



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

Developing a secure self

Guest: Deirdre Fay

Disclaimer: The contents of this interview are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This interview does not provide medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or psychological condition.

[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson

Hello and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Anxiety Super Conference. Today I'm speaking with Deirdre Fay.

She describes healing as a modern day compassion training from 40 years exploring wisdom traditions and contemporary psychotherapy.

Healing, according to Deirdre, is not an accident when we deliberately choose to cultivate compassion. It's the sure result of consistent and persistent practice developing a solid, steady and secure self with an unshakable heart, despite the many twists and turns of life circumstances.

Deirdre is the author of *Becoming Safely Embodied, Attachment-Based Yoga & Meditation for Trauma Recovery* and co-author of *Attachment Disturbances in Adults* and co-author of chapters in *Neurobiological Treatments of Traumatic Dissociation*.

Deirdre Fay, thank you so much for being with us today.

Deirdre Fay

My pleasure.

I know we all have anxiety in different forms and shapes, so it's so important to deal with it.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely.

So I know that a lot of what we've talked about in the past has been relationships, and so for those of us dealing with stress and anxiety in relationships, because that's kind of a thing of its own, why do we have a hard time healing that?

Deirdre Fay

Well, my work is informed from the attachment perspective. So that's really how I would look at it and look at attachment as, or the healing of it as an attachment wound.

[00:01:39]

Now one of the key things to think about with anxiety is, what's happening in this moment, the healing part of what's happening now? If I'm oriented internally too much, I'm going to keep firing all those old patterns and I'm going to keep freaking myself out.

So the first step often is, okay, don't locate myself inside, but begin to locate myself out there. What's going on out there? Am I in physical, emotional danger out there?

Now, let's say you are. Let's say anybody on this call might be. That is a different form of anxiety that we'll be talking about. If it's really present nature, my heart goes out to people in that situation, but that's not what's going to help this talk that I'm doing right now.

So when we orient outside, we begin to see, oh, the color of my walls, nobody else is here. I begin to see that that's where my anxiety lies internally.

So then we look from an attachment perspective and we see, why doesn't it heal? Why hasn't it healed? And the most clearly defined research part of it is that, what's embedded in us early on, the kind of relationships that helps us form and develop before we're 3 years old, those are the ways were imprinted.

And if we didn't have kind, supportive, encouraging, attuned connections between 0 and 3, it's going to be a little bit more fraught. It's imprinted in us as something's wrong, on a body level, not just a nervous system level, but a body mind and heart.

And so it's literally like the lenses, the contact lenses that we're looking through in the world. The air that we breathe, it's so normal. It just feels like that's the way life is.

And so the complication in any kind of healing, but certainly with anxiety is, I'm living in this moment, and it's 2022 in this moment, and the imprint in me is in a whole different mechanism in me, it's part of my bio. And as I've grown up, I'm more used to thinking and talking about my world and less about feeling and being in my body. So there's a disconnect that goes on in there.

And a lot of my task then is, can I be connected inside myself? And it's hard. We know from all the attachment research that if I didn't get what I need, I'm going to have two main patterns. One is to be, help me, help me out there. You provide for me so I can feel better inside.

Or on the other end, it's going to be like, stay away from me. Never worked before. I'm going to hold myself in and keep myself distant in here. Or another might be a more complicated version of both. Sometimes it's the same moment, pulling at you, pushing at you at the same moment.

And so I think of it as we're growing up, as we're dealing and doing our healing later on in life, life then is an attachment mirror. It's showing us ourselves. But, none of us like that. We want it to be clean and clear, and we want you to be the problem out there because that makes it easier than I have to deal with myself.

So one of the things that really helped me with attachment theory is say, okay, I'm upset because of what? What's going on? And in the attachment research, there's a phrase called protest. So I have protest behavior. I'm not liking this. You see kids, tantruming, it's not fair. Well, we know that place inside of us.

[00:05:44]

And so that state is, we can just globally call it a protest. Even when I'm freezing and pulling away and pushing you away, there's something not right. It's almost as if, if we put words to it, this isn't right, it shouldn't be like this.

So when we look at life that way, we say, okay, I'm protesting. What is it that wants to come up? What is the need that was unmet back in the past that's not showing up now that I might be able to be in connection with.

Now, one of the things that happens here is, let's say I didn't get calm, reassurance. Maybe somebody wasn't attuned to me. Well, now in my present moment relationships, I'm going to want you to provide that for me.

It isn't the truth. It's not to say that the ship hasn't sailed, but we have to be able to be connected inside ourselves so that we can then be in relationship with the world and the way we want. I think everybody knows that experience of demanding you out there to make it better for me. And what do people do? Do people respond well? Not in my experience.

So when we start looking at that and saying, okay, so what do I need right now? I really wish you would have a kinder tone of voice when you speak to me. Then I get to look at where do I speak to myself? Not in a kind voice. When I want soothing, I want you to soothe me but what am I willing and able to take the time to soothe myself? If I'm upset that you're not giving me the step by step instructions I need, well, how do I listen and learn to attune to myself and let that wisdom arise?

So there's all kinds of things that we can do about that, but that first bit, knowing what we're protesting and then say, what does it need and how can I be with that, are pretty much essential.

There are a lot of other people that will talk about, and I'm sure you're having this on your whole conference, people will talk about some of the research around mindfulness and self-compassion. All good. Mental loving kindness, all so helpful. From an attachment perspective we're looking at something else, which is the unmet, unfinished, unmetabolized needs and how do we get those met?

Because that's where the anxiety is. We can soothe ourselves, we can use self-compassion. Great. We can look at all that, but if we're not looking at what was unfinished and how do I be with myself now, it's hard to actually heal it.

Meagen Gibson

What I hear you saying is that it's almost like we can deal with the symptoms, but if we're not doing the questioning, the underlying responses and patterns and developmental things that are going on, then we're just going to have to keep, not only putting Band-Aids on ourselves, but on the people that we're in relationship with, often, if we don't get underneath what's going on.

Deirdre Fay

It's absolutely beautifully said. So we can deal with the symptoms, but we never get to the root cause.

[00:09:13] Meagen Gibson

One of the things that you said earlier really struck me, which is, often I think, and I've seen women do this more than men, both do it, but just naming safety, like fundamental safety. You're saying that we can't orient outside of ourselves when we're fundamentally in danger because then the anxiety response that you're having is literally appropriate. It is a fight or flight response that is appropriate to your safety and welfare and should be listened to and responded to and foremost you should orient yourself towards safety and get safe.

So I just love that you named it because obviously if you're in a domestic violence situation or in an emotionally abusive situation, looking at the colors of the walls is not going to help your situation at all. So I love that you just named it.

And safety and connectedness also, I know a lot of what we've talked about so far has been about the self. Like figuring out your attachment wounds and orientation, and that is completely, I shouldn't say completely, I shouldn't speak in absolutes, but it's very healable. Bringing it to awareness, doing that inner healing work to get to a secure place of attachment both in yourself and in your relationships.

But I'd love it if you could speak for a few moments about, when you're in relationship with someone, with either an insecure attachment or anxious attachment or an avoidant attachment orientation, how you make yourself safe and grounded and compassionate when you're in a relationship with someone else who has maybe attachment issues.

Deirdre Fay

Wow, that's such a great question. We could talk for hours about that.

Meagen Gibson

Right.

Deirdre Fay

But it's true. And this is what gets most people stuck in relationship, is, I have a need, you're not meeting the need. Then what are my coping strategies around that? Do I blame, judge, make wrong, disappear, push you away? What happens inside of me?

Once I begin to name that, I start saying, oh, look at what I do. Look at what I do here. Okay, I'm starting to just fall into that old pattern. Let me step back. Let me pause. Now the pause takes forever to learn how to do. And sometimes in my groups, in the coaching environment that we're in, we say to people, sometimes you need medication. Nothing's wrong with that. The PRN, as needed medication to just train your body, I don't have to go there.

This is especially true when there's relational anxiety because it's so deep and it just captures us so quickly, that if I'm in it and you're right in my face and I'm starting to freak out, I need to find a way to step back and pause. And sometimes we need medication.

I had lived in an ashram for years, and during that time all we did was take teas or bach flower remedies or something. And so it was really a mind blowing thing to me to use medication, but it's so necessary and it's so helpful for people in those acute situations. Train your body.

[00:12:36]

Then once you have that, okay, I don't have to get as triggered, then you say, okay, how do I have this more often? How do I attune to myself and say, I like being quieter inside. How do I have more of that?

And then see, how is my relationship on the outside from that place? If I'm a little bit calmer, does the other person not get as reactive? Or when they get reactive can I say, okay, let's talk about this later and walk away? And if you're an anxiously attached person, that's going to be like, I can't ever do that. Yes, you can. You'll be able to say that's you and this is me and walk away.

So learning those little ways of being with ourselves, and then it might be you're walking away and you're like, okay, it's okay, it's okay. I'm allowed to take a break. But what if? What if? It's okay.

Meagen Gibson

And I really love that you named medication as a resource. Obviously, there are a lot of remedies, treatments, modalities for anxiety treatment, but I like to talk about anxiety medication as a tool that can help you remember what it feels like to feel safe.

Deirdre Fay

Oh, I love that, Meagen. Yes.

Meagen Gibson

Because anxiety and trauma hijack your nervous system to an extent, especially if it's been ongoing and untreated, people seek treatment for anxiety, especially very late, it can go on for a very long time until it becomes so bad that they need to seek treatment. And often you've so far forgotten what it feels like to be safe literally in your body, and what safety feels like.

And I have found personally from experience, that medication can literally just orient and ground you. And you'd be like, oh, this is what my body, mind and soul feel like when they're safe. I remember this. Now I can responsibly put in practices, get assistance.

Because especially in the American healthcare system, to get therapy, to see a psychiatrist, to get any kind of support, takes time. It takes a lot of time or can take a lot of time, months in some cases. And so how can we orient ourselves towards safety in a responsible, medication assisted way? I just love that you named it.

Deirdre Fay

And it's hard. You're saying something so important, because it could be, I get the medication, is the answer to my calmness, or that drink, or that joint, or that whatever drug I'm taking, that is what is creating this. But you said it so beautifully, all those coping mechanisms are meant to help us remember, this is the original state of ease.

Actually, this has been a practice that's been helpful for people. So if you tune into your body and say, so where is the anxiety? Often people can't feel inside because they've been so numbed out to themselves. But let's say anxiety looks like this inside, and you use your hands to mimic that internal state. Let's say it's like this. It's like, okay, what would be more soothing?

[00:15:59]

And you invite your body, your natural wisdom, to find a soothing rhythm. And not be right about it, not follow somebody else's, but just what allows you to take a breath? To move from this internal state to... And that can be extremely helpful for people in just a simple way of learning. And then you have to do it 20,000 times a day because we're so used to being activated.

Meagen Gibson

Literally moment to moment.

Deirdre Fay

It's like relearning, retraining ourselves.

Meagen Gibson

I love that open ended question, too. What would make you feel? And I love the hand motions. What would make you feel more like this and less like this? Because then it's completely oriented to you and what you think.

And I know often for people with anxiety, you ask them that question, and because of attachment things and just patterns of behavior in their family system or relationships, that they're so used to not answering that question, that sometimes it might take some time. But it can be something as simple as, when you were doing that motion and when you were thinking, I thought about so many people find water soothing, whether that's a bath or a swim, even the sound of water, like standing on the beach.

For me, I have a hammock in my front yard. And when I get, what I would call blown, where it's just like I can't think straight, everything's taken over, I will go swing in that hammock and try to identify bird calls.

Deirdre Fay

I love that.

Meagen Gibson

And it just gets me out of my mind, gets me in a different state of being.

So what's accessible to you, that might be just having bare feet somewhere that you can get a new sensation with, whether that's concrete because that's all that's accessible to you, or if it's grass or if it's dirt or if it's water or sand, what's accessible to you? It could be carpet, for that matter. A cold bucket of ice on your feet. What would make you help establish that feeling?

Because you're right, so many of the tools that we have easily available to us, whether that be drugs, alcohol, social media, whatever it is, can be used as an avoidance and a numbing, because we're always looking for that orientation of call in whatever way we can get it so that we can remember that safety. But at the same time, that deeper work needs to happen.

[00:18:31] Deirdre Fay

I love how you're saying it.

There's some research which I'm not going to recall out of the depths of my mind at the moment, about movement and how important movement is. And like you said, just moving or walking or taking your shoes off and walking barefoot or on the carpet. So simple. Getting from one state to another state. And then moving yourself begins to free up the energy.

Because sometimes some people tend to say, okay, I'm going to tighten up and just not do anything, or sit on the couch and watch TV, which I understand, it does do a certain thing and it can shift the state, but you could also play with a little bit of movement. I love the hammock. Those chair hammocks might be a perfect thing, too, that people have.

Meagen Gibson

I've seen those a lot lately. I've been avoiding the large bulk box store purposely so that I don't buy a chair.

And I want to talk about, just because it's in my brain right now so I'm just going to name it, the parent-child relationship. Because we're talking about relationships, most people assume romantic, but I also want to talk about parent-child.

I have a spicy child, if you will. One of my children is particularly spicy. And for years and years and years, because of my attachment stuff, would match his spiciness. And I have just recently, in the last 3 years, spurred on by quarantine and being altogether trapped with one another, had to and was forced to do the inner work so that I would stop matching him.

And I finally put a pin on it and I was like, oh, he treats me like all the worst boyfriends I had, unreasonable and unpredictable. I broke up with all those people, so what do I do now? I can't escape this relationship, and I don't want to. So what can I do?

So maybe speak to the anxiety and the triggering that can happen in those types of relationships and how you ground yourself safely in your adult seat?

Deirdre Fay

Oh my God, you're the expert on that. You've got that 3 year training on it, it's powerful.

And what is true, and this comes from the ancient wisdom traditions, it comes from attachment theory, comes from trauma treatment theory, is those wounds are going to stay stuck in us, and they are going to get activated, so how do we deal with that? Who do I want to be? And what you said, okay, who do I want to be? I don't want to be the teenager I was, I want to be the mother I want to be, but how do I get there?

And one of the simple things that it sounds like you already discovered is, instead of matching the tone, the activation tone, I'm just going to stay calmer, quieter. And that can be hard work but when I do, when I don't match and instead stay steady and calm, this person starts floating to my rhythm, not trying to drag me into their experience.

[00:21:47] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And again, that moment to moment, it's literally moment to moment and just reminding myself that you don't have to match it. Great, thank you.

Deirdre Fay

Well, there's one other thing we could say about that, and this has been helpful clinically, but it's also helpful in parent child relationships, adult relationships, is to be like, wow, when you say that, I find myself getting much more anxious. Is it my anxiety or your anxiety?

There's this idea that I got from a lot of the research, actually, about schizophrenia, it's self-other differentiation. I'm here, you're there, where do you begin and end and where do I begin and end? And where's the space in between? And can I have, instead of being over there trying to get into your world so that I can then figure out how to be, it's like, okay, I'm in here, you're over there, you're the one that's anxious. Oh, you're activated. Okay, I don't have to go there. But it's a training of knowing my body, mind and heart.

Meagen Gibson

And I'm so glad that you named that too, because talking about childhood development, that stage of differentiation can be really disorganized for kids. They're trying to enforce separation, but they also totally need you. I literally just dealt with this this morning in the span of 30 minutes. My child was being very spicy and I was just gray rocking him. I will not match this. And then 10 minutes later he had a personal crisis and then all he wanted was me and was calm and sweet and nice, which is why it's so confusing.

But one of the things that helped me, just in case anybody's getting served by this part of the conversation is, I'm constantly asking, especially with this particular child, what is this behavior trying to communicate? What is he trying to say that he doesn't know how to say?

Because I know adults who don't have the words to describe how they feel and are confused by their own actions and behaviors. So I'm constantly just asking myself, what is this behavior trying to communicate? And that calms me down. I don't have the answer most of the time I'm like, I don't know, but it helps me stay calm.

Deirdre Fay

You know what, it does. And you talked about the developmental process, it's certainly a developmental task for us as adults. As an infant we are fused and we have to separate. And as adults we want to be connected, but how do we do it in a way that's not like fraud?

And so by your saying and pointing out, okay, you're trying to communicate something to me in the only way you know how, I'm over here, you're over there, I can observe that your behaviors are activating you and they're activating me, how do I stay over here? How do I land inside myself? How do I find my belly, just soften into my heart and then return?

And another way to do it is to say, well, if I'm activated, how much of this activation is mine? Is it 50%? 100%? How much of it is yours? Those small little cognitive questions can help ease the activation in there.

[00:25:20] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely.

Deirdre Fay

The other thing that we do in the Becoming Safely Embodied Skills, there's a whole chapter on it, is separate the facts from the feelings. And this is eye opening for so many people because we are so used to blurring the boundary.

The fact is, if we're just looking at pure bare minimum facts, the fact is right now, I'm saying something and you're there. You're nodding, I'm here. Not all the interpretation and association. If I just stay with the facts, this is pure mindfulness, if I just stay with the facts, my whole system will decelerate and come in.

If I'm talking to somebody that's activated, instead of getting caught in the storyline, I would just be like, I'm sitting here or standing here, you're talking, you're whatever, it's like, okay, name it. It's that simple. That's going to slow down, pause, and allow the system, both of our systems, actually, to calm down a little bit.

Meagen Gibson

And so much of what makes us human and makes us who we are is our brain and body's sophisticated ability to collect evidence and information to keep us safe. And so that's such a great exercise to calm that part of us down.

Because even when I'm at my safest and with my safest people and I feel safe, I catch myself all the time. What did that raised eyebrow mean? I heard a tone, I heard a shift in demeanor. What is that? I'm interpreting. I'm doing so much interpreting. And having to just stop myself and say, hey, I know you're just trying to keep me safe. I am safe. Literally, right now. This is the safest place I could be. Stop doing so much work. I hear all that. Put aside your stories and just be present.

Deirdre Fay

That's the development of one of the very important attachment needs that we all have, which is not to take life personally, to be like a duck and let water roll off of our back without getting hooked. And when we look at well beingness and the signs of well being, that is one of the essential components, think of all the ways that you just said so beautifully, that I'm going to get activated, triggered, caught up in the storyline of it.

But what if I just let you have your life and your activation and not join you in that or not be thinking of all the layers of interpretation I'm adding onto it. It's going to give me a lot more room inside.

Meagen Gibson

And that happens in waves, I'm sure, as you can attest. I'm thinking of just the stages at which you start to release that.

The first stage that I can remember experiencing is worrying about what other people thought of me at the most surface level. I'm worried about what people will think when I walk in a room. I haven't done this in years and years and years, but that very teenage through early 20s stage is what it feels

like. You're always worried about what other people think of you or if they're judging you or talking about you after you leave.

[00:28:38]

Thank goodness, maybe it's age, maybe it was just me, I let go of that a while ago. And then I'm constantly trying to interpret and decipher meaning behind the words and actions of people in my life or work or relationships. And you find out that if somebody is angry with you, they will actually tell you most of the time.

Deirdre Fay

If they don't, is that the relationship you want to be in?

Meagen Gibson

Exactly.

Deirdre Fay

But being able to say, you're being a little weird, and not get hooked into what the weirdness, or to hear the tone and be like, is that me because they have a tone? I don't have to go there. That's going to already reduce a lot of the anxiety load we're putting on ourselves.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I know that you talk about shame as a relationship wound, and so I want to talk through that. Because we've talked around it, but I want to name it.

Deirdre Fay

Well, I think this was one of the greatest discoveries in my own life. Having been a card carrying member of the shame world, I was inundated with shame. And when I finally studied attachment theory, I thought, oh, this is why. And I just don't have it anymore.

And it's because I felt ashamed, we all feel shame if I don't get my needs met, if I didn't belong, one of the fundamental attachment needs, if I didn't belong I'd think there's something wrong with me. And then anytime I get pinged around that, I'm going to go, oh my God, there's something wrong. But that's so normal. That need to belong is so normal. That need to be calmed and soothed, need to be attuned to, the need to be delighted in, all those are essential.

And if we don't get that, the cycle doesn't complete, it's going to get interrupted, and the interruption shows up as shame. There's something wrong with me.

And so learning to even use shame as a protest and say, I'm going into shame, I'm dying, I'm dying, oh my God, that's your body, your heart saying, it shouldn't be like this. If it shouldn't be like this, what does your body, mind, and heart know? It should be like...That just changed my life.

And it's been one of the most powerful things that's helped thousands of people, is knowing, if I'm dying of shame, there's an unmet need, what is that need? How can I be there and just, maybe not

even meet that need because I don't know how, but to be present and say, it's normal. Everybody needs that.

[00:31:44] Meagen Gibson

I love that. To be quiet enough of yourself and suffer the discomfort temporarily enough to be able to discover and name what you need and then just normalize it. Yes, of course I need this. Everyone needs this. I was entitled to this, and I deserve it.

Deirdre Fay

Then our attachment styles will kick in, and we'll be like, but you should give it to me. And then we have to go through another whole piece of, maybe you won't give it to me, but I can recognize this need as normal. How can I attune to myself?

Meagen Gibson

I love that you name that because that's the danger, isn't it? You do the work and you're like, I know what I need. And then you go outwards and say, alright, I'll be happy if you could just deliver on this thing, and that's not quite it.

Deirdre Fay

Unfortunately.

Meagen Gibson

And most people can't deliver in the way that you imagine would make you whole anyway. Putting some hefty expectations on people.

Deirdre Fay

And they'll feel it and they'll respond in a negative way.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I love that you said delight. And what it reminds me of, and that I just want to name, is that, tell me if you find this is true, but so many of our attachment wounds, I believe, can happen just in mismatched needs as we're developing a child. Obviously, there are situations where mothers and child's and parents and child's, caretakers and children are separated or are not given proper care. I'm not necessarily speaking to that. I'm speaking to the shame and the wounds that happen when you just have a mismatched parent child relationship.

You have a parent who is not physically affectionate but loves you dearly, or you have parents who are uncoordinated and very academically oriented and you're a sporty jock who loves sports. And if you don't have a parent child relationship, or didn't, where you can delight in someone's differences and they can delight back to you even without having to join, that can be such a healing. It doesn't mean that you have to be identically matched all the time. It just means that you have to delight in what the other person delights in.

[00:34:12] Deirdre Fay

Beautifully said. We see this a lot. You named great examples. Another would be if you're not producing at school, you're not getting A's, maybe your brain doesn't work that way. Maybe your brain works differently. And there's the shame of, I'm not enough.

I think the most beautiful examples I see are toddlers or infants below 3, when they are just showing you the marble or this toy that they have and their face is a glow. And if we're like, oh my God, that is the most amazing thing. We see this with potty training. They are so proud that they produced that poop. And so if we're like, oh my God, you shouldn't. Instead we say, look at that! You did that all by yourself! And our voice matches it, and we're thrilled with it, they start developing pride and self-worth.

And that was so important for me to learn and to read in the research and put together, that when we actually meet people with expressed delight, they develop pride and self-worth in themselves, not who I think they should be if I overdo it, if that's the only thing, I get delighted in them, yes, they're going to skew it. But if we can see them as unique human beings, then they're going to develop that.

And another need that comes out of it is a sense of confidence, that I can do that. You are a person who's guiding and mentoring me and seeing me and attuning to me. And now I know I can actually do something.

Meagen Gibson

I love that you named all of that. I was actually just at a birthday party this weekend with my spicy child, but there was a 2 and a half year old there, and his parents, they have a 4 year old and a 2 and a half year old, and they were exhausted. Two boys and they were fast. And I could tell the parents, it was like 2pm and it was a Sunday and they were already like, I'm over it, I'm exhausted. I've done all the things with these two since 5am.

So I took the 2 and a half year old and was like, do you mind if we go and look at balloons? And they were like, no, please take my child. So we just walked around and he pointed at every single balloon as if it was the first balloon he had ever seen. And we did that for an hour. And it was the best part of my day because I was just able to delight in his delight.

And we lose so much of that as adults because we're so capitalistically results oriented in our delight. I have done something or have felt something, and I can't claim the delight of that because I know it's not measurable against some standard of excellence that we have as adults.

You speak to this, you're the expert, but that healing and knowing your inner child's needs and healing that shame and healing your unmet needs is claiming that delight in just yourself and what you do. I fried an egg. Look at this amazing egg. It's so good.

Deirdre Fay

It's so important. And I think there's been some worry that some people have had that, well, if I delight in you too much or if I get too delighted in, then I'm going to become narcissistic. And I suppose that is a concern, but narcissism comes from a different place. And if I just say it in the flow of connection, delight in you, then you're going to not need to be out there being the most, the biggest, the best of all time. You can actually allow yourself to be there, connected to other people and let them have their specialness.

[00:38:24] Meagen Gibson

And I think that's often where a lot of envy and jealousy comes from and fear of missing out, is us not allowing ourselves to delight or to name what's fun or whatever for us. And so when we see others claiming that, then we get resentful and envious of what we see them doing that we can't do for ourselves.

Deirdre Fay

It's great you say that, because maybe what somebody can do is, if I find myself getting jealous or envious, that's an unmet need, that's protest behavior. So I'm jealous, what is it I need? I need you to see me. I need to be special. That's normal. Of course you do. How can we make it?

And in our coaching group and in the Becoming Safely Embodied learning community, so much of what people work on is how do I make it so granular, so small that I can meet those needs and be in relationship with myself in the world without activating a threat response, an anxiety response. I can be like, okay, I need it so small. I need to see you smile. What does it look like to see you smile? My body relaxes. Okay, let me just, I love smiling, I love seeing people smile. Okay, let me just savor that moment.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. My 9 year old the other day wanted to go through all of his different types of laughs for me. He was like, here's my polite laugh, here's my, I didn't like your joke, but I'm going to laugh anyway, laugh.

Deirdre Fay

I love that.

Meagen Gibson

So the way that we respond to people. And I love that it's granular. I am doing this for me and my delight. And asking, okay, if I need to be seen, that follow up question that you ask which is, and I often phrase it differently, I have a growing teenager as well, it's, so what have you done to get that? I'm shifting in a consultant role with that one as levels of development.

So if you needed help with the homework, what have you done to get the help? How have you communicated to me? And so it's the same way when you're trying to delight in yourself or if you have a need like being seen, I want to be seen. Are you hiding? How have you been trying to be seen?

Deirdre Fay

Lovely. So great. Your kids are so lucky to have you.

Meagen Gibson

This is the highlight reel.

[00:41:04] Deirdre Fay

We all know that. We all know, honey.

Meagen Gibson

All the shameful stuff goes in the memoirs, in the journals.

So I just want to touch on one more thing before we go, which is the difference between internal control and external control, which I know that you talk about.

Deirdre Fay

Well, we've talked a lot about it already. If I am trying to fix you out there or change the world out there so I can feel better inside, I'm doomed. I'm sorry.

And this is where I started looking at the wisdom traditions and calling it a modern day training, because it's an internal process. And healing is. I think of it as an Olympian task. It takes everything, but we should celebrate that and not shame ourselves or other people for taking the time.

And so when I start owning it, I can take that radical step, saying, I am the result. There's a phrase in one of the teachings and the wisdom traditions about, take the blow. Which is hard. We want to make you wrong, make the world wrong, make it out there, blame everything so I don't have to look so deeply.

And yet when we do, when we see how I set up a chain of events unbeknownst to me or even out of my karma, whatever you want to call it, when I can look at that and see how that unfolds, if I could take ownership of that, the other person gets off the hook. They can respond however they want to respond, but I can change and be who I want to be.

Meagen Gibson

And so much of it is what's in my control, and then truly actually digging into what is actually in my control. Because especially with anxiety, so much of it is the illusion of seeking control, all of our worries. If I just worry about this enough, to the end of the possible worryness, then I can prevent bad things from happening and control the future. It's like trying to hold smoke when really you should be identifying where the fire is coming from. And so, just reminding yourself what is actually in my control and starting there.

Deirdre Fay

And it would be nice if everyone would change and be who I want them to be, but then it would be boring too.

Meagen Gibson

Although it would be a nice place to vacation. And then I would get tired and be like, okay, you're right. Let's go back to free will land. It's fine.

Deirdre, I love talking to you, how can people find out more about you and your work?

[00:43:59] Deirdre Fay

My website is dfay.com, very simple, dfay.com. And at the back of it, if you put the slash, dfay.com/safeguide it's a whole beautifully illustrated description of what it means to live in a safe body and become safely embodied.

And there's also my book that's out there.

Meagen Gibson

I love that that's a resource that people can get right now, today.

Thank you so much.

Deirdre Fay

Thank you, Meagen. I always love talking to you. So grateful you're in the world and what you do.

Meagen Gibson

Thank you.