



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

Seeking peace

Guest: Dr Darryl Tonemah

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[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson

Hello, welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Anxiety Super Conference.

Today I'm speaking with Dr Darryl Tonemah, a psychologist of Kiowa, Comanche and Tuscarora heritage. He has three bachelor's degrees in psychology, sociology, gerontology, a Master's degree in Community Counseling, and a PhD in Counseling, Psychology and Cultural Studies.

Dr Tonemah is a trauma informed counselor who works with native groups across the United States and Canada.

Dr Tonemah, thank you so much for being with us today.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Meagen Gibson

So, in speaking about anxiety, one thing I found is that one of the reasons it might take people a while to come to terms with their anxiety is that we've become very skilled at avoidance.

We have technology, we have substances like food, drugs, and alcohol, all kinds of things to distract us and help us avoid discomfort so much that we forget what it feels like to feel fundamentally safe in the present.

So I'd love to know what you tell people in the beginning of an anxiety journey to help them return to that state of safety.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

That's an awesome question. Well, before I even jump into all that stuff, I've had more folks in the past 6 months call me or shoot me an email saying they've had their first bout with anxiety or an anxiety attack or depression, really since COVID has really settled into the nervous system. And maybe the tools that they had used previously, or maybe they're a preloaded person with stressful stuff and the extended season of COVID has really affected their responses.

And nationally, you've seen the spikes in usage of alcohol or drugs or smoking, the "COVID 15", so even eating. So folks have really used a lot of external tools to deal with internal events. And the

smartphone, the TV, binge watching has become a socially acceptable way of dissociating, and so engaging in something outside of myself.

[00:02:29]

And I think even I'm guilty of binge watching, and honestly, for the sake of just unplugging from everything. I've done it, and everyone I know has done it. I think getting to the point where it becomes a pathology, where you're addicted to things, that's turning, you're seeing more of those things.

So the first conversation I have is, what's changed? How do you see yourself different? How do you know you're feeling more anxiety than you were before? What was it like before? Really I want to see where the baseline is.

And then I want to know, what are they calling anxiety? Really just, first of all, what is the somatic? What does anxiety feel like? How do you know it's not something else? I want to see how they're discerning and how the states have changed. And what does it feel like that I'm labeling this differently than this and why am I labeling the anxiety? I'm really curious about that.

And then I want to see what tools had you used previously? And what tools are you using now? And that's where I've discovered more folks doing dissociation behaviors and using the external tools for the internal events.

And for me, that's where I see the work beginning. Let's see what internal tools we can develop that shore things up, that give you a sense of sovereignty when you get those first inklings of what you're calling anxiety. Let's develop some tools around that rather than having to go to the store, turn on the TV, pick up a pack of smokes or drink to address that. That's where I am now with the community and developing mutual understanding.

Meagen Gibson

And I love that you said all of that, and that your first line of questioning is just like, what does that mean to you? How is it coming up for you? What's not working anymore?

Meagen Gibson

I relate to that so much because when I had to come to terms with my anxiety, it was several years ago, and I was waiting outside the doctor's office for them to open because I was like, I know something is wrong.

And then in speaking to the doctor, he said the exact same thing. And I said, well, I do yoga, I exercise 6 days a week, I have a gratitude journal, I meditate, I was like, and I feel awful, and I can't experience joy anymore. I've lost the ability to play. And he was like, God, it sounds like you're working really hard and you must be exhausted. And I said, yes, I'm working so hard to be happy, and I'm so miserable.

So I just love that you named that as the thing that people can self identify, what is going on that makes you think that this is anxiety?

And then I want you to go back to something that you said earlier, which is that some people are preloaded for more sensitivity to, say, stress. And so I would love it if you could unpack that a little bit more and say what you mean by that.

[00:05:46] Dr Darryl Tonemah

Well, a lot of folks that I see had, maybe they came up from toxic environments. And there's the wonderful field of epigenetics and how things can affect us. They can boil under the surface. I've developed some tools that keep them at bay. And I'm still living my life pretty good, but adding an overwhelm event or an overwhelm season for 2 years, such as COVID, then these same tools aren't keeping us at bay anymore.

And so I'm having this experience, and I keep doing my yoga, my meditation journal, all the tools that you were using, but the tools weren't matching the event anymore. And so that's where I want to find out, what have you been doing and how has the experience changed? That's very subjective. And that's why I asked those questions, because I can't sit there and define it, or I can't say we shouldn't be experiencing that because you're doing all this stuff.

And I've seen folks where that has been a fatal flaw in their previous work, they'll be totally activated, crawling out of their own skin and then saying, but everything's okay because I'm doing this. And they can't even sit still but they've been told to convince themselves that, well, that's not happening because you're doing this and you are stronger, you're smarter than this.

So I just have a real conversation about that, and it's got to feel awful. And let's just be honest about that. It feels awful. And what does it feel like? And that's where I really want to go to. I don't want, it feels like anxiety. I want, where is it? What is it doing? Where does it live?

And honestly, Meagen, that's a conversation that a lot of people hadn't ever had because everything else is hypothetical. Because I could say, well, could it be this? And they could say, well, it could be this. And could it be this? Well, maybe it's this. And then we spend all of our time wrestling with hypotheticals but I'd rather wrestle with the facts.

Meagen Gibson

Right.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Facts are, I'm so uncomfortable in my own skin and I can't sleep. My feet do this at night, and I can't sustain a thought, my stomach is in knots and my arms are tingly. Those are the facts. Alright, let's deal with the facts. Let's develop tools, internal tools around the facts.

And you know what? There are so many awesome tools. We're in a great season of understanding trauma and anxiety. And tools around those things leaps and bounds in the past 10/15 years of understanding the tools that are going to help the body reclaim sovereignty without trying to figure out which needle in the haystack is the one activating you right now. So I'm just happy to be around during this season.

Meagen Gibson

And I think that's actually part of what contributes to the guilt and the shame in, what I call, the suffering Olympics, in the denial game that we play around our own suffering and need for support.

We are living in the easiest time where we have shelter and we have access to food, especially in the Western world, we have access to so many tools and resources and phones and technology has

never made us more connected, and yet we feel this guilt and the shame that we would be suffering because we have life so good. How dare I suffer when so many people have it so much worse?

[00:09:53] Dr Darryl Tonemah

And that's a catch 22 because before the phone, before binge watching, I probably did more things that helped my body help me. I probably ate differently. We probably exercised more. We're probably more connected to community. All the things that we did previously, so both of those are valid arguments.

So saying that there's no reason that I should be feeling like this. And you know what? I don't want to get stuck on the reason. Let's just say you feel like that and let's work from there. Let's have that be our foothold. I just feel like this.

And whatever the rationale, let's get the body and the brain back in sync again. The, "I shouldn't feel like this", my PhD is in CBT, so I'm down with it, man. But it's primarily here. Logic, cause and effect, rational language, thinking it through. It's probably right there.

But where we are in the season of understanding is, this is a system, and the system has become distressed. Not just one part of it where you say, I "shouldn't be thinking this way". "I shouldn't be feeling this way". Man, that's just one part of an entire system. Let's get the whole system. Let's help this, which empowers you.

I'm so into that, and it's productive. I love the proactivity of it, that we can do things that move the needle. And I think that's what people want. If somebody is in depression or trauma or anxiety, they want to do something to feel better. They want to be proactive about it. And that's what I like about, let's rock the system then, and help you do the things that are going to move the needle for you.

Meagen Gibson

And I'd love it if you can talk about that system a little bit, because there are thoughts, and a lot of people think if they think differently, they can just solve all their problems. This is a thought problem solely. And there's a sophisticated system of things working to keep you safe.

And anxiety specifically, I just talk about it as the illusion of control. We're just grasping at smoke when really there's an underlying fire we haven't paid attention to.

And so if you could describe for me this sophisticated system that's all at work in the background and the things that you are in direct control over and the things that you aren't that are automatic responses that you can then inform with tools and practices.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

And this is part of the knowledge base which has been booming. That the vagus nerve, the limbic system, and how the brain, my thought processing is miles away from where the stress centers of the brain are, which is miles away from the vagus nerve. So somehow there's got to be a way that all this information interacts with each other, that keeps us moving forward.

And we've been stuck with, "We'll just think it through". And again, I'm trained in that. I'm down. So I had to sit back myself and say, okay, why are people having, who've been in therapy for decades still having this response? And what can I do differently? Where's the gap? What am I missing?

[00:13:41]

And then Vietnam vets, for example, 50 years, and they woke up last night struggling. For me, it comes to the understanding that if we could have thought our way out of it, we would have by now. For me, I'm going to go old school on you Meagen, the record playing in my head, records are coming back.

Meagen Gibson

They're very in right now.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

In my head when I'm meeting with somebody, because that's the model that's pervasive. Everybody understands that. Well, let me just tell you all about it. And I'll say, okay, we can do that, but I don't want to assist to land there.

And so looking at the research on how the gut affects dopamine. The gut affects dopamine production, and that information travels all these highways and so we as providers, as caregivers, as community members, as citizens start leaning into, well, if that's true, which it is true, what can I do to start being proactive and promoting that health, which promotes this health?

I think the beautiful new season of health and mental health is understanding the system. And I think we're leaning into that now as a society. And maybe that's one of the blessings of COVID, is that we had to look at our health in a different way. And what can I do to immunity? How can I strengthen that which strengthens me? So I think that could be one of the positives that came out of COVID.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. You couldn't orchestrate a more unified experience worldwide of a stressor of this extreme amount. Even if you tried, you couldn't orchestrate this kind of experiment.

And so the fact that we've all shared, although everybody's experience was different and unique to themselves and their situation, we have all experienced the elevated stress and constraints and impacts of 2 years of ongoing public crisis.

And I want to go back to what you said about gut feelings and anxiety, because one of the things that I know people have often named about anxiety, is a loss of gut instinct. We name it as gut instinct because we tune into our bodies for answers to life's big questions or to figure out what our next move should be or how we should make a decision.

And when you have anxiety and you're suffering from anxiety, I found that that intuition feels lost, and that contributes to the anxiety. You're like, well, my gut feels awful. I might be sick. I might have digestive issues. So how am I supposed to trust my gut when my gut feels terrible? And so how do we piece apart, what is worry and what is intuition?

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Those are two really interesting conversations. So thank you for bringing those up.

[00:17:05]

One of the things that I've noticed clinically is, if there is chronic stress or traumas, there's a separation. The stress and trauma separate what should be integrated and integrate what should be separated.

So it integrates this moment and this sense of what I'm labeling stress and overwhelm. It integrates this whole thing of, it feels awful. It separates the mind from the body because the body has a lot of stressful information, it has a lot of uncomfortable information so I'd rather just not deal with it.

But you can see there's a system that is lacking there. Part of the process is creating integration again in a healthy way, in a safe way, because not everything has to be overwhelm. Sometimes it's just information.

And that is the most empowering thing that the folks that I work with, that moment where they recognize the stomach, the gut thing as, my stomach feels funny right now. That's just information. It's just trying to tell you something. Rather than call it overwhelm or anxiety or stress, it's information.

And that is such a victory. I've been given this information my whole life and I have been running away from it because I've labeled it instantly as something that is distressing to me. But really, maybe it's your gut instinct to protect you.

And you're right, maybe sometimes that pain is just off, but getting to know it is how you start to recalibrate it. Beginning to know that the environmental things and being comfortable with it, that's how you start to become sovereign with it, rather than just having to be the enemy. Because once you start to become introduced to it, that's when you start playing nice together, slowly but surely.

But you're right, if I grew up in toxicity, then everything is that, everything is dangerous. But if they're sitting in this office or on a telephone meeting, it's a safe moment. And that alarm, what's causing that alarm isn't in reality occurring right now. But the more you lean into it, the more it says, what should I do here? Let's stay safe then. Let's recalibrate, let's recalibrate, let's recalibrate.

And I just love seeing those moments. They happen and they're genuine and people, my favorite thing is if we're breathing it down or we're doing some sort of tool with it and they get this face... Like Snoopy, like Zachary's had his favorite meal. I love that moment.

And here's what I've learned from those moments, I'll ask, what does your body feel like? And they'll say things like, I don't want to throw up. My stomach's not tense. My heart is not pounding. My breathing is not out of control. My arms aren't tingling. So they're telling me all the things that aren't occurring right now. Because that was probably their normal. And maybe for the first time they've introduced their body to peace.

And I'll just say, help them with a label, what do we call that peace? So rather than say, rather than something to avoid, I'm avoiding this list of things here, what if we created something that they can pursue? And they probably had little glimpses of it their whole life, but with the calibration being off, they never just grabbed onto it because it was foreign.

So what if we created more opportunities that this exists and expand that window and spend more time in this, in developing the tools that make this thing happen. It's doable. It's possible, but it's not going to happen by accident. It's got to be well, here's how I understand my system now and here's

what I do that creates this versus this. Or I get my first inkling of one of these things popping up, what do I do that widens this window that I can be in this experience rather than this experience?

[00:22:16]

I'm going to pound my desk. I love that stuff.

Meagen Gibson

I love everything you said. I love the subject, object differentiation, of getting in tune with your body, first of all, if you've been avoiding it for a long, long time and somebody asks you to get in tune with it, even in that safe space, in the secure and safe space of working with you, it's totally scary. Everything's lit up and it exacerbates all those symptoms. And so just to pay attention, but then give them that tool to subject object differentiation. This is just information.

Because for so many anxiety sufferers, especially, that information becomes just another thing to try to control. I'm going to avoid situations that made me feel that way or I'm going to avoid foods. And some of that is helpful.

I have a 12 year old son who is very lactose intolerant but also really likes ice-cream. And so from a very young age, we've had to just create an awareness training, like, okay, so if you eat that ice-cream, what's going to happen? Where do we need to be? Information feedback.

I'm not going to create a thing, anxiety around him and ice-cream. He just needs information and understanding to release the anxiety around it. Otherwise there will be impacts that will create awkward social situations for him. But creating that information, like subject object thing, where it's like this is just information. And I can take that information in, in a safe environment, and withstand it. And sustain the discomfort instead of constantly avoiding it, I think that's a powerful step.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

And a couple of things. Once you feel sovereign over that, then you go into the awesome CBT space with meaning changes. And once meaning changes, and I have sovereignty over my responses, that's a different world.

What becomes distressful when we're looking at, how can I be? We don't want to create hypervigilance. We don't want to train hypervigilance in, well, you should be, watch out for that much. I get it with the ice-cream but if I train everyone, then that in itself is distressful for crying out loud.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

So I want to think about, just even my three kids at home is, how can I have them feel sovereign and autonomous and strong in any one of these things that comes along? So they have the tools that this comes along, what do they have? And always talk about the ABCs, always be cool.

And that's a funny thing, but what does cool feel like? Which is, I have a regulated heart rate, I have regulated breathing. So what tools do I have to ABC in any of these situations?

[00:25:40]

Because I work with a lot of folks that have become shut ins, basically. Because I go here and I feel this way, I go here and I feel this way here, I feel this way. And it could be one of any millions of inputs. So we're not going to control all the millions of inputs. What to control is my response, but it's got to be practiced at home a bunch.

So the system fires and wires in a different way that when I get in those situations, I know what this is and I practice this. We don't have a fire drill in the middle of a fire. Because if you have a fire drill in the middle of a fire and everyone stands up screaming, if you have a fire drill ten times in case there's a fire, do you know what to do, where to go, how to respond in the middle of the fire?

So the things we do ahead of time, all the time, practicing a lifestyle, honestly, Meagen, of health and wellness, that taking care of that, which takes care of me. Practicing that lifestyle on an ongoing basis, practicing the heart rate variability breathing just all the time, driving on the road, walking your dog, practicing the breathing that helps with regulation just all the time.

And maybe coincidentally then, that number of things that previously caused a response, there are fewer of those. I just did an *Elmer and the Flood* there. So there's fewer of those things, coincidentally because I've been doing all this ahead of time. And the world expands and anxiety wants constriction of your life, but sovereignty and autonomy, it wants expansion.

And the more we practice these things, there's expansion and expansion and expansion. You get more of that basis, which is what we're looking for.

Meagen Gibson

And I know that you've talked about sovereignty and stacking sovereign moments a lot, and I think that comes into play with what you're talking about, practicing the fire drill before the fire.

Because a lot of what happens in anxiety and definitely trauma responses, is that your rational thinking brain is taken offline, your amygdala takes over, and it's just in survival mode. And so we're often not in control of our initial response to whatever the stressor might be. But what we are responsible for and able to respond to, is the next thing that we do.

But that's why it's so irritating if your heart rate is up and your breathing is off and somebody comes up and goes, "Take a deep breath", but you haven't practiced what it feels like to re-regulate your heart rate and take a deep breath, you want to punch that person in the face. I don't condone assault.

But if somebody comes out to me when I'm hyperventilating and they're like, "Take a deep breath", I'm like, you should get away from me, arms length, definitely, because you don't understand what's happening right now. I'm not in control.

But if you have practiced that and you've stacked up those little sovereign moments, as you call them, then when that happens and somebody comes and says that in a well meaning way, then you know what they mean and you've done it. You're like, oh, right. It's like your teacher in the classroom, we've practiced our fire drills. Everybody goes to their spot. In that reminder, you're like, oh right, I know what my job is. I know where to go.

[00:29:22] Dr Darryl Tonemah

And part of that is, I always encourage folks to know what's that first thing? First thing, I smell smoke. What do you do when you smell smoke? So where is it? What does it do? And really become familiar with that. Become familiar with the body. That's where all these victories are going to occur.

And people say, I get this thing in my chest, a tightening right here. I've heard people say I get a fluttering in my stomach or I get dizzy. And they're telling you, here's the information I get, that I just run with historically.

And so we stop during our fire drill then, when you get that information, here's what we do next. Then, you're right. When somebody says watch your breath, that's my tool. And the more you practice it, the more that becomes the way of bringing it back, opening that, broadening that window.

And the more you practice that, the more, really the system says, I know what this is. I know what you're doing now. Because we never did this before, but now that you're doing this, I get it. So you take that first breath, and say, so this is just like those things we have been practicing 1000 times. Got it. And the system sits.

I use that a lot. I don't know why I'm adopting that. Whereas just say, sit. And it just kind of sits and says, dude, okay, I get it. That's that sovereign moment.

And then I want people to acknowledge, I just controlled that. That's a victory. I want people to really spend time saying, that didn't happen before, it's happening now. It's a new season now. And I want people to really claim those things.

Meagen Gibson

I actually totally resonated with when you were like, sit, because if we're talking about animal behavior, dogs, especially, if anybody is a dog person, oftentimes animals will display anxious behavior because they're human is not reacting the way they want them to about the anxiety or the information that they received.

And so when you take back control, and let's say that the dog is your nervous system at this point, and you're like, sit, I got this. Then the dog sits and it relaxes. And it's like, oh, you're in charge. You see what I see, you have the information I have and you're in charge. Got it. I'll relax. I'm going to go off alert now because I trust you.

And that's kind of what you're teaching your entire system, is that you can be trusted with the stimulus and response and that you've got the tools and behaviors ready to take care of yourself and keep yourself safe.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

And I think, as you say, that's grounding. Talking to people in your community about these things, surrounding yourself with safe people that get it, they're going to cheer you on, that aren't going to say, oh, you're crazy. That aren't going to say, have you ever thought about just calming down? Because again, you want to punch them in the throat because that's the wrong tool.

But if you have the person in your community that says, this looks tough, let's do this together. Let's use these, our robust toolbox, to bring you back. Let's practice that together.

[00:32:59]

And I love the saying, "Community is not the problem. Community is the solution". I love that. Because the more we create that specific group of people that we've had this conversation with, and maybe they've had the same experience and maybe you're part of their community, that we start bouncing these thoughts and ideas and hope and help off of each other, that you've kind of created a safer area for yourself because people around you are supporting that and recognize the tools and practice the tools with you.

I just love that. I'll say it again, "Community is not the problem. Community is the solution". And unfortunately, during COVID season, we're told that community was a problem. But now I want us to understand that the community is the solution.

Meagen Gibson

I love that framing. And I've also heard you say before, several times, that "We suffer in silos and we thrive in community". And so I'm going to quote you to you. It's brilliant. A wise man once said that.

But I also think that we have an unreasonable expectation that our communities of closest relations, so our family systems that we've either come from or created ourselves, our best friends, are going to be able to meet us where we are.

And sometimes our unique journeys, our unique sufferings, just like, I was going to say, I don't want to participate in my husband's fantasy football league, but he's not even in one, so I just made that up. But I don't care. I'm not interested in that. It's not something that fires me up. He can have that.

And I don't expect him to be fired up about trauma and anxiety research. So I need to create a community that supports my interests and my growth. And hopefully we grow together in a lot of ways as well.

But just because your family of origin or the family you've created don't understand or support your journey in that way, it doesn't mean that you can't find it. Even when your local community, for reasons of geography or isolation or ability, aren't available to you, we are more connected than ever. There's literally a group for everything online that you can find support in and find people on the same path as.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Creating a community of support. I think you said that, at least.

Meagen Gibson

A wise woman once said, create a community of support.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

I think that's a great idea. And you're right, we have more opportunity. And this one of the things that, a good thing that comes out of the technology is we have more opportunity for that than ever. When we were on farms and raising our own food, which had its great stuff as well, but that was the community.

[00:35:49]

And so now we have an opportunity to use technology in ways that it can enhance wellness instead of becoming a way of dissociating. So I love that.

I think maybe part of our own personal growth and development is taking the best of those things and just taking what your husband can give you as far as a fake nod about your trauma and anxiety research, and you give him a fake nod about his fantasy football.

Meagen Gibson

Exactly. We've literally just taught each other a phrase. It's just like, that sounds really interesting. I'm so happy for you. It's just code for like, I'm listening, I hear everything you say. I don't care. I'm sorry I'm not going to join you here, but I'm very happy for you. It's much less demeaning than it sounds in real life, I promise.

So we've talked around, just before I let you go, we've talked around practices and you've mentioned some things, but I would love if you could tell us one practice that you give people to help them create that internal, to touch the internal peace and sovereignty that we've talked about so far.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

So I love the recent heart rate variability breathing. And people will say, well, just breathe. Everybody says that. People come in and say, okay, I'm just going to breathe. And I'll say, well, no, let's talk about it. Let's do it right.

So my favorite part of the group of research that I've seen for heart variability is the breathing in through the nose for the 3 counts and pausing, and then exhaling through the mouth for 7 counts.

Did I flute breathe for you last time?

Meagen Gibson

No, I don't think so.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Well, you just poke the bear, Meagen.

Okay, so I tell people, when I play the flute, I don't blow, I just breathe. And it really emulates heart rate variability breathing where it's 3 counts in, a pause, 7 counts out.

So we know from research that inhaling through the nose activates the sympathetic system, and the exhale through the mouth activates the parasympathetic, the calming digestion, all the stuff like that. But it doesn't pop over, it blooms over. So that's a flute note.

So you breathe in and you're actually creating heart rate variability, and then acetylcholine is released to slow the heart rate. So you're just affecting the entire system. An oversimplification is, just breathe. But there's so much going on physiologically.

[00:38:49]

And so what I have folks do is, I'll have them recognize the information, and then I'll tell them, let's breathe that down. And the magic number is like 6 to 7 cycles of doing that. And I've had people make that grin, and I'll say, what's happening now? It's not happening anymore.

And they'd say, I used to wrestle with this for about an hour, 2 hours. It would just be present and very limiting. But they claimed it and said, well, I'm just going to do this now. And so I'll say, just pay attention to your breathing. Look at the information. Don't try to change it. It'll change on its own. And just let it happen.

And so flute breathing, I haven't done this for you?

Meagen Gibson

You gave me the anecdote in our last talk for the Trauma Super Conference about the little boy, the one with the snot pouring out of his nose, and instead of telling him to take a deep breath, because you're smarter than that, you played the flute and then handed it to him and let him play it. So yes, you did play me a little flute as part of that anecdote.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

I'll do that with the folks here. And I'll say, as long as you see me breathing in, you breathe with me. (Plays flute)

And I'll make sure that I'm counting in my mind 3 in, 7 out, 3 in, 7 out. (Plays flute)

And I'll do 6 to 7 cycles.

But I love that that's a device where they can, well, that crazy psychologist was playing flute in his office for me. I want them to know what was the purpose of that. Well, that's flute breathing. That's heart rate variability breathing.

And the portable, simple tool is flute breathing whenever you get that information, 6 to 7 cycles and just pay attention to the information. I've had a lot of people tell me that it moved. So it was stomach and then, oh, my leg hurts, my back hurts, it moved. But I said, well, let's just do the same thing. Let's just do the same thing and create sovereignty and create autonomy in these moments rather than being a bully to them. Then using just simple tools to tell it to sit.

Meagen Gibson

I imagine something like blowing bubbles might work as well. Or I could unhide my children's recorders that mysteriously disappeared during quarantine.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Or Pinwheels from Dollar General, like that. But a lot of kids will see how fast they can make it go. That's not the game. You want to see if they can go longer than you. And then you run out of breath at about 7 seconds.

[00:41:45] Meagen Gibson

Yeah.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

So there's all sorts of ways to get folks to practice that in a way that is comfortable for them.

Meagen Gibson

And that's also why I love bubbles. And by the way, bubbles are great for kids, but I found bubbles are also great for adults. I use this stuff, but in order to blow a big bubble, you have to blow slower and steadier. If you blow fast, like you said with the pinwheel, you get a bunch of bubbles, little, tiny, small bubbles. But if you blow slow and steady, you get a big bubble. Not that I've done this a lot.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Well, I don't want to ruin my carpet with the bubbles, but it's an indoor activity now, we're in the middle of winter here in New York. But I do like the idea of making a big bubble. I might have to bogart that.

Meagen Gibson

And in fact, just another tip, during COVID, it was a long quarantine for us, we made those big, giant mega bubble wands that you can just make with literally two sticks from the yard and some yarn. That was also like when you would get all activated by each other from home schooling at home, we would go outside and make giant bubbles because sometimes just a bubble wand was just not enough to re-regulate.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Did you have to blow into those big things?

Meagen Gibson

No, it's more of an activity, but you put all the bubble solution in a bucket instead and you just scale it all up. And you definitely don't want to do that indoors. You're going to get your shoes and your legs and your arms covered.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

I'll say it's therapeutic, but actually, I'm cleaning my carpet.

Meagen Gibson

Exactly.

Darryl Tonemah, thank you so much for being with us today. How can people find out more about you, your work and your music, for that matter?

[00:43:30] Dr Darryl Tonemah

Can I show them this?

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, sure.

Oh, it's upside down. Flip it over.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Here we go.

Meagen Gibson

Funny guy.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Okay, so this is *The Singing Psychologist*. That's our podcast. It's on all the platforms. And our telehealth is first nations telehealth. And the trainings that we do is Tonemah Consulting, so we talk about all that stuff on *The Singing Psychologist*. I'm truly enjoying doing *The Singing Psychologist*.

It's a podcast, it's not a webcast yet because I don't have the fancy microphones and things that you have. I don't know how to make that work here in my office, but come join us. I would welcome everybody.

Meagen Gibson

Fantastic. Thanks so much for being with us today.

Dr Darryl Tonemah

Thank you. Take care of yourself.