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Okay. Hello, here we are, curated Q&A Call number eight for SBSM 16. We've got Ari helping out in the chat. Thanks for being here, Ari, and Rebecca, as well, I believe will be coming. Ah, there she is. Awesome. Rebecca is also here. Sorry about that. I was having trouble with Zoomy-Zoom. Ah, no worries. Thanks for getting here. Awesome. Alright, so we've got a lot of questions. Thankfully a lot of them were about the same thing, so I am going to be able to address them all. I replied to a bunch by email, but there were a few different common themes this week that seem to be popping up for folks, so I'll get to those first. So the first was all about situations, symptoms that are very common when we've had early developmental trauma. So the list that people wrote in about, to summarize very briefly, there's thinking aspects.

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So sort of having this, what's the point of doing anything kind of thinking. There can be a sense of helplessness and at the same time sort of a panic. So there can be this kind of collapsed state but with a panic of uncertainty underneath that, is also pretty common. There can be, someone said, confusion and squirrels at the same time. So I sort of interpret that as a similar kind of thing, a sort of a mental fog, but an agitation on the inside. Feelings of existential crisis. So how to be an adult, how to just deal with the fact that I have to take care of myself in this world as an adult. That is also another very common experience when we've had early developmental trauma. So why, what's up with all of these things, and what to do about it, was generally the gist in terms of why.

(00:02:24):

Let's think about what early developmental trauma means. It means that before you know how to talk, before how to even differentiate yourself from the world around you, before there's any sense of self as an individual, there is a survival pattern that's already been established. So this can happen as early as the womb. It can happen in the first few months. It can happen throughout our life, of course. But what we're seeing especially with this early trauma is that the patterns of survival get recruited before there's almost any information about what is this experience, who am I, what? How do I differ from what's out here? So when that happens, those survival pathways are the core of our identity that we form around, and what are the

beliefs and the mental states of these patterns once we develop to the point where we can have such things.

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So if we learned really early down, early on, that, look, I am just going to have to shut down, the system learns this, not the cognition. I'm going to have to shut down and numb myself out to deal with the amount of stress that's coming in, because I can't fight and I can't flee. I have no musculature, I can't do anything. So when that happens, that belief system is one of freeze, which is, I'm going to die. The freeze response, remember, is only supposed to come in when we're about to die. That's how it evolved. So what's the belief system of that? It's going to be what's the point? There's no point of anything. It's all hopeless. I'm totally helpless. There's nothing I can do. Why even try? Why even bother? That is the mental state of that physiology, and it can just kind of seem like it's a part of our personality, but it's only because we formed around this kernel of freeze and survival. So the mind reinforces that through our belief system, through our thoughts. Now that's the collapse side of things. However, whenever there's collapse and freeze in the picture, we know there is sympathetic energy that didn't get to do its thing.

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I couldn't fight, I couldn't flee, but the system still would've tried to mount those responses initially because that's just how the organism works. We first try to fight or flee quickly. The system realizes that's not an option, but those impulses at a very early age are still in there underneath the freeze. So there's the squirrels, there's the agitation, there's this, the sense of sort of feeling trapped within this helplessness and this mental fog of confusion or collapse. So that's why we have these states. It's because our entire mental process and how we view the world and ourselves is formed around these little nuggets of survival energy that just got established first thing. So what to do about that. So this we've addressed a lot, so it can be easy to think, well what about this case, or what about this case, and what about this case?

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It is all kind of the same thing, and I'm sorry that that's the case, because it'd be nice to like, oh, you have mental fog with squirrels underneath. Well, okay, you do this exercise then, and that would be great, but we don't really have that. What we have to do is the steady slow work to develop capacity and a sense of internal safety, and just kind of being okay in the world. So

I'll refer to all of you who wrote in with these types of questions. Really go back to the early trauma tips that's in the additional resources section. Review those, the practices that we talk about there, the perspectives we talk about there. Learn to start identifying which practices of the various options help you feel kind of okay, help you feel a bit more connected to yourself or connected to your environment. That's really what it's about.

(00:07:11):

It's about, it's simple stuff. When we find ourselves in these states, we can't get really fancy because a baby can't be fancy, right? A baby can't do a breathing technique or do a potent posture exercise. We got to think about what that early, early physiology needs and that is connection, attunement, safety support, and that's the kind of lens we want to, to turn it onto ourselves through our awareness of ourself, through our touch, through the way in which we think about our experience. Can we really view ourselves with that care of like, oh man, oh yeah, you really went through it early, didn't you?

(00:08:00):

Oh, I'm with you. I'm with you. I'm here. Look, we're here in our house. Here's a window. Do you see the tree? Yeah, yeah. It's like you relate to yourself in this very kind, patient way, understanding that the physiology that's arising is very, very young. It can't understand fancy interventions or certain techniques or mindset shifts or anything like that. It's really about that care, attunement, attention, the basics. The other thing we can think about if we want to start to get a little bit fancy is understanding the contrary systems. So what's going on when we're in this early survival state, it's the freeze, the high tone, dorsal vagal response and it's the sympathetic, the fight flight, big charge.

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So what are the contrary systems? It's the healthy parasympathetic in many cases. That's what we're really trying to cultivate with that attunement, that attention, that care of self sparking up, that ventral vagal pathway, helping support the low tone dorsal so we're not in the high tone dorsal. So things like just making a little sound, talking to yourself, and the way I kind of just was when I was doing that little enactment, just generating sound, hearing our own voice, hearing our sounds, feeling the vibration of sound is really good for that ventral vagal system, or maybe we're really in the collapse side of things and we need to stimulate a little sympathetic. We need to squeeze a bit, push a bit. Just again, you can use sound for this as

well. Maybe it's a little bit more aggressive sound. Maybe you just do a little squeeze of your fists and then you notice what happens and that's a little ping into the pond.

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What did that do? What are the ripples? So that's about it. Whenever we find ourselves in these early states, it's about really being simple in how we intervene and remembering what does a baby need, what would a baby need? And then we treat ourselves with that same kind of care, attunement and attention, and just remember it's not a one and done kind of deal. This takes a lot of practice and repetition for the system to learn something new. And for some of us, maybe we're just starting this in our sixth or seventh decade of life. It can take a lot of repetition to learn different options.

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And then another question to do with early developmental trauma. A lot of times when we've gone into these survival states early, it can be difficult to access emotion at all. Someone specifically asked about grief, two people actually asked about grief in different contexts, and what to do if it feels like it's frozen or it's very difficult to access. Maybe there's a little tear that comes, but then that's it. How to encourage our emotions to come out and say hello. A lot of it has to do with that attention and attunement and care, and I was talking about really being kind to ourselves, to our system, like I was talking about. That's a big part of it. Another part though is working with the diaphragms because when emotion is stuck, it is usually stuck within the diaphragms. These are the structures in the body that tend to hold the affect, hold the emotion.

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So we may need to proactively work with these spaces and places in here when we aren't necessarily feeling much of anything, and it's like an exploration into our inner territory, our inner caverns, so to speak. We want to see what it's like to bring in more space. Fundamentally what this is about is the system feeling safe enough to allow these emotions to emerge. So how can we support that? Well, everything that I've already mentioned, of course, but we also want to look at some practical considerations, especially when we're actively moving through and processing trauma. We need to protect our space. So we need to look at things like who are we surrounding ourselves with? What's our home environment? Am I putting unnecessary pressure on myself? Are there resources that would be very helpful for me? Sometimes

specifically with emotion, there may be shows, TV shows or movies or songs or books or poems, pieces of art of various kinds that we know elicit an emotional response in us. Those are great things to go to use.

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For me, I had some of that for sure. The show *The West Wing* was this huge resource for me because, one, it was very intellectually stimulating and brilliant. I mean a brilliant show, beautiful, but there's a lot of emotion in there as well. And one thing I found is that I would go to it when I wanted to have a certain emotional experience. I knew which episodes would bring out certain emotional responses in me, and if I was feeling a little stuck, I, oh, I need to watch that episode. And sometimes my mind would just, I realized I was thinking about a bit of dialogue from an episode. I was like, oh, I should go watch that. And sure enough, there would be something that would spark up in me. So it may sound kind of silly that you could use a TV show for healing, but you absolutely can.

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It's about relationships, and you can develop relationships with characters in pieces of art. It's still to the brain of another person. So that can sometimes be useful. Understanding what our resources are, even if they may seem as silly as a TV show, it can still absolutely help to wake up the system a bit and to have some of that, even if it is kind of like co-regulation, in a way, and that's predictable, which feels very good and safe to that early system. I know what's going to happen because I've seen this episode 10 times and so there's safety in that. And of course nature finally is a potentially very good resource. Also potentially scary for some people, I have learned. So not everyone feels safe going out in nature by themselves. So if that's you, how might you bring someone with you, a pet, a person, but there's a lot of healing resources in nature.

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I mean, say that you're having this experience of, there's grief, but you feel like you can't access it. What would it be like to go sit by a river and just watch the flow, feel your body as you see this, just constant flow of water. Maybe you do a little diaphragm work while you're sitting there by the river and bringing a little space, and meditate on that flow, and what might it be like to feel that? Various things like that. Connecting with trees, feeling the solidity of a tree

resource can be found in many places. So know what is a resource for you and consider exploring some that may be unfamiliar.

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And anytime you get a little bit of grief, a little bit of emotion, really lean into it. Welcome it with big open arms. Really notice, what am I feeling? What are the sensations? Ah, yes, thank you body. Thank you. Yes, give me more of this please. We want to really encourage whatever little bits we get.

All right. Second common theme was a couple questions about how to navigate body work. So different forms of body work, manual body work can be very helpful as part of this process, because as we know stuff gets stuck in the tissues. We can do a lot to release that through internal work, like working with the diaphragms or the joints or the layers, simply tracking sensation, et cetera. Sometimes we need manual help. I just got back from a massage where I'm still working on this now. It's a spot that's very specific in my thigh and hip, but it was a huge bracing pattern that I've needed a lot of manual help to get out of because I didn't get attention early on.

(00:17:06):

So yeah, it can be really helpful. And what if I'm terrified of it? That's essentially the question. How do I navigate body work? If I'm really scared of touch, how do I navigate it? If I already have lots of emotions and I'm very sensitive and I know it's going to bring a big response. It's all about communication with your practitioner. So if this is you and you want to explore body work and you know that you are scared of it or that you potentially have a lot of emotions that will come, have a conversation first. Make your first session just about talking and let them know, yeah, I'm happy to pay for a full hour, no problem if I don't use it, but I just want to come in and have a conversation and talk about what you do and what I might need. Okay, that's the first step.

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If they don't want to do that, not a good fit, find someone else. Any good practitioner should be totally willing to sit and talk with you about that kind of stuff. And in that conversation you just tell them, look, I'm really scared of getting and receiving touch, and I know I really need it. I have a trauma history. I need to know it's okay for me to ask you to stop, and that you will

stop. I need to know that it's okay if I have emotions come up that may be part of it, and that that'll be okay. You have the conversation and put it all on the table, so to speak, before you get on the table. So that's the best thing I can suggest. And you'll get a sense in that conversation about how they feel to you. You need to feel safe enough, and that's an important designation.

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If I were to just say you have to feel safe with a person, you might never ever get body work, because there's a degree to which we may never feel a hundred percent safe as we're starting this. We need to feel safe enough. So that means, yeah, I can tell this is going to be edgy for me, but okay, we've had this conversation. You've responded well, I can see that you're a kind and caring person. You've given me the information I need, which is that yes, you'll stop when I say stop. You will give me space. My emotions are okay, et cetera. And then you have to take maybe a little bit of risk and you try it out. But it starts with communication. That's how you create that safety for yourself.

And then finally, there was a couple questions that were both about anger and emotion in general, and how do we know when it's the result of doing this work, and unfreezing and old layers emerging because they're being poked at by a situation or a person, versus is this just a healthy response to a present situation? So how do we know whether to allow that anger to express in the moment, which we would want to do if it's a present situation where anger is needed, or do we actually need to talk to ourselves, and actually consciously compartmentalize it a bit, because it wouldn't be appropriate to actually go into it, because it's not about now, it's about what happened to us when we were three. So how to recognize these things and how to work with them.

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I would say in general, I mean if you're just getting into this work or you've been doing it for a while and stuff is moving, it's usually pretty safe to assume that if you have a big response to something, it's probably a little bit about the past and maybe a little bit about now, but it might be more about the past. I would generally start there as an assumption. Now this is to be clear. If you are not in an actual survival situation, if you are not actually being threatened, then of course you want to allow your survival responses to do what they need to do. But if it's in the context of a conversation, something at work in your family system, if it's in a social situation

that you becoming, you realize you're becoming activated, you see something on tv, you read something online and you're full of anger and rage, chances are this is about the past, because there usually isn't much justification to get that full of anger because of something we perceive online or read or see or are being talked about.

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Generally speaking, when we're in our adult self grounded in the present, we're not going to be so reactive. So it's sort of good to err on the side of caution as we're in this work, I would say to prevent potentially problematic blowups in work, social family situations. And then in those cases, if you're just not sure, then yeah, do what I've talked about, which is this conscious compartmentalization. You're just like, yeah, I hear you. I'm aware of my anger. I am recognizing that I'm getting this big response right now. I'm going to go away right now. Or if I can't do that for some reason, I'm going to just tell my system I hear you and we will work with this as soon as it's safe to do so. It's not safe right now with this situation or these people, et cetera. And then you have to actually do that.

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You have to get to a safe place and you have to revisit that moment, talk to your body, welcome that emotion to come back. It may not or it may, but generally speaking, the more we practice this, the more it'll be available. There was a worry in one of the questions that if I'm soothing and I'm resourcing, isn't that just suppressing it? Yes, there's no getting around that you are suppressing it. That might be the smartest thing to do because it may not be safe to allow that response to come out. Because if you do, then you could actually get into a real present moment conflict that then reinforces the trauma pattern. So in those cases, it's actually better to suppress, do it consciously, which is very different than just while you're don't, don't look now, look over there and I'm going to just press this under the rug.

(00:23:36):

We can do these automatic processes of suppression without even realizing it, which we've, many of us, learned to do. That's very different consciously, deliberately acknowledging what's happening and saying, I will be with you as soon as I can. It's not safe. Now another thing to consider once you get some distance is to try using your critical thinking and objectivity to look at the situation. Does it make sense that this person would be activating a survival response in me? Does it make sense that this situation would be stirring up anger based on my history?



What do I know about myself? Yes, I see the parallels. Whatever they may be, we can. Essentially, these are all ways of narrowing in on just recognizing instantly when we are activated, and it's not about the present moment because eventually what happens is you just know it. There's a certain flavor to the feeling.

(00:24:37):

There's a familiarity. There's often thought patterns and loops that are always the same. There'd be a posture that's always the same. Maybe you always clench your fist, you start gritting your teeth. There'll be somatic cues that are always the same. There'll be scripts and words you want to say that will always be the same or similar. So you will learn to identify very quickly, oh, I'm triggered. I am in my trauma. This is not about now, but it may take some practice. So err on the side of caution as you get there and you become more familiar with what that's like in terms of whether to work actively with the aggression versus soothing it. If we are in a place where it's safe to do either, that of course depends on your capacity, that depends on what do you have the energy for? Is your wiring internally robust enough to handle the big voltage of a lot of aggression?

(00:25:40):

Or maybe it's just you can handle a little aggression, it can handle just a bit of it. Again, that's a process of self-discovery, learning what our capacity is, what we actually have the capability of allowing to move through our system. In that context, suppressing and soothing is actually part of growing capacity. I know that may sound weird, but if we know that we don't have the energy to really allow this charge through fully, that builds safety. Because if we then proactively work with it a little bit and then calm and soothe the rest, that builds safety because we know ourselves more. That builds capacity because our system starts to realize, oh, I can have these big emotions and look, I'm being taken care of. I am not being pushed over my edge into this big cathartic, that I'm being paid attention to accurately. It actually builds capacity over time to know where our edge is and to meet it, but not crash over it. So, all right, that was all the themes. So now I am into individual questions.

(00:27:08):

Just going to have a little sip of water. Saw a question? Yeah. Does TV eliciting emotions include things like terror? Is that a good idea? Totally depends. Totally depends. I certainly don't like the experience of being terrified. It's not, like, on my list. There's people who really do

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genuinely like that because we're all different. There's people who feel soothed by that because it matches what's going on on the inside already. For them, it's like a form of validation, almost. I think eventually as we get more regulated, we probably would lose the taste for that because you wouldn't have that anymore wanting to be met, right? So it's important not to stay stuck there. But yes, there may be all sorts of experiences of stimulus that your system is asking for that may not necessarily make sense, but yeah, that is something. That's a thing that happens.

(00:28:22):

Okay, individual questions. “Hi, Seth. I often struggle with something that frustrates me in an instant. I can be completely enthusiastic and feel inspired and passionate about an idea and totally feel like this is what I want to do, and then a day or even an hour later, that feeling is completely gone. Suddenly I don't feel up to anything. I need to do something else, eat something, or let myself be distracted by something, and then that spark too, whatever I wanted to do is gone. How do I create a steady feeling of this spark?” So first I'll say the fact that you feel that at all is fantastic. So that means your system is alive enough and awake enough that you're feeling this life, energy, this sense of purpose and creativity. That's really good. The way that I would say you help create a steady feeling of that is by really letting go of the idea that you have to do anything with it.

(00:29:22):

For now, I would instead focus on the feeling itself as it comes, and don't go into the mind and, oh, how am I going to put this into action? I need to do this. Yes, because right now it's not so much about what you're doing, it's about what you're feeling that's going to be more supportive. So as you feel that spark of aliveness and inspiration, just really get buddy buddy with that. What is the actual sensation of that? Where is it in my body? Can I hold it? Can I maybe work somatically with that? Like, oh, okay, wait, what is this? What is this? Oh, it's like a glow. It's like a glow in my chest, in my abdomen, and I'm going to imagine a container that holds that and keeps it safe. I'm going to build a somatic container, and I see that in a bubble in my body, and I can feel that, Ooh, that's so yummy, and maybe I'll breathe a little bit. I'll breathe into that chamber and I'm going to see myself fanning that spark. I'm going to see it growing. What's that feel like? Awesome. That's the process, the kind of process you want to do. Don't worry about needing to actually do anything, that you're thinking, you're excited about, that can come later, once this life energy is more sustainable. For now, it's about just

leaning into the feeling, identifying it, encouraging it, making a safe container for it, breathing on it, just really working with the feeling itself.

(00:30:58):

“Hi, Seth. I'm finally ready to do some more structured exercise and I've started going to the gym. However, I'm confused about how to train, right? I know that Irene disagrees with a lot of classical exercise science. Could you say something about your routine, especially in what form of stretching is necessary or recommended? Any other advice to share when it comes to increasing my exercise regime?” So a very important disclaimer that I'm not a personal trainer, and this is a bit outside of the scope of SBSM in terms of I'm not going to advise specific routines or things that you should necessarily do, but I can certainly talk about this from a nervous system lens and general functionality principles. Absolutely, and in terms of my routine, I mean neither Irene or I stretch at all from the lens of Feldenkraisian learning and functional movement, stretching is completely useless because it's about function.

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It's about doing the form correctly in such a way that your body uses its musculature and skeletal support efficiently, and when you're doing that, you don't need to stretch. When you're stretching a muscle out, it's almost like a false window of tolerance. In some ways, you're enabling it to do something that your normal functionality doesn't want to do, because you're not moving in a way organically that encourages that to happen. So yeah, that's one of the biggest things where Irene and myself and anyone who's a developing Feldenkrais practitioner, I see, Rebecca, doing stretching is not really useful. What is your function? What is your form? How can you become more efficient in your movement and pay attention to what your whole system is doing as you go through the motions? That is potentially much more useful. It's good to warm up a bit for your system.

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Usually if you're going to do some intense activity, it's generally not the best to just go right into lifting heavy weights and or doing intense, intense cardio. So maybe walk around a bit first or something. I mean, just move a bit, whatever it is. Maybe do some of Elia's practices, just sort of movement practices, just some kind of warmup can be good to just sort of get the blood flow in a bit. That's sort of a general principle. Variety is really a big part of what I and Irene both do in our exercise. Sometimes it's just going for a walk. Usually three days a week

I'm doing intense weight training, lifting heavy weights, for me, now that's because I'm a biological male at the age of 50. It's really good for me. Lifting heavy weights isn't necessarily good for everybody. It depends on your physiology, but it's really good for me.

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I also will mix it up. I'll do a 15 minute HIIT workout, high intensity interval training, maybe once a week, or once every couple of weeks. I'll throw some of that in there. So just not doing the same thing every time, and really bringing in the Feldenkrais, and the principle of learning and movement is so life-changing when it comes to exercise. Being aware of how you do what you do. I'm fortunate in that I have Irene with me a lot of the time when I'm exercising, so she can point out all the stuff I do wrong, which can still be a source of that. We don't argue about it at all anymore, but I can get a little defensive. I grew up being really, really heavily criticized, so I can still have a little g, so that's fun. But I'm really fortunate to have her there correcting me when I'm doing things wrong with form.

(00:35:03):

So in that vein, having a personal trainer who understands function and form and proper movement can sometimes be useful as part of it. The biggest thing from a nervous system lens is to stay within your window of tolerance first. Know what that is. It sounds like from what you say, you probably know, because you say you're finally ready to start doing some structured exercise, going to the gym. It sounds like you've been doing this work for a while and you're familiar with what your capacity is, so awesome. But for people in general when it comes to exercise, learn what your window of tolerance really is. That means specifically how much can you do without going into a survival response. Simply put, if you start having to recruit the old fight, flight, or freeze in order to do something, then you're no longer in your authentic window of tolerance.

(00:36:01):

That can be tricky when we're living in those things all the time already. But what generally happens is there'll be a ramping up. So what might that look like? You start to dissociate. You start to space out. You start to think about a million other things. You're no longer focused on your movement in your form. You start to get really angry or emotional in some way. You notice your straining and really tensing in ways that are not necessary for the activity. These are all kinds of signals that we're moving out of our real window of tolerance.

(00:36:36):

Yeah, that's basically it. I hope that's helpful.

Okay. "I have early developmental trauma and had abuses at various stages of childhood and teenage years by family members and family friends. I've noticed a lot of anger, resentment and rage coming up towards my non-abusive mother for not protecting me, turning a blind eye, not speaking up, not holding boundaries, being in freeze, et cetera. Also layers of guilt for that anger because she was not directly abusive. The anger should not be directed at her. It seems like it should be directed elsewhere. Can you talk a bit about what could be going on here and how can I start to work with it?" So this is a really normal paradigm to run up against. There's basically two things happening in terms of what's going on. There's the instinctive knowing of your biology and your mammalian self, and then there's your higher brain and it's saying what it thinks is right, and those things are in conflict right now.

(00:37:51):

So in this context of this work, we want to let the mammalian self win. We're working with the biology, we're working with our mammalian self, right? The anon autonomic nervous system is a mammalian system. We share it with all other mammals. The only thing that's different is this higher brain. So when it comes to trauma and trauma resolution, it's about working with that animal self and using our higher brain to make that safe. We don't want to hurt anybody. We don't want to hurt ourselves. We need to learn our capacity, our window of tolerance, all the stuff I've been talking about, right? That's all higher brain stuff, but that's all in service of letting the animal self do what it needs to do. So your mom was abusive, I'm sorry to say, because enabling abuse is just the same. It's no different. If she knew what was going on, she didn't say anything.

(00:38:50):

She didn't protect you. That is still being abusive. When we grow up, we tend to polarize our parents into the good parent or the bad parent. That's pretty common. It sounds like there's a part of you that feels like you need to protect your mom. She was the good one. That's totally normal and holistically speaking, she probably is a good person. I don't know the specifics. Like you said, she had her own trauma. She was in freeze. She didn't know how to respond. Maybe it doesn't excuse what happened and that she helped enable it, and your biology doesn't give a shit. It doesn't know. It doesn't care about those perspectives. All it knows is this person was

supposed to keep me safe. There's an instinctual kind of knowing in a wolf cub. I think that mama wolf keeps it safe. This is my protector. So that's a real betrayal at a deep biological level, and that is what you need to work on allowing to come out.

(00:39:59):

So in terms of actually doing that, it may be really helpful to differentiate in these ways with your higher brain. Understand like, yep, okay, my mom did the best she could. She's not a terrible person. She wasn't free. She was traumatized, didn't know how to protect me, whatever the circumstances may be, and you kind of put that all over here and like, yep, that's all true. Fine, I'm not going to do anything that would ever hurt her. Remember the healthy aggression work and the annihilation work is about destroying what's the figures that are inside of us and liberating the energy of aggression, allowing it to come out and be expressed as the mammal self wants to. And if you can understand that your mom is safe, you're not going to hurt her with this work, because obviously it would not be useful to direct your anger at her.

(00:40:59):

Literally, that's not going to be useful in any way. This is about what you do on your own within the purview of your own psyche and physiology. And in that context, it sounds like you're hearing your animal self saying, I'm freaking pissed at this person who is supposed to protect me and I have rage, and it's okay to allow that. It's okay to allow that and to express in whatever way it may organically want to express within here, within you, and it may be helpful to have some support with that. It's possible that some individualized support with a practitioner could be supportive for some of that process, just to sort of help support you in accessing that. But it sounds like what's really needed is just permission. You need to give yourself permission essentially and know that no one's going to get hurt, and it's about freeing up your energy and that that's okay. Alright, let's take a little pause and we're about halfway here, so let's just take a little tea bathroom water break, and we will be back in just a few minutes.

(00:45:54):

All right. Okay. This next one is, "This is my first experience with SBSM. While tracing the muscles in my left forearm, I suddenly felt the pain from two old scars where I cut myself. It was as if the injury was happening again. My body collapsed and I was overwhelmed by pain

and confusion. I sat up, focused on my breath, and distracted myself by watching tv. My question is, instead of distracting myself, do you have any recommendations for moving through this experience?" Absolutely. So yes, welcome to the magical world of somatic trauma healing, where pain from the past can suddenly be in the present. That is the whole point actually, and it's what the nature of this work basically is, is stuff that got stuck and was never processed will then be allowed to arise, and that's what happened. So it's a really good thing. It means your system is opening up and it's letting go of stuff that was stuck, because most likely when it happened originally, you would've been predisposed to go into some kind of freeze response, and so it got, those sensations got stuck, and now they're thawing, and here you go.

(00:47:24):

You're building a relationship with yourself. You're touching, you're tracing the muscles, you're paying attention, you're curious, doing the right stuff, and there's those sensations. So that is how it goes.

(00:47:37):

That is what the work is all about really, and it happens in all sorts of ways, not necessarily pain. That's just part of it. It can be emotions, it can be different kinds of sensations like trembling or electricity or vibration, or just indescribable stuff. It's quite mysterious. So yeah, how to move through that. It sounds like because it was such a new experience, you got overwhelmed by it, and also potentially there may have been overwhelming emotions present at the time that it happened, so those maybe came flooding back. So there's nothing wrong with what you did. Essentially what you did is you did your best to connect back to yourself and realize you needed to do some resourcing. Awesome. In terms of what you could do differently, then, yeah, you just take that being with yourself deeper. So the first thing is to not be scared when something like this happens.

(00:48:39):

Understand it's normal, it's good. It means you're letting go of stored tension in the system, and then it's just the basics. You just welcome the experience, you orient to where you are, right? You feel your feet, you feel your seat, you just wait. Maybe you just have a little gentle self touch there, and you hold the scars and you connect with care and kindness. If there's memories that arise, then yeah, great. You just notice those and yet you still remain present to where you are in the moment. Be aware of the context. Oh yeah. This is when I cut myself.

Okay. Yep. And here I am. Yep. Alright, great. And that's about it. It'll just move through. I mean, when this stuff arises, it's on the way out the door, so it may be that it'll come up again because you did have to sort of stop the process a bit and got overwhelmed. If so, then awesome. You just welcome it, stay present, know that it's normal, and it will pass usually quite quickly. And something like that comes up.

(00:49:57):

“How can we somatically forgive ourselves or someone? Or I guess more precisely, how can we physically not hold a grudge? How can we physically not have that tension in our chest or gut because of something we did, especially in cases where we rationally don't think forgiveness is deserved.” So yeah, forgiveness is kind of a mental emotional act. So I like this framing. How do we somatically forgive someone or ourselves? And the answer, I would be, I would say, is you somatically forgive someone or something by allowing what the tension is holding to move. That's how that tension in the chest or gut releases, it is not about the tension itself per se. That tension is keeping something stuck, which is almost invariably some kind of emotional response that needs to happen, especially in this context. So we need to allow whatever emotions are there to move, so that we are not holding them stuck in our system with tension.

(00:51:14):

And there's the somatic forgiveness. It's like, ah, great. They liberated the emotions, the energy. They're no longer being stuck. My body has more space in it now because I don't have to hold this stuff, and there's not as much tension. That's basically it. Now, part of that may include the aggression and annihilation work. Annihilation work is often a huge part of forgiveness, which can sound weird, but for example, it's really hard to forgive my dad when I am still raging at him and scared of him on the inside, I could maybe be a mental concept, but that's not going to be authentic. How could I possibly forgive him when inside I'm still terrified and fighting him or running from him? I need to allow the aggression that never got to happen, to protect myself, to freaking destroy him. And that's what I did, obviously, again, not literally, right, in the healthy aggression practices, I freaking ripped his head off, shot him, stabbed him, pummeled him, stomped him into the ground, into a bloody mess many times until those aggressive urges were out of my system.

(00:52:35):



And then, wow, how much easier is it to have a real relationship with him, because I'm not holding all that on the inside. Then I can actually feel openness and love genuinely when I'm around him, because I gave myself permission to destroy the hell out of him. That's kind of how it works. So that's in the context of rage. There may be other emotions, you may need to allow yourself to feel disgusted. You may need to grieve, you may need to move other kinds of experiences through the system. But essentially it's about allowing the emotions that are stuck to move, and that frees up the space in the body.

(00:53:16):

Sometimes it's also about what movements need to happen. Sometimes that's also part of it. If we think about expression, sometimes it's emotion, and there may be movements that need to come along with that, that the body was wanting to do.

“Hello. I've suffered from early trauma through life. Much has improved since I started this work. I am here in my body and I'm more stable in general.” Awesome. “I haven't gotten around my locked jaws so far. I have tension throughout the head and neck and suffered from migraines for many years. Clenching my jaws is probably the core of my survival strategy. I feel ready to renegotiate that pattern. And I'm wondering if you recommend any particular exercise from the program as I haven't found the right one for myself yet.” Okay, so there's a few. One, the jaws are a mirror of the hips, and the hips are a mirror of the jaws.

(00:54:20):

They, generally speaking, work together in terms of the kind of tension or pattern that may be present there. So have your hips and your awareness as you work with your jaw, and anything that you do with your jaw, consider also exploring in some way with the hips and the pelvis. That's one principle that is often not looked at. Then in terms of SBSM specific practices, the voo ahh is a really helpful one for this, and especially check out the extra resource that I made on the voo ahh page, which is a video at the bottom, which is called titrating and playing with the voo. And it goes into all sorts of ways to work with that particular exercise. And all of it is in service of allowing the jaw to mobilize and for the system to express as well, which is often part of that.

(00:55:24):

Another one would be the watering, the brainstem, which is now available in the extra resources section. That's an audio lesson that I recorded about working with softening the brainstem and the whole system, the gentle head rolling exercise, which I believe is in lab seven or eight. And of course the healthy aggression work and the annihilation work, I mean, lots of times tension in the jaw is because we want to literally bite someone's head off, or multiple people. And so what are you trying to bite in your sleep? Or when you're walking around with all this tension, oftentimes that's a big part of it as well, when we're talking about the jaw. So it's sort of a multiple approach of working with ways of activating and expressing and working with ways of softening and letting go. We need both. And keep in mind the hips. What might that look like?

(00:56:37):

For example, say with the voo ahh, maybe as I start to let the ahh happen, I also feel what it would be like to open the hips a little bit. The hips come open a little bit. That could be interesting to explore. That kind of work with the hips can also be really interesting to explore on an exercise ball, one of those big balls that you can sit on, those can be really helpful for just finding, exploring different movements that you can do through the hips, because of a very specific kind of support that you get.

(00:57:19):

Yeah, play with all that. Let's see what happens. Alright.

“Hello. I'm an alumni with EDT, chronic fatigue syndrome, anxiety, depression. When I do an exercise bringing touch and awareness to my hand or face, I feel sad and negative focusing on dry skin wrinkles, stiffness. It doesn't happen with parts covered by clothes or internal spaces. I can feel a bit freezy and distracted, hard to stay connected. I struggle with negativity and victim thoughts in general. I can't express anger positively. I always get passive aggressive, and I can only attempt the healthy aggression exercises in an ultra titrated way. Help!”

Okay, so the main thing that I hear in this question is that anger is in the system, and it is being directed inwards. Right now there is a lot of anger and aggression in there. It sounds like the capacity is not there yet to fully express it, but you're building it.

(00:58:26):

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And so keep doing that in, however, a titrated way you need to. That healthy aggression work is going to be really, really important. The voo ahh is part of that, really focus on continuing to allow that, because everything you describe here is essentially aggression that's being directed towards yourself, judging yourself. I'm judging the way that you look or feel, having that suppressed anger such that you can't really come out healthily. It's passive aggressive, feeling very negative, having these victim thoughts. All of that is essentially internalized aggression. So that's the most important thing I would say in general is keep building your capacity to allow that aggression to come out somatically directly.

(00:59:22):

Another idea is, again, more on the nurturing side of things. How might you start to build your capacity to touch these areas of your body with more care? One way you could do this, since you said it doesn't happen with clothes, just start there and really focus with just building that ability to connect and appreciate and attune to yourself with care and kindness in areas that are covered by clothes. And then maybe you do one little foray into an area that's more wrinkly or dry or whatever it is, and see if you can really stay with that intention that you've cultivated by working with areas that are covered with clothes or what might it be like to bring that care into some self-care. Really, maybe, if you feel okay, your skin's dry and wrinkly, put on some lovely lotion or cream that's really nice and apply it with that same kind of really attuned touch care.

(01:00:30):

I'm really soothing myself, I'm caring for my skin. Make it part of a self-care practice. Maybe it's easier to do in a relaxing bath of warm water. So consider exploring different settings in ways that you might use your intention through your touch. Ultimately, it's about getting that aggression out and letting it be directed somatically. So yeah, healthy aggression work, all those practices. The voo ahh, keep titrating it, important. I've mentioned the voo ahh twice in a row now, so this is in the video, so watch that. But I'll just say it now as well. One thing that we see a lot of people do with this is they'll do, they'll do this big skip where it'll suddenly go into this big opening and that is usually skipping over all sorts of tension and stuff that actually needs to be engaged with. That's why in the instructions and in the video we talk about, it's about slowly opening the mouth until you get to a point where you feel tension, and then it's about backing away.

(01:01:47):

So that might look like little pulses, opening, closing, and if you can work your way to, ah, right, that's great, but understand that you may want to work your way there. And it's about that process of discovery that happens as you find that opening. And again, watch that supplementary video about different ways to explore that.

Okay, question. “How come when your brain is stuck in survival, one is so much caring for other persons, more maybe even than oneself. After doing many exercises today, I realized how much my brain is stuck in the survival mode. And I reflected already a long time ago that every person I meet, I look out for how could I help him or her assuming somehow that they also hide some terrible issues.” Well, I mean, you're probably right about that. It's just a reality that pretty much everyone's walking around with some form of unresolved trauma at this point.

(01:02:59):

However, yeah, not your job, necessarily, to take care of them when it comes to this work and caring for others, it is certainly a “apply your own gas mask first before helping others” kind of situation. You can't really help anybody if you're offering from a depleted cup. So what's going on here? It's the hypervigilant empathy radar, what's going on. It's a common thing that happens where we learn early on that in order for me to stay safe, I have to know what's happening with everyone around me, and I have to make sure they're okay, because when they're not okay, it's bad for me. So this is one that I absolutely learned early on. How can I manage and soothe and take care of everyone who I perceive around me that I'm in relationship with, so that I'm going to be alright? And so when you learn that, what happens is your empathy gets coupled with hypervigilance, and it becomes like this ultra sensitive radar where you're just always feeling into everybody around you and thinking about how can you take care of 'em? So pretty normal survival response, and it's about just doing this work to turn that care and empathy to yourself, and through all these different practices, and understand that you're going to have this reflex. That doesn't mean you have to necessarily follow it. So that's something that comes when it comes to behaviors that are survival driven. We have to learn to start reeling them in. And that starts with recognizing when we're doing it.

(01:04:43):

And once you realize that you're doing it, you actually kind of work on stopping it. You don't encourage it through further action. So that might look like, I go into a situation, I can tell this

person's really angry. My instinct, because I've learned this, is to instantly notice that and then I'm going to start thinking about how I need to take care of them so that they're going to be gentler and have a better day, and I'm going to be alright. As soon as I recognize that, it's just naming that for myself. Like, oh, okay, yeah, I'm doing that thing. I've already felt into their system and felt what needed to happen, so I'm just going to notice that, but I'm going to let go of that, and I'm just going to do my best just to be polite and ask for what I need and not try to take care of them in any special way. And sort of talking to yourself, noticing what you're doing. Ultimately, this changes by us becoming more authentic, more regulated, more comfortable in ourself, because that's what brings real safety. I mean, of course we want to be kind to people around us, if possible, but not at our own expense. And it sounds like that's what's happening right now is you're so focused on others being okay that it is taking away from your care for yourself.

(01:06:05):

Okay, there we go. "I have an extreme fear of being ugly. I don't know exactly why, but has always controlled my life. My parents were very judgmental and insecure about themselves, so I guess I inherited theirs on top of my own issues." I think theirs became your issues. You, we don't just have our own issues. We were not born with issues. To be clear, yes, there are some genetic things. That's not what I'm talking about. We're not born with behavioral, emotional, mental issues. We inherit them from our parents and they got it from theirs and so on and so forth. So "I also had family members that would call out flaws in a mean way when growing up." Yep, there you go. "Mirrors are my enemy. I assume it's some fear of not being loved unless I am or look perfect." Yeah, sounds like you got it.

(01:07:07):

"What are the best exercises to work on this issue? Thank you for all you do." All right, so when I got this question, I immediately thought of a story that Twig, my colleague, Twig Wheeler, had told. Twig Wheeler is a wonderful SEP. He's not so much in the public anymore, but for a while he was doing a one man show about his experience with growing up, doing therapy, working through trauma and stuff, really beautiful stuff. He had this show and in it he told the story of working with his practitioner, Steve Hoskinson, who is also one of Irene's mentors and is a great practitioner. So one of the things that Twig grew up with was this stepfather who basically had kidnapped him and his brother, and they lived under the threat of, if you try to run away, I'm going to shoot you in the back of the head. And that's for a long time with this

threat, right? I'm going to shoot you in the back of the head. So Twig developed this tension pattern, kind of like where he was always expecting to get shot. In working in session with Steve one day, Steve said to him, at one moment, Twig, feel the bullet.

(01:08:46):

That's what came to mind when I read this. In other words, you've been afraid of this thing for so long. Just fucking feel the bullet. Let it happen. Let yourself get shot already. And that led to the resolution because obviously he wasn't really being shot, but he allowed the somatic experience that he was terrified of to happen. And then, no more tension. Let yourself be ugly. That's what comes to me when I read this question. Find a fucking mirror and fricking be ugly. Ah, see yourself. Because what's going on is there's rage that needs to come out. And again, that rage is going inwards. You got all this judgment, all this negativity put on you. How can you give yourself permission to just let that out and witness yourself doing it? Now, you may need to work your way up to that, but that's what I'm sensing. The resolution of this is let yourself be ugly, meaning make a face, be powerful, be aggressive, make faces, see yourself, forgive yourself. Allow it to happen.

(01:10:08):

I think that you could explore working up to this, if that sounds terrifying, which it might well sound terrifying. You can start just sort of playing around with it without witnessing, right? So perhaps that means you just start playing with faces, just feeling what it feels like from the inside to make faces. I mean, there's really no one that's ugly in reality. We are all beautiful, in my opinion, in our own way. What can create an impression of, I guess, of ugliness is tension. Incredible tension in the system. What holds the face in unnatural positions. A lot of times that's what people perceive when they're perceiving unquote ugliness. And that's what needs to come out, I think, is these tensions. So I would start by maybe just exploring what it feels like to make faces and move your face in different ways, but eventually, yeah, what would that be like to just like, oh, I'm ugly.

(01:11:22):

And again, aggression, self-protection is part of that. Protecting yourself from that information that was so harmful.

Alright. Alrighty. Last one. “Irene posted that it's not enough to just be with the sensations, et cetera, and it triggered a strong theme of mine of I can never do enough along with its desperate opposite of I have to do more. There's hopelessness and resignation with the first thought, I can never do enough, anxiety and pressure with the second, I have to do more. They still cycle. The second is a childhood survival pattern. I have to do more. The first is a childhood realization. I can never do enough. Could you speak about her posts generally and also about how to move beyond those deeply held limiting patterns of decision-making regarding trauma?” So it sounds like you already recognize this, but yeah, this thinking itself is of course survival based. It is part of the survival energy, right?

(01:12:26):

Keep doing what you're doing. First off, in terms of naming it for yourself, noticing what you're doing and why, where does it come from? That's all really great because you're making it more conscious and it'll be easier to stop doing it the more conscious you are of it. Also, really working with the emotions that are associated rather than so much when it comes. This is just my experience, but I've noticed that the thought patterns tend to be the last thing to shift. The somatic experiences, the emotions, the tensions, the symptoms, the autoimmune conditions, all of that tends to change a little bit faster. And then that may be true. The longer we've been living with this stuff, the mind just gets certain grooves, right? So it sometimes can take a while for those mental patterns to shift, but what you're doing is exactly the right thing, which is being aware of them, naming them for what they are, and identifying where they come from, identifying the emotions that are associated, and then just give yourself permission to work and allow and express those emotions instead of trying to work with the thoughts themselves.

(01:13:41):

Now, in terms of what Irene meant in general, meaning it's not enough just to be with a sensation. What that means is we need to at least be aware of our environment too, right? In the context of this work, it's not necessarily enough just to be sitting there with your eyes closed, tracking your internal sensations. I mean, that's essentially a vipassana practice, which is one of my early introductions into self-awareness where you just sit there and you just track sensation, and that can be valuable for building your ability to pay attention, for sure. It certainly was for me. It can also drive you completely nuts. I mean, it depends, I was fortunate enough to have a deeply embedded freeze response, so I was able to totally bypass all the stuff

that was inconvenient and had a lovely spiritual awakening, and meanwhile, I'm just reinforcing my freeze.

(01:14:37):

Other people who are more in sympathetic, they cannot deal with that practice at all, and they'll run screaming, which is actually better because you allowed yourself to flee from something that was not going to serve you. But that's kind of what she's talking about. It's not just enough to sit there and track sensation. We want to be aware of our environment. Where are we? Can I feel my seat? Can I feel my feet? Do I know where I am? So that's the minimum, and that may be all that can be enough, especially with early developmental trauma, where there's not necessarily any emotional context or big movements or expressions that need to move. We just need to feel the sensation, but we need to do it where we are now, not with our eyes closed necessarily, where we're actually more in where we were. Then healing that trauma through allowing the sensations to move.

(01:15:32):

We need to be present with where we are now. So that's really all she meant. There can be other pieces. Sometimes we need to express. It's not enough just to feel and track. Our body needs to say something. It needs to allow vibration or movement or something to come out in the form of expression, but that's not always true, right? Like I said, sometimes that's not true, but we do at the very least, need to be aware of our environment. So that's all that she meant.

All alrighty. That's it for today. As always, thank you for being here. Thank you to my lovely assistants, Ari and Rebecca, and yeah, we're getting close here. We've got a couple labs left, and I just want to really encourage you to keep doing what you're doing, and understand that if you're not on lab eight, or seven, no worries.

(01:16:31):

If you're still on lab three, your on lab two, awesome. Great. Do what is right for you, please, and accept where you're at, accept your pace, and just keep showing up for yourself in whatever way you can. Circling back to the first theme about early developmental trauma in general, that's what this work is about. No matter our history, how can we consistently show up for ourselves in new ways? How can we consistently start to explore different ways of connecting to the environment and to ourselves through these different practices we're learning?





Just keep on going in whatever way you are doing. So thank you. We'll see you next time. Bye for now.