Embodied Healing Techniques: How Somatic Trauma Recovery Boosts Interpersonal Relationships Transcript

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Introduction to Trauma and Somatic Healing

Hello to you all. My name is Dr. Isaac Eliaz, and I am very happy to talk about the subject of trauma, which is such a big subject with so many angles and aspects in solution and understanding.

And today, my guest, which I'm really excited to talk to, is Irene Lyon. Irene Lyon is really a master in somatic practice, in the understanding of how to take issues like trauma and bring them into the body.

From the perspective of learning, Feldenkrais. The work of Moshé Feldenkrais, which I had, I would I had the opportunity to interact with some of his original students.

And Peter Levine, from the point of view of understanding Somatic experience and Kathy Kain and integrating together into a program that she offered to thousands and thousands of people.

And today, we're actually going to talk specifically about trauma from the point of view of embodied healing, bridging somatic trauma recovery with interpersonal harmony.

And I think even before we start that interpersonal harmony is so relevant these days where anybody that doesn't agree to our opinion almost becomes an enemy and adversary, you know, and these are not only thing that have been effective outside the effects of communication between our cells in the body, they affect our relationship with the 100 trillion guests in our microbiome.

So these interpersonal harmony is just a reflection of the issues of interplay in in their personal harmony. And I'm sure that you would talk a lot about it.

So thank you so much. And please, why don't you share with us how you got interested in in the topic of somatic trauma recovery? Yeah. Thank you Isaac.

Well, it wasn't, something I was looking to do. It was, just another piece of the puzzle. Another piece of the puzzle. Another piece of the puzzle. So my.

If I go back just to my my background, my educational background, we'll we'll keep that simple for now. I was trained in exercise physiology, exercise physiology, sport science, nutrition, sport nutrition.

I was, a fairly accomplished athlete in my teenage years, in my 20s and in my early 30s. Not professionally, but I was in a lot of outdoor sport, a lot of adrenaline sport.

Not the best kinds.

Irene Lyon's Path into Body-Based Recovery

But, you know, that was what injured me and led me into some of my, my body studies. So studied exercise science, sports science. And then, you know, you mentioned, cellular biology a moment ago, we were talking before we recorded, I got really interested in cell membrane physiology when I was finishing my PhD.

Well, it took me seven years to do my bachelor's degree, but towards the end, I got very interested in omega three fatty acids. the, the the communication across the cell membrane, the phospholipid bilayer.

And how when the, the layer of the cell, the membrane is healthy with good fat, the communication is clean and

clear and it provides, we would say, a anti-inflammatory effect.

So I got really geek. I geeked out, as we would say, in that. And I then went to study, did my Masters in research in Australia. This would have been in 2001, 2002.

And I thought Isaac. I was going to study omega three fatty acids. But then I realized, that level of study, you would have to work with rats and mice and you're in a little lab feeding them fish oil, and and I, you know, I know we need to for such things.

We need to do experimentation on animals. And and I know that happens. but it just wasn't what I wanted to do. Truth be told, I didn't really enjoy my professor, my, the person that was my main, supervisor, so I wasn't very happy.

And then someone new, this scooped me up and then gave me a study. Working with real people, elderly, adults. So not too old. it was. They called it elderly, but it was really 65 to 85.

And, the study was sponsored by the Meat and Livestock Association of Australia. So this was at a time when people were afraid of red meat and saturated fat.

And so they wanted to show that their product was okay on the human system. And so I was brought in to offer these subjects, high intensity strength training, high intensity strength training, mainly of the low of the legs, the lower limbs, while feeding to different diets.

In the end, the research showed that exercise is the more potent stimulus compared to diet. And we just have to exercise and keep our muscle. So that was my master's degree in research.

But at the time, Isaac, I was recovering from a patella fracture. So I had fractured my patella as a complication of an ACL reconstruction on my left knee.

It's a long story, and I had spent maybe 6 to 8 months on crutches, before I went to Australia, convalescing and figuring things out. But when I was in Australia, I was going to massage chiro, something called bone therapy.

Physical therapy. I was doing everything. I was in so much pain physically, but I was very symmetrical. I was very strong, you know, I was still very fit.

And my physical therapist was like, I don't know what's going on. Like, everything is balanced visually. but you have all these patterns that are just tight.

And of course, now I know that there was trauma still in my system. Tons of facial tension, shock traumas in my bones. I didn't realize all the concussion and whiplash as I had had as an athlete as a kid.

Now I understand why I was in so much pain and trying to figure this out, but, I didn't at the time, so I went and saw someone who he suggested, and it was a fellow in Christ practitioner, and I went and saw this Feldenkrais practitioner who was also a physical therapist.

And to make a long story short, within a month of doing must raise awareness through movement lessons with audiotape. And I saw this gentleman maybe only three times, maybe four times.

Everything changed. I was light, I was strong but resilient. I had no more of that tightness through all my joints and as someone who had just studied seven years exercise science and fitness and rehab and stretching and all the things, it kind of was a mind screw.

I was like, I just studied all this stuff to teach people exercise and stretching and and all these neuro developmental things. And I got better by laying on the ground, rolling around.

So I went back home to Canada and, one thing led to another, and I was like, I need to study the Feldenkrais Method. So I did. That was in 04207. And then I was in practice, private practice, doing really well, doing lots of workshops and classes.

And and yet there was, the summer of oh eight, 2008, I had all these clients that came and saw me, and even the Feldenkrais wasn't helping them. And like me, they had been to the acupuncturists, the physical therapists, the massage therapist.

They had seen all the practitioners where I lived. And, and they said, go see Irene because she's doing this other stuff. So I would see them for Feldenkrais.

And I'm like, why are some of these people not responding to Moshé's brilliant work? The way I responded? And that led me to find and I can't remember how I found it, but that's when I found Peter Levine's work, Somatic Experiencing.

And then as soon as I started studying SE in 2008, it was just I just went full on, did the training, did all the masterclasses with Peter. I got to the point of assisting at his masterclasses.

then studied with Kathy Kain, who is also one of his students who specializes in early trauma. pre-verbal trauma. also Steven Terrell, who specializes in attachment disorders.

and again, pre-verbal trauma in utero trauma, intergenerational trauma. So that just kind of all this education, lots of practice. And then I was in private practice very much, consistently, but started to realize, Isaac, that a lot of the things my clients needed to know was education and lots of basics.

And so I kept telling them the same story. You know, you'd see a client for an hour and you'd educate and educate, and then you'd teach them how to feel and sense.

Feldenkrais, Somatic Experiencing, and Nervous System Regulation

And it became it became very clear that that was inefficient for my time and for them paying me to, you know, here in Vancouver, we have to charge 200 plus dollars for a session to pay our rent.

And so it just wasn't cost effective for them, for me to be sitting there, you know, drawing them a graph of the nervous system. And this is where it gets stuck and fight flight and freeze.

And this is what creates this. So, long story short, again, I put together all my materials, created materials, and now I have online courses that teach people how to get into their body, how to learn about their physiology.

And we've had people, heal from all sorts of things, from complex PTSD to autoimmune issues, mental health issues, pain, people who have had, shifts in their diet, Betis, thyroid, I mean, just all sorts of things from learning, as you said a moment ago, had to be internal, that internal awareness, we would call it interception.

So that's the quick version of how I got to be where I am today. doing this work. Yeah, it's people who don't you really have to experience, Feldenkrais work.

I mean, when I talk to a open heart medicine retreats many years in Israel, and one of the key person who was teaching qigong is being a fitness teacher for decades.

It also would work on me. And, in six years, flying for my retreat here in Norway. Oh, lovely. And it's amazing, right? It's like. It's like it's all about letting go.

It's not about trying. It's about and allowing the body to just come, come to its place. It's it's really a magical thing, especially once you develop that awareness.

Yeah. It's remarkable. And so how, how maybe you can a little bit elaborate about how your expertise in the nervous system, you know, working with the based method, which is the movement and breathing method, and then understanding, like with Peter Levine's understanding how how really how does it work specifically with somatic trauma recovery?

and really for fostering, you know, genuine and maybe long term sustainable, healing in people. Yeah, that's a good question. So, so the interesting thing, and this is something I'm still learning how to speak because it's something that I could feel intuitively when I was working with people and teaching.

But the connection between the Feldenkrais Method, but really the it's more the principles, the foundations of my Shay's work. That's the goals. The the lessons are good, the movements are beautiful.

But it's how we interact with our body, how we listen, how we sense, how we think about our movements, how we maybe don't think about our movement. Moshe was very interested in early development.

What babies do, the natural, you know, when a baby is neurologically healthy, how they know how to walk, they they figure it out, they roll, they they push, they crawl, they squat, you know, all these things.

You know, when you give, a human infants the ground and safety, of course. And you provide encouragement just by being there. They learn how to come to stand.

It's in our genetics. but as adults, we don't remember that process so much. You know, it just it obviously it happens. and so if we take an adult's whom maybe they didn't have that early luxury.

Luxury? It's not a luxury birthright of having parents that freely allowed them to roll and move and crawl. And we know this, so many babies are put in devices, you know, they're put in, walkers, we would call them or these jolly jumpers or they're put in a chair and strapped in so they don't move.

a lot of people will obviously put their children in cribs or in Playpens so that they stay safe. And I understand that, but many of us didn't get that neurological development of the freedom to find our bodies and all that.

So what I found was and bear with me as I pieces together. Peter Levine's work was about or is about. It isn't just about somatic. You know, people think it's all about somatic because it's called somatic experiencing it really at the core is about restoring regulation to the entire person.

And so when someone is suffering or living with an old trauma, and for sake of simplicity, I haven't met anybody, Isaac, that's only got one trauma that they're.

Both. Having to work with. It's typically many, along with early trauma, developmental trauma, which isn't an event like we think about, you know, you fall off your bicycle, you break a leg, or you break an arm.

That's a shock trauma. That's fairly simple, actually, to work with. If someone comes in and they know that they've got some old shock in the arm from falling off of the bike.

But if someone was raised with parents and this is general, but this is very common in the West, Hume held them with with anxiousness or when baby cried, baby was ignored, which is very common.

You let them cry and cry and cry and that will teach them right how to self-regulate. And we know that that's completely false. You need to connect with the crying baby and attuned to them and help them get out of that activation.

And so, so many adults are living in dysregulation because they didn't get that good attachment, that good attunement, that gentle but firm holding. maybe they didn't get taught right from wrong.

That's very common these days. I'm seeing is kids are not, taught what we would call healthy shame. Right. You

know, anyway, so all of these things that that, that facilitate the health of a human, if we don't get that we're living in some form of this dysregulation of fight flight, which is sympathetic activation of the nervous system, or freeze, which is where we shut down and we numb out, we might collapse.

We might be in a state of, just not having vibrancy, vital energy, life force, energy because of this survival fight, flight freeze. So, Peter, to go back to somatic experiencing, realize that humans we hold our traumatic injuries and our shocks and our stressors and our emotions versus an animal in the wild.

If you try to grab a mother bear's cubs, she's going to fight. You know, she she's not going to like that. She's not going to think, I better not get angry to the wolf or whatever she just expresses.

Whereas humans, he realized, we can hold in, we can see someone being hurt and not do anything about it. Right? Or we can not like what someone saying to us.

We might feel the anger and the desire to say something back, but we keep it in. And then if we think about abuse and traumas, we might have been attacked or held down.

And we can't break out, we can't break free. So Peter realized, animals in the wild don't typically get post-traumatic stress. Of course, we know when animals go into zoos and are held, they have health problems, they get lethargic.

That's the phrase. So animals in the wild, they don't have these complex PTSD problems. These just regulations. But humans do what's going on. And it's because we're storing our survival stress inside.

But it's not just in the nervous system. It impacts all of the systems. So of course I want I want to point to two thing. And of course you're talking about animals in the wild, animal gets abused by their owners. Yes.

You can see terrible PTSD. We we we we adopt. We rescue a lot of dogs in the family. So but you said something important that people have to realize it.

Trauma is a single event. Trauma that can be huge events, but trauma can be a a repeated very gentle things. Really trauma per definition, is something that happens to us and leaves a scar doesn't disappear completely.

And so from this point of view, we are actually exposed to endless traumas in these lives and multigenerational. They get to accumulate, and they get a certain tendency in the body based on the emotion, the different emotional system throughout.

And so it's really this, this car that if it becomes significant enough, creates adhesion, creates stuckness. Yeah. I just love. This phrase, you know?

So when he's talking about the basic survival response to nine below debate in my book, The Survival Paradox, it's a paradox. What makes us survive is what gets us to suffer and to be sick.

In short, in the outside. So we have the fighting mode. That's inflammatory mode, right? That you experience. then we really have the, the fear and flight where we just freeze and we literally, physiologically, we create a coating around certain tissue.

And so Feldenkrais is very brilliant because it basically just teaches you. Right. It's so amazing. Like they hold your neck and you realize, oh my God, you are holding your neck.

Just let go or you're holding it. And once you let go, it's like, wow, right? It's amazing. The whole body goes into this dense and interesting babies.

We still have it. I remember I was trained in in the 80s. My God I'm getting older like 88. So 40 years ago in baby walking. Yeah. We take a baby that is one week old lesson a man is not supposed to stand and you will actually walk with them, but they never have the gravity.

But you maintain the movement. I mean, I remember a good friend of mine, a brilliant person from the medical field, the child, a baby I was already living in the States who never stopped crying in the first two years of life.

And I told him, please bring them. I want to meet them. And I remember they just brought them. And basically it's really, really it's what I did is I held them and I just they always still have a remnant of this free movement.

Yeah. The fly just moved with the movement.

Trauma, Development, and the Role of Early Attachment

And suddenly they just relaxed for the first time after and that's it. It was gone because it's easier to unwind a baby than somebody. You know the. Oh yeah. Oh yes. Yeah.

Because of the multiplicity. So just to make this point that yeah. Let me look for the listeners for the mega drama. Yeah. And the mega drama. And our response.

It's the best we could have done at the moment because of survival. Look reproducible subtle things that ends up accumulating. And suddenly, you know, you get a serious problem when it didn't come out of was a blue.

And that's what we see is someone will often and this is sort of the conundrum of those in the West, if I call it that is, they'll have not have been brought up in war zones, no natural disasters.

They had food on the table, shelter. They played soccer or they went to movies. They had everything they wanted, you know, good school. And then they get into their older years.

And by older I don't mean, you know, 70s, I mean 20s, 30s. And then they have, a life event that's quite stressful. Often it can be a car accident. It often can be oddly grad graduate school, like the stress of being in grad school.

Well, you would know. You know, the stress of that, someone dying suddenly, seeing something very shocking. But my classic example, because I saw this, people would have a car accident.

They'd be in a car, but not like a life threatening car accident. Just like a little, little car accident. And then the next day and the next week, everything just deteriorates.

They can't sleep. Their gut goes off. They're afraid to drive. They're afraid to leave their house. They're in pain. they get anxious. They don't know what's going on.

But what has occurred is when you talk to these people and these were the people I would work in my practice with. When you start to hear the history, there was violence in the home.

There was drugs, you know, excessive drug use in the home. There was, no emotion, no, no love. No. Or the opposite. there was so much violence and anger.

Or maybe mother was unwell or someone was absent or someone died, you know, or there was something like that. And then you start to see, wow, this person has been storing and storing so much.

And then they have this one event. And it's like the saying it's the straw that broke the camel's back. Everything just. And then you start to realize, wow, humans are remarkable at folding.

Folding so much until they can't. And then it and then often, Isaac, you know, a lot of these folks that end up on disability because the medical system doesn't know how to work with that.

And this is a big part of Peter's work being so revolutionary. And, Kathy Kane, one of his one of my mentors as well, one of his colleagues is we realized that you have to go back to the basics of restoring safety.

You know, you asked about Somatics and you have to, work at the core organs that the autonomic nervous system connects with to let them know you don't have to clench or you don't need to be collapsed.

the interesting thing with Feldenkrais is a lot of people try Feldenkrais and they're like, unlike me. And I'm like, you, nothing happens. They don't they don't feel a change.

They get bored. And what's happening there is that they are in so much a functional freeze. Right? They can't even feel that they have feet under them.

Right. Or there's so, riddled with what we would call that fight flight energy. We would, we would call it in our day and age anxiety that the moment they lay down to sense their bodies, it's like danger, danger, danger.

I can't sit still, I can't, I can't, you know, it's that that hyper vigilance. And so for me, the in price I use in a very strategic way when I start working with people more so is how I instruct them to notice their bodies.

And it's less about the movement. So I've, I've taken moshe's principles and foundations and then I've inserted them. It's like a hybrid, a genetic hybrid to Peter's work and Kathy's work.

And so I'll teach people how to learn, how to have a felt sense, how to tune into their organs, how to work with the layers of the body, but not with movement.

And then, of course, as we do deeper work, we will do classic Feldenkrais work, but only until there's more regulation on board so that they can handle the connection of the thought.

Because you need to think about the movement, the connection with the body, and then act the movement out, but not in a stress response. Know it's really. Kind of it's it's a it's interesting.

it's, for them is a movement among, you know, being a physician and Chinese doctor or whatever. it's interesting because you have the Feldenkrais Method, which is very free, and you have the Alexander Technique, which is not as popular it structured, but it's also it allows a certain it's profound.

Alexander. The profound system. Yes. Amazing. They come to it practically very different manifestation. But this is the thinking that allows the thought to lead, to lead the way.

You know, like in Alexander Technique, there is no movement. There is no like movement because you you do it it you think about it and you let the body just naturally, but yeah, Feldenkrais especially is magical.

Is it also depends you how you want somebody who is very well trained. But you might put this freezing is at the root of trauma and the root of causes, you know, of course, inflammatory and other diseases.

But what drives cancer is the tissue is it freezes it no longer gets oxygen and then goes into this because survival, because survival comes when we don't feel safe and when we don't go with the flow.

It's really, you know, really it's about flow. It's really about keeping in the flow. So looking at this, I know that in your upbringing, you worked, you know, your environment was closely, you know, related to the planet into animals.

How this influenced like I, you know, I was telling you prior to the interview about me being like the youngest registered beekeeper in Israel and oh cool.

Really helped me with Chinese medicine within these two seasons because the bees will tell you what's going on in the season, the magical. And so how did this affect your approach to somatic drama recovery and the interconnectedness between humans and in our environment?

It's really important, especially in dealing with biodiversity disappearing. I mean, even I get back to, to, to raising bees. And in the past when a teenager in 20s, I never lost a beehive.

It took me three years to get one beehives to go through the winter because the biodiversity is so and so. I think, you know, it's finally I made it easier and it's cool.

You guys made it. So why why didn't you elaborate on this? Because it's important for people to understand the importance. Well, I would say my introduction like some both my parents, are veterinarians.

and but so small animal, you know, dogs, cats, birds, you know, a few reptiles, that kind of thing. But, It's odd, Isaac, because my upbringing was literally in the animal hospital.

our home was their practice until they had their own, you know, practice.

Animals, Attunement, and Interpersonal Harmony

That was, the commercial space. So I was, literally raised in an animal hospital hospital. And it wasn't until in my SC training that I understood how much that impacted me, and it wasn't all good, because when you're in an animal hospital, a veterinary clinic, it's not all nice.

It's a lot of illness, a lot of infection, a lot of, animals that aren't being taken care of properly by their owners. And so they come in terrible. but there's also a lot of, handling of the animals.

And I handled a lot of animals when they were in intense fear, you know, even, you know, even though we treated them well, they don't know what's going on.

It's confusing. And so it wasn't until I was in my SC training that I realized, wow, I have an ability to hold an animal or know what's happening in an animal, but it's not something that I learned intellectually.

It was just from being around that environment from such a young age. So one of my jobs, when I was old enough to stand at the treatment table, was to hold the animals while they were being, treated.

And what two of the main things that happen in a veterinary clinic is you you do surgery, so you have to put them under anesthesia. and you need to usually get a vein from the front paw, you know, so you hold or you hold them and they're being euthanized, right?

They're being put to sleep. So I didn't realize until my training how many animals, dogs and cats I had held. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. And I, I know what it feels like when something dies.

It's amazing. It's so. Well, you. Know. And so when I, when I landed on that, it what that did, interestingly enough, is it actually sparked a lot of anger and a lot of grief and sadness, which, you know, I don't blame my parents for it.

It's not it's this this is just the family business. But as an adult, I recognized, oh, that's why I've been so functionally frozen, because I, you hear about, E. R.

doctors and first responders, you know, ambulance and firefighters and police who are struggling with a lot of complex PTSD because they see things that are terrible and they have to shut down to do their job.

Right. And so, essentially, that's what had happened to me, was I had to shut down to do this job, because I worked for them after school, on weekends, during the summer.

But it also gave me this incredible ability to attune. So if I'm out walking, you know, and the trails will I live somewhere where they're not always the dogs are always on leash and, you know, friendly dogs, they see you and they, they run I right?

And of course, the owner is like, he's safe, he's safe. And I can tell if a dog is going to bite me. And I, I would say ten times out of ten the dog isn't going to bite me.

They're just excited. But I know it because I've been around that for so much. Right? Yeah. The other, more fun part of the job was when there were caesareans.

So, you know, the the cat comes in and yeah, you need to do an emergency caesarean or the, the dog. So I experienced at a very young age holding newborn animals like and that I think taught me attunement.

You know, it's really I, it's really fascinating. I was telling you about these two years old. It's, Yeah, it's it's yeah, I remember when I to do a residency, getting in in family practice in the States, age 40, I was already trained in.

So many healing, patients for decades, and the doctors wouldn't see it, only the experienced nurses. So in the first day in the newborn, we have to look at the eyes and we have to look at the ears, and we kind of hold it.

And they are closing the island. What I would do, I would hold them and just like I said, I would go into the movement. There's a movement. They would just open the eyes and I would just do everything and they would never cry.

That's very. Very experienced. Nurses would ask me, hey, Dr. Eliaz, Dr. Eliaz what are you doing? And I told him, no, I could. I was already we are doing now 45.

No, it's your imagination. So imagination, you know. But yes. So there is something. This is a real gift, you know, it's it's really getting because we as humans have these in us, you know. Yes.

Genetically. But we lose it so quickly because of the habituation. Right. And the comfort and the not not feeding the earth and not, you know, not being in nature and.

Yeah. Wow. That's that's really fascinating. I can completely see. Yeah. And, and what it reminds me of, you know, is, it feels like whenever I teach, whether it's my students or when I was with clients, I always, I always go back to babies.

And what would a baby need? What does a baby not want but need require to learn self-regulation of their own system. And they need that attunement. Like, you can throw out all the fancy words and but they need to connect and be attuned to.

But you can only do that when you're attuned to yourself, right? This goes back to what you said at the beginning about that intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal and, you know, I remember when I was younger, in my 20s, if I had a friend who had a crying baby, whether it was their baby or they were babysitting, they would call me over because they knew I could soothe the baby.

And I'm not someone who's had a baby. Even to this day, I'm not a biological mother and it confuses people because they think, oh, you, you haven't had your own kids, so you don't know anything.

It's like, that's not true. You know, in your. Experience with all these all these animals and. Well, that's fascinating. So right now, do you, do you also work with people one on one or you mainly teach teaching Mainly teaching online.

And I'm, you know, we're recording this and, what what month is it? May, I will be doing, professional training with my mentees starting this year. So students that have been with me for many years, we're starting a professional training this year.

it's like a basic level. So the one on one work that I will do will be with them, to. Usually teens, which is, which is also powerful when you have. And. Yeah.

So can you share with the, with the audience how they can find more information about you and how they can reach you. Yeah. it's just my name, just irenelyon.com with the y no s irenelyon.com Everything is there courses, articles, videos I have over I think now 450 videos on YouTube with many, many different topics talking about the

nervous system, trauma, somatic healing, ailments.

It's all it's all there. Wow. Thank you so much for for joining me. You know, I think we share the same passion for for bringing the the bigger picture into the body and understanding what's in the body is a reflection of the bigger picture.

And the animal kingdom is is so is so amazing. In fact, I'm going to finish interviewing you and I'm running to our dog that we we saved two years ago because. I.

Taking care of her. And so you thank you very much. Welcome for, for joining this summit. Really thank you. Isaac.