Opening on Trauma, Healing, and Self-Transcendence

Like making it kind of no big deal or trying to kind claim that let's just kind take away the attention, distraction. There's often things like addiction or strategies that we can get into to try to avoid thinking about things.

We are very good at distracting ourselves from even things that are quite healthy for us that can also come up very often, build us up or make us feel good.

This is Dr. Talks. I am so delighted you are here joining us at the Trauma to Transcendence Summit because you could be playing fantasy football, you can be goofing off, having a beer on your back deck or walking your dog and instead you're here and by you being here you were saying I care about myself enough to show up for me to give me this time to heal to dig into my issues to open up the possibility of working with those traumatic events those imprints that have held me back that of squelched my potential and release them and then move into these states of bliss and oneness we know that are possible when you move in to those phases of what we call self-transcendence.

Abraham Maslow, the great developer of the hierarchy of needs, at the very top of that hierarchy he had self actualization. But in the last two years of his life, He began to realize there was a stage beyond self-actualization.

He found people were moving far beyond simply actualizing their potential. They were living into transcending their limitations and so he called that capstone self transcendence.

That's why we're here. and in order to be in self-transcendence you have to also heal all of those habitual wounds that hold you back that keep you looping on things you don't want to think about those intrusive thoughts that hyper vigilance that looking for the next bad thing that needs to healed and then you can really move into these higher states of being higher States of consciousness with clarity so I'm so glad you're here you are participating in this process You're voting for your own healing and well-being and I'm thrilled that you are joining us today.

I am also delighted to be sharing with you the wisdom today of Sarah Close. She's a licensed professional counselor in the state of Oregon and she is with BetterHelp, which you can find at betterhelp.com.

She received her master's of science in clinical mental health counseling and operates as from a relational trauma informed approach. She is trained in NARM and EMDR.

Sarah gently aims to shift the focus of mental healthcare from struggles and problems that we all face to the resiliency and the wisdom that's inherent in seeking help.

Sara, it's wonderful to have you here. Yeah, I'm so grateful to be here. Thank you all for tuning in. I am so curious about what led you to this career path, what drew you, to devoting your life and making this your focus.

Yeah I love to say that I feel really grateful that i get to to a therapist on paper and a therapists at heart. i think since i was a kid I was definitely the person asking people about whats going on with their inner world.

sometimes at the annoyance of some of the adults in my life. But I was so curious about everything and that just continued all throughout my developmental years.

Sarah Closeu2019s Path to Therapy and Parts Work

And when I kind of found therapy, both in own experience as being a client and then also being able to see that as an opportunity for myself, it felt like I coming home to a place that made the most sense for me.

So I feel so grateful that I get to do this. I'm so humbled and inspired by my clients. They continue to show me that

in the deep questions and opening up and being curious is the best way through.

So. Oh, wonderful. And what big personal issue did therapy help you over? Was there like one really pivotal issue you remember that it made a huge difference?

Yeah, so in my 20s, I was feeling a sense of kind of feeling trapped by my experience of being a really caring about other people. And I desire to help was actually me was an invitation to continue to make my ego happy on some level.

So I was really kind of stuck in my grad school program, obviously pursuing helping people, but I also was very concerned that this was just a part of me, that I like checking the box somehow, you know, made this a part of my identity.

And I was working with an internal family systems practitioner who was wonderful and just was able to kind of help to notice all of the parts that were coming online.

I could notice the helping professional part and see that as this wonderful part that I can bring closer to me and not judge for kind of leading my life in this particular direction, I've been able to work with that part as this essential component as opposed to maybe pathologizing it or rejecting it as, you know, this thing that's just making me feel better by helping other people.

I want to just have everyone, before we move on from that, with Sarah's big insight, what part of you are you not accepting? Grab your journal. You've been journaling all along.

Grab you journal right now and just make a note of that part you that you haven't been accepting. Sarah, What was your name for that? Oh man, Heidi. Heidi!

I apologize to all the Heidi's out there. But I love her so much. So name yours as well as you're reflecting on which part of you you have trouble accepting, then you can give it a name.

And it can be a funny name, it could be an evocative name and it's just a have dialogue with it, you can start to have perspective on it. You can Start to take the witness perspective when you're thinking about that part of yourself.

So self compassion begins with just holding that party yourself and naming it is useful exercise. give yours a name. I didn't know I'd be saying that one out loud.

There's something powerful about naming it and also that name usually is shorthand for all the emotions, all of the energy that's bound up in that part of self.

So it's a pretty handy tag to use. Totally. And so how did that catalyze your growth once you did Yeah, I think being able to accept that this was like a part of me that both gave me some sense of purpose and was a of part me I needed to kind of be mindful of, it felt like I had a new sense awakeness in my practice as being a therapist and being human.

It gave a sense kind guidance and kept me alert to the possibility of that part and also other parts kind coming in. and maybe disrupting my access to my core self or my wise part.

So yeah, I feel like I connect to Heidi often and I kind of, it's been helpful just to have a little bit more awareness and expansion into kind characterizing these different aspects of who I am instead of experiencing myself as this blended identity, which has not been very serving of me in the past.

Yeah, yeah. And so again, as you're journaling, you might find other aspects of self popping up in your awareness, go and write those down too. Because we aren't competent selves, we are competent cells, beyond unitary selves.

You'll have all these different parts of cell, and they aren t always in agreement. Like one part of yourself wants to go buy a house with security. The other part says, well, Interest rates are high right now prices are higher right?

Now. I might be left high and dry So what one part of yourself says do it one party myself says don't do It you can get mired in these conflicts unless you're able to realize that there are all these different Aspects of who you are and start to work creatively with them So it's powerful to make note of them and you go ahead and journal about them as we're going ahead here, and who knows, you may even go to betterhelp.com and take a look and see who wants to help you out, who's available there to work on them.

So let's go ahead and dive into this whole foundational topic of trauma. At one point I was working with a lot of veterans and I just found they were stuck, Sarah.

At that point, this was before the wars in the Middle East, so they're mostly Vietnam veterans. They were just looping on traumatic memories, traumatic events.

and they were not able to easily move past them. At that point, there were about 500,000 Vietnam veterans with PTSD in the VA system. Now, a lot of them have died.

They have very high mortality rates, very higher rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, other things. There are about half that number left. But just watching them being unable to free themselves, they wanted to Free themselves but they couldn't they were just dragged down by these memories involuntarily.

That's why they're called intrusive thoughts because they intrude regardless of what they Wanted.

Defining Trauma and the Role of Body-Based Therapies

So what is this thing called trauma? How does it affect the mind? how does It affect a body? Oh, such a good question. And I love that you started from not necessarily the beginning of trauma.

I think humans have been experiencing trauma forever, right? But I Think our understanding of Trauma really did start with PTSD and with shock trauma and With Veterans First Responders.

and I Ithink nowadays it's expanded into a much more nuanced kind of understanding. interested in seeing the way that research continues to evolve around developmental trauma or complex PTSD.

But one of my maybe the most holistic definitions, that's quite simple, I think, of trauma for me is any moment where our needs are not met, which can be a very extreme moment.

Of course, we're talking about Vietnam veterans coming back and having intrusive thoughts of obviously not being able to have survival needs met in certain situations, let's say, or relational needs.

And then we also have maybe some attachment wounding that happens in our family of origin where we don't get attention in a moment or we do not experience our mother's love or the love of a system around us.

And then, of course, there's all sorts of other traumatic instances that can occur. So, when that happened, our body is still there and present in the moment.

And our mind can do all sorts of different things to try to cope, which is a beautiful tool. It's a wonderful safety mechanism that our brain can. We can be something called dissociation, where we kind of go out of our body.

And I think of that as a useful tool, but it's often not used because it is beautiful thing happening. So trauma work is often about slowly finding a way to get back into our bodies.

and where a bunch of the wisdom and the memories might exist, and continuously reminding our mind that we're safe now, that were in a present space of safety and trust and love.

And of course, that's what these techniques like EFT and EMDR do. They keep people in their bodies while they're experiencing rather than dissociating.

Dissociating is fine. If you're three, four, five years old and you are being abused and can't escape, well, it makes sense to be out of your body if you in a foxhole and a firefight and your in imminent danger of death.

Sure. By all means, you know, have your have your sense of being fly up there 100 feet above your head, but it isn't so adaptive if you're back home and safe with your family, and that's still happening.

So go ahead and just share about these body based therapies and how they help people stay grounded while they process those memories. Yeah, there's so many different modalities and approaches, EFT being one tool, one wonderful approach to supporting nervous system regulation, supporting getting back into our body.

Also EMDR is sort of body-based, any sort modality that shifts our focus from the mental space and into your body's inherent wisdom. Somatic psychology is one such way.

definitely a myriad of different things. I've personally practiced yoga and although that's not technically therapy, I think of it as therapy when I practice yoga because I'm really mindfully going into my body and connecting in a beautiful way.

Before I got on this call, i got to do your eco meditation, which I love your ego meditation. So grateful for that and I thing of that also any sort of mindfulness practice.

i love guided meditations personally, the ones that kind of help me imagine and feel into my body space and connect to something and reminding myself that I can feel safe in my buddy again.

And that of course is the ultimate purpose of therapy, being safe your body again and not having to go out there. Go and share with us a couple of case histories of people you've worked with who learned to be safe and their bodies again, Yeah, one person stands out and I was using the visual with her that we were kind of walking through a house together when we're working on her trauma story.

And we both have flashlights, but hers is the one that's on, mine's only there for if it's needed. We're kind navigating this house and she gets to guide us to whichever room makes the most sense to focus in on.

Then we also of course have a safety room that can go to in emergencies. escape hatches and all of that wonderful stuff. And throughout this process of kind of maybe exploring each of the rooms and opening up different aspects of her trauma story, I noticed her shifting into this more embodied presence and it was kind-of challenging to maybe describe.

But throughout the course of working with her, I noticed her just lighting up internally and you could feel it in the room with. Like we might be going through some difficult stuff, but I could the capacity that she was opening up within herself in order to kind of go into these places.

And I was noticing that, you know, sometimes joy is not a very safe emotion to be experiencing. It can feel quite vulnerable. But she was opening up her capacity to experience joy in life, even though we were going through this house and it was difficult and some dark memories were coming through.

I could just feel her presence opening out. And eventually that felt comfortable and I kind of explored together and she happily told me that she had gotten back into, she really loved to do dance.

She had stopped dancing for many years. And she had recently gotten back into dancing and she said she was enjoying being in her body in a space with other people around.

And that was used to feel really vulnerable. She said, she's able to experience it as freedom again. It was quite overwhelming. I'm curious when you felt that she were shifting and becoming more comfortable, was this a virtual

session or in-person session?

It was in person. In person, okay. Yeah, and so I know sometimes when I work with people in-person, I'm picking up cues like that and signals like. I pick them up a little bit in Zoom sessions or online sessions, but when they're in front of me, Yeah.

Yeah, I think sometimes with a virtual session, it's like a posture experience that I can notice first, just a sense of maybe they have a little bit more command in their body and the way that they're kind of showing up in the virtual space.

And sometimes it can be an effect that's a bit shut down, which makes a lot of sense when we're carrying some pretty intense trauma. But over time, that can almost be just this like slow kind It's really cool to watch people tell their story before and after treatment.

And I remember one video I watched of a woman who was telling about an auto accident and she was sitting there rigid. Her head wasn't moving, her hands were clasped tightly in her lap and moved her head very little and spoke in a flat voice.

After a tapping session and this therapist was using a combination of EMDR and EFT, After that tapping session, she was telling the story again, and she's moving her hands around.

She had much more range of motion in her neck and shoulders and just telling a story and paradoxically, She was expressing quite a bit of emotion around it, but it wasn't frozen emotion.

It was flowing emotion and discharging emotion. And just the difference in posture is so profound. That is a big cue we have that people are able to move their bodies around, they're telling the same story, but now this dynamic energy flow there isn't just this frozen recounting of some old story.

Yes, yes, that reminds me. I had one person I worked with that was a first responder and he couldn't stop yawning after an EMDR session. And he was so kind of embarrassed about it that I was, you could tell it was something like just opening up so much more space within him.

Just being able to process certain memories. Yeah. Yawning, movement, breathing, watching people breathe more deeply. Watching their shoulders go from like this to like that.

So for all of you listening and watching now, Notice when you're tense. Notice you are contracted. notice when your rigid. When are you telling a story and you can feel your muscles getting rigid?

When is your neck getting ridged?

Case Examples of Embodiment and Emotional Release

when is you chest getting contracted? Often, Wilhelm Reich, one of the great psychiatrists 100 years ago, One of his statements that really struck me was he said, no neurotic can take a deep breath.

he observed these patients of his a century ago in the 1920s and he said no neurotic can take a deep breath they couldn't breathe fully and easily in meditation research we actually measure respiration depth and rate as a measure of how deep the meditation is as meditators go deeper and deeper as they transcend move it from that self-actualization to self transcendence their respira tion rate gets much much slower some of them are taking only one breath a minute, that's 30 seconds in 30, seconds out very, very slow respiration.

And then the opposite is tension. So when when are you when you're getting tense, this is a wonderful mindfulness tool that Sarah's giving you here of just noticing observing when What story do you tell yourself in your life that makes you freeze up, makes your rigid?

What stories do tell where you're fluid and you are moving? When are you dancing? The way Sarah's client was. And also another question to ask yourself is, what fluidity, fluid practice in you life have you given up?

I was talking to someone a couple of days ago and she said, oh yeah, my husband just gave up soccer. And, you know, he's been playing soccer since high school.

Now he is 50 years old. He's just decided to stop playing. So have you stopped dancing? Have you stop skiing? have You stopped bicycling? How do you start rowing?

You stop yoga? Is there something you used to give yourself some way of being fluidly with your body that now has been released in favor of rigidity, where you're just rigid in this part of your life.

Even Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras, if you read the yoga sutras carefully, you'll find that these 195 verses, they have people begin with asanas, breathing in asana, so you are doing body flexibility, you're doing pranayama, breathing exercises, only then do you get to meditation.

And so in what areas of your life have you become rigid? Use Sarah's test over there, rigidity, giving up something that you flowed with and then how might you reclaim that?

Just make that note in your journal right now. You can pursue that later on as you do more self-inquiry. But that's a really powerful example of movement, of watching the clients movement and then of the places in our lives where we maybe need to just introduce movement or reintroduce movement to help free up the mind the way those ancient yoga sutras advocate.

Yeah, yeah. That was a beautiful example. And so, traumatized people often are telling their story very rigidly and then you see them shift. What other ways do you recommend people use to notice stories in their lives that had that emotional impact that's holding them back?

Yeah. Yeah, with trauma work, I try to apply this to other people too, but I start with my clients that the assumption is that trauma is present. And I think that's not meant to be pathologizing or kind of diagnosing, But I, think assuming that there may be some story that we're all holding that causes tension, causes rigidity, Causes pain, or generally causes defense mechanisms to come up.

I'm trained in a type of therapy called neuro-effective relational model or NARM. And that the kind of bones of that are that we all have an impulse toward healing.

And as we approach that healing impulse within us, our defensive strategies come up and they can look very different. Some of them might look like Heidi or different parts of our psyche, right?

That are coming in to say, no, this is a beautiful, vulnerable part of us and we need to protect it, which has so much wisdom to it. as if maybe a practice could be if you check in with yourself and try to imagine moving toward the most tender, vulnerable, and safe, wonderful life force part of ourselves.

If you let yourself do that and notice these strategies coming online, those might be your own flavors of what your trauma story or what these difficult stories you might dealing with.

are holding, what they're trying to protect you from. So I know for myself, if I try to approach that, I can have maybe a kind of a stonewalling part of me that tries to become quite avoidant.

And that's based on lots of thoughts of things in my own life. And if I notice that avoidant part coming in, that can be a really good example that I'm approaching something really tender and important.

And my avoidance part might need a little bit of attention or might be to say something or I might have to integrate it or tell it to pause for a while.

So I think my answer to that is it's going to be everyone's kind of maybe presentation of the different parts that come in to protect us, to project our core self.

are going to look quite different and sometimes they can look avoidant. Like I just described, maybe the rigidity can come up, may be a reaction generally.

And some of these other things that in psychology we can call symptoms can also just be these protective factors that are coming in to try to preserve the core self that is old and healed.

First of all, write down in your journal. What's your favorite way of being defensive? And there are a million ways. What are some of the ways and things to look for Sarah as symptoms of that defensiveness?

Yeah, like making it kind of no big deal or trying to kind claim that, oh, no, it's not a big, let's just kind take away the attention, distraction. There's often things like addiction or strategies that we can get into to try to avoid thinking about things.

Recognizing Defensiveness and Protective Strategies

We are very good at distracting ourselves from even things that are quite healthy for us. That strategy that comes up for me can be shutting down or avoidant.

That can also come up very often. Removing ourselves from people, kind of taking ourselves away from things and places and people that build us up or make us feel good.

Yeah, so those are some of the possibilities to look for in your own behavior. Are you doing any of those things? Are your habitually employing any those strategies to be defensive and to not grow?

And then of course, as Sarah is saying here, that is a signal we're on the threshold of healing. Yeah, it's a beautiful opportunity to harness potentially.

Very similar to maybe if you talk about things like an ego death or kind of having a moment of transcendence, let's say. Often it can take a lot of effort to switch from thinking that this could be terrible to kind relaxing into the reality that there's so much abundance and love on the other side.

What have some of your key experiences of that abundance and love been as you have broken through to the other side? Yeah, quite a few. I would say one that stands out is I remember being really stuck in a kind of trauma narrative in my own personal life that I was not enough was kind the base thoughts, which is definitely something that can relate to many of my clients with when they share.

So my base kind negative belief would be that, I'm not a enough and I kind looping in this process and maybe throwing myself into situations that were kind of maybe in a sense of desperation trying to maybe prove somehow that I am enough, but I was undermining that progress by putting myself, setting myself up to fail.

And I had an experience with a really good friend who asked me in a moment of what just felt like clarity and connection, asked in me a very heart-open way, are, am I okay?

And I felt this, oh wait, like this opening up in my chest, felt I was seen and I reflected back and this person felt they were kind of extension of myself looking back at me and just saying, hey, I see you, what's going on?

moment of letting go of my own experience of fighting and maybe forcing myself to prove that I'm enough but also undermining or sabotaging. I kind of let go those defenses and I was able to see myself as abundant or everything that i needed to be in that moment.

And just like somebody else asking you a question and holding you in the space. Yes, I think I was right there at the edge. I could really feel that inner sense of I pushed myself right to the very edge and all that was holding me

was this very thin, maybe hair width of tension.

And then I finally burst through that. That feels so wonderful to do that, have those epiphanies and move through to that new level of growth. It's just such a privilege to be able to grow in that way and then expand.

And then, of course, there's the next journey we go and go to. Right. Yeah, it doesn't stop there. You know, one of the things that we are careful when we're doing training of our, our coaches, are therapists that be trained is the whole contextualization of, of starting to, to deal with trauma.

We throw it on profit. It's called the veteran stress solution. And we've offered free treatment to over 20,000 veterans over the last decade. and it's.

It's a tricky thing to do. One of our analyses found that of all the people veterans refer to us, only one in 12 had just treatment. The other 11 out of 12 say, no, thank you.

It was just tragic, but it's been the number we found. There are all kinds of reasons why people won't go there. They don't believe they can heal, they've had unsuccessful treatments.

The numbers are really just stunning that that nine out of 10 vets who enter a PTSD treatment program drop out. nine out of 10 drop out. Only one completes it.

They always drop it after the first session, but they dropout over the course of the treatment. So what do you do at the very beginning when you're working with someone who's traumatized?

And again, they're about to start work with material that's been too scary, too terrifying for them to touch for a long time. What do Yeah, those are staggering statistics to hear.

Well, yeah, I think a beautiful kind of introduction to such an important question, then the beginning is really critical to ensure that there's safety and trust.

And also for myself, maybe it's really essential to be mindful of the way that I'm presenting to the person that I'm working with, and especially if we're approaching trauma and I tend to have maybe a gentle presence.

And so that gentleness can be a trigger if maybe I am working, let's say, with a veteran who their inner world does not talk to themselves with that gentleness.

Maybe they reject it because their system that they've been a part of in the military, there's not a lot of space for the gentleness because they have to act and they need to be focused.

So being mindful of the kind of context that surrounds the people I'm working with and doing my best to meet them where they're at as well as to take time initially to provide some psychoeducation, so to provides some context and information that can support the normalization of what the people are experiencing, because despite the fact that there are some maybe buzzwords and some ways that people tend to know about some of these issues like PTSD or trauma, I think it can be really essential to lead with Talking about them, talking about what's happening in people's bodies and their brains to create a little bit of room for not making it be this isolated instance that only you are experiencing.

Cause I think with trauma, we can experience it as this is just me.

Breaking Through Trauma Narratives and Finding Abundance

Nobody else is validating my experience. It's only up to me to deal with this. And so to kind of start with. contextualizing this person, figuring out what approach might make the most sense and then providing some a little bit of psychoeducation to get started can be really helpful beginning approaches to creating a bit a safety and trust.

Yeah, knowing that you aren't the first person to have these experiences that people have them and that they can heal from them that is really powerful context to give that first session.

It haunts me that it's not 100%. Why is there that one or two veterans out of 10, one to two traumatized people out 10 where This work has no impact on them.

So we're seeing these amazing results. I mean, look at EMDR research, over 200 clinical trials and a lot of the studies on PTSD. EFT, about 120 studies in English language journals, another hundred in other languages and.

A lot work on PTSD, again, fabulous results and there's that 10 or 20% of people and they're getting all the same treatment modalities and the aren't budging.

What's going on there? Yeah, I'm reminded of before we started recording this when you were describing, we were talking a bit about just maybe only like bilateral stimulation or using both at the same time with tapping and these techniques, typically a lot of the research is done maybe bilaterally, but every so often that one person will come along where you notice that it actually regulates them more to taps at the same time.

Don't lose heart if these practices aren't working for you, even though maybe research suggests that things like EMDR tapping work for the majority of people.

I think we're all wired slightly differently and we all come from slightly different cultural contexts and carry our trauma slightly And there's beautiful, wonderful opportunities to explore all of the different healing opportunities that exist out there in the world.

And they get to change over time. One thing that was effective for me when I was in like a teenager in my current environment at the time is not going to be helpful for my anymore, my currently lifestyle.

I think that gets to kind of continuously evolve as I learn and grow more. And so I would hope that people who maybe aren't able to experience the healing that other people experience in these modalities keep searching and see if there's one way that it can be done or some practice that they can integrate into their lives that can give them a little sense of relief.

Yeah, and one of the ways that shows up is different styles of meditation. And for example, my wife loves yoga, goes to yoga classes every week and yoga just totally works for her.

Me, not so much, but I really enjoy Qigong. So I'd rather do Q igong, I rather inspirational reading. I love sitting meditation as well. She does any meditation, that first secondary to Yoga, just read a study recently about the number of people who have anomalous experiences, go to mystical states from doing yoga and it's a high percentage of people.

They're doing physical asanas and yet they're catapulting into these elevated self-transcendent states through movement. So really take Sarah's words to heart here.

There are many different modalities and you may have tried one and if it hasn't worked for you, even though it has worked other people, then try another.

In my book, Bliss Brain, I cover the seven different kinds of meditation and the styles are radically different from each other so one style might work for you one, style, might, work, for your next door neighbor another family member but there are lots of different things lots different possibilities lots, of ways in to healing trauma one thing i would say to pick up on something she said earlier is that the commonality is the body based They're physically based.

Yoga is physically-based. Meditation where you sit on a couch or a pillow and you're focused on your breathing. That's physically base. The great transcendent master Ramana Maharshi said he was asked about mind wandering.

He said, you know, someone came to him and said Bhagavan, what do I do? My mind always wanders. I've been a yogi for the last 40 years, I can't stop mind-wandering.

And he said, just return to the breath. And the question said yeah, but Bhagavan, my mind wanders still. Ramana Maharshi said return the to breath again and just keep returning to breathe.

So the breathe is a physiological anchor. for some people. So find a style of meditation that works for you. One size does not fit all. Some people are far more inclined to use moving meditations.

Others, it's the mind. It's a mental focus for example on the writing of a saint that's going to really bring you into that sense of being present fully in your body and then replicating those states in you're here and now.

So just because some method hasn't worked for you does not mean that no method will work for You. And as Sarah emphasizes here, keep on trying. What other advice could you give people who are struggling with their current treatment regimen?

Starting Trauma Work with Safety, Trust, and Flexibility

Good question. Yeah, I mean, if you're noticing some edges of your current care plan or your healing journey that aren't quite working out, first of all, it's wonderful to be able to notice that.

I think sometimes trauma can really have this experience of limiting our sense of what's good and what bad for us, and we can become almost myopic. So to noticed that something isn't working, is just a beautiful example of how much capacity, we might be growing to know, to be able to discern what's working, what not working for us.

So pause to celebrate because that's wonderful news. And then use that as an invitation to curious. I think there can be a reaction to maybe not feeling like we're getting our needs met that can Reinforce a trauma narrative of maybe really wanting to race to the next thing and throw ourselves at things.

I can be that way when I mentioned being desperate and throwing myself at different things and very much relate. And I think the practice would be to settle a little bit and allow ourselves to be gently curious about what could possibly be there for us.

What else could bring us some healing? often going back to, like you mentioned earlier, Dawson, going to back these kind of gentle movement practices, things that have been ways that you've been able to get in touch with your body in the past or trying new things.

And then I think also just finding ways to access a little bit of joy and give ourselves a bit break in order to find space for other emotions along the continuum can be really healthy and help us kind of get into a mindset of curiosity.

And from that place, asking questions maybe to a provider if you're working with a practitioner, mentioning what you think is not working, what might be feeling stuck within you and maybe exploring within your support network other things that people have found useful and attempting to maintain a sense of curiosity throughout that process.

Not that it has to be the thing or you have to get it right because as we've talked about, this gets to shift over time. A lot of trauma work is about giving ourselves permission to evolve over time, allowing ourselves to be curious and allow that to change.

And it doesn't have to that one thing worked once and it's going to work forever. That curiosity is powerful because that puts us in the witness perspective.

We're looking at our local experience and saying, Huh, that's interesting. What's going on there? And that by itself opens up space between us and our thoughts and immediate experience.

So curiosity is a powerful perspective from which to view things. Sarah, how can family members help traumatize people? Great question. It's definitely about support systems a lot of time when it comes to trauma work.

So if we are in a circle with a traumatized person or someone who's carrying trauma within us and we're aware that they are working on their trauma, Offering support in whatever way makes the most sense to the person is really supportive and essential.

Reflecting back any evidence of resilience because it's there, I promise you. Evidence of light and joy and sharing in positive memories and experiences together as much as possible.

And then I think maybe most essential would be to ask how we can support. So it doesn't have to be that the has an answer for us, but to allow that question to be a living question is really essential.

Because throughout trauma work, if you listening might have experienced this, a lot of times our voice comes back, right? We have a little bit more confidence and we have the ability to name what it is that we most want for ourselves.

And so maybe initially we might not be able to say, hey, partner or friend or sibling, this is what I want in support of my trauma. But throughout the process, we may be Once a month, if you want to connect with me and we can share memories of our childhood, that will help me practice talking about things in a space that isn't my therapeutic space.

But allowing that conversation about what it is that this person maybe needs from us to kind of grow over time and making sure that you give them space to be able to answer that question for them.

just listening, just being present is such a powerful exercise. We do in the trainings that I do, people do. But in one of them, you sit with another person and they say things, and then you have to repeat back what they said verbatim, their exact words, to memorize their exactly words.

Memorize a sentence and say it back to them. And hardly anyone can do this. It's such powerful practice. Yeah. So think about think, about doing that just really deeply listening, coming to the present moment, listen to that person and just reflect back to them.

What they just said, we're so used to coaching, evaluating, judging, processing, that we don't usually sit there and Just listen, so just listening is a powerful gift and again, you can ask questions but then that really shows the person as they're saying you are fully present and there for them.

I'd love to hear about your recommendations for self-care. You mentioned that you do yoga, You have other practices and what which ones that may work for you and which are ones That you recommend that everybody experiment with Yeah, important question as well.

I think especially when we're talking about approaching trauma, it'd be really important to spend some time connecting more to ourself, self-love, and bringing in our self care practices close.

We don't have to keep them all super close the whole time, but making sure that they're nearby in case we need them. So yes, I have a pretty dedicated yoga practice.

And I definitely can tell if I've allowed that to fall to the wayside.

Curiosity, Support Systems, and Self-Care Practices

That's a good indication that maybe I need to kind of dedicate a little bit more attention to what's going on in my heart. What's happening in life that.

Maybe I don't want to pull that as close. I spend a lot of time outside. Between sessions, I really stay disciplined

and try to just even go stand outside, take a breath of air, feel the sunshine on my skin.

And then I try do that outside of like after work hours as well. So outside time, my yoga practice. and engaging in some meditation to start the day, very essential for me.

If you're not sure about what self-care would mean for you, I love to do a practice every so often. I call it the joy list and you just take a moment and maybe close your eyes if it's helpful and just allow your pen to not stop hitting the paper and writing down all of the things that bring you joy.

So take a moment to connect to joy and then just write, write right, right for maybe a minute, three minutes, maybe as long as you can. And then you reflect back on this list and notice, is there any sort of trend in the things that you've listed that maybe could point to something that could do as a self-care practice?

So if you notice that write a lot of things have to do with nature, may be gardening or trying out something involves being outside more, an activity, just going for a walk, doing a movement, meditation outside.

So noticing the trends in their joy list and again that permission to change, like my joyless changes over time and I get to add new things all the time.

So finding things that bring you joy and making them a dedicated, essential part of your routine is crucial, especially with trauma work. But I think generally as humans, Nowadays, I think we need to be able to rely on a self-care practice to sustain us, to connect us to joy in order to keep showing up in a world that maybe is providing us reasons to afraid or to re-traumatize ourselves.

And so make your joy list, add that to your journal, make my joylist. I want to pick up something that Sarah said in passing, but I wanted you to write this down in your Journal.

give up and leave written down every word here. Okay, so when you're feeling resistant, you do it anyway. What Sarah said was, even when I'm busy, I am caught up with all this work.

I mean, doors working virtually, make myself go outside. and stand there and feel the sunlight on my skin. Okay. She does this not because she feels like it.

But she may be totally immersed in her work. And I want you to have that same approach that there is that piece of self care that's non-negotiable. You do not talk yourself out of it.

For me, it's taking a week off every month and going and meditating writing and spending a whole seven days in samadhi in the state of elevated bliss now i work like you know ungodly hours now the three weeks of of the of a month that i get my my one week of solid samanthi where i go off into the wilderness and i don't talk to anybody i just meditate i write i read and I get into these elevated states and stay there without interruption no that's extreme i'm not saying take a week off every every month But it might be just that five minutes of walking out of the office, walking into the house and standing in the sunlight.

Don't talk yourself out a bit. Go do that. If you have committed to say two exercise periods a day, I'm going to take two hot bar periods every day and I am going go out and take a run, take walk, bicycle, do whatever it is you want to do, then if you made that commitment to yourself, treat it with as much seriousness as you would treat a visit to your doctor, a doctor's appointment or a court date, something you can't get out of.

that commitment to yourself or your own self care non-negotiable. So I want you to write down which item of self-care you will make non negotiable that you'll stick with.

You'll make a commitment too and you're sticked with it. We'll give you just a couple of minutes to do that while Sarah and I take some nice deep breaths and visualize you being truly in touch with what you all commit to writing it down.

and sticking with it. Well thank you so much for humoring me by journaling and letting me interrupt Sarah, like 10 times to make you do things and write things in your journal.

But as your doctor would say is for your own good. So prescription for both trauma release and prescription four transcendence. Sarah I'm so moved having had the privilege of sharing with you for the last hour.

I'm so grateful that you're bringing your wisdom, your insight, and your love to the people you serve and to us. Thank you. And so thank you all for spending your hour with Sarah and I.

There's lots more learning, there's lot more discovery, lots of more journaling, lot's more action. And just know as she's emphasized that there is always a greater possibility.

If what you're doing now isn't working, then there something else. Keep on being curious as you said. Find those things that really work for you. When you practice them, they have the ability to elevate your life, bring you up the vibrational scale to that point of self transcendence.

Every blessing I'll connect with you on the next episode. Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health.

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