

Brady Music: [00:08](#) ***music plays***

JP: [00:08](#) Hey everybody. This is the legal disclaimer where we tell you the views, thoughts, and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to us, the people talking, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing.

Brady Music: [00:43](#) ***music plays***

JJ: [00:44](#) Hey everybody, welcome back to Red, Blue and Brady, and welcome to what is sort of a weird cast, and not weird in the sense that we use it now like a cool weird thing,, like an alien on a tee shirt or the Halloween costume that I'm putting together this year, but weird in the original sense of the word, something unnatural, something you can't wrap your head around. Because in today's episode, we're talking about what happens when the people who we love hurt us. Now you should know me or at least my little nasally voice by now. I'm JJ and I am of course joined by the fabulous JP.

JP: [01:23](#) Hi everybody! And we're joined by Kate.

JJ: [01:25](#) Kate is a amazing survivor and activist and author, but she'll be talking about a couple of different things today. But she came in to do a book talk at Brady and so I got the copy of the book and got so excited and was so ready for the book talk. I put lots of post-it's in it. I had lots of thoughts and then I had to go home really quickly for a family thing and missed the book talk and was really upset. So this is wish fulfillment for me to have you back in. I don't know if you realize this, but this is purely a narcissistic thing.

JP: [01:59](#) Yeah, book talk part two!

JJ: [01:59](#) So just, just so you know. So we're really happy to have you more.

Kate: [02:03](#) You actually get more.

JJ: [02:05](#) I know, right? I get this like one-on-one book talk. JP, you don't count. Just pretend you're not there.

JP: [02:09](#) I'm not here. Just a bug on the wall.

JJ: [02:10](#) Well you got to go to the book talk. So.

JP: [02:12](#) It was great. It was great!

JJ: [02:14](#) Yep, rub it in JP.

JJ: [02:14](#) So Kate, do you want to introduce yourself to our listeners real quick, or?

Kate: [02:20](#) Sure. I'm Kate Ranta. I am, first of all, a mother of two sons, Henry, who's 16 today.

JJ: [02:28](#) Happy birthday!

JJ: [02:30](#) Uh, my son William turned 11 in September and I am a marketing professional. That's my day job. And then I'm also a domestic and gun violence survivor. And I've been an advocate and activist now for actually coming up on seven years, November 2nd is the shooting-versary, I guess as we call it. I've been doing, I've been in the space for awhile. I'm also the author of Killing Kate.

JP: [03:01](#) A great new book. And I know one of the big events that, as you just mentioned, brought you into this movement happened on November 2nd, 2012. Can you tell us a little bit about what led up to that day, um, and what transpired on November 2nd?

Kate: [03:17](#) Well, to get into what led up to that, we'd probably take three hours, so I can boil it down, um, to basically what was going on just before. So I had been locked in a contentious divorce with my abusive ex husband for about a year and a half. I'd been just terrorized through family court. It was awful. I couldn't make any movement toward, you know, disengaging myself from this person. We had child services involved. It was a mess. About a week before the shooting, he had been told by child services that, until we had a signed order from a judge about visitation, that he could not see his son, our son, and everything went quiet for about a week and that was, it was eerie because everything had, it had been like a tornado all leading up to that. It was constant threats and ongoing emotional abuse and then silence. So that day, it was a Friday, and I had just worked normal day, I went and picked up William from his preschool. I got home and I had plans for that night. I was going out to dinner and so I was getting ready and getting him ready. We go out to the car and I turned on the ignition and the uh, you know, like the dashboard lights lit up about low tire pressure and I thought, oh God, he found me. I knew immediately that it was him because anything like that that happened, he had been in, he had previously -

JJ: [04:58](#) And you had been moving around.

Kate: [04:58](#) Right.

JJ: [05:01](#) To hide from him.

JJ: [05:01](#) Yes,

JJ: [05:02](#) Out of concern for your life.

Kate: [05:03](#) I had moved several times within that year and a half to two years, in order to try to keep safe, and he found me every time. He broke into multiple homes. So right, I had not given him this address. So, when my tire was slashed, I just knew. I called my dad and then he said call the police and I said, well I don't have a restraining order at this point. I had been turned down three times for one previously,

JJ: [05:30](#) which is not to keep interrupting you, but probably one of the most frustrating things in the book, because obviously you know where it's going to end, and seeing you repeatedly try to engage the court in one party, doing everything the right way, one party doing everything the wrong way and you being almost sort of punished.

Kate: [05:46](#) And I always had, you know, tons of evidence, texts and emails and all kinds of, you know, cyber-stalking harassing stuff in the courts. Kept saying that, didn't have enough proof. And so they, yeah, I got turned down three different times. I knew by calling the police, nothing was going to happen, but my dad said call and report it. So my dad came and he stayed in the apartment with Will and I went out, and it was a young female police officer from Coral Springs, Florida. And I explained the history and the situation and what was going on and that I, I felt he was dangerous and that I was in fear. And she, I mean, she wasn't like, super dismissive about it, but I mean, she really was kinda like, I'm really sorry, but there's, do you have a restraining order? Do you have any sort of court orders?

JJ: [06:35](#) And I didn't have anything. And so I just kind of rolled my eyes and I, and knowing that she couldn't do anything and she was like, well, here's a report number, but you should try to go get a restraining order tomorrow. And I was like, well, I've already been turned down for three, so I don't know what good that's gonna do. And she was like, I'm really sorry, but there's just nothing we can do. And I said to her as she was leaving, he's going to have to kill me before you people do anything about

him. And then literally 20 minutes later he showed up at the door with a gun.

JJ: [07:07](#) And that's your, your dad is there, your son is there who's four at the time.

JJ: [07:12](#) Right, right. So what happened was, my dad went to leave, and the plan was I was canceling my plans and William and I were gonna go over to my parents' house for safety, and to kind of regroup and figure out what we were going to do, how we - how we were gonna handle this.

JJ: [07:30](#) Right, are you gonna move again? Are you gonna have to talk to your boss again?

Kate: [07:32](#) Right, right. Yeah, exactly. Cause up until this point, right, it wasn't like he wasn't physical, nothing, nothing. It was, it was a lot of like nuisance, harassing, stalking type of stuff. So I just assumed that that's what this was too. So my dad went to leave and I was standing at the door and all of a sudden he turned around and said, "Katie, call 911 Tom is here." And when I looked over into the parking lot, which was visible from my door, I could see his car backed up next to mine and him - and the dome light on and him getting out. And my dad said, "I'll, I'll wait out here, go back in the apartment." And I just had a really not good feeling. I just had a bad feeling and I didn't want my dad to stay out there with him. So I said, "no, no, come in. Just come in with me." And so by the time my dad got back in, to the door, my ex was there pushing against it. And still at that point we still didn't know he had a gun. He was just pushing against the door. And my dad said, he was saying, "I just want to talk to Kate. I just want to talk to Kate." And then all of a sudden three bullet shots came through the door. And my dad and I were both standing literally against the door. And my son, my son I had with my ex, was standing just a couple of feet, right behind us, he proceeded to then push in the door and had the gun pointed. And the next thing I remember was a boom, and my right hand just like blowing up, and like right in front of me. And then I fell to the ground. And I, and I also remember like moving my hand and like, and like seeing blood splatter right up the wall. It's like being in a movie, you're in absolute denial. It's completely surreal and just terrifying. And then he went over to my father who had gone left toward the couch and my, he was trying to call 911 and he ordered my dad to push the phone away and then I heard boom. So I'm on the ground and then I just heard a boom and I heard my dad grunt. So I thought he, I thought he killed him. The other odd thing I remember is that when he came in, first of all, he wasn't this crazed looking

monster. He wasn't out of control. He was very cool, very calm. His eyes were, he was in control, they were blank. Cause there's, you know, but he was not this, this monster that everybody would want to believe, came in and he's yelling, "why did you take my stuff? Why did you take my stuff?" And I'm like, "what?" You know, he wasn't saying, "I love you too much to live without you. I just want us to be a family. Please don't tear apart our family."

JJ: [10:41](#) He's not screaming for, "give me my kid."

Kate: [10:43](#) ". Nothing, nothing, nothing like that. It was why did you take my stuff?" And basically I had moved into that apartment two weeks before the shooting, so I had taken some of the furniture from our marital home. So we're talking couches and like a bedroom set. And he was upset that I had done that.

JJ: [11:07](#) Which as per the book you had paid for, so...

Kate: [11:09](#) Yes. Right. Like I'm the one that took out and accrued debt to, to furnish this brand new home we had built in Florida. Right. I was taking my stuff, but so I in, if you ever hear the 911 call, which is, I've heard nine one one calls, mine is absolutely, like horrifying. You hear me saying "I'm sorry Tom, I'm sorry Tom. I'll give it back. Please don't do this. I'll give it back." So I'm like begging for my life and saying I will give him his belongings back so please don't kill me. And then I remember like just being like, like my hand in so much pain on the, I'm on the ground, and then I thought to crawl, kind of around the kitchenette table that we had to, I don't know, put some distance between us. And the next thing I knew he knelt down on the opposite side and William was, was there. He knelt down next to William and had he, by the way, the gun that he used was a nine millimeter Beretta and hollow point bullets. So he was there to kill, it's a big gun and that's some serious ammunition, ammunition and he, there's no doubt that what he was there to do and what his intention was. So he had a laser on it and he was pointing it at me and kind of playing with the laser, taunting me and then Will said, Will was screaming and said, "don't do it daddy, don't shoot mommy." And this boy was only four, he had just turned four. He, he, he was just a baby. And so I don't know how or where these words came from, but he said them. I'm, I, I'll always say that I'll never give it to my ex that like somehow he had a change of heart or those words changed his mind. I that's giving him way too much credit. It had already been done. I mean, my dad had been shot, I had been shot, both very critical. So now I won't give it the, you know, he'd suddenly had a change of heart, but he moved, I could hear him move into the

kitchen area and I'm laying there, I'm laying there, and the cops were not coming and kicking in the door or you know, they weren't coming in, not like the movies or TV. Nothing they, they never came in, didn't come in and shoot the bad guy cause it's active shooter situation.

JJ: [13:40](#) Cause it's an active shooter situation so, they're not gonna come in.

Kate: [13:40](#) So they did nothing. They did not come in and I couldn't understand why nobody was coming in to save us. So it was very confusing. But he said to me, finally, "Kate, there's a table runner on the table, grab it and wrap the wound." So I did, I did. And I wrapped it around my hand and then he said, "Kate, just go." And so when I looked, I could see that the door was open a little bit and I'm foggy. It's, you know, I'm losing a lot of blood, but I thought, I did think, okay, they're not coming in, I'm going to go. And if he shoots me in the back, he shoots me in the back as I'm leaving. But either I, I was gonna die if I, if I laid there. So I got up and went and got out and collapsed on the grass, and I could see the whole Coral Springs police department lined up in the parking lot and the lights flashing,

JJ: [14:35](#) Yeah, cause this is happening in an apartment complex. So neighbors were calling and you were calling...

Kate: [14:36](#) Right, right. It was gated, right, so it was gated. The gates were not working that day though. So that's, yeah, there's all kinds of failures. So yeah, the, the police are all there. I could see them hovering by cars and they're like, "ma'am, can you get over to us?" And I'm like, "no, I'm dying. Somebody come get me." They wouldn't, nobody would come get me. And so a minute later, about, my out comes my dad with William. So I knew that my dad hadn't died, and he knew I hadn't died because he didn't see me get out the door. That was the first time that we realized that neither one of us were dead. And they're like, sir, can you, can you bring her with you? So my 67 year old father who's also got, you know, bullet shots and bleeding all over is like, "Katie, we've got to go. We've got to go get up off the ground." And he, you know, helped me up. And so he was really like a hero that day. He doesn't ever see himself as that, but he did. I mean, he found the strength.

JP: [15:34](#) Does your father have any conversation with your ex husband in that time period where you were outside?

Kate: [15:40](#) No, he said that when he got up, he said to William, "William, it's time to go." Oh God, this is gets me upset.

JJ: [15:47](#) Can I hold your hand?

Kate: [15:48](#) Yeah. It's like I could talk about myself, but when I talk about them, so yeah, he said, "William, it's time to go." And, um, he, he said he got the, he put his body kind of over William. A little bit, like hunched over William thinking the same thing, that he'll probably shoot him as they're leaving, and he wanted to try to protect Will as much as possible, and as, but as he was leaving, Tom said to him, "Oh," he said he looked over to where I had been and Tom said to her, to him, "Oh, she's gone." And so he thought that he came out thinking I was dead when he, when, when he said "she's gone." My dad thought he meant that I was dead.

JJ: [16:28](#) Yeah

Kate: [16:28](#) Right. So when he got outside, you're right. It was the first time that we both realized that each other was alive. So, he got me up off the ground, got me over to safety. We went on the grass behind the cop cars and the thing I kept waiting for on the ground among other things was to hear the shot, that they got him. Like they, that they, they shot and killed the bad guy. Then it never came. It never came. He came, he knew to come out, put the gun on the counter, in the apartment. And the ammunition, he left everything in there and came out with his hands up. So he knew it was him, trying to control, right. He - that they, they probably wouldn't shoot him if he came out with his hands, well, they really couldn't shoot him if he came out with his hands up. So I, I, so they arrested him at the scene, and as we were on the ground, first of all, the female police officer that had walked away, was standing over me saying, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." And I let out the biggest enraged, screaming, yelling that you could ever imagine, saying, "Fucking told you. I told everybody and none of you would listen. I told you he was going to do this."

JJ: [17:46](#) Yeah, you had told judges, you had told lawyers, CPS people, everybody.

Kate: [17:46](#) Yeah. So I had told everybody, everybody involved in our case knew that I was scared, that he was a sociopath, and that I was in fear for my life, but nobody cared. Nobody, nobody wanted to do anything about it until after this. So it just enrages me. So she was saying, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." I'm yelling. I hear my dad yelling, "Katie, Katie" in this gravelly sort of, you know, parental, really, it's your baby. It's, you know, I'm his baby.

JJ: [18:16](#) It's his baby, his grand baby.

Kate: [18:18](#) Right.

JJ: [18:18](#) I mean it's, yeah.

Kate: [18:20](#) And also on the ground, we learned that I had been shot through my left breast - or they didn't know at the time it was through, I just was bleeding profusely from my chest. So grave, possibly fatal shot. They thought a bullet could be in me. And so it was determined that I needed to be helicoptered out and to the trauma unit and that my dad would go via ambulance.

JJ: [18:43](#) Yeah. Cause your dad was shot and he was shot in -

Kate: [18:46](#) He was shot in, in his left arm. And then the point blank was in his left side, but it missed all the vital organs by my chest. It went in one side out the other. So it, I didn't even need stitches. It was a flesh wound. I don't know how this happened. I don't know. I don't know how shots like that go into any, he, he shot center mass. And the door. He even could've hit William.

JJ: [19:09](#) Yeah it seems very clear with the way that he shot that it was for the intention.

Kate: [19:12](#) Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

JJ: [19:14](#) He couldn't make the claim that it was for - trying to scare someone,

Kate: [19:18](#) No, he was trying, Oh he was trying, cause he, he pled not guilty so he was at first right after the shooting, trying to say that it wasn't intentional, that he was just trying to shoot at the lock, to get the door open or so, yeah. We had a lot of ridiculousness after as well.

JJ: [19:34](#) But your, your hand was pretty severely injured.

Kate: [19:37](#) Yeah.

JJ: [19:37](#) On the blood loss.

Kate: [19:38](#) Yeah, it was. It was. I never actually looked at it once I got out, I don't, and I don't really remember like the gore and what exactly it looked like, but it was like, I remember it like dangling and limp. I thought that it was going to have to, I didn't think I'd ever use my hand again, or maybe it would have to be amputated. It was very, very injured.

JJ: [20:00](#) It was bad.

Kate: [20:00](#) It was really bad.

JP: [20:01](#) It sounds like there was so many failures, you mentioned not only the court system, the gate at the front of your apartment complex. What caused you to look at advocacy in terms of domestic violence and gun violence rather than looking at, sounds like there's a myriad of problems that you can, that you can look at trying to work on. But why these two?

Kate: [20:22](#) I'm delving into kind of all of it now. Uh, at the beginning of my advocacy, I got pulled into the gun violence prevention movement, and I was focused for a lot of the early years, on the intersection between domestic and gun violence, obviously, because that's what happened to me. And it's important and I want to disarm abusers. I think it's kind of one of the lowest hanging fruit in this movement. I mean, yeah, I don't,

JJ: [20:52](#) Yeah, we, we know scientifically that if there's a gun in the home, right? Women are 500 times more likely to be injured by that gun if they also have an abusive partner. Right? So if we have that quantitative data, why not act on it?

Kate: [21:05](#) Right. And so that's, that was where my focus was for a long time. But now especially with the book, I'm pivoting not away from domestic and gun violence intersection because that's all a part of it. But I've been very, very vocal lately about the systems that are supposed to be in place to protect women and children that, that just fail across the board.

JP: [21:30](#) And in the book,, you mentioned that there were some signs that you didn't quite pick up on in your relationship and, and afterwards, what if when talking to other survivors or people who experience it, what do you tell them to look out for in signs of an abusive relationship?

Kate: [21:46](#) Sure. Well since I'm at Brady, I'll talk about the gun thing. So he was an officer in the Air Force. He was a captain when I met him and then he promoted to major.

JJ: [21:57](#) But please read the book cause there's a lot to that. So yeah.

Kate: [22:00](#) Yeah, there's a lot to the millet. Yeah, that's a whole nother,

JJ: [22:03](#) We're going to, we're going to link to the book numerous places throughout Brady. But please read cause that, to me, was such a fascinating failure. So, but, read that part. But anyway,

Kate: [22:12](#) But yeah, so when I met him, he had a lot of guns, and I come from... not gun culture. My parents are educators. We did not have a gun in the home growing up. I, if my friend's parents had guns, I didn't really know about it. I didn't grow up in sort of a gun culture type of face. But when I met him he did have guns, he was military, he used to go hunting with his father. So he had this cabinet with all kinds of hunting rifles in it. He had multiple shotguns, modern shotguns, handguns. And it made me uncomfortable, because I just had never been really around in close proximity to guns much in, in my life. But I at the time in, early on in the relationship, I just wrote it off as well, he's military and he used to go hunting and this is, and that's okay. But I did know enough to ask about, you know, trigger locks and locking it up. Cause I had, my, Henry at the time was only three and a half when I, when I met my ex. So somehow I had the knowledge, it wasn't based on anything, you know, any advocacy I had, you know, I hadn't gotten that far yet, but I knew enough to say, "can we, can we at least have trigger locks and, and lock these up." And he, he was resistant at first because you know, "if an intruder comes in, I've got to grab the shotgun under the bed and go blow him away." But he, he finally did.

JJ: [23:45](#) You said that there were maybe like no overt acts of violence until suddenly there were, but I mean even when he's walking, you talk at one point about him walking around the house saying that there's an intruder in the house.

Kate: [23:55](#) Right, right.

JJ: [23:56](#) Just sort of rambling around corners. That to me is sort of, it's not pure violence, but I think it implies a threat there. Right?

JJ: [24:02](#) It does.

JJ: [24:02](#) Like, I have this, I have this training.

Kate: [24:05](#) Right. So there were a few things with the guns. He knew I wasn't comfortable with them, but what he would do was take them out, and line them up on the bed and "clean them." I'm putting air quotes, clean them in front of me, like and pick them up and play with the laser on the wall, and laugh, and he would do his, like he had fun knowing that I was uncomfortable and

like, "Oh, you're just, you're overreacting. You're, you're, you're just too emotional about this and that kind of stuff." The other thing was that he, I remember clearly one time, he claimed that he had heard something and an intruder was in the house, and he grabbed the shotgun from under the bed and proceeded to sweep the house. So he went all through the house, like Rambo, with it pointed. And I have a three and a half year old son who was sleeping, you know, it was, it was really, it was really odd and scary and that was early on, but I looked at it as he was protecting us. I wasn't, I didn't see that as a threat, but it was behavior that I had never seen before. So there were, yeah, there were multiple incidents like that.

JJ: [25:21](#) Yeah. It seems like in the book that there's this sort of constant of like pushing of boundaries while at the same time being very cruel to you and like on an emotional level with like this like threat of this gun sound in the background.

Kate: [25:37](#) Right. And that's the hardest part to explain honestly are the, are the red flags because he was so subtle and it was all so insidious over time that, by the time I realized that I was not safe, I was so deep into it. We were married. I had, I mean, William was two, by the time I really realized that this was not a safe person, brand new house, all new cars. I had this whole life that we had established, we had moved. I, you know, I mean it's, so a lot of the red flags from early on, you can write off to, first of all, lack of knowledge. I didn't grow up knowing that somebody's trying to control you and have power over you is abuse. It was, if a guy hits you, that's bad. It was real. Literally, yeah, it's physical, but I didn't know about emotional. I didn't know.

JJ: [26:34](#) Not if he tells you you're stupid or if he tells you to get plastic surgery or tells you this stuff or that, yeah.

Kate: [26:39](#) It's that it's all these mind games is and it's just chipping away at who you are, over time. I've always been a very strong, outspoken, you know, opinionated woman,

JJ: [26:52](#) Wicked smart. You'd been a writer for a really long time.

Kate: [26:55](#) You know, professional, college degree, everything. So I, there is no stereotype of, of a victim because I, I just think it's so victim blaming to say that strong women won't find themselves in these relationships because some of the strongest women I know have found themselves in these relationships. I think these guys like to see what they can do and how, you know, how far they can get.

JJ: [27:17](#) Yeah. And this is perhaps, like I know that JP and I both qualify as millennials, right? Are we just barely millennial? I think we're barely millennials. I'm definitely not a Zoomer, I think anyway. I know I'm not Generation X but, but so you, but you had talked about in the book she was sort of that and I think that's true because as millennials we sort of, early millennials, we got the generation X messaging. I know certainly that I own like, the crop tops and have the Generation X, like, style and wanted to be a skateboarder.

Kate: [27:43](#) Love it.

JJ: [27:44](#) But that, yeah, but no, the abuse was a very set thing that happened also to a very set type of person.

Kate: [27:50](#) Right.

JJ: [27:50](#) And it couldn't possibly be psychological. It couldn't possibly be slow, and insidious. It was you got punched in the face and that was the Lifetime movie anyway.

Kate: [28:00](#) Yes, exactly. And really the abuse of a spouse only became illegal in the early seventies, so that's not that long ago. So when I, by the time I was coming up, I mean really it wasn't being, it still wasn't being talked about. It was a family matter behind closed doors. I, I and hadn't.

JJ: [28:19](#) It's still not discussed. I would say.

Kate: [28:21](#) Yeah, I'm trying to change that. Why I'm doing this,

JJ: [28:25](#) But it's also, you know, it's not fair that it survivors that that have to take the onus on of educating the masses. Ideally we're not raising abusers either. Right as this society, that would be great.

JJ: [28:39](#) As a mom, of two boys, I have definitely felt the pressure on that, to of, the messaging that they hear from me and you know, with what they're seeing too, coming up, because the, what they hear from their friends and from society at large is like, it's tough.

JP: [28:54](#) And how have your two boys been dealing with, I know you recently moved up here, into the DC area, and obviously one experiencing the, the shooting itself is so traumatizing and, and can be a really difficult thing for children to deal with. How have

you been working through that and, and what is that process been like over the last couple of years?

Kate:

[29:17](#)

Yeah, it's been a, it's been a long process. So two things; for Henry. My older son, he was not present, so he's a step removed from this. And yes, his mother and grandfather almost died and his brother was there, and he's heard the story ad nauseum through the years, and he's witnessed some of my advocacy. He's, he's big on looking me up on the internet and reading articles and he, he, I think that that's his way to cope. He, he wasn't there so he can't fully relate, but he wants to get all the information that he possibly can, to know about what happened. And I mean, I think it's confusing for him in a way because he was so, he was also so young when it happened. He was nine and not there, but he didn't hate my ex. He didn't hate him. And so I think that early on for him there was a bit of a struggle over that. Like not understanding how this guy did this, it's not squaring up with the person that he knew since he was three and a half. So, I mean, you know, he's not, he was nine, he was nine when it happened. He's 16 now. He seems to have a pretty good grasp on things though. He'll ask me about it sometimes, but he's not overly emotional about it. William is 11, he was four when it happened. It's, we're yet to know what the full impact will be. He is on the brink of becoming a man himself. And his struggle is twofold. He has all of his anxiety is around me, and protecting me. He, and, too, he does not trust men at all. So when we are out in the world, he experiences a lot of anxiety. I will see him hyper vigilant, looking, you know, looking around eyeballing men. If they, if they look at me, he, he gives them dirty looks like "don't look at my mom," he's become it, I think because he saw me almost die, it flipped for him to be - from child to protector, at a young age when he shouldn't have to be the one protecting his parent, his mother. But that's he, that's where he still is. It's gotten better. He's, you know, if I can go to the store for groceries for an hour, and he can stay at home and be okay and he knows he's okay and safe and that I'm safe. But for the longest time, it's just been, he, he really is just hyper vigilant and protective of me.

JJ:

[31:54](#)

You know, so often we'll hear people say like after a shooting the involves exceptionally young people, that you know, well kids are really malleable, kids will adjust and kids will be fine.

Kate:

[32:02](#)

Kids are resilient. "Does he remember?" I get that all the time. "He was four, does he? He probably doesn't remember. Does he remember?" I'm like "he remembers every second." It may be, eventually or even now, it might be a little bit fuzzy in a way, but he remembers the trauma and yet guys, your body, your

few physically, it remember the trauma. So that's just people trying to make themselves feel better. Like, "Oh the child won't be that impacted by it." Well, he is and it's always going to be really hard, really hard. So I've tried, I've been showing him old pictures and you know, baby, baby pictures of him and me and you know, what we looked like and what things, what things were like before the shooting cause in his little mind.

JJ: [32:49](#) Well, and that's gotta be hard for brothers too, that there's an older brother that I can remember the good times with with a person and then younger or younger siblings who can, and that's gotta make, some sort of tension because...

Kate: [33:00](#) Henry, yeah. Henry can remember things from when, he was like, two. Two years old. He's got this crazy memory that he is, and William just just doesn't, and I can say that even there's memories from after the shooting, from when he was five, six, even seven, where, and I understand, that because I have a lot of fog in blanks in those few years following it, from the trauma and the PTSD and trying to just put our lives back together, that he was in the same mode. I, it would be no different for a child than it would be for an adult.

JJ: [33:33](#) And one of, one of the things that we talk a lot on here, particularly with survivors about, is the the costs of gun violence that people don't think about, the cost of violence. It doesn't occur to people that after you survive shooting, it's not that they took you up in a helicopter and everything's fine. You've got medical bills, you've got work, you've got rent, you've got a life ,you've got for particularly, I know in the book, you talk about all of the work you have to do rehab-, wise on your hand, and then what emotionally you're going through, what your kids are going through and what your father is going through. Well, as a family, and I wonder if you could talk about that a little bit, expand on it, and I want to quote you, which might be weird for me to quote directly to your face since we're sitting like two feet away. Quote, "This is why women get fired during abusive relationships. This is why women lose their livelihood over men behaving badly."

Kate: [34:26](#) Yes.

JJ: [34:26](#) And that was a line that really, really struck me because, it's not the shooter that bears the consequences after the fact. Even though that - you then had this really lengthy legal battle, he was, you know, he had a place to sleep at night and he had three meals and he didn't have to have hard conversations.

Kate: [34:42](#) Didn't have to do. Yeah. He didn't have to do anything.

JJ: [34:44](#) Yeah.

Kate: [34:45](#) He's had to worry about himself and what was going to happen to him, whether he was gonna stay in jail, in prison or not. So for my experience, I, medical cost wise, I was actually very lucky in the sense that I had a really good job in a amazing employer, a very supportive manager who, I mean, my coworkers went to the crime scene and removed all of my belongings from the apartment so I wouldn't have to do it. That's the kind of employer that I have.

JJ: [35:19](#) That's good.

Kate: [35:19](#) They're called solstice benefits and they're in Plantation, Florida.

JJ: [35:22](#) Good job! That's a terrible name for a town. But good job Solstice!

Kate: [35:27](#) Yeah, it is. But they, they were incredible. So I lucked out there and I, and I also had really good insurance through them. Plus at the of the shooting I was still technically married to Thomas, so I had TriCare Military as my secondary. So the helicopter, the surgery, the anesthesia, all of the hospital stay, the occupational therapy, a year of occupational therapy to get my hand moving. I did not face the brunt of those costs, but I, and I know and I, I right, I do not take that for granted that I had that cause I know so many survivors that that had to bear those medical costs. So I definitely don't take that for granted. But yeah, I was just very lucky to have an incredible employer that was empathetic and allowed me to go two - three times a week, leave early and go to occupational therapy to get my hand moving again, or else it would have been a claw is what the surgeon told me. If I didn't start moving it and getting it going and just get the muscles going and the tendons and it would, it would have been a claw, and unmovable and you had to start going right away. So I was really very, very lucky with that. But I mean that, yes, the emotional costs are huge. I, I didn't face any of it for the first three years. I was in survivor mode. I had to keep my job, I had to be strong for William. I had to get my life back together.

JJ: [37:04](#) The homework doesn't stop, and PTA meetings, and all that happens.

- Kate: [37:04](#) Yeah. Right, getting going. I went, I went back to work two months after the shooting. I still had, um, this splint thing that would hold my, my arm up, and I was really basically typing with one hand just because if I took more time off, I wouldn't be paid. I was, I was very lucky that they paid me for two, the first two months they paid me my full salary. That, which also doesn't happen, but at the end of the two months, I had to decide what I was going to do and I, I had to go back to, I need my health insurance. I needed, I needed a paycheck. I had moved out of the apartment where the shooting had happened, but I still had bills that my parents couldn't pick up. Like they had their own stuff. So it still doesn't matter. I still had to get my life back together. I had to get back to regular life and pretend like everything was okay when everything was not okay. I was not okay. I would disassociate at work, which is one of those feelings where it's like almost an out of body experience. You feel like a fraud. Almost like you're watching yourself from above and like you're, you're just like phoning it in and you're, I just was not okay. And finally about three years later, I, I had a real breakdown. Um, it just all collapsed in on me and I wound up taking a Family Medical Leave Act, for three months, which you're not paid, but I, I had to go into intensive therapy where I learned tools and skills to deal with triggers and things like that. And really, I think that that, that really helped save me. I was never, um, giving up. I was never, I never had suicidal thoughts. I, I never did, but I was not, I was low. I was, I was really, really low and I needed help. And thankfully I got it. And I have a supportive family.
- JJ: [39:05](#) Oh, and good on you for being tough enough to go look for it, to go get it.
- Kate: [39:08](#) Yeah. I knew enough was enough that when I, when I really lost it at work and just couldn't function, I couldn't write another word. I couldn't deal with anything. I, I, I knew that I needed to do it. So I took the time and I did it. And I would encourage all survivors to do that. Don't stay in survival mode because it's not a way to live.
- JP: [39:30](#) After hearing the stories of your boys' recovery and your recovery, it's so hard to think about how the system had to be reactive, like everything had to be done afterwards, after all the pain had been inflicted. And you mentioned in your book that you'll, you almost had to die, in order to get at least some justice and the scene that you told us about of you laying there, shot screaming at this woman police officer who had been there 30 minutes earlier, it's just a, a little metaphor of the system at large. How, what are some of those little pieces that you think

that could help change both our criminal justice system and our laws around guns in this country, that you think could make our system more preventative rather than reactive?

- Kate: [40:17](#) Right. So I believe that we need to start with believing women. First of all, there's a lot of victim blaming that goes on in domestic violence and where, it, the onus is on the victim to prove that this person is not safe. Whereas if we started with, okay, this woman is reporting this, he's not safe, let's do X, Y, Z. And he needs to prove that he's safe, and taking his guns would be would be one thing, but holding men accountable from the very start is, and with actual consequences, I can't tell you how hard it is to get a conviction on domestic violence. So when these domestic violence laws with, about guns pass and it's like on a conviction, well great, yeah that's great but it's very, very, very hard to get a conviction, and people underestimate that. They, these guys plead down to misdemeanors, you know, whatever he did to her is not considered a felony. You can't do anything legally on emotional abuse. We need stronger, I guess laws, against men who are abusing their partners with actual harsh consequences. It's just, it's holding men who show that they will be violent towards somebody that they purport to love, their wife, their partner, and or their children. If he shows that he's capable of doing that, if he shows that he has the violent tendency, then more needs to be done to thwart and stop him instead of all the victims and everybody having to come forward and not being believed.
- JJ: [41:58](#) Cause you mentioned at one point in the book that when, when you had initially filed for I think one of the restraining orders that did go through in Florida, they said, okay great, we're based on the number of firearms you've told us and the evidence we have here, we're going to go remove those firearms. But just so you know, legally he can go out and buy one tomorrow, to replace everything is what, that to me is a minute in the book where I, I didn't know that, actually. That if you had had them seized, you still can get more. And I work in this space. Granted, that I'm still a newbie in this space. But that was shocking,
- JJ: [42:31](#) Right? Under Florida law, temporary restraining order, cops can go in and take all the guns, which is what they did. And then like you said, in the next breath, they said, "well, but just understand that he can go out tomorrow and get a new one." His name wouldn't have hit a system because he wasn't convicted of anything and we hadn't had due process.
- JJ: [42:50](#) Oh. So that he could then go into a...

Kate: [42:54](#) Correct, so what happened was, he was served, they took the guns and then we had a court date two weeks later, which would be his due process at that, at that hearing. Correct. But at that hearing it was, this is how the systems were failing me. So at the, at the two, the two week later hearing, I asked for a permanent restraining order against him, which I believe then would have had his, his name would have hit some system if he had a permanent restraining order against him. The judge kept saying no and would drag us back to court like three or four more times, each time with me asking for a permanent,, and him just extending the temporary. So the entire eight months he only was under a temporary restraining order. And my understanding from the detective is that the gun, the Beretta that he used to shoot us, was purchased legally. So he did not go through. Right. So it's a loophole. Yeah, it's a, it's a giant loophole.

JP: [43:51](#) I know that six weeks after your shootings, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting happened. And it's kind of this tale that we often hear in the gun violence prevention world of we have to wait til some of the mass shootings happen in order for any anybody really to talk about it or for there to be any laws that would actually help some of the situations that you found yourself in. How do you deal with talking about mass shootings in your advocacy and particularly in how sometimes they'd take up a lot of the oxygen in the room when we talk about this issue?

Kate: [44:25](#) Yeah, it's been a long frustration of mine since getting involved in the movement, and I get it because these mass shootings are, they're tragic and shocking and somehow surprising every time they happen and it's like, you know the media. It's like a feeding frenzy, where intimate partner violence, community violence, some of the stuff that happens basically every single day just isn't talked about or sensationalized as much. For me, when a mass shooting happens, one of the first things that I look for in coverage is what was, people don't want to talk about the shooter, but I want to know about the shooter because almost every time they've got violence against women in their pasts and that's the key. That's I think the key to helping solve at least some of the violence because these guys are showing signs leading up to these mass shootings and a lot of it starts in the home. Whether the Sandy hook shooter shot his mother, the San Bernardino shooter had that manifesto, and it was all about women and that women weren't giving him attention and he wanted to kill women. There's examples, the Vegas shooter, same thing, he had violence against women in his past. There's these patterns of behavior that give us a window into who these

guys are, and a lot of times people are reporting their behavior, but the authorities don't want to do anything about it, and they're, it's, it's goes back to holding them accountable, taking people seriously when they're making these reports. I don't know how to get more attention on the epidemic of domestic violence and women and children being killed constantly. These guys taking guns and wiping out entire families and including themselves. That's a mass shooting.

- JJ: [46:25](#) And we have a, a child psychologist, actually coming on the podcast later in the month to talk about the trauma that kids go through, with this. And I feel almost like with mass shootings, with lockdown drills, we're still putting the responsibility on, hey, if you want to survive, do you X, Y and Z
- Kate: [46:43](#) Let's arm teachers, kids throw books at the shooter, you know?
- JJ: [46:46](#) And so we're putting the onus on the survivor and I think we still do that with domestic violence. Here's how you get away, right? And here's how you don't fall into a violent relationship as opposed to putting it on the other.
- JJ: [46:58](#) How about he doesn't abuse and how about, yeah,
- JJ: [47:02](#) But just I think sort of the lessons that women get taught too about sexual assault and sexual violence of here's what you do not to be assaulted. Here's what you do not to be raped as opposed to here's how do you not,
- Kate: [47:12](#) Don't wear a short skirt. What were you drinking?
- JJ: [47:16](#) Right?
- Kate: [47:16](#) Why were you walking alone? Why were you? Right. So how about,
- JJ: [47:20](#) cause you mentioned, you mentioned just sort of in the book, things like that. Well like why did you have a child? sort of topsy turvy that's like, cause you don't think about it like that.
- Kate: [47:28](#) And also the other big thing is that when abusers come into your life, they're not waving a flag saying, "Hey, I'm an abuser" and they don't look like a monster. My, my ex husband was very cute, very good looking. He was, I mean very good looking, very successful.
- JJ: [47:45](#) Seemed very charming.

JP: [47:45](#) In the military.

Kate: [47:45](#) Smart, intelligent, right, in the military. Like was amazing, when I met him, I used to call him Mr. Fantastic to everybody. I thought that I had hit the jackpot with this guy. Like I can't even tell you. And so no, he wasn't waving a flag saying that he was homicidal and if I left him he was, he was going to kill me. He, they don't, they don't start with that. They would obviously none of us would be with them if they started with that. That's it's insidious it, they hide it. It's, I always say it's like a mask. He had his, his mask on real tight, when I met him. And then slowly little by little it started, it started to show.

JJ: [48:25](#) And it's not that, I think, that the mask comes off and then it's perpetually off...

Kate: [48:28](#) No, no.

JJ: [48:29](#) ...until the very, very, end, is that it's like it can slide back and forth.

Kate: [48:32](#) And it's very confusing for the person in the relationship because no, not all times are bad. We had some great times. We had inside jokes. We had this whole life planned.

JP: [48:44](#) I wanted to give one last plug for your awesome book, Killing Kate. Is there anything that you hope that people listening and the readers of your book get out of it? And is there anything that you got out of the process of writing it?

Kate: [48:58](#) Yeah, the process was a difficult one, cause it was, you know, retraumatizing and reliving and going, going there in a lot of places. So it was really, it was really difficult, but right from the start, right after the shooting, I knew that I, I just didn't have an option, but to be a person that was going to speak out because I was so, at the beginning, it was anger that was driving me. I was so angry that I saw this and I had warned so many people and that this still had happened, that I almost had to lose my life in order for us to see justice. So from the book, I'm really hoping that it opens eyes to what an abusive relationship looks like. That it's not always just physical, that none of us go into it wanting it, looking for it. I'm hoping that younger women, especially, will read it and take really good notes and take it for face value. If you're seeing somebody behave in these ways, it's not cute. It's not flattering and you need to run. I mean, get out of it before it gets to be as bad as it did for me. Gun violence side of it, I want people to understand that the myth of, "oh,

he'll use something else to get you. So it's not, the guns" is a bunch of bullshit because my ex showed up in a car, he had a hunting knife on him, but he had a nine millimeter Beretta with hollow point bullets and extra ammo. It's the go to instrument for them to use. And so disarming them, yes ,is absolutely the answer. And, you know, getting guns away from these violent men is gonna save lives. Yeah.

JJ: [50:46](#)

The knife couldn't go through the door.

Kate: [50:48](#)

No. You would have had a yes,

JJ: [50:50](#)

You and your father could have overpowered it.

Kate: [50:52](#)

correct.

JJ: [50:53](#)

A whole when you introduce that lethal weapon, that's a whole different ball game.

JJ: [50:56](#)

Right, exactly. The other myth that I hear a lot, and I've heard a lot in my seven years, is why didn't you have a gun on you? So in a way, being blamed for my own shooting, because I wasn't armed and it's, I always call it a vigilante myth. So Oh, "let's arm all the women and then they can just shoot their perpetrators and stop them. And everything will be okay." Well, no, just no. First of all, it was an ambush. So we didn't even know he had a gun on him. He had never actually threatened me with a gun before. So this wasn't something that I was looking for. Second of all, the space was really, really small. So if we're talking about me, an amateur with a gun, maybe. All right, let's just for argument's sake, say I went to the range a few times and I kind of knew how to shoot. Any of us could have wound up actually dead with all of those bullets flying through a small space. Come on. You know? And then the other thing is that we're asking women to actually take a life of somebody that they may still love. It's complicated with abuse. You don't, when you leave, you don't always hate the person. So let's put it on her to go shoot somebody that might be the father of her child, maybe right in front of her child. How that's, that's a great idea. That myth has gotta be squashed and the movement's the one to do it.

JJ: [52:21](#)

So the books done. It's amazing. What's next?

Kate: [52:23](#)

That's it! I'm working on pushing the book out and out and out, over and over on social media. I'm looking for big time media to pick it up and run with it.

JJ: [52:32](#) They should. It's a, it's, it's an amazingly written book. I mean, his story is so compelling.

Kate: [52:38](#) Thank you. I think so, it's my story. You do a very good job of telling it.

JJ: [52:44](#) Well, so on that note, Kate, thank you so much for coming in and for everything. This was phenomenal.

Kate: [52:49](#) Thank you guys.

JJ: [52:51](#) We have to stop talking now so I can hug you.

Kate: [52:52](#) Okay.

Brady Music: [52:54](#) ***music plays***

JP: [52:57](#) Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's lifesaving work in Congress, the courts, and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you. For more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to the podcast. New full length episodes drop every Monday, weekly wrap ups, drop on Fridays and minisodes come whenever we can fit them in. You can also get in touch with us at bradyunited.org or on at [@Bradybuzz](https://twitter.com/Bradybuzz) with two Zs. Be brave and remember, take action not sides.

Brady Music: [53:50](#) ***music plays***.

Disclaimer: [53:50](#)