## Book Launch and Opening on ACEs

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. It's time. To talk. About ACE's. Let's go, y'all. Hello. Hello, you guys. Welcome to another episode of Be Victorious. You know who I am. It's Dr.

Tori. And I really am excited about the guest that we have. This is someone that has been, we've been actually colleagues and working together for a while.

And when I was in schools, we kind of got together, you know, to combat bullying and combat some things that have been added to the CDC. One of the major things we did, I actually did curriculum for the Sandy Hook Promise.

And at that time, discovered a bond, a bound for us being in Chicago, just really having that awareness and wanting to help our communities. And so we connected and we have kept in contact over the years.

So to see this transition and to have somebody with power and purpose still supporting you, not just in public education, but the passion and the purpose that I'm pouring out, She is my girl.

And I think what people need to understand is when you're really empowered in your community and you doing things, your work speaks for itself. We made a joke about this when we first met, but it's a part of her introduction.

It's Erica with a K. Let's be clear. Some of you all may not know her, But I do. Come on Erica, let them know who you are. A ray of sunshine.

## Ericau2019s Background and ACEs Score

That's what you have always been. Y'all see that flower? Yall seen her representing? What I mean, we're talking about BIPOC. and people that stand out in their community.

And when I tell you it was an honor to introduce you to our community and let them know that you were already doing it, y'all have already connected, you've already bonded.

The blend was easy. Every now and again, I introduce the community to some people that hold my heart, and you really are one of them. I just want people to know that it's ACEs awareness, it is an ACE's experience.

But this episode is a little different because not only are you going to talk about your ACE, but you're going talk your cycle to healing. You are a psycho breaker, honey.

Representing, doing your thing. And here we are. So Miss Erica with a K. I love it so much. Tell us about you. Oh, goodness gracious. Where to begin? All right.

Well, I'm a queer Latina, spoken word poet and artist born and raised on the south side of Chicago. Very proud of that. Hey. And my parents are immigrants, first generation.

which I'm also very proud of. And I also lived in Texas for some years, which is how we connected, because that was part of the work I was doing with Sandy Hook Promise, is that you were in texas at the time.

So that's how connected. I actually lived In Mexico as a grown up, as an adult for many years. and I went to school

there, I worked there and had a whole life there.

and I've also spent time in India and lived in Canada for a year. And I say this because it also adds to that experience of being an immigrant, because oftentimes as a first generation, it's like, well, I'm not an immigration yet.

I have somehow actively sought to be an immigrants and want to know what that experiences and live in other places and experience that and walk in those footsteps.

Do you want to know what my score is on the ACES? What your ACEs score? Are we ready for that? Lucky number seven, Hey! And you know, what I think we do that just as an identifier people.

So, you, know we, do not let our ACes score define us at all. And when she means lucky number 7, let me tell you I always speak highly of you and how you've never let your ACEs score, define you.

Did y'all hear everything that she said? You have to understand the umbrella and know a lot of this. is really aces, but the thing that people have to know is we cannot let that define us.

She explained it in the introduction. And I think that's the reason why we bonded. We talked about a lot, and it really doesn't make a difference, you guys, whether you have a seven or a one, it's that fact that you haven't aced the score.

You have done something about it. Your legacy. Because you talked about your you being a first generation. I'm a 1st generation that I learned that right here.

My 1 generation high school graduates why get it and understand. There you go. I mean, so many of us is we're the first time for so. Many things. So, um, I always joke that I came out of the closet at 34, but I tell people I.

Came out. Of all the closets at. 34 because it's, there's many. Closets and so, many, of. Us are in. Right. And, and there. Is a lot of shame and. There's a.

Lot of blame that goes with those things and to be able to free oneself of those.

## How ACEs Shaped Her Work and Healing

Things. is so powerful and yet it's also important to remember, it doesn't just happen overnight. It is a lifelong journey. Just like it took 34 years to get into all of those closets, It's probably going to take that much time if not longer to come out all those closet.

So it really truly is the journey, and that's to me what ACEs is all about. I knew about ACES before I had met you actually. You did. And I did, I know about aces.

I remember when I learned about it, it was so empowering. It was just amazing. But then when i met, you, i'd never met anyone that was actually a champion for wanting to talk about Aces.

People did not want to, talk, about Aces when, Dr. Tory, you were just like, Oh, You're like this. You were like I'm a champion for talking about ACES.

Let's talk about it. I was like what? You changed my life because you really gave me a platform to stand on, not just with you, but with so many others and realizing there's a lot of us that are talking about it.

It's not just me, it's just you. You have brought us together and created this community. And that's what's so powerful about this is that we get to share our stories and yes, we gets to show our wounds.

But for me really important to do is also share the healing journey of those wounds and it is okay to still have those

ones. So, Example, someone just asked me just a little bit ago, how are you?

And I said, I'm having a hard day. I am struggling today. How are doing? It's just statement. It is a reality. And it doesn't lessen, it is just we are human.

and I will not give you the canned answer of I good, and how about you. No. This is what it looks like to live with ACEs. You can be real, but you can still show up.

But the thing is, we got to make space for each other to show us as we are. And that's what I love about what you do is that you give us that not so much permission, but you have reinforced that.

Like, let's talk about the aces. And I watched the episode where you were talking with your daughter and I was just like, oh, I will snap it so hard, my fingers were snow sore.

I like I, was like yes, get it. That's what I'm talking about. To me, she's a first generation too. She is a- She's the first-generation where it's okay to talk to about acing and everybody knows about it, and she is the ambassador for it from her young age.

How powerful is that? So when we talk breaking cycles, That's one of the things definitely to be able to say I'm a first generation cycle breaker, where I am not embarrassed to talk about aces or I get the ambassador for acing.

And you've been doing your thing. I think that's the warm, it warms my heart because again, you have to understand when people come to the podcast, I don't know them at all.

And then I understand their place in the community because everybody really isn't ready because, again we've be empowered. We're out there. You have been like this since the day we met.

You go all in for what you believe and what to love. So to see you on the team and introduce you to people on our team, we're winning because, honey, We love you already.

They took you in like, oh my God, she's this. Oh my god, Dr. Toy, why you didn't tell us about us? Because you got to shift the narrative. I knew that you and Jorge would be good.

Not only because of Chicago, but just on the fact of the stories. The stories are similar, you know what I mean? And he doesn't feel alone anymore. It's like, What?

Oh, it's so much bigger than that. And I think that's the reason why we bonded from day one. I thinks that the reasons why were still here. That's reason we're kinetic, baby.

We are energy together. People have to understand that cycle breakers can unite and do what we need to do. So before, again, this is us, y'all. This is how we act all the time.

The fun thing about this. Okay, so you knew about ACES, you were at the conference, shined your light, did your thing. And you said that ACEs helped you grow personally and professionally, correct?

Correct. Can you give us some examples? Being able to understand where I was in the ACES framework, it was really empowering for me and especially because I think was working in youth violence prevention.

And I that's when I actually came to know about ACEs was right at the beginning of that part, that chapter of my career. Mm hmm. So for me to discover ACES, when I'm doing youth violence prevention work and directly working with not just students, but I am also working teachers, counselors, all the mental health professionals, everybody.

And then you go into secondary resilience, what is it? Secondary trauma, right? Because those people are also having trauma from working with the kids who are experiencing.

So anyway, for me to have a better understanding, one, it was it, was like an aha moment for m to be able to understand, to give a framework. It was just like, oh, yeah.

There, It's there. And now to understand it, it really helped me because then I was able to make that a part of my story versus just a partner, my darkness.

It went from just being this darkness to a party, a story. Then I able take that molded and craft it not just in my own healing and my struggles, but then be able heal it and work on it in a way that I wasn't able use that to connect with the youth in way was real and raw and authentic.

and not just very like matter of fact or not, just so prescriptive or academic-y or just performative, but rather it was real. Cause kids, you can't BS kids.

Nope. So for me to want to walk into their schools and be like, Hey, I'm Erica. I mean to tell you about not bullying. They're going to be, like you know what they were probably thinking if I was going walk in like that, let's be real and I am walking into schools where it is primarily BIPOC kids violence, urban areas.

So, in wanting to connect with them, it helped me connect to myself. By connecting with myself, I was then able to connected with then, and then I could be so effective at my work, because it wasn't work.

It was a calling for me. I really was there to serve them. That's what I told them I'm here to work for you. But in working for them, I had to first.

Professionally, personally, absolutely. really shifted the conversation and then getting to know you and meet you as a part of that work. That just pulled me into a whole new world.

And I'm like, Wait, wait, you got a book. Yeah, and you hadn't written the book yet. But you were working on book I was like Oh, I want to get that book right.

Yep. We were talking about and just so knowing about ACES also has connected me and grown my network. You know, at first it was a professional but then that lasts about five minutes and it's like oh no girl, No, we tight.

We like, We're going to be friends for the rest of our lives. Right? Like, it's one of those.

## Healing Symbols, Community, and the Rosemary Story

And that's a beautiful thing. Even though I no longer work for Singing Hope Promise, those relationships with those kids, they're now adults. I'm still in touch with them.

They still message me. we still messaged each other. they've grown now. They've graduated.they've gone on to do things. and yes, did lose some kids along the way.

Then there was some people in that work that unfortunately didn't make it. But we keep going. Yeah, we Keep doing the work and we keeps showing up. Because you can't save everybody.

but if I can save one, then I've broken the cycle. And that's what it is. and that what I focus on. I focused on the win, not the loss. because the Loss is what gives us the Win.

If I hadn't had the lost, I wouldn't even know what a win looks like. To me, it's just that perspective. So yeah, ACEs changed it. It changed a lot. I love our history because we are sisters.

You've watched me transition. you were there a year ago. You were there for the book launch. When I make the story out, you all have to understand we have been at this.

And having your support is unwavering. You'll use sharing about the students and how much of an impact that we

had and the fact that keep in contact with them is the reason why the Victoria's Foundation exists.

You know what can I what could I do I was at a school when I met you I've been in administration forever but leaving just imagine the calls the the what we're doing it's like.

I need, I still need you to talk to me. So understand people. This foundation is real. I had no other choice. And who's standing right beside me in this foundation?

Erica Whitaker. Because we know we've been there, you guys, and even when they grow, I've being told to switch it from mentorship, because it's always going to be mentorship.

But it is transformational leadership, it isn't just kids that we're transforming anymore. We're transform lives, we are transforming communities, transforming people in the shift that needs to happen.

So I accepted it, I took it. I actually received this information from one of my colleagues. Shout out to my dissertation chair. You met her. We had no other choice to do this, but here we are.

And I love the Victoria's Foundation. So again, thank you for always being there because you are and your healing journey. And I wanna shout out some wonderful things that you got in your background, because you have to tell us how some of your healing strategies benefit you and help you.

Well, it is interesting, cause some stuff in my background is small things, but really important things. So the you matter sign right there, that was actually a gift that given to me by one of the youth led clubs Uh, in the work that I did with Sandy Hope promise and they gave that to me years ago.

And I take that with that little sign with me everywhere. I always have it. Um, and it is, it's a reminder. Not just for people when I'm on a call or people to see it, right?

More importantly, when i'm watching it I can see up there. It's reminder to myself because. I struggle every single day. I am struggling all the time.

And I tell people that I'm always struggling. This is the face of someone that is struggling." So I need those reminders all that time, so I try to build those little things for myself.

If I have a little post-it notes here and there, you know, and I just look at those and, I wear a flower in my hair. One of the reasons, one of many reasons why I wore it, yes, because yellow symbolizes hope and esperanza in Spanish, we say esperansa, but, you know, and it blooming things that are growing, they require nurturing.

So it's a reminder to nurture myself, right? It's an reminder that I'm growing. And also on those days when I am really struggling and I wear it, people are friendlier to me or people say hi.

People more intentional connecting with me. Sometimes I m struggling, I' m almost crying, or I'm just kind of gruff because I had a really hard night and didn't sleep well.

And people are being really nice. I mean, why are people being so nice? Or what? And then it's like, it because it is the flower. Or somebody will come up to me and is like I really love your flower and it they help me smile.

So not only is the flower helping others, but again, it's helping me. I try to find strategies around me that it is not just about me doing for others.

It's that beautiful circle and that reminder that when one of us succeeds, we all succeed. When one us heals, We all heal. Even something this small creates a moment of intentional humanity to connect in a way that otherwise wouldn't happen.

Instead of walking around during my day and just seeing strangers, I get to connect with human beings and we get

see each other for that moment. No. And one very important thing, and this is a surprise for you, these little plants right here.

First time in my life I have ever propagated anything. This is Rosemary. Oh, hey girl. You know where this Rosemarie came from? Where? The ACES conference.

Really? One of the vendors, she had some little branches of rosemary as part of her display. I can't remember who it was. And she was giving it away at the end of day.

This rosmer was just going to die and wither and go into the garbage. So I said, and I was really depressed because that was the anniversary of my dad's passing.

He died by suicide when I 16. The ACES conference, I just was in pieces. Being at ACEs conference helped me feel held. I needed that conference more than I thought.

That conference literally saved me because I was struggling so hard those days. Y'all literally gave me life and held me. So what I did is I rescued that Rosemary.

As oppressed as I, I said, because you have planted in us, you've planted abundance. And Rosemarie for me and my culture represents abundance and healing.

So I took them and I put them in little two little glasses. I was so depressed. Let me just take, I just took a couple of glasses out of my cabinet, put him in water and i'm like, i don't know if they're going to grow.

i've never done this before. And the roots started growing. The roots, started, growing as I continued to get through those hard days. and the more I, was trying to heal through, those, hard, days and get, through that depression, their roots.

Started growing and then I had one of, my BFFs as her dad, who's a gardener, he helped me. to plant them. So I just, this is a visual representation. Yes, it is.

Of our community. And it's the first ACES, International ACEs Conference.

## Legacy of Love and Advice for Healing

This is the representation of what has already started growing and what will continue to grow because of you are doing and we are together as a community, so these are because you.

Now I have abundance and hope every day when I see them because And because of our community because this was a community effort and made it possible so you know what I get so many people that want to ask about the conference and it's one of those conferences you guys where you really needed to be in the room.

It is so much that happened. It was the small, like this isn't a small thing. it was a seed planted. You got to think about it. That was April. Look at how much it has grown.

that should say so to you because it says so many to me. I'm in here emotional. And I love it because tears are silent prayers. This is what I wanted.

You see us. When we held that book and we went out there, we have been killing it in the community. And, I'm not saying killing in that term, but people are talking about ACEs.

We knew that it was going to be international. It was international people there. But my God, I got people calling me every day. Who are you? What are doing?

And what I'm saying is I can't be at this place. So let me call somebody that can. Because you got to people like

you. You got People like Jorge, you've got, people, like Leah, got.

People, Lisa, get people. Like Nick, You get all these people that were at the conference. I cannot control Andre Charlie right now. He is blowing out of the water and it's like this is what I asked for and I'm ready because I am telling you now this what's happening.

We're in the community, we're having the conversation and look at your representation. This my sister y'all, I keep trying to tell you all. ACES can bring you together if you know about it.

Being a psycho breaker is embracing our ACEs score. It's embracing a journey, not looking and reflecting on the past. Its building our future. She just explained what helps her heal and something as simple as putting and placing a flower in your hair symbolizes everything and every reason why I love you so much.

That's why you're here, that's the reason we have a Cycle Breaker episode and this was perfect and let me share. This is just the beginning you guys, this is really what we've been doing, we had been going this.

She said she knew about ACES, she know about all of these things but you gotta understand when you have passion, you got a purpose, it's going to continue to allow and make you grow.

So I hope you remember this when you have those days, because let me tell you, you're a legacy. Speaking of legacies, what kind of legacy are you hoping to leave as a cycle breaker?

I'm not hoping too. I am already doing it. Come on. Oh, I got in trouble. Marv told me to stop talking when we were talking. Go ahead, sister. Yeah, I hope it to do it.

I'm already doing it and my Instagram handle says it because I am leaving a legacy of love. Legacy of Love. Everything I do is to leave a Legacy Of Love that is my goal.

And I've already I'd do It every day. Sometimes it's just for myself because sometimes there are days that all that I can do was brush my teeth and go back to bed and cry some more.

But that's okay. Because that asked me loving myself that day know whether it's someone puts their signal light and I let them over instead of just cutting them off you know um or I mean there's so many ways and people think it has to be these grandiose things no it it just I live with intentionality every day so I am leaving a legacy of love and that is my goal is to leave that legacy alone and you're really doing it Like you said, been doing it.

Been doing that, you guys, just to see it, for the people, again, that met you, it was like, oh my gosh, she's a ball of sunshine. I'm like… Well, I told you, or, yeah, that's my friend or yeah that is my sister.

Because that really who you are. You have really been a huge part in the Be Victorious movement and the be victorious journey. And so for someone that does not know how to heal or know the steps, what would you tell them?

Because they're going to gravitate to you. What would tell him? Be okay with the ick. Tell me more. You gotta be okay, with that ic. It's not gonna be cute.

it ain't cute, it don't feel good. I'm like, you gotta means being okay with people making that ick face when you try to talk to them and they're not, they don't want to have it.

That's okay. that's not your person. Now you know where you stand with them. Ain't about you. You keep going and you find people that are okay, with your icked until you realize that it is not icky.

It just means you're human and You start being. Okay with the icks and. Start being able to. Talk to the. And you start becoming friends with it and then you hugging the ick and then you start hugging yourself and in that journey you will find other people that are also okay with the Ick and or they're struggling and working through the ick too so

that's what I always say don't go for the people they got all the answers and they are all like yes I did it look at me come be my friend or let me tell you the five steps to greatness in your life and healing it's like no Find the people that are in the ick, that're working through the ick, they're actively talking about it.

And that's what I will say. It ain't gonna be cute and it's gonna feel lonely. Healing is very lonely because it requires that one shed versions of oneself.

With those versions we shed our people, we have to also release. I say release, you release with love. because they were part of that version of the self and it's okay to release with love.

No shame, no blame, release. And then you move into the next version. Some people will come with you and some people not and that's OK. That's just part the journey.

But it is hard. and thats why it important to have the support network. There is the proverb, the saying that says it takes a village to raise a child.

I always say it take a villages to sustain an adult. We think, you know, it's like, I'm a self-made person. No, baby. It takes a village to sustain Erica with a K.

Community. And that's why ACEs is so important. But more importantly, that is why the foundation that you have created is important, the Be Victoria's Foundation is very important because it is community.

The other thing I love about what you do and how you There's no filters, there's not overproduced, it ain't all these fancy bells and whistles. You are real, you are raw, You show up.

And it's like, this is who we are. So that's also what I say to people that want to step into their healing. It's, like shed all the expectations, the filters that what you think what we think we're supposed to look like or be like just Let it go.

And I think that's what it is. So being a first, I. Think it's humbling because people have met me at certain stages. You met. Me as Dr. Williams, you got people that met as Tori, but the ones that.

Met me here at Dr Williams. I'm a okay. And I say that to say I had a journey and I started somewhere too. And sometimes we forget that we were so busy being up here that didn't realize where we came from.

## Finding Erica and Closing Reflections

I love to listen to the ambassadors say, you had me in a room. So important being in the room with doctors. It's like, I never thought about it like that because I never thought about it like that.

You know what I mean? Like it's a really big deal. I understand I'm Dr. Tori and I get it and earned it. And I respect myself and y'all respect me and love that, but when I wasn't thinking about like, you know, I am placing you all in a room with doctors.

Now let's, I'm gonna cut to the chase, because when you go and apply for a job, yeah, they ask you what your degree is, but people don't understand under that it asks for experience.

Because that experience can count. If you have 20 years experience of going through something or experience with something, you can't knock that. You can say that that's different than somebody that has a degree.

Your experience is your experience. And what I learned is we go through the same experiences. They're just identified under that umbrella that places you into that category.

ACES is not looking at your degree. ACEs is now looking any of that. If you were abused, you are abused. if you weren't neglected, your were neglected.

Household dysfunction is what we live in. I just left Chicago. You know I would have ran into you, let's be clear. But it was so much stuff going on this past weekend.

And lovely Ayesha tried to be at everything. It was the cutest thing ever. One minute she was at Lala, the next minute, she with me at Black Women's Expo.

But I also have a kid that visits over the summer. Now, what's interesting is some things have happened. And when I tell you I wanted to see her, I actually had to call and sit down and calm myself because I was scheduled to her.

But again, i live in household dysfunction. I'm divorced and I had understand and realized I got to step back because you see Dr. Tory, but I am also a mama.

And while I'm prioritizing doing what I have to do, I actually have understand things. I am human, and I want to go off. And I wanna do these things because these are my kids.

But when you have that ACES awareness, it'll wake you up. It'll let you know what's going on. it will let know how to change the narrative in your situation.

and i think that's what i love about us because we've been through a lot together but to see our growth You gotta understand, I was there. And to see that we're in a community now where we can be open and talk about LGBTQ or talk things that wasn't really able to talk previously, we could do that now.

Those are some of our kids too, you know what I mean? The kids that bind with, the kids we love, they're gonna gravitate to us because of this. And so I will tell you, especially for someone that travels so much, Do you plan on staying in Chicago or do you planning on traveling?

I am a perpetual traveler. I always say there are no borders or zip codes that limit and define me. So geographically where I lay my head at night is just like, you know, that's a technicality.

It's like but I live in the world. This is home base for now. but I am very fortunate and blessed that I have such an amazing, wonderful network and community and village sustaining me that, you know, I get to go visit and be hosted at different places.

So I always say that. I, have many places to call home and I'm very, very grateful. And I feel very honored to be able to say, but for now, um, not doing as much traveling, right now um but I'm always looking forward to that next trip and where am I going what am i well I will I would let you all know if you see her you're going to see me we're gonna she's coming to Dallas let's be clear we already know that we got plenty of things going on and she is always a phone call away from me so I appreciate you I appreciate you for coming on the show telling your story, but let the listeners know how to find you.

They know they're gonna find with me regardless. But if they wanted to reach you, where could they find? Thank you very much. Instagram, TikTok are the easiest.

My handle is E-W-A-K, which stands for Erica with a K. And also I like to say Ewhack because I'm a little whack. So EWhack. Underscore, legacy, love. You can DM me there.

And I do have a little website. I don't even remember what it is, because I doesn't visit my own website very often. So I forget what is is. It's on my little business card somewhere.

But that's where you can find me and reach out. and I'm always happy to connect, and do connect with people sincerely. Sometimes I'll post something, they're complete strangers and they'll say, hey, this really resonated.

Then I end up having great DM exchange with them. They're just like, Hey, thank you. really needed that moment I'm like absolutely so when I mean it I tell people I really care so if you're gonna step to me appropriately and you like you genuinely need that support I got you yeah you know and I might reach out and be like I need the support

but please reach And this is the reason why I love her, you guys.

She's been a part of my community. So just to introduce you, not just our ACES community, our Be Victorious community but to have you on this podcast, finally.

I am so grateful. You guys, we have to let you know of all the wonderful things that are happening. Dr. Victoria's everywhere. But as far as Be Victoria, this is one of our ambassadors, she's in the community.

She's talking about ACEs. If you're looking for a nice poet, baby, when I tell you she will fill your room, She will. she is a powerhouse. This is my sister Empower, and I love her dearly.

And this has been another wonderful episode of Be Victorious. We will talk to you guys soon. Bye-bye, you, guys.