



The 3 core emotional needs

Guest: Alex Howard

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[00:00:07] Alex Howard

Hi, I'm Alex Howard and welcome to this session. Also, welcome to the Trauma Super Conference. I find myself sat here with a couple of hats on, I haven't got any props, but I find myself here both as a host of the Trauma Super Conference, but also as a practitioner and a teacher.

And in this session, I'm really excited to share some really important principles that are not just important in terms of supporting our own healing journeys, but I think also giving some wider context to some of the ideas and some of what I know is being shared as part of some of the interviews as part of this conference.

In this session, we're going to be talking about your 3 core emotional needs. Having these needs met is critical to our healthy development as children and establishing the capacities and the skills and tools we often need to navigate the world as adults.

As has been said in many interviews as part of the conference, trauma is not what happens to us, trauma is what happens inside of us in response to what happens to us. What happens inside of us is in a big part shaped by whether these 3 core emotional needs were met when we were children.

We'll be talking about what those needs are and why they're so important. We'll be going through a checklist to help you discover more about whether these emotional needs were met in your childhood. We'll then explore some of the coping strategies, some of the ways that we learn to navigate the world when these needs have not been met. And often it's these coping strategies that cause a lot of the suffering, a lot of the difficulties we experience in our lives.

We'll then talk about if you didn't get these emotional needs met, how can you learn to meet them as an adult? How can you develop these capacities? How can you, in a sense, cultivate the qualities that you need to do the healing, to do the repair work? Just because we didn't get what we needed as a child, it doesn't mean we can't give it to ourselves as an adult. As a child we're entirely dependent upon those around us. As an adult we're able to learn to be there for ourselves. And we'll talk about how you can learn to do that.

Just to give you a little bit of background on me, how do I get to be sitting in this chair and talking about these ideas? Well, firstly, in my mid teens I ended up suffering from a debilitating severe chronic illness, otherwise known as ME or chronic fatigue syndrome in my case. Then I spent 2 years, initially, in a very desperate place with completely debilitating symptoms of fatigue, of muscle pains,

of headaches, despite being completely exhausted all of the time, not being able to sleep, not being able to get the quality of rest that I needed.

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After a couple of years of this, I really reached a point of true desperation. It's not that I wanted to kill myself, I just didn't want my life to continue the way that it was. I couldn't see beyond the hell that I was living in at this point. I had a conversation which really fundamentally changed the direction of my life. This conversation really helped me realize that if I wanted the circumstances of my life to be different, then I was going to have to be the one to change them. I spent the next 5 years on a, at times enormously challenging, but ultimately life transforming healing journey. I saw dozens of different practitioners, I spent my entire student loan on supplements and different health protocols. I practiced thousands of hours of meditation and yoga. There wasn't one answer. There were many different pieces of the jigsaw. In fact, my most recent book was called *Decode Your Fatigue*, because I see it like a puzzle. We have to find the different pieces to the jigsaw.

But ultimately I recovered, and I set up the organization that I've been leading now for nearly 18 years, the Optimum Health Clinic. It's now one of the world's leading integrative medicine clinics. We have a team of 25 dedicated full time practitioners. We have patients in over 50 countries around the world who published research in the *British Medical Journal Open Psychology and Health* and many different places. And that has been the most extraordinary laboratory of learning, of developing protocols, working a lot with people with a whole range of different experiences of trauma. From major PTSD style trauma to those much more subtle developmental traumas that really we all experience in different points.

Along the way with the Optimum Health Clinic, I ended up co-creating and founding a methodology called Therapeutic Coaching and we've been training practitioners in this approach now for 15 years. Therapeutic Coaching really brings the best of more traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, looking at the impacts of the past and our relationship to ourselves and our emotions. With more solution based coaching approaches where we can really learn to create accountability and drive change in our lives. I like having challenges along the way. I found myself, about 7 years ago, setting up an online learning platform, Conscious Life. We work with many of the world's leading teachers, and it's actually through Conscious Life that we're producing this conference.

One final thing I'll say about my experience and my various initiatives over the years is, 2 and a half years ago I launched the first RESET program. This is an in-depth 12 week coaching program with me that we've now had several thousand people go through, where it's a really carefully structured program that helps us learn how to reset and calm our nervous system. One of the biggest impacts of trauma is we learn to go into our mind as a way to try and find a way to have safety. The nervous system learns to ramp up and we become conditioned and normalized to being in that state. That has an enormous impact on our health, our relationships, our emotions, our mood. So the RESET Program is really about learning to calm and to reset our nervous system.

So I sit here having come from different perspectives from being on my own journey, having worked as a practitioner for many years, having supervised many practitioners, having trained many practitioners, but also the great gift, one of the great gifts of my life of interviewing all the wonderful people that you get to hear from as part of this conference and previous conferences that we have produced.

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So let's come into these 3 core emotional needs. We'll start off by talking about what they are. We'll then talk about why they're so important. And we'll start to explore, how do you know if these emotional needs were met for you in your life?

So the first one is the need for safety. As children, we need to feel that the world is a safe place and that we are safe in it. What helps us feel safe is having predictability in our environment, having consistent caregivers, having physical holding that tells us that we're safe. The people around us being able to regulate their own nervous systems so when we merge, we merge with a calm holding space. That sense of safety also comes from the absence of any sort of violence or sexual violence or manipulation or things that are unhealthily confusing as children. Being confused can be helpful sometimes because we learn, but I mean unhealthy confusion, like we're trying to make sense of things.

And so when we don't have that sense of safety, we fundamentally learn the world is not a safe place and that we're not safe in the world. If I reflect on some of my own childhood, around the time that I was being born, my mother divorced my father on the grounds of mental cruelty. I don't know all the details of what happened. I do know that my father then disappeared and we never saw him again. It was only about 8 years ago that I finally decided to go and track him down. And that's a whole other story for another day.

But my mother was in great distress. She feared for her own safety. She feared for the fact she was going to be raising two children on her own without financial support. And so both in utero and after being born, I was in an environment where I was merging with someone that was very highly stressed. And it took me many years to figure out, why was that? For many years in my life, the default in my nervous system of not feeling safe because there wasn't that physical need met of safety as a child.

The second of these emotional needs is love. This is the experience of feeling adored by our parents, the people around us. Feeling special, feeling loved, having the sense that we're the most important thing in the world, at least at certain times, of the people around us. I don't mean in a way that a child is emotionally spoiled where they always get what they want, but at least some of the time there's this sense that we're special enough that our parents want to be with us, they love us, they love being with us.

I also want to make an important distinction here. The distinction between knowing that we're loved and feeling that we're loved. Another way to make this distinction is we can have parents that love us, but they aren't skillful in the ways they demonstrate that love. The majority of us had parents that loved us. That wasn't the problem. The problem is often their inability to express their love, or the confusing, mixed ways that we might have experienced love. That love may have been expressed in conditional ways, that if you do this, then you get love, if you don't do this, love is withdrawn. Or love comes in a way which is smothering and overwhelming and we can't have our know and our boundary and our edge with it.

So if we don't get the need of love met, again, that has a big impact on what happens inside of us. We'll come to this more in a bit, but often we then develop coping strategies because, by the way, these are needs, not wants. This is not like having had a really good meal and wanting a bit of extra pudding. This is like having not been fed for days and been desperately craving and starving of something. So if we don't feel loved, we've got to do things to get love.

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And again to map this a little bit to some of my own childhood. I often share stories from my own life because, A, I don't have to worry about anybody else in terms of permission, but also it's the stories that for me are the most alive sometimes in terms of illustrating these points. I knew that I was loved as a child. Particularly, actually, I had a grandmother who was very giving in terms of time and her resources because my mum was working three jobs a lot of the time. Two jobs most of the time and three jobs some of the time.

The problem was the love from my grandmother was very conditional. My grandmother was very much about, 'you need to be the top of the class', and if I came second, 'who was top?'. It was a great shame, 'who was top and why were you second?'. If I got one wrong in a test of 100 questions, the focus was on the one that I got wrong and how I was going to get it right next time, not the 99 questions I got right. And so what I learned was, you're loved for what you do, not for who you are.

So these emotional needs can be subtle and can be complicated in as much, as I say, it's not the knowing, because I knew that I was loved, but a lot of the time I didn't feel loved. And a lot of the time I felt that the love was conditional based upon being a certain way.

The third emotional need is the need for boundaries. This is one that I think is talked about less in psycho emotional circles. Often people may be familiar with the need for safety, the need for love, but we also have the need for boundaries, the need for edges, the need for a parent to love us enough to say no.

As children, we think we don't want boundaries. Think of it like puppies. Puppies think they just want to be able to do everything, but actually, as children, and I'm assuming the same is the case of my dogs, it's boundaries that tell us that we're safe, that they give us those edges. And if we have a big, wide open space, there can be a sense that there's no holding. The boundary says, I love you enough to hold a consistent boundary.

Boundaries done well are also responsive. They're not crushing. Sometimes the boundary needs to be really rigid, but often there needs to be a little bit of sensitivity and give that is responsive, that makes us feel that our needs are not just being crushed and swallowed, they're being responded to, but also that person loves us enough to show up.

A classic example, a child is not eating their main course. And as a parent, you're frustrated because you know that they need to get the vegetables and the nutrients. And you say, 'if you don't finish your plate, you're not getting pudding'. Sounds entirely reasonable. Trust me, I've said that probably many times. The thing is, if the child doesn't eat the main course and they don't get pudding, you're probably going to get a tantrum, particularly if they don't know that you're consistent with boundaries.

In the short-term, when it comes to parenting, holding boundaries is often a lot more work than not. And what often happens is parents get, often because they're under-resourced, they're tired, they're overwhelmed, they threaten things and don't follow through so we don't learn that solid, consistent holding boundary.

I remember a few weeks ago one of our daughters was supposed to be having a sleepover with her best friend. She's literally joined at the hip to this best friend. They've been best friends since nursery. It's very, very sweet. And we got a phone call from the best friend's mum saying, I'm really sorry, but I've had to cancel the sleepover. I said to our daughter that if certain behaviors didn't change this

week, I would cancel the sleepover. They didn't change. And I need to follow through. So I'm really sorry that your daughter is going to be let down. And both my wife and I were like, we just want to say thank you for holding that boundary. As much as our daughter is going to be disappointed, it shows her that we're not the only people that work to follow through with boundaries.

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Also with boundaries, they give us that sense of inner strength. It's like more typically, and of course, there's all kinds of variations of this, but certainly typically in history, it's the more feminine quality of love, and 'I adore you, and you're perfect as you are'. And it's more typically the masculine energy that said, 'you've got this. Go for it. Get out there. Do what you want to do', that gives us that encouragement.

Having not had a father figure as a child, one of the challenges was when it came to rough and tumble with other boys, when it came to play fighting or even fighting, when it came to sports, I didn't have this sense that I could do it because I was used to smothering love or my grandmother's love of very conditional love. But I didn't have this sense of confidence in my body, this confidence that I could stand up for myself, that I could say no, that it was okay for me to have my boundaries. So the result was I got bullied terribly as a child. I was reputationally the most bullied child in school because I didn't know how to have those boundaries.

Now we can see the impact of not having these boundaries as children. But the impact, then, is when we don't learn about how to feel safe. We don't learn that we're lovable as we are, and we don't learn to have those boundaries and that self discipline, which is part of what develops from that. It shapes how we develop through our lives.

If these needs are met, not perfectly, but enough that we had a sense of feeling safe, a sense of love, a sense of boundaries, we can handle most of what life throws at us. The problem is when those needs are not met, we then go through a difficult experience. We go through what typically might be called a trauma. It might be a big major PTSD big T trauma. It might be a more subtle, small T trauma, like we go through a divorce or we go through financial hardship or we go through a bereavement. But if we don't have these core emotional needs met, those events in our life tend to impact us much more severely.

If we don't have a sense of feeling safe and then we get into financial difficulty, it's much more traumatizing than this sense of, my safety is not dependent upon how much debt or how much money I might have. We don't have this sense of feeling loved, and then we go through a breakup, maybe in our teenage years we're in a loving relationship, and then it goes wrong for whatever reason, but we're destroyed, we're devastated because our sense of lovability was tied to the love of this person. Now this person's gone, we're decimated. Or there's something in our life that requires us to be really boundaried with ourselves, let alone with other people. That we need to commit to something. Maybe we're studying for our exams as a teenager and we just don't have that sense of sitting down and committing, because as a child our boundaries were all over the place. Or when it comes to being an adult and saying, I want to go for this thing and I'm going to show up and I'm going to make that thing happen.

So if these needs are not met we learn certain things. We learn things like, the world is a scary place, I don't have what it takes. Or we learn that I'm not lovable. Or maybe we learn that when I show my feelings, I get hurt. Maybe there was a thing around as a child that every time we expressed our

feelings we got rejected and so we learned that we weren't lovable if we show how we feel. Or when I show my feelings, other people get hurt.

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Because by the way, these 3 core emotional needs don't just affect our relationship with the world, they also affect our relationship with ourselves. They affect our relationships with the people that we love, with the intimate others in our lives. So we learn all of these things of the experiences that we have in life, if we don't have these 3 core emotional needs met inside of us.

So I want now to explore a little bit of each of these needs and how much they were or weren't meant for you in your own childhood.

So the first is this need for safety. Did you feel physically safe as a child? Did you feel emotionally safe as a child? It might be that you knew that you were physically safe, but emotionally your sense of boundaries and contact was not feeling safe. It might be you didn't even feel physically safe, that there was some sort of danger or threat in your environment.

Did you feel physically held and comforted as a child? If you were distressed or if you were upset in some way, was there a sense of being physically, not just being told you were okay, but age appropriately, when you were particularly younger, were you scooped up and held? And was the person holding you regulating their system? Were they generally in a calm state that allowed your nervous system to feel that sense of co-regulation? That sense of safety?

Did your nervous system learn to self regulate? Do you notice even now in your life that if something gets you wired up, are you able to calm by yourself or are you dependent upon substances or other people or something else to allow your system to regulate and calm? Does the world feel like a safe place to you now? Do you have this sense of foreboding or trepidation or that people can't be trusted? And of course, some people can't be trusted, but if that becomes a global belief that our default is, people can't be trusted, there's likely some kind of projection or object relation that's playing out there.

When you feel overwhelmed now, how do you respond? Does it feel okay to be overwhelmed and there's not overwhelm about overwhelm? Or if you get overwhelmed, does it feel like the end of the world and you'll never be able to get out of feeling that place?

So reflect a bit on these questions. You might want to pause the video and pause so you can see the slide and just take a little bit of time to work through these.

And then I have a question for you. On a scale of 0 to 10, how safe did you feel as a child? 10, you felt totally safe, not just that you knew you were safe but you felt a sense of safety in your body. Or 0, there was no sense of safety, that you were always on edge, and maybe even now in your life, unless you've worked to change it, you may well find yourself on edge a lot as well.

On a scale of 0 to 10, how safe do you feel in your life now? Do you feel like your system is basically in a calm, healing state most of the time? Or have you defaulted to being in a state of anxiety? It's like we can normalize, we have a homeostatic balance just like our blood sugar or blood temperature or whatever has a homeostatic balance, the same is true of our nervous system. Where's your nervous system's natural home? When you're not particularly busy or doing stuff? When you settle, what's the point that you settle to?

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Again on a scale of 0 to 10, 10 being completely safe, calm, relaxed. 0 being like, absolutely on edge. Where does your system feel now, at this point in your life? Again, you might want to pause the video and take a little bit of time to reflect and to write down your answers.

The next need we're going to explore is the need for love and the need for that sense of holding. Did you feel loved as a child? Remember what I said a bit earlier, I'm not asking, did you know you were loved? Or when you reflect, did your parents love you? But did you feel that sense of being loved? Did you feel special and adored in the eyes of your parents or your primary caregivers? That you are special enough that they wanted to be with you, they were excited to see you, that they were interested in you and in your world? Were you hugged, were you physically comforted as a child? And I mean in an age appropriate way.

Was there a sense of that hugging and loving being nurturing and loving or did it feel too much? Did it feel smothering? Or did it feel insubstantial, like going through the motions of putting arms around you without really feeling that sense of being in a warm embrace, tightly held that feels good? Did you feel your parents were interested in you and wanted to understand your inner world? Like you got back from school and they asked about your day and they actually listened. They really wanted to know what you'd experienced and what had happened for you.

Do you feel gentle and loving towards yourself now? Or is your relationship with yourself inappropriately critical and harsh and judgmental and you're always pushing yourself around? And when you have a need come up, you ignore it because there's that kind of punitive relationship with yourself? Are you able to let in love from other people? When someone does something loving towards you do you let yourself feel it? Can you feel the kindness and the gesture? Or do you shut down? Or do you push people away? What do you do? How do you respond when someone acts in a loving way?

Or have you set your life up that everyone's kept too far away, that you don't let anyone get close enough? Or that you're always needing to do things to win love that you find yourself having to look a certain way or be a certain way, and only then can you have a chance of feeling loved by other people?

Again, you might want to pause the video. I'm going to move through these with a little bit of pace. You might want to take some time with each of these questions, just to sit and reflect.

On a scale of 0 to 10, how loved did you feel as a child? 10 being you didn't just know you were loved, you felt it in your body, and even now when you think about it, there's a warmth of how you feel about it. Also now, how loved do you feel in your life now? That's probably a combination of how lovingly are you to yourself? How much love for you is there in the people around you in the wider world? And not love that you have to be a certain way to get, but that more unconditional love for who you are.

Again, you might want to pause, take a little bit of time to reflect on that.

We're going to come now to the need for boundaries. Were you given healthy boundaries as a child? Were you given boundaries where you knew where the edges were, and it's like they were solid and they were firm and you felt safe with them, but also there was a bit of give sometimes? Sometimes you'd be a little bit cheeky as a child and you'd push the edge and you didn't live in fear of being crushed as a result of that.

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Were your parents or primary caregivers consistent and measured in holding those boundaries? Not that it was like a massive explosion and reaction to something, but they would think about it and they would be firm when they needed to, softer when it was appropriate. Simple example being the boundary of bedtime at 8pm. Was it always rigidly, you had to be in bed and you weren't welcome downstairs after a certain point? Or was it that bedtime is 8pm and parents get a bit shirty if it gets too much past that, but weekends it's a bit late and holidays it goes out the window. Like there was a sense of spaciousness and appropriateness around it.

Were you given a sense of, 'you could do this' as a child? That you were encouraged to believe in yourself. How about now in your life, are you able to be disciplined and to follow through with the things that matter to you in your life? Can you commit to something and show up to something that's important? I don't mean like just driving yourself into the ground, but in your heart going, I want to do this thing. This thing is hard. I know it's going to take commitment, but you know that when it comes down to it you've got the boundaries with yourself to show up, to make that thing happen.

Do you have a sense of your own strength, your own capacity to fight for what matters to you? Again, I don't mean it in an aggressive, unhealthy way, but you're also not afraid of your own power. As before, you might want to pause a little bit and go through these questions and answer these questions a little bit, one at a time.

On a scale of 0 to 10, how healthy did your boundaries feel as a child? 10 being, they were solid, but they were holding and you felt good with it and you instilled a sense of your own capacity. 0 being, they were completely crushing or there just weren't any.

On a scale of 0 to 10 now in your life, how healthy are your boundaries with yourself? Can you be disciplined? Can you show up? Can you also say no? So there's an internal boundary, how you show up to yourself. And there's an external boundary, your ability to say no to other people. Sometimes to say yes to ourselves we have to say no to others. So on a scale of 0 to 10, what is your capacity to do that? Again, you might want to pause the video, take a little bit of time to reflect upon that.

Now, whatever you answered for those questions, this is not about going, I didn't get these things met therefore the rest of my life is going to be shaped by that. It's about getting the information to recognize what did and didn't happen in the ways ideally it would have done. And then how do we learn to change this in our lives now?

The challenge is when we don't work with this consciously, we develop coping strategies. These are needs, not wants. We can't go through the world not feeling loved. We can't go through the world not feeling safe or not having boundaries. We try to compensate. So how do you compensate for these needs not being met as a child in your life? Now that's what we're going to explore a bit together.

So let's look at safety coping strategies. Here are some examples. You feel unsafe. The world feels like an unsafe place. How do you compensate? You avoid going outside your comfort zone. You don't put yourself in situations that magnify that sense of not feeling safe.

Another example, you feel unsafe so you attempt to control other people and the environment around you. Like, I don't feel safe here but if I'm in control of everyone and everything that's going on. Then I can try and get that feeling of safety. Or you feel unsafe so you self medicate. You use drugs, alcohol, sex, there's many different ways we can do it, but ways to try and change the way we feel.

Ways to try and calm what's happening in our nervous system. It might be that the thing that we find most calms our system is having half a bottle of wine every evening. The problem is not having a glass or two of wine, the problem is that it's the only strategy, it's the only way we know to feel calm, and that's why it becomes unhealthy and becomes a problem.

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Let's look at some of the love coping strategies. We feel unloved so we obsess over our appearance to try and constantly have the perfect body and the perfect clothes and the perfect haircut, whatever it may be, to try and be loved. If I can become this idealized self, this person that I dream of being, if I become that person, then I'll be loved. But the further I am from that person, the more unlovable I feel.

Another strategy might be, we feel unloved so we reject ourselves before others get a chance. We constantly put ourselves down and we criticize ourselves, and maybe we push away people that would have been loving towards us. We reject them, we reject us, so we don't have to feel that feeling of being unloved. Or the feeling of the loss of that love.

Another example might be we feel unlovable so we choose cruel partners because that's what we deserve. And also, what's called our object relation, the way that we've learned to relate to certain objects around us, is that we're unlovable. So in a strange way it feels safe and familiar to be with someone that's cruel and unkind to us. That's what we knew, that's, in a strange way, what feels safe to our nervous system because it's what's familiar.

Then when it comes to boundaries coping strategies, we might feel weak, we don't have the boundaries that we need so we over train our body to look strong. That if I have big muscles and if I'm some big, imposing presence, then I'll look strong and then I'll feel okay in the world.

Or we have a sense of feeling weak and we have sloppy self discipline. We fail to achieve the things we care about, which then just perpetuates this cycle that we don't have what it takes and we're not someone that's able to follow through. Or we feel weak and we don't have that sense of boundaries, we become cruel to other people to try and feel stronger.

There's obviously many more examples of these different coping strategies that we can use, but here's the thing, as adults, we are no longer dependent upon other people. We can learn to cultivate these different qualities, resources inside of us, but when we use these coping strategies, we tend to make it worse, not better.

So much of the suffering we experience in our lives is not what happens to us, it's what we do in response to what happens to us. It's all these strategies that we develop around, not putting ourselves in scary situations, having to look a certain way, not being able to follow through, it's those coping strategies that perpetuate the suffering that we experience.

So I'm curious, what are your coping strategies? If you look back on those 3 core emotional needs for safety, for love and for boundaries, if you look back at your scores to those questions, how have you compensated? How in your life have you dealt with those needs not being met? Have those coping strategies made things better or made things worse?

I want to make this point again. As adults we are no longer dependent upon others. As children we need our parents to help us feel safe. We need our parents to give us that sense that we're lovable.

We need our parents or primary caregivers to give us those boundaries. But as adults, rather than getting dependent and using these coping strategies that make things worse, we can learn to meet those emotional needs. We can go back and go, hang on a second. I don't feel safe in the world. I'm doing all this stuff. But actually, what I need to do is deal with that at the core.

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So let's explore briefly, what we can do to meet these needs. Rather than using coping strategies, we need to deal with the core issue. If we deal with the core issue, we don't need the coping strategies. We're so much more free to just be ourselves in our lives, to live our life of our greatest potential, our greatest joy in the world.

So cultivating safety, there's lots that I can say about this, but here's the most important thing. We have to learn to regulate our nervous system. This is really the focus of my 12 week online coaching program, the RESET Program. We have to learn the strategies to calm those triggers, those trauma responses, to learn to find that feeling of safety inside of us.

Here's the thing, you can't think your way to a feeling of safety. In fact, the more you try to think your way to a feeling of safety, what actually happens is you go more and more into your mind, you feel more and more unsafe, you think even more and you get further away from the feeling that's there in your body. Learning to calm, learning to reset, to regulate our nervous system, will help us develop that feeling of safety. We then don't need those coping strategies.

Cultivating love, we have to work on our relationship with ourselves. Looking at how you meet yourself emotionally, moment to moment. If you have a feeling of sadness come up, what do you do? Do you become curious and interested and compassionate and giving it space, which is allowing yourself to give yourself that act of self love? Or do you reject those emotions? Do you try and run, or do you avoid and distract yourself? You get a strategy to not feel how you feel. Learning how to work on your relationship with yourself is so important to meet that core need, remember it's not a want, that core need of love. We then don't become so fixated on how we look. We don't become so fixated on what everyone else thinks about us. We have an inherent sense of loveability. And instead of going to the world to try and meet that need, we meet the world from the place of that need already being met.

Cultivating boundaries, this is about developing your sense of discipline. This is about showing up to yourself. One of the things I say at the beginning of the RESET Program, and also my other online program, The Heart Program, is that if you go through this program, this also applies to this conference. If you decide that you're going to commit to really following the path of this conference, even if the information is useless and you learn nothing, which I would be horrified to hear and very surprised to hear, but even if that's the case, if you're someone that typically doesn't follow through, that doesn't show up to yourself, and you do, that in of itself is transformational. Because you've changed the pattern. You've developed a new way of being there for and with yourself.

It takes practice. Developing healthy boundaries is like a muscle. The more that you do it, the stronger it becomes. And it's really tuning into right now, why am I doing what I'm doing? Do I need to be disciplined with myself? Or actually, do I need to just let myself have a break? Sometimes the healthiest thing to do is to veg out on the sofa and eat some not particularly healthy food and watch a load of crap TV, because that's what you need to decompress and to relax and settle in yourself. But other times, the things you most need is to get off the sofa and go and do some exercise, whatever it may be.

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So understanding, this goes back to this point that as parents, boundaries are not rigid, boundaries are intelligent. There's thought that goes into, how firm does this boundary need to be? Why is this boundary here? So it's learning to intelligently develop and commit to those boundaries for yourself.

Learning to meet each of these emotional needs is a journey. The journey of developing that sense of safety, of learning to reset, to calm your nervous system. The journey of investing in self love, of being there for yourself, of loving yourself, of showing up to yourself. The journey of developing these boundaries, being able to be disciplined, to be clear, to be strong, to say no, to be able to follow through in your life.

What I hope from this presentation is that you've got a bit more clarity on where you need to work. It may be all of these emotional needs you need to work on. It may be one of them, it may be two of them. Hopefully you have some more awareness of the coping strategies. What do you do in response to those emotional needs not being met? And what do you ultimately need to do? And it may be all 3 of these. Calming and resetting your nervous system, working on your relationship with yourself and that journey of self love, and learning to develop and establish and put in place those boundaries.

So I have a little bit of homework for you to reflect upon, if you would like to. It's your action plan for cultivating your 3 needs. Which do you need to work on? It might be all 3, but let's pick one to start with. What's the one that feels the most important for you to work on balancing? What are some practical steps you can start with? Are they practical steps around cultivating that inner sense of safety? Are they practical steps around working on this relationship with yourself? Are they practical steps around developing these boundaries? And if you don't have a sense of what those steps might be, this conference is going to be the perfect place to build that insight and awareness. You're going to hear from dozens and dozens, over 70 experts talking about different tools and techniques and practices.

And my invitation to you is to really hold these core emotional needs in mind as you're listening to experts speak and you'll pick up all kinds of different pieces that you can learn to work with. And I always invite people to commit to some kind of action plan. This might be 10 to 15 minutes a day of working to develop these core emotional needs. So what might that action plan look like for you?

Thank you so much for watching this session. I really hope it's been helpful, and I so hope you enjoy the second Trauma Super Conference.

If you'd like to find out more about my work, you'll see my website below, alexhoward.com

We'll also be letting you know after the conference about my next RESET Program if you want to come on an in-depth 12 week coaching journey with me, learning how to calm and to reset your nervous system, it really does help give that sense of safety. But actually, also we're looking at, how do you work on that self love, that relationship with yourself? And ultimately, a big part of it is, how do you show up to yourself? I say in module one that it's not shelf help. It's not a program you buy to look nice on a shelf. It's self help. And we really talk about how do you develop those boundaries, that commitment to show up to yourself?

Thank you for watching. And as I say once again, I so hope you enjoy being part of this conference.