



***Catching Health* podcast: *Home Will Never Be the Same Again*. A conversation with co-authors Carol Hughes and Bruce Fredenburg**

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Diane: Welcome to the Catching Health podcast. I'm Diane Atwood. I'm a health reporter and I share news and stories on my Catching Health blog and podcast that I hope will make a difference by educating enlightening, encouraging, and inspiring people to be as healthy as possible in mind, body and spirit.

Today, I'm talking with Carol Hughes and Bruce Fredenburg. They are both licensed marriage and family therapists based in California and have many years of experience between them working with divorcing couples and families. They are also the coauthors of *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce*.

So hello, Carol and Bruce. Welcome to Catching Health. I gave you a short version of your bios and so I give you permission to

add anything that you think is important and that you want people to know about you. So, Carol, anything you want to add?

Carol: Well, I think it's important to know that I've been practicing for over 30 years and have worked with a lot of adult children whose parents are divorcing. And so, this book comes from a lot of years of experience and doing a lot of research, the little bit that there is about this population.

Diane: Before I get to Bruce, I want to ask why is there so little research done on something that seems to be a pretty prevalent issue?

Carol: That's a good question, Diane. Well, you know, our legal system in the United States and actually in the industrialized world, says that they care about the minor children and their best interests, but they have no authority over adult children once they're adults. So, the cultural myth in our country and many others around the world is that these children don't matter. They're adults after all, why can't they just be adults and shake it off and get on with their lives? What's the big deal? You know, minor children have a lot of support system in, in our country and other countries but what's the big deal. Again, they should just be able to shake it off and go on like nothing happened.

Diane: And so, we're going to talk about why it is a big deal and how people can be helped. Bruce, what do you want people to know about you and your expertise?

Bruce: Well, I've also been a therapist for more than 30 years and like Carol, I'm also trained in mediation and also in other non-adversarial divorce processes. In fact, 2003, we aligned ourselves with some family law attorneys who no longer litigate. One of them said I got tired of winning cases while destroying families.

And so earlier in my practice as was the case with Carol, I had people come in who were suffering from either their bad divorce or their parents bad divorce and among that group were adult children and they would say things like I'm crushed. My family's gone. My family's dead, and they're surprised that it's hitting them

this hard and they think maybe there's something wrong with them. But if you think about it, it's going to be a major disruption in somebody's life when their family that they've known their entire life just disappears.

And so over time we found that this was not just an underserved population, but actually an unserved population, and it's growing every year. There's about 300,000 couples in this demographic each year, which is 600,000 people divorcing over the age of 50, just in the United States. And there have on average, one to two children, it's Generation Xers and boomers, so there's potentially 900,000 to 1.2 million people that are suffering from this problem every year and the people who were suffering last year and the year before are still hurt by it, so it's pretty large.

Diane: It doesn't go away. So gray divorce, this is a term that's been coined to represent these couples who are divorcing and affecting their adult children. Can you tell me exactly where that term comes from?

Carol: Yes. Bowling Green State University did research. They were researching the US census data and they discovered that between 1990 and 2015, the gray divorce rate of those 50 plus years and older doubled. So that's in twenty-five years. And then the divorce rate for the 65 plus during that same time frame tripled.

And then from all of their analytics, they predicted that this divorce rate was going to continue until 2030, and it was expected to triple. So, they came up with the term gray divorce revolution. So, gray refers to the hair color, of course. In Japan, they're calling it the retired husband syndrome, in the United Kingdom they're called the silver splitters, and in France, they're called the diamond divorcees.

Bruce: And also, in Canada, your neighbor to the north, they call them diamond divorcees at least in Montreal.

Carol: That was my error. It's Canada, you're right Bruce.

Diane: You know, it's interesting because we say the old days, what people were more apt to just stick together because divorce

was not exactly taboo, but maybe somewhat taboo. And now things have changed?

Bruce: Yes, and also women have gained much more economic independence over the last 30 or 40 years. So, in the past, I suspect a lot of people stayed because they really couldn't survive without their husband's, income and it's women who are initiating most of these late life divorces.

So, we're thinking that people are healthier longer. I don't know if the absolute life expectancy has increased that much, but our mobility into our older years seems to have gotten a lot better. And so, these couples who maybe married when they were young or at least younger, and as they go through life, they discovered maybe they're not that well matched or their goals are different, but they're raising kids and they're building careers and they focus on that.

And now the kids are gone. Maybe they're retired, maybe not, but they're looking at their spouse, both of them, and maybe they're just tolerating and they're thinking, I don't want to just tolerate the rest of my life. And so, with the added economic impetus and ability to do it, these generations seem to want more out of life than just surviving. So, they want some happiness, and so they're willing to leave. And I think a lot of men get blindsided.

Carol: Diane. I wanted to give you the statistics too. You mentioned that divorce used to be more taboo. Research shows that in 2001, 45% of Americans considered divorce morally acceptable. And in 2014, 69% considered divorce morally acceptable. So, as Bruce was saying, honoring those traditional expectations, culturally has been changing since well, before 2001 so that's another reason as you mentioned, it's not as taboo anymore.

Diane: And is it primarily women that you see in your practice who are like tired of just existing and realize that we're living longer and they're maybe healthier and they just say enough.

Carol: Yes. Sometimes the impetus is as Bruce mentioned is because women have more financial security on their own. They

have professions, careers. In the U. S. More than half of mothers work outside the home in a job career profession, and also the percentage of men in the U. S. who have affairs is much higher than women. And so sometimes that impetus for the divorce comes from an affair that they may have worked on together at couples counseling, but it just did too much damage to the relationship. So, the women say I'm outta here.

Diane: But to think of people who are deciding in their seventies and eighties to get divorced, that's sort of mind boggling to me.

Carol: Right. I talked to someone the other day who was 92, a gentleman, and he said, I just can't take it anymore with her. And he was filing for divorce.

Diane: Wow.

Carol: He said, whatever years I have left, he's very healthy, you know, I just want to be happier.

Diane: But you know, when you get to that age, maybe one in the couple can get along healthier, but I have all these scenarios going on in my head, but what about the spouse who, you know, maybe has at that age dementia coming on or other issues?

Carol: Right? It can certainly happen, yes.

Bruce: I think it depends on how much disappointment and anger has been festering under the surface. And, it might be just a point where people are still functioning, still mobile, maybe underestimating how much they're going to deteriorate, but maybe just don't want to put up with it anymore, you know, either one because at the moment they're deciding they're still reasonably healthy and they're still able to move around and they're probably assuming that they're not going to fall down tomorrow or they're not going to fall down next month and the idea of going another several years I guess it feels. I know in the legal, the system, they found that when people have indeterminate sentences, it's much more horrifying for them than if somebody has a date that they know they're going to be released. So, I think that would probably be the same thing if somebody has been in a long-term marriage

that's been disappointing or more for the last 20 years, it might just feel like now or never.

Diane: And who knows, maybe at some event they've met somebody who they feel really compatible with. I'm not a therapist, but I have seen that happen with people that they may have wanted to leave forever, but the impetus was meeting somebody and being able to clearly imagine being with somebody else.

Carol: Yeah, and we call those bridge relationships because often it is the bridge, the pathway out of the marriage, but the statistics show those don't last. Some do, but the majority don't. So, it is an impetus, as you said.

Diane: Or an excuse.

Carol: Yeah.

Bruce: Think about when somebody is having an affair, they're not really having real life with the person. Their mistakes are not tied to the other person's life, so you can screw up and there's nothing in it for them. They're not no skin in the game. So, it's always like honeymoon, it's like long distance relationships where every time you get together, it's fun and it's just fine. Whereas real life has sweat. And there's good times and bad times and disappointing times and joyful times, but it's the stuff of real life.

Diane: We will talk about the adult children, but before we get to that, I want to know why you two decided to write this book together.

Bruce: Well, Carol is the impetus, so I'll let her tell that that part of the story.

Carol: As Bruce mentioned, we aligned ourselves in 2003 with family lawyers and financial specialists and mental health professionals as we are, and who were passionate about offering people an out of court, peaceful, respectful, dignified family focused divorce process if they had chosen to divorce.

We don't promote divorce, but if they decided to divorce, we wanted to offer them a family focused process, as I said. And one of the parts of building our it's a nonprofit organization, was to write articles. And so, we did, and I had been working with a lot of adult children, as I mentioned earlier.

So, I wrote an article about how adult children are affected by their parents' divorce. And a New York Times reporter found me via that blog and was doing an article in February of 2016 and asked if she could interview me. I said, sure. And so, six months later after the article came out, a literary agent in New York reached out to me and said, hey, there's nothing on this topic. Would you be willing to write a book on it? And I, when something comes to me like that over my years, I've said always, yes, because I believe it's coming from somewhere that I need to respond to. So, I said, yes, and then Bruce and I have been colleagues and friends for many, many decades. So, I said, hey, would you want to write this book with me? And he said, sure, and almost four years later, it was a lot of research and a lot of sweat, as he said earlier and toil and all kinds of other things, it came out on June 22nd of this year.

Diane: Congratulations.

Carol: Thanks.

Diane: In the book, you have the research, but you also have a lot of personal life stories. And when I was reading them, I did notice a thread that a lot of the adult children of gray divorce feel like there something very wrong with them and don't realize that there are lots of other people feeling the same thing that they're feeling. Is that in fact the truth?

Carol: Yes. And that's another reason besides the agent coming to me to ask if we'd write it, we really wanted to give these adult children a voice and have them know they're not alone. The research, the little bit that there is, shows that about 50% of the adult children of gray divorce are shocked. They feel like they are alone. Some of them become questioning their own ability to have relationships. Some say, as Bruce said earlier, my family is dead. I feel like I'm going crazy. We wanted them to know they're not

alone and to help them understand what was happening to them and also give solutions. So, the solutions are also woven in through the book when we're talking about why is this happening and why is it so upsetting to you?

Diane: Can we talk a little bit more in detail about what are some of the ways that divorce actually disrupts the life of an adult child?

Bruce: Sure. There's different stages of adulthood. I don't know if you have children or not, but if you have any and they're in college or they've been in college, you know, legally, they may have been adults 18, 19, 20, but they were still dependent on you most likely in that's how it is at that age.

If it's a young adult, one of their concerns is what's going to happen to me? I'm still living at home or I'm living away, but I still get helped by my parents. And so, there's going to be a concern. What comes next? Or is there a new person that's going to be involved and they're not going to want my mom or dad to help me?

When people are a little older and they've started families of their own or they're even farther along, they may be worried that one parent is going to need more help emotionally or financially or both than the other, and then what are they going to do about it? It's going to be a financial burden perhaps on their family. Their spouse may not be as invested in taking their family resources and giving it to one of the parents.

There's people who've been in their lives for years, all of a sudden, it's coming apart and then they have to balance this. Families tend to start choosing up sides. Like one spouse's parents are going to side with that one and the other, they're going to side with that one and the siblings and aunts and uncles to the adult children and now they've got different parts of the family who want to bash the other parent whenever they're around and invite them to join in those conversations.

And then there's family celebrations. There's births, there's graduations, there's weddings, all of these come up. And what happens if one of the parents is so angry at the other, they won't

show up at that the grandchildren's graduations, unless the other one's forbidden to come? And then there's two Thanksgivings and there's just all these things that they didn't even think of before.

Your family's like oxygen in the air. You never notice it until it's not there. And all of a sudden everything's different. And so, depending on their stage of life and the dynamics of that family, there's just all kinds of disruptions that can happen. And then Carol likes to talk about the nevers. There's never going to be a big, fun, all family get together. There's never going to be the same family at Thanksgiving. There's never going to be bringing the grandchildren over to see grandpa and grandma both at the same time. And you know, I could probably spend 20 minutes talking about the disruptions, but it's a lot.

Diane: And is it the same for everybody or does it depend on the personality of, particularly the adult child, the kind of relationship she or he has with a parent, other things, or the fact that they just have it dropped on them instead of any kind of a lead in preparing them for it?

Carol: Yes, Diane, all of what you just said are factors in how it affects the adult children and often where they are in their stage of life as Bruce mentioned, that the younger they are, sometimes they're still in college or doing other training and financially dependent somewhat or totally on their r parents and they start to worry do I have to drop out of school? Maybe the parents are going through financial difficulties.

We know that divorce can create financial difficulties for parents, so these kids start to think, maybe I need to be supporting my parents. There is a role reversal that can happen where they do start to feel like they need to help their parents versus the parent help them. If the children are in, kind of midlife stages, often they have younger children and then they have their careers, their marriage, maybe they're in their own business, whatever, and their parents are older.

They could be worried about parents failing health or again, that the parents might need their emotional, financial support. In our

field, we call those middle life adults, the sandwich generation, because they're sandwiched between the younger children, whatever ages their children are and their own parents. And then there are the older, you know, maybe we've seen people in their fifties whose parents were divorcing, fifties or even early sixties. they're even more concerned about their parents aging and needing their help, you know, health-wise. And then, as you mentioned, the different personality types of the children and the parents. So, there are a lot of variables, a lot of variables, all of which we go into in the book as well.

Diane: Well, when you talk about that 92-year-old gentlemen, it makes me think, all right, so if they have kids, they're like in their seventies, maybe, and they're already facing her own issues.

Carol: Right.

Diane: Okay. I have to stop here, Carol, that little doggy barking is yours, right?

Carol: No. It was somebody across the street. It's not mine.

Diane: Ok, well, I only interjected this because you had mentioned before we started that you have a four-month-old therapy dog.

Carol: Yes. Yes. You read about Molly in the book.

Diane: Yes.

Carol: Sadly, Molly went to doggy heaven in January. So, I have a new therapy dog. Her name is Frieda, which means peace in German. So, she's going to be another peacemaker. When we're ever back in the office, whenever that is.

Diane: Are you doing most of your therapy sessions, both of you, via Zoom or other ways?

Carol: Yes.

Diane: And what kind of dog is Frieda?

Carol: She's a yellow Labrador as was Molly, yeah.

Diane: Well, dogs are always welcome on the podcast.

Carol: Great. She's asleep now I can tell, but next time we'll have her join us.

Diane: Okay. What is the usual divorce strategy? Bruce, you alluded to traditional divorces, but there are other ways you can divorce, right? It doesn't have to be just head straight to the lawyers.

Bruce: Yes. I can talk about California, because that's where I practice and that's where I know lawyers who've educated me on this, but I think it's true in all states in most jurisdictions. People can do it themselves, whereas they're sitting around the kitchen table and deciding who's going to get what and how are they going to deal with the kids and their assets and, if they were getting along well, they might not be divorcing. That can work well for people who don't have complicated lives, you know, retirement plans, things they don't understand.

What I found from dealing with family law lawyers in California is there are a lot of landmines in the divorce code and it's easy to accidentally make a mistake to think you're saying one thing and you're really saying the other. There's an old joke I like to tell that no matter how small the town, you can always find someone to give you the wrong direction and I know just enough law to provide that for you if you like.

But that's one way, and then there is litigation, which is what most people are familiar with. You know, it's really adversarial. Each one hires their own attorney and then those attorneys, their job is to get as much as they can for their client, which is the one person. So, they're hearing nothing but bad things about the other spouse and in the courts, they say the adult children don't matter.

So, you can see, there can be a lot of unexpected collateral damage. It's like when people want to go to war, it's going to be messy and it's going to be harsh. And then there's mediation, which is an out of court process where the decisions are made by the couple and nothing can happen unless they both agree.

Our style of mediation is we tend to work in teams, so the mediating attorneys typically will have a mental health person who's trained to do this, and there's a neutral financial specialist who makes sure everybody understands all the finances, so when they make decisions, they know what they're doing. And because it's consensual, it can take longer to get to a decision, but the decisions last longer because everybody owns them, their decisions and collaborative is another out of court way of doing it.

And in both of those ways, the final agreements are typically written up by an attorney so when they are submitted to a court and the court does give them a real legal court for authorized divorce, but they have a lot more privacy. Their personal family disputes are not all written in the court records. There's much less information available to the public. And there's much less for lack of a better word, much less combat because you have a team whose job is to dampen down the fight, help people communicate better, help them be present for those business meetings. When all is said and done, it's much easier for the family to heal later on because it can spare families, the worst aspects of divorce.

Diane: And so those processes take into account, the adult children.

Carol: Yes, because they're family focused, and we have child specialists that work with the minor children and the adult children. Our particular practice group in Orange County, California, the attorneys and the financials specialists really embrace the idea of working with the adult children. Because they saw that they were stakeholders in many different ways in their parents' divorce, emotionally, financially, sometimes legally wondering about what their inheritance would be, as I said before about worrying about their parents' health, mental health, physical health, et cetera.

Bruce: In fact, one of the attorneys in our group wrote a piece in our book and he talked about a family that the husband had all the assets, I don't know, in the second marriage or not, but in any event, he just decided that there was no need for him to give his

wife anything and she was just going to walk away with nothing at all.

When he had had a chance to interview the adult children, he found out not that the divorcing parent really loves spending time with his grandchildren, his grandson, I think it was. And so he went on and on about how his wife was going to get nothing and she was just going to have to live with that, he pointed out okay, so you really liked being with your grandchild and when you go over there to go to the grandson and you want to go out fishing with him and he sees how you're treating his grandmother, how do you think that's going to go over? And he had to rethink exactly how he was going to do everything. And they, they did a much more amicable settlement.

Diane: Well, so this takes me to the big question. One of two big questions. First is how can divorcing parents help their adult children? You've just said having a different kind of a divorce can help. What else?

Carol: Yes. That's one way. Certainly, pick a process that is family focused because divorce is not a neutral event to minor children or adult children. I want to say that again because it's really important. Divorce is not a neutral event to minor children or adult children. And so first and foremost, parents can listen to their children, their adult children, listen to what they're saying, hear their feelings. Don't judge them. Don't berate them.

There's research in our field that shows simply listening, simply listening is part of healing. It can facilitate healing, and don't expect your adult children to be happy for you, as happy as you are for yourself, perhaps. If you're depressed and so shocked by the divorce yourself as a parent, don't use your adult child as your therapist or your ally or your dating buddy. Use your friends or professionals like clergy or mental health professionals to help you with the issues you're facing.

Bruce: I'd also like to add one of the biggest things parents need to do is to let everybody in the family know that they don't want their adult children or their minor children to get sucked into taking

sides against one of their parents because it's really puts the adult children in a terrible position where members of their extended family now despise their other parent and they're going to hear those conversations and if the adult child joins in those conversations, it's either going to make them dislike the parent they're talking about more, or it's going to make them feel like a traitor to their parents. They just have to insist. Don't let my kids get dragged into this, and also don't drag their kids in themselves. Don't bad mouth the other parent to your child, because for the rest of their life, they're still going to be their other parent.

Carol: And also think about what is the legacy you want to leave for your adult children at this time, and I don't mean money. I mean, what are you modeling for them in terms of resolving disputes? Are you modeling it's war and it doesn't matter if the family gets blown apart or are you modeling peaceful, respectful, dignified conflict resolution that they need to learn how to do? And you can be a role model for them.

Bruce: If you think about it in a family, you know, the relationship between the husband and wife is different than the relationship between their kids. And so, parents need to avoid insisting that their child have the same relationship with the other parent that they have, it's going to be different. The parents are not divorcing their kids.

Carol: Right. And lastly, think about how, if you believe in family and you want a family focus process, can't you be at the birthday parties together without tension? Can you be at college graduations without tension and being respectful that the celebrations are about your children or your grandchildren and not bring all of your negative feelings about each other? Dance at your children's weddings together so that they don't lose that sense of family.

Diane: Or at least be able to have a conversation. You have a section in the book where you talk about how to have conversations that don't automatically make the other person feel defensive because that's usually the go to, in these situations. But

I can think of all these different scenarios. If you're the couple that's divorcing, then you're totally self-absorbed. You know, all you're thinking about is how wounded you are that your partner asks for the divorce. If you're the person who asked for the divorce, all you can think about is hallelujah, I'm going to have a life now, and there's that mentality that we've talked about. The children, you're adults, you've got your own lives. I'm so happy that I don't have to worry about you, but that's not the reality.

Carol: It isn't.

Bruce: You just reminded me of something that's really important, and most people don't think of it when they're in it and they don't think of it ahead of time cause they didn't know they were going to be in it, but there's a pacing part of this that needs to be taken into account.

In my experience and I know Carol's as well, most couples by the time somebody decides to divorce, they've both been unhappy, for one way or another or least unsatisfied in the marriage. But up until somebody took the initiative to start a divorce, they both had a choice. And that choice was whether to divorce or whether to keep trying to salvage the marriage.

The person who initiates it typically doesn't advise the other person that they're really close to divorcing. They look around, they see what they're going to do. They're investigating, they're finding out what are these different processes, they're figuring out where am I going to move to? What's the house worth all of these things. And then when they're really ready to go, they pull the trigger and the other person's suddenly surprised.

And so, one person's down the road and out the door and the other person doesn't even know we're leaving, and they feel like somebody had a phone line that just got ripped out. And so, the person that is leaving doesn't want to talk about it anymore and the other person is stuck with, well, why let's talk. And so, one of the things we do when we're functioning as divorce coaches, or adult child specialists is help the person who's already out the door slow down and help the other person catch up. Because if they don't

take that into account, they're going to have a really hard time making consensual decisions that work for the whole family. And you can see how important that is, but nobody thinks about until they're in it. And they usually one of those things, they think about what they should have done if they'd known, but now it's gone.

Diane: Do you have any words of wisdom that you'd like to share to the suffering adult children?

Carol: Well, as we said earlier, you're not alone and your feelings are valid. If your parents don't take the initiative to talk, you take the initiative to talk. Try to help them understand what you're feeling. If you're not successful and they're on the party line of our cultural myth, you're a grownup what's the problem, then you can take the initiative. Schedule an appointment with a therapist or clergy person who can help your parents hear what you're saying. Sometimes one of your parent's trusted friends or an aunt or an uncle whom they respect could help them hear you. The main point, one main point is, is that what you're feeling is real and that we want you to know that that's valid and to not just walk away and say, oh, well, my parents don't understand and just cut them off.

A lot of adult children just withdraw when the parents don't understand. So, it's worth quote, fighting for your family. I say fighting, cause it's not like in litigation, but to get through to your parents and try to have people help you if you're not able to. And don't be sucked into the alliances that Bruce talked about. If your mom or dad are trying to use you as a confidante, dating buddy therapist, tell them that you love both of them and you want a relationship with both of them and you aren't willing to take sides or keep secrets. One tells you they're dating, the other one doesn't want the other one to know, et cetera, quite a long list.

Diane: One thing I'd like to make sure that we address is feelings. Can you describe what are some of the, you know, the spectrum of feelings, because it can be a pretty broad one, can't it?

Bruce: Yes, there's just a whole gamut of feelings. One of the things we hear from adult children is the word surreal. It feels surreal to me. Their family's just been there the whole time and

now it's not. And it's kind of like waking up in the middle of a dream and finding there are two suns in the sky and a green moon. It just like you're on another planet. There's nothing familiar and they start reexamining their own history and wondering was it all smoke and mirrors?

Or even the ones who thought their parents should divorce because they were arguing a lot find that the reality of it is much different than they had imagined. And so, they're shocked. There's grief. Just like people would grieve over the loss of a parent dying the loss of their family's like a death to them, so there's going to be grief over that. There can be denial. They can just wall off.

Families that communicate well and talk, will talk over these problems, but families that don't, will talk even less. And so one of the things we do is encourage people to meet with a professional, and you could be really surprised how much a well-trained experienced therapist who's used to dealing with divorce can come up with ideas that the family's not going to have even thought of. So, they can move on to heal because the therapist isn't in the middle of their pain, and so having a neutral party that's experienced can really help, but otherwise those feelings are going to come out in difficult ways.

Father's relationships are the most at risk. If you think of it, most children spend more time with their mother when they're young than they do with the father. So young kids learn to see the father through the mother's eyes growing up. Most people report, they feel closer to their mom than their dads. Not all, but many and women are the kinship keepers in our culture, so they're going to keep the connections and the dads may just disappear. Either get swept into another family if they marry somebody or they're living with another person or just going off on their own.

And so that denial is going to cost the adult children, and it's going to be a loss for their children as well, because grandpa's not going to be around. You can just see all the different, emotions and in divorce, anger comes up a lot. There's an old saying in sales, I learned from a sales trainer that a confused mind always says no.

And I've discovered that a confused, angry mind says no with an attitude.

Diane: Hmm.

Carol: Anger, and frustration, and depression is common. A lot of the adult children that we've worked with and the research shows, too, become depressed. Was it all smoke and mirrors? Was my whole life a facade? Was it a fake? And they start looking inward and questioning themselves, and am I going to be the apple that doesn't fall that far from the tree? So, depression can ensue as well, and anger and frustration.

Bruce: And it causes discord in their own family. Cause you know, your spouse is now getting sucked into maybe the parents insist that they're not going to be at the kid's birthday party if the other parent's going to be there. So, all of a sudden, their kid they're being hurt, or the cousins aren't available, cause one of the parents is going to be there. And so now their spouse is angry at them because they're not quote unquote controlling their parent better.

Diane: What a mess.

Bruce: Yeah.

Diane: So, I'll give you each this opportunity, or just one of one, one of you wants to do it. If you could just summarize what your book is about.

Carol: It's about what adult children experience when their parents are divorcing, why they're experiencing what they experience and what they can do about it. It's also there to help the parents understand what their adult children are going through and what to do about it and keep it a family focused process.

Bruce: And help them avoid those worst parts, those big mistakes that are really hard to repair later on.

Diane: What do you want people to come away with when they finish reading the book?

Bruce: There's a number of things. I would like the adult children to come away with an understanding that what they're feeling is normal because they're part of our culture. They've been also taught that, well, you're lucky it didn't happen when you were a kid. And so, to help them understand why they're feeling what they're feeling and that it's normal, so they don't feel isolated and alone.

I would like the parents to understand that their kids are going through this and it's real, and help the parents avoid the worst mistakes. A lot of those mistakes are they're understandable, but they're still going to do damage to the people they love the most. I also would like them to understand that it is possible to heal. There is hope and healing and with the proper awareness and guidance and understanding they can go on and have happy lives and interact with each other in a way where the family is not totally lost to them. It's going to be different, but they're not totally lost.

Diane: So instead of trying to hang on to the past, you can have the memories, you have to look forward to building. It can be very positive, but a different future.

Bruce: We have a whole chapter on hope and healing and throughout the book, we really emphasize the importance of if you don't know what to do, be kind to each other.

Diane: Let's remind everybody the name of the book is *Home Will Never Be the Same again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce*. What's the easiest way to get this book? Especially now that we're a homebound.

Carol: Yes. It's available on Amazon, of course. If people Google the name of the book, Amazon comes right up. It's available on the Amazon site and Kindle, and also an audio book. And it's also available at other local bookstores, Barnes and Noble, all those online of course, or in person, if you want to go in and the publisher, Roman and Littlefield, it's available on their website as well. And we have an offer if people would like to take advantage of it, if they want to email us at homewillneverbethesameagain@gmail.com, we have some free

tips and advice and ideas that we'll be happy to email them while they're waiting for the book to arrive.

Bruce: Yeah. It's a gift for your listeners.

Diane: Well, thank you for that. Any last words or have I forgotten to ask you the most important question of all. You think we've got it covered?

Bruce: You've really done your homework and so all the things you've asked this, you really seem to have a good grasp of it. I think we covered, again, the thing we always advise over and over and over is do everything you can if you're the adult parent to not let your kids get sucked into taking sides. And if you're the adult child, if you get a chance to think about these things, instead of just reacting, you can respond a little more carefully and not make your own life harder.

Carol: And lastly, that family is forever. And how do you want to have your family look going forward? Both of you, the adult children, and the parents.

Bruce: Yeah. Somebody once pointed out. A financial specialist or an attorney can easily tell you the value of an asset, like a retirement plan or a house or a savings account, but what's the value of being able to dance at your child's wedding without anybody cringing that you showed up.

Diane: Well, I want to thank you both for taking this time to help us understand that when older couples divorce, it can have a profound effect on their adult children. I think you've brought it out in the open and then you've written this in-depth guide to help both the parents and their adult children. So, you're definitely making a difference.

Carol: We hope so.

Bruce: And thank you so much for giving us this opportunity. We really appreciate that.

Diane: I enjoyed it too. You have been listening to Catching health with Diane Atwood. I have been talking with Carol Hughes and Bruce Fredenburg. They have written this wonderful book. *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce*.

It's available everywhere, but mostly online right now. Right. And you will find more episodes and blog posts at catchinghealth.com. That's it for now. May you be, well, may you be safe, and may you be happy.