

BigBrain Radio Show

1/12/08

Karen Stewart

(music)

DS: Hey good morning, it's Saturday morning! It's time for the BigBrain Radio Show. I'm Dr. David Stussy and you can call me Dr. D. And we have another BigBrain show about life. Now the BigBrain is about all areas of life... the metaphysical areas of life... the things that create who we are, what we love, what we do, and how we do it... and then what we don't love and then how we do that too. And we kind of go through the different areas of life, like the mental and the physical and the spiritual and the financial and the vocational and the social. But one area that's very important is family... and then relationships. And we have a guest returning. I think you've been on two times before... is that right?

KS: Yeah... it might even be three.

DS: I think it is three.

KS: (laughter)

DS: I was thinking about that this morning... in my unorganized state. Anyway, Karen Stewart, who is the founder and creator of Fairway Divorce Solutions. And she is in Calgary, Alberta. Have I said that correctly I hope?

KS: That's correct.

DS: And... but she has a past history of being an outstanding businesswoman and she's had her own businesses in financial areas,

and she has several business degrees. But because of her own... Like many things that happen in life, because of her own experiences, she set about to develop something very outstanding called “Fairway Divorce Solutions”, which is very unique in the fact that it is negotiated between the couples without them being there before the attorneys get involved in an attempt to have things resolved in a way that becomes more... civilized. How’s that? Is that a good word Karen?

KS: I like the word civilized. The win-win. How’s that?

DS: The win-win. And it’s really based on Karen’s experiences in life... and financially in her own divorce and then her experiences with transformational experiences, where people understand that when we change form it isn’t necessarily devastating, it’s just a change in form. And when we do that, some people call that transformation. So you might call divorce a transformation. Right?

KS: That’s correct. Mm hmm.

DS: Because it is a change in form... and what we resist persists. And so there’s different things that happen. And everybody knows the stories about it. And we’ve talked before about the financial aspects. We’ve talked about the general concerns and the loss of love, etc. And today ... Karen and I were talking earlier and just because it was Christmas... and at Christmas a lot of family stress shows up – especially around marriage because there’s a lot of going to different houses and ... You know, you have to go to mom’s and dad’s, etc. Or, it may be just occurring and that even makes it more stressful. So

I imagine you have some things to share about that. And then you told me that you have this little... blog that you did. Right?

KS: Mm hmm.

DS: And... um... I'm trying to get back to it here. It's called... ah... Karen's thoughts on... No, "Holidays"... what's it say here? "Celebrating the holidays through divorce." And so... and you did that blog. Tell us how that turned out for you.

KS: Well you know, it was really interesting David. First of all, thanks for having me back because I love to ... I love to be a guest on your show and talk about this... this word divorce and what it means in our lives. But... the blog was really... I guess I just wrote it with the intent of trying to give people... um... you know, shift a perspective a bit. There's a... you know through holidays, whether it's Christmas or Easter or Thanksgiving... even times like Valentine's Day... we tend to reflect. And when we're in a place of turmoil, or stress... which obviously that can be caused with divorce, or divorce can cause that – we're more vulnerable. And we get into ... sometimes we can go into victim mode; sometimes we can go into a bit of I feel sorry for myself. And there's nothing wrong with that, but the blog was about trying to empower people to perhaps have a bit of a different approach... to say, Okay, how can I spend the day in a way that's going to be empowering to me and/or my children? And, whether I have the children or I don't have the children, how can I benefit from this ... this time...

DS: This is an...

KS: ... which is really a time of reflection.

DS: And I see you did that. Because one of the BigBrain concepts is to develop new strategies. Instead of not being... when you build a strategy you actually have a plan... and I see you did that. You have several things you've listed here. Do you... Can you remember what they are?

KS: Well I believe we...

DS: I have them in front of me.

KS: Yeah... no, no... we talked... you know I certainly talked a bit about – and this would apply whether it's Christmas or you know we've got some upcoming holidays certainly that people can ... an apply to. But, Christmas is a good example because it's often means... it's either Christmas alone for the first time. It may be a holiday without ... without the children or with the children. And I'm all about creating new beginnings. And I always think of divorce ... the way I like to look divorce is it's an event in our life – it doesn't define our life. And ...

DS: Say that... say that again. I think that's really... You said that to me earlier. Say it again.

KS: Yeah. I like to think of divorce as an event in our lives. It doesn't define our lives. And when we're in the process of divorce we tend to define ourselves by the fear and anxiety that we have. And so I threw out some ideas like... you know it... it ... because it is an emotional time – any holiday is – you know I actually sort of call a spade a spade and I gave the idea of maybe it's the time to do some

scrapbooks and wrap up the past in some scrapbooks. And in one of the examples I gave, I did this one year when I sort of had the box for the ... for the ex that I gave to ... to him at the end of the holiday season. But it was a time to grieve a bit. It was a time to shed some tears – and you know I think probably if I'm honest...

DS: So...

KS: ...I cut out a few pictures. (laughter)

DS: Did I understand... (laughter) Yeah! Did you gather something and give to him then too? Is that what you said/

KS: I did.

DS: Yeah, that was ...

KS: And that was part of... that was part of the cleansing. It was here's your box of your... you know there's the memories there ... And actually, I was very conscientious not to have any of my pictures in there. And I think that's what we have to be careful of when we're doing anything like that... is not... If we're going to give, it needs to be a gift from love – even if there's some pain attached to it. And so don't... you know, don't do the stinger, which you know some people would... you know might...

DS: Oh, put a little... put a little... how good you look now picture? (laughter)

KS: Yeah, exactly. Yeah... Yeah... (laughter) Look at the perfect family that you mucked up. Right? No, that wasn't the ... (laughter)

DS: You know I think sometimes... if people think back... you know let's say when you're family's there and it's all busy and everybody's making the demands, before the divorce people say to themselves, boy I wish I had some time for myself. You've got to be careful what you think about because sometimes that happens, and so when it does you should actually take advantage of it... and take the new beginning.

KS: I love that. You know we... I've worked with hundreds of couples now, David, and have had such phenomenal... seen such phenomenal growth and success. And one of the things that is often causing a lot of fear and anxiety at the beginning of the divorce process is what ... what is this going to look like if I don't have my children all the time, or if I don't have my spouse with me? What am I going to do with myself? I can't envision my life without them filling up my space. And I can almost promise – with 100% certainty – that it is... you can get to the place where you are absolutely counting down to the day when you're going to have that space. And I know that. That's not just my story, but I've had now the chance to work, like I said, with so many people. And they come back ... you know what Karen? I remember when you said ... and it's happened. It's happened! I actually look forward to my day by myself...

DS: Yeah there's some...

KS: ...because I've restructured it.

DS: Misunderstanding. And really when you really look truly at people's experiences, that's not what happens. It's like what you say,.

And you shared your own experiences and are able to create that for them. That's fantastic. Um... anything else on that subject?

KS: Well no. I think... I think just... just ... the other thing I was going to say on holidays or events that in the past were toward more family-oriented is to create new traditions. So whatever the holiday is, create a new tradition around it... because otherwise you'll find yourself weeping over the turkey as you're cooking it because this is what you did... or weeping over the ham or whatever it is that you're cooking. So create a new... create a new um... a new set of traditions. Maybe you go out for dinner with the family. Maybe you cook something totally different. Maybe you go hiking or skiing, or swimming ... whatever. Create new traditions so you don't get stuck. Because those kind of days are emotional and we want the people that we're sharing them with to be empowered, and we don't want to play the victim. Right? That's the most disempowering thing to do.

DS: And it's easy to feel that, especially when you know emotions become overloaded or things look like they're going against you. And people might wonder well why am I talking about divorce on the show? Why have I done this a couple times? Well, number one is I think you're a great guest and it's great to talk to you. And what you're doing is so important to society because you can look... we could look at several things that people get confronted that are big events in their life and marriage obviously is considered by many to be number one. But divorce has gotten so common... but I don't think really people have been trained... you know how to do that and that's why I admire you so much, because you're making that effort.

And... um... it... it's so important to people. So... It's an event in life and we want to make sure that people know that this is available to them. So, we appreciate having you here. So... you know we said we're going to talk about families... So families are a unique environment because they're kind of what we... You know we have how we identify ourselves: Ourselves, and then as a couple, and then as a family. Now, family can be a bigger group. It can be you know the in-laws... and the other parents. And so tell me a little bit about how that shows up – because you get a lot of different connections there.

KS: Well, yeah. And there's so much to talk about with families. And I think one of the... one of the key ingredients to moving to new beginnings and transforming through divorce is to be really cognizant and aware when you... you yourself goes into victim mode. Because if we can be empowered as parents, or children in the case of I guess in-laws, we can move through this in a way that empowers the people around us. And a lot of people say to me things like... yeah but my husband hit me. Or, my husband cheated on me. Or my wife cheated on me and had an affair... and so I'm the victim. And this is one really key ingredient to a successful transformation through anything, whether it's divorce or anything else, and that is you may have been a victim in the modem... in the minute. For example, if someone breaks into your house, you're the victim. But how you respond to that, is 100% accountable for you. You have to be accountable to how you respond to that event.

DS: I think we'd like to explore that a little bit more. We're going to take a little break here. And this is the BigBrain Radio Show... Dr. David Stussy... and we're talking about life itself – family and divorce.

(music)

(music)

DS: Hey, this is Dr. David Stussy and the BigBrain Radio Show. And we're talking about life, love and one of the things that happen when life and love get together – divorce... because life's a balance. Everything that can happen positively can happen negatively and it's how you perceive it and how you use it that makes a difference. And that's what the BigBrain Radio Show is about. So, let's continue talking with Karen Stewart, the creator of Fairway Divorce, which has been two years now? Is it two?

KS: Yeah, it's been about two years that we sort of been out public I guess.

DS: And Fairway Divorce is really committed to the idea that people can negotiate the division – because divorce does mean division – in such a way that it empowers both couples and they do that by kind of removing sort of the ... um... I hate to say the legal entanglements, because they are still there... but they do it in such a way that processes get handled. Like we talked in previous shows about when you handle the money first – or the assets – then the other things, like the children, etc. kind of work themselves out...because the property division tends to be the biggest thing. And we spent

quite a bit of time on that before. We could sort of talk about it again though. And I was just telling... talking to Karen saying I know that she's been doing this now for a period of time and she has things to share. And so we're just going to continue on that road ... in terms of what it takes for families. Because it isn't individuals that get divorced, it's families that get divorced... so we should talk about it. Go ahead, Karen.

KS: Yeah... no, that is so true. I... I am such a believer that we need to shift as a society in the way we label divorce. And as I've said previously, while I started this company because of my personal experience in the traditional system. I've now had the opportunity to work with hundreds of families and I found that there's a real common thread, regardless of how much money they have or don't have, or how the divorce – the end of the marriage – happened. And certainly when it comes to children, the common thread is everybody wants their children to move through this in an empowered way. But, saying it and do it can be very, very... show up very differently. And one of the things that I'm a real advocate of, and there's lots of research out there to support, is that... how do you deal with your children moving through divorce? How do we empower them? Well first of all, we empower them by not labeling divorce. We empower them by saying we're moving through a family change. And it's about mom and dad not living together any more, but it's not... It's a different family. It's not bad. It's not something to be ashamed of. We're not victims in this. So we really... number one is we have to reframe it... reframe it.

DS: Let me know... It would seem like maybe one of the things that would cause the kids the most problem is the way the parents talk about the other parent or they try and use the kids in some way by, I don't know, brain washing them or something like that.

KS: Well and I guess that's kind of the set of rules, right? The set of rules are never... and again, I get that this is easier said than done. There's been lots of time in my past where I've slipped up and I've said something under my breath about my ex...

DS: (laughter)

KS: And my kids look at me and go, "Mom." And I go, "Oh, sorry. I slipped up." So we're human and we make mistakes. But at least call it.

DS: Well... because kids know what you're saying is true, but they still love their dad, or their mother or whatever. Okay?

KS: Yeah. Never badmouth your spouse. Get that that... whether or not you like them or not, your children are half them. And so see the gift... try and find the gifts through your children's eyes. So, never bad mouth them. Secondly, be honest with your kids. One of the... one of the research... some of the research in looking at ... interviewing adult children of divorce is they were denied the truth. And that's not about telling them all the gory details. It's age-appropriate truth. But kids are intuitive. And they're very, very wise. And everybody who has kids knows... knows... knows this. They see things that we don't think they see. And they understand that sometimes we don't think they understand. So give them age

appropriate truth. Never deny them their intuition. For example, if a child says you know, I heard, you know Daddy and you screaming at each other. Oh no, we weren't screaming we were just... No. We were screaming. You're right. We were having a fight. Because what you're doing is you are ... you're encouraging them to trust their own intuition. And we ... research has found that adult children of divorce, their intuition is shut down sometimes, and that's because they were denied the truth of what they were feeling. So be really sensitive to acknowledging that they get it... they get it way more than we think they get it, and they need to be in the loop.

DS: You know I found... I was looking at some article and I found a really good article here. It's from the University of Missouri Extension... Helping Children Understand Divorce. And what they did is they had the kids outline what they needed from mom and dad. And then they go through each age: infant, toddlers, pre-school... talking about the understanding, the feelings and then what parents can do for them at that age. It's quite good actually.

KS: Yeah...

DS: It's pretty good because it really takes... whatever level their relationship... I mean toddlers obviously don't have the prefrontal lobe to understand everything, but feelings are important and how they're handled is important. And the other thing... one of the articles they wrote is for them to understand is that divorce is forever. Because they always... you know there's this fantasy they're going to get back together again. And obviously it happens once in a while,

but it's not the rule by any means. So the finality of it... because that's probably not a very... that's hard for adolescents to understand.

KS: Well you know, that's a very interesting point. And I think the truth is is that kids always fantasize about their parents getting back together. You know I'll use my personal situation. My youngest never ... we split up when she was basically an infant... so like three months old. She's never experienced us together and yet she still fantasizes about her life being a little bit better if mom and dad were together. So I think there's a bit of a reality that parents are always going to have to perhaps have a little inkling of a wish that mom and dad might get back together. However, as soon as I reminded her that yes, but if mom and dad were together then you wouldn't have "dot, dot, dot", she's like 'oh yeah, never thought of that.' So it's just kind of again having that open conversation and I think... ah... you know when we talk about some of the rules of getting through divorce successfully and empowering our children, obviously reframing it is number one; telling them the truth, never badmouthing the parent – or the other spouse... and the other thing is starting to create some exciting opportunity for them to see how the new beginnings are going to look like. Won't...

DS: Sure and that ...

KS: ... it be fun when...

DS: That would really depend on their age. Like you said, your daughter really... you know that happened when she was very young. So...

KS: Mm hmm.

DS: You know you're going to communicate to her than you would your son. Um...

KS: Absolutely.

DS: And you have to take that into consideration. Like... um... they... I thought it was really good because they talked about the understandings at that level. They may have both of it... like it might be just that one parent isn't going to be here, but they really don't understand any more than that. And then when they get a little older, they no longer live there. And as they get a little older, we're not even connecting with each other I guess.

KS: Well you're right. Knowledge is power. And understanding where your children are at is absolutely crucial, whether that's getting your information from good articles and good books, like you're pulling off I believe the internet... and then as well as it... getting... surrounding yourself with professionals... getting some advice from some counselors and psychologists... and making sure you're getting good advice and good information from people who know what they're talking about.

DS: Well you've put such a big effort into creating this family... creating this... that you have to treat it as valuable and not something you're just throwing away. And... um... we ... and it isn't ... it isn't valuable but the whole concept of family can kind of get lost... in the whole process. So, when we come back one thing I'd like to talk to

about is adult children – how they see what happened to them when they were divorced. Okay?

KS: Mm hmm.

DS: And so... um... would we be... you'd be willing to do that, right?

KS: Absolutely.

DS: Okay. So this is Dr. David Stussy of the BigBrain Radio Show.

(music – “Crazy Little Thing Called Love”)

(music)

DS: Hey, this is Dr. David Stussy and the BigBrain Radio Show. And they want things to be wonderful again. We were talking about children and the change in status... and... So they want things to be the way they were. Right?

KS: Exactly. Exactly.

DS: And I think you were talking about this change in status, like moving from a house or... um... and you wanted to share something about that. Let's just talk about that right now.

KS: Well... Yeah... Well you know... I think divorce... you know other than the emotional journey, there's also the practical side of it, which means there's going to be changes. Often there is less income because there's now going to be two households. This may require a change of jobs, it may require a change of locations. It certainly often requires a change of lifestyle. One of the most difficult things for people to wrap their head around is the change of the family home.

And I would say 95% of the people I work with have a certain amount of – well a significant amount of fear around ‘oh my gosh, my kids are not going to be able to handle leaving the family home.’ They often will say, ‘Listen, the divorce has been tough enough. How can I possibly ask them to move from this nice big family home to a smaller place?’ And what I really would love your listeners to get ... anybody who’s in that place ... is that I will promise you it is not the family home. It is the love and the traditions and the environment that happens within those four walls.

DS: Wow, that’s great.

KS: And you need... If you can say to the kids, “Listen, we’re moving. This is going to be an adventure. Yes we’re going to smaller, but let’s have some benefits of smaller. We no longer have to work in the backyard. We could actually take off and go hiking. We no longer have to... we’re going to have new bedrooms and it’s going to be different and it’s going to be great...”

DS: Wow!

KS: “... and we’re going to have love and we’re going to be able to snuggle together a little closer because we’re not in a big space.” And I will promise you...

DS: I think kids probably see it as kind of an adventure if you create it that way. Correct?

KS: You know... and that’s what parents need to get. The kids will see it through the eyes of their parents. If their parents shift their perspective and shift their vocabulary and shift the way they’re

speaking about things and thinking about things, bang! It will be like a miracle in front of them. The children, all of a sudden they're going 'wow! This isn't so bad. Yeah, mom and dad are getting a divorce, this means some changes, and it's going to be great.'" And if that's the one thing that people can get a message – especially around that family home – is let it go. Let it go. Because the last thing you need to do is be stressed around the money of being able to make those payments – those mortgage payments. That is going to cause you... put you in a bad space. You're not going to be available emotionally for your children. And that's not the outcome you want. We have to remember, David, we come to this earth with nothing, we leave with nothing except the impact we've made on the relationships and the legacy of the relationships. That's it.

DS: You're born alone, you die alone. Right?

KS: Exactly.

DS: Ooh... okay. (laughter) Actually, that's... you know that is the truth. We are alone. Even in kids ... are seeing it through their eyes and for what it is for them and that is how they're going to see it, just like we see it for what... you know what's the divorce affect us, us, us. And ... because that's how we are... because we can only see our lives as we look out and see what things are happening around us. And do they support us or do they challenge us? So, we don't know. In fact, actually that's what we want to talk about is that the biggest cause of divorce is love.

KS: (laughter) I love that!

DS: Because love is such a fantasy that people have created. True love is a compliment of opposites. And you know people say they want someone who's just nice and does all that stuff... and I think people... a true relationship understands... and we've talked about this on the BigBrain Radio Show a number of times. True love is balance. You know, nice and mean... competitive and cooperative... um... I want you hear, I don't want you here... get out of my space, come into my space. You know? Once you understand it, that is really what love is about... I think that might even prevent some divorces... but it certainly would prevent the fact that we have ... a lot of people have a fantasy about it – especially today. You see all these girls spending all this money on weddings, like it's... people plan their wedding than they do their life I think.

KS: Oh, that's so true.

DS: And... ah... So they get fantasize about... it's going to be happily ever after. True, it will be... what we say on the radio show, it'll be happier ever after... because we're happy... either we're happy or we're not. We can be happier and we can have more happiness, but we have a base happiness that's always there for us and that's what we back to. And if we get a more balanced look at life we really see that love is truly a balance. I mean... look at it this way. If you see life as a balance of positives and negatives, then we have love around us 24 hours a day, all the time... because that's just what life is.

KS: Hmm.

DS: And people... if I said... told people to raise their hands, people would say yeah, that's what love is for me. But still we kind of think of it as going in just one direction when it's not. And I'm sure that must come up for you in your interactions with people.

KS: Oh absolutely. And I actually kind of make a little light of it in a sense. I say you know when you first fall in love in with somebody and you go oh, you know, he's so ambitious and successful... he's such a driver... and he's ... oh he... he dresses to the nines... or whatever. And then I go, yeah but give it five years and he's a workaholic, he's... you know absolutely A type personality and a perfectionist so you can't have anything on the floor. And you know I always say of course, for every positive there's the absolute opposite negative. And maybe if we started to sort of... at the time as we enter marriage we got that... for every wonderful quality that we're focused on right now, there's going to be the exact ...

DS: Oh, there is!

KS: ... quality, and...

DS: That is important because that's how you develop your self-worth ... your ability to see both sides.

KS: And... that's...

DS: Support and challenge... both.

KS: Exactly. And when we're working with couples and moving them through divorce, we really try and focus on that... because a lot of people when they come to us, they've now done exactly the

opposite of what you do when you're getting married. You're focusing on all the negatives. So we have to now take...

DS: Oh good point. That's a good point.

KS: ... our time...

DS: That's a good point.

KS: Yeah. So we now have to take them and say yeah, but okay... maybe ... maybe he or she is this, but ... but they're also this. Yeah, maybe they... maybe they have a temper, but they're also passionate. And so we have to spend time almost reframing the vision of their spouses. Now, flip to the other side. They've totally disconnected the two... the two parts, particularly again for parenting. Um... we'll say... a lot of people say well that person never spent any time with the kids anyway. Well, that's because at that time, they were focusing on something else. But let's face it, they tend to... whatever they focus on they will put effort into because that's their personality.

DS: Yeah, it was in a different form. It's like... you know things just form up in a different form. Nothing... energy and life is not created or destroyed, it just changes form. And the more we can see the different forms of love express, you know, like a father might tend to put a lot more attention... so he can give his children stuff or give his wife stuff. Not always. I mean obviously you were a very successful businesswoman, but you probably got caught up in that a little bit yourself. So there's different ways of expressing your love and you can't... and when people can see that change in form, I would probably say there would be less divorce. You know ... I think

people think that the purpose of marriage is to be happy, but that's not the purpose. In fact, if we said that to married people, they'd be laughing... like Justin's laughing in the other room right now. The purpose of marriage is to balance us out. When we get cocky at work and we come home, the wife will... or the husband or the wife will bring you down. And it isn't a negative, it just balances us back out. Or when we're down, they bring us up.

KS: Yes.

DS: And I really don't think people understand that enough. Of course, you and I have had some background in that kind of work. But that's the kind of thing that... If that could come out of your work with other people, you know you'll change their life forever.

KS: Well absolutely. And I think one of the little... one of the little mistakes we make is we look to our significant other to fill all the different... all our different needs. And I think one of the things we need to say is you know I have a lot of needs... whoever I am, I have a lot of needs in my life and I need to not look to my spouse to fill those needs. Perhaps my spouse fills me the need of intimate conversation. But... or maybe just... maybe it's just a physical... more of a physical relationship with that person. But maybe I have other people in my life who fill my other needs. And when we start to look at the community of the people we surround ourselves with, all of them filling our needs – and us filling them of course because it has to be a give and take always – then we put less pressure on that person. It's... I ... first of all, I don't believe... we're always responsible for our own happiness... obviously. But we ... if we put a

little less pressure on our spouse and allow them just to be who they are and fill in the gaps of our needs in other ways, I think we will create more of a balance within our relationships... and looking obviously in the process of divorce as well.

DS: So I guess what we've been saying is the balance perspective about this thing about love... because when you get infatuated the opposite of that is resentment, which is what you end up seeing all the time... it's the resentment. And it was never either way, it was always both. And...so... um... I think when you... you probably work on that all the time. And what you do... you know... and so the other thing we talked about briefly was... I had... I don't know where I read this – I've seen a lot... you know I do a lot of reading. But it was a lot of people commenting about divorce, and they were adults... and I would say not all, but a lot of them really had a negative opinion about what it did or they... I don't think they talked about it positively. I think they even used it as an excuse in a way.

KS: Well I think... I think you're right. That's playing the victim and I'm never an advocate of people playing the victim, because it's so disempowering.

DS: But they've been carrying this with them for years and years... and that's what I could see. Okay?

KS: Exactly. And these adult children are saying the same thing, which is my parents weren't honest with me, they badmouthed each other, they didn't get that I loved them both the same.

DS: Oh yes.

KS: And that I was pulled between the two of them. Maybe I didn't like them the same... maybe I have one parent I don't particularly like as much, but I loved them the same. And I needed to be loved by them both. Regardless of what they thought of each other, I needed both of them. And I know... I know in working with hundreds of couples that what I'm saying right now is so obvious and very few people really get the impact of not providing that environment for a loving relationship between the children and both parents. And if we could do that – listen to them, be truthful to them, have a good relationship with both the parents – we would empower these kids and we would shift the perspective of society on divorce.

DS: Well you know, a lot of reason it doesn't happen... because there's no environment for it to happen... when you take the traditional ... or not the traditional, but sort of the... the adversarial view of divorce... and what you're doing is you are creating a... an environment for this to take place, because... it would be... I don't even think it gets to that because the people are fighting and trying to use each other, etc. So... I have to acknowledge the fact that you're actually creating that environment for that to happen for children, or for the individuals involved.

KS: Yeah, everything at Fairway Divorce is about empowering people through divorce. You know there's lots of tough decisions that have to be made, but it's important they're made separately from our emotions. We need to remove our emotions from our decisions we make in divorce because these are decisions that are going to lay the foundation for the rest of our lives. So there's no question that

Fairway Divorce is a paradigm shift. And I know that it... it's being embraced hugely up in Canada and hopefully will be certainly down in the States soon as well too.

DS: Well you know... for those who haven't listened to the show, why don't you tell us just a little bit about what it's like with Fairway Divorce. Say a couple comes to you and they say you know we've decided to work on the split.

KS: Yeah, well I think what happens is they come to us obviously through you know referral or whatever. And um... what we do is we engage a couple and then we take them through the entire process separately. Everybody at Fairway Divorce has got extremely high financial acumen. So the whole foundation of Fairway Divorce is around the money... because there are only two things in divorce... money and kids. And once you deal with the money, a hundred percent of the time I can guarantee this... when you get the money off the table and you've got resolution on the money, the parenting plan is... it's like... it's a miracle. It unfolds with such ease and simplicity. And you know I'll use the authentic word of love, because the fear is removed. So Fairway is a very... it's a step-by-step, strategic process that takes a couple through all the decisions – separately, brings consensus along the way at different stages and ultimately gets the win/win for everything. And most importantly, a plan... a financial plan to move forward, a co-parenting and nurturing – we call it our nurtured children's plan... moving forward so that people can look to the future with a sense of security and confidence and hope. That's the most important thing... and do that for ... for in

a short period of time because we move people through reason... very quickly compared to the traditional system... and we charge a flat fee.

DS: Well...

KS: So we're never, ever... we're never incentivized... we're never... there's never an incentive for Fairway to drag it on.

DS: Well, you know that is important because I think that has gotten to be this way in the traditional legal structure has really gotten actually kind of severe. You know, you say that... handling money is the... is primary. Do you have any interesting solutions you had to come up with money? I mean what do you do to make sure that works for both sides?

KS: Well, it's very interesting. It's ... one of... one of our tricks is we always get a couple – and it doesn't matter whether the wealth is \$40 million or \$500,000 or \$100,000. The degree of wealth is irrelevant... the process is exactly the same. And I always say to people, I don't care how many degrees you have or how much money you have. This is one time in your life you need to be taken by the hand and walked through a process. One of the things we do is we always agree... we always get a couple to agree on the values of everything – both before we talk about who is going to get what. It's like you go back to those times when you were a child and your mom would say, 'Okay Johnnie, you're going to cut the pie then Sally gets to pick the first piece.' We use the exact same principle... because then, it's totally fair. It's absolutely fair. And when you know that ... okay I better put a fair value on that house or my business... I better put a fair value on that business because I... I should be indifferent

whether the business is worth \$1 million or \$10 million versus that \$1 million or \$10 million in cash. I need to get to that place where I'm indifferent because it could be that my spouse might get it. So it's a real fabulous way, and we're non-negotiable about the process we use because we know it works.

DS: So once they have given a price, then it's just a matter of who needs more liquid assets and who needs less, etc.

KS: Yeah...

DS: ... financially stable.

KS: Absolutely, or it could be listen, you know what the best thing is to sell this asset. But, you know, people have a ... an absolute... it's unconscious. They don't even do it, but they'll... as soon as they see an asset on their side of the balance sheet – and that's where the traditional system starts – they put a higher price... a lower price on it.

DS: Ha!

KS: So... I'm going to take the house... I'm going to take the house for you know \$200,000. But... well then the spouse says, oh, I'll take it for that. No, no, no... it's really not worth \$200,000, it's worth \$250,000. Well then I'll take it for ... (laughter)

DS: Yeah... I've seen them where they actually have people... they actually bid on it and whatever they decide to bid of course is going to go against their side of the ledger.

KS: (laughter)

DS: Which would be kind of the same thing. Um... so... So we kind of got back to the main thing, which was deciding the assets, and then once that's done how that affects the family. And then what you're providing is the environment for the family to kind of create the new beginnings for how many people are involved and the types of people who are involved, and the children at different ages. So...

KS: Absolutely.

DS: And so when we come back I want to just touch a little bit about divorce in terms of it's effect on society and how you see it, and a little bit about what you do in your business. And then we'll kind of make sure that everybody knows about your book, etc. All right?

KS: Fabulous.

DS: This is Dr. David Stussy, the BigBrain Radio Show.

(music – “Another One Bites the Dust”)

(music)

DS: Hey, this is Dr. David Stussy, the BigBrain Radio Show. And we're talking with Karen Stewart, the founder and creator of Fairway Divorce – a new paradigm and what it's like for individuals to split their love. And because the love is still there ... it's just going to change form. But in order for that to happen there has to be a fair equity of the assets, which allows a calm environment for the family... if there's children involved or whatever... to actually make the decisions about how their life is going to work. So it's about the children, it's about the family, it's about the assets... but it's about the love.

(music playing)

DS: Hey... BigBrain Radio Show. Marvin Gaye tells us what it's like. We have a piece of clay and we can make it the best or we can make it not the best I guess. So... ah... Karen, with ... this is our last part. It's called "Stuff that Works" where we kind of what to just bring things to a conclusion and ... You know you said summary that the best thing is for the family to have a calm environment to make decisions about themselves, including the children. And that happens... I think that really happens because of the way you handle the asset division and because the strong financial training that you have in your company... because that's your background... and I assume the people around you have that also.

KS: Well... and I think that's a really good point to... to just sort of summarize... and that is... once... If you can get the money out of the way, which is so important... that's absolutely what Fairway Divorce Solutions does... is we get the money out of the way. The best... the best people to make the decision on how the new family is going to look going forward is the family themselves. But that's not going to happen if you're in a place of conflict, if you're fighting through the court system, if you... if the money is causing you a lot of stress. You need to be committed and absolutely demanding of getting you to the place of resolution around the money and the other issues so you can focus on what is most important, and that's your family. And the most creative, fantastic arrangements I have seen come out of that place. I've had people... in fact parents at different sides of the country and find ways to make it work. And people say there's no

way I'm going to let my spouse, you know, live, you know two provinces or two states over from me...

DS: (laughter) Provinces.

KS: ... that's not going to happen... right? (laughter)

DS: You gave yourself away with the province.

KS: Yeah... but... But the reality is ... if you're approaching it from the place...of ... of... If you're approaching it from the place of love and absolute commitment about finding a good outcome, it doesn't matter where they live, whether it's in another country. We actually have couples who one lives in the United States and one lives in Canada. We have couples where one's in Canada and one's over in the U.K. We have couples from the States. So we've dealt with people all over the place.

DS: Wow.

KS: And have had to find a creative way to be empowered in parenting children, but not live in the same place. So I'm just saying there's always a solution, but you need to get to a place of calmness and serenity and ... and a bit of love to be able to get to that.

DS: You know I think what you're doing is such a strong... it's such a strong idea because you know... I had this last little article in front of me from the Atlantic Journal and it said that divorce does not... is not a threat to the institution of marriage. You know a lot of alarmists do that because some people are standing there... because they're standing, they want everybody else to I guess. And ... because people will always create families. You know a family is a

group of people who help us create... survive... at whatever level. And the closer we are, sometimes the more important it is. And so we're always going to have marriage, we're always going to have families, no matter what happens. And if we can do it in a way that doesn't destroy what we created to start with and it just creates two new forms, you know with the same amount of love, then that would be... that's successful, so I have to acknowledge you for that.

KS: Well...

DS: And the effort you've made to do that. Okay?

KS: Well thank you very much. And I just want to add to that I also believe that if we start to approach divorce in a more loving way as a society, more acceptable, we will actually see marriages last longer. Because I think... again, it's that ... it's that positive and negative coming to a sense of balance. That will happen also in our perception of... as we do it in divorce, that will actually transform and move into our perception of marriage and our ... our ideals and our expectations around marriage will change. So I see this as being wholly fantastic for society.

DS: Well you know, you said an interesting thing when we were talking before. You know people live a long life and you know marriage might actually be important at certain levels. And as we get older it might actually change for individuals. It may not be appropriate to be married to the same person or in the same environment as we get older because we change and things change. It's a possibility. And so when you... when that's a possibility...because people want to get the most out of their life...

because you know life's about yourself. You're the only one that you know that's alive... and if you can do it in a successful way without creating harm or damage, it would be great.

KS: Yeah, wouldn't our world be a lot better if everybody was happy and fulfilled?

DS: Yeah. I think that... well... you're trying, right? Well we're not going to make them happy or fulfilled, we just want them to understand that life is always successful, no matter what's happening. It's just how you perceive it.

KS: Absolutely.

DS: And when you can take an approach like you take and show that the perception is that there's always success being created. And divorce creates success, believe it or not... because the other thing wasn't working. And um... By the way, are you happy you did this?

KS: Oh, I am... This is a calling. You know this was my life mission I've been ... had my head down the financial industry for a long time and I'm doing this with the real intent of hopefully making an impact on people's lives and so far that's the gift that I'm getting.

DS: Well, I really want to acknowledge you for doing this. And I love talking to you. I think... didn't we meet last year at the Master's Planning thing? Is that where we met?

KS: We did.

DS: So that's been about a year.

KS: It's been a year.

DS: Well you've been working hard girl! (laughter)

KS: I... I have been. We've had great success with expanding Fairway Divorce and look to ...

DS: Okay.

KS: ...lots more.

DS: All right. So this is Dr. David Stussy of the BigBrain Radio Show. And we want to have you... all the BigBrains in your life, tell them thank you. This song is dedicated to the BigBrain, Dr. Zena, who's usually on the show with me. And have a great BigBrain life.

(music)

(end of show)