



Using your thoughts actions and beliefs for healing

Guest: Dr Elena Villanueva

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[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson

Welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Trauma Super Conference. Today I'm speaking with Elena Villanueva, an international speaker, health influencer and co-author of *The Longevity Code*.

Dr V teaches evidence based approaches for finding and treating the underlying conditions and causes of chronic illness and brain related conditions. Dr V's unique approach incorporates the merging of science and spirituality and the integration of the mind body spirit. Dr V is producer and host of the 5-part series *Mastering Trauma Masterclass*. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Yes. Thank you. Super excited to be here, Meagen.

Meagen Gibson

So I'd love it if we could start just by talking about how trauma makes us sick.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Yeah. That's a really great question. First of all, let's take a couple of steps back and let's talk about really what the definition of trauma is. Because across the board there are a couple of different variations of the definition of trauma. And when we can understand what trauma really is, then it can make it easier for us to understand how it changes the biology and the neurological systems of the body.

So trauma, when we're talking about definition, in the medical model, in the traditional medical model, they define trauma as the event itself. It was an event. Without going really deep, because we could talk about the definition of trauma for 30 minutes. So we're not going to do that. I'm just going to give you the overview. But what trauma really is, it's the body's response to an event, or rather how they perceived the event and the worry they developed around a particular heightened emotional experience or an event.

When we perceive an event as dangerous, threatening, scary, any of those, what people call "negative emotions", which really are not negative. And if we have time, we can talk about that later, but for easy purposes we're going to call them the negative emotions, the scary ones. When we are

in an event, and we then perceive the event as something scary, shameful, frightening, and dangerous, that creates alarm systems to go off in our body. These alarm systems literally will create a very quick rewiring of the neurological system. It's designed that way for survival. It's an amazing adaptation that we have as humans. But when that happens, it changes our biology. It changes our chemistry and our body so that we can survive.

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In other words, the digestion system will shut down, the blood pressure will go up, all of the stress hormones will start flooding through the body so that we can react very quickly and we can do what we need to do. And when you're in that type of environment, that stress response environment, and you do that chronically, repetitively, over and over and over, maybe even every day, like a really great example would be people that watch the news every single day.

And I teach about this in our Trauma Masterclass. I teach about the rewiring of the brain and how this happens right under our noses. When you're watching it every day, it's putting you into a state of fight or flight every day. In other words, you're perceiving the events of the day, because you're watching the news, the events of the day are telling you that everything around you is dangerous. And so your body changes, and it's doing it every day. So you're literally rewiring your neurology and you're strengthening those new neurological pathways with the repetition of the same type of news that you're hearing and seeing every single day.

And when that happens over a long period of time, that stress response is highly corrosive to the human body and highly corrosive to the brain. So think of it like battery acid being very corrosive. When this happens to the human body, my camera is jumping up here, when this happens to the human body, it creates these long-term negative effects on the body that lead to chronic hypertension, that lead to chronic GI and immune issues. That leads to pretty much every chronic disease under the sun that we can think of that most people are suffering from. Heart disease, cancers, autoimmune diseases, mental health diseases, neurodegenerative diseases.

And so that's why the long-term effects of trauma, which are stored in every cell and tissue, and even in your DNA, that's why the long-term effects of that can make us so sick. And the good news is that we can reverse it. It's just a little bit of a process.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And you said so much, I'm trying to anchor into a point where I want to follow back up on. But you touched on DNA. So I definitely want to talk about how trauma can impact our DNA, the expression of our DNA in this lifetime, the DNA that comes after us, before us. So I'd love it if you could unpack that just a little bit.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Yes. Well, this is just another part of the beautiful protective mechanisms in the human body that have helped us to evolve and survive over the millennia for thousands and thousands of years. And so when our bodies undergo a repetitive stress response, that trauma gets stored in the body, the perception of having to protect ourselves. That's what the trauma is, it's not the event itself, remember it's our perception of it. Our perception changes the neurology, changes the biology. And in order for the human body to survive so that we can have the next generation go beyond us, our genetics change. Our genetic expression changes as well.

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So not only does the expression of how our genes work for us or against us change during our lifetime, the actual genes themselves change. And that's just a process of evolution. And we're all familiar with evolution. That's why alligators are still here. They've been around since dinosaur times. That's why humans have been able to survive as long as we have. However, what we're seeing is that instead of the process of evolution, with DNA changes that we've seen happen in the past happen the way that they're happening, since the 1960s we've started evolving in a very different way where it's not making us more resilient. It's making us sicker.

So our bodies are evolving faster than they did in the past because of the physical traumas and the emotional traumas. Physical traumas being all of the chemical toxins that are in our environment. That's just one very quick example that we are living with. Our bodies have to adapt and change so that they can survive, so that we can still be fertile and be able to have children, and then they can make it into the next generation. It's been happening faster since the 1960s.

And now, thank goodness, there's a really big awareness around trauma, both physical and emotional types of traumas. And we're finally circling back into an age where we are going to be able to teach one another emotional intelligence, teach one another what tools are available so that we can move through those traumas. Because if we don't do this, our future generations, they're already being greatly impacted. And this could be a serious concern moving into the future if we don't start addressing the trauma now, whether it's physical or emotional.

Meagen Gibson

One of the things I was thinking about as you were speaking is that, when you start to understand the impact of trauma and how much of your human experience just being alive can be interpreted by your person as trauma, that you can almost feel a little bit hopeless. You're like, well, heck, there's so much happening that's out of my control. What is in my control?

And so you talked about some of these processes and these tools and techniques. So what is in our control to affect the impact of trauma on our interior lives in our bodies?

Dr Elena Villanueva

How we choose to perceive an event is under our control. And as we start moving away from the Newtonian model of how we see us and the world around us and move into more of the quantum model, which is happening, this is a part of the evolution of the planet, we will, as a collective, become much more aware that our perception of things, how we choose to perceive things, and how we choose to navigate our emotions, and how we choose to learn to be more aware of our thoughts, as we learn that we ultimately have the control over those things.

And as we learn that those things actually create our realities it's going to be life transforming for this entire planet. Because we create our reality. We literally create our reality and people who are in their trauma and people who have been on that hamster wheel their entire life, I was on it once, where all the same crap kept happening to me. Always the same things no matter how hard I worked or how much I sacrificed or suffered for the cause, all the same crap kept happening, and I kept thinking, I'm not sacrificing hard enough. I'm not praying hard enough. I'm not whatever. I'm not enough. I'm not enough. All this is happening to me, not for me.

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When I first started hearing of this concept I actually got a little bit upset because I was like, I'm not creating this reality for myself. This isn't my fault. I work hard. I have a good heart. I'm generous. I work harder than anybody else I know. All of these things. I was more in that victim state because that's what we've been taught. And it's a lie. It disempowered us as humans. And once I realized I was in the driver's seat and I had created all of that, and once I was in a place where I could empower myself and get the learnings from it, get the wisdom from it, and learn that I was in control, I was able to jump off that hamster wheel. My entire reality changed.

And in our programs we are showing people this very same concept and their realities are literally changing, their health, all the work that they've been doing for 15 years, trying every detox under the sun, every supplement, every medication, and they're worse than they were before. This type of work is where they're finally seeing the changes in their body and their bodies are finally healing. It's fascinating.

Meagen Gibson

Well, give me just a piece. Obviously, you don't have to disclose the whole program right now, but can you give me a piece of how people can make that shift in their perspective of things happening to them versus for them?

Dr Elena Villanueva

Well, a little background. When I first started doing this type of work with people, my passion was to work with people, and still is, with chronic chronic disease, mental health issues and neurodegenerative diseases. Why are those my passions? Because I actually had those issues once myself. And I feel a lot of compassion for the whole planet. We're seeing more of this happening than we've ever seen before. We've had a stark increase in the prevalence of every chronic disease under the sun since the 1960s, because previous to the 1960s, which was not a long time ago guys. I was born in 1970, so the 60s was not that long ago. You didn't see this stuff happening. It was like a one in a million for every single chronic disease that people are dying from now every day.

So I jumped into this type of work to bring evidence based approaches. There are a lot of labs that can be done to find the underlying causes of why people get sick. We teach that there are five main underlying causes of chronic disease, mental illness, pretty much any type of disease out there, even cancers. There are five primary underlying causes. Four of them can be tested for. And this is the work that I started doing many years ago.

You're looking at environmental toxins, heavy metals, mycotoxins, infections, the foods that you're eating, the environment that you're choosing to be around. If you're hanging out in an environment where you're going to a bar every day after work and drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, that's an environmental thing. It's an environment that you're choosing. And so all of those things can be tested for.

What I realized very early on, even from the very beginning, was that the fifth item was intangible. You can't test for it, but we know that it can make people sick and cause them to stay sick and not allow them to heal. It's another barrier to healing. It's the fifth barrier to healing. And that is, and I clump these together, mindset, trauma, unprocessed emotions. That's the intangible. It's the only one of the five things that's intangible. You can't really test for it.

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Now, in a way you kind of can, and I'm going to talk about that in a minute. But in general, if somebody comes to us and says I'm sick, there's not really a trauma test per se. There are different things you can do like get their ACEs score, and you can get their history and stuff. When we work with people, we address all of the underlying causes. I go in and we identify which ones they have, which most of the time they've got all five of them. The body is very resilient. It can deal with one thing, five things, that's where we start having a lot of symptomatology.

And so when it comes to the intangible we use a multitude of tools and modalities. That's what makes us very unique. So there are many people out there who specialize in EMDR therapy, or they specialize in EFT tapping, or they specialize in different types of neurological repatterning techniques. Or they may just do a lot of hypnosis, or a lot of meditation, or just the breathwork, which I don't know, but I would guess that a lot of your speakers have probably dialed in very specifically on these different modalities.

What we find, just like food, is very different, what everybody needs is very different. And you can actually genetically test people these days and you can see some people do better with more complex carbs, some people do better with more fats, some people need to add extra vitamin C into their diet to maintain their cognitive function as they get older. You can test that stuff. When it comes to the tools and modalities that can be used to help move people through their trauma and help them to learn to navigate their emotions, become emotionally intelligent and just let all that stuff go literally, we find that, just like with foods, there's a multitude of modalities oftentimes work better than just one.

And so we have curated, I have curated experts in different modalities around the country. And we work together with you, using pretty much every modality under the sun, from EMDR to EFT tapping to breath therapy, to pull you out of fight or flight and activate your parasympathetic nervous system. All the way to using tools like timeline therapy and perceptual position therapy, resonance repatterning, hypnosis.

We use all the modalities with you, everything, depending on, as we work with you, and we're going through, and we're teaching you how to navigate. When we hit the roadblock we have all the tools and modalities and the skill sets to go, you know what? Let's use this tool and modality to move her through this roadblock. And if it's not as successful as we want, we've got another one that we can use. Oh, that one worked even better. Now we're through that one. Now let's go to the next one. And so that's our approach. It's just having a wide array of different tools and modalities to be able to use for each individual.

Meagen Gibson

And if you were to find a person and identify stress and trauma as something that they needed to move through, the problem is that that person is not doing that work in a vacuum. They're still out in the world. They're living. They have a family. They have work. They have interactions. A family member might get sick. As we're addressing our trauma and we're looking at the tools available. One tool might work at this point and then, because we're out in the world still living our lives, another activation might happen or something that's going to completely disarm that tool as being effective at this moment for this particular activation.

[00:17:56] Dr Elena Villanueva

Exactly. Plus, the other thing is, we want to empower you to learn how to use the tools yourself. That's another big change in where the new model of health and wellness is going. The old model is like, doctor patient. You notice how the doctor's hand is up higher than the patient because the doctor knows all, patient knows nothing. Doctor tells the patient what to do. Patient just follows orders. That model doesn't work. We need to understand how our bodies work. We are inside of this vehicle in this vessel. We need to learn what kind of oil we need? What kind of gas do we need? What kind of filters do we need? What kind of interval maintenance do we need?

Because if we're working through a lot of trauma, we're going to have higher maintenance, higher service requirements, like a Ferrari. Versus the person who's already moved through all that and they're kind of just coasting, and they're more in Prius mode. They're in more economic mode. You know what I'm saying?

So we want to teach you. How do you know what tools and modalities that you can learn? What have we taught you, Meagen, that you can learn? So that if you were to call us after, let's say we've worked with you for 3 or 4 months, and, oh my gosh you've had massive breakthroughs. We've done the one day intensive breakthrough followed by all the integration and the neurological repatterning. And we sent you home with the recorded hypno breath sessions or whatever it is that we're doing to help you.

And you're learning the tools. And we're having our monthly follow ups. And you're doing great. And you're telling us about all the new breakthroughs that you're doing, using all the tools we taught you to do. And then maybe one day you call us and you're struggling. Guess what? We can go back through the tools and modalities that we taught you, and we can go back through it with you again as your coach. Because the power is not in our hands. You have all the power to heal from within you. And it's time now, for the evolution of this planet, it's time for us to take our power back so that we can teach you that you can heal yourself. Let us show you the keys. Let us show you the tools. And then you can do it. And if you need help, as your coaches and your teachers and your guides, we are always here for you, and we can even help move you through it if you need that extra support or that partner to help you to move through it. But we want you to be empowered.

Meagen Gibson

It's more like you become someone who can remind us of our own capabilities and our own knowledge and that we've already been down this path, and we've got everything we need. It's more of a place to check in for safety and security, not an authority figure that we're coming to to tell us what to do.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Exactly. And you said a very keyword there, safety. When we're working with our clients, that is at the top of the list. We need to teach them, and we need to show them and work with them so that they can feel safe. Because you'll never be able to work through your trauma and gain a new perspective and get the learnings, you'll never learn how to navigate your emotions if you don't feel like you're safe.

And so when you're working with your coach or you're working with your team of coaches, that's our approach, we have a team that works together as a community with you, like a family. We give you that safety, and we show you then how to create that safety in your own environment so that once we get off the call with you and your home, that you can learn how to create that safety around you.

[00:21:41] Meagen Gibson

And that really is, I found, especially at the beginning, the hardest work for people. That recognition that it's an inside job, because, especially when we're in trauma response, there's a lot of, if only my family or if only my work or if only the world, if only society could bend itself to make me feel safe and could change to make me feel safe. And it's just letting go of that expectation, and you're entitled to that want, but grieving the fact that the world is never going to perform for you in that way, and that the safety that you need in order to move forward as an inside job is a lot of work, isn't it?

Dr Elena Villanueva

It is a lot of work. The great thing is that it doesn't have to be painful work. And that's another misconception, that if we're going to do the work, that it has to be painful and we have to suffer to get through it. That's a construct. That's a lie. And it's a construct. I'm glad that you brought that up because there are a lot of people out there who really do believe that they have to suffer and go through a lot of suffering in order to get to the other side.

And we are here to teach people like, oh my gosh, no, that's a lie. That's a construct. Everything you've learned about that you have to sacrifice everything about yourself in order to be able to have success on the other end, it's absolutely the opposite of that. You don't have to suffer through it. Let us show you how to navigate all of this. Let us show you that you don't have to suffer. It doesn't have to be scary, and you certainly don't have to get triggered and reignite and go back into your trauma in order to be able to heal. That's a very big misconception as well.

And I was just going to say, that's why talk therapy can be so dangerous, and that's why talk therapy fails the way that it does many, many times. I personally went through that as a kid. I think I was living with trauma from the time I was 2 years old. I didn't know any difference because I was living in it. I was not even in my body up until the last few years and didn't even really realize that I was not fully embodied. There was no congruence between my mind, body, spirit. There was no congruence with my conscious and unconscious mind. Everything was fragmented into a million pieces.

And the talk therapy that I had tried going through many years ago, I would feel worse, for like a week afterwards I would feel sick because I literally would take myself back into the trauma talking about it in the talk therapy. There are so many amazing modalities and tools now where you don't have to go back into it. And you don't want to, because every time that you do that you're reinforcing that neurology and your body stays in that state of fight or flight, which is corrosive to the body, and it literally kills the human body. And there are tools and modalities where we can move through this, and we do not have to suffer.

Meagen Gibson

And that's been one of the best things that I think comes out of these kinds of summits and conferences, is the knowledge base of all of the tools available. And I'm so glad that you named it because I often do in these sessions, the fact that you don't ever have to utter a word. You don't have to tell your story. You don't have to rehash the whole thing and go through it again and charge up all the triggers and the activations and the bad feelings. There are modalities to move through it and disarm it, if you will, that don't involve that.

And now lots of people find it super releasing and validating to tell those stories. And there's nothing wrong with that if that feels like something safe for you, but if that's not something safe for you yet, if that's not accessible, then it's not necessary.

[00:25:24] Dr Elena Villanueva

Exactly. And there are ways, there are methodologies that can be used that you can teach the client or the patient so that when they feel like they need to express their story, they can do it from a dissociative state where they don't associate with it. They can tell their story as if they're watching it on a TV screen. It's a very easy way to teach clients if they feel like they need to go through the story, to talk it out loud, to get new learnings, perhaps, to get new wisdom from it. Just so they can get it out, to allow it to finally flow out, maybe it's something that they've hidden inside their whole life, something that happened to them, and they need to get it out.

But we can do it in a way where we dissociate them, we teach them how to do it themselves. You don't need Ketamine to do it. Ketamine assistant therapy, great, but there are tools, and we can as humans, we have the power to be able to dissociate on our own if we're taught how to do it, so that if we feel the need to share the story, to get it out for whatever reason, we can do it and keep ourselves in a state of calm, where we don't reassociate into the trauma again, where our body literally thinks we're right back in it again. There are tools and modalities for that.

Meagen Gibson

Because that really is the crux of why trauma is something that people are trying to deal with because it takes the past and hijacks it into the present, and makes the past the present. And so teaching people how to change that subject object relationship where I'm not the subject of the thing that happened, I can look at it as an objective thing that has occurred, and it is not my present.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Exactly. And that's super powerful. To teach people that modality really empowers them in a huge, huge way.

Meagen Gibson

And also I know we have other contributors talking about dissociation, but it's something that we all naturally do, but normally it's a defense mechanism, not an active tool that we're using. It's something that we've done, but as a protective measure. As something to keep us from experiencing the emotions because they're just too much of whatever it is that's happening for us at the time. So we do it to protect ourselves, but on an automatic basis instead of a tool that we can use intentionally in order to create safety as we're moving through an unsure territory, if you will.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Exactly. We're learning to use the tool but for the wrong thing. We're trying to use the hammer when we need to screw the screw in, but we have a hammer. It's the wrong tool. And so dissociation is a very powerful tool, but when we're using it to avoid processing an emotion what we don't realize is that it's causing bigger problems later on down the road. It's going to make us very sick, it's going to change our genetics, it's going to cause problems with our children and our grandchildren and our great grandchildren, and it's going to keep us on that hamstring wheel of hell. When we learn that we can use this dissociation as an empowered tool to use it in the right time at the right place, that is where we can have transformation.

[00:28:38] Meagen Gibson

Our bodies are so brilliant, and I'm always in awe of how brilliant our bodies and our brains are and how they work so well together to protect us. But at the same time, it's taking the power back of like, I'm not just walking around being subconsciously protected by systems out of my control. I'm going to take more control over what's happening and how I interact in the world and the emotions and all the interactions I have in a day.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Absolutely becoming aware and becoming conscious of all of our patterns, becoming aware and becoming conscious of how we have allowed ourselves to be ruled by our conscious mind instead of us ruling our conscious mind. We haven't been taught about our conscious and subconscious. We're not even aware that our subconscious is driving 95% of our daily lives. We've been living in our heads our entire life creating more of the crap that we've been wanting to get away from unknowingly.

Once we become aware that, hey, there's this whole side here that's more intelligent, that is never going to take you down the wrong path, that knows all, and then your brain is what's been driving the car but your brain only does 5%. Your brain makes all the mistakes. Your brain can only perceive things based on the experiences that it's had while you've been on this planet, while you've been here. Which is very little compared to your subconscious mind, which is, some people might call it your God self, your higher self. This is the all knowing.

When we can learn to tap into the subconscious mind. And then we can learn to defragment and bring congruence back within the conscious and unconscious mind. Oh my God, everything about how you see yourself, how you see the world around you, your reality, possibilities, opportunities, everything changes. You don't just go into a different chapter of your book. You go into a whole new book.

Meagen Gibson

And I think one of the misconceptions, too, around trauma work is that you're going to do the work and you're going to become a different person. And often I remind people it's like, you're going to do the work and you're going to be the same person. You're just going to have a lot more agency and a lot more control over your responses to your life and the way that you're navigating the way that life comes at you. It's not that you're changing yourself. It's that you're becoming your real self.

Dr Elena Villanueva

And you're right. In one sense no, you're not a different person, you're always who you were, only now we get to see the real you, and you get to see the real you, and now you're free to be who you really are.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah. All the things that you thought were protecting you that were really keeping you even less safe than you could have been.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Absolutely. It's so beautiful to have these conversations because what you're doing is empowering people, Meagen, you're empowering people. We're empowering people. We're showing people, you

don't have to suffer anymore. Wake up. Let us take you by the hand. Take our hand. Let us show you that there are so many possibilities out there for you, and you don't have to suffer anymore. And you don't have to be physically sick anymore. And you can have a completely different reality. You've just been holding yourself back. And now that we're making you aware of that, do you want to do the work? You do want to do the work? It's not going to be scary, I promise. It might seem scary, but just come with me. Take my hand.

[00:32:19]

And then we take them and we start showing them. And just remember this, too, for all of those who are listening, it's not a destination. It's a journey. What does that mean? It means that you are born to have a human experience. A part of that human experience is emotion of every spectrum, from the ones that we think are scary and negative all the way to the ones that are blissful.

And once we can learn to navigate the whole spectrum of emotions, which you'll never feel all the good, amazing ones to the intensity that you want to feel them, you may not even feel them at all until you learn how to feel these. All the ones that you've been burying your entire life, that you've been shoving them down with medications, shoving them down by working so hard that you don't have to pay attention to be with yourself. All the ones that we work so hard to suppress because they scare the hell out of us. Once we become the master at navigating those, that's when nature or the universe reveals the essence of the joy and the love that you really are.

And that's when you finally get to feel the intensity of joy, the intensity of gratitude, love, safety, all of those things. And so the thing is that you were born to experience these things. Nobody told you that. But we're telling you that now. And once you can learn how to experience those things, that's when your life changes. And you're going to go through it your entire life. It's not a destination. It's a journey. But as we learn how to master it, driving that race car becomes a lot more enjoyable. We don't have to white knuckle it anymore.

Meagen Gibson

Very well said. I think that's a really good place for us to stop.

Dr V, thank you for being with us. How can people find out more about you?

Dr Elena Villanueva

I have an amazing team. I could not do this without my team. We are Modern Holistic Health, and you can find us at modernholistichealth.com. If you're interested in any of the type work that we're doing, just go check us out on the website and see what we're all about.

Meagen Gibson

Awesome, will do. Thank you for being with us.

Dr Elena Villanueva

Thank you so much.