



Conscious Life presents
**HEALING TOXIC
RELATIONSHIPS**

How to Be in Toxic Relationships

Guest: Ty Powers

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[00:00:09] Jaï Bristow

Hello and welcome to this conference. My name is Jaï Bristow and I'm one of your hosts. Today I am very, very pleased to be welcoming the wonderful Ty Powers. Welcome, Ty.

Ty Powers

Thank you, Jaï.

Jaï Bristow

Thank you for being here. Ty, you're a meditation teacher and the co-founder of the Insight Yoga Institute alongside your wonderful wife, Sarah Powers, who is a very well-known yoga teacher. You're also a certified integral coach and an internal family systems therapy counselor.

This conference is all about healing toxic relationships, but when we were talking, you talked about how to be in a toxic relationship. My first question to you is, do you believe that all relationships, harmful toxic relationships, can be healable or not?

Ty Powers

In a word, no. I wish that weren't so, but I think there's a lot of things that have to be at play on both sides for that to be the case. And that's just not the case for so many relationships. There are relationships that are based on dominance. There's a lot of relationships that are based on a sense of superiority or inferiority. And there's some basic assumptions that are made and in too many relationships misunderstandings that are taken as the truth, the whole truth and nothing but.

There's a variety of different reasons why one side may not even want to be in the relationship in any other way that it is, vis a vis, say, a boss, a president, a prime minister. Something where it's top down and that's how it's seen, and that's how it's believed to be the best way to approach all situations. In those situations it seems that being able to express on that side vulnerability or humility, the things one needs to be outside of a toxic relationship, are just not possible given the construction of the actual relationship.

[00:02:26] Jaï Bristow

Interesting. And you talk about power dynamics and relationships vis a vis a boss, or a president, or some of those examples. Are the relationships that you're referring to ones that have an obvious asymmetrical structure? And what I mean by that is, if we think of symmetrical relationships as peer relationships, and asymmetrical relationships as ones with an obvious named power dynamic, like employee and boss, for example.

Ty Powers

I would say that in peer relationships there is very much the potential, and I would say always the potential, for the toxicity in the relationship to end, especially as peers. That there is the possibility for one to listen to the other with humility, with a possible understanding, with compassion. And in that sense, if those things aren't present, that's why I say it's nearly impossible for there to be a resolution. But if they are, I think the possibilities are infinite for how we can be inside a toxic relationship, at least one that feels toxic.

All right, maybe we should define toxicity here. I would say toxicity the way I'm speaking of it is a relationship in which one or more of the parties is actually not willing to look at the scenario in any different way. In other words, there's a fixed point of view, there's a fixed set of beliefs that are involved that doesn't allow one or the other person to actually make that step across the aisle. This is how things are.

Religion has a lot of this going on inside of it, which is, this is how things are and this is how things are meant to be, and if you step outside of that, there really is no compromise from this side, that belief, something needs to be done about you.

So in that sense, how to be in a toxic relationship is just how to not take that on as somehow being bad or wrong. That's the part of being inside a toxic relationship that's our responsibility, as the person that may be the object of the toxicity. So how do you work with that? That's the part of toxicity that's yours to work with.

Jaï Bristow

Could you say more about being the object of the toxicity, what do you mean by that?

Ty Powers

Let's say within a certain religion being gay is absolutely wrong, it's bad, it's wrong. And so there you are, your parents deeply hold this belief, and yet there you are in front of them, and they decide that they need to reject you entirely based on that belief. Which has happened, so what is one to do with that? What's your part in that, to deal with that?

Because things do change, yes, we know as the world has changed and things have grown in that change, to be sure. But in some times, in some places, let's say the Taliban, there is no room, at least in this point in history, for certain beliefs to exist under that set of beliefs. And so what does one do there? How does one take care of oneself there? When there really is no potential to speak rationally, or openly, or honestly, or vulnerably with the other side?

[00:05:59] Jaï Bristow

Interesting, I really appreciate this definition you're giving of toxic relationships as having a very rigid viewpoint, whatever the viewpoint is. It doesn't matter if it's a quote-unquote positive, or quote-unquote negative viewpoint, because that will depend on the person. And viewpoints are in their very nature subjective. But it's when you have that rigidity and positionality, where you take a position and there is no flexibility to see it from anyone else's perspective, no flexibility to have any flexibility, any movement on that viewpoint.

I think that's a really interesting definition of toxic relationship, of toxicity. I also appreciate what you're saying about how the difficulties or the pain that can arise when you're considered the object of the toxicity, which, if I understand correctly, is when you're someone who by your very existence, or nature, or beliefs, or being is somehow in opposition to those rigid viewpoints.

Ty Powers

We all know this for ourselves in the world as it is now, be it a certain race, a certain gender, a certain non-gender, whatever it might be, there's a sense from certain people that you should not be that way. It is dead wrong, and I'm going to disabuse you of that belief that you have around that dead wrongness that you are. And so there's nowhere for you to go inside of that, inside of that toxicity, except to maybe go away.

Jaï Bristow

Right, which is my next question. In these toxic relationships, you talk about whether it's with a very religious family member, for example, or whether it's with your country, and the leader of that country, or whatever it is. In your definition of these toxic relationships, is it possible to leave? Do you recommend leaving? What's the relationship with leaving these relationships if you recognize that they're not, quote-unquote healable?

Ty Powers

Yeah, I think if you can leave. That's certainly a big if for a lot of the world, because unfortunately there's a lot of borders that keep people from leaving situations like this. But in my work, I've probably recommended maybe twice, after a lot of work, and I'm talking months and months, if not years of work, that they actually get a divorce. And I mean from a partner, I even mean from parents, or from siblings, or from a close friend.

Yes, I think there are scenarios in which the relationship is toxic, in the sense that you've done all the work from your side that you can do, that you know how to do. And still the other side has decided that you are who you will always be in their eyes, and they want to approach you, speak to you in a critical way about that, constantly. No one should have to endure constant abuse in that way. So if the other side is not willing to see your side of it, or how it's affecting you negatively, if they're not willing to see that, or don't care about that, sociopaths, psychopaths don't care about that. Then the best thing to do is actually get up and go if you can.

Jaï Bristow

Yeah.

[00:09:22] Ty Powers

And now, if I knew how to actually exist inside of this, in some of the world situations that there are out there, I'd have a peace prize, to be sure. For example, Israel and Palestine, or Russia and the Ukraine, you can't just get up and go, and you know what to do inside of that, I don't know. You fight to get your piece of the pie, you fight to get your perspective seen. I never think fighting is the first, second, or third resort, but maybe this is the only way to be heard ultimately. So maybe that's the way? Again, I don't know really, and no one knows clearly or these things wouldn't continue to happen in the way they do.

Jai Bristow

I think these examples you're giving between Israel and Palestine, or between Russia and Ukraine, they're quite extreme examples, and they're also on a macro level, where they're two nations that are literally at war with each other. So maybe we'll come back to that afterwards.

What I'm really fascinated by, and what you said, is that in your line of work, and you've worked with a lot of people over the years, that only maybe twice ever, and after many years, have you actually recommended a separation, severance of the relationship, whether it's a divorce from a partner, or parents, or whatever.

I find that fascinating because that's the opposite to what I hear a lot of the time, often people say toxic, get the hell out of there. So what are you saying? What do you recommend? What are some tools that you teach, and that you work with and recommend to stay in a toxic relationship? And again, we're defining toxic by these opposing viewpoints, and rigidity around the views.

Ty Powers

All right, so maybe backing up a little bit to say that I think, and this is a belief, so this is take it or leave it, that the relationships that we are in have some reason for being. Be it karmic, or just whatever it might be, we're in a certain job, and there are certain people around that there is that toxicity, and we just have to be with that to be in that job. So at that point, it really is on us to figure out, why we're here, or why they're there, and why this is so obnoxious to us? Whatever this toxicity is to us, how it's affecting us.

Is there something that I can do in terms of some of the cherished beliefs that I'm holding on to that feel untouchable, or firm, inflexible? Is there some way that I can trim those, or refine those, so that I can be in this situation and it doesn't feel toxic to me? Because we all know situations like that, or people like that, where they'll be in the same scenario with us, or in a room with us, and there's this one toxic person, and that person is really toxic for us, it doesn't bother them so much.

So there's something they're doing, there's some karma they don't have. Just calling it cause and effect, in this case, karma. There's something that's not tapping on something inside of them that's driving them crazy. And so I really want us, each of us, I do it for myself, of course, to look around for what that might be, before I decide I've got to leave the room. The baseline belief is, potentially everything is helping you.

[00:13:03] Jaï Bristow

Interesting, there's some things that can really resonate with what you're saying, and there's also some things that feel a little controversial in what you're saying. I can really resonate with this idea that all relationships that we have, we can learn something from them. Life is constantly giving us opportunities to learn, including relationships that are very activating or triggering. Then, it's often a repeating of patterns from our past, or it's something that's being activated in us that is a great opportunity to look at for ourselves.

That's not to say that you have to become best friends with the other person, for example, but it's like, okay, when I'm in contact with this person, it's activating something in me, let me go off and maybe work on what's been activated. Rather than working with it with the person who's activating us. I think that's a really important distinction to make.

And at the same time, you're a black man, so what if in the context you're giving, the person who's activating you is being very racist, and the other person in the room isn't being as activated as much because they're a white person, for example, would you still say the same thing?

Ty Powers

I would. It would make sense that the white person wouldn't be as activated, they're not talking about that, and they're not calling them a bad name. They may be offended by the idea, but it's not hitting the heart in the same way. Especially, as in that particular case, part of the racism is the idea that one race is superior to another. So if the white person in the room is listening to that, it's not tapping on anything that's particularly offensive. I mean, yes, of course at its baseline it's offensive, to say that about any race. But the fact that it's being said about them, might even be a little pride in that, yeah, maybe that's true or whatever. I hope that explains the difference for me.

Jaï Bristow

I think so. I think what I'm hearing, or what I'm understanding, is that even when it's systemic trauma, rather than being personally activated. And again, systemic trauma, and what I mean by that is the systems of oppression in society, whether it's racism, sexism, transphobia, classism, all those kind of things. All those systems are always felt personally as well, we'll be personally activated when we're being confronted with oppression towards ourselves, for example.

And then we also will have our own personal trauma, our personal histories based on our family, our conditioning, our life experience, or that kind of thing, and I think they do intersect. What I'm hearing you saying is that regardless of whether the person that's activating you, regardless of what they're saying, and whether they're morally right or wrong, or whatever they're saying, and regardless of how it's impacting you. There is still the opportunity for you to look at what's being activated in you, and to heal that. Is that what you're saying?

Ty Powers

It's exactly what I'm saying. What is mine to offer to this scenario right here? This is my heart that's being hurt, this is my head that's being hurt, whatever it is. How can I attend to that in a way that clarifies that for myself? Why am I so hurt? Am I taking this in as some semblance of a truth? Do I believe that? Those kinds of questions for oneself so that you really explore, so why is this hitting me so hard?

[00:16:40]

We can take the example of someone like Barack Obama, who didn't seem to be nearly as effective as, say, as Michelle, around issues, around race. The different things he was being called and whatnot apparently just rolled off of him. It's like, this is not where I want to be focusing my attention, this is not the best use of myself in this world to respond to all the slings and arrows. And so there's some way that he evolved to be able to do that in a way that was structurally healthy for him.

I think it's really interesting because what you're talking about boils down to, when someone says something that activates you, it's because you're taking whatever they're saying literally, personally, like you're taking it as an attack to you. And that makes sense based on everything I've learned about trauma, hosting these trauma conferences and relationship conferences over the years, that makes sense that it's a trauma response to feel attacked.

But what you're saying is, one of the ways of healing is recognizing that that's the other person, that's their views, that's their projections, as opposed to taking it on board as your responsibility. Is that what you're saying? Or are you saying something?

Let me refine that a little bit. Let's say someone does say something racist, and the first response is to fight, that's a trauma response. I would say built into that trauma response is maybe the idea that if I don't fight, I will be run over, I will be taken advantage of, and so on.

What I would say is that fight response is actually an interim response. Meaning the response is to the idea that someone's going to take advantage of me, someone's going to use this in a deleterious way.

Whereas I think there's a possibility, very real, in fact, I've seen this for myself and others, that you actually bypass. When I say bypass at this point, I'm not talking about ignore or reject, but the question becomes, is the fight necessary? Is the idea of fighting necessary to deal with this?

So that's a question for everyone who might be listening here. Is it necessary? I can go straight to, all right, I've got a jerk in front of me, and they have this belief system, and how am I going to get to them? Or do I want to get to them? Do I need to get to them? Maybe I just need to leave the room, because looking at them they seem intractable around this.

But the idea of need, of being alarmed, or hurt, or needing a fight is a interim trauma that doesn't necessarily have to be tapped on, but it's a process to get there, you have to really reveal to yourself all the ways you might be buying into what's being said, such that it does tap on, maybe that's true. And that's the process I'm talking about needing to go through first, to make sure that whatever's happening in this toxic relationship is not yours to carry on.

Jaï Bristow

I like that. I like this sense that you're saying that recognizing trauma responses or triggers and recognizing them, and instead of necessarily immediately acting upon them, it's taking that pause and questioning, is this necessary? What's actually going on here?

[00:20:27]

And then maybe you can offer some alternatives too? I think you mentioned possibly leaving the room or how do I get to the person? But in that moment, for someone who recognizes a situation, who notices they're being activated or having a trauma response, or being triggered, and they can recognize that, and they can take that beat and think, this is the other person rather than me, or this is the other person's views. Then what's the next step?

Ty Powers

So you could say working in that way is analogous to the way that Internal Family Systems approach works. Which is we have this family, this inner committee, this family of parts, is what they're calling in that nomenclature. That all have their particular ways of dealing with various aspects of life, tenured from way back, mom deals this way, dad deals this way. If you don't have mom, dad, primary caregivers, brothers, sisters, whoever.

All that is in our system for how we deal with things, and the extent to which that inner system is healthy is the extent to which we're able to dialog with each one of those parts. And the dialog would look something like, wow, you feel that way, tell me more about that.

And so you could imagine, even in a very racist scenario, that instead of getting offended, like, wow, so tell me more about that. Where'd you get that? Where'd that come from? And why is that important for you to uphold? What are you afraid would happen if you didn't uphold that idea or that belief? And now, so that we've calmed the air down a little bit, oh, the person is actually going to listen to me.

It might be something you don't want to listen to, because it's nonsense. But the point is a befriending of that part of that person, that part of you. Because we all have toxic parts internally, that part of you that instead of just, no, no, I don't want to hear it. You want to make sure that you heard it carefully first before you make some decisions around what to do.

And just the healing quality of attempting to hear what's really being said without imposing ideas on top of it. That in itself is healing, and calms the room, calms the temperature. Tell me more, tell me more. This is one of the first steps in this therapy, is you're really asking those questions of your inner parts. Which would be the same response you would have, why am I so triggered? Why is this part so triggered? Okay, so there's a threat here, there's something I'm afraid would happen. I'm going to the fight now because I'm afraid they're going to overpower me. Whatever it is.

But there's that interim part where you're really asking the question openly and honestly, as openly as honestly as you can, perhaps being triggered now I'm asking it's a tall order when we are triggered, which is why we want to, as a process, remember to pause and try and soften whatever it is that's hit us.

And now it's psychosomatic, it's in the body, I'm upset, I'm mad, I'm frustrated, whatever it might be. Or just sit for a moment with that, let that be, let yourself notice that, so that you're not acting from that, because the acting from that is not a response, it's a reaction.

[00:24:01] Jaï Bristow

I think it's really interesting what you're sharing. Because you're talking about the tools of IFS that are designed to look at your own different parts, and communicate between your own different parts, but using them also to communicate with others.

I lead these online courses around power, privilege, and prejudice. And one of the tools I give is when going from defensiveness or dismissiveness to curiosity. And it's exactly what you're sharing. It's that sense of rather than just, this person's an asshole, dismissing them, dismissing what they're saying, being like, oh, why do they feel that way? Where's that coming from? Why are they saying that?

I had an incident just a few weeks ago, actually, where I was in a car share ride with someone, and therefore I had a long three and a half hour journey stuck in the back of this car with this person. And we exchanged a few pleasantries and small talk at the beginning about travel and this, and they seemed like an interesting person.

And then they asked me something, and I mentioned something about being queer, or the queer community, and they asked me, what does that mean? So I explained queer being an umbrella term for the LGBTQ plus community. I explained how I was non-binary and pansexual, that kind of thing.

And then they said, used the line that is always a danger line, red flag line, I'm not homophobic but... Followed by how much they didn't feel like, how much they basically disliked gay people and queer people. And so again, just like what you've been sharing for me in that moment I could feel myself being activated.

But because of all the practices I've learned throughout these relationships and in my own life, I could feel that activation, and I could take the time to just be very kind and gentle, and have a light touch about what was going on within myself and then ask questions. I asked him, I can't remember exactly what I asked him, but I asked him basically tell me more as you're saying. I asked in my own language and based on the context, and we started having a conversation.

By the end of the conversation, it's not like we became best buddies and all the hatred in the world was solved and we went singing along. But I realized that we actually had a lot more that connected us, and we actually had quite a lot of values in common. And that where he was coming from with that was to do with his own conditioning, his own... What he'd seen and read in the media, he kept referencing the media, for example, that he'd never actually had a conversation with a gay person or queer person.

He said at one point like oh, you're the first person from "that" community I've been able to talk to you about this. I also totally understand why that's happened, because if that's his first response then to anyone he meets who's gay or queer, then of course they're going to be defensive, and think toxic person, red flag, danger, trauma, let me get the hell out of here, and protect myself and be safe. And I think it's really important to be safe.

But with all my practices, and again it's what you're saying there are practices, there are tools to support being able to have that difficult conversation, to support being able to stay in connection with someone, even when the situation is toxic, where there's rigidity of views, where there's a direct opposition of views and beliefs.

[00:27:29]

And that it doesn't mean that you'll necessarily end up becoming BFFs with this person. But that there are other alternatives to just creating more division, or polarization, or reinforcing the views by just separating, and then reinforcing that person's belief and story of, see those people are like that, for example.

Ty Powers

Yeah, you used the wise route which is diffuse the situation. You quickly realized you weren't in any physical danger, and maybe not even in any psychological danger, and so it allowed you the space. The space is really important. There's no space in Ukraine or Palestine. It allows you the space to feel safe enough to be curious. I'm certainly not advocating staying in situations that are undeniably toxic. But the first order of business I think is always to ascertain whether or not this is my trauma that I'm placing on this scenario?

Jaï Bristow

Absolutely.

Ty Powers

Or is this an opportunity, this idea that everything's helping you, is this an opportunity to impart something just to prove to myself? Am I equal to the task of being with this without flying off the handle, without needing to impose my beliefs on the other person, as they're trying to do to me, whatever that might be?

Projection is one of the most powerful forces in human interactions to be sure. And so to look out for how we're projecting, what we think, and what we think is right onto other people. It's a powerful tool for going, aha, caught myself, all right, let me just pause, and soften and yeah, I can come back now and just be curious. Just be wowed by what the other person knows, or thinks they know, and believes.

Jaï Bristow

I think that's so important, I interviewed, on this conference, Rafaella Fiallo, who talked about interrupting those stories we tell ourselves, the harmful stories we tell ourselves, the self-fulfilling prophecies. I recommend people who want to know more about that to check out that interview.

I'm curious Ty, because you mentioned the space to be safe. I think that's really important in this conversation we're having, to talk about safety, because if there's no safety that's how people get retraumatized. The situations we're giving, the hypothetical racist in the room, the actual experience I lived with a homophobe basically. Those situations could have been traumatizing, and retraumatized if there's already a lot of trauma and we're in trauma response.

So how do we establish safety so as to be able to take a different route, and to be able to stay in connection despite the toxicity without retraumatizing, and without creating more work to be done later down the line?

[00:30:35] Ty Powers

That's very difficult, but this is our task as humanity, is to be able to do that, to be able to, because first of all, danger is largely in the modern world a matter of perception, not a matter of fact.

I think we've actually moved too far in the direction of not wanting to offend anyone. We're walking on eggshells around how being offended could actually be something empowering. Okay, so why is that offending? Back to all that, just going back inside, so why is that touching me so much? Why am I so upset with that? And so I think there needs to be more possibility for people to say offensive things, and us to be curious about it. So that's the idea of freedom of speech. That's a tough topic right there.

And then once we allow ourselves to recognize all the ways that we can be offended, that's our work. That's our work and from there... So again this is analogous to how IFS, Internal Family Systems, works, is we are looking around at all of our various parts inside, and seeing whether or not those parts feel like part of the whole. And very often parts don't.

Certain parts feel what's called exiled. It's like, I don't like you, you're not a good part, you're always disruptive when you come up, so I'm going to keep you in the closet, I'm going to exile you, I don't want to hear what you have to say. And that seems like an appropriate strategy for a very disruptive part, but what those parts just tend to do is just get stronger. It's like, I'm going to figure out a way to get through to you in a very disruptive way.

Being able to look inside and tolerate those offensive parts is one of the first strategies to being able to tolerate that in others. Once we're able to see our foibles, our misconceptions, our contradictions, then it's just... Compassion naturally arises, once we're able to do that for ourselves. We see that in another person it's not so offensive, it's like, wow, I get that, I've been there, or I know that right now. All right, and I understand there's a reason for that to be there. Something happened that you feel that that's the necessary stance to take right now.

Okay. Just like some of my parts, okay, all right. Now I've got something to work with. Now I've got some compassion, which is, all right, I'm curious about this now, maybe the person wants to be helped, maybe they don't want to be helped. But now I've got some openness to where the possibilities might be able to go. Can we do that? Can we do that for ourselves?

We have to do the work. That's the first piece of business, we have to do the work for ourselves, that we know what our triggers are, and to be able to work with those in a satisfying way. A way in which we start to turn the temperature down, to use that term again, around how that actually occurs. What are we believing? What are we saying to ourselves about this? What's the fear in letting this in? What might happen? And that's such a great question to start, because once the question starts in that way, then now we're in curiosity mode, now we're not in fight or flight mode.

Jai Bristow

Wonderful. I think that's so important, that ability to do the work on ourselves first. To embrace, and welcome, and befriend all our parts, and recognize which parts of ourself do we reject or exile, as you said, because often that will mirror the beliefs, or the people that we also reject and exile in life.

[00:34:41]

I'm curious Ty, you talked about, or most of this conversation has been about how to respond, rather than react, when confronted with someone that we consider toxic, by the definition of having very rigid views, indirect counter, indirect opposition to ours, for example. How do we recognize if we're the one that's toxic? By that definition, if we're the one. How can we be sure that we're not the ones contributing to the toxicity?

Ty Powers

Funnily I would say, we're always part of it. And what I mean by that is, giving the example of the racist who has a particular view that's immovable, that's toxic, and that's maybe something we're not going to be able to be curious about, or move the conversation forward, but then it becomes the same question internally. I've got toxicity around my response to this within me. How do I work with that?

So that's what I'm saying, there's always our toxicity somewhere in there for us to work with. We might end up as a result of what we find deciding to walk away. But first and foremost, the boomerang is always, so what's happening here? What's happening here?

I don't mean, to be really clear here, blaming or shaming the victim, don't mean it in that way at all. And people who have a tendency to do that, also need to work really hard with a compassionate other. In order to know how that occurs for them, so that they can overcome that tendency. But outside of that, really to look in and say, what's mine here? And how can I be of service to this situation? Of ultimate service to the situation.

Which is, what I think is our essence as human beings, which is love, which is joy, which is compassion, which is really being empathetic and sympathetic to others, really caring for others.

Again, with the exception of certain mind states that are maybe chemically toxic, like a psychopath or a sociopath. I think that the vast majority of people I know, have run into, have worked with, are deeply good people, somewhere there, the vast majority.

Dick Schwartz, the founder of IFS, says, he's worked with people who are truly murderers, rapists, and pedophiles. And he said, I could always find something inside that person that I recognized was their essence, and it was love. It wasn't the behavior.

Again, that's my experience in the world and other people have other experiences. But I lean into, to use that overused term, I lean into that as a perspective to meet people with, and try to go from there.

Jai Bristow

I think that's really beautiful because love, compassion, some of these qualities you've named are really needed for trauma healing. And they're really needed towards ourselves to heal and accept all the different parts of ourselves. But they're also needed towards the people that we have a tendency to exile, to cancel. These days, cancel culture, anyone puts one toe out of line and shows one part of themselves that isn't perfect, and isn't exactly in line with our beliefs, let's literally delete this person from existence, from society, from their status, who they are. I love what you're

saying about the essence often is love and that can get distorted, very distorted. You're not saying that it's okay and go hug pedophiles.

[00:38:46] Ty Powers

That's right. That's absolutely right. Thank you for being sure to mention that, because that is in no way what I'm saying. People do need to be locked up, away from society until they get better, if they can get better. For sure.

That brings me to our last point, which is also one that I want to make sure it's not misunderstood, which is forgiveness. The misunderstanding that there could be there, is the fact that forgiveness is a process, and that we don't want to go around blanketly forgiving someone for their transgressions.

We really do need to work our way through that, how they've hurt us, explain that to them, or if that's not explainable to them, just work with that within ourselves, until we come to some sense of compassion around ourselves. With how we're feeling with what happened, and then begin the process of forgiving.

Responding directly to this idea that people are being canceled for the slightest things these days and important things, to be sure. There really needs to be more room in the human psyche, in the greater collective human psyche, for forgiveness. To be able to look at another human being and go, okay, they messed up, and they messed up badly, and let's just see, let's see if there's a possibility beyond punishment for reconciliation.

Offer them a way back, offer them back in. Let's not do what we know we can do to ourselves, let's not exile parts of ourselves because it's unlikable, it's done something wrong, it's done something bad, it's been stupid. Let's try and get our arms around that and go, okay, tell me more, I'll sit here with you.

Jai Bristow

And when would you say it's appropriate to forgive? Because like we said just before, it's not about necessarily embracing everyone who's toxic, and has harmful views, and is actively trying to hurt people and harm people. So when is forgiveness appropriate?

Ty Powers

I can't say I know the answer to that. I think it's different for everyone. I think the people that Harvey Weinstein harmed. I think they could begin to forgive, maybe on the traditional level, if he admitted, and really apologized, and cried and just said, oh, my God, just really threw himself on the floor around this issue, instead of fighting it, instead of denying it.

I'm saying at that point, there would just be the beginning, perhaps, of forgiveness. But what I want to make explicit here, too, is that forgiveness is something for one's own heart mind, because if you haven't forgiven, you're the one that's suffering from that. So as a gift to oneself. Again, not to do it too fast, not to override the feelings of anger, and frustration, and retaliation, and punishment that you want to see heaped on the person. But once you really start to deal with those, you really begin to recognize how much not being able to forgive is harmful to oneself. So just as a matter of

self-love, okay, let me see if I can begin to get there now, let me see how that might happen, how that might work for me.

[00:42:18] Jaï Bristow

I'm almost hearing two definitions of forgiveness in what you're saying. There's the forgiveness in the sense of letting go of the hatred, and the anger, and the rejection, and the exiling of someone in our own psyches. And doing that because there's this famous idea of, not forgiving is like... What was it? Is drinking the poison to punish the other person, or something like that. Or holding on to the... Or not taking the antidote to the poison in order to punish the other one. I can't remember exactly.

I am hearing that there is this idea that you can forgive for your own well being, as part of your own healing journey. And at the same time, to not bypass, to not feel the need to rush into the forgiving process.

I'm someone who grew up with Buddhist meditation teachers as parents, and so had this idea of forgiveness as like, this is what you do to be enlightened, basically. And actually, it can be dangerous to rush too far. You need to feel all the feelings on the way to being able to feel that forgiveness.

And then I also hear this definition of forgiveness almost like extending an olive branch to people when they've done the work themselves, and have taken responsibility, and have repented, or really taken responsibility and offered sincere apology, that you can offer an olive branch without necessarily completely embracing them. Again, I think there's often this idea, like, forgiving is not the same as forgetting.

Ty Powers

That's exactly right. You may forgive, and you may want to make sure, I would think all those women, many of those women, if not all of those women, with Harvey Weinstein, would never want to see him again, even in forgiving him.

Forgiving is not to forget, and maybe to parse that there is a relative forgiving, which is forgiving people you think deserve to be forgiven, and then there's absolute forgiveness, which is doing that, whether you think they deserve it or not. That's a very exalted state of being. That's an enlightened heart there to be able to do that. And we know people that do that or can do that, Nelson Mandela, maybe being on the world stage, a person like that. So there are people that can just say, okay, all right, here we go, that was very wrong, that destroyed a nation, that destroyed a people, that whatever, it was and...

Jaï Bristow

Wonderful. There's a lot more that I'd like to go into and ask you, but I'm very aware of time. So, Ty, how can people find out more about you and your work?

Ty Powers

Oh, they could just go to sarahandtypowers.com.

[00:45:03] Jaï Bristow

Wonderful. Thank you so much for your time today, this has been a really important conversation. I think if people are listening and feel there was a lot of information and a lot of nuance, I recommend people to listen again, or maybe reach out and connect with you, and do some of this IFS work, because it sounds like it's very healing, not just for your own different parts of yourself, but also in relation to others. Thank you so much.

Ty Powers

You're welcome.