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. It's time. To talk. About ACE's. Let's go, y'all. Hello, hello, you guys. Welcome to another episode of Be Victorious. Now let me tell y'all something.

Y'al know the Cyclebreaker series has been amazing. But when I tell you we have guests that not only know about aces, I got some guests that are real, true bosses that're coming on this podcast.

Now, this young lady is near and dear to my heart. Not only is she a founder and the executive producer of United We Heal, she is also the founder, and executive, producer, of Excel Healing and Wellness.

Stop and pause.

Ashley Hendricks' Background and Trauma Advocacy

Not only is she a mental health therapist, a certified trauma professional, in Maryland where I am now, ah ha ha, she is Miss Unity World USA. I thought it was the sweetest thing.

She said, can I wear my crown? And as a queen, you have that right. Where are you, queen? I'm right here. And you better wear that crown. You are doing big things.

Thank you. Don't ever hide it from anybody. And I cannot wait to hear your story because this is what this Psycho Breaker episode is all about. So of course I had to represent and let them know who you were.

But there is so much more. People need to understand when we wear our crowns, we're all more proud. And your journey, your stories is going to be an amazing story to share.

Tell us about you. Okay, well, you gave a really good introduction. But I'm Ashley Hendricks. I have experienced a lot of trauma in my life. And that's kind of what led me into the field of mental health, specializing with trauma, and ACEs advocate.

So I've done a lotta research, Ive done alot of work. That's kinda what made me start United WeHeal Inc. so I felt like in our community, people of color, that we don't always have these uncomfortable conversations.

We don' always access to resources, not to say they're not there, but they are not placed within our communities and the stigma alone kind of limits us from reaching those accesses to stuff.

So I started that as a way to be able to expand reach to people. In my work as therapist, I primarily work with adolescents, so I look a lot at average childhood experiences, And a lot of people aren't fond of working with the youth for many different reasons.

But I felt like when working adults, a lotta their rooted trauma was in their childhood. And so I'm like, if I could go back and work with youth and kind of help them while they're in those stages, maybe we can have less adults that are going through it.

So that's a little bit about me and the work that I do and my passion. with average childhood experiences. And here we are. We need to build this bridge because ACEs are real.

Yes. I will tell you I am in in Towson right now. Okay. I'm in Dallas, I just came back from a wonderful conference thanks to Family Tree. It was all about ACES.

i wish I would have known because I wouldn't invited you personally, you would had fit perfectly in this room. Because when I tell you we need to have this conversation, it was humbling to be in a room to to half the conversation with people that were already having the conversations.

Yeah. because i go into rooms and people have no clue about it at all. Yeah, yeah. And you have to let people know how you became a cycle breaker. So what's your definition of a Cycle Breaker?

A cycle breaker to me is someone who kind of steps out of their comfort zone to say like, enough is enough. It's gonna end with me, especially when we talk about generational trauma and how things continue.

And a lot of it's unintentional, but I feel like somebody who's willing to actually be aware of what's going on. and it is like no, I'm gonna be intentional and is stops here with.

Very good. You have done it because you're a survivor. People have to know if God brings you to it, he'll bring you through. Yes. And so for those who don't know, how would you describe your journey as a cycle breaker?

It has been tough. It hasn't been so. For me, I think it took that level of awareness. Like I had to kind of really go through it, like you said, and I hit rock bottom if I were to, if i say that, you know, so I'm a three times suicide attempt survivor.

And I, after the third attempt and i survived, it was almost like I know that God has something for me.

Defining Cycle Breaking and Personal Survival

There's no way. that after three times that I'm still here and able to tell my story. And so I ran it. I had an individual who was one of my employees and she was demonstrating a lot of negative signs.

Something was wrong with her and I was like, I am going to her house. My boss was, like you can't do that. And so I got there and I had a conversation.

And she was the first person that I ever told my story to. She was like, I was getting ready to take my life. You literally came right at that time. From that moment, this is my purpose.

It opened my eyes up to all of the stuff that had. My mom's trauma, different people in my family. I'm like no, it's going to end with me. Whatever it is that can do, is going end me and not just in family, But I want to reach out and help other people and break their cycles from our community as a whole, not even just my family.

And that is what you are doing. You are a superhero. you're a psycho-breaker, you a queen. I think that's the issue that people don't know. They know about ACEs.

Your in the field so you know, your a therapist, so know what's going on. But what are some of the strategies or habits or support systems that have helped you?

I love you sharing the story about your friend, but me storytelling is helping people. This podcast is an educational tool that has been used globally.

So what is some your healing strategies? So I think storytelling was a big piece, like just being able to be vocal about my experiences and not holding it in.

I that was the initial healing part for me because it was like, I did it. Like I told my story. I didn't have any challenges. And I think getting over some of the negative feedback, like even when I started being more vocal and just on a bigger scale of my Story, I would get pushed back.

There would be people that would say, oh, you're just doing it for attention or, this happened for that. So even me getting that hump of being able to tell my storytelling and accept it and say this is my life.

This is journey, but it doesn't define me. And so that to me was the biggest part of my healing journey, was being able to accept that this doesn't define me, it's actually elevating and empowering me to be able move forward.

And I think once I got there, then it was really finding my community. My community, I always tell people your level of resilience is based on the support that you have.

Once I found my Community, those two things, telling my story and having a community were my biggest healing things to this day. And it still is. Because I'm telling you, it's the community that's waiting for you honey.

I love how you're wearing this crown. Thank you. Yes, I do. And I loved the fact that you own it. The fact you share, because some people don't even share that part of the story.

You have to tell us how to get here. So I am cutting and going straight to the chase. Unity, world, you SA? I did my research and I'm a researcher. And when I tell you, your story is just intriguing to me.

Just, and, I don't think you should stop sharing it at all. I am not a woman of many likes and things. It just happens naturally. But I'll tell any time you do something, you need to post it.

Because there is somebody that is looking and saying, wow, if she can do it, keep doing that. So tell us about how you got to represent United States of America and India.

I want it all. Yeah. Uh, so I was introduced to pageantry through my sister and I going through a really, really low point in my life.

Healing Through Storytelling and Community

This was in 2021. And so I was experiencing a lot of trauma. I think I lost a huge point in myself. And I feel like that was the first time that I had felt that low in years.

She was like, you should come do pageantry. This will be great for you. So I came, and it goes right back to that community piece. When I come, I'm still very shy about myself, very insecure.

And it took, I think it was three people that came up to me after rehearsal and they were like, can you stay behind with us? I'm like yeah, sure. And they just poured into me.

They were we can tell from your walk, it's not that you don't have it, you just seem like you're not confident in yourself. I don' know what it is that have going on, but they poured in to my.

From that moment I just went for it. So I won my first national title that day. And so I took a break from pageantry to do a lot of stuff. I was in grad school at the time.

Actually, I just started when I did that pageant. So I take some time off to go to grad schools a while. And then I got invited again this year. so, I was Orlando at this same exact time as the director and the production manager.

We were in the same hotel, same weekend. and I thought this has to be fate that we were here at same time So they were like, you got to come back, and I'm like okay.

So I came back for Nationals, so this time I represented District of Columbia. And so I was born in District Columbia, went to school twice in DC and still work in D. C.

now. I could do this. And so I got that title, which was a win, and then went on to Nationals, Which was just in New Orleans about two weeks ago, a week and a half ago.

It was November 9th. And I competed for the Miss USA title and won. So one of my biggest things though, again, was community. I think I would have never saw myself as a pageant queen.

If you would've told me this like 10 years ago I'd have been like, no ma'am. But it's bigger than the crown, the makeup, dresses, it is the community, stuff that people don't see behind the stage.

It's being surrounded by people who all have stories. I've talked to people that have experienced domestic violence, trauma, suicide. So many different things and being able for us to tell our story and kind of build community and support.

That was huge for me. And so that was a big push of how I got here. So now I'll be representing USA and India in October of next year. I'm excited. Yeah, I don't know how right now because you are an example of a true psycho breaker.

You all missed it. If you didn't miss it, she shared with you guys that she is a survivor. When the Lord had a blessing over your life, we just had this conversation, you know what I mean?

Like over in two days in a conference of bringing people up in the community where we have to not criticize them for the things that they're doing, but your past is your pass, your future.

It's everything and look at your example. You are letting people know that they can overcome obstacles. you are. Letting people. Know that you can heal because not only are you a therapist again, maybe I'm just saying nonetheless, you have to understand how powerful you.

And I and I know you know, that But other people have to understand that even though you go through these things, you can experience those heal and achieve goals that you never set for yourself.

And look at how I placed you on that pedestal. So you represent us, honey. But you're representing aces. You're presenting survivors.

Pageantry Journey and Winning Miss Unity World USA

Women you're representing Queen and okay, let me stop and pause but you got to give people their roses while they're alive because Again, you talk I'm talking to somebody that wanted to take their life.

But here we are and here you are So you'll representing for all of us who need to heal You're a blessing understanding your aces. I know for a fact it helped you grow.

And so here we are, you guys. This is the reason why the Cycle Breaker episode is all that is going to be. But let's talk about legacy. What kind of legacy are you hoping to leave as a cycle breaker?

So the legacy that I want to leave is somebody who can feel empowered and inspired. So even though life may throw things at you that you can still continue, like you said, it's not so much your story and maybe you're passing the things that But using that as a stepping stone of a sign of resilience and strength to keep moving forward.

So taking that and inspiring others, and that's kind of the legacy that I want to demonstrate. And even, you know, I talk about resilience, strength so much, but on the other side of things I always share and a legacy I wanna have.

is even more, your resilience shouldn't define you. It's okay to be tired and want to take a break from being strong. And so I have to say both sides of the page here.

So that's the legacy. I want people to understand that they can be strong and resilient, but they're also aware and give themselves grace to rest and push through.

That's how you survive and live. Mm-hmm. Love it. What is something that you wish people understood more about

childhood trauma or ACEs that isn't talked about?

I feel like the biggest detriment is the lack of a voice. I felt like a lot of our youth do not have a or prevented if you were allowed to have a voice, especially in our community.

I don't know how many times I hear people say, oh, you know, your child, can't be stressed out. You can be depressed as a kid or stay in a child's place or, what I say go.

You know, they don't have that voice to really share what they're going through. And so the biggest thing that I would tell people is to just listen. Like give you a place to talk and you will learn so, so much, because again, I did my research.

I've seen you in some classroom. Oh, yeah. Tell us about that. Yeah, so I host a lot of different workshops for our youth. Again, I love the youth and so the most recent one I did was at an iMatter event and I talked about who we are.

So yes, the world may place different labels on us, they tell us who are, we go through different experiences, but I want our you to be able to used to look at those experiences, be aware of those experience, but identify who is my core self.

Outside of what I've been through, outside of where people tell me who I am, who am I, and who do I want to be. And so I have people identify those things through words, through pictures.

So again, storytelling, I love storytelling. But being able to identify, Who I Am, or who want I to Be, Outside Of What Other People Tell Me I AM. Do you travel outside of, well, you have your woman that has so many hats and wears so much hats.

Do travel globally to discuss mental health? Not yet, but I would love to. I do go across the US. But I am trying to network more because I want to be able to get in more spaces and speak more.

And that is one thing a lot of people that I've worked with, so a lots of supervisors that have had, they have all said that to me. They're like, Ashley, you have a gift of speaking and you need to on somebody's stage speaking.

So I'm always looking for different engagements. I plan on speaking at some different conferences next year. So yes, I am open to it and I would love to do it.

– I want to personally invite you while we're on here. We have an ACES International Awareness Conference. Now our ACEs acronyms are awareness plus community equals empowerment.

That is what I feel. can help us heal, because again, I teach ACEs awareness. I bring awareness, and I educate, then I pass them on. Not to say it like that, but I love therapists, so I do.

But I just don't want to be one. So in my attempt to increase ACE awareness is from an educational standpoint. You should see how many educators, how much clinical therapists and psychologists, social workers, people, period.

came together to have this global conversation. It's an international issue.

Legacy, Childhood Trauma, and Youth Workshops

So I really want you to understand, I love the fact that you are representing us because you're going to that conversation and speak from a mental health special because it comes to you naturally.

And so when you have those conversations globally, that was the reason why I asked, because mental health in the United States is a pretty big deal. When you're on this platform, do you had that opportunity to share?

Are those questions coming up? And this is just questions for me, Because again, I'm nosy, and I did the research on you. And I think you are a godsend.

I know that the Lord has placed you in a place to where you can have this conversation globally. So I also gave you just four questions into one. But again, how can you help those in the mental health understand in your position that you're in?

So to speak to one of the questions, yes, I can use the platform to share my story. And that's like my biggest piece is using this platform, to just share story, speak for other people, give a voice to many people.

I think with mental I have a blessing, I will say. And that was one of the things that I had to tell myself is that, i have combination of personal experience, and then obviously book knowledge of going to school as a therapist.

I feel like that gives me a different perspective and leverage to different conversations that i sit at the table for. So I think being able to use that That is what I want to focus on.

I wanna be able to tell my story and have a perspective for people, but I also wanna provide a healing space of resources from the mental health perspective and give that combination.

So that is I what to do, especially on a global scale. Yes, mental health has gotten a seat at the table in recent years, but I still feel like there's so much that's not talked about.

Even in pageantry, there is so many stuff that goes on behind the scenes for mental help that people don't talk about, like you're expected to come up, be pretty, perfect, suck it up.

Deal with it. Come out here. And it's a lot of pressure that gets put on you. So even from the pageantry lens, I want to be able to tap into that and kind of express even how that goes about.

We have a lot of women that are in pageantry that have experienced a lots of ACEs, but then it's like, how are you managing that, and processing that in dealing with it so then you can show up as your true self?

I don't know how many conversations I've had behind stage where I can see that a lotta people are letting their trauma, then impact their confidence and then impacts how they show up on stage.

And see, that's why I asked because people see the lights, the flashing lights but they don't know the story behind it. You have a story and do you get a chance to share that story?

Yes. So yeah, and I won't even say like I'll be completely honest with you. I don't always get the platform to share. But one thing about me is that I'm going to make sure you hear my story.

I'm going to wiggle it in there because I want to make sure that I get to tell that story because there's so many people out there that know who needs to hear it.

And it's like, I am going keep saying it because i know there is going be at least one or two or three people that need to here this story. So I will always use this platform to say what I got to Yes and no.

So I have started working with youth and being able to mentor. I wouldn't say I do it officially, but I am looking to expand more because that is one thing that I've learned.

And then now I'm trying to navigate how to balance that thin line of like the therapy stuff and still doing the mentorship. Because I definitely noticed the impact when I was doing it before.

Okay, so let's pause. You guys, again, we're talking to a queen who is a license certified mental health professional, that's how I'm gonna put it, because you're representing us.

I'm extremely humble. You have to understand. Of course, I did my research. I was very happy because not only do you advocate for ACES, but you are a cycle breaker sharing your story.

We, you have understand how powerful you. And I know that, know, that people are watching. They're watching you heal. they're going to say, if she can do it, so for the person that that don't get that second chance, that person that is struggling, the person who needs support, who doesn't know that there is another end, what would your advice be to them?

So my advice to them would be to know that you're not alone. To know it's okay to not be okay. And to find your support. Find your community and find you purpose.

So I know I always tell people that's so hard to hear though when you are in that moment. When you in those dark spaces. But being able to find your light, whatever that is, find that light through one person.

Mental Health Advocacy and Global Speaking Goals

Find one that you can truly rely on and that's who your person is. That's the biggest thing that I always tell people is just know that it's okay to not be okay, but find you person and find community.

Very good. Now, let me go all the way back. because you are a one-woman wrecking crew. However, you started from somewhere. Parents, siblings, only child, tell us a little bit more.

So I'm the only girl of five brothers. Um, so I got, yeah. I do have mom and dad. They divorced when I was three, so I have a stepmom and stepdad. I primarily grew up with mom-and-stepdad, and then I would visit my dad in the summertime until I 12, and my parents moved back to the same state and I would go to my dad's on the weekends.

So most of like my ACEs scores were that like zero to 12 when I was just with mom and stepdad. They were both in the military, so we moved every two years.

But yeah, that's a little bit, I guess, about my childhood. I only live with three of my brothers though. The other two are my stepbrothers, though they would only come and visit, but they live I knew we connected through the girl bond.

I'm the only girl too. So I had to ask because the pageantry thing, surprisingly, I did. And I just did not take it, you know what I mean? Because I am really strong on extracurricular activity.

I did it. It was cute. I didn't, you know, ballet. Then it went into that. And it was like, no, I got interested in something else. But I am a firm believer in extracurricular activity and how it actually can help people as well.

So I feel like you being the queen that you are rewards you for all the experiences that you're representing not just a community of survivors, but again, you are representing the United States and you representing us.

You just got this crown two weeks ago. Yes. So that means you have a whole year to represent. What are your plans? I am interested. This is the fact that it just happened.

It's like, OMG to me. So what are your plans? Tell us more. So I am a server at heart. I love to serve and help in my community. So for me, it's a twofold.

Like I'm gonna focus on the mental health side, but also wanna serve my communities. A lot of the work that I have over this next year will be community-based and mental-health-base.

Even just in the next, what is it, 30 plus days of this year, So having this interview, December, I am volunteering with our local Toys for Tots. So whether that's some stuff you won't see.

Some stuff I do volunteer in the warehouse with sorting toys. I'll be helping the day of with giving out toys to the

family. But then I also have my own annual toy drive that I give out.

One of the things I like I like to see people be blessed. I want to actually see the work translate. So I donate to bigger organizations, but with my toy drive, we actually give it directly to the families.

Every year I think we've had about at least 1000 kids that we're giving toys out to. So I like to be able to give so we have that coming up. We'll be doing like Christmas tree lightings at the harbor.

And then I'll doing AIDS walk for AIDS Day on December 6. And then next year, we're going to be doing a couple of mental health panels I'm putting together, one geared towards pageantry, and the rest are geared toward trauma related things.

So a lot of stuff, it's either going to know, for me, that pageantry is bigger than just the beauty in the crown. I did an event where I volunteered on November, sorry, September 11th, and that was one of the things that the organizer said to me.

Community Service, Mentorship, and Closing Remarks

She was like, a lot of queens coming here just for the photo op, the pictures, but you came in, she was, like you immediately put, we had to tell you to put the Crown on to take a picture, because you come in and put a hair net on and went straight to work.

And I'm like, yeah, because I want to give, I wanna my legacy to be like she was here, she served, She taught, educated, inspired. And so that's what I plan on doing over this next year.

That's why I love you. I will tell you because when you go in, Let surprise them with who you are. Your stance and your representation is going to tell people who are and then that's how they're going get it.

You have to understand we do this speaking thing. We go into these workshops, we go on to these presentations and you have all of these people that are willing to speak but until you really know who they are, you won't know Who they Are.

your work is speaking for itself. Your actions are speaking for itself. And I'm honored, honestly, to have you on this podcast. Please share with the world how they can find you.

So my pageantry Instagram is MissMSUnity, U-N-I-T-Y World. Sorry, I had a Queen Latifah moment spelling that. U N I T Y. So Miss Unity World USA, so that's my Pageant Instagram.

And then my therapist Instagram, is BIPOC, So the BipOC Trauma Therapist, which is also on Instagram as well. Yes, I love her, you guys, and guess what?

I'm going to pull her. I have no other choice. Keep doing the service that you're doing, keep doing a work that your doing because people are going recognize that and they're going continue to pour you and that is going be your opportunity to wear your crown, to represent yourself, not just represent your self but represent us in the United States doing what you are doing and follow your passion.

Your passion is leading if you did not know. I feel it in your spirit. It radiates in the room. So of course I want people to know who you are. i would love to introduce you to a community of people that are already talking about ACEs.

The community is so powerful because they're everywhere. We're talking Speaking internationally and speaking globally, it's going to be a huge representation because the need for mental health is really out there.

So I appreciate you for being here. I'm definitely going connect with you. We do have a be victorious foundation. It's a mentorship program. It highlights those not just who are cycle breakers, but who understand that mentorship is needed and we do it specifically for those with adverse childhood experiences.

So I would personally invite you to join us because you're already doing the work. And we need people like you to have those those steps those roles so the students that we when we go in the classroom to Have those conversations, they can see you, They can See that you can do this.

They could see that your wearing your crown, I'm honored. Thank you again for being here. And you guys, I am going to go ahead and say this is a wonderful episode of Be Victorious.

You all know where to find me, but you will be seeing both of us together because I would love to step in and have those conversations that are needed.

Yes, thank you. I really appreciate you having me. Yeah, we're here. You're going to see me again. Trust me for you all that are listening. Thank you for listening and enjoy this wonderful discussion.

But I'm going end here because there's nothing else that needs to be said. Just watch us shine. Watch us grow and make sure you support Miss Unity World USA.

all the verbal, all of the physical, and shine her light as she continues to grow. I love you and continue to do what you're doing, okay? I'm a fan. And I want to support you.

If I support, I'll tell you, you'll see all these lights coming in my way. I believe me because you're amazing and you grow. You guys thank you for another episode of be victorious.

I couldn't I had to because she is radiating energy right now and I can keep going on but I'm gonna go ahead and end right. Now thank You Miss Unity World USA for a wonderful discussion and we'll talk to you guys very soon.

Goodbye you. Thank you