Opening on Emotional Validation

think of it like a three-year-old kid who's screaming in the store for candy. They want candy. You wouldn't just tell your kid, now suck it up and move on.

I mean, hopefully. Gosh. Hopefully, you wouldn't do that. Yeah. Yeah. But you would be like, no, honey, you can't have candy right now. Mommy already said no, or whatever it is.

You would try to explain to them. You wouldn't just tell them to suck it up and move on. You're not going to just let them stewing that by themselves.

They're three. They need your guidance. You're their parent, right? So actually validating, sometimes just recognizing and just saying, oh, wow. I feel, hello, sadness.

Hello, anger. There you are, anxiety or embarrassment or whatever it is. I see you and I'm going to drive the bus right now. You don't get to take control.

Welcome to Take Back My Brain with Lori Hammer, where real healing starts in the brain. I'm Lori, a functional nutritionist and mom who's walked the path from anxiety and burnout to clarity and calm.

Podcast Introduction and Guest Welcome

Each week, we're going to dive into brain-based tools like amino acid therapy, gut health, fasting, and faith to help you reclaim your energy, emotions, and sense of self.

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Take Back My Brain. I'm your host, Laurie Hammer. And I am so excited today because I have Melissa Armstrong with me.

And we're going to talk about the nervous system and how God created the nervous system and so much more. So make sure you send this to somebody who is having nervous system issues and would like to know why.

So Melissa Armstrong, welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much, Lori. I am so excited to be here. We did a podcast together, so if you haven't listened to that one, you haven't seen me advertise it, make sure you go back and listen to our podcast together.

And this is like part two of everything that we talked about. Melissa, tell us who you are, what you're doing, and I want to know your story. How'd you get here?

Yeah. So I'm a nurse by trade. I've been a nurse for 15 years. My nursing adventure, let's call it, was birthed out of a desire to help people after I experienced a lot of trauma.

My parents were addicted to drugs. They were both abusive and emotionally unavailable. And we had like lots of periods of homelessness and all of the things that you think of when you have drug addicted parents when I was really, really young.

They divorced when I was six. My dad left, never came back. Lots of tragedy and chaos in the years that ensued after that. And then when I was 15, there was a shooting at my high school.

Melissa's Trauma Story and Calling

And then obviously very tragic and traumatizing for me. I was really good friends with the shooter. I knew him well.

He was at my house right before that, like I had no idea what was going to happen.

But obviously like blame as a 15 year old girl, like I was to blame. I thought lived in a very dark, dark place for many years. And then when I was 18, my brother who was five years older than me was killed traumatically right in front of me.

And yeah, my life was already very like tragic and difficult. And You know, I had tons of mental health issues and physical health issues and all the things.

And it was like in the weeks that followed his death that I was like, I'm going to be a nurse because I want to help people. And then spent the next, you know, now it's been 20, almost 22 years since then.

just learning about my own trauma and my own history and how that was impacting my current reality, how to heal myself from all the trauma that I've been through.

Became a nurse, worked in traditional medicine for a long time, realized that's not where I was feeling called to help people in the biggest way. and transitioned about five years ago out of traditional medicine and opened my own practice, helping women heal their mind, body, and spirit from trauma.

I believe that the imprints of trauma on our nervous system And the way that trauma affects our identity and our perception of ourselves is what actually keeps us in mental emotional prisons for our entire life and believing that we are not worthy and we are not capable and we are not good enough.

So a lot of my work today is helping people connect back with themselves. recognize their identity and what they're holding on to that's not serving them anymore, obviously grow closer to the Lord and heal their nervous system so that they can heal their physical body and find relief and live from overflow, not overwhelm and anxiety.

Yeah, amen. When did that start to happen for you? When did what start to happen? When did you go from that overwhelm, you know, negative identity to that overflowing identity in Christ?

Yeah. Well, I think that's like a journey. It's not really a destination. I think that there have been different levels of that healing for me over the last, you know, 15 plus years when I was 24 is when I started meditating.

And that was a significant like milestone for me where I actually like started to practically regulate my nervous system. And when I was 30, I came to know the Lord and accepted Jesus Christ into my heart as my Lord and Savior.

And then I'm about to be 40 next month. And I think, you know, even in the last 10 years, like there has been different levels of that where I feel more like that Christ-like overflow.

But definitely, it's a journey. Always, always a journey. You and I were just talking about how amazing the nervous system is. And I would love for you to share with what you shared with me before we started, like your view on the nervous system.

Yeah. Well, personally, I think the nervous system is like the most incredible system in the whole body. The nervous system is designed to be your internal surveillance system.

It's constantly scanning the environment for danger and trying to keep you alive and keep you safe. Right. And I just kind of recently had this realization where I think that the, you know, we all have that, and this is what I was sharing with you, is like we all have that feeling of like that pit of your stomach or like the hairs standing up on the back of your neck, like you're not quite sure exactly what's going on, but like something doesn't feel right.

That's your nervous system, you know, or even like butterflies in your stomach like excitement. It doesn't necessarily have to be like a bad feeling. It can sometimes be a good feeling.

But nonetheless, that's your nervous system speaking to you and giving you data and information. And I had this realization recently that I think that that's actually God's direct line of communication with us.

I think he's speaking to us directly through our nervous system and giving us like, what a absolute, like, miracle that it is that we have this system inside of us that can sense danger before we're actually there, you know?

Nervous System as Godu2019s Guidance

And I think culturally and just, like, systematically we're kind of, like, trained to not pay attention to that and, like, suppress that feeling. But if you can get really close with your nervous system and actually listen to the cues that your body is giving you, it will guide you.

And I think that that is the Holy Spirit. I, I a hundred percent agree with, with that. I can think of so many times in my life, just protecting you from danger.

Like maybe there's this one time our, my husband and I were on a vacation and we were on this beach and you know, everybody's leaving the beach. It was after sunset.

Everybody's going home and above us, like above on the sand dune, there was a guy standing up there with a with a board and maybe people will be like, well, I probably wasn't the Holy Spirit.

It was just your knowledge that the guy above you, only hanging onto a board, you probably shouldn't follow him. But anyway, nonetheless, I'm like, ooh, that was just like a creepy feeling, right?

And so we were like one of the last people off the beach and we could either go through the trees or we could go down this longer pathway to the parking lot.

And my husband's like, we're taking the shortcut. I'm like, no, I feel like the guy with the board is in there. You know what I mean? Like, like I just, it was, it was just a really odd, creepy feeling.

And I feel us women, maybe some people say we're a little overly paranoid, but I don't think so. I think the Lord made us extra sensitive so that we could keep our men alive who tend to do things without thinking, right?

In some situations. Or risky. Yeah. Or risky. Yeah. And so, you know, going down to the parking lot and stuff and sure enough, the guy with the board.

came out of that pathway, and I pointed that out to my husband. He's like, he wouldn't have hit us with the board. I'm like, what is a guy doing on the beach carrying a board with him?

You know what I mean? And he was just staring. It was just really odd. But nonetheless, my point was, there are situations in your life, you'll never know what would have happened if you would have taken the path.

But I feel like the Lord is like, no, don't go down that way, because that is a danger. You don't know what that person would have done. Anyway, just little things in life.

We're like, you know, turn around and go back in and make sure the stove is off. Like there's things in our nervous system that all of a sudden something pricks and I do think it's the Holy Spirit, but it gives us a physical response.

Yeah. And I think that physical response is that extra communication piece to like solidify, you know, what the Holy Spirit is trying to say to us. A hundred percent.

Yeah. Yeah, I had a similar experience probably about nine or 10 years ago. I was at an intersection and the light had just turned green and something inside of me told me not to go.

I was in the front, like the very first car. so the light was green, the intersection was clear, I could have just gone

right into the intersection. And I hesitated for just a second, and I did not push the gas pedal.

And then when I went to go push the gas pedal, it was kind of like a blind corner slash a hill, like coming down from the other direction and fully loaded with like two by fours in the back semi truck went flying through the red light like right as I was just going to push on my gas pedal so I was like just creeping into the intersection that semi truck went flying through the intersection didn't stop nobody was in the intersection it was early in the morning on like a weekend And I remember like I stopped and I just instantly like started crying because I just felt, I felt it ahead of time.

And then as soon as it happened, I was like, wow, if I would have just done it anyway, my life would potentially be over right now, you know? Yeah. It was just, it was so scary.

There was a, there was a guy sitting next to me in a truck. He was in the turn lane. His light was still red. And I remember like, I looked over and he looked at me and our windows were both up, but he, he mouthed like, are you okay?

And I was like, shook my head. Yes. Like, Oh my gosh, barely, but yeah. Yeah. Thank God. Yeah. You know, and those are the instances where, you know, we as Christians, you know, people say, Oh, it must have been God's will for them to die that day.

And yet you still had that that prickling of the Holy Spirit to be like don't go yet Right. And so it wasn't your time I don't know if I'm gonna make sense people will probably be a little critical this one but we're supposed to have a long life and part of living that long life is Listening to the Holy Spirit and there's so many times where I've done things that Or like, you know, just even going back into the house to get something.

I'm like, oh, I'm sure it's in the car. And then, you know, you feel like, oh, no, you're supposed to go back in and get it. I'm like, oh, no, I packed it.

And then you get someplace, you're like, oh, I didn't pack it. But the Holy Spirit told me to go back in and get it. And I didn't listen to him. Like, how many times has that happened in our life?

And I feel some of the times when we're quick, we are more spontaneous, we push through when we should take a break and then the tragedy happens or something like that.

Not saying that that's every time to blame on anybody, but just saying sometimes it's our own not listening to the Holy Spirit, especially when you already are a Christian.

to be more in tune. Learn how to have the stillness, right? Yeah, for sure.

Listening to Intuition and the Holy Spirit

I think, like I said, culturally and systematically, we are taught to ignore that and push through it or don't connect with it or you know yeah whatever it is like we're taught to ignore it yes just just keep going just keep going just keep going yeah and to ignore all those still small voices because there wasn't any reason for you to stop right it was a green light we just go yeah so you know praise god that you you did listen yeah yeah yeah when you're working with women regulating their nervous system what are you seeing most often is the biggest obstacle or like stronghold that they have going on in their life?

I think it's twofold. The first thing is awareness. Bringing the awareness of the patterns and the cycles that you're living under, like in the subconscious or in the background or whatever you want to call it, like bringing people to awareness of those things is sometimes extremely difficult.

And then the second piece of that is those patterns, that identity and like actually getting, yeah, as I'm saying this, I'm like, that's for sure the hardest, the harder part.

Like the awareness is hard sometimes, but for sure the harder part is actually unraveling and uncovering those identity, those subconscious beliefs that we have so deep inside of us that are running the show.

And we have to make the unconscious conscious, right? Because like 95% of what we're doing day to day is happening in our subconscious. And until you make that subconscious or that unconscious conscious, you can't actually, like, change it.

And those identity beliefs and the things that you truly believe about yourself are what is going to run your show. Like Jamie Kern-Lema says it, like you will never rise to the level of your desires.

You always fall to the level of your belief. Right. So how are you uncovering those subconscious beliefs? Working with women to actually uncover the things that were either said or not said, the situations that they went through, and what their thoughts and beliefs about those circumstances and those experiences were, that's where it starts.

but a lot of like deep introspective work, you know, like one-on-one coaching, talking through situations, talking through the deep dark. painful memories and asking one of the most powerful questions is who did you want love from the most and who did you have to be or not be or what did you have to do or not do to get love from that person?

And that is a powerful shift when you can recognize, like, when you're thinking back to your childhood, like, who were you trying to get love from? Right.

That's usually the root. Yeah. Who were you trying to get love from? Wow. And who did you have to be or not be in order to get that love? Yeah, that's a big question.

And then really like guiding women back to like who they really are. And that's so much like your identity in Christ, but also like so many other things like, you know, letting go of the identities that aren't serving us anymore.

Like I used to call myself a perfectionist and like I don't anymore because it just doesn't serve me, you know, and realizing that I actually developed that identity as a response to the, for me, it was my mother's love that I always was trying to get.

And in order to get her love or feel like I was even like, catching her attention, I had to be a perfectionist. I had to perform and do and clean and not complain and smile and, you know.

So really just like unraveling and learning to like, who are you actually? Who do you want to be? And if you don't want to be that person anymore, you don't want to be a perfectionist anymore, you can actually just set that down.

Right. Right. Because we put these labels on ourselves. that just don't serve us and I love that that's the work that you're doing because you know you think back like where did that come from right like I mean we can talk about in the physical realm because you know I do amino acid therapy and there's always a physical piece going on as well but when we're talking about this spiritual emotional realm It usually comes from something that happened to us or something that somebody said.

Uncovering Subconscious Beliefs

I was talking to a woman not too long ago and she was having some body image issues and she's like, I had an amazing childhood. There wasn't like a traumatic event, but she said, I do remember one time and it kind of stems from this and she goes, my dad wasn't being mean about it, but I was eating like an enormous amount of food one night and he says you're an athlete you can't eat like that and she's like all of a sudden I was like and she took that message and she made it into something that he hadn't intended right but then it shifted how she ate and how she performed like it was just very far-reaching you know some of those things come out of our immaturity of not hearing what the other person is saying.

So I don't know, it even needs always to come out of trauma. It just could be, we just misunderstood the event, the

connection, the interaction, whatever it might have been.

And if you go back and you kind of rework it, you're like, oh, I totally misunderstood all of that. Yeah, it doesn't have to come from a truly traumatizing event necessarily.

Lots of well-meaning parents say things that children in their developmentally appropriate milestones have this way of making everything about them, right?

So when you're when your brain is not fully developed and you don't understand the complexities of the world and language and all of these things, and then somebody says something to you like that.

Of course she took that to mean something, then carried it with her. Look at how many decades that she carried that. I have dozens, so many, I couldn't even count examples of clients that I've worked with who have had similar types of situations where a teacher said, here's an example of a bad student.

And that woman carried that identity that she was bad for 40 years because of one interaction with a teacher. It's crazy what we internalize for, for decades without just laying it down to Christ.

Cause in, in Christ we're a new creation. And so the old is gone and the new has come. And I think sometimes we even take that out of context that you're not forgetting your past.

You're just knowing that it doesn't define you anymore. Right? I don't know. I'm always kind of careful when I, when I tread on this stuff, but maybe you can explain it better.

Cause you're, you're always doing this as your wheelhouse, but when somebody When you're in a specific religious situation and somebody's like, well, just suck it up and move on.

You're new in Christ. Yes, and what do you say to the and piece of that? Yeah. suck it up and move on is not helpful because it's a true feeling and emotion, right?

And sucking it up and moving on actually just invalidates your own experience. There's so much judgment in the connotation of that statement. That's part of the problem is we develop these identities and we judge ourselves in addition to all the judgment that we receive every day from the outside world, we then judge ourselves.

for having these beliefs and these feelings and these emotions. Suck it up and move on is actually super unhelpful because it just suppresses those emotions that are real.

Maybe they shouldn't be driving the bus, but they're still real and validating them.

Validating Emotions Without Letting Them Lead

I feel like so much my own emotions, they just want to be recognized right like think of it like a three year old kid who's like screaming in the store for like candy they want candy like you wouldn't just tell your kid now like suck it up and move on like i mean hopefully gosh hopefully you wouldn't do that yeah yeah but like you would be like no honey like we're you can't have candy right now like mommy already said no or like whatever it is right like you would try to like explain to them like you wouldn't just tell them to suck it up and move on like you know you're you're not gonna just like let them stew in that by themselves.

So three, they need your guidance. You're their parent, right? So actually validating, sometimes just recognizing and just saying, oh, wow, I feel, hello, sadness.

Hello, anger. There you are, anxiety or embarrassment or whatever it is. I see you and I'm going to drive the bus right now. You don't get to take control.

But yeah, like suck it up, move on and like, so that's the first part, but like the and is like, I think recognizing and

validating those thoughts, those feelings and emotions that you're having as real and giving yourself that self-love and compassion that we all too often like don't get from the outside world and like really withhold from ourselves even like I feel like that's that's the beauty in transformation is like being able to just like be with yourself and hold those emotions as true and valid maybe not like being totally in charge like both of those things can be true at the same time they don't have to be like running the show but they are also still valid right I don't know, does that answer your question?

Yeah. And I was thinking like, you know, we just to reframe those thoughts, you know, there's a couple of things that have come up for me recently, just things like I hadn't thought about in years that were, that were challenging, you know, you could call them traumatic, but just challenging.

And at a certain point in my life and choosing not to dwell on that, that just came up, but just acknowledging that, okay, so that's still in there. And, but gosh, father, thank you.

for taking me beyond this thank you for you know forgiving the situation for getting me out of the situation thank you for healing like coming at it and reframing it from a place of gratitude and praise to him knowing that i am that new creation like So that event didn't define me, you know, while it was challenging, it shaped some things in my past, but that past is what made me who I am today.

And he's using me today. You know, I'm a wife, I'm a mom, I'm on fire for Jesus. And so I wouldn't want to change it, right? So I think acknowledging it, reframing it and coming from that place of gratitude for me has been very, very helpful because I don't ever want to dwell on those things anymore.

Yeah. And I think so much of the secular world is like, okay, we need to work through that piece. And maybe there's some things that you need to contemplate a little bit more than others, go through some forgiveness pattern, you know, whatever you might need to do.

But oftentimes it's just like, that did happen. That was really hard. And Father, thank you that I'm not there anymore. And that you have taken me to this higher place with you and that I am seated in heavenly places and I am your masterpiece.

Yeah, and there's nothing better, you know, I think about the the assassination, you know of Charlie Kirk this last week and so many people just witnessing that and my prayer is that Nobody uses that event to define themselves negatively like there's not a dwelling on it But there is a father, you know praise God for this amazing man who spent 31 years on this earth and and gave everything that he had to the nation, the world, his wife, his children.

And thank you, Father, for everything that's going to come out of this. That will be for your glory, for the revivals that are taking place right now on all these campuses, for the young men and women who are going to rise up because of this tragedy.

So it's not negating the tragedy, but knowing that God's going to work all of that out for good. He doesn't leave us. He doesn't abandon us as the body of Christ, right?

We can't scatter. We have to unite and rise up. Yeah, for sure. I love everything about that. My favorite verse in the Bible is Romans 8.28, which is, God works all things for the good of those who love him, for those who are called according to his will.

Reframing Trauma Through Gratitude and Faith

And I just learned recently that I was a huge Charlie Kirk fan, but I just learned I heard somebody or him maybe, I can't remember a video of him talking about that verse.

And I, that was the first verse. I didn't come to know the Lord until 10 years ago, but that was the first verse that I have memorized. The Lord put it on my heart and like showed it to me everywhere.

Like there was a billboards that had it like Romans 8, 20. I love how he does that. Oh, it was just, it was incredible. And, and I, I just in the last, I'd say two to three years, realized like my life in the first 20 years of my life was pure tragedy.

And I could, and I did for a long time, let those events define who I was. And it wasn't until the last couple of years that I realized that, like, do I want to go relive those events?

Of course not. Like, do I miss my brother every single day? Yes. But also, I firmly believe that my calling on earth is, like, I am living out my calling on earth right now because of everything that I've gone through, and God didn't make any of those things happen.

Like, He already knew that they were going to happen because He has already gone before us, just like Deuteronomy tells us, like, He has already gone before us.

He knows he's omnipresent, omniscient. He knows exactly every step, every decision, every turn, every, you know, everything that you are going, that all of us are going to do.

So like, there's nothing that you can do to You can't surprise God. Yeah, and you can't overcome His will. This is His will for my life is to do exactly what I'm doing.

I firmly believe that. I could not have the impact and the empathy and the connection with the people and understanding people from a totally different level if I hadn't have gone through those things that I went through before.

Yeah, it's so important. I love the fact that you framed it that way because he's never the author of evil, right? Never the author of evil. Christ came so that we could have life and have it more abundantly.

And this devil comes to steal, to kill, and destroy. So anything that is stealing, killing, or destroying is not from the Lord. It's straight from the foot of hell.

But he works it all out, right? He works every single thing out for the good. And that's what we have to cling to, you know, and rest in. I even hate to say cling to, we have to rest in that.

Yeah, have faith in that for sure. And what you said about what I wanted to say one thing about with Charlie and with like earlier when I was talking about that incident that I had with the semi truck and like, You said, like, if, you know, if we, and I said, like, thank God I listened, like, if I hadn't listened, but like, with Charlie, with that situation, like, again, like, God knew, like, the end?

For Charlie was already written before he was ever born. God already knew that that was going to happen, that the end was going to happen exactly that way.

God already knew that I wasn't going to go into that intersection. God already knew the tragedy that you went through, the experiences that you went through, and the shooting at my school, and the X and the Y, and all these different things.

He already knew all of that, and there's nothing that we can do to extend our life or shorten our life by even a second or an hour. The end is already written.

And for me, I find a lot of comfort in that knowing that I don't have to control it. And like, oh, if I don't listen to my nervous system right now, what if I make the wrong decision?

It's like you actually can't make the right wrong decision. He's already in it. He's in every detail. Amen. He's a detailed God. We were talking earlier, when we're going back to the nervous system, we're talking about our eyebrows.

Even our eyebrows are specifically placed on your face. It's a miracle, isn't it? It's a miracle. Your eyes are set perfectly so that you can see the way that you can see.

Godu2019s Sovereignty, Healing, and Final Encouragement

Your ears are placed perfectly so that you can hear the way you hear. Then you go internally. everything is so organized. I don't know how you could take a look at the human body and go, oh, it evolved from whatever it might be.

I was at a conference this last weekend and listening to I haven't really heard a good evolutionary perspective for a long time as to how things happen.

It was just fascinating to me. I cannot believe that this really intelligent person believes this, but they were just saying how this original form of life, which was basically a blob developed a tube, we'll call it the esophageal stomach tube, and then it just happened to ingest some other microbes that happened to be alive and that's how the microbiome got established in our gut.

I'm looking around me and they're all listening and kind of nodding their head. Really, how many of you really just believed that? Because that is about as far-fetched as anything could possibly be.

It just happened randomly. All of a sudden, we just ingested another five million types of bacteria. I mean, I don't know. Yeah, I think the miracle of humanity and like the human body, I feel like is proof that there is a God.

Yeah, there's a creator. It's not a coincidence. No. It's not an accident. Didn't just happen. It was divinely orchestrated and created by Jesus Christ.

Amen. In Him, through Him, and for Him. Oh, so good. That gets my nervous system going for sure. Yeah. What else would you like to say to the audience?

Oh, I think if I could just put one thing, if you just hear one thing, it is, I want you to know that healing is always, always possible. It doesn't matter the story, your history, the past, your childhood, your current circumstances, none of it matters.

You are divinely created to heal and healing is always, always, always possible. Wow. I love that. Amen. Where can they find you, Melissa? My website is the best way, holistichealthbymelissa.com.

I've got lots of free stuff on there. I host quarterly workshops for free. I'm just teaching people how to regulate their nervous system. My Instagram, Holistic Health by Melissa.

My podcast, Holistic Health with Melissa. All the places. It'll all be in the show notes, everyone. Go down there and look at it. So Melissa, thank you so much for this amazing conversation.

You are so welcome. So happy to be here and connect with you again. It was great. Thank you, everyone, for listening. God bless you. I'll see you in the next episode.

Thanks for listening to Take Back My Brain. If today's episode helped you connect with hope or direction, I want you to follow the show, leave us a review, and share it with someone who needs it.

And if you're ready to start your own healing journey, explore our courses and our coaching programs at lorihammer.com backslash store. So until next time, remember you cannot medicate away a nutrient deficiency and healing your brain isn't just possible, it's Powerful.