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## Q&A Call #5 Transcript

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All right. So welcome everybody. This is our fifth Q and A call for the 12th round of SmartBody SmartMind. We've got Mara in the chat helping out, posting links and answering questions and whatnot. And a fair amount of questions this time and not a crazy amount. So I should be able to get to all of them. We had a lot of questions about relationships. Five different questions, all about relationships, and of course such an important topic when it comes to this work, when it comes to healing and trauma. And most of us were originally wounded in the context of a relationship or multiple relationships. And so that can make future relationships interesting. And sometimes we may attract relationships that aren't the best for us or that echo old patterns. We may attract relationships that are good for us, but are triggering nonetheless.

(01:06)

And that's one thing that if you had trauma at some point growing up in a relationship with your parents or your siblings or even teachers, it's a good bet that later on in life, as you get into more relationships, that they will be triggering. That's just kind of how it goes until we resolve this stuff in us. And this is the thing, I mean, one of the first questions about relationships was... Someone was asking actually about my relationship with Irene and how to navigate a relationship where there's a lot of love and connection and interest and also triggers and things getting stirred up. And really that can go one of two ways. It can last for a while, but eventually explode because both people aren't on the same page and both people aren't working on their stuff. Or it can be a really, really powerful catalyst for healing for both people because yeah, the triggers are going to happen. It's just a given.

(02:17)

And so the question is, are each person in the relationship open to looking at their stuff when it comes up to realizing, "Oh, this isn't just about now. This is also about then and what happened to me then." Getting the support to work through that together. All of that needs to be in the picture. And if it is, then yeah, it's totally possible to have very fulfilling, rich relationships that are a wonderful vehicle for healing for both parties. Or you cannot have all those things in place and the triggers eventually just get too much, or maybe just one person is interested in working on it, but the other person is totally resistant, that won't last.

(03:05)

So, I mean, for Irene and I, we had a lot of support. We had lots of stuff that we had to work through. I mean, most of you are pretty familiar with my history and also, some of Irene's now. And we both had our own stuff that we were bringing to the relationship and we had lots of support. I mean, we probably had for two or three years pretty regular couples therapy with one of our somatic mentors and that was crucial. We wouldn't have gotten through it if we didn't have that couples support. So that can be a big part of it.

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That's also very often a bit early sign that may be a cue for you if you're in a relationship with someone and stuff is getting stirred up and you're wanting to work on it and you say, "Hey, maybe we should get some support. Maybe we should do some couples sessions with a good practitioner." And if the other person is like, "Yeah, that's a good idea," that's a very good sign that yeah, okay, this has potential. If on the other hand, the other person's like, "No, I don't want anything to do with that stuff, whatever," that is a good indication that it's probably not going to last. So there needs to be that willingness.

(04:19)

Another thing someone asked about is, "What to do when just people in general that you encounter seem like characters from your past?" Like your landlord reminds you of your third

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grade teacher or your boss is echoing patterns from your father. Why? That happens a lot. I don't think we know exactly why, but it does seem to happen where when there is something in us that is unresolved, we will be attracted to situations, people, places, jobs where those patterns are echoed. It will present opportunities. I view it as it's part of the system's innate trend towards healing.

(05:07)

I believe that the human system doesn't organically want to be in a state of dysregulation. Like any organism, it wants to be in a state of homeostasis, of flow, of goodness. And so it will seek that out. It will have this organic trend of wanting to go towards that. And it's like it's flowing towards that, but it hits this rock inside of us and is like, "Oh, I can't move towards that until we get this big boulder out of the way." And so we will then be presented invariably, it seems, with a situation in our life that pokes at that boulder that says, "Hey, we gotta get this moving so that we can get more health in our system." So it's pretty mysterious how that happens.

(05:54)

In terms of what to do. Well, yeah, that's going to keep happening. You will keep on encountering people that remind you of past people that were involved in some kind of hurt until the hurt is resolved. Now, even when the hurt is resolved, it's possible you will still encounter people who echo various abusive patterns, but what will happen is it won't matter. It's like, "Oh, whatever. Yeah, that person is being a jerk. It's their thing." It won't ping into us and be like this, "Oh my God, I feel like I'm four years old again, or whatever it is." So you just keep doing the work, keep doing the work, keep working on your stuff.

(06:37)

When you encounter people that trigger you, view it as an opportunity. Every time you get triggered, it is an opportunity for you to go deeper into yourself, to use the tools and the knowledge that you're accumulating through this program and the work that you're doing. In this case, I believe one of the things was feeling small, frequently interacting with people who

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you tend to want to just avoid. And so in that case it's about, well, how can you start to lean into your authenticity in those moments.

(07:18)

When you encounter people where it's like, "Oh, I feel like I need to shrink away from this," that's actually the opportunity being presented, is how can you step into it? How can you notice your posture? How can you notice your feet on the ground, stay connected to your body, stay connected as you can to your authentic impulses? That would be the opportunity there. And as you get stronger and healthier and have better boundaries, you'll have a much clearer radar of people like that from even further away. It's like, "Oh, I see that person coming and I recognize that energy and I'm just going to go this way because I want nothing to do with that." Your radar gets much stronger and your boundaries get much stronger.

(08:06)

Another question was about, "What to do if you're in a situation like a single mom who has kids and you're trying to do this work and you don't have the break that that partner can come in and give you?" And that's tough. You want to get as much support as you can, of course. If your kids are of a school age, even though public school isn't great, a lot of the time it can also be kind of an important break for you as the mom. Or whatever kind of school it is, if your kids are of a school age and can go away for a little part of the day to go to school, that can be a window for you to attend to yourself, of course.

(08:52)

If they're not of school age, then hopefully maybe there's some family around you that can offer some support. And essentially it's going to be about finding ways to carve out time for yourself in some way. And if there's really no support available, it's just you and your kids, then it's going to be about staying connected to yourself in ways that you can, day-to-day, moment-to-moment. The bathroom is your friend. Everyone's got to pee. The kids will understand that, "Oh, I got to go to the bathroom, I'll be back." Use that opportunity to

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whatever's coming up. Maybe you need to have a little cry or maybe you're frustrated and you need to get into some of the healthy aggression work that I believe is coming either this lab or next lab. So it's working with whatever the energy that's up, as you can, just making moments for yourself.

(09:58)

You may find yourself in a situation where it's like, "Okay, I'm aware something's getting triggered. I'm aware something's getting stirred up, but I can't. I have to attend to this thing that's happening." If possible, in those moments, at the very least, you can just make a little mental note. You can say to your system, "Hey, I hear you. I acknowledge that we are activated right now. I can't attend to it right now, but I will make time for me as soon as possible." And you just do your best to do that. But yeah, being a single mom or a single dad, a single parent without a lot of support and doing this work is really challenging. There's no getting around that. It certainly is doable. It just may take longer and you may have to be creative in some ways in terms of finding support or just ways to have time for yourself.

(11:01)

Another thing was what to do as we're doing this and we're around toxic people like family members and whatnot. Well, one thing is you may want to consider limiting your time. Even having a hard boundary of no contact for a while sometimes can be very important. Obviously, it depends situation-to-situation, family-to-family, what's going on. But it can be really important to have those boundaries with even our family members or at least limits on the amount of time that we spend. Because when we're doing this work, it's a very vulnerable space that we're entering into. The more we get into it, the more we get sensitive to our own system, the less tolerance we'll have for a while. Eventually, we'll get to a point where we have more tolerance because we have greater capacity and greater regulation.

(12:07)

That's like me with my dad, which I was down there recently. He doesn't trigger me anymore. I

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can find all the good parts of him in being around him and the positive elements of that relationship, but I can still only hang for three days. There has to be a time limit because his lifestyle is so toxic. I don't like the whole package, where he lives, how he lives, the things he wants to do. It just doesn't vibe with me. So it's not that I'm triggered, but I still have to have a hard boundary of like, "Okay, I'm good for three days. I can fully show up, be present, engaged. That's it." So you sort of develop those types of knowledge about yourself.

(12:56)

And family will have pushback a lot of the time. That's part of the deal. And just remember that if they really do love you, support you, care for you, they will honor your boundary and they will give you space. If they just want to keep you hooked into the drama and the struggling or the fighting, whatever it is, then that's probably not a relationship that you need. They're probably not going to be able to support you. And sometimes that's the case.

(13:26)

And then another question about relationships is what to do when there's a big fight? Like say, we do have a partner that we're close with, it's going well, but there's a big blow up, there's a big fight. In the example they gave, maybe even something got smashed. No one got hurt, but there was some explosiveness or something. What to do in situations like that? How to come back together?

(13:52)

So the first thing to know is if there is a big blow up like that, it's very likely that you're going to need to both have a little bit of space. You may need to both go away from the relationship for a little while, do your own thing, let your system come down. So that's a very good thing to know about and discuss before, when there's not a big fight happening. Just sort of the rules of the relationship. You sort of lay down the ground rules like, "Look, if we get into a fight, let's both acknowledge that it's okay for us to go a separate way." Because part of the trauma bond that can happen frequently is there can be like, "No, I want to stay. I need to stay engaged even



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though we're fighting and spinning around and not going anywhere." Well, that's echoing something that's very familiar in the system, oftentimes from childhood where you really couldn't get away.

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And so there can be a tendency to stay in this dysfunctional, kind of triggering back and forth, it's not going anywhere. And so it's helpful to have an agreement like, "Okay, let's both do our best to recognize if we're spinning around or there's been a big blow up, we need to have our separate space for a while." Go away, let the system come down, and then maybe come back after a few hours, maybe later that night. It depends on what works for you in terms of time. But that period of separation after a big blow up is often really useful to get a little perspective. That's often just thinking about my own past blow ups. That's often when I will start to, "Oh gosh, yep. Okay, I see. I did that thing where..." Whatever it is, whatever dysfunctional pattern I got triggered into, I recognize it, but I won't be able to recognize it until I have a little space from that situation.

(15:51)

Anything else on that. Mm-hmm. In terms of when you come back together, it's very important that both parties be open to being vulnerable, to open to being wrong, to be open to saying this is how I got triggered and this is how I screwed up. And there may need to be... Maybe someone did do something that was explosive and violent, like they smashed something. Okay, that might lead to some resolution. They may need to hold space for the other person. Maybe there's tears. Maybe there's rage.

(16:32)

I don't know if all of you have seen the video of Irene and I when she's doing the healthy aggression work with my arm. That's a very, very really effective way. If one partner is pissed and the other person is kind of the source of that, here you go, here's my arm. That physical contact, that squeezing. You won't hurt... It's not about hurting the other person. It's about, I'm

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showing you how that affected me and I'm feeling that in this visceral way. That's a very powerful way to resolve frustration, anger, hurt, if there's tears on the heels of that, all that stuff. It's about being vulnerable and helping... Each person supporting the other in allowing what needs to come through to come through. And that may be very useful, as I've said, to have support in that process. It may be useful if you have a couple's therapist that you can work with to hold space as a neutral third party for that. Okay.

(17:40)

"Did you share this with your dad that he just doesn't vibe with you?" Not explicitly, no. I mean, he knows. It's pretty obvious that we are... I mean, he knows that we have different views on things, for sure. But I haven't out and out said, "Wow, everything about your life is toxic, upsetting to me." No, there's no point in that really, because he's not going to change. He's living the way he wants to live. So yeah.

(18:23)

All right. Moving on to individual questions. "I need guidance for what to do after I attend to what arises with all my attention, presence, connection, movement, sounds, et cetera, and feel, and I reach my limit, but the sensations and the body remain very loud. All my resources and activities aren't enough to soothe or get the break and space I need from the loudness. The intensity of the distressing internal physical sensations feel like they continue and it feels like there's more work to do, but there's an overload too. So I feel caught in a high distress with these two as the only options."

(19:09)

So it sounds like what you're saying is something comes up and you turn all your attention to it, you work with it, you feel it, you allow it to come through, you use all your tools, and even after that, there's still a lot of intensity going and it doesn't seem like you can get a break from it. So that's not an unusual phenomenon. Early on, especially in this work, when stuff has been packed up tightly for years and years and years and years, and then we start to turn our



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attention to it and actually help it move through. There can be like this, oh my gosh, flooding of like the system, just wants to keep giving us stuff because it's been waiting for so long. So that's not that unusual.

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What this shows is that you need to, however strange as it may seem, attend to yourself less. Much more focus on the external, less focus on what's happening. Because the way you write this, "I attend to what arises with all my attention, presence, connection, movement, sounds, feeling." Yeah, great, but at this time that's a little too much, it sounds like. It sounds like you actually need to have a little bit more of a casual approach to working with yourself. Like you notice it. Okay, this is happening. Maybe I'll let a little bit of expression, but then I'm coming away from it. I'm coming out of the inside. I'm going to the external much sooner than you might think. So it's like dipping into the system, a little scoop, then come out and spend more time out than you might think you need. Orienting, just reading a book, having tea, going for a walk, watching a show, something external that's not about paying attention in here.

(21:07)

And then what that'll do is it'll start to train your system like, "Oh, it's okay to do this in little bits. We don't have to just flood everything all at once." But you have to train that a little bit. So dip in, feel, express a bit, but then much sooner than you might think, move away from it and do something else for the rest of the day. Don't feel like you have to get to all of it right then. And it'll help train your system. Oh, okay. That's titration, right? We talk about titration a lot. That's titration in practice. It's like scoop in, come away.

(21:47)

"I'm having trouble staying with the sensations in my body. A lot of fear comes up when I do this. There must be something wrong with me. The start of a disease or a health concern. I suspect this is related to preverbal trauma and just not feeling safe in my body. Do you have any suggestions on how to deal with this?"

(22:09)

Yeah. This is, again, not unusual. This is something I hear a lot, or people start to track something and they feel a sensation that is new or unfamiliar and it's like, "Oh my gosh, that's cancer. I must be dying. Something's wrong with me." That's not unusual at all. What's your feeling is probably essentially the fear. You're feeling the sympathetic activation associated with that charge. Or maybe you're feeling a freezy thing. Maybe you're feeling the sense of doom or it's all pointless or hopeless. That can come with the freeze response or with activation. It can be fear like, "Yeah. Oh my gosh, there's something wrong. There must be something wrong with me." So it sounds like you're feeling the survival energy. It's translating into the mind though. It's coming into the mind and presenting as these thoughts.

(23:05)

Now, of course, we'll always say, "If you find that you're consistently worried about something, then you can always rule it out. You can always go to a doctor. You get it checked out." With this work, with this type of thing, it seems like 9.9 times out of 10, what happens in that situation is the doctor says, "No, there's nothing wrong with you. There's nothing we can find." And that tends to be what I hear over and over again. But it can be useful just to get that message so you can say, "Okay. Nope, I went to the doctor. There's nothing actually wrong with me. These are just sensations that are part of this process."

(23:46)

And just know the kinds of sensations that you may feel in the course of this work can feel like you're dying. It's not unusual to feel such a wide range of sensations. The sensations that the fascia can produce as it comes out of constriction. It can feel like a heart attack. It can feel like, "Oh, this intense pain," but it's actually the fascia letting go. It's nothing to do with your heart. It may be the fascia in the chest. There's vibrating, trembling, feelings of panic, tingling, itching, like anything that you can imagine. Feeling is something that can happen in the context of this work. And I felt so many things in the course of this where I thought, "Yep, this is one of those

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things where someone would go to the hospital and then they would stop the process that was trying to happen."

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One way I got a head start on this work is through apasna. When I was in my 20s, even though I was totally spiritually bypassed and not really addressing my trauma, I did get a lot of practice for decades of feeling sensations and realizing that they weren't dangerous. There's so many things that you may feel that really are not dangerous. Constrictions, pain, pulsing, tension, vibrating, heat, cold, flu-like symptoms that then they're different in an hour. All of these things can happen and do happen.

(25:30)

So, suggestions about what to do with the fear. Well, there's no tricks to it, really. I mean, like I said, if you feel like you need to rule something out by getting your body checked out, do that. Then you'll know. But essentially, it's about when you find yourself in those thoughts back to the body, back to the experience itself. You have to develop that muscle and develop that trust that it's safe to experience this and understand that the fear is often the activation itself. Like the worrying about I might have this thing, that is the activation. And so if you can feel that in the body, that can actually move through.

(26:19)

Yes, heightened sensitivity also. Absolutely. Heightened sensitivity to everything. Light, sound, voices, chewing, the sounds of stereos, construction, whatever it is. Yes, yes, very much so. Okay. So just back to the body, back to the body. You find yourself worrying about it. Okay, wait, nope, back to the body, back to the body, feel. It takes a lot of practice.

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"I was telling somebody of this work the other day, and they responded that if you're able to control your thoughts and your mind, you would never experience any stress." Oh, wouldn't

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that be nice? "It's all about perception. It turned into an argument about what comes first, thoughts or emotions. I just wanted to hear your opinion on this matter. Could you control your stress by just controlling your attitude to any given situation?" Boy, such a fun one. I mean, yes and no.

(27:20)

So here's the thing. "If you're able to control your thoughts and your mind, you would never experience any stress." That does not apply with trauma, because in trauma you are experiencing stress often before there's any ability to think at all, right? The stress is coming into the body directly from the environment, often before there's any cognition online. So you don't have... There is no way to have positive thinking about it. You have no thinking. That comes much later. So with early developmental trauma, which is the bulk of the trauma in our culture, that attitude is total bullshit. It does not apply at all. You have to deal with the stuff that the body experienced before there is any ability to have thoughts about it in any way.

(28:15)

Now, in terms of what comes first, thoughts or emotion, actually sensation comes first. The physiological processes of the body happen first. That is translated into sensation that then is translated into emotions or thoughts. So emotions. I would say emotions, and emotions are essentially the meaning we make of our sensations. We have clusters of sensations, and over time we learn, oh, this constellation of sensation means sadness or jealousy or joy or whatever it is. We learn what the sensations mean. That's part of what happens with a mother in the process when the ventral vagal system's getting myelinated through the process of attunement. If you think about a mom looking at her baby and making faces and ooh and noises, that's part of that development of that ventral vagal system where we're learning like, "Ooh, this means happy, this means sad." That's where that process starts. So yeah, the felt sense, the sensation, the physiological processes happen first.

(29:37)

Now, the reason this is tricky is once you do have the ability to get into the felt sense and work with that directly and start resolving these things and get more regulated and get more capacity, then there does come a point where the way in which you use your mind absolutely can have a huge effect on what you experience in terms of your physiology. It works both ways, but you have to get to the point where you can genuinely do that. And what that means is often just having the ability to come out of the thoughts and attend to the felt sense directly using your consciousness, using your awareness to work directly with the physiology. And that's a way of using your mind. It's just not the way that we would normally think about it in terms of positive thinking. Positive thinking doesn't really do much, in my opinion. It's like being aware of what is, does something. I mean, when it comes to thoughts, all that stuff, that is what I would say.

(30:42)

Anything else I have here? Yeah. The mind is powerful, for sure. It's about how we use it and we need to deal with the stuff that happened before the mind was online at all. Okay.

(31:02)

"I can't remember ever not having been stuck in functional freeze. So my question is, I'm interested in a lot of things, but my brain never comes up with questions. I feel a deeper stirring inside of wanting to know more, but with no idea of what or how to ask. It seems my brain is blocked and there's also fear. Fear of being seen, heard, judged or attacked for saying something. Do you have any suggestions for breaking free from this pattern?"

(31:34)

Absolutely. So what you say here, I feel a deeper stirring inside of wanting to know more. That, what is that? What do you mean you feel inside a deeper stirring of wanting to know more? That's your doorway in. That felt sense. If you can really just spend some time with the feeling of that, the feeling of wanting to know more and really tune in to, "Okay, what is that? What

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am I noticing? What might want to happen next?" That would be a very interesting way to enter into that. What is the felt sense of that wanting to know more?

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And then in terms of following that, perhaps you go into that and you're feeling this desire of wanting to know more, and it really comes to you. I don't know what it is, but I want to know more about cooking pastry, whatever it is. I don't know. I mean, YouTube is your friend here, essentially. I mean, you don't need to ask questions. You don't need to put yourself out there and be vulnerable to learn more about things. You can just turn on YouTube and look it up. There are videos about basically everything.

(32:51)

So what might it be like? You tune in, you feel this sense. There's something inside of feeling like, "I want to learn more. I want to know this." Just spend time with that directly. See what happens next. If you do get a specific notion of what you want to learn more about, then just go watch a video on it and stay connected to your body, what you feel as you just take in information. The YouTube thing, it's really a beautiful resource in this context because we can take in information from a very safe place, whatever your cozy spot is. You don't have to be in a classroom asking a professor or something.

(33:32)

That certainly has its place too. Don't get me wrong. I'm all for in-person learning. But some of the amazing things of technology is the amount of resources that it gives us in this realm of learning things, learning about things. So yeah, just look it up, take it in and stay connected to the felt sense of your body as you take in that information. And that may mean pausing like, "Oh, I just noticed something else happen. What am I feeling now?" Use it as a neurosensory exercise, as a somatic exercise. But the starting place is that what you describe as that deeper stirring inside of wanting to know more. That sounds like this innate curiosity and really work on cultivating that, feeling that in a physical way.



(34:20)

"What could a possible connection be between vaginismus..." That's hard to pronounce. Constriction of the vagina when there tries to be penetration, essentially is what that is. "And then around four years of interstitial cystitis. What's the connection between these things? The interstitial cystitis has resolved, but vaginismus has not. No trauma that comes to mind as a possible connection, although I'm realizing these issues are not due to bad luck or chance." No. "Is there any advice you can give me, a little insight as to what could be going on?"

(35:09)

Absolutely. Both of these things are expressions of constriction and inflammation. So when there is constriction and inflammation in the system, that can express in many ways. But I've found... I've had maybe three clients with interstitial cystitis at this point, and all of it, for all of them, has resolved through working with the sympathetic energy and allowing it to move through and out because it is often that stuck fight-flight energy that causes chronic inflammation and tension, chronic inflammation and constriction.

(35:45)

Now, both of these issues are about the pelvis, the pelvic floor, and the lower abdomen. So it doesn't have to necessarily be due to a sexual assault or something like that. The connection is just trauma in general. Our pelvic floor, our lower abdomen, those are the parts of our body that are about foundational issues. Safety, home, mom and dad, money, primary relationships, just foundational safety issues tend to be stored in the area of the pelvic floor, lower abdomen, along with sexuality as well.

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But just going through trauma in general can lead to the pelvic floor being very drawn up and constricted. And if that's the case, that could very easily lead to this sort of chronic issue where if you're trying to have sex and you're trying to enjoy that, and then the moment comes where for penetration, and then the door says, "Ah, nope," closes up. I mean, that could be related of

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course to sexual assault, but it also could just be completely related to trauma in general. The pelvic floor just not wanting to soften. So that's what I'm going to suggest is probably the connection here is just stuck fight-flight energy in general, and a chronic constriction in the pelvic floor.

(37:20)

Now, what I would suggest is explore those pelvic diaphragm lessons. There's two different ones, the pelvis and feet and pelvis and respiratory. Really explore those and see if you can work with... Yeah, thank you. Also, not just for sex, but also using tampons, menstrual cups. Yeah, anything that needs to go up in there and the door is just like, "Nope, not going to do that. Don't want to let anything in." So yeah, just work with those pelvic exercises, work with those diaphragm lessons. See what it's like to bring this sense of, is it possible to bring a little breath, little expansion into that pelvic floor, and be open to the sympathetic charges wanting to move through. That's probably what's going to happen at some point, is there's some held fight-flight energy, either in the form of fear or rage, that will probably get unlocked at some point through getting the pelvis moving.

(38:25)

Yeah. I'm just noticing this note, someone asked is, "I'm finding positive mantras are helpful for me." Absolutely. Yeah, like Mara said. Yeah, it's all about resources. This is probably circling back to the thing about thoughts and are they useful and can you use your mind? So yeah. I mean, sure, it's just a resource, but just recognize it as a resource. A mantra is something that helps focus your attention, is all. That's nothing wrong with that, but it could be useful if you also learn to do that in other ways. All of our resources, we want to have our resources, but we don't want to have to have the resources. We want to eventually learn other things as well. It's all about having options, really.

(39:07)

"Can I please have a quick demo of the hand placement for the holding of the shoulder

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diaphragm? I imagine I understand the directive, but I find it uncomfortable, the bent arm, and unsustainable for more than a few seconds unless I support the bent arm with pillows, which seems daft."

(39:31)

No, not daft at all. That's actually... Irene will often use pillows if she's doing that. Totally fine. Not everyone has an arm. So the placement is, it could be here, it could be here, it could be here, it could be anywhere in this territory that's easier to reach. It doesn't have to be like right here. Not everyone has long enough arms to do that comfortably. It depends on the size of your torso, the length of your arms, all that stuff. It may be easier to lay down while doing this. It may be easier to have some pillows propped under the elbow, all of that's fine.

(40:11)

With the diaphragm work and other things like the kidney work, joints, we're teaching you how to do touch work for yourself that normally someone, like the way we learned it, would be doing for you. So we have to be creative sometimes in how we support that, is all. And it's totally fine to use any props, pillows, change your position, whatever. It's just about finding a way to facilitate that contact in some way. Even if it was like you have a big pillow that you can put here and you're just holding the pillow, if that's easier. It's about getting that sense of contact, is all. So you have a place of feedback to do the work with.

(40:58)

This one was... Okay. Yeah. "Our survival based implicit/procedural memories, by definition incomplete nervous system responses. I'm a bit confused by how we use the terms implicit memory and procedural memory. Put another way, if we're talking about an implicit survival based, not reflexive memory or a procedural memory, are we automatically talking about an incomplete nervous system response?" Okay. So not necessarily. So procedural memories, implicit memories also include things like knowing how to read, knowing how to ride a bike,

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things that you know how to do without having to think about it. That's what an implicit memory is.

(41:41)

So it's only, I would say, a incomplete nervous system response if there is survival energy in the picture. Then that's how we know like, "Oh, this is something that wanted to happen that didn't happen." And that's where we're talking about, these incomplete self-protection responses, right? Like I wanted to block the Frisbee or I wanted to hit the person, or I wanted to dock out of the way where... Whatever it is that didn't get to happen where instructions were written in the system like, "Oh, you need to do this thing," but then there wasn't time to do the thing. That's where we're talking about these incomplete self-protective responses, incomplete procedural memories. And when that's the case, there will be survival energy present in some way, whether that be sympathetic activation or freeze or both.

(42:38)

So that's how you can tell the difference. If there's a sense of activation that's coming or you're starting to feel checked out or spacey, or you're feeling strong emotion, and if you're feeling a strong tension, that's another clue. Sometimes places of chronic constriction in the body are sometimes associated with these movements that need to happen. It can be frozen shoulders, one thing that we see quite a bit, where it's actually nothing wrong internally, it's that there's these instructions saying, "Move, move, move, move, move," that aren't being acted on.

(43:14)

So places of chronic constriction sometimes are also clues that there may be some kind of incomplete self-protective response that needs to emerge. And some kind of survival energy is going to be present. It may not be immediately present. It may only arise as you go into it. So much of this, when it comes to this, is about following those impulses, really listening and following, feeling, slowing down the movement and then being open to what may come up through the system on the heels of that or during that.

(43:49)

"I'm having trouble feeling my organs within my own body. They are just a mental concept to me. Through this work, I'm starting to feel the container of my body, but the inside still mostly feels like a vague void. Interestingly, looking at photos of a dissected body signals my brain to body to feel more real and like a hefty bag of meat than it is. Is this A, common, B, cause for concern, C, something that will naturally resolve through this program? Do you have specific guidance regarding the organs?"

(44:32)

Okay. Yeah, it's great. So is this common? Yes, absolutely. Is it cause for concern? No, not at all. "Something that will naturally resolve for this program?" Yes, most likely. Although it may take longer than 12 weeks. Yes, through doing this work, you'll come to know your body in a much more attuned specific way. Having this sense of like, "I think there's a body down here," that's super, super common. And so often it's like we're going through life, we're just these heads that are floating through existence, somehow supported by something that's happening down here but I'm not sure what it is. That's really common when it comes to unresolved trauma, because the stuff down here wasn't safe. That's the whole point. It feels dangerous to be in this stuff, so we just stay up here. So yes, not having a clear sense, that's totally common. The fact that you're starting to get a sense of your container is fantastic. And I love what you say, like you're starting to be able to sense yourself as a bag of meat. Yeah, absolutely. Those sort of vague, but almost kind of gross sense. Yeah, that's super common.

(45:53)

I remember there was this client, we were doing touch work and their guts started gurgling and it was like, "Oh my god, what the hell? What is that?" They thought there was something seriously wrong. They had never felt their guts move. They had never heard this gurgle, gurgle, gurgle and felt this thing moving through their abdomen. They thought they were dying. So that is a common experience that can happen when we're unfamiliar with all the nuance of

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sensation that can happen in here. And as it comes online, it can feel gross, it can feel alarming. This is where we get into those sensations. We're like, "Oh my god, I got to go to the hospital," but you're just feeling your intestines for the first time is all that's happening, right? So all of that's very common, and yes, you will get much more familiar with your system and how it feels in all of its three dimensionality.

(46:51)

In terms of specific advice regarding the organs, just keep doing it. Just keep feeling, keep listening, use your intention, use your touch, hold your hands on your belly and just lay there and feel your breath, and listen with your hands, listen with your internal sensations, just keep practicing, is all. And looking at anatomy videos, that can be a really great way in, to get really specific about what is where. It sounds like that's useful. So yeah, keep doing that. That's awesome.

(47:28)

Hey. "Hi, Seth. I've noticed that eating food can sometimes stimulate a need to express or move. What is the nervous system explanation for this? Do you have any suggestions for managing my own needs to move, et cetera when eating in public where it isn't necessarily appropriate to roll around on the floor or start retching, et cetera?"

(47:53)

Yep. So first off, explanation. So normally, yes, in just a regular homeostatic human system, eating will usually promote a need to be still, and that's what the siesta is for, and you rest and you digest and you chill out. Sitting around the campfire after eating our saber-toothed tiger, we're all just telling stories now and digesting our food. It goes way, way back. So yes, we're generally wired to become more still after eating.

(48:28)

So what this tells me is that there is a coupling between the act of eating and sympathetic



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activation. Your fight-flight response is coupled with the act of eating, which is not unusual at all. What were your family dinners like? That's what I would ask. For most of us, a lot of us, probably not that great. Probably a fair amount of tension, I mean. So that's all it would take. Growing up for years, eating dinner with your family and there's tension and unresolved stuff and doesn't feel good and you want away from the table as soon as possible. There it is, right? So look at the connection. What were your family meals like growing up? If any of that rings a bell, that's what's going on. There's a coupling of the stress response with eating.

(49:17)

"So what to do in public when it isn't necessarily appropriate to move like you want to?" You can do some. I mean, one thing that would be good is to work on uncoupling these things, and that might mean using the act of eating as a deliberate trigger into this. So make a supportive situation for yourself where you can go into whatever activation wants to come up fully. And that may mean that you take a few bites and then you pause and what's happening? Can you attend to something right then? Is there something that wants to move through? Start working to uncouple those things so you don't have to keep on having to move or express or emote when you're eating.

(50:09)

But in the meantime, well, there's some things you can do even in public. I mean, depending on the situation, you could maybe just let your legs bounce a little bit. Let your legs, let your heels kind of run a little bit under the table. That's something you could do pretty much wherever you are. Or maybe you just excuse yourself to the washroom. Again, bathrooms are our friends, bathroom stalls are our friends. And then, whatever, maybe when you're in the bathroom stall, then you can do whatever needs to happen. Yeah, just see if you can make an opportunity for yourself.

(50:45)

But more importantly, see if you can start to work to uncouple this fight-flight response from

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the process of eating. There's all sorts of things that may arise from that. As we get into the healthy aggression work more, the annihilation work, I mean, it may be that some of that is called for. If I'm right that there was some kind of stress associated with eating early on, then it may be that there's some rage, some things that need to happen with your imagination and your body. Maybe you need to destroy the dining room table. Maybe you need to run away. Maybe you need to kill your family. Who knows? In your imagination, of course.

(51:31)

So there's many ways that the body may want to respond in doing this work that are not logical. Again, this is the intersection of mammalian responses with human consciousness and it's not always pretty. The tiger doesn't have compassion, et cetera. So if you felt growing up trapped, and this certainly resonates with me, like the dining room table, it's like... Thankfully, we got to watch Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy, the old American classic growing up, with dinner a lot of the time. So that helped diffuse some of it, but it's like, man, there was still so much tension on just unspoken stuff and conflict in the air in the context of eating. So yeah, maybe that there's some aggression, some running, some mobilization that needs to happen.

(52:32)

Yes, that could also come from earlier in life, for sure. It could be maybe from being unable to nurse or it could even be potentially about having an umbilical cord wrapped around the neck in utero or during delivery. There could be many causes for that. But yeah, something happened where it sounds like the fight-flight energy got coupled with the act of eating.

(52:57)

"What to do with a kid who's in survival stress when eating?" Well, wait to eat. Work with the stress first. If a kid is obviously in distress and survival, that's not the time to eat. Let's go run around the block. Let's go... Let's wrestle a little bit, try to push me over. Those old things, all the games we can play with the kids. Let's stomp around. Let's get that energy moving instead of just trying to eat while that's happening, I would say.

(53:39)

Okay. Where do we do this time? Okay. "My partner has three kids and we have one together. I feel anger and resentment towards his situation and was trying for years to cope with feeling wrong for not wanting his kids. I have early developmental trauma, been working on this for years, but being in the situation with his kids causes survival stress. This plays a part in my condition of chronic fatigue syndrome. My body signals to run away, but I can't. So I froze. It screams no, but the love to my partner and the idea of what's right makes me override my impulse. Any suggestions?"

(54:22)

That's a really tough one. The question is, so if your body keeps on saying, "No, I don't want this," and yet you're overriding it because you think that you should, well, that's potentially problematic. It may be that you really don't want this, that this really isn't good for you. I don't know. But that's tricky. And you have one child together, so it sounds like you've been together for a while. There's some history there. It may be that you actually really do want this and this is just a very big trigger, and it's an opportunity like we talked about earlier in the call. It's an opportunity. This relationship with his kids is poking at really, really deep unresolved stuff in you. And that's an opportunity to work with.

(55:16)

And if that's the case, really doing your best to cultivate a relationship with his kids will probably be the way in to resolving this, and using that as... But remembering that's an opportunity when you need to take yourself away and work with what's happening. It's hard to say, for sure. Given your history and the fact that you've been together so long already, it's highly possible that this is actually something that is doable, but it's just stirring up this really deep stuff.

(55:59)

Yeah, hard to say, for sure. Like I said, it's like when you say, "My body screams no, but I love

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my partner and the idea of what's right makes me override my impulse." Yeah, that's potentially hard. And it's hard to say, for sure, exactly what to listen to. I would say to try your best to cultivate a relationship with the kids, and through that engagement, see what happens, what happens if you turn towards the thing that is scaring you, you're saying you don't want, with the intention of using it as an opportunity to work through this stuff and knowing that you may have to take yourself away from time to time from that relationship to process stuff. Yeah.

(56:50)

"My partner has developmental trauma and some real shock trauma, including being shot in the head 16 years ago. He lost an eye and brain tissue, including frontal lobe, but is a walking miracle and still speaks two languages fluently. Have you all had experience with this work helping someone like him better regulate his emotions and PTSD responses?"

(57:19)

Absolutely. For sure. I mean, this work has been done with all sorts of veterans who have experienced catastrophic injuries. And yeah, that's an amazing thing, isn't it? There's many reports of how the brain can be greatly damaged and it just recruits another part of the brain for those functions. It's amazing. The brain is so resilient.

(57:43)

So yes, absolutely. What I recommend watching, just so you have a little reference, is go to YouTube and look up Somatic Experiencing, Ray's Story. Mara, if it's possible to find that, you could pop it in the chat. And this is a film over a few sessions of Peter Levine working with a veteran who was blown up by two explosive devices. So yes, and you will see how they work together to resolve... This comes in with all these ticks and all sorts of classic PTSD expressions and absolutely, it totally works. Thanks, Mara. That's awesome. She just linked it in the chat there.

(58:33)

Okay, a couple more. "Sometimes I find myself trying to force things to come up in this work, like feelings and movements. I have preverbal trauma and I know trauma is related to being forced to do things, including sexual trauma. When I try to force things to come up, it feels like I'm violating myself, and I wonder in these instances, if I'm tapping into the energy of my trauma. It feels like I'm playing out both parts, victim and perpetrator, inside myself. Does this make sense? And any advice for working with this?"

(59:08)

Yes, that completely makes sense. And I think your interpretation is right on. Yeah, you are forcing yourself to want to do things. That is an acting out, I would say, not so much of what was done to you, but what wanted to happen that couldn't in response. So again, we're talking about self-protection, where if you were forced to do things against your will, well, that means that the body doesn't want to do that. So it would've wanted to protect itself from that. It would've wanted to fight back. And so that aggression is actually your own self-protective response that is incomplete. It's a different way of looking at it, rather than you've somehow absorbed the energy of the perpetrator. It's not like that. It's that this is your own self-protection that's wanting to emerge that didn't get to happen.

(01:00:04)

So in terms of how to work with it, yes, when you find yourself trying to force things to come up, stop, see a big red stop sign. Sorry, I got some water. Yeah, just visualize a giant red stop sign and stop. This is the moment to stop. And then what you're going to want to do is feel the energy of that, that's underneath that, because that energy of I'm trying to force something to happen, that is an aggressive energy. So we're going to want to stop the current presentation of it, which is trying to make something come up, and just start with that. Just start with that approach.

(01:00:53)

When you notice yourself trying to force something, stop. That's step number one. Just stop with that practice. Just notice that energy. So that's step two. Can you feel the energy of, I'm trying to force something? What's happening in the body? What is the felt sense of I'm trying to make this thing happen? That's your doorway into the aggression that wants to come out. And then that would be step three, just working with that aggression. So stop, notice the felt sense of it, what's actually happening, how might that want to express. It's going to be connected to aggression in some way. See what your impulses are. How might that want to come out?

(01:01:44)

Okay. This was a fascinating question that Irene and I really... We talked about this for a bit. "I was adopted, not touched by my birth mother, but not adopted for six weeks. You mentioned intergenerational trauma. With this work, am I clearing birth family, adopted family, or both?" I was like, "Oh, that is fascinating." And what we came to is both. Most likely what you're doing is clearing both your epigenetic expression, like the DNA lineage on one side, right? So you have the DNA from your birth family and that has its own potential forms of expression through the DNA, through the epigenetics. So there's that. But then you have whatever behavioral, relational dynamics were at play in your adopted family and that you're also clearing that. So I would say both, which is wow, when you thought about it, that's intense. That's a lot that you're doing there. So yeah, be very proud that you're doing this work because it's really hard.

(01:02:58)

And adoption is one of those really, really deep wounds. That could be... It doesn't have to be, that's what's so sad. If people knew the right approach, what to do when you adopt a baby initially, all of that could be mitigated. Just doing the touch work primarily just would resolve pretty much all of it. And then there would be a new attachment formed. So it doesn't have to



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be, if people had the knowledge of how to support that kid, that little one, but that was not in place for most people. So adoption is a really tough one. So yep, you are doing the work of two entire family systems there.

(01:03:42)

Okay, last one. "I seem to be attaching stories to some somatic experiences as I go through SBSM. Can't tell what's accurate or conflated. Some stuff isn't clear and feels like guesswork. For example, a family member sexually abusing me when I was young. I don't think this actually happened, or maybe I don't want it to be true. Recently when activated, I saw a vision of me being dragged by the arms along the ground and had a feeling this was past life stuff. Could I be putting unhelpful mind narratives on things?"

(01:04:15)

Yeah, it's possible. Like I said on last call, are you putting a story to it or are you sensing the story that is there? And it doesn't really matter that much. I mean, when it comes to the story, history is, I mean, important. Understanding what happened to us is important. But sometimes we're just not going to, or sometimes the clarity won't land for years after actually doing the work to resolve it. You don't need to know the story in order to resolve it. That's the most important thing to understand. You don't have to know what the story is. So the best approach when something comes up in your mind and you feel that like, "Oh, this is what happened to me," recognize it, work with the images if need be, but don't be attached to it being true. It's not necessarily true. It may be, it may not be, and it doesn't really matter in terms of resolving it.

(01:05:18)

So for example, you saw a vision of you being dragged by the arms along the ground and had a feeling it was the past life stuff. So, okay. Well, maybe so, maybe not. Leave the interpretation for later. Can you just work with the image? How might you get free, right? That's what I was like. I have this image of being dragged on by my arms. Okay, I'm going to sort of feel that, act

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that out. Then, okay, how would I break free from that? And that image may simply be a cue from your body to spark a specific series of movements. It may not be a memory at all. It may simply be information that's helping you find a way to navigate whatever wants to happen in the physiology. So sure, use the image, work with it, but don't stay attached to it being true.

(01:06:06)

A really great example of this that Peter told once in class, he had a client who was this young boy or a younger man, sorry, who was convinced that he had been sexually molested. And he'd been to all these people and he couldn't get resolution because he couldn't remember. Some people told him he was making it up and some people, they tried hypnotherapy and he couldn't get the memory. Like, "I know I was sexually molested, but I just can't remember."

(01:06:36)

But then through working directly with the felt sense with Peter, what it turned out happened is the trauma was from when he chose to get circumcised later in life, which he totally didn't make the connection to. He had decided, as a teenager, that he wanted to be circumcised and the trauma was from his body trying to pull away from that procedure even though he wanted it, and he wasn't ever sexually molested.

(01:07:06)

So the way that the mind may bring things up can be totally an interpretation of something that happens somatically that is not at all accurate. So that's why we want to notice the images, notice the thoughts, notice the meaning. Oh, that's interesting, that's curious. Is there some information there for how to work with what we want to happen in the body? But I don't need to stay attached to that being true or not. And then it may be that later down the road you actually do get clarity about what happened or not. Sometimes you won't. The mind is a really tricky beast. It will invent things out of wholesale cloth that'll just make stuff up entirely to justify experiences. So it's very hard to know sometimes if it's true or not.

(01:07:57)

Okay. All right. Thanks very much to everybody. We have reached the end of another Q and A. And just wishing you all just lovely autumn, cozy wishes wherever you are. If you're in the southern hemisphere, then happy spring, burgeoning plant wishes. And yeah, just thank you all so much for being here and showing up. See you all next time.