

**Corey Andrew Powell: (00:02)**

I am joined today by Naja Hall, a master stepfamily coach. She's been dubbed, "The Queen of Conflict Resolution" in dealing with blended families. Naja has been seen on NBC's -The Today's Show and in syndicated columns across the country. Naja, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

**Naja Hall: (00:18)**

Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (00:22)**

Oh man. I am so excited for you to be here too, because I've wanted to interview you for a long time —because I follow you on social media, like a fanboy basically —because you do a lot of great stuff and you're always doing really thoughtful, thought-provoking posts, but also very funny. So we'll make sure people can follow you as well and get into your shenanigans on your podcast. But first, to begin, I wanna know with your platform, your main platform is the blended family platform and dealing with step parenting and co-mothering. So before we begin into what you do in that space, I'm really curious to know why you got interested in that space. Give me your story about that.

**Naja Hall: (01:04)**

Yeah, so I think like a lot of people, in my case, art started to imitate life. I've always been a creator. I've always been an entrepreneur and I started dating this amazing man about nine, ten years ago. And he told me that he was a daddy. And I had inhibitions about that, simply of all the things I had heard from TV and my friends' experiences, you know? They don't really shine a positive light on people who are divorced or people who are trying to co-parent. They always make it look like it's drama and toxicity. So I was a little, just gonna be honest— I was a little bit hesitant. But he was literally, and is literally, we ended up getting married, still married, turned out to be the most amazing man that I'd ever been with. One of the things, however, that started to happen was all the drama and toxicity that I had been warned about.

**Naja Hall: (01:55)**

And I was fearful of what started happening in our situation. It became a very real part of my life. I, as I got to know him and the family life unfolded, I had to accept the realization that I joined a ready-made family. I firmly believe, Corey, that the family is the most important system that all of us are ever gonna be a part of. It's our first system. And not all of them are functional as you and I have discussed many times. So I was living literally, witnessing real life. Childhood trauma happened to children. I was witnessing dysfunction. I was seeing an undiagnosed personality disorder, like all these things that I didn't have a name for at that time. So when I started researching, you know, I talked to my therapist about it. That didn't really help. Talked to the preacher man. He told me to pray it away —no shade to the preacher man, but these resources were not just for this one specific area of my life.

**Naja Hall: (02:53)**

Those resources that I was coming across were not helping me. So I did what any woman would do, Corey —I built! I started first talking about my plight online, not really sharing and spilling all my tea, but I started talking about it, just seeing, you know, what did people want? And as I started to gain an expertise and, as you will, and an expertise sounds so ----yeah, weird. But as I started to gain more experience, I started to give people advice. And before I knew what, people were calling me and I was spending eight hours of my already busy day helping folks. And I was like, Naja how can you flip this into coins. Cause clearly you love to do this, but how was this translating to your own bottom line? And so my business was born. That was five, six years ago. Now, I run a full scale coaching agency. I've grown from strictly seeing people in step families and having conflict in their blended families or their unended families to coaching people through all sorts of aspects of life. I have some A- list, celebrity clients and politicians, a lot of athletes. So the business has, has definitely sprouted into something beyond my wildest dreams. Yeah. That's how I got started. That's my story. That's a short version.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (04:08)**

Well, listen, I think it's fascinating because it's a multifaceted story. Because there's also a lesson there about taking something that you know, or that you are good at. You mentioned the "expertise" as a word that may sound a little bit extravagant, but the reality is if you have gained a lot of knowledge in a certain area of life or experience of life, many very, very successful entrepreneurs, they've taken that knowledge and they've parlayed that into a career. And in your case, it happens to be a family counseling platform. But it's no different than if you had been, you know, a mason and knew how to lay bricks better than somebody else. And you said, I have to turn this into a career. I mean. It's a foundation for a career, but I am curious to know too, like why do you think there is so much drama with stepparents? I mean, is it just, is it jealousy because they now are angry because maybe their ex or their spouse is connecting with someone else emotionally. I mean, I would imagine there's a lot of reasons, but do you have a couple of main reasons that you see?

**Naja Hall: (05:10)**

Okay. I would say I think at the core, a lot of the drama, when you see two people that say we're gonna love each other forever, they pop out this baby, then they break up. They don't really learn how to consciously uncouple. So I think just from the beginning, a lot of us, I know I surely wasn't, as a child, I was never taught healthy ways to resolve conflict as an adult. I learned how to handle and communicate my big emotions. And I think that's also a lot of people that are just undiagnosed. We have, and it's over, you know, on social media. Everybody's a narcissist, but it's very true. All of us have some narcissistic traits, people possess borderline personality or just some traits of that. People are not able to recognize this in themselves. And especially before they start having kids with these partners. So you're left to kind of deal with a person's own unhealed trauma and their lack of ability to resolve conflict. I really think that's the root of it. Corey. They just don't know how to play in the sandbox together.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (06:13)**

Yeah. And although your topic is universal for all women, I do wanna stress too, that you specialize, I would say with the minority family, the black family. I mean, you do it all, but I'm saying, I know that a lot of your content really specifically deals with that dynamic because it is a very different demographic and we have maybe different social economic situations we're dealing with, et cetera. So what do you find in that community are some of the biggest obstacles? Is it what you just mentioned? Like, is it the fact that maybe mental health in general is a taboo topic for African Americans? What do you think about that?

**Naja Hall: (06:51)**

I don't want to sound like I'm being air headed or that I am being tone deaf, but I do have a specific clientele. The people that come to me are the people that have already been with a therapist before. They are the higher thinkers. They are...They know that they have a problem and they know that they want to seek resolution. I think the misnomer that happens in the black community that they say about a lot of us is, oh, we think we gonna pray it away. Christianity has been given a terrible rap because in the past we've seen a lot of theologians not support mental health and thinking that's a demon in your head. When really a person is simply imbalanced. So, you know, I do deal with a very specific echelon of people of color. Of course my business has expanded to, and I hate to be this "all lives matter" person. But one thing I've learned, people give me a very rare glimpse into their souls, their beliefs and their family systems. And if I set a white family right here and a black family right here, and they have the exact same conflict, don't, you know, the same things, keep these people up at night. The same things do. Now as a black person, I will say that my black clients feel that it's easier because I speak their language.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (08:08)**

Yeah.

**Naja Hall: (08:09)**

My white clients love me because I teach from the systemic perspective, specifically of the African family, systemic perspective. One thing that we, as African descended people, no matter how, where we come from, we all kind of still carry that "it takes a village" mentality. That's one thing that I did not, I have not seen in European or especially in white American families. So when I come teaching these white folks about honey, it takes a village. You cannot do it alone. You yourself are not enough. You have to provide your child with outside resources —they like that because it's right. It's not just my way. It's best practice. I no longer subscribe to the notion that black folks ain't getting therapy because we are. We are paying top dollar. We have resources out there. I have ex-gang bangers. Believe it or not as clients. They come on and they pay that hourly session fee. And they get, you know, they say what they need to say and they express it. And I speak to them in their language. I have politicians that have had, white politicians that had, have had children outside of their families. And now their wife has to accept this new child. And she's a stepmother to a kid that was born during her marriage. And so I have to speak, learn how to speak their language. Speaking the language of pain has become a universal thing for me, but I also speak in the language of healing.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** [\(09:30\)](#)

I love that because it does have to begin with acknowledgement, accountability, and then you can move forward. I know so many people who struggle with that part of it, but I do think it is a stigma that's a bit past tense, probably about therapy. Because I know for myself, one of the best decisions I made, I was 28 years old and I went to therapy and I did not realize the unresolved childhood traumas that were there. And thank God I had a great therapist because I've heard stories where you might not get a therapist who's as skilled and very true and, and great at what they do. So I know that can happen, but I do also recommend people get therapy. And you did tap into something else when you talked about the notion that it takes a village, but there's also what I'm getting into more and more with African Americans is there's also ancestral trauma we're bringing forward to our future generations.

**Naja Hall:** [\(10:24\)](#)

They call it PTSD, post traumatic slave disorder. It's been proven.

**Naja Hall:** [\(10:30\)](#)

It's been proven that trauma is passed genetically. Like if you're a person that reads about epigenetics, like you really know trauma is something that is embedded in the very fiber of our DNA, which is, you know, something that we try not to pass on to future generations. But yeah. I mean, I think if people are not in therapy or some sort of coaching or counseling now with the advent of social media, like if you just scroll your timeline as if you were 14 year old, you're seeing the resources. You're seeing that in your timeline. So, you know, it exists when I was coming up, that wasn't a thing for me.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** [\(11:05\)](#)

No, no, we didn't have that.

**Naja Hall:** [\(11:06\)](#)

That, it, wasn't a thing. I think we had "Scared Straight" for like the bad kids.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** [\(11:11\)](#)

Yeah. And it didn't work for a lot of the kids I know. So, they still ended up in Rikers.

**Naja Hall:** [\(11:18\)](#)

Exactly.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** [\(11:19\)](#)

Yeah, yeah, no, you're right. There are so many more resources. And I also think what's great. And what's wonderful about the newer generations, especially— I will talk to the millennials and Gen Z — I'm really happy that you guys —I'll address you guys directly, are in a better place to handle the mental anguish that past generations had to deal with. Gender identity issues for one is a great one where I know that there's just much more inclusivity and freedom to move about in the skin that you demand to be in, and that you want to be recognized in. And I didn't have

that in my generation, you know, in the eighties growing up, it was a very different time. So I am happy that we're progressing moving forward. I think that's really a good thing. Now I do wanna move on to some other stuff, cuz you are also an author and you have your "Girl bye" book series. Right? So in the "Girl bye" book series, that's how you

**Naja Hall: (12:14)**

That's not how you say it, you gotta say, "GURL BYE!" (Finger snap!)

**Corey Andrew Powell: (12:15)**

Girl, bye! And it is a, I guess it's an ongoing series. I'm just checking my notes here to make sure I do it justice. But the "Girl bye" book series, you have a couple of them right now. One is the mindset makeover journal for stepmom's. But the one I really love, cause it's a, it sounds a bit more scandalous and fun is "Girl bye she's not going anywhere. Neither are you". So that sounds like you're referring to a stepmother and the new girl or the?

**Naja Hall: (12:49)**

Either one of them. It's interchangeable. Because I wrote that book Corey for women that are thrust into this co-mothering situation and they don't want to be in it. They did not ask to be here. They were not invited, but boom, here we are at the table together and we need to figure this out. If not on the book cover, it says, this is not a kiss and makeup book. Cause I'm not trying to teach mothers and stepmothers necessarily how to be BFFs or end up being that little Hallmark card that we see. I just want you not to ruin this child's childhood. I don't want you to retraumatize them. I also want you to get your own healing. And so in that title, when I said she's not going anywhere, neither are you. That literally is speaking to whomever. If you are a biological mother, it's telling you, honey, that stepmom ain't going anywhere.

**Naja Hall: (13:39)**

So how are we gonna do this? Are we gonna torture each other for the rest of this child's life? Or are we going to move on? And the stepmother, she's not going anywhere. Neither are you. Stepmom, this woman is that kid's mother. They are bound by a soul tie. That is one of the most powerful unions that exists on this planet. She ain't going anywhere, Boo boo. So how are we gonna make this work? That book is speaking to both women and biological mothers and stepmothers equally have purchased that book and took me to an Amazon best seller with buying that book.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (14:10)**

Mm, wow. That's amazing. Congratulations on that. I am wondering what role, well, not what role, I know what role they play, but at what level do you speak to the men or do you, in your book series?

**Naja Hall: (14:26)**

So there's a whole chapter called the man in the middle because let's be honest if it wasn't for him, none of us would be here. He is a very important factor. And I think so often men will kind of step aside and leave the one woman to fight this battle that neither one of them started.

They're not necessarily vested in it and they don't know how they got there. So I do call to the forefront, the men that are the reasons that these people, this whole situation exists. What is your responsibility perhaps? Did you start one relationship before the other one kind of ended officially? Have you been giving your child's mother false hope? Have you been completely honest with this new woman? Are you, and I see a lot of fathers doing this, they'll get in a relationship, a new relationship and they'll start to negate responsibility over to the new. And she becomes like a surrogate step-up, instant mom. And that is not a stepmom's job in my firm, very experienced, humble opinion.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (15:27)**

Yeah. Well it reminds me of when I was about 15 and my mother was dating a really nice gentleman for a while and he had a daughter who was about my age. Oh. And and I was an only child, you know, to my mom. I have other siblings that I discovered later as you know that story.

**Naja Hall: (15:46)**

That's a whole episod...

**Corey Andrew Powell: (15:47)**

Yeah that's a whole other show. But it was interesting when I first met this girl, she was only with us for like a week. She came to stay with us and one morning she called my mother, "mom" and I literally looked across the table with like....

**Naja Hall: (16:01)**

Who are you talking to girl?

**Corey Andrew Powell: (16:03)**

Right?!?! And it was just so, and she, you know, she was kind of endearing herself to my mother because her father was dating my mother and they seemed to be getting along. But I was like, no, that's my mom. You don't call my mom.... And when I thought about that memory in relation to the work you do, I thought about even that as a dynamic, when the children are not kind of understanding how they should even react, and respond to the newness. Right? So that in itself I had that little moment. I was like, I was about to jump across the table when she called my mom "Mom", when she called my mom, mom. So I can imagine that's....

**Naja Hall: (16:34)**

Honey, that's not your mom.

**Corey Andrew Powell: (16:36)**

Right?!? Like...what is that all about? But I was also immature and being, you know...

**Naja Hall: (16:40)**

You know what? You were a child and you had been accustomed to it just being you and mama all these years. Right? And then your whole world is shaken up. One thing I realized is that with

our children, a lot of adults are not equipped with the right tools to kind of help their kids transition into what this looks like. We also have to realize, especially I see a lot of stepchildren starting to act out because they don't really have autonomy over the situation. They don't have any control or they don't have a say, all of a sudden they know they're getting a new stepmom or step dad. They're getting some new siblings. They're having to share their parent and share their space. But no one has ushered them into this newness with delicacy and they don't give them any sense of ownership in this. It's kind of like, you're told what to do and children, like a lot of adults, don't really know how to express these big emotions. So what do they do? They act out. Yeah. They carry out. They act out, they resist. I feel like if parents were to usher their children in with ease or at least give them a sense to where they feel like you are in control and you gotta offer a lot of reassurance.

**Naja Hall:** ([17:50](#))

Cause what if your mom would've said, looked at you and said, you know, or later pulled you to the side and said, baby, you know, I know you heard that girl, call me mama. I'm gonna always be your mama. Now there's enough of me to go around. But you, you came up in my heart right below my heart. Right. Nobody can take the place of that. You know, that probably, you know, you needed reassurance. You're like, okay my position is safe. I can breathe now. And I can kind of be cool with this girl. So yeah. I think our parents just have to use their words.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** ([18:18](#))

Yeah. Yeah. I do often cite. I call it grownups behaving badly, which is sometimes when they, when they just don't step up to the plate and, you know, help kids get ushered through those situations for sure. Yes. That does bring me to ask you about in general, your career, you're doing so well in your career in media, and I think you are a great role model for other young women looking to get into the media field. So just, if you have a few words of advice or wisdom about a young college student, perhaps, or someone in college in general, looking to get into the media career, what would you suggest are some, some steps to take?

**Naja Hall:** ([18:55](#))

If you are looking to embark on your media career, I would say this, no matter how old you are, no matter what type of equipment you have start today. It doesn't, it doesn't have to be perfect. My first podcast, I recorded it from my phone. That one probably got maybe 50 listens, 50 downloads, but you know what? I just kept going. I literally kept going. My podcast now —I think we're getting 10, 20,000 downloads per episode. But that's just simply because I kept going. Also talk about what you wanna talk about. Be free and be yourself. Think about what your future self would want to hear. Always put things out that your grandma would never be ashamed to hear, or your parents or some adult or some person out there that you respect. Maybe a mentor. Think about yourself in the future.

**Naja Hall:** ([19:47](#))

Be very careful and guard your image because you don't want things that you say, cuz we know cancel culture is real. We don't want things that you say when you're 20 years old to come back and bite you when you're the CEO at 40 years old. So just be very mindful with your words.

Always be fair. Most importantly, be consistent. Always, always, always be putting something out, make sure you stay on the top of people's minds. Don't engage in social media fights unless you're getting paid for it. Don't do that. And just always make sure you lead with love. Everything that I've done, Even if it's been from a painful experience, has always been with the purpose of me teaching others so that I can save somebody else going through some of the things that I've gone through. Be consistent, lead with love, guard your image and watch your mouth.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** ([20:35](#))

Awesome words of wisdom from the amazing Miss Naja Hall and author of the "Girl Bye!" Book series. So I am so happy you joined me today and thanks for your time and all the words of wisdom. And I love that despite the fact that you're discussing things that are about step parenting and co-parenting a lot of those lessons about accountability, responsibility, being kind, being compassionate, that all spills out into other aspects of everyday life. So thank you so much for being here with me today.

**Naja Hall:** ([21:05](#))

Thank you so much for having me.

**Corey Andrew Powell:** ([21:08](#))

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays presented by the national society of leadership and success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcast. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, and I'll see you again here next week.