

HTBH Podcast Episode 001 – How to Be Happy in a
Relationship When There's Been Infidelity.

Show notes at:

<http://jaredakers.com/how-to-be-happy-in-a-relationship-when-theres-been-infidelity/>

Jared: How To Be Happy Podcast Episode #1. JaredAkers.com.

Welcome to the How To Be Happy podcast with Jared and Emily Akers, where we talk about life, love, happiness, respect for yourself and your partners in life. Open your heart and your mind and prepare to be true, be loved and be happy.

Welcome to the How To Be Happy podcast with Jared and Emily Akers. This is our maiden podcast actually, episode #1. First off, I'll tell you what our topic is going to be today. We're going to talk about how to be happy in a relationship where there's been infidelity. I think a little bit of a back story would be relevant here, maybe about us a little bit how we got to where we're at and maybe why we were even qualified to talk about this stuff. Anyway, I'm here with my wife, Emily Akers.

Emily: Hello.

Jared: Hello everybody. I think, basically, my journey started in March of 2006. I'd reached the bottom emotionally, physically and spiritually pretty much. I just got really tired of the way I was living. I don't know, I just knew something had to change. I'd been through some through some unhealthy relationships in the past, as we'd both had been, and so I kind of set on this journey of self-discovery. I spent about a year working on myself and some self-discovery and learning about emotional connectedness and all those things and developed a spiritual kind of life. I think that's really when I kind of invited God into my life and really kind of sought for something more. Then, shortly after that was when I met my wife, Emily. I think she was kind of going through something similar along those lines during that period of time, weren't you?

Emily: Yeah, I was. It was a low part in my life, a low point. Pretty awakening for me really.

Jared: It was about a year, at least for me, that I kind of realized that I could be happy by myself and that I didn't need these external validations like that as much.

Emily: So important.

Jared: Yeah. We met on February 25th of 2007 and then we got married on December 2nd of 2009. Since then, we've had a lot of friends and family....

Emily: No.

Jared: What?

Emily: 2008.

Jared: 2008?

Emily: Yeah.

Jared: Okay. Yeah, so we're really close. We communicate really well. I think a lot of our friends and family ask us all the time how we are so happy, why are we so happy. I don't know. We just thought let's start talking about it because we sit around and talk about this stuff all the time. I have this website at JaredAkers.com and it deals with how to be happy. Happiness For The Practical Mind. I also have a newsletter there for people to sign up. I get emails from people all over the world constantly asking me things about happiness and stuff like that which is what I'm there for. I noticed a lot of reoccurring questions. A lot of times, women will email me and we'll start conversing and I'll, with their permission, I'll forward that on to Emily because she's got a lot of experience, obviously, on the female side. That's kind of how this started. We started corresponding with people and trying to help them. I don't think we really give advice so much as we kind of share experiences.

Emily: You've got to let people make up their own mind.

Jared: Yeah. Just like we had to. Today the topic for our first topic, first podcast, episode #1, is How to Be Happy in a Relationship Where There's Been Infidelity. My question, I have been in some unhealthy relationships and, at least not on my part, there wasn't any infidelity. I would ask you, Emily, what would your response be when someone asks that or inquires about that or wonders about that?

Emily: I am a survivor a spouse that was unfaithful for all eight years that I was with him so it was a tough deal. I spent a lot of time trying to catch him.

Jared: Yeah.

Emily: I became a private investigator and really just kind of lost sight of who I was. I became his keeper and totally lost sight of my work, my family. I was just so focused on the drama.

Jared: You weren't happy obviously.

Emily: No. Not at all. I was allowing him to zap me of any possibility of having happiness pretty much.

Jared: Then you had said something to me when we were first talking about this that if you were posed that question and you said, "That's not possible." Do you believe

that it's possible to be happy in a relationship where there's infidelity? Then we were talking about the commitment thing. At what point is your own happiness more important than the commitment you made to someone else? You had said something about the commitment that they made at that point is null and void.

Emily: If someone is unfaithful, they're obviously not committed. The committed relationship that you want doesn't exist. They made the decision for it to end. If they're willing to own up to what they've been doing and have full disclosure, get some help, there's potential. It has to both of you wanting that that. I think the most important thing to understand about all of it is that your happiness is not dependent on someone else's behavior or someone else's situation. It's an inside job really. You've got to decide what you're willing to live with, what you're willing to accept, how you're willing to be treated.

Jared: One thing you've often told me, and I've heard you tell others, that we set the rules for how people treat us or something like that.

Emily: Yeah. If you're going to allow it, you're basically establishing the rule that it's okay because you allow it.

Jared: What about family where they have kids and stuff like that and they say, "Well, we're going to stay together and stick it out because of the kids," and stuff like that? I know it's different with everybody so you can't give a blanket statement. I know from your experience...

Emily: I think that it's so destructive for the children to witness or be a part of that kind of relationship or that kind of a family dynamic. I think if i had to do it all over again, I would have ended it at the first year, the very beginning and not put my son through that.

Jared: How old was your son at the time?

Emily: My son was maybe 11, 12, or 13, around there.

Jared: Yeah I know we've actually talked about all this before.

Emily: Yeah, I think maybe he was 12. He was in there somewhere. He was kind of doing his own thing. Just seeing me so devastated, so hurt, and so angry, I just kind of lost the star quality I had with him.

Jared: You mean like you being the superstar?

Emily: Right.

Jared: Oh I see. Well, now that's interesting.

Emily: Yeah, I didn't feel much like a star during that time.

Jared: He kind of watched you not being happy.

Emily: Yeah. Sure. It's a tough age anyway. To not be thinking right, to not be focusing on being his mother and just really focusing on how do I catch this guy was really healthy for us.

Jared: Well, I'm grateful, not for the pain you went through... As our song, like as many other people's song, is Bless This Broken Road by Rascal Flatts. That song says a lot. We went through a lot to get through to where we were at.

Emily: Really says it perfectly.

Jared: It does. I think though that, for me, that period or that year of self-discovery.. I guess it wasn't quite a year but it was pretty close to it. It was really learning that I could be happy and I didn't need a relationship, a job, a profession or anything. I really didn't have much of anything at the time but I did find some inner peace, some serenity, a faithful existence, stuff like that, and belief in myself. Then it was like, okay, I can do this. I can be happy. I can be true to myself and be authentic and still be loved and then we met.

Emily: Thank goodness.

Jared: Yeah. I often think about you shared about a day when you were in a hammock or something like that and that's when you asked God for some guidance and just realized.

Emily: Yeah. That was the moment of clarity for me. I was just calm. I knew I needed help and I asked for God to help me. First, I apologized for being gone for so long, then I asked for his help. It was not an hour later that I had a sign and I knew what to do. That's when he got home from work and I asked him to leave. I was done. Completely done.

Jared: Then you spent the year of fun, I don't know what that was called in your mind, but you dated a lot and kind of learned about yourself a lot during that period of time.

Emily: Yeah. I really did. I spent a lot of time at the book store reading everything I could get my hands on really.

Jared: Yeah. Everyone out there, no matter what problem you have, someone out there went through it before. I actually hope that's kind of what we do here a little bit. I listed some things down here in our show notes, topics about the whole can you be happy in a relationship when there's infidelity. Obviously honesty is a big one, if you don't have the honesty. I think respect as well. That's one of the things I

want to talk about. I respect you so much and I had to respect myself. I learned to respect myself when we met and I respected you so much and I think honesty is a big part of that and knowing that you're going to love me regardless because I wasn't sure about that at first.

Emily: Well, no one is really. Becoming vulnerable to your partner is probably one of the most genuinely difficult things there is in life. If you don't allow someone to see the real you, you're not ever going to have that intimacy that you crave. You have to be willing to risk opening up. Own it.

Jared: Honesty it's a lot easier, the complete transparency, for me.

Emily: Well, in a relationship, honesty is necessary to build trust. Trust is not something that you automatically have. It's earned. You don't have it at the beginning of a relationship. You're exploring each other. You're testing each other. You're finding out what buttons are there. Is there anything taboo? What can I say? What shouldn't I say? You have to be free to speak your mind.

Jared: It was the first couple weeks we met, and I know we talked about this a lot, but I had something in my past that I wasn't quite sure how accepting you would be or whatever, but I knew it was part of my past and I wanted to share it and be completely honest. You came down to meet me for lunch and I was on the elevator actually going down and I thought, "I'm going to pray about this." I actually got on my knees in the elevator. I worked on the 8th floor so I had to be quick in prayer. For me, humility is what it's about and faith. I prayed about it and got into the car and I looked over at you and said, "There's something I need to tell you." I was all serious.

Emily: I don't think I was breathing at this point. I was just like, "Ugh."

Jared: Actually in the past, I'd shared it with a few other relationships and it hadn't gone so well. Actually it ended one of the relationships. I told you what it was you were like, "Okay. Is that it?"

Emily: Actually I think I said, "What are we eating? Where are we going?" It was nothing.

Jared: It was huge for me because it was a big turning point in my life. I can be completely transparent and open and honest about everything about me and still be loved. Even though I knew that, I think...

Emily: You knew it after that.

Jared: Yeah. What about forgiveness? Is it possible to forgive someone?

Emily: I think you can forgive but I know, for me, in fact, I could never forget. He wasn't really interested in earning my trust so not willing to be transparent and kind of coddle me. He wasn't willing to put up with my questions. I think we'd gone too far too long and all we were left with was the bitterness. I think it was a relief for both of us to end it honestly. It took me a long time to get there and I was so afraid to make this choice. It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. As soon as he was gone, it was like this huge weight was lifted off of me. I was calm and peaceful. I was finally free. That's when the work starts.

Jared: What do you mean by that?

Emily: That's when it's time to get to know who you are. I know it's cliché, but it's true. Why am I choosing people like this? What about me is attracting someone like that? It's after you break up with someone that everyone says, "Oh, yeah, we didn't like him." Thanks dad. Thanks for letting me know. He said, "I tried to like him for you. I never really like him."

Jared: Yeah. I'd had a similar thing, I think, in my situation, in my relationships.

Emily: Our family knows us. They're the last people that we go to to make these decisions and that's just crazy to me.

Jared: Yeah. Or we go to them and they tell us what they think and...

Emily: Well I think when you have doubts, you're definitely not going to go ask your family. When you're sure, then you go to the family, which is what I did with you.

Jared: Yeah me too. I told my mom...

Emily: Remember Meet The Parents?

Jared: Yeah, we had only been together a couple weeks and I emailed my mother and said, "I met the woman I'm going to marry." She said, "After I came down from the chandelier, slow down speed ball." That's what she said because she wanted me to be careful, but I knew. The first 48, 72 hours we spent every second together. We have since.

Emily: Yeah. It was just never any question at all. So nice.

Jared: Yeah.

Emily: So nice.

Jared: Well, a lot of people say relationships are hard. Yeah, granted we haven't been married that long so...

Emily: Over three years. That's a good amount of time.

Jared: It's not hard because we don't look at each other to validate our life or make us happy. Sure, I desire your respect but I don't depend on it for my happiness.

Emily: Right. Well, to earn someone's respect, you have to be respectful. It's not that I don't have ugly thoughts, but if I get an ugly thought, I take a breath and think of a better way of saying something.

Jared: What do you mean "an ugly thought"?

Emily: Well, you can be annoyed.

Jared: Like when I snore?

Emily: The first thing that comes to your head is a negative. I don't want to do that with you. I know that's a dangerous place when you start letting your guard down. Not your guard but, I don't know. I want it to be like in the beginning, the way you respect someone when you're first dating them and I'd like to continue that.

Jared: I'm a big, I don't know, what is it? I do not like the term "get back to the way things were" because I think that you're constantly setting expectations

Emily: Well you don't have to get back to the way things were if we just kept them the way they were.

Jared: Yeah, right. Well, then I think you're limiting yourself to past experiences if you have no expectations.

Emily: I'm just talking about how we speak to each other. I take it to heart what was suggested by the lady that married us on the beach in Hawaii, that everything we speak to each other needs to pass through three gates. Is it truthful? Is it necessary? Is it kind? If it can pass those three tests, then you can say it.

Jared: Right. If you have those gates and is it true and is it kind, I can really rationalize those. It is true? Yes. Is it kind? Well, yes it's kind because I'm telling her the truth. The third one, is it necessary? That's the kicker.

Emily: Yeah. What's the game there? What's the point.

Jared: Yeah. The forgiveness thing.

Emily: I don't know. I think that really it's a choice. I think you have to forgive to move forward. When you're holding a grudge, that's basically part of your heart that can't love or be loved. You're kind of holding that part of your heart hostage with the hostility.

Jared: The whole cliché that forgiveness is for you and not the other person. It's so true. It's a cliché for a reason, I guess.

Emily: Right. I think if they don't ask for your forgiveness then you don't have to give it.

Jared: I have down here a note from the prospective of the offender, which I have not been the offender.

Emily: I wonder how we're going to discuss that. I haven't been the offender

Jared: Well, I know that in relationships I've been in in the past that I was not representing myself very well. I was certainly doing things that weren't in the best interest of the relationship.

Emily: Weren't necessarily truthful, honest, and open.

Jared: Yeah. A lot of it was from fear and it was kind of a self-sabotaging thing too. I didn't have enough guts to say this isn't what I wanted or didn't know myself well enough to say this isn't what I want or expect. I was stuck in that, well, if this is as good as it gets... I didn't know myself well enough or what I needed to be happy so I kind of took the chicken way out by being the bad guy and by eventually making them tell me to leave.

Emily: I heard something. I heard someone say once that women are the ones that make the decision to leave. The man will never leave. It has to be the woman's decision. Men will just behave in a way that they know the woman's going to throw them out.

Jared: Well, that was certainly the case for me.

Emily: Yes. It was the case with us. I remember him saying that I would ask him, "Do you want me to throw you out? Do you want me to..." and then he would just withdraw. Yeah, he did. He wanted me to. When I did, he couldn't get out of here fast enough. Good decision.

Jared: I heard something once that at the beginning trust is all you can hope for and at the end it's all that you have or something like that. I'm not sure what that means.

Emily: I don't know. Sounds kind of grave.

Jared: Yeah, I don't know. I'm not sure who said it.

Emily: You didn't start the time.

Jared: Oh. Well, I got the timer. We're trying to go for 30 minutes, so if we can keep it to that. Then I have from the perspective of the victim. Victim is such a label.

Emily: Oh, I definitely became the victim, but that's a choice

Jared: Well, you get a lot of mileage out of that.

Emily: That is a choice and a lot of people, good people, end up in the victim role. I would not have ever characterized myself as the victim. I was usually running things.

Jared: Well, I don't see you that way now at all.

Emily: I became a completely different person. I completely embraced it. I guess that's where the term co-dependent comes in. You become part of that sickness. If they're unable to be faithful... You promise, you get married, you make the commitment, and then they're just incapable of doing it, that's a sickness. That's their issue. I think what I'm guilty of is becoming a part of it and there was just this circle and we just went around and around and there was no way out until I made the decision to pull myself out of the circle.

I think that you can do that in a relationship when you just, as you say, something with love, detachment with love. If someone is doing illegal things, you can still love them but you can detach yourself emotionally from the situation.

Jared: Is that realistic when you're married to someone and you're in the same household with them? Can you do that for a while and then hope that maybe it comes back somehow and you can get over this? I don't know.

Emily: I think it's probably worth a try if both people are willing, if you're willing. I think at that point you need a third party.

Jared: Yeah, you're so close to it.

Emily: You need a therapist, preacher, a counselor.

Jared: I'm all about the committee.

Emily: Yeah, you need a committee.

Jared: I need a team.

Emily: People that are going to give you some insights that maybe you can't see because you're involved. In my case, he wasn't willing to do that, so I explored that. I think you kind of have to give yourself permission to be important enough to get out

and take the chance in life. I know people have all kinds of excuses for not doing that, but I'm telling you, from someone that did it, it can be done. Definitely

Jared: After that was when you learned that you learned that you can be happy by yourself and that you can make it.

Emily: I really am. That's a good feeling.

Jared: It's very empowering. I know you have friends and stuff that come to you all the time and ask or that are in situations where maybe they are not even married or something, but there's infidelity or unfaithfulness and he's screwing around and all this, whatever. What do you tell them? I think you're a little more harsher than what you've been here so far.

Emily: Well, I just say dump them. Period. You're worth more than that. You deserve better. If your worried about that now and you haven't made the commitment to be married, it's not getting better from here. A lot of women think, "Well, if I could only be more something, sexy or skinnier or whatever, then he wouldn't do that." It really has nothing to do with you. The cheater is cheating for his own benefit. It has nothing to do with you at all. I think that that's a huge load off of me, to know that it wasn't anything I did wrong. It's kind of like the kids when the parents divorce. They blame themselves and it has nothing to do with them.

Jared: Guess we wouldn't say that it's not possible to be happy in a relationship where someone's not faithful, but I think to get to a point where you are happy would be very difficult. The respect, for me, is the huge point.

Emily: In my case, the respect was gone.

Jared: Well, the person doesn't respect...

Emily: To this day, I don't have that respect for him. That's done. Gone. I really don't think he cares. I don't think he cared then because he didn't respect himself so how could he expect anyone else to respect him?

Jared: Yeah. We have our dog here, Pepper. She's a Westie.

Emily: She's my moral support.

Jared: She's a Westie that we rescued. I think she's been through some very unhealthy relationships in her life as well.

Emily: Yes. She has trust issues.

Jared: She was a canine call girl, I guess, maybe?

Emily: Yeah, pretty much. Unpaid prostitute for years and years.

Jared: Against her will, but she's making progress, I think. Sometimes I'm not so sure.

Emily: Well, the problems now is she's getting old, so she's got those problems

Jared: Well, I hope that she's happy. She seems to be.

Emily: She'll be happier when she gets her dinner. She's simple. All she needs is dinner.

Jared: You can be happy but it'll probably take some more from your experience.

Emily: Here's what I think. I think when infidelity is discovered, it's imperative that you separate. I really do. I don't mean that you have to divorce. I mean that you just need to not be together and work on things separately. I say the cheater's got to go. You got to go get an apartment or go back and live with mom and dad or whatever you got to do. Brother or sister. Go live with the girl you were cheating with. Probably wouldn't work really well.

Jared: No. At least you'd find out one way or the other if that's the way it's going to go.

Emily: True enough. Then you can try to work back into a relationship, discover something new if you're both willing to work for it. I think it would be impossible to be living in the same house and doing that. You both need to go back to square one.

Jared: Yeah. If they're not living in your house, how are you going to know if they're staying true?

Emily: You're never going to know.

Jared: They're going to be out on the town.

Emily: The trust is gone. Go ahead and imagine they are. Are you willing to live that way?

Jared: The fear of being alone is... I know from experience, being in a relationship that is unhealthy is a lot of times more secure than the fear of being alone which is sad but that is the way I was for a long time.

Emily: Yeah. There you go.

Jared: There you go. At the end of the day we [inaudible 30:03].

Emily: Well I'm sure glad that I got out of that relationship and met you.

Jared: Well, I'm really glad I went through all the crap that I had to go through as well. I think that's it for today. I had a topic in mind for next week.

Emily: Great.

Jared: I can't really remember what it was now.

Emily: Oh wow.

Jared: I think it was something about communication.

Emily: Well you have a week to figure it out.

Jared: Or maybe finances. We keep separate finances. People are amazed at that sometimes.

Emily: Really?

Jared: Yeah. That we...

Emily: Keep our money separate?

Jared: Yeah, but the same.

Emily: Yeah. I know that it's all ours. I think when I earn it, it should be in my bank account and when you earn it, in yours.

Jared: Yeah.

Emily: Split the bills.

Jared: Online dating. That could be something fun as well because that's how we met.

Emily: That would be a good one.

Jared: We got some good advice, not advice, but experiences there.

Emily: That was a fun experience. That might be a good topic for next week.

Jared: Yeah I think it would be fun.

Emily: All right. I'll be thinking of things that I want to discuss and you'll be thinking about what you want to say.

Jared: We'll be a little more relaxed, I think, next week since it will be our second one.

Emily: Yeah, it's a little awkward.

Jared: Yeah, because we're usually pretty funny.

Emily: Unfortunately we're not on camera so you can't see all the equipment that we have in front of us. Usually when we're talking we don't have all this in front of us.

Jared: It's just us sitting on the couch. Thanks for listening. This is the How To Be Happy podcast with Emily and Jared Akers. You can find me online at JaredAkers.com.

Emily: Lots of good stuff there.

Jared: Yeah. Sign up for my newsletter. You can get practical tips and exercises on how to be happy.

Emily: Great stuff.

Jared: Happiness in Everyday Living. I'm currently actually working on a book as well so that should be out in a couple of months hopefully. Anyway, thank you.