



## Trauma and oppression

**Guest: Kimberly Weeks**

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### **[00:00:09] Meagen Gibson**

Welcome to this interview, I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Trauma Super Conference. Today I'm speaking with Kimberly Weeks, a certified trauma recovery coach and director of Association Leadership for the International Association of Trauma Recovery Coaching. She works with narcissistic and psychological abuse survivors, as well as people with childhood trauma to both recover and discover life lived from the authentic self.

Thank you so much for joining me, Kimberly.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Thank you, Meagen. I appreciate it. I'm excited to be here with you today.

### **Meagen Gibson**

So in the context of psychological abuse and how it contributes to trauma, what's the common thread across different types of abuse and oppression?

### **Kimberly Weeks**

I'm going to say the common thread is the questioning of your identity. For psychological abuse survivors, for anyone who wants to establish a position or a power structure of dominance and control, what they have to do is to get the person to question who they are, to have a distorted sense of their image, and to see that they need something outside themselves in order to be anchored or secured in their personhood. And that's kind of the dance of psychological abuse. It's to disarm the person, to invade them mentally and psychologically, and start to dismantle their sense of self.

That's the common thread. And if you look across all kinds of abuses and all kinds of structures of dominance and power and control, the robbery of identity is at the root.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And we experienced this on micro levels occasionally. I literally just had, a couple of weeks ago, I had an argument with someone that I came out of feeling bananas. I was questioning myself, is my experience real? Is my felt reality real? But I was able to name it in that scenario and just say, I reject that, because I have a ton of experience around subjects of power, domination and control. I directed a cult documentary. But it's only because I have that education.

**[00:02:35]**

But one of the things that I didn't know until I explored that was that oftentimes the people exerting the power, dominance and control aren't consciously aware that that's what they're doing. I don't want to focus on oppressors too much, but I think that there's definitely a misunderstanding that people think that it's like this devious machination of plans and scheming, when really it's actually more of a subconscious effort to just not lose their power.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yes and to secure themselves. And so they seek for someone else's cosine, if you want to call it or say it that way, someone else's submission, someone else's compliance in order to secure and anchor their sense of identity, their sense of self. And without that, and without that little puppeteering, without that puppeteering they feel exposed, they feel insecure and unanchored or not anchored. Absolutely.

I like that you said that because it isn't, when you talk about trauma and childhood trauma, much of this was the way that that particular person, which then creates structures and systems, were handled in their first 5 years of life. And the dynamics that they grew up in their original structure, which is the family system. And so they're just operating out of what worked for survival, what worked for them to be able to have a sense of success and a sense of identity. They're just operating out of that unconsciously.

And I agree that without moments of clarity and awareness, that just can continue for the rest of a person's life. And it can become ingrained in the tapestry and in the fabric of whatever organization structures, institutions, those frameworks are brought to bear in.

### **Meagen Gibson**

It's not that one singular moment that is so disarming or so damaging, it's the chronic repeated cycles of this pattern of behavior, of power, domination and control that, as you said, can infiltrate systems and family structures in ways that are really insidious and take a long time for us to recognize and then unpack.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Exactly. And the dismantling that many people, like yourself, are participating, like myself, that are participating in, is about sitting with the reality of your own story, your own identity, your own framework for the original structure you came out of in your childhood. To be able to see how it has shaped your worldview, it has shaped your personal view, and it shaped your ability to own and have agency over what happens on the inside of you when you're engaging with the world. So yeah, it's fascinating and yet it's the most challenging work any of us will ever do for ourselves and our legacy.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I'm glad that you named that because it is such an inside job. And I can tell you from experience that trying to, awaken is the wrong word, but trying to show someone who is in the midst of trying to exert power, domination and control that they're doing it, is like telling someone who's had too much drink that they're drunk. There's just denial. You cannot change that person, and that's their journey.

**[00:06:26]**

And I don't know if you would agree with this, please tell me, but there's this mix of your own personal responsibility to become aware of and do the work inside you to dismantle that, and the way that it's affected you and make different choices, but then also release control of what, if this is a particular individual, you can't control them but at the same time keep moving the goalpost toward change overall.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

It's a Double Dutch, I know. I look at it like a Double Dutch, because what you're really doing is you're saying this is what I have, this is my locus of control, this is what I have the authority over and the agency over. And here's how I can move in this situation. Here are my choices in terms of how I move in this situation. And yet there is an education. There is an awareness. There is, I use the word awakening, for communities that have to be engaged. This conversation, like we're having right now, that has to be engaged in, in order for there to be this broad understanding of the structures. And without those conversations, awarenesses and how it impacts groups of people, families of people, can't even be broached. It's just like the cogs keep going over and over and over again.

I agree with you 100% that it is a very interesting dance that we're in as it relates to looking at systems of oppression and how they show up at every level, how they show up at every level in society.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I would love it if we could take just a minute to talk, and we'll talk about each of them, but let's just go with family systems to begin with. And I know that lots of people, especially the ones that identify as legacy breakers or legacy changers, if you will, that there's nothing more isolating than being the one that says, 'hey, wait a minute. This is not working. This structure is not healthy for anyone and has damaged me in a lot of ways'. And watching the rest of your family rally and say, 'you're the one that's crazy. There's nothing wrong here. Everyone was doing their best'.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

So that's typically what's the black sheep of a family system, is the person who says, 'hey, this is not okay, and I'm not participating'. And they go to start seeking support for themselves because they recognize that they can't continue in the system.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And they're not going to get the support they're asking for in the system.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

And that they can't voice what they're really experiencing in that system.

It's interesting, the first rung on the trauma recovery wheel, if that makes sense, or process, is denial. Anytime a person or a group of people experience trauma or a traumatic event, anything that happens 'too much, too fast, too soon', Gabor Mates says, anything that causes us to change the way we see ourselves, we see other people and the world around us, the first place our nervous system goes is denial. It's overwhelmed. It's too much.

**[00:09:48]**

And so many people in family systems start in that place in childhood. They can't believe that their parents are behaving this way or that their sister or their brother did this or that, and they turn on themselves. And it's about them being bad, wrong, something that they could do better. And they go into this whole process of trying to overcome those feelings with performance, accomplishment, whatever you want to call it, or just rebellion. That's typically the pattern that happens in family systems.

And at some point, people get to the end of that. They get to the end of their capacity to do that. And when they do, they either have a moment of like, I call it a come to Jesus moment, they have a come to Jesus moment, and they're like, okay, I can't do this anymore. And they exit the family system to their detriment, loss of support, loss of financial help, loss of a sense of family. I work with many clients who are walking that path right now.

### **Meagen Gibson**

It's a sophisticated system that our brains and our bodies have developed to keep us safe. That denial is part of a mechanism that's trying to keep us safe because of all the reasons that you just mentioned, like we're wired for connection, and a lot of our safety and security in our lives is established in those family systems, or perceived.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah. And so the person will either go off and black sheep it, if that makes sense. Or they will literally delineate into addictions and other things to try to numb out the ache and the pain of that rejection from their family system. And it's just a cycle that happens.

When I meet my clients they're coming to say, 'I'm at the end of myself. I can't continue to do this. And I need help'. And in order for any change or transformation to happen, whether it's interpersonally or systemically, that's the place we have to arrive at. We need help. And I'm willing to say, 'I can't do it this way anymore'.

And so from a family system perspective, that framework, I call it that cement that gets poured in, really does impact our way of being and how we show up in business, how we show up in our families, our new nuclear families, if we have those, how we show up in friendships, how we show up for ourselves. What is our own self talk? How do we engage with, have compassion for, see, push, pressure ourselves?

So, it's a fascinating dynamic. That system starts on the inside when we're groomed in our family systems.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I wanted to definitely start with family systems, because then if you've been practicing that denial and been engrossed in that kind of a family system your entire childhood, when you becoming an adult there's going to be ways that you're going to deny the clues and the things that you encounter in, as you called it, communities of care, or your workplace. Or you're going to just deny all of those things and ways that you've got to surrender your agency or surrender the ways that you can show up authentically or safely in your workplace or in your Church, those kinds of things. You're going to be more susceptible to do that maybe.

### **[00:13:21] Kimberly Weeks**

And after denial, typically people go into chaos. That's the second stage of trauma recovery because you're starting to go, 'no, I can't submit to this anymore. I can't participate with this anymore. I won't participate'. And so everything that has been systematically established internally, starts to get dismantled. And that dismantling starts looking like how you begin to move with your family, how you begin to move in business, people leave places of work. I mean, just all the different things. People leave churches, all of those different things. And they go through, the buzzword right now is, deconstruction. They go through the deconstruction of what they have been constructed in their childhood. And they start questioning their beliefs, they start questioning how they really think and feel and connecting with that many folks for the first time, because they have to divorce or disassociate from themselves in order to fit into the family system.

And so that chaos is loud. It's loud whether it happens, interpersonally, it's loud when it happens when you are in intimate partner situations, it's loud when it happens in communities, in communities of care. And I think that that's what we've been seeing during this COVID period. There's a lot of deconstruction that's happening. And people are beginning to start asking themselves what they really believe, how they really want to show up in the world and what kind of impact they want to have on everyone that's in their sphere of influence, and really starting to ask the hard questions.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And there's been a lot of talk about the workforce, etc, and not enough talk about the fact that, well, first of all, three quarters of a million Americans are gone and dead, but also that people have been able to see a different way of work and life and social and all of the ways in which we've had to facilitate a different way of life. And a lot of people want to go back. And a lot of people are like, no way, we're never going back to the other way before times.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

They're deconstructed, they're like, no way, I don't want to go back to working for a company for 25 years so I can get a clock to put on my wall. And if something happened to me, they would replace me tomorrow. There are dreams and passions and goals and all this stuff on the inside of me that I haven't realized because I've submitted my mind to the structure out here that says, this is what success looks like or this is what it looks like for you to be an employee. A lot of folks are going, this structure is no longer serving. It's not serving where we are today. So yes.

### **Meagen Gibson**

What I've really felt, too, is that people are like, my personal value is worth more to me than my value to you as whatever, as an employee or as a part of your organization, whatever kind of organization that might be, people are putting their own personal value first.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yes. And going back to reclaim identity. Because when you assent to the structure that this system is, of the employee employer structure, there is an identity that's found there. There's an identity that's found in your title. There's an identity found in your salary and your bonuses. All of a sudden, folks are going, I'm reclaiming my personal value, and I'm going to choose from my agency and my locus of control what I decide to do with my time, my attention, my efforts, my passion, my abilities, my gifts, all of that.

**[00:17:23] Meagen Gibson**

And even geography, you were naming a couple of things and I was even thinking about geography. How many people have decided that they don't want to be where they were, like physically.

**Kimberly Weeks**

In particular countries they're going, hey, I'm going to go. I have known several people in the last 24 months that have moved to other countries. It's incredible. All of that's underneath identity and systems of power and control. And what does it look like to start reclaiming that for yourself.

**Meagen Gibson**

So you've been naming these stages, and after disorganization, did you call it disorganization?

**Kimberly Weeks**

Chaos.

**Meagen Gibson**

I was already like, 'you mean disorganized'. 'No honey, it's chaos'.

It's funny because I related to that so much as well, because there were a good 15 years of my early adulthood where I just called it the, light a match, where I would literally light a match and just burn my life to the ground, my relationships, my work, and never burned bridges as the saying goes, but in order to secure safety for myself in ways that I didn't understand. I wasn't cognitively processing this all at the time, but in order to secure safety for myself, I was just like, these people are gone, this place is gone, this job is gone, I'm going to reinsert myself somewhere else. And the irony of that process over and over again is that eventually you realize wherever you go, there you are.

**Kimberly Weeks**

At some point, you've got to get to the end of yourself. And I love that you said that because the scapegoat leaves the family system but they still have to deal with what impact has been had on the inside and how they see themselves and their image of themselves and how they identify themselves as worthy and valuable. And that part has to be, it's like you try to go find some safe place, when the safety that's available to each of us is an inside job. I think you used those words.

**Meagen Gibson**

After chaos...

**Kimberly Weeks**

It's recovery. That's right. It's denial, it's chaos, and then you go into recovery. That's where you really start to be able to ask yourself the hard questions and get some support. Because in order for anything to be made new, it's like when you see the people shoveling up the cement because they're going to pour a new foundation, there has to be some people that come to help to do that, that dismantling, that deconstruction.

**[00:20:05]**

And that's where I typically come in with clients. I'm supporting them as they're walking through their own process of determining who they are, how they want to move in the world, how they want to treat other people, how they want to treat themselves.

And that's a beautiful place. It's a lot of work, but it's the place of recovery where you figure out, I can leave this relationship, I can stop talking to this person, I can leave this job, I can stop engaging with my family system. But there has been an impact, like a marinade that I got to deal with that's in here. And I get to decide what I take forward, and I get to decide what I divorce myself from. And that process is a life journey. It never ends.

### **Meagen Gibson**

I was going to say it's certainly not linear. It's not a straight line in any way, is it?

### **Kimberly Weeks**

As a matter of fact, you will take a whole bunch of steps forward and think, oh, I got this.

### **Meagen Gibson**

I got this.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

I'm better off there. And then you will butt up against something and go, oh, my gosh, there's that codependency again. Oh, my gosh, there's that people pleasing again. Oh, wait a minute. And then you get to decide if you can be compassionate toward the fact that you had 40 years of life doing that. And now you're aware of it, well, like bing, bing, bing, let's have a parade because you can see it.

One of my counselors, as I was going through my process leaving my abusive marriage, said to me, 'there are three ways to see yourself. You can see yourself after you happen, you can see yourself while you're happening, or you can see yourself before you're happening.' So, many people don't go through any of that. They don't see themselves at all. What my goal is, is just to come in and support clients so that they can become more and more aware, real time, of what's coming up and where it's coming from and connect their emotions, which is the sensory things that happen, the sensory things that happen on the inside of them with feelings, the words that we make meaning from, for those emotions, and then decide what to do with themselves from there and how they want to see themselves real time in the moment.

That part of it, that self actualization is like a snail. And people want to come to coaches, to counselors, to therapists, and they want, I want to be better, let me take a pill and feel better. And there's nothing wrong with taking medication, I'm on medication, but I'm saying it's not something that's an immediate fix. It is a process over time of re-establishing that foundation.

### **Meagen Gibson**

A lot of practice as well. We get tools, we practice the tools, we get a test about how well those particular tools work, we might need to grab another one. As you were saying, with the concrete, you

need a lot of different tools for that job, depending on the stage of the project, and that's how it can feel sometimes.

**[00:23:23] Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah.

**Meagen Gibson**

All right. So what are some of those tools that you often give to people when they come to you and they're ready for that recovery stage?

**Kimberly Weeks**

Okay. So because they're in the recovery stage, one of the first things we start to look at is their atmosphere and their environment. What's happening in order... How do we create an atmosphere of healing for you? How do we create an opportunity for your nervous system to stay in its window of capacity as much as we possibly can?

Many of the folks that come to me have been in fight or flight for their entire lives, some people from coming out of the womb, that was their womb experience. And so because of that level of activation and dysregulation, they don't know anything but that state, that state of being completely hypervigilant, looking around, trying to figure out how to negotiate life, to be able to keep themselves safe. They are drawn and attracted to people who have the same kind of power structure that they grew up in, so they keep repeating the same cycles of trauma.

And so we start to look at dismantling the atmosphere first. How do we create a space so that your body has time to repair? If we can't create that, then they're going to keep being in that state of dysregulation. And that causes all kinds of chronic illnesses, all kinds of issues with attention, focus, ability to function, and activities of daily living where they're functioning. And so that's where we have to start, from that place of recovery.

For people who are narcissistically abused or people who are in situations of domestic violence, that typically looks like leaving a relationship safely. Leaving a relationship safely. And so we start building their community's care and their support network so that they can leave that safely. And then at that point, they have to go no contact with the atmosphere that their abuse occurred in, the person that abused them, all of those types of things. Again, all in the service of survival from that immediate standpoint, but also in the service of safety for the environment.

**Meagen Gibson**

I have a lot of compassion for people, especially in domestic abuse situations. And I think the statistic is that it usually takes someone about 5 times, 5 tries to get out of that relationship. And again, going back to, just like we're wired for connection, we're wired for familiarity, we're wired and if we were raised in a way that created a lot of codependency, that toxic, abusive relationship is going to feel like home, it's going to feel familiar. And so I just have a ton of compassion for how much work and exertion it takes to remove yourself from that situation.



**[00:26:24] Kimberly Weeks**

Absolutely. Because chemically your body is actually in a type of addiction to the cycle of abuse. And because of that when you leave it, you have to go through withdrawal, chemically, in your body and in your nervous system, and that's hard. They say for narcissistic abuse survivors that it's kind of like coming off of a heroin addiction, and it's that loud on the inside, and so there's a lot of people that are needed to support not returning back to that relationship in order to put that activation out, put those chemicals out, all that stuff, adrenaline, dopamine, cortisol all the stuff that happens chemically in your body.

And I wish that someone had told me that when I was going through my stuff because you feel crazy, you feel like you're completely out of control. And so that's why people hire me, to walk them through the process of withdrawing from deciding, making their own personal decision, and then deciding to leave and actually walking out of it and then maintaining those boundaries that they set.

**Meagen Gibson**

And you being able to give them the context of, 'this is going to feel agonizing and awful and here's why'. And that's normal, and that doesn't mean you should question your choices, decisions, boundaries. That's all part of it. And sitting in that discomfort is actually the key to getting through it.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Well, setting it with some tools, you asked the question.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Learning how to support your nervous system and how it works to come down from that activation using the power of breath, using the power of meditation, doing activities that help with tension release, being connected with nature, and being outside in places that allow for your body to have a sense of union with the world and around you in a safe space. Having co-regulating relationships or friendships with people that know you're going through this process so that you feel supported and validated for all the things that are going on as you're leaving.

All of those things are tools that can be helpful for a person as they're leaving the abusive relationship. And those abusive relationships could be people, I've had people leave work environments that were abusive. I've had people leave churches that were abusive and narcissistic in terms of the system. I've had people walk through dealing with racial trauma, and what does it look like to start to exit from situations in which they're constantly experiencing microaggressions and different things. Just all of those things all fall under the same pattern of systems of oppression that have to be addressed internally first, so then they can be addressed externally.

**Meagen Gibson**

Because I know a lot of people who have removed themselves from situations that were abusive and oppressive and then landed themselves in another situation that very much modeled what they were just experiencing. And so without those tools you're like, I've gotten out of this situation. Not that there's a direct parallel, but I remember I had a situation where I was sexually harassed at work and

went through mediation, and it was a very peaceful resolution. All sides were like, this was a good learning experience. We all have taken away a lot from this.

**[00:29:57]**

And so when you're young, you think, well, I've had this experience, this will never happen to me again. I've now done this. That's out of the way. And no less than 9 months later I was sexually harassed again at work. And it's enough to make you think like, oh, you're the problem, when that's not true at all. And I remember that was the thing that I was just so stunned about. I was like, wait a minute. I've already done this. It's not allowed to happen again. But that's like the ways in which you would deny or ignore. Or the ways in which, in my specific scenario, the ways in which I was in a work situation because of what I was going to get out of it, so ignoring signals, ignoring signs that put me in danger. No, I'm not victim blaming in any way. I'm not blaming myself, my abuser is definitely 100% to blame. And yet I also have responsibility around my awareness of what situations I'm getting into, what I'm making comfortable for myself.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah. And what did it get modeled? What did it get taught in terms of boundaries? And why something that is a boundary crossing is familiar. All of that is the data that we get in terms of starting to deconstruct what we came out of when we were younger.

And so that's really good. That's really good. And it puts you in a position where you can start to, again, have compassion for what you didn't get taught and have hope that you can start to learn today and move forward in terms of showing up differently. That's what it really comes down to.

**Meagen Gibson**

And I'm glad that we spent a lot of time talking about interpersonal relationships and one to one abusive relationships but I also briefly want to go back to what you already named, which is religious organizations, spiritual relationships and also racial microaggressions, racial trauma. Because those are two situations, person to person relationships obviously, there's your family of origin that's informing your perspective and the reasons and all of that digging that we can do, but when we're talking about our spiritual relationships and our actual skin color and race and how we identify culturally, these are not things that we can walk away from. It is much harder to sever.

And so just again, a ton of compassion for that. And for people who have experienced either of those things, is the recovery process any different? Are there tools that those types of recoveries require that an abusive romantic relationship or familial relationship might not?

**Kimberly Weeks**

That's a really great question. So let's unpack them separately.

**Meagen Gibson**

I don't want to bucket them into the same thing.

## **[00:33:00] Kimberly Weeks**

We start talking about religious trauma, you're talking about your idea of God, in many cases. And because from a Church environment, it is a type of family, every religion structures itself as a type of community of care or an extended family. And so what normally happens in that environment is the same dynamics that come from, your family systems show up in Church.

And then you have the overlay of the authority of God and Scripture that is often used in a way, a subjugated type of environment and a power structure where there is a request for compliance, to the structure of the Church but it's really like they're positioning it as, you're saying yes to God. You're being obedient to God. You're submitting yourself to God when you do X, Y or Z at this Church.

And so what that does again, is it really messes with a person's sense of their personhood, their identity and their safety in the world. Who am I to God in this religious environment? Because my pastor says, or my priest is saying X, Y or Z. And so for that person, they have to be in a position, and I can only tell you my experience as well. I had to leave the structure of the Church and go find God outside of him. I had to leave the rules. I had to leave the, this is what you're supposed to look like, this is how you're supposed to show up, this is what it looks like for you to be a wife, this is what it looks like for you to be a good mother. I had to leave that and go spend time in the Bible for myself and start to discover what a relationship with God looked like for me individually, a one on one again, type of interpersonal relationship. And have my idea of God and my idea of who I am as a creative being be informed through sitting with him on my own.

That happens to quite a bit of us. That's a part of a deconstruction. The tools that are needed for someone who's going through religious trauma is lots of validation, places to be able to openly talk about their questions, the ability to start asking real questions about what they were taught growing up from an informed and open and non-threatening environment, start to see what they really want to accept and believe. And that community of care is so necessary that it helps people from that standpoint, not disconnect from God, but helps them disconnect from religious trappings. I don't know if that makes sense, or ritual laws, and all the rest of that stuff.

So that's what's needed there, a lot of validation. But again, it's the same no contact that a psychological or narcissistic abuse survivor has to go through. And then they have to deal with themselves and what they're really thinking about, what they believe, how they see themselves, their image of themselves has to be anchored, all of that.

When you talk about racial trauma it's a lot more nuanced. Because from a historical perspective, historically people did not identify themselves according to black and white. People identified themselves according to their country of origin. I'm Irish, I'm Polish, I'm French, I'm Ghanaian, I'm from the United States, whatever the situation is. So there has been this, what's the right way to say it? Almost this propaganda that has been used to create a caste system of darker and lighter in every culture globally.

You see it in people who are Indian, you see it in people who are Asian, you can see it in people who are from the Middle East. There is a system where if you are lighter, whether that's white or just lighter skinned, that you have a superiority or are more beautiful or are more intelligent than someone who is darker. That framework, that ideology has literally been passed across the globe.

And so when you start talking about racial trauma, the nuances of that and how it shows up in workplaces, relationship, I mean, as my children are watching marketing on television, commercials, 'mommy, you should do this to your hair'. All of the things. It's like a machine that's happening here.

And underneath that is this ideology of colonialism and superiority based on the lightness, or the closeness to people who are traditionally Caucasian, as being better. And so that has to be divorced.

### **[00:38:24] Meagen Gibson**

And that has come out of power, domination and control. That exertion of colonialism, we'll just name it, has exerted its power and domination over almost the entire globe at this point.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

The entire globe for the purpose of subjugation, for the purpose of capitalism, for the purpose of all of those. I mean, there's so many isms underneath the structure of that.

I was actually in a training a couple of weeks ago, and one of the instructors was saying that at the root of all power structures is an ideology. And so when you're listening to someone, if you can listen for the ideology, the ableism, the capitalism, the consumerism, the racism, the patriarchy, if you can listen for that, then you understand interpersonally what's being asked of you to do in terms of giving over your agency. What you're being asked to really submit to. That ideology makes its way into systems. Those systems and institutions show up in interpersonal relationships. Those interpersonal relationships, that can be either intimate, partner and/or family systems, start to become internalized. And it's like an iceberg.

And so all of a sudden, how I speak to myself and what I see in the mirror, when I go look at the mirror, is being evaluated on how light my skin is, how straight my hair is, what my weight is today when I step on the scale, all of those things start. And if you go underneath all of it there's an ideology that I've adopted because it's all around me.

It's just fascinating to start dismantling all of those things. So whether that's Church, whether it's this colonialistic blanket that the globe has been under for hundreds and hundreds of years, what we have to do to dismantle all of that. What people have been trying for a long time to do to dismantle all of that, to start having a look at the ideology. Just like a person who's coming out of a family system whose a scapegoat would have to look at, okay, how did my family system impact how I see myself? How did the society I grew up impact how I see myself? How does the way that my mother talked to me, my father talked to me? How does the history that I got taught in school or didn't get taught in school impact how I see myself and my classmates? It's very deep.

But I heard this quote, it's one of my favorite quotes. The lady's name is Linda Thai, she's an amazing somatic trauma therapist. And she said, 'that regulating stress responses', and I want to make sure I get this right, 'is the reclamation or the reclaiming of the capacity to do the long haul work of liberation'. Which includes dismantling power structures. In order for us, we're talking about all the levels that these power structures take on, for us to do the long-term work we have to first start with ourselves and starting to learn how to regulate our own nervous systems.

That quote hit me like a ton of bricks because I know it's like a truth that is undeniable. If I can't sit down with you and have a conversation about my experiences and be willing to sit with and hear and be present with what experiences you've had from a regulated place, then we can't change any of the structure that's going on around us. And I think that's what's so interesting to see what's happened during this COVID period that we've been in, because what we have seen is lots and lots of dysregulation.

### **[00:42:29] Meagen Gibson**

I was just going to say, my kids know that, and they wouldn't name it like this, but they'll be on YouTube and they'll see a Karen video or something. And so I've told them, because we talk about coping skills a lot and regulation skills and things, and what I've started to tell them is these are just people who have absolutely no sense of self regulation. They have been upset by something, and I'm not just talking about Karen's, but this is the most dramatic, public viral version of it. And I'm like, this is just nervous system dysregulation, and they've been upset by something, and they don't know how to, they don't have any skills to calm themselves down. And so what they're going to do is outwardly punish everyone in the vicinity for how toxic it feels inside of them. And that's why it's our responsibility to know better and do better so that we don't ever do that to anybody in our lives.

We're always normalizing. I know you're little and you're going to have big emotions and you're not always going to know how to cope with them correctly or in the best way for all of us, but that's my job is to teach you. But it starts with me like, I had to learn that for myself and I'm not always perfect. And my 9 year old calls me out all the time, and he's like, 'wow, it seems like you really overreacted to that'. And I'm like, you know what? That is fair. The thing that you did was still not okay. But you're right, I did overreact. Good call.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah. And then being willing to own that. And that's hard. It's very hard. And it is a learned skill. The root of being able to own it is feeling a sense of being a deeply loved person that has worth and value. Shame will keep you from owning what's happening on the inside.

And one of the things I work with my clients on is that as well, like the messaging of shame that they got from their family systems and how it's showing up internally, how it's been internalized now, because when you have a sense of, I'm good, I'm loved, I'm a person that has worth and value, then you can be curious about those big emotions. And you can be curious about, oh, yes. I've been racing all day, that's what's going on. I need to stop. One of my clients says, I'm going to give myself the gift of slow down. Give myself the gift of slow down so that I can get back into a place where I am able to access the parts of my brain that can think logically, rationally, prefrontal cortex, all that stuff. And not feel like, oh, I'm a bad person because I just went off on somebody. Okay, I was dysregulated. That's what happens when people are dysregulated. It's not to minimize it or dismiss it or say, it's not nothing, but it's having enough compassion to understand I'm human. And when I'm overwhelmed, there's not going to be a whole bunch of flowers that come out of that situation and butterflies. And having some, okay, I'm good. I can get back into a state where I'm able to respond from a place that's centered and my core self.

### **Meagen Gibson**

It's respond versus react. That's where the responsibility is for me. We respond, we don't just react. But also forgiving ourselves when we just react. Like my kids know they're not allowed to startle me. That will not have a good result for you. I'm like, I've tried to work on it for 40 years kids, guess what? Just don't startle Mom.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Don't do it, okay. And that's perfect for you to say, because that's where you are. That's where your capacity is. And the more we respect, I say it this way, if I could put some respect on my nervous system where it is today, which is different than where it was 5 years ago, which is different than

where it will be 5 years from now and not try to force myself to be somewhere that I'm not, and trying to fit into the structure, whatever that means. I can put some respect on my nervous system then I have an opportunity to stay in my window of capacity and grow it, which is what we hope to do. As Linda Thai said, learning how to regulate my own nervous system and meet myself with compassion right where I am.

**[00:47:06] Meagen Gibson**

I'm really glad that you shared that. I really liked it, it resonated a lot.

This seems like a really good place to wrap up, Kimberly. Thank you so much for joining me. Where can people find out more about you?

**Kimberly Weeks**

They can find out more about me and my website at [thenarcissisticabusecoach.com](https://thenarcissisticabusecoach.com). That is where most of my clients are settling with me.

And/or if they're interested in finding out more about being a trauma recovery coach, they can go to [iaotrc.com](https://iaotrc.com), that's the International Association of Trauma Recovery Coaching, where I am a leader and a director for leadership at that particular place, and I do teach at every level of that Association as well.

**Meagen Gibson**

Fantastic. Thank you again for joining us today.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Thanks, Meagen. Great conversation.