



Conscious Life presents

TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

Movement and mindfulness for managing triggers

Guest: Deirdre Fay

Disclaimer: The contents of this interview are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This interview does not provide medical or psychological advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or psychological condition.

[00:00:09] Meagen Gibson

Hello, and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, cohost of the Trauma Super Conference. Today, I'm delighted to be speaking with Deirdre Fay.

She describes healing as modern day bodhisattva compassion training from 40 years, exploring wisdom traditions and contemporary psychotherapy. To Deirdre, healing is not an accident, but instead happens when we deliberately choose to cultivate compassion. It's the sure result of consistent and persistent practice developing a solid, steady and secure self with an unshakable heart, despite the many twists and turns of life's circumstances. Deirdre Fay, thank you so much for being with us today.

Deirdre Fay

Always love being with you.

Meagen Gibson

So I know you integrate yoga and meditation in your work healing trauma. So what's so important about combining those approaches to you?

Deirdre Fay

I was thinking about this before I got on with you, and I thought, why did I ever come up with this idea of modern day bodhisattva training? And I was talking to somebody today, a therapist that's really great and doing great work, and talking about some of her clients. And what I remembered and realized once again is that somewhere in our Western world, we have this idea we should all be happy. And so we present ourselves a certain way, and we put ourselves out in the world and we leave ourselves behind.

And the tragedy of that is that and the beauty of the wisdom traditions like yoga and meditation, and many of the other traditions speak to how important it is to know that we are being cultivated and changed over time, that we're not supposed to be happy. Although happiness is a wonderful state. Happiness. I mean, there's so many books right now about happiness, but what happens when we're not happy?

[00:02:07]

Then we feel like we're failing, like something's wrong with us, like we didn't achieve it. But maybe it's not so much about trying to be happy. Maybe it's being with whatever life is, that allows happiness to arise. And that's why I love the wisdom traditions, which are basically saying, let life move through you and clean out the gunk that's keeping us from being our true selves. And our true self is one of contentment and happiness and compassion and kindness and joy that surpasses all understanding.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. You make such a good point. And one of the things, and this focus on happiness, I think what gets missed, and especially in a trauma context, is that often the things that make us happy are the things that we don't feel like we have safe access to when we're dealing with unresolved trauma, right? So things like joy and play, movement like dance or just unrestricted, free, like being able to just freely move our bodies or be in space with other people's bodies.

The curiosity and all of those C words that you named earlier, those are the things that can get kind of suppressed and taken. They're the first things to go when you've experienced trauma and you're not in your healing journey, right? But happiness is the ability to access those things freely, to me anyway, if I could just speak for myself. And so in healing your trauma, you're really trying to get back to the ability to access happiness, not just create the static state of constant, never-changing happiness, right?

Deirdre Fay

Isn't that true? Sometimes I think, well, what is happiness? Now that I'm older, I can say this. I'm so happy when I'm content, when I'm not striving, which is the anxious attachment bit, or I'm not freaked out and trying to push away life in order to survive, which is more the dismissive end of the attachment pattern spectrum. And so when I'm in that and just like there's a contentment that happens, and maybe that's really an element of happiness that's there.

But what gets in the way with trauma is that these basic patterns of pure attachment needs that we had were not met. Like a child, when they reach up, this natural body movement of reaching and wanting connection and to be held and close. When that isn't met, we think there's something wrong with us. The natural urge for connection, to reach and be gotten by another gets truncated and we think, it's not even a thought.

That's the thing, it's not a thought. It's like there's that shock, I call it an attachment shock that something I need was not met. And having those kinds of things happen over and over again embeds in us that there's something wrong with us. And then, as you say, Meagen, it's hard to believe that we should be happy or could be happy, our true nature is happy, because we don't feel it. We feel like there's something really wrong with me. And that is really the unrelenting difficulty of trauma.

And I think that there's a way, I feel a little cautious about saying this in open space, but there's a way in our world where we have begun as therapists to think that trauma is something wrong with us, like, poor you, poor me, you poor little thing. Rather than being like, and this is what I love about yoga, yoga says there is this life force that's pushing through us all the time. It's unrelenting. We can't stop it even when we try, and some of us do try it, because that life force, that prana is

pushing through it and it's going to bump up against anything that is in its way and say, let's clean this out.

[00:06:26]

Let's bring you home to yourself, to your true nature. So if we focus on that broader view, life can be good. Life is actually trying to get me to reconnect with myself, rather than there's something wrong with me, that something hard happened or difficult or painful. It's a little shift, but it's a huge shift.

Meagen Gibson

I really like that context because as you were speaking, I was thinking of the word resistance, right? And with these practices, it's guaranteed you're going to encounter resistance. And it might surprise you where you do. If we're talking about asanas and poses and things like that, something that might be really easy for you 99% of the time, might be extremely difficult for you one day.

And accepting resistance, breathing into resistance, allowing resistance. All those things and just the practice of that and how it might loosen up your ability to sit comfortably with the resistance that you have in other places of your life. To feel what's difficult or to feel what doesn't feel familiar or what feels hard, right?

Deirdre Fay

You bring up a really good point. I'm thinking of what it would be like if instead of trying to change the outside world, we'd be with this, whatever this is that's going on. And I don't know about you, but I certainly when things aren't working out there, I like to blame, criticize, judge, make wrong, or do anything out there. But when I finally sit with it and be like, what's happening in here? Why is this getting triggered and activated?

I'm thinking of an experience I had recently with a person that I know. I don't know them that well, but there was some conflict, and I found myself so charged up, and I could feel a spurt of rage at one point. I was like, what is this? First of all, the person, the relationship isn't worthy of that much upset, but I was caught in it, and I could feel myself wanting to call people and talk to people about the person. And I just was like, it's my habit not to do that.

And when I sat with it, I thought, okay, what is this? What is this going on in me? And I tracked it down, and I began to see I have this pattern of being drawn, this is an embedded, imprinted pattern from my life, of being drawn to people that are narcissistically oriented, who make it all about them. And when I'm in that, I have that receptor that opens it. They can just plunk right in there if I'm not careful.

And that's exactly what happened. So once I made that connection, here I am, caught in my own pattern. It's not about that person. The whole thing cleared, and it's like, okay, that person is there or not there. It doesn't matter. But I'm not stirred up or charged all the time, and what a relief that is. Now, maybe that's happiness.

[00:09:42] Meagen Gibson

You make up such a great point because with trauma, the emotions we have a lot of times, the resistance we have, if we're using the word we were just using, all of these things are designed to protect us, right? And so your anger was designed in that moment to protect you from falling into your pattern. It was like the signal flare of, like, hey, danger coming ahead in the relationship with this person of like, hey, we recognize this and we're going to give you an emotion that's going to alert your attention to a problem.

And oftentimes, we do what you just said where you call a person or you default to other mechanisms to talk it out, and can you believe what this person did or said or how they behaved? When really it has much more to do with us, and just understanding the signal that we've been given and what it's meant to help us protect ourselves from, yeah.

Deirdre Fay

That's why I like to think of those kinds of triggers as a way to access our own guidance system. And recently, I think it was actually this incident that I realized, oh, we have a trigger, like a plunk of something. But then there's the hook, there's a pattern behind it. So the trigger is one thing, we are going to get triggered, but then how do I use that trigger to say, okay, what's the pattern? Where am I getting hooked? And how do I then orient to releasing it and turn towards something else? Something where it's much more satisfying and nurturing.

It's not. I don't like being angry. I don't like being critical of somebody and blaming them. So what would be more satisfying? Seeing the best in them, well it's hard to see the best in them when I'm, like you said, in a threat period of seeing them, my fears, blocks and resistances just coming right up. So that switch, being able to identify the trigger and see where I'm hooked into an old pattern, really can make a huge difference for people.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely.

Deirdre Fay

Including myself.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, right. Never stops for any of us. I was thinking the word trigger is so great, it's gotten a little bit of a bad rap. Some people say activation, there's all kinds of, it's really like signal response. But we give it a bad rap when you're triggered all day long, right? If I'm outside and I smell a funnel cake, if I happen to be anywhere near a county fair and I smell fried dough and sugar, that's a trigger for me. My mouth is going to start watering. I'm going to want that darn thing.

The same thing, like if you smell a lemon, it's going to evoke some sort of sensation or memory. I'm talking all about food smells right now apparently, it's close to lunch. But these are all triggers. So triggers aren't inherently bad. It's what we do with them, how we behave once we receive them, how we interpret the information that makes meaning out of our triggers.

[00:12:38]

And to get curious, like you're saying, to just slow down and notice our thoughts, emotions or behavior patterns when they're around big things that evoke unpleasant sensations for us. That's how we kind of break through, just being in the same habit patterns.

Deirdre Fay

So true. Yes. I love how you put it too, Meagen. Ed Tronick talked a lot about signal response, and it really had helped me in working with clients and training other therapists.

Then you break it apart. There's a trigger, which is a big thing, and then how you break it down into small little bits of, okay, the funnel cake, what's the smell? What's the impulse that arises inside, what's the images that come to mind? And once we start breaking it down into those granular pieces, we actually have some capacity to shift and change it, to find a way around it rather than getting stuck in it.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And I give the funnel cake example, but most of the time, funnel cakes aren't going to activate my nervous system into fight or flight, right? So it's kind of an innocuous example. So it's much easier for me to notice a funnel cake trigger and cope with the aftermath.

But we have a lot of empathy when somebody's triggered. I'm sure that was overwhelming and kind of flooding to be that angry, because we've talked several times, you don't occur to me to be a person that gets really angry when people speak with you, right? So that was kind of a disarming sensation for yourself.

So I think it says a lot about you that you were, like, quiet and like, I didn't see that coming. That's unexpected. Let me kind of go through the sensations and what they mean and how I can interpret this and what it means. What's in my locus of control?

Deirdre Fay

When I think about modern day bodhisattva training, bodhisattva is somebody who deliberately chooses to take their suffering and transform it into compassion. And that, I think, is what's incumbent on all of us, is we are going to suffer in our life no matter where we are, when we are, what happens. Something will happen. And how do we say, okay, I'm going to deliberately take that, and instead of acting it out and being reactive in our world, choose to pause, go inside and see where this is hooking me?

Because if we think about it, we could have multiple different responses inside. But why am I being hooked here? Think about a jukebox. If I'm playing some country song that's modeling and pulls on my heart strings. B6. Okay, if I hit B6, that's what's going to happen. That's that signal response, that trigger response.

So what if I choose C18 and something different, something uplifting, my body is going to move. It's a happening thing inside of us. What am I going to do to choose this? Who do I choose to be in this moment, instead of having life choose it for us, propel us, catapult us into it.

[00:15:56] Meagen Gibson

Yeah, exactly. And that process takes time, doesn't it? It's not something that you can, sometimes on the trauma healing path, you can't piece all of that apart at one time. Sometimes it takes a little bit of time. What is safe for me to be curious about right now? Which part of this can I look at?

Deirdre Fay

Exactly. I'm thinking of a course we did on conflict and repair. It came out. I knew all the theory, I've been doing it for whenever length of time, but there is something that happened, an incident that really hooked me again, and I had to do the inner work and really pull it apart. And that's, I think, where the richness came from and the teachings came from that real life experience. But that's what allows us to see our way through, when we can get clear on it all instead of being hooked by it.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, I've got a ten-year-old who loves fishing, and it's been quite a useful analogy for the way that he and his brother often bait and hook each other. Adolescent boy relationships. And their version of bids for attention is to annoy each other and they know what gets under each other's skin.

And so in our relationships as adults, people aren't necessarily quite that Machiavellian or manipulative about it. They are subtly, maybe subconsciously, but people aren't necessarily trying to hurt or trigger or activate us. But it happens nonetheless. And our job is to kind of become more and more conscious of our own reactivity and slow down, just like you said, and come from a place of response instead of reaction.

Deirdre Fay

I'm thinking, as you're saying that, how difficult that is, because that threat response is so immediate and so compelling that to harness that energy and stay maybe not still, but contain it inside, instead of letting it leak out, is so hard. And I'm thinking about adolescent boys because you brought them up. It's like that energy, that testosterone is charging through and what a training ground it is to say, okay, let me learn how to be big enough. How do I let my skin actually hold this intensity of experience inside? And is that ever a process of learning?

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And you bring up a great point, which is that most of us, when we get activated, are kind of emotionally regressing into an old version of ourselves, right? We're, depending on the reaction, we're, you know, a petulant 16-year-old or a toddler or, you know, a middle grade person, middle schooler, God forbid.

But most of the time it's activating us into some part of our past, some age from which we needed help or guidance or support, and we feel smaller than our actualized adult self. And so, just like my adolescent, middle aged, middle grade boys, I mean, have a real problem embodying that work. And obviously, it's not one thing, I haven't told them once, like, here's how you do it. It's done, right? It's daily, weekly, monthly of practicing and instructing. And you have to do the same thing for yourself, don't you?

[00:19:48] Deirdre Fay

When I think about how I've had to change patterns over time, and it is 20,000 times a day. And people say it's so hard work. I say that too. It is hard work. And what I've really come to value is that healing is an Olympic endeavor. You don't have Olympic games for it, but gosh, the amount of time and effort it takes to change ourselves is what an Olympic athlete goes through. It should be valued in that way. Instead of feeling small or less than or there's something wrong with us. No, let's value it.

That's why summits like you guys are doing is so important because it puts a word out, yeah, we're in it. I remember when I first started doing research and training around this. It would have been 1996, I think, and there were two articles about trauma and meditation at that point. That's all in the literature. Now, we have a ton of it, but we're still burdened by that sense that there's something wrong with us, that we're misfits, we don't quite fit in because there's something wrong with us, and it's just not true.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I think you make a great point. Yeah, there isn't anything wrong with us at all. We're just on the healing journey. And since we're talking about embodiment, I know that you focus on that a lot. And so I'd love if you could say something to everybody because a lot of these triggers, our reactions. A ton of thought is happening, but there's also the physiological reaction and the embodied reaction of what's going on for you.

And often that's why people turn to the coping mechanisms and coping resources that have kind of diminishing returns, like substance and things that aren't going to be healthy for us in the long term but work in the short term. And so around embodied healing and practices like yoga and meditation, how do people get started and what can they expect?

Deirdre Fay

That's good. I think that's one thing I like about yoga is because it has this multi-faceted approach. It is in the body. There's sensations in our body. How do we be with the sensations? How do we be with our physicality? Asanas, practices, the postures that we can do that help us hold and tolerate? If we're doing something and we're stretching and we're feeling something in our body, how do we begin to breathe through it and let it be there and let that energy move?

Pranayama, being with our breath, being able to hold and contain energy if there's so much rushing through us. Can we breathe, gently hold, extend and then let it go, and train our body to hold it. It really is actually a good practice when people are so anxious, that anxiety is running and it just becomes a kindled effect. It just runs and runs and runs. What if we just breathe in, just pause, gently hold, keep holding and then just naturally let go, and we train our body to interrupt the pattern. Same thing at the bottom of that exhalation.

So in yoga, we say there are five multi-layers of the body. There's the physical body, there's the prana body, the energy body, there's the mental emotional body. So how do we be with our thoughts? How do we be with our feelings? How do we learn to separate that? That's part of what I started doing with becoming safely embodied skills. How do you know it's a thought? How do you know it's a feeling inside your system?

[00:23:37]

How do you know it's sensation? How can you break it apart so you're not overloaded and overwhelmed and just let one of them move, let the energy move, the thought shift and change. Try shifting your thought, try shifting your feelings, and as you do that you begin to have some mastery over your own inner experience.

We also have the wisdom body and the bliss body in yoga, and the wisdom body is one of discernment. Can I actually be able to stand back and be with it? In attachment research, we call that mentalizing, being able to think about myself and think about the other person's experience, and think about how my experience affects your experience, which is affecting my experience. So I see you seeing me seeing you, and it's that the interconnectedness of it that is so important and we miss that.

And so that capacity to mentalize, to be able to have discernment and be able to choose our experience is a gift that we give ourselves. And that, in many ways, is what leads us to having a lot more contentment. Or the bliss body we talk about. But bliss, people think of it as ecstatic-ness in a certain way which it can be, but there's also that sense of where we're all one, where we're connected, where we can let go, we naturally smile, our viscera naturally eases.

So when we think about it in those ways, we have a chance to be more embodied. So it's not just one. And I think the dilemma that we have, and certainly in training people, what I've seen over and over, is we're so used to thinking about our experience. So if we say what's happening? The person is prone to say what the thought, the narrative about it. But the narrative is one piece, and what's going on inside and that's how we access, I don't want to call it the subconscious, but let's call it the nonverbal, the non-narrative experience which we often are separated from.

We have somebody in our coaching group who is a fabulous therapist. She's so attuned but because she had a crazy mom, a literal crazy mom, it's complicated. So when somebody talks to her, she gets all dissociated but she knows what's going on but she can't access the words and it's learning to link it together. That's the relearning bit of it all. So how do we do that?

We have to trust the connection. We have to trust ourselves and we have to trust our own timing. In this person's, it's like, okay, let's just take our time. We don't have to rush. And it's so hard in our world. There's so much rush, rush, get it done. But what if nobody has a chance to be with and be together? People don't even know how to do that anymore.

And really, if we think about it, that's the essence of attachment is being with, not trying to cheat. I just thought of something. When we're healing, we go through this drop down into the depths of our healing, and then there's something that opens, that lifts us up. This first phase where we're dropping down is really about learning the skills, learning the mastery of the situation. And then as we begin that shift, there's a period where we have to pause and learn how to be with ourselves in a different way, and relearn how to be in the world from a different place. That's the wisdom body that starts emerging. Anyway, I just added that in.

Meagen Gibson

No, I love that piece. That was beautiful. And it reminds me that practice as we were, meditation or yoga practice, the reason I love that word is because think of other things, other protective things

that we do, like fire drills, right? We don't do fire drills in fires. We practice fire drills when there is no fire. And the same thing happens with yoga and meditation. We practice so that when we need those resources, because it's good for us all the time, so that when we most deeply need to be able to connect to our breath.

[00:28:13]

And if you think about somebody having a panic attack or somebody like physiologically having a bad reaction and somebody comes up and says, take a deep breath, if you haven't practiced, and you don't have access to what it feels like to be intimately connected to your breath, you don't know how to get your breath back, you don't know how to start physiologically re-regulating yourself because you haven't practiced.

Now, I'm not shaming anybody that doesn't do yoga and meditation. I'm just saying that's the biggest beneficial factor for me is that it's like practicing for the fire before it happens. We're going to practice the drill so that we have access to it and we don't have to think about it. We just know what to do when we need the tool the most.

Deirdre Fay

Love it. Love it. And you're right, it's not just about having a practice like yoga and meditation. It could be singing, could be dancing, it could be anything that engages our multi-faceted body so that the new habit is formed, and so we have something to rely on instead of freezing, shutting down and going away.

I think about John Gottman's work with couples where he says for every one bad thing that happens, you have to have five more positive things he says, put it in the emotional bank account. And that's true with trauma. If all we're doing is focusing on what's wrong with us or the hurt or the trauma, we spin that web so deep. So we need to, that's happening, but also be buffering ourselves with other things, like what creates moments of ease or allowing spaciousness or breath or petting a cat or a dog where there's just, and then focusing on that, the pleasure of that. If you have a cup of hot chocolate, okay, do that.

Yes. It's an escape perhaps, but it's also like, oh my gosh, it tastes so yummy. The funnel cake. I love the smell. Don't even taste it. It's just smell. I love it. Let your body have the pleasure and remember pleasure. And the more we repeat those moments, it augments this huge moment of pain that comes with trauma.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And you were speaking earlier about the different parts of yoga and you were talking about wisdom. And I know that one of the things I've heard so much and I experienced myself in trauma healing was that I had a really hard time knowing what was anxiety versus what was intuition, right? And without practice, it's really hard to tune into that.

To know, is this a voice of anxiety? Is it a protective measure that's coming up because of my trauma, or is this intuition? And the practices that you've named and talked about so eloquently help make that discernment much easier, right?

[00:31:18] Deirdre Fay

Well, how did you do that though, Meagen? Because that's beautiful. How did you know? What's the pivot point in there?

Meagen Gibson

For me personally, it's false urgency. Wisdom doesn't have any false urgency about it. It's not going to enact anything right now, I have to go like, let's say something innocuous that I was actually just talking to a friend about last night. I used to get really reactive when I would get a call from a teacher at the school about my kid's behavior. For all of you parents out there that have never gotten calls, gold star for you. I've gotten several.

And it used to really create a trauma response from me. It would be immediate tears, before I'd even heard what happened, I would be sobbing. And right before COVID happened, I remember I was in the grocery store, I was in the bread aisle and I got one of those calls and I started sobbing. And I was like, this can't go on. Because what I can't do when I'm in this response is actually listen to the problem.

What I can't do is actually be present for the teacher who's just trying to do the worst part of her job and call and report something. I can't actively receive the information in an adult seated way. And so I worked really hard around like, what is this about? What are the patterns that have created this in me? And then started to try to piece apart like, what were my actual feelings? And my feeling I noticed was that there was this urgency, urgency I have to fix my kid.

And the way my kid behaves is a direct reflection on who I am and my value as a human being, and all of these ideas and shame and all of these things that I had buried that I didn't recognize for years and years. And once I unpacked all of that, my intuition spoke up. And my intuition was like, calls from the teacher do not mean you're a bad human being. And I wrote myself a letter, next time you get a call.

And my intuition wrote myself a letter. Next time you get a call, this is what it means. Absolutely nothing about your value as a human being. Absolutely nothing about your kid's value as a human being. Yes, they are struggling right now. Yes, you have the capacity to both listen and respect the teacher and support your child through this difficult period that is not permanent/

But the first step was, though, I had to listen to all of the panic, I had to listen to all the urgency, honor it for what it was trying to do, which was protect me and then also protect my child. And for that matter, probably the teacher. I was taking on everybody's stuff. But then once I was able to listen to it, receive it, then my intuition spoke up. And that wisdom that you spoke of, but I couldn't do it the other way around. I couldn't just say, everybody shut up, wisdom is trying to speak.

Deirdre Fay

No, you also bring up something important there about the attachment need of not taking life personally. We are prone to think there's something wrong with us because we didn't get that need met. But by repatterning yourself like that and learning to listen to yourself, you separated out the facts of the situation. I got a call from everything that you were loading into that, and then that allowed you then to have more freedom to say, wait a minute, she's just calling. I don't have to take it personally. I can actually be present. That's really, what a beautiful story.

[00:34:54] Meagen Gibson

And it completely shifted.

Deirdre Fay

Life experience, right?

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, right? Like, I am not a therapist. I just interview them for a living.

Deirdre Fay

Play them on TV.

Meagen Gibson

Exactly. I just play one on the Internet. I would never even joke about that. I'm not a therapist, but I get to talk to wonderful, beautiful, completely amazing people like you. And I've collected all these breadcrumbs. The only reason I can even talk about these experiences is because of all the wisdom that I've gained from all the people that I talk to, like yourself. And I just hope that sharing real world examples like that help people understand that it's a daily job of just creating enough safety to allow yourself to be curious like that. And it took, that was four years of work before that moment.

Deirdre Fay

Right. So I want to just sit with that and just appreciate the time it takes to heal. I tell the story sometimes when my first memories came up. I said to my therapist, well, how long? How long am I going to do this? And being a good therapist, she turned it back on me and said, well, how long do you think? And I said, well, I'm an Aries. I can do this. Six months. Got it.

I'm still in it. Now, I'm gray and old, and it's the way it is. And I want to, like you, help cultivate an environment where we feel safe to be in the process and the struggle of it without it being that we're victimized, because we're not. We're learning a new way. We are Olympian champions here. It takes what it takes, and why not celebrate that and appreciate it? And those moments are so important to say, yeah, wow, look at the freedom I got and it took its time.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, absolutely. And I know you talk so much about being safely embodied, and this is exactly what we're talking about, right? I mean, you cannot control other people or the outside world. And so it doesn't matter how much you put into healing, the world will still world, right?

We're still going to encounter difficulty. We're still going to encounter people who don't behave in the way that would be best for us. So all we can do is do exactly what you talk about, which is become safely embodied.

[00:37:28] Deirdre Fay

One year when I was in India doing some training, and the lineage that I was practicing at the time talked about how the main guru had actually achieved this very high state, but that many of the people, even when they choose a high state, they come back because they're still continuing. We're hardly ever done. Nobody really is ever done. There's no done. We're in the process of it. So how do we love the process? How do we begin to value it and appreciate it and bow our heads in pain and misery, but recognize that this is part of it?

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I think that's totally the key. And it doesn't sell conferences to say, you're never going to be fully healed or done, I'm sure. Because in this day and age, everybody wants a quick fix. Everybody wants the answer and the solution, and I completely and totally empathize with that. We all want to suffer less and we all want to be happier. And you can and will be, I promise. It just takes time. And you have to be gentle with yourself.

Deirdre Fay

It's true, Meagen, but we can suffer less along the way. The fact is, we are going to suffer. But how do we, during the suffering, be with it in a different way so that it doesn't take us over, so that we're not reactive all the time, so that we're not crushed by life, but we actually become these full-hearted, wise people that can hold and contain the whole spectrum of life experience. Not just one or the other, but we're everything. We're everything.

And when you think about the people that you feel most comfortable with. Certainly it's true for me. It's the people where I don't have to pretend, where I don't have to show up a certain way. I can be myself. And in the process, they see the best in me and I see the best in them.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely, yeah. We're all going to encounter difficulty, we're all going to suffer on the lifeline of this existence. And yet the more work you do, it doesn't bother you for as long, right? Everything still hurts.

Deirdre Fay

We don't fall into the ditch for as long. We don't stay there for as long. At some point we might even say, oh, there's a ditch, let me go here instead.

Meagen Gibson

Exactly.

Deirdre Fay

But it's just life. It's just life. So rather than taking it to heart and feeling bad about ourselves, we're really like, this was it. And how do we just embrace ourselves, keep going and embrace the world in the process?

[00:40:21] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. You may have alluded to it earlier, but I know you've talked about attachment theory a little bit. What do attachment theory and the wisdom traditions give us as a formula for healing?

Deirdre Fay

Well, the model I put together that has helped me and helped so many people comes from both of them, because I was so steeped in the wisdom traditions for so long. And then I studied attachment theory for 13 years and it's like, oh, my gosh, they're saying the same thing on different levels. When we talk in the wisdom traditions, we talk about surrender and letting go. Well, when we talk about it from attachment, we're like, what does a baby do, an infant? They yield. They can't hold their body up. They're just yielding into their Earth. Well, that's surrender. It's the same thing.

What is it like if we reach? And it's an attachment that reaching, it's a practice. How do I reach for something, grab hold of it, pull it and bring it toward me. That's the embodied attachment cycle. We think about it, protest is attachment. Protest is saying something's wrong. It's our wisdom getting activated. Something's wrong here. It shouldn't be like this. It should be like, what?

And when I was doing all this study with Dan Brown, I was like, what is it? How come if we're saying it shouldn't be like this, our body knows it should be a different way, but we don't pay attention to that part. We're just caught, and in therapy, what we do is we get caught in what's wrong, what's wrong, what's wrong. But it's wrong because our soul, our heart, our body says it should be a different way. So that first bit of knowing what is it we're protesting? What the protest leads us to look at, and this is where I started looking at what are the attachment needs, what do I need?

And that's a four letter word. In our world, we're not really allowed to have a need. We're embarrassed by our needs, partly because when we didn't get our needs met, we were shamed for it. Don't cry. Something's wrong because I feel agitated. Something's wrong because I need nurturance or connection. I talked to a therapist today on a consultation. She was saying, I really want people to like me. Of course you do. Who doesn't? That's so normal.

When a cat comes up to you and curls up against you, they want to be liked, they want to be petted, that's part of just our bodiness. So letting that be, having that, letting all those different needs come up, and I catalog eight different ones. Like having that, you're allowed. So once you have your protest, that points out a need. Well, what is it?

How do you begin to get that? Well, the problem there is that it's hard for us to have a need, let alone have the intensity of the longing that it brings up. I long to be loved. I long to be cared for. I long to know what I'm doing in the world, to be mentored and guided through the whole process. I long to be free and to play.

Those are basic needs that every sentient being has. Well, so I protest that I don't have it. I recognize the need. How do I let my body have that experience inside? How do I let my skin hold this longing? Because that's the rocket fuel. If I can let that energy rise and rise and rise, that is going to lead me towards something else, something I don't know, some exciting new world is out there waiting. And usually I can't see it because I've been so lost in my protest that that's my perceptual lens. John Bowlby talks about it as the internal working model.

[00:44:29]

If that's what I see, if that's what I'm prone to see, I'm not going to see whatever else could be there. And so learning how to use this transformational model to see a different world, see ourselves, remake ourselves from the inside, it's such a big opening, and it's really what the wisdom traditions have promised us. They say we are all one. There is no separation. You are pure consciousness. And what has clouded you is your perceptual lens. That's Bowlby's work, internal working model. It has stopped us from being able to be in the world. It's the same thing. It's right there.

How do we let the life force flow through us, push against the samskara, as we call it in yoga, and just grind away, so we release it? The grinding away, the samskaras are our fears, blocks and resistance. They're the same thing, different words.

And when we integrate the two pieces, because the attachment theory is much more grounded in our current Western biological cells, we have something that allows us to change. It's a prescription for change.

Meagen Gibson

I love that. That's beautiful. And it also takes the trigger reactivity language out of it, just a protest and a need. I love that because when you talk about it like that, it also makes it about you instead of what the other person did, right? Or said, in a relational context anyway, of I'm protesting, what do I need and then how do I communicate it?

Deirdre Fay

Right.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, it's wonderful. Deirdre Fay, thank you so much for being with us today.

Deirdre Fay

I love being with you. It's great.

Meagen Gibson

How can people find out more about you and your work?

Deirdre Fay

Probably the easiest thing is on my website, dfay.com. Very simple. D-F-A-Y.com. And forward slash safeguard gives you a 40-page piece around it. On Instagram, on the link. So my Instagram is @dfay.com. No, sorry, [@dfaypics](https://www.instagram.com/dfaypics). D-F-A-Y-P-I-C-S.

And there's a bunch of other things, another freebie around relationship profiles and psycho-spiritual healing that goes a little bit more into this. So there's all different kinds of ways like that. I have a lot of stuff on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), a lot of stuff on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), so there's all kinds of ways for

people. But really it's about you listening. I'd say you to all of us, listening to your own heart, because that's your inner wisdom really urging us to come forward. And there's nothing like reconnecting with yourself and finding your own way home to yourself.

[00:47:30] Meagen Gibson

I couldn't agree more. Thank you again for being with us.

Deirdre Fay

My pleasure. Love being with you.