

Identifying and Repairing Toxic Relationships

Guest: Dr Monica Vermani

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[00:00:09] Meagen Gibson

Welcome to this interview, I'm Meagen Gibson, your conference co-host. Today I'm speaking with Dr Monica Vermani, a clinical psychologist specializing in treating trauma, stress, mood, and anxiety disorders. In over 25 years of clinical practice, Dr Vermani has successfully treated thousands of patients through supportive psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, EMDR, breath, body and mind practices, mindfulness and stress reduction tactics.

Meagen Gibson

Dr Vermani's latest book, *A Deeper Wellness Conquering Stress, Mood, Anxiety and Traumas*, is available now. Dr Monica Vermani, thank you so much for being with us today.

Dr Monica Vermani

Thank you for having me.

Meagen Gibson

I want to start off by asking you, how would you define a toxic relationship?

Dr Monica Vermani

We all get into relationships, that's a part of our journey. I always tell people, you're born alone, you die alone, you take your first breath into the world alone, and you take your last one out alone. But you're born into a community, into a family, we're around people all the time. And so toxic relationships, we don't choose them, but sometimes the dynamics between two people can be toxic just from our own stuff coming up.

Toxic relationship is a relationship where two people don't support each other according to what each other needs, in respect to support, often in a long standing toxic relationship, it could be with a parent, a sibling, it could be a lifelong friendship. We struggle sometimes with unresolved conflicts between one another, misunderstandings between one another. And so in relationships with people in general, we can sometimes have toxic dynamics.

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It's people dynamics, sometimes they're intimate relationships with people closer, and sometimes it's with more further apart people like colleagues, or coworkers, or people that we engage with as students or colleagues, where you're in either some sort of a hierarchy with one another, or it's just people at the same level with you.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, absolutely. As you were talking, I was thinking about the dynamics of power and choice, and how so many of our relationships, if we're lucky, we're born into a family that we get to stay in, but that doesn't always guarantee a really healthy, warm, nurturing, supportive, connected environment, does it?

Dr Monica Vermani

No, many times I don't think families mean to cause dysfunction and harm. What we always have to realize is we are all here learning lessons and growing, and trying to be our best versions of us. And so, plain and simple, when you're in pain, you spill around to others. And when you're in health, there's also a ripple effect. We're all trying to be healthy, but we do the best we can with what we know.

And our early childhood, as you mentioned with family dynamics, comes in family units where sometimes our parents are still working on themselves, and they're still trying to learn what is breaking ancestral trauma, and patterns of toxic relationships, or abuse and dysfunction. And other times they're working on health because it was role modeled. And so we do the best we can with what we know.

And many times we're repeating patterns that we've learned in our upbringing, or with our family units, and they're just blueprints, or narratives, or stories, how we think we need to be with one another. But there are healthier ways to be without controlling jealousy, envy, without feeling the need to be right. And sometimes our toxic dynamics with people come with the need to be right, or the need to be heard, or the need to control others in order to feel validated, loved or accepted, or having that person in our lives, and guilt, shame, blame comes in.

And these are all toxic words that we are plagued with in relationships that sometimes go from love, and kindness, and compassion, to also having a side of guilt, shame, blame, criticism. Where then we also internalize it with low self-esteem, of self-scrutiny and judgment. And we're hard on ourselves. And then again, we do the best we can with what we know.

If we grew up with parents with dynamics that are toxic, they're spilling over onto us, repeating the same patterns. And if we're not aware of how unhealthy these are and there's other ways to be, we just repeat the cycle too. And we just carry ancestral trauma, if you want to call it.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely, it's so tough. I was thinking about my own parents last night because I have a teenager, and I'm just crossing some big milestones in that teenager age group. I was thinking about my parents and how by the time they were the age I am currently right now, they already had a married child. And yet I'm much older and much wiser, and just entering the teenage years. So it

was a moment where I was just like gosh, I'm going to give my parents a lot of grace, they were children when they...

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Sometimes our parents are bringing us about, and raising us in really nice, healthy environments, and we may have toxic relationships outside of our family unit, which feels unfamiliar. So again, we do the best we can with what we know. If we're raised with loving, supportive, caring parents that really are, maybe even, raising us in a bit of a bubble of a shelter when we have a neighbor, or a colleague, or a student at school, or a teacher, or a coach that's being hard on us, or having toxic dynamics of competition, of control, of telling us how to be, or telling us how we're less than, we struggle.

Dr Monica Vermani

Sometimes those toxic relationships can go outside of our family unit, and because it's unfamiliar, we can struggle with those dynamics. It's important for us to recognize one reason why things can feel toxic, is they also can be unfamiliar. If you're hunky dory, and happy go lucky in a nice place in your life, and then all of a sudden you start having these people come in that are controlling, manipulative, gaslighting. Or people that you feel that you don't know how to manage their temperament, or you don't know how to defend yourself, or work with, we struggle.

Those are toxic relationships. They make us instill self-esteem issues, self-scrutiny, wondering what's wrong with us, wondering what's wrong with them. Or how do I resolve this? Deep down inside we all want some control, to feel like we're managing life in a smooth manner. Toxic relationships take away that smoothness. They bring us in a ruffled effect of uncertainty, of self-doubt, of anxiety, of the unknown, of how do I handle this? How do I make this person like me?

Deep down inside, like all children, we just want to be loved and liked. And when we sometimes have people with a different blueprint, a different mindset, a different upbringing, sometimes the way we communicate with one another, we all want to be liked and accepted, but our differing views make us clash.

So instead of having compassion, that people show you who they are, not who you are, we often personalize situations, or what people say about us, and that can cause conflict. Toxic relationships are often two viewpoints clashing, or two ways of being clashing, because you're not having compassion for each other's side, or you don't know a better way to be to be accepted, liked, and loved.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely, and so many of those dynamics that we're raised with, of the way some people conform, or adapt in order to get love and receive love, they're going to serve and they're going to need less. Those are sometimes, I find, the people that get most influenced in these situations, where they're questioning themselves, and their worth, and their viewpoint, and their ideology, or values, or beliefs about themselves, because they're more impressionable in that way, because they're so generous, and kind, and giving. Then also just the aspect of culture, and think about how when you're becoming a young adult or an adult, and even into adulthood, your ideology around respect, and how you give and take it, and how much you can stand up for yourself in relationships based on dynamics of respect alone.

[00:08:49] Dr Monica Vermani

Respect is interesting, you have to realize we are raised with different dynamics, and many of us, and our parents, if we look at their dynamics, there might be a giver and a taker together. Or there might be one that's passive, and one more aggressive or assertive, and there might be one that's more subordinate and dominant. Sometimes we have these dynamics that we're raised with, and we become like one, or a bit of both of our parents.

What we find is we're attracting people that balance the scale in our heads. There's givers that oftentimes attract takers, and there's takers that oftentimes attract givers, and it's good for you to recognize. One reason why sometimes we can interpret some relationships as toxic, is because we're depleted. But the depletion is not because the taker is taking. The depletion is because you don't know how to set boundaries as a giver to say, all right, you know what I've given A, B, and C, now I'm going to ask you to give back. And learn to create dynamics that are reciprocal.

Sometimes these people are coming into your life not necessarily to be toxic, but they're coming to show you a lesson, or a blind spot, as I call it, of how to fine tune and become a better version of you. And so to me, there are no accidents.

We attract people by our dynamics, and sometimes in our own bubble we think we're doing great. But then when we have a person enter as a colleague, as a neighbor, as a friend, as a parent, and we feel guilt, shame, blame, or we feel defensive, or we feel taken advantage of. Those are my feelings, and it's about me recognizing, okay, so what is this dynamic teaching me about me?

Maybe I need to be assertive, maybe I need to speak up, maybe I need to separate and cut this person out of my life. Some relationships are solvable, and we can fix them, and we can work on them. And some of them we're meant to walk away, and have the self-esteem to know that this dynamic is not for my highest and best interests.

And so it's important for us to realize that unhealthy patterns sometimes show us how to be healthy. It's not about toxic relationships as being abusive and hurtful only, they can be, and they can be detrimental. I've helped a lot of people work through traumas in their life, I'm not minimizing that.

What's important to understand is, why are these dynamics in your life? What is the lesson it's trying to teach you? And many times when we look back to look at how far we grew from those relationships, we realize how empowered we are, how we learn to speak up, how we learn to vocalize what we need, how we become people who not only give, but maybe learn to receive now, or stand up for ourselves to leave an abusive situation, or a workplace that was toxic, to go to a better place that's a better fit.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely, so much of what you said rings so true. I can distinctly remember a moment in my marriage when I was trying to express what was going on to my therapist, and I finally just blurted out, he just out selfishes me at every turn. And she was like, okay, let's talk about that, is he selfish or is he just trying to get his needs met, and you don't have any boundaries or limitations? Have you expressed any of that?

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So I just want to also say that totally perfectly healthy, mentally healthy people are totally capable under stress, under the influence of illness, of having toxic relationship dynamics. And just because you are not getting along, just because the dynamic and the patterns aren't adaptive to making you happy, doesn't mean that you have to abandon every relationship that makes you uncomfortable, or breeds a little bit of toxicity.

Dr Monica Vermani

Well said, the other thing to understand is phases of a relationship, like you said, when we're entering a new workplace, or we're entering a new relationship with an intimate partner or a friendship, we do put our best foot forward. We are in a place of giving, and sometimes over-giving, and over pleasing, and people-pleasing, and being so kind, and so accommodating, and then over time we get exhausted by that dynamic of maybe not having it reciprocal.

We sometimes punish people for being exactly who they were from day one because they're not becoming who we need them to be now. So it's important for us to sometimes realize, like codependency for example, in codependency you need to be needed, you get your value from taking care of people, and helping people. So you attract people that need help, or need fixing, or like guidance, and you love being there for people, and you love people pleasing.

But over time that dynamic, or friendship, or relationship that's an intimate partnership can feel depleting, exhausting. You have a couple of kids with this person, you might feel like I need help now, and I can't be just giving to you, you got to give back. But we're punishing someone for the dynamic that's always been there, but now you're changing the rules of the game, and you want more, but you don't know how to get your needs met. There's a beautiful couple's book called *Getting the Love you Want*.

Many of us just want our needs met, to feel loved, appreciated, and worthy. We don't always know, or have the skill set to communicate, or break patterns of our own guilt, and feeling afraid to ask for what we want, or feeling entitled, and why do I have to ask? I do it without asking. Sure you might, but that person might need direction.

There's followers and leaders, and there's some of us that take initiative and do things, and there's some of us out there that when you ask, they'll do it, but they can't read your mind. And we need to learn to start pausing and reflecting. I find the busier we are in life, and we're not in a good state our stress accumulates.

Stress is when your activity level surpasses your energy level. Activity is mental and physical, you can bring down only so much. You got to work still, you got to do things, or you bring up energy levels, food, sleep, exercise, and breathing, a calm state of mind.

But when you're in a good state on your own, you can pause and reflect versus react. And when we're less reactive, we're sometimes less toxic because we're mindful, we're more compassionate, we're more able to see our impact on others, and maybe why somebody's behaving the way they're behaving. Versus taking it as a personalized target, like this person's hurting me. You're realizing maybe they're hurt, and they're spilling over onto you?

[00:15:12] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely, I just had a conversation with somebody who's in a period of extreme stress and said, if you want some feedback, now is actually the time for you to slow down. And I know it feels like you need to go even faster because there's so much going on, but this is actually the exact time to just pause, and take even more contemplative time to consider, how am I eating? What am I drinking? How am I sleeping? How am I tending to things that bring me joy and care? Even when we're just squashed and we don't feel like there's a single moment to enjoy that stuff, that's even more reason to slow down.

Dr Monica Vermani

I love how you spoke about joy. You got to live each day as if it was your last. Each and every one of us are born not knowing when and how we're going to die. And we all have that, we need to realize, live each day as if it's your last. Are you bringing in joy? Are you bringing moments of connection?

When you meditate, meditation is doing one thing with complete presence and it's where you lose the concept of time and space. You could be hanging out with a friend and hours go by and you're like, wow, how did that happen? Those moments are meditation, you're doing one thing with complete presence, whether it's a hobby, an interest.

It's important for us to recognize that being in a good state is not just sleeping while eating well, and doing exercising, but bringing in moments of joy, so that we connect. And as we're in a happier state, we have less expectations on others. Sometimes our expectations make dynamics toxic, because now we're trying to control people, now we're gaslighting them to stay with us, now we're dominating them, or we're not hearing what they need, and we keep imposing what we need.

Versus realizing, well, what does this person need from me too? And reciprocal relationships come when you're in a better state on your own, whether it's a friendship, or place, et cetera.

Meagen Gibson

Let me know if this is true for you, and your experience, and with your clients. But I know that my desire to be taken care of, rescued, accommodated was exponentially greater before I started my trauma healing journey.

Dr Monica Vermani

And trauma, there's layers to trauma. As a practitioner who's a professional and an expert with mood, anxiety, stress and trauma, there's layers to it for all of us. It's not about minimizing everybody's impacts from trauma. Some we can judge as more significant just by reading it, and others we can judge as less than, because our experiences were maybe more traumatic, or we're judging it.

Remove judgment, life is a series of experiences, we all have good and bad. We're all struggling and we're all trying to find ways to be a better version of us, which sometimes is recognizing why do I keep attracting these situations? Why do I struggle in these dynamics? What are the skills maybe I need to learn to be able to manage, or to walk away, or to not choose dynamics that make

me feel taken for granted, not good enough, not lovable, not worthy, or giving at the expense of myself?

[00:18:30] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I want to talk about this in a different way, just for a minute because I think we talk conceptually a lot of times, and we get lost because you and I, back and forth, can talk about this conceptually forever and we would never get tired.

But I've been doing something lately where I talk about how it's going to feel in yourself. Because a lot of people as they're watching these interviews, they might be questioning, well, I don't know if my relationship is toxic or not. So how are you going to feel in relationship?

And you go to your therapist and you're like, I don't know what's wrong, but here's how I'm feeling. What are some of the things that people describe that they're feeling in relationships? When they've got a toxic relationship dynamic, and they're trying to figure out is this something toxic that I can fix? Or is this something abusive that I need to exit?

Dr Monica Vermani

Good question. So many times those keywords of guilt, shame, blame. Many times people feel, in a toxic relationship, guilty for the way they are, or for the way they live, or the way they respond, or the way somebody is feeling. You feel guilty, and you have a hard time maybe communicating and expressing yourself authentically to ask for what you need, out of guilt, or out of feeling like you're a burden, or you're imposing on someone. So it's making you hold back your authentic truth of what you really need, or want, or want to ask for, or speak up and say how somebody's making you feel, because you feel guilty to let this person know.

The other red flag is often that there's a scorekeeping where you feel like the moment you bring something up the person's going to roll their eyes and be like, here you go again. And it's always about you. The scorekeeping is another red flag in a toxic relationship where you feel like I'm feeling unsafe to communicate my needs. I'm feeling unsupported in our dynamics because you're keeping score, or you're always poking at me that whenever I speak I'm criticizing you when all I'm trying to do is express my needs.

And there's a fine line, I have a lot of couples and individuals that come into session and they say, every time I speak up to ask for what I need, they interpret it as me criticizing, or blaming, or shaming, or they make it sound like all I speak about is how they have to change. Versus seeing the good in them.

And it is good for us to hear that because sometimes you do want to weigh feedback that you give to people of what you need, with also what they're doing right. We don't always want to hear constructive criticism, even if it's packaged well. We want to hear that we're doing things right, because in a relationship what makes us thrive is feeling loved, respected, and adored for doing something well. We want to know that that person feels we're worthy of love and that we're valuable to their life, not always a burden, or not doing something right, or feeling that they're always right, you're always right, I'm just going to have to go along with what you have to say.

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The other one is, there's in toxic relationships, a passive-aggressive dynamic where there's one, sometimes beating down the other, or the other one feels the need to be silent, to keep the peace because otherwise conflict just exacerbates.

And many people feel uncomfortable communicating, because if I say something this is going to turn into a fight. When you feel threatened to communicate your needs and your truths, that's toxic. Because over time you're going to resent this person, and you're not going to feel safe in the dynamics to be able to really be yourself. And over time, if you're not going to be yourself, what ends up happening? You deteriorate in the relationship.

Resentment over time will lead to you having a gap, where you're not going to want to feel close to them anymore. Once that gap is big enough, the relationship is already broken and sometimes it's hard to repair, and there's no lifelines for it, because the resentment is so big that you've never allowed me to speak, and you're always passive-aggressively dealing with me. I don't know if I'm walking on eggshells, and it's going to be received well, or you're going to rip my head off and lash out.

Other ways are like, when both people blame each other. One person brings up something and, you do this, this, and this, and oftentimes that blame feels toxic, and it's another red flag that this is not healthy.

Many other people can see little red flags of other unhealthy maladaptive behaviors like jealousy, envy with your partner, feeling the relationship is one sided, not reciprocal. Feeling as if you're not safe, or comfortable to ask for what you need, and be able to receive it.

Some of us do ask for what we need, and it feels like it's falling on deaf ears. And you feel powerless, when you're powerless in a relationship that's toxic because who wants to be in a reciprocal, mutual loving relationship where you feel powerless. It's not healthy. Where you feel unheard, you feel unseen.

Where you feel you're constantly people-pleasing to gain attention, or love from someone. That dynamic is not healthy either, because you're constantly feeling unworthy, and you're trying to overcompensate. You're feeling guilty all the time because every time you speak up, you want to bring up your concerns, and it sounds like a complaint, or you're nagging, if you want to call it.

And the big one is you don't feel authentically yourself. Many times when we come together with friends, or colleagues, or bosses, or partners even, we're putting our best foot forward and we feel authentically ourselves. And that chemistry is great. And we feel happy in our friendships when we're aligned. But over time, when there's toxic dynamics, or behaviors, or words being used blame, shame, guilt, you get to a place of not feeling like your authentic self.

You have to change who you are to keep harmony. Change who you are to have peace. Change who you are to minimize or mitigate conflict that is unhealthy. And where you're feeling disrespected, plain and simple, whether you're being yelled at, you're being financially, emotionally, verbally, or physically, or sexually abused, or having people withdraw communication by silent treatments, or withdraw affection. These are not healthy dynamics where we feel our needs are met.

[00:24:55] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And so many of those things can feel little, but over the course of weeks, months and years it adds up to just a complete and total diminishment of the self and sense of self, doesn't it?

Dr Monica Vermani

It's our self-esteem, nobody enters relationships where it's bad right off the bat. You enter a relationship, there's some good and you invest in it. And then sometimes that investing in it is what makes us stay in toxic relationships, because we want to believe that the good will override the bad, and the good will override the toxic parts. Or the toxic part is a one-off, it won't happen again. We sometimes justify and make excuses and defend those behaviors, because we want to believe in the potential of good in this relationship.

But more days than not, if you're unhappy in any relationship, you need to challenge why you're here. Why are you putting up with certain dynamics? And why you're not changing them, or changing yourself. We can't change others, but we can try to communicate to allow people the opportunity to change.

And the other thing is, work on yourself. More you're in a better state, the more you are aware of dynamics that you can take a step back and change of your own. You be the best version of you. And if the dynamics don't shift, you'll have the confidence to shift them for you, because you deserve better.

Remember, it's an individual journey amongst the collective. We're here to learn better versions of ourselves. And sometimes these toxic dynamics teach you how to step up, teach you how to be assertive, teach you how to ask for help, teach you how to receive instead of just give. And teach you also that there's safety in relationships, not just toxicity.

And instead of repeating patterns that you grew up with, you can break cycles, you can be better and you can feel worthy and deserving of health, love, compassion. Without criticism, without jealousy, without envy, without competition, and without control.

Meagen Gibson

And speaking of that individual journey and doing your own work, toxic relationship dynamics can be so confusing and overwhelming, and you're wondering, is it me? Am I the problem? So how do we discern? And what support can we seek so that we can figure out what our part is as the individual. What their part is? And then what our collective part in the relationship is? What's everybody's responsibility?

Dr Monica Vermani

Just earlier today I was teaching a little bit of a lesson, so I have it on my board here, so I'm going to pull it up for a second. Any problem in life you can put on this table, anxiety, depression, toxic relationships, addictions, self-esteem issues, money problems. Any problem, caregiver needs, to our children, or parents, cancer, diabetes, any problem you think you have in life you put on this table.

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It will manifest in three ways in your life. Through physical and physiological symptoms, headaches, muscle aches, abdominal distress, constipation, diarrhea, heart palpitations, crying, sensitivity, irritability, panic attacks, fatigue.

It shows up also through negative thoughts. Negative thoughts about you, your world, your capabilities, I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough. I'm not capable, I'm the one at fault here. I'm the problem.

And it shows up also as maladaptive behaviors, or lifestyle habits. Eating too much, eating too little, sleeping too much, sleeping too little, alcohol and drugs. And then these guys, we do it here. Avoidance, denial, procrastination, over, video games, porn addiction, shopping addictions, food addictions, staying in bad relationships, not speaking up for ourselves, not asking for that raise, not going back to school, holding ourselves back from having a good life, or getting the treatment we need.

These symptoms we live with all the time when we have problems that are toxic relationships in our lives. So understand and have compassion that the one reason why many of us people don't expect ourselves to get into these dynamics, but slip into it, is it starts off good, but over time our symptoms get louder and louder, as we're not finding solutions for these things.

And those symptoms, as I just showed you, physical symptoms, negative thoughts racing in your head, and negative lifestyle habits of avoidance, or silent treatments, or not speaking to others and seeking help. All of that stuff we're living with. We get overwhelmed by these dynamics. And that's one reason why many of us stay in these dynamics for so long sometimes. Because it's overwhelming by the symptoms it produces.

And so by working on yourself. You are doing yourself an advantage to be able to see everything separately and work on it. Managing your physical symptoms, so that you can pause and reflect better. Noticing the thoughts that make you doubt yourself, when you know something is true, when you know the gaslighting is happening, when you know somebody is calculating to turn things around and putting on you, over time it looks like a duck, it quacks, it's a duck. Start recognizing to trust yourself.

We doubt our intuition, we lose connection to our truth, and believe other people's words about us. Instead of being solid in who we are. And so even maladaptive behaviors, cut out drugs, alcohol, cut out things that might be clouding your judgment. That may be making you feel like I'm the problem here, and look at things accurately, and get the help.

In isolation we're overwhelmed sometimes, talk to people, talk to friends, research, talk to a therapist, talk to your family doctor, talk to people about what's going on inside you. And realize that as you treat your own symptoms, the physical symptoms, or negative thoughts that maybe you're doubting yourself, and negative behaviors you're doing, as you treat these things, it will be clear what your path is forward. And so the key is to work on yourself.

Don't give from your well, give from your overflow. In toxic relationships you're depleted and you're giving from empty, because you're tired, you're exhausted, you're in self-doubt, you're in low self-esteem. And when people spill on to you, you absorb it to sometimes continue those feelings for yourself. And so anger, irritability, frustration, don't do it in silence. Learn to ask for help.

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Learn to seek guidance and recognize that again, these dynamics don't start this way, they creep in slowly. And when they creep in, it's our responsibility to sometimes look at, okay, more days than not, I'm not happy. One of my meters for any friendship or relationship is, we choose people into our life and we can choose them out. Including workplaces, including neighbors, including friends. You can choose them out, but a good measure, we all have bad days, so it's not about punishing people the first time they do something.

I always say, more days than not in a month are you happy in your relationships? Do you feel like they serve your needs? Are they helping you be a better version of you? Do they teach you, and help you grow, and support you? Do you feel safe in them?

So if you can look at your relationships, is my relationship making me happy, serving my needs, helping me grow? Those are good relationships to have. And if they're not, and more days than not I'm feeling depleted, I'm feeling unsafe, I'm feeling unloved, I'm feeling doubtful, I'm feeling a low self-esteem, I'm feeling targeted, or abused more days than not. If you're unhappy, you need to question if this is the right person to be in your circle.

Take charge of the energy in your space. Maya Angelou says that about taking charge of the people and the energy in your space. Make sure they're lifting you. And if you are noticing people are depleting you all the time, are these people that are the right ones to be around me?

But you have to be in a state of health to recognize who's healthy around you. And so it is important for us to start working on ourselves. The first step to treatment, or resolution of any problem, is awareness. Bring in awareness of what I can fix in my own so that I can accurately see what's going on. And if more days than not you are unhappy in any dynamic, work, with your parents, with your siblings, with your friends, with your colleagues, with the neighbor. Work on solutions.

But sometimes solutions can't come from isolation. We do the best we can with what we know, and we don't know enough. So sometimes you need to reach out to people who might contribute to your knowledge, to increase it, to bring you proper solutions, or give you advice from what they've gone through, that worked for them.

And as we learn how to be better versions of us, we can sometimes get out of these dynamics. But in isolation, you don't have to be inside of suffering. Ask for help, read, learn, and stop thinking it's always about you. People show you who they are, not necessarily who you are.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. That's a fantastic point. I think we're about done. But I want to ask if you've got anything else that you want to say in closing, anything you'd like to add?

Dr Monica Vermani

One thing I do want to mention is that I often help people understand that we can work on relationships. And if they are toxic relationships, it doesn't mean you need to walk away, and cut them loose, and cut cords, and never see them again. You can work on it, but it takes two to tango.

And whatever dynamic, whether it's a parent, a sibling, a friend, a colleague, an intimate partner, it is important for you to recognize that work on yourself, and try to work on giving people the opportunity to step up, and change by communicating what you're feeling and thinking.

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But if they're not ready to change, and they're not ready to see that with a compassionate eye what you're going through, that the two main reasons why we suffer in life, we don't accept people as they are, and we don't accept situations as they are. Acceptance is a mindset.

And if somebody is not ready to really see their part in a dynamic, it is good to take a step back, and learn that maybe I do have to cut this person out forever. And take a step back, and care about them from afar, and send them well. But realize that maybe my lesson here in this dynamic, or this relationship, is to take a step away and to walk away.

In others, it's to repair and give them opportunities to change. Maybe bring in therapists, or bring in other people to mediate. Not all relationships are meant to be fixed. And it's okay for us to not feel guilt, shame, blame, for letting go of a relationship that we feel is toxic.

The journey is an individual one, you are choosing to bring people in, realize that if for your own health and wellbeing you need to choose to take a step away, it's okay. Putting yourself first is important. Don't give from your well, give from your overflow. If you preserving your resources is to take a step away, it's okay.

Give yourself permission to have awareness of what's going on. Take responsibility for your part and try to be healthy. If possible, have honest communication with the person that is causing you harm, or that you're interpreting is causing you harm. Because people don't always mean to cause harm, they are just repeating patterns. And when you give them a good avenue to change, like therapy, or intervention, they may change. They just need awareness of how much pain they're causing others. Sometimes we're just so busy, we're doing things without the awareness.

And set boundaries, notice what that means, speak up, stay, stop, walk away. Pause and reflect. Bring in other people for help. Learn that boundaries sometimes we set ourselves, and boundaries sometimes we bring other people in to help us with.

Look at your forte, and everywhere you go have awareness of, how am I feeling? What is struggling with? What do I have to work on? And seek help, go for therapy.

We place so many conditions on us being happy. I'm going to strongly say, you're worthy of love just the way you are. Remove some of those labels, thoughts, narratives.

I did a Ted Talk recently of Think About It, thoughts are powerful things. Anything that was ever created in life started with a thought, including dynamics between people, coming together as well as going apart. Sometimes it's our misunderstandings of why somebody's doing what they're doing that we interpret as toxic. But they're doing it from a protective place, they're doing it from a narrative that they've always grown up with.

Give yourselves a little bit of credit to not feel that you're always taken for granted, and that maybe people are just in pain spilling over onto you. But you are worthy, and deserving of a better life. Step up into it, stop placing conditions on people to change, work on yourself. And sometimes

realize dynamics for relationships are complicated, and they become toxic not with intention to harm, but sometimes just because we're not aware of patterns, dynamics, and narratives that are influencing us. Thoughts are powerful things, good or bad they shape our lives each and every day, each and every way.

[00:38:38] Meagen Gibson

Well said, Dr Vermani where can people find out more about you and your work?

Dr Monica Vermani

You can Google me, I'm Googleable. And you can find me on my website, drmonicavermani.com. And you can look me up on YouTube for my Ted Talk. And my book *A Deeper Wellness: Conquering Stress, Mood, Anxiety and Trauma*, is available on Amazon.

I also have a masterclass coming out on how to work through thoughts, because thoughts are powerful things. And like I said, thoughts give us permission to put ourselves first. Thoughts give us permission to sometimes fall into patterns of catastrophizing, anxiety, depression, or rumination about how we're not good enough or capable. Making our faith bigger than our fear. Faith in ourselves that we can work through things that show up. And when dynamics are unhealthy, try to see the lesson of what do I need to change? Before trying to put it on others to have to change.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Thank you so much for being with us today.

Dr Monica Vermani

Thank you for having me.