I use my privilege? And I, I think that's kind of what you were getting at. Like how do we help folks who have privilege actually use it effectively to create change on every level of society?

[00:46:56] **Sue Marriott:** That's beautiful. I think that was a very you helped me get there, but I'm totally with you.

[00:47:03] **Sue Marriott:** I'm totally with you. I mean, when we used to do advocacy, you know, at the capital, the, you know, the straight people would always have more access the men like the children of gay couples as their boys grew up and became men, all of a sudden they're getting access because there here's the CIS white male that yes, that will get the meeting with the, uh, congressional person.

[00:47:26] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm . All the people in strollers and that are in these couples, uh, you know, we, we do not get access, so that's right. Yes. I'm agreeing with you.

[00:47:35] **Jeanne Bunker:** Mm-hmm I'm so I'm with you. So it's, it's allyship and using our privilege for good. Yeah. Instead of equal. Yeah.

[00:47:46] **Sue Marriott:** Yep. Oh, I love that. We certainly try to do that here in a number of different ways.

[00:47:51] **Sue Marriott:** Um, so that actually even just helps me think in terms of, um, what I'm even meaning about these men that could be on our side that could, that could resist these, um, Arcane mm-hmm , you know, oppressive, uh, structures and policies that literally injure everybody, not just women. For sure. That's right. Yeah.

[00:48:17] **Jeanne Bunker:** It injures everybody.

[00:48:18] **Jeanne Bunker:** Mm-hmm

[00:48:19] **Sue Marriott:** yeah. Well, I thinking about them, men that are having vasectomies.

[00:48:22] **Jeanne Bunker:** Oh, I know. I just read an article in the times this morning about how many men have now signed up to get vasectomies because mm-hmm, it's remark. Mm-hmm .

[00:48:35] **Sue Marriott:** Yep. Yep.

[00:48:37] **Jeanne Bunker:** And I, I mean, it's, it's both heartbreaking and heartening. Like, it's that weird mixture of we're all being oppressed and that is heartbreaking how it's affecting all of us.

[00:48:50] **Jeanne Bunker:** And then it's also heartening to see the proactivity of these men. Like they're gonna go and they're being account. mm-hmm

[00:49:01] **Sue Marriott:** yeah. Yeah. So, and yeah, it's like now it's a, we problem. Not their problem or just our problem. Um, for sure. It's like, that's really being in it, in it with us. Mm-hmm

[00:49:14] **Sue Marriott:** yeah.

[00:49:14] **Jeanne Bunker:** Which is, I think a new thing for, for.

[00:49:19] **Jeanne Bunker:** Folks for women and men and everyone who's affected by a reproductive, uh, justice. Like it is becoming more and more of a we thing. Instead of a, that's just you. Oh, you could get pregnant then that's just you. Oh, you wanna start a family? That's just, you it's much more understood as a systemic thing. It reminds me of.

[00:49:42] **Jeanne Bunker:** So a few months ago you had someone else on your show, Loretta Ross.

[00:49:47] **Sue Marriott:** Oh yeah, she was Loretta.

[00:49:48] **Jeanne Bunker:** 'I think she was in January actually. And. Was totally excited by that interview and have sought out every bit of writing I can of hers. And she has a book called reproductive justice. Yep. Um, and it's like an introduction to the ideas and she co-wrote it with someone whose name I can't remember right now, but the basic thrust with so much nuance and beauty in it is that reproductive rights are human.

[00:50:16] **Jeanne Bunker:** Right. And they affect every one of us. And it seems like she wrote this several years ago. It seems like we're finally catching on a little bit.

[00:50:25] **Sue Marriott:** Yeah, totally. You know, it's interesting that you bring that podcast up because the whole notion of that had to do with aggression. It had to do with managing aggression, right?

[00:50:32] **Sue Marriott:** Like it was the calling in the call out culture. Yeah. And part of, one of the points she made, and this is just exactly what we're talking about today. Jeanie is that some of the issue she was having is that, that some of the advocates would go right to shame and want to, you know, cut people off and call people off, you know, and all these things.

[00:50:52] **Sue Marriott:** And didn't have the gradation of, um, now some people, some corporations would have you. Yes. That's the appropriate thing. But this idea of being able to harness like, um, you know, for someone who's just misinformed that you don't come at them with the same with the SHA, you know, like, oh, you have a black me labs may matter, but that's, you don't really believe it.

[00:51:13] **Sue Marriott:** And NA NA NA right. Is, is like overshooting the. I think her point was like that you can tie, she, we didn't use this language, but to titrate the aggression, but to, you know, they're, they're, they're aggressively putting something out, saying something to the world mm-hmm and then if somebody has a problem with that, Kind of the idea of matching instead of just going with what you're feeling is and telling them that they, whatever that they're performative or what have you

[00:51:39] **Jeanne Bunker:** mm-hmm right.

[00:51:40] **Jeanne Bunker:** But if we think of call out culture too, we can think of that as a defense. It's again, a defense against that vulnerability of actually being in conversation with someone it's a defense against our own shame. Like if we participate in callout culture, we're inserting our shame into someone else. Mm I'm.

[00:51:58] **Jeanne Bunker:** Not like that. You take my shame too. You're a terrible person. How can you even think that mm-hmm so call out culture is like this manifest defense against being in a relationship mm-hmm

[00:52:11] **Sue Marriott:** mm-hmm and all the stuff that we haven't looked at. Yes. But then we want that we wanna then stamp out in the world, but certainly haven't necessarily done around.

[00:52:20] **Sue Marriott:** What did you say? Yeah. Bearing of the soul. mm-hmm . oh, that's, that's really great. And I'm happy to tie that back into this. The, you know, the series that we're doing around defense and really trying to keep exploring and learning more about how that we unintentionally do things to push people away in close relationships.

[00:52:40] **Sue Marriott:** Mm-hmm um, this has been so inspiring. Um, is there anything else that we didn't get to that you wanted to say around that, you know, uh, key takeaways or, uh, action steps for anybody? Mm,

[00:52:55] **Jeanne Bunker:** no, I think we covered the key takeaways of separating out anger from aggression, um, to understanding that the ways we attack ourselves are misguided expressions of aggression.

[00:53:06] **Jeanne Bunker:** Um, to understand that, uh, to move forward and to, uh, have our ambition intact requires, uh, courage and aggression and desire. You know that to allow ourselves to work with all of that. Um, so yeah, be brave, be heartfelt, hold other people. So you know that relationship in mind when you're doing these courageous acts.

[00:53:38] **Jeanne Bunker:** Um, yeah,

[00:53:40] **Sue Marriott:** those are beautiful. Beautiful. Now, if people wanted to contact you and find out more or check out your, uh, articles or your chapters, how would they reach you?

[00:53:49] **Jeanne Bunker:** Uh, they could. Go to my website, uh, bunker therapy.com. They could email me at Gmail bunker therapy.

[00:53:59] **Sue Marriott:** That's such a great

[00:53:59] **Jeanne Bunker:** name. I created that like a decade ago.

[00:54:03] **Sue Marriott:** that is so awesome.

[00:54:04] **Jeanne Bunker:** I'm like, OK. Bunker,

[00:54:07] **Sue Marriott:** I'm sorry. Go ahead. Bunker therapy.com.

[00:54:10] **Jeanne Bunker:** They could email me at, um, Jeanie L bunker gmail.com or they can call my office at (512) 328-3947. Um, I'm happy to go talk with whomever, wants to talk about the stuff that I love. Mm

[00:54:28] **Sue Marriott:** that's. So generous. We also will have, um, there's a ton of resources in the show notes.

[00:54:33] **Sue Marriott:** Um, There are all of the links that she just mentioned will be in the show notes. And yeah, we're super happy to continue this, um, series on disarming human defenses. Thank you very much for listening. Thank you, Jeanie bunker very much for being here and uh, we'll see you around the bin