Book Announcement and ACEs Introduction

Hey, you guys, it's me, Dr. Tori. My book is officially out. And yes, It is time to talk about ACEs. You guys can find the books everywhere. However, I would encourage you, guys to go to my website, bevictorious.com and place your order today.

Yes, its time talk to about ACES. Let's go, y'all. Hello, hello, Hello you guy, s it me Dr Torie coming with another episode of Be Victorious! Now listen, it's really an honor to have the guests that we have coming today.

We have been speaking for a while and her passion, her vision, everything that she's been doing in support of adoption awareness. We're trying to let you guys know what it is and what we need to do to understand how important it it or it isn't because the problem is we're not bringing awareness to what We need too.

And when I ran into Lena, it was just an amazing sight because she knows what she's talking about. Not only does she co-host a podcast, she definitely advocates and she is here with us.

And it's my pleasure to have her here, Lena. Where are you? Hi, Dr. Torrey. It's so nice to be here with you today. I'm so happy to you here. Because we have been doing this and this is the thing you've been.

Doing this on your own your passion for advocating for what you believe in is what drove me to you and I've. Been sharing with so many people that it's the awareness of aces that's going to help because all of these fall.

Introducing Lena and Her Advocacy Work

under that umbrella. Even though they made those updates, it's still a few updates that they need to make. And I think what you're advocating for definitely needs to be on the website for awareness.

So tell our audience who you are and what your represent. Okay, my name is Lena Vanegas, and I'm a social worker. I do work with adopted displaced foster trafficked and stolen people.

Also work for moms who have lost their children, either to foster care or adoption, or they haven't quite their child is in care, care right now so I also give national presentations on suicide prevention and my focus is adoption and how adoption is an adverse childhood experience and a risk factor for suicide.

Y'all know I always bring some good people up on the platform and this is one. You know why? Because she stands for what she believes in and that's what got me to just watch her pay attention and see what's she's doing.

And she is doing work in this community. If you notice, you see how she paired it all to adverse childhood experiences. Yeah, let's have this conversation.

So you know about ACEs already. Absolutely. A lot of people don't, so I'm glad we're talking about it. I know that's your work and it's so important, but I love having these conversations.

Because it needs to be in our community. And you talked about everything. You're doing the work in your community, you're going to work nationally. We need more people like you to to step up and believe that this can happen.

There's so many people in my community already that's going to take you in. I'll tell you, shout out to Albert. He's out there right now advocating for foster care, and you've seen him.

You've met a lot of people I think that's what we need. That community awareness is what's going to get this information out here. And I thank you so much for stepping up to the plate and saying, yep, I'm ready.

Not just for adoption awareness, the consequences, and the disadvantages, but suicide awareness. Let's be clear, we just had our month, But we don't need a month.

We need to talk about these things every day. So tell us more, do you have a nice score? My eight, my personal score. Yes. Yeah, it's very, very high as you wouldn't be surprised by that due to my lived experience.

So I hit, hit almost all of them. I don't remember the score, but it was very. And guess what? It's okay. It's going to be people that's gonna take advantage of that.

Of course, I have to shout out my favorite. Everybody knows Mick. Mick don't hide his. He called his the perfect 10, him and Sarah. And Sarah, of course you met her as well.

They don' hide it at all because we do not let that ace to score define us. I have it, I'm not ashamed, my kids have, it my family has it the world has, we just need to bring awareness to it.

Absolutely. I don't think that's a perfect 10, if you know what it is, you can say I honestly, am not embarrassed, but I just don t remember exactly what is.

Right. And that s okay. It's one in three with an ace score right now. Join us. Exactly. Just the identification of taking the ACEs quiz and having an ACE score are great steps to take.

What do you do with your audience in regards to educating them on the adoption awareness?

Adoption, Lived Experience, and ACEs Awareness

What I mean, I tell them about, lived experience is a big part of what I center because I think that's the most important thing because we don't look to the people that we're advocating for and we won't ask them what they need and figure it out.

We're not going to know, right? So I talk a lot of centering lived-experience. I do talk about mine, but I talked generally about you know, people in general that I know I'm not giving information, but just kind of grouping it together.

There is also research out there. The research is lacking, and I'll share that because some audiences, that's more important than the actual lived experience, But it's very lacking.

So I just share, you what is the lived-experience, explaining why it is trauma, why is complicated trauma. an intergenerational trauma, and it's really a trauma that people don't recognize.

They think, oh, you're adopted. You should just be grateful. Your lucky. you have this better life. And then I always say adoption needs to be recognized as an adverse childhood experience because it is.

It definitely is. And with those experiences, we know it puts us at a greater risk for suicidality, addiction, incarceration, poverty, being unhoused, so many things that could be prevented.

I told y'all she was good. I said it. She's good and we need more people out here that can advocate. It's your lived experiences is that that's going to pull other people in.

We don't necessarily have to share our story, but people need to understand those lived. Experiences is what we use to motivate other. To share theirs.

Still haven't had a chance to really thoroughly explain. Because ACES has always been an household issue. And, you know, growing up, stays in our household, let's do this.

But when you have things like adoption, Shout out to my friend, Story, who came to the Kansas City Be Victorious

experience and poured her heart. She was adopted.

And when we went to school together, you know, fair skin, beautiful young lady, but her brothers were not her at all. Just to have to grow up. in that environment was one thing, but when she shared her story about having to go and get her birth certificate, she said it triggered her so bad because of course she had to reach out to her people and they weren't accepting of her.

And I hurt for her because I know that the people that, the parents that fostered her, brought her into her house, they took care of her. But we missed that missing piece of what if something happens?

You know, what, if there's, you know genetics, there are some things that are happening. And that's where I have to shout out Julie. She was on the podcast and she, um, she had the twin.

she actually has another book out by the way, but there people in our community that have had this conversation. And so to have you there, not just as an advocate, but someone that can actually help lead that discussion and help people, you really don't understand unless you're in that situation, how much of an effect it could have on you.

So I want you to really know the work that you are doing is of God grace and you got to continue doing it because somebody is listening. I'm that somebody, I am listening, so if nobody else is, i am.

Thank you, You're welcome, because you doing the Now, what motivated this work for you? What made you go into it? It was really, it's an interesting journey because I went, when I was young, I wanted to undergrad and then I want to grad school and I got my master's in social work, but I've always been conflicted of the field.

I feel like the feel is very homogenous. The feel very harmful. And I felt that way at 22 years of age. I can't work for $10 an hour. I know my worth, I just can do that.

So I veered away from social work. And I think it was best just because I wouldn't be the social worker that I am today because had my own work to do.

We can help others and support others until we help and supports ourselves, right? So, had many different lifetimes. Then once I started to really on like decolonize and deconstruct being a bought and sold person.

I connected with other adopted fostered you know traffic stolen people. i really started to feel validated like a lot of the things i felt internally i didn't have the language for and i was always the other person in the household that I grew up with, everybody was white.

And that's not me. So I was always on the outside of everything. I didn't have the language. It just became what it is, but I knew internally that wasn't, that was not natural, not normal.

Connecting with other people, and then I had some lived experience that were really, really harsh. My mom, I connected with my mom in Colombia. So that was a whole process, right?

And talk about, you know, when we connect with our people, and we don't speak the language, it makes a huge, huge barrier, so it's like Google Translate, getting people to translate, and trying to establish a relationship that you can't make up for when you've missed 38 years.

We're always connected, but we weren't in physical space. So we have language barriers, we so many different barriers. And we both come to the conversation in different spaces.

greatly impacted by being separated, you know, that's a trauma, a loss, grief, something you're never going to get over or heal from or recover from. You can find ways to live with that grief in your life.

we were in different places. And I was still unpacking everything. Unfortunately, she ended up dying from suicide. That was in 2019. So I really need to understand this.

Personal Trauma, Family Loss, and Motivation

What are moms who are impacted by adoption or CPS or the system? What is it like for them? And had to unpack because there's a lot of propaganda about those moms, right?

And it's false, so I spoke with, I was like, "I'm going to talk to moms to see what they're going through." And I found that most of the moms were living very parallel experiences to myself and other displaced people.

They're dealing with suicidality, they are dealing addiction, they're dealing with relationship problems, they are dealing being on house, poverty, mental health struggles, all of those things.

So I realized it brought me back to social work. And I never really was like, I'm going to do this. It just kind of happened where I started sharing and I guess enough people we're like interested in what I was saying so they would invite me into spaces you know speak about suicide prevention right and it's just kind of gone from there you now people see what i'm doing and then they i am lucky that they want to invite into the space and they wanna hear about the lived experience.

So that's how, how it became to be. And then I realized like, this is what I, This is, what, I want to do. This, is What I need to, be doing. so I've been, you know, connecting with other people doing it.

and I mean, that, s how It kind of came to Be. It was, it started. I think a lot of our work starts personally, but then it becomes bigger because it's not, This isn't about me anymore.

This is about advocating for people. So this doesn't happen. this is advocating. For people that aren't here. Now, this. Advocating for. People here that, you know, aren' able to at this point because they're not safe to or they'r not in that space.

so I do have that privilege because I. Do have the privilege of a degree and that is a privilege. I want to acknowledge that it gets me to spaces. that people might not listen to me because I don't have those credentials behind my name.

So that's kind of how I got into what I do today. And that is the reason why. I'm a fan and I want you in the community. And I know for a fact that the committee is going to accept you because they share the same story, not just your story of lived experiences.

I have people and will share, I am a dissertation coach. Been a Dissertation coach since I got my degree because it's people like us, like you said, with the lived experience following our passions, doing what we're doing.

That was the push for me to go back to get my doctorate degree. I will share. My dissertation coach or dissertation chair, shout out to Dr. So I still talk to her to this day.

We actually do conferences where she is the dissertation Chair and I'm the Dissertation Coach and we share what you just said, because there are people out there like us.

I remember her asking, like, what are you so passionate, you're passionate about so much, really passionate. And I really wanted to get to the bottom of understanding ACES.

It was that talk I shared with everybody that Dr. Nadine Burke said I started my dissertation in 2014. it fell in my face, I said, this is it, and that was it for me.

So let's be clear. Yeah, you have those people that don't have it but those live experiences speaks volumes because that makes you a matter subject or a Matter Expert period, regardless of your credentials.

That's what I love about you because yes, You have the credentials, yes you're in social work, but if you haven't realized the Lord has paired you because you're advocating for not just yourself, but a community, for your family,

or others that share the same qualities.

You now have that community already. So number one, congratulations. Number two, I'm in the community too, because really we're saying the thing. We really are.

I made this hands down. Because everything that you talked about, The suicide, the adoption issues, The abortion, we've talked about so much. Like people don't understand, you can meet so many positive people if you just open up your eyes and understand and listen.

And I think that's what's been our relationship this whole entire time, because you are out here, You are movement by yourself, honey. and let's be clear, I've seen your community.

You've done research. So those lived experiences and talking to people, That's the research. So now I hear people, yeah, I did my research, you're supposed to.

Because you'll understand that you are not alone in your journey and you aren't alone at all. There are so many people that support you right now. You talked about your community.

Tell me more about you community because you advocate for the people in Columbia for sure. I don't, I mean, starting to do some work in Columbia with other Colombian people, but that's not like the majority of my work.

Mostly it's with adopted displaced foster traffic and stolen people. So I'll support them, you know, we'll deconstruct their lived experience, right? They're the expert in that, that I'm just coming alongside them.

I also work with the moms in the same capacity. You know? in their, of their lived experience. And I come along with suggestions, you know. So that's, that who I work with in terms of like interpersonal and one-on-one, and that- Don't downplay yourself, Lena.

You're an expert, baby girl. Quit downplaying yourself because you do it. You're advocating. I see it. Because soon as you post, I'm posting, and I am sharing.

Do I, do I not? Like, let's be clear, because that's what we need to bring more awareness to the issues that we really have a passion to advocate for.

And you are doing it." So your motivation and push, again, it's not just you, but it was your mom. Yeah, my mom, I would say definitely my Mom like that was a big.

That was the big experience I did have another experience where someone I was, you know, had a Big part of my life was adopted, and they died by suicide in 2014. So that was like the first one and then my mom came in 2019 and I was just like, that really impacted the way I'm going to do, what I am going do in terms of my work.

So yeah, definitely my Mom, my lived experience. definitely the other person. And then just, you know, when I connect with other people, I'm just like, every time I work with an adopted, displaced, fostered or trafficked or stolen person, or I worked with a mom, there is never an incident.

There's never like a situation where I have this all wrong. You know, I don't, just realized like the corruption, the trauma, struggle, pain, torture, all of that, you know?

So it's like I can't turn away from it. It kind of, it empowers me to do the work and use the voice that I have. Dr. Thelma said that people with ACEs or people trauma we kind tend to, its soothing.

Why Adoption Should Be Included in ACEs

Yeah. So like First 48 is a great show. Law and Order are great shows. Shout out to my new shows on Hulu, Reasonable Doubt. Yeah, I like it. I do. And then Unprison.

With Carrie, Carrie Washington advocates for ACEs. She has always advocated for adverse childhood experiences. You don't hide it at all. she talks about it in her book.

But just to see authors like Terry McMillan, Hulu really bring people, there are shows out there that bring awareness to these things. And I think once we make it reasonable, you're doing that by having the discussion.

You're going that, by advocating and supporting the people that you are advocating for. Your doing this for your mother, your doing it for yourself. We just need to get more people in the community.

And you have your community and I have mine. Were going to continue to educate and were going get it out there so more can feel comfortable by not just sharing their stories, but being comfortable and knowing that they're not alone in their journey.

Absolutely, absolutely. Thanks for having this, creating this space where we can have these conversations because these conversation are so, so important.

And I appreciate you for coming in because I think once people get in the space, it's like, oh, So many people gets so nervous. It's, like oh my God, Dr.

Tori, you're so… No, I'm not. I am just a person just like you passionate about getting this information out here. Just imagine episode one, and I was alone.

And here I am, I found so many valuable people. You are a hero to me. No, you are because not just the social work aspect is the people that have came to you.

you gotta think about it from that. Once you advocate and people see that, they lean to that they want that support because we didn't have that growing up.

So that's where mentorship comes in for me. I've always been a mentor because I don't want people to experience what I experienced growing up. So whether it's the abuse, the neglect, It's ACEs.

And I just like how you've paired it together. It takes a minute for some people to understand that suicide is really a big deal. it's something that we should be talking about more because I feel like there's the hints, but we don't take advantage of the, the hint.

I have a cousin that just passed away. In June, it hurt me bad because I felt like, because we disconnected, I didn't get a chance. Cause I know for a fact, if he would have came to me, definitely would've did the best I can.

It just hurts. it hurts because you have to live with that. But under that umbrella, It's definitely under the ASIS umbrella. And we have bring awareness to as much as we can because awareness will save lives.

It will, and I'm sorry about your loss. And I just want to say, it's not your fault that you didn't get to connect. Yeah, It's very complicated, but it is something that stays with you forever.

It changes you and it changes the way that we move through the world, at least for me it has. Its changed the ways I see things, its changed way I do things.

you know, you just, there's like life before and then there is life after. And you find a way to, or I found a to live, right? And is that like grief running through, but there are ways to find support, find supports groups, get support whatever support means.

But yeah, it is one of those experiences that I wish on nobody. And I agree. So I'm going to ask you a good question because we've seen the, for me, it was the updates in June of 2023 that made me say, thank you, God, because in 2019, these are the things that I was advocating for.

Racism, racial discrimination should have been on there a long time ago. What else should be included? on the ACES awareness on CDC's website. Adoption should be included.

Why should adoption be include? because if it was included, people would actually probably recognize more that it is an adverse childhood experience and it's trauma.

And people miss the, I feel like so many dots are not connected with it. You know, there's, we know when children don't live with biological parents or a biological parent, that's an at first childhood experienced, but it needs to be like, in on that survey so people can connect those dots.

And I agree. And guess what? On my survey, I would love to add it because no shade. I got the approval from CDC. The initial study set over 17,000 people back in 1995. Of course, people weren't having the discussions we're having in 2024. the 10 question survey is just a 10 questions survey to bring awareness I even had what's interesting.

One time I did a conference and someone was like, oh, I'm sure she's abusing HIPAA laws. And I started laughing because again, i'm not the only one that has a quiz out there.

Everybody has the quiz. I just made my quiz more educational to bring the awareness to people. However, I would love to put because I am a researcher hint.

And yeah, I would love to put that on the part or an additional question about adoption. I wood. because I think it will bring awareness to it a lot more.

And that's the information that I feed. There are people that not just use my research to get into college, they're using it to expand trauma awareness everywhere.

It's a pretty good one. I mean, let's be clear, it's as good as that book, Let's Be Clear.

Community Support, Social Media, and Closing Remarks

because it's a reference. That's really all it is. It's an awareness tool, just like the ACES quiz is an, is a awareness. People need to be more aware of sex trafficking.

We're not having that conversation either, but we need too, because at all falls under the ASIS umbrella. In the last things you want to share with our community, I am personally inviting you to the community.

I will share all of your information. Accept everybody and I'm not saying that I want people to understand ACES and you're perfect. And I know for a fact the community will take you in and love on you because they're going to agree with everything that we have talked about today.

I thank you for being here. Thank you so much for having this conversation and having me here today. It was, it's an awesome environment. You know, you're welcoming.

I was never worried. Actually, I love doing podcasts. That's one of my favorite things to do. So I loved it and I've enjoyed our conversation. And I hope we can continue it.

to collaborate. I mean, there's a lot of opportunities out there. Yeah, I'm ready. Send me what you need because I know that you co-host the podcast I do.

Let me know what we can do as far as getting this awareness out because that's why we're here. We're to help people. Our lived experiences is the reason why want to save people's lives.

And I think you're amazing. Always have. and I am glad that I got the opportunity to sit with you. let our listeners know where they can find you They can find me on Instagram at Lena Leads with Love, or Lena Vanegas on

Facebook, Or Lena leads with love on Twitter and also on X.

And then I just took the dive down TikTok. I hope I don't regret it. and I'm Lena leadswithlove there. So thanks for asking. My website is not up. That is coming soon.

And we'll be here. And you're stuck with me. So I mean, thank you. It would matter. We're going to find you on TikTok too. But I find I'm learning because we're all learning together to just find the space where you can use and then use that space as a tool to help you with the other spaces.

I'll post on X every now and again. And then it'd be five people that say something and I just elaborate on that. So it just, you, we just got to get a feel of it.

I honestly, I hate to say this, but social media. We weren't, wasn't born in the social. Yeah. A rotary phone. Yeah, I did too. Exactly. I had an answering machine and there were pages back in high school, the library, what is it?

The card catalog? I mean, no, Google, all of it. Oh, love it! The encyclopedias, The Thick Ones, yes. Actual dictionaries. Yeah. And honestly, i'm still okay with it, She was actually on our podcast.

She's going to get her doctorate degree. I showed her my folder of ACEs information, and it was about this big. And she was like, my God, I said, baby, but you can't tell me anything about it.

You want to know about ACE? I will spit it out. But that's the purpose. Those lived experiences will create that for you because you'll be able to do that.

And I'm telling you, you are a subject matter expert in your area, and we need to hear more from you. You know about our lunch and learn? I do. I've attended a couple.

It's hard at lunch. And when I can, yes, I did. Yeah. and I appreciate that. People don't know we really actually do learn and people come on and it's people that actually chime in and is like, Oh, well, what?

And then they chime and they stay and then join us. For our listeners, join us. Lena has been a part of the community. We just have the pleasure of hearing from her and hearing her story and how powerful she is and she shares.

and exposes the world to awareness is what we need. So I thank you so much again for joining us. You will see us, you guys, we will be collaborating and we'll be working together.

And for this I say, this is of course a great episode of Be Victorious. I think you're so for being here. Thank you. Our listeners, We appreciate you, guys for listening to us but make sure you all follow Lena and you will Seeing more from us soon.

Thank you guys again for another fabulous episode of be victorious You know where to find me everywhere everywhere LinkedIn to let me shout it out because I've been getting a lot of love from LinkedIn So thank you so much for just sharing my information.

Don't forget about my book. It's out there and I will be tuning in to everybody and supporting everyone that supports me. We thank you guys so much for another episode of Be Victorious.

I'll talk to you guy soon. Bye-bye you, guys.