



Conscious Life presents

TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

Understanding Mother Hunger

Guest: Kelly McDaniel

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[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson

Hello, and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, cohost of the Trauma Super Conference.

Today I'm speaking with Kelly McDaniel, a licensed professional counselor, author, mother, and women's advocate. In her first book, *Ready to Heal*, she named an attachment injury as Mother Hunger and started a movement. Women resonated with the concept and wanted treatment.

Kelly devotes herself to nurturing insecure attachment, and maternal deprivation in adult women. In her second book, *Mother Hunger*, Kelly speaks to the millions of women who suffer with a lifelong emotional burden that adversely affects self-worth, eating patterns, and relational wellness. Kelly McDaniel, thank you so much for being with us today.

Kelly McDaniel

Thank you so much for having me.

Meagen Gibson

I absolutely love speaking with you about Mother Hunger, and as this is a trauma conference, I would love it if you could just start by explaining your term Mother Hunger and how you came to it.

Kelly McDaniel

I think the term found me actually in the depths of the therapy process. People come to therapy for all different reasons, but generally things aren't working out really well, and they're struggling with symptoms of depression and anxiety, generally attached to heartbreak.

Since I was writing about love addiction, I was working a lot with broken hearts. And there was always a moment, it seems, no matter how old someone was, that when we would get to the core of that ache, that wound, that heart break, there would be a moment where someone would say, I want my mom.

And when I started paying attention to that simple request that really, as soon as somebody would say it, they would wake up and be like, no, I don't, why am I saying that? So, it came from a primitive, younger part of the self. It really spoke to something that I was seeing. The urgency to find a maternal quality of love that was getting skewed in a search for romance. And so, it was so

urgent that it reminded me of being hungry. When we're hungry, it's urgent that we get something to eat.

[00:02:25]

That's biological, that's innate. We don't make a decision. We just have to do it. And that's how this search for love looked to me. Urgent, biological, essential. And yet the love that everyone was looking for was way beyond the scope of what romantic love can provide.

Kelly McDaniel

So it took me a while to operationalize it, to really name what is it folks were looking for, so for a while, I just called it Mother Hunger. But then when I wrote the *Mother Hunger* book, I really did need to operationalize, well, what is that? What do mothers provide, and what is it that we're desperately searching for?

Meagen Gibson

And you just teed up to my next question really well, thank you, which is, you know, what are those characteristics that mothers provide that people would associate with having a good relationship?

Kelly McDaniel

Exactly. And it's interesting that it's not common knowledge. In fact, when I was faced with the daunting task of writing the *Mother Hunger* book, which I put on myself, nobody did this to me, but it was not something I was really looking forward to doing, I just had to go to the dictionary and just look at the definition of mothering to see if that could help me a little bit operationalize what it is a mother does to help me write.

And in the dictionary it says to care for someone as a mother would. And it just really spoke to how important it is to have a better understanding of what mothering is. Because as little mammals, we all need to be mothered. But if we don't know what that actually is, we think it's just innate.

We're missing the boat here. And that's why I think so many of us, as mothers, as daughters, as children, as adults, struggle because we didn't get the core needs met. So, I came up with three. The first being nurturance, the second being protection, and the third being guidance. Nurturance and protection being the two most primitive needs because without them, we could die. We don't thrive.

Nurturance includes feeding, holding, touching, eye contact. Protection is what it sounds like. If we're not protected when we're most vulnerable, we can die. So those needs are very primitive. And then the guidance need comes a bit later. As we get older, we look to our mother and hope that we find some inspiration, some admiration to direct us as we grow and begin to make our own decisions and choices.

Meagen Gibson

It's almost like they're associated with stages of development in personhood as well, right, because you're not necessarily going to look to your parent for guidance explicitly when you're young, you will do it, but you won't realize you're doing it. And then when you're older and you're a fully formed adult, you're going to intentionally go to a parent for guidance.

[00:05:34]

And if they weren't able to provide it for you as a child, not getting it as an adult is like a reinjury, or even though you haven't been able to pinpoint why it hurts so much and why the absence of that guidance is such a pain point, it's exactly what you're talking about.

Kelly McDaniel

I like the way you say that because it expresses what I've seen, that we never really outgrow our desire for a mother. And I think part of that is about guidance. We may not want the mother we have, but we don't outgrow the need to be mothered or guided when we weren't adequately guided at the age appropriate time.

I will say this, I've seen time and time again when the early needs for nurturing, for being safe, were not met, children may not even trust their parent or their mother enough for guidance. A mother may actually want to be a guide. She may step in as her kids reach teenage years and want to help. And the children have already learned, I don't trust you to guide me because without those early needs being met, children learn to do it themselves.

Meagen Gibson

You figure it out, don't you?

Kelly McDaniel

Then guidance almost feels like an insult. Don't tell me what to do. I've got this.

Meagen Gibson

Especially unsolicited guidance.

Kelly McDaniel

Oh, that's the worst.

Meagen Gibson

From anybody, but especially from somebody you haven't deemed valuable and safe in your life.

Kelly McDaniel

Exactly.

Meagen Gibson

I want to back up a second because what were your concerns, if you had any, about you are a mother and you had a mother, and then to write a book about the way that mothers can be less than supportive and contribute to trauma and bad attachment and things like that in their children. What was that experience like for you? What were you afraid of? And then what are you hoping that exploring this topic will help people do?

[00:07:45] Kelly McDaniel

What a great question. Thank you. My biggest fear in writing this book, without a doubt, was that I would somehow contribute to a culture that is already blaming mothers, that I would be contributing to a culture that's already misogynistic, that I would be adding more burden to mothers than they're already carrying.

And that's what almost stopped me in my tracks time and time again. Gratefully that is not happening. The feedback I'm getting is that it's very clear that Mother Hunger comes from a root, that it's not about women, and it is totally about the culture not supporting women or femininity or mothers and children.

And so when we look at it as Mother Hunger, as a byproduct of a culture that doesn't really respect how important mothering is for all of us, we're going to have Mother Hunger. And then let's add that we also live in a culture where most women I know know what it's like to feel frightened out in public, whether it's catcalling, whether it's stalking, whether it's literally the darkness and being attacked. We know in our bones that we're sexual prey when we're outside, sometimes in our own home.

So many of us are frightened, and it's almost impossible not to pass that fear to the next generation, which contributes to some of the lack of protection.

Meagen Gibson

And I can imagine... Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt...

Kelly McDaniel

Please, go ahead.

Meagen Gibson

No, I was just going to say that that inherent, just being a woman and then an inherent lack of safety that is inherent to being a woman in the world if you're part of society, if you're not aware of it, and how the pressure of it contributes to you and how you move around in the world, I can see how, and I'm not going to blame that entirely for the symptom of Mother Hunger, but I can see how, if you're not aware of it, if you're not developed enough, that you could then project all of that fear into if I can't be safe in the world, I also can't provide safety for somebody I'm supposed to be providing safety for.

Kelly McDaniel

Whether consciously or unconsciously. So I've seen some mothers over-protect and I've seen some under-protect from that place of just lack of awareness around the reality of this issue like you're saying. I think the more we can be aware of how to make ourselves safe, it helps us make our children safe in a way that doesn't frighten them unnecessarily. But that's a tough deal. And I think a lot of us come to motherhood before we're even aware of how to do that.

[00:10:42] Meagen Gibson

Yeah I always tell my kids that I was lucky enough to choose when I became a mother and became a mother later in life than many people I know and that I'm really glad because I would have been a horrible young mother. My self awareness was not even remotely close to good enough to have made the changes and be aware of the things that I needed to be aware of to be even a remotely caring mother. So yeah, not everybody has a choice though right?

Kelly McDaniel

Well, and I love that you pointed that out, that making the choice with awareness to become a mother is something that unfortunately shouldn't be a luxury, but it is. When motherhood is forced on us or we move into it from an unconscious place, because that is what the culture says our body and our existence is for, it's really difficult to be prepared.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely.

Kelly McDaniel

But even if we are conscious, we make the choice and we have more wisdom, that doesn't mean we're still prepared and that sure doesn't mean the culture is going to support us. It's really difficult to be a mother and to provide those three things. And they don't have to be done perfectly but they do need to be done enough to promote a secure attachment.

When they're not done enough, what happens is there's an insecure attachment and I don't like the word insecure attachment because it implies that, I mean who wants to be called insecure? And yet the science says 50% of us are insecurely attached. I think that's conservative. I think more of us are.

So that's another reason I wanted a name for what this is. This achy sense of I need some quality of love, but I don't know how to get it. And I didn't want to call it insecurity. I call it Mother Hunger. We are hungry for more nurturing, more safety and guidance.

Meagen Gibson

And I know that you say in the book that it's not, this term Mother Hunger, it's an injury, not a disorder, right? You're not going to walk around saying, I have Mother Hunger, it's something that you become aware of and can heal, not something that you just have to carry around with for the rest of your life.

Kelly McDaniel

I do talk about it as an attachment injury because too much of the literature out there that is psychological refers to things as disorders, whether it's a personality disorder that can look like bipolar borderline, depression, anxiety. These things are not disorders. They're so common. I don't know why we call them disorders, but they do emerge from an attachment injury and based on how profound that injury is, can lead us into behaviors that are more difficult to treat than others.

For example, since this is a trauma conference, if as a child you received none of those elements, no nurturing, no safety, protection and no guidance, or the guidance that you got was really

damaging, as in the case of some. Well, we heard Jeanette McCurdy talk about it in her book, *I Wish My Mother Had Died* where her mother taught her how to have an eating disorder.

[00:14:00]

That's profound misguidance. When that happens, I call it third degree Mother Hunger. Third degree Mother Hunger is another term for "complex traumatic stress". I don't use the word disorder, and I don't use the word post because it's ongoing. There is no post, like when we grow up with an abusive primary caregiver, or mother. That's ongoing. It's every day. It's all the time. It becomes our embodied sense of who we are.

So we carry it in our bones even if we're not living with her anymore or maybe she's died. And so recovering from that injury, from the very person we were meant to attach to, is the most difficult trauma healing that there is.

Meagen Gibson

And you name both food and mood and behavior. What I'm getting at is the ways in which that thing happened, where Jeanette's mom was saying those things to her, it's not only going to affect the way that she relates to her body, it's going to affect the messages that she internalizes in her brain. Like, she's going to hear her mother's voice for a very long time, and it's going to inform the choices that she makes in regard to her body and her behavior for a long time.

Kelly McDaniel

For all of us, because our mother's voice, our mother's touch, our mother's presence, is how we form our idea of who we are. We don't do that alone. Little infants are, by nature, meant to develop a sense of self in connection, not in isolation. And so if our connection is damaging our self image, our self being is very hurt and it's very difficult to heal that when so much of that pain happens before we have language and before our brain comes online to make sense of what's happening, which doesn't happen till we're about five or six years old.

So until then, we're making sense of the world and who we are based purely on how we feel, how we're talked to, how we're held, and how we're fed. So her story is not unique. She's brave to have given it to us and told us, and if you haven't read it and you're curious, the book *I'm Glad My Mom Died* by Jeanette McCurdy is a beautiful illustration of recovering from third degree Mother Hunger which, in my opinion and in my experience, is the most arduous healing journey from trauma that we have.

Meagen Gibson

And I think I remember you saying something about how this attachment injury is important to heal first in trauma work, that you can't necessarily maybe get to the work of untangling the rest of the trauma until you deal with this primary injury of Mother Hunger. Am I quoting you right?

Kelly McDaniel

Well it depends on the trauma. Obviously if you are fresh from having a car accident, gotta deal with that. If you've got a physical injury, gotta deal with that. If you're struggling with an addiction, gotta deal with that. You've got to deal with some of those externals that are more crisis oriented, more life threatening, before you can go down deep into this work.

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I really think Mother Hunger work is the PhD of healing work and sometimes it takes a while to get there because what we've had to do to cope with this yearning may have gotten us into lots of trouble and we gotta deal with that first.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I really like the way they contextualize that, because you're absolutely right. Some of those more acute needs definitely need to be, and if you're having mental health issues like anxiety, depression, a whole variety of things, we've got to get those things stabilized, get you support first before you can do those deep dives. Otherwise, you're going to be further injuring yourself by trying to untangle all of that.

Kelly McDaniel

Well said. And I think this is mother nature's beautiful design even that she won't let us get to this primitive injury if we don't have enough support because it could flood us and put us in jeopardy.

Meagen Gibson

That's such a great context that you just laid out for us. I mean it really is true. I always try to think of these traumatic responses and the coping mechanisms we develop, you know, people always say, that's not a good coping mechanism. I'm like, well, it's pretty wise. It's the one that this person developed on their own when they didn't have anyone else to rely on them or teach them, and it was meant to protect me.

Kelly McDaniel

And it was meant to keep us alive. That is our body's purpose, is to keep us alive. And so whatever coping mechanism we needed for our unique constellation of family culture, that's what we had to do. And it worked for a while. And so we have to be grateful for some of our coping strategies, even though eventually they start to cause us more harm than good and may, in fact, put our life in jeopardy.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, exactly. And that's when most people come to that assessing, like, all right, so this is not working anymore. I'm going to deal with getting some better coping skills, learning, getting into a supportive environment and then once I feel safe, I feel secure, in my own self, I feel supported, protected even, then I can go into, okay, now where did all this begin? Where did this come from?

Kelly McDaniel

The body has its own wisdom that we've been given. So we are designed to heal, but the body will wait until the conditions are safe for that healing to unfold. Because sometimes the healing can hurt worse than the original injury, right?

[00:20:13] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely.

Kelly McDaniel

For a period of time, it can hurt worse before it feels better because we're waking up. I call it we're defrosting, we're thawing. So, when we're carrying around this attachment injury that I call Mother Hunger, without a name, without a place, without support, the grief that goes with it freezes in our body. And that can cause all kinds of difficulties, chronic pain, autoimmune issues, allergies.

And so that's a symptom of the grief having no outlet. Disenfranchised grief is grief that the culture doesn't recognize. And when it's disenfranchised, there's no place to take our grief. We can't talk about it. So, the body holds it, just holds it until there's enough support around and then it starts to defrost. And when things defrost, it stings at first before it starts to melt and feel better and flow.

Meagen Gibson

And just to go with this metaphor a little bit longer, if you don't do it with intention, then it's going to be a big mess, right?

Kelly McDaniel

Yes.

Meagen Gibson

Somebody like me and you go through a hurricane and you lose power, then your freezer is suddenly a big rotting, messy, wet mess and we don't want to be accidentally defrosting anything.

Kelly McDaniel

Exactly. And yet sometimes, like a hurricane, we may be thrust into a defrost before we would have chosen.

Meagen Gibson

Sometimes the things out of our control throw us into that, don't they? And it reminds me of something that, I know, I think I've also attributed you to saying, which is that part of the reason it's so internalized and we hold on to it is because we can't hate our mother. We're biologically programmed not to. We have to instead internalize it and hate ourselves instead because we can't break that bond.

Kelly McDaniel

We have to have our bond. And as little ones, we see her and need to see her as perfect. So if something's not going right, we will do whatever psychological gymnastics we need to, to try to connect with her. And if it still doesn't work, we're pretty convinced the problem is us. Now, that changes eventually as we get older, but the ferociousness of that bond is already set.

So even though we may grow up and realize, wow, that relationship is not very healthy for me. It doesn't mean we stop loving her. It doesn't mean we stop hoping it will change. It doesn't mean we

can always break out of the fantasy that she will eventually come around and apologize and be the mother that we want. That takes a long time for the awareness to catch up with, maybe, oh, okay, I don't think being around her is really great for me. It doesn't change the desire.

[00:23:15] Meagen Gibson

Right. I was just going to say yeah, exactly, that you might become aware that your mother is incapable, like will not ever be at a place where she will have accountability and make a sincere apology that resonates with you, but you won't ever stop wanting it.

Kelly McDaniel

Right, right. And that's why I call it an apology ache. Being part of Mother Hunger is this aching for recognition of a mother to say, I've hurt you, this is how I hurt you, and I'm so sorry, and I'm not going to do it again. And for so many, that never happens. And longing for it to happen creates a certain pathology because it becomes an extended fantasy. It makes it hard for us to see her objectively. It also makes it hard for us to see anyone else objectively.

So we look for apologies from other people when we're slighted and we have high expectations, maybe of our lovers or our friends or even our bosses, wanting them to do the repair work that really we needed our mother to do.

Meagen Gibson

And I bet, I can imagine in that insecure and also disorganized attachment fashion, that nobody's mother, usually, I'm going to make a generalization here, but nobody's mother is pure evil. And I'm sure that even if you didn't have some safety, some security, even if you had third degree Mother Hunger, there were moments where your mother was fun, or your mother was caring, or you had moments where you made good memories and you had good experiences, and you felt, for that fleeting moment, the experience that you were after.

And so, we're always trying to chase after that. We're trying to reinsert ourselves into an unhealthy relationship or an unhealthy environment, chasing after that one moment that we were hoping is going to come back again.

Kelly McDaniel

It's really well said. And I think that's why Stockholm Syndrome is sometimes one of the best examples of what third degree Mother Hunger is like. Do we need to go through what Stockholm Syndrome is?

Meagen Gibson

It would probably be wise, yeah.

Kelly McDaniel

Okay. That term came from the situation that happened where there were some men who held up a bank. To do so, they went inside and held up the bank tellers, who happened to be women, at gunpoint for quite a period of time, a series of days and I don't remember the exact details, but in that period of time, these women were frightened.

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They were being held at gunpoint, but at the same time, these men fed them, talked to them. There were moments of good even in the terror. So after these guys were apprehended and put in jail, the women that they held up wrote them letters in jail, and then when they were released, they all got married, the two women and the two criminals. So it's a great example of trauma bonding.

When our two most powerful neural pathways are activated at the same time, the neural pathway for attachment and the neural pathway for safety, fear, when those two things get activated at the same time, it creates a very powerful bond, and the attachment will trump the danger. So we find ourselves going toward people who other people might see as dangerous, but for us, if we've had a dangerous upbringing and a mother that was threatening, that will feel normal to us.

Meagen Gibson

Okay, so it's going to feel familiar and even safe, because familiar is safe, right?

Kelly McDaniel

It might even feel intoxicating in the beginning...

Meagen Gibson

That instability can be a little bit invigorating, right?

Kelly McDaniel

There's a lot of adrenaline that comes with that and a lot of cortisol that comes with that because our body really wants us to run or fight. But if we can't run and fight our mother when we're children, instead we default to the freeze response and we become somewhat immobilized.

We may appease her, try to please her. So those responses are what take over when we can't fight her and we can't run away from her. And so one of the expert ways we stay alive is we learn to keep her happy or at least try to keep her balanced. That's what we can do as adult women when we're being threatened, we may appease the abuser as a way to stay alive. And it's very effective.

Meagen Gibson

It's smart, it's sophisticated, our bodies are trying to keep us alive and trying to protect us and trying to keep us safe. And, so, it's completely understandable that that would be a response.

Kelly McDaniel

The whole purpose of our body is to keep us alive. And so if that means appeasing a perpetrator, that's what we'll do.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, I just want to honor that. I think if you haven't been through a situation like that, you can look at it and see people as weak or insecure, et cetera. And it seems super strong to me, especially

until you become aware of it, and then it takes even greater strength to break those patterns, break that legacy.

[00:28:46] Kelly McDaniel

Yes, exactly. Well said.

Meagen Gibson

And if you don't have the support, to try to do it alone without the support of an education or if we could just teach people how to validate other people's experiences, we wouldn't need therapists anymore.

That's all I pay my therapist for, is just so I go in, say what's going on and she'll say, gosh, that really makes sense. Even if she doesn't agree with me, she just goes, gosh, your feelings really make sense. And I'm like, well, here you go. Here's my money.

Kelly McDaniel

Well, part of what that is, is nurturing, it's attunement.

Meagen Gibson

Exactly.

Kelly McDaniel

So when your therapist attunes to you, that means what you're doing makes sense. If our first caregiver, our first love, could attune to us and help us make sense of why we're crying or why we're scared or why we're joyful, yeah, we wouldn't need therapists. That would be great. Maybe that's why I wrote that book.

Meagen Gibson

Trying to get yourself out of a job, right?

Kelly McDaniel

Trying to get myself out of a job. But the world is not cooperating.

Meagen Gibson

Just to validate the work that as a parent, as a mother, it's super hard to attune to your kids because your own reactivity and your own expression and your own emotions and your own history is all bubbling up. I'll take a really shallow example. My son has a VR headset. He plays a VR game. And there was an aspect of this VR game that he just wanted to tell me about so desperately, and I could not have been more annoyed.

I was just like, on the inside, I'm like, do you have any idea how much I have to do? I'm getting angry. I'm getting activated. I'm just like, why would you bore me with this detail I don't care about? But on the outside, what I know is he's making a bid for connection. He's making a bid to be heard

and seen and noticed as important. So I was like, two minutes, tell me everything about this thing that is important to you and why it's important to you. And then it was over.

[00:31:11] Kelly McDaniel

It's so hard, right?

Meagen Gibson

So hard.

Kelly McDaniel

If people prepared us for this in high school, we would really have a lot more information about whether or not we want to be a mother. But I think that it's also really difficult when you're outnumbered. So, you have more than one child, and they have different ways that they need to be witnessed. Or even the one child you have has a love language that's nothing like yours. So, attuning to that individual requires a skill set that's not coming naturally, and that gets so underestimated.

That's the emotional, invisible labor of love. And we do it with our partners. And thank goodness for Gary Chapman's book on *The Five Love Languages*. But when we have to do it with a child or more than one child, it's exhausting.

Meagen Gibson

Not to mention that the children then, or at least one of mine, gets savvy to the fact that you parent them differently. And then there's a fairness issue, right? Why do you deal with them differently than you do with me? Because you're different people, you need to be attuned to differently. Different things matter to you.

Kelly McDaniel

Yeah. It's overwhelming.

Meagen Gibson

It is extremely overwhelming. And even if you don't have children, just to love other people in the world requires that exact same skill set. And we're normally able to compartmentalize or escape better, like setting boundaries with people that we haven't made and have to parent.

Kelly McDaniel

Exactly. Or maybe we're only with that person for an hour or two, but with children, it's the one job, motherhood is the one job, you cannot quit. You don't get to say, I'm out, I resign, I'm fired...

Meagen Gibson

Although I do put myself in time out probably once a week.

[00:33:05] Kelly McDaniel

Well, right. And way to go because it's so much better that, as mothers, we put ourselves in time out than put our children in time out. It's a way of owning, I don't know how to handle this situation right now. It's not your fault, so I'm going to take a break. I'll be back when I can calm down.

Meagen Gibson

I feel like you just took the words right out of my mouth.

Kelly McDaniel

We're not writing a parenting manual. So, fortunately, we don't need to be experts in that, do we?.

Meagen Gibson

Exactly. Thank goodness. I do want to touch on your experience on Red Table Talks just a little bit because I think that's another great place where people can see you in action.

I know that you were there twice talking about Mother Hunger, and we mentioned Jeanette McCurdy's book. But what were your most memorable moments of that conversation with Jeanette and also with Jada Pinkett Smith and her mother and daughter?

Kelly McDaniel

Well, I'll just say this. The first time the producers called me and invited me out, it was so lovely because Jada had organically found my book visiting a friend, and the book was on the coffee table. She read it and she liked it, and she invited me out. And there was no talking to Jada before the show.

There's no prep. It's literally, come on out, walk onto the table. You're on. And I have had very little experience of talking about Mother Hunger with generations in the room. Mother, daughter, granddaughter. It's rare. And so, I think one of my takeaways from that first table visit was the immense amount of healing, respect, and integrity that those three have for each other, for the space they're creating.

And in that sense, what role modeling they're offering, what a gift they're giving to women that they would pick this book, have this hard discussion, and risk going into tender places at the table...

Meagen Gibson

Spontaneously with one another.

Kelly McDaniel

Yeah and so I went in definitely in therapist mode in case there would be a cause for some intervention, but there wasn't, because those three are so careful, respectful, and they're doing their work. So, it was delightful to have that conversation. And that is unique. So that was my first takeaway.

[00:35:41]

The second was incredible, too, because I had stumbled on Jeanette's book right as it hit the world, and luckily, because it sold out immediately, but somehow I got a copy, read it right away, and I did an Instagram post about it because I was just so blown away by the quality of her writing, her skills, and her courage.

The courage to say out loud, "I'm glad my mom died". Most people will judge that right off the bat and not even give her a chance. But without her mother dying, I don't think she'd be liberated. She would still be trying to be a good daughter. So, it gives Jeanette a chance for a life.

And so the title really makes sense, especially in the context of the abuse. But sitting at the table, I was just so grateful to be included in that discussion. They called me saying, I think it would be good if you come to weigh in on this, because this is an extreme case. And I was able to share that it's not that unique, which is the tragedy, but all the more reason why Jeanette's book is a gift.

Jada's Red Table mission is a gift, that they are putting out healing information that we need. I've felt grateful to be part of it. And I'm so happy that they're helping me with the mission of teaching about Mother Hunger.

Meagen Gibson

I love that you're here. I love that we're talking about all of this, but we're not talking about my mom and we're not talking about your mom. It's to have two examples of not only three generations talking actively about their relationships, their attachments, their things, and having you as a guide and then having Jeanette come on and be very vulnerable and talk specifically about her relationship and have you guide her through that and talk about it from a different framework and perspective is just a different, obviously different, way than we talk about trauma and Mother Hunger here.

So I love both representations and both models of how to talk through it and what it looks like.

Kelly McDaniel

I do, too and I think Jeanette really didn't need any guidance. She's had expert therapy. She is a walking miracle, and she didn't need any guidance from me. I think I was there to validate and understand and maybe put a different language, third degree Mother Hunger, with it, so that others who are enduring this hardship in real time may have a name for it which will help their healing.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. So I want to leave people with something that they can take away, that they can put into practice right away. You name and describe several self healing and calming techniques in your book. I would love it if you could share one of them with us now that people could start using today.

[00:38:38] Kelly McDaniel

Well, I would like to differentiate, because we are in a Trauma Conference, that, specifically, Mother Hunger exists on a spectrum and there are forms of it that are not necessarily traumatic, that can be healed with a good relationship, a friendship, a pet, even the right career.

But when it's third degree Mother Hunger, that requires clinical intervention. It just does. Since we're talking about trauma here, if you or your clients are struggling with this type of relational burn, which is why I call it third degree, I think the best interventions are attachment focused EMDR, and that's Laurel Parnell's model.

Try to find someone who's trained by Laurel Parnell in the attachment focused EMDR. Anyone who's trained in Pat Ogden Sensorimotor Psychotherapy can also work with third degree Mother Hunger. Someone who's attachment focused in their therapy, body centered in their therapy, because talk therapy is not going to be enough, that's really the best intervention for third degree Mother Hunger.

Because it's not enough to have a good friend, it's not enough to have a gravity blanket, it's not enough to take a warm bath. Those things all help with nurturing and putting nurturing back in, but it won't be enough for third degree.

Meagen Gibson

I love that you said it, you're like, you're not going to journal your way out of this. You're not going to meditate your way out of this. Since we talk so much about support, I'm glad that you were very explicit about it. This is the support you're going to need in this situation.

Kelly McDaniel

Yeah.

Meagen Gibson

I really appreciate that you named specific modalities, techniques and people because I can attest myself when I was first on my trauma healing journey, that the process of finding a therapist that was appropriate and had the approach, I didn't have the language, I didn't have the background skill set to know the terminology that I should be cross referencing with my insurance company's coverage of whoever.

You don't know what you need to be looking for in order to advocate for yourself. You're at the beginning of your journey. And the last person that's going to be a real go-getter to do that is going to be somebody who's trying to unpack the trauma for the first time.

Kelly McDaniel

Exactly, right. We're so vulnerable. When we need help, we are so vulnerable and we don't generally have the energy or the wherewithal to find the exact help. So what I'm trying to do on my website is create a resource page for clinicians that I'm training so that they are aware of this issue.

[00:41:34]

Because I think sometimes we can be re-wounded if we go into therapy with someone and they try to encourage us to repair the relationship with our mother. And that's what a lot of untrained people will do. So that can cause more harm than good. And so I really appreciate what you're saying. We usually don't know what to look for. We haven't had the language.

This is still so new to understand and for there to be a term called Mother Hunger. So lots of people may not know how to treat Mother Hunger, but they do know how to treat relational trauma. And that's why I'm suggesting attachment EMDR, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, because those clinicians tend to be the most sensitive and savvy and they're not going to try to talk you out of your reality.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Fantastic. Well, you mentioned it briefly, but I want you to tell people specifically where they can find out more about you and your work and your book.

Kelly McDaniel

Well, the best place to find a book is any place you buy books. If you are someone that is struggling with third degree Mother Hunger, or you're supporting people who are struggling with third degree Mother Hunger, those folks do better with the audiobook because if they try to read, the attention span is challenged already.

But they hear their voice or their mother's voice, and that can be so difficult that they can't get through the book. So they pick up the audiobook and they hear my voice. And what I'm hearing from women is that it's very helpful. They can digest the material. So that is, I think, one of the best resources out there, is the audiobook for Mother Hunger.

My website is kellymcdanieltherapy.com and on the resource page is where I'm adding clinicians as I'm getting them uploaded. So, right now, there are not very many, but I have 20 more in the queue and a few more coming in November. And it will take a few months before they're up to speed, but I'm working on it.

Meagen Gibson

I appreciate it. I can also attest to being one of those audiobook readers. I love the audiobook and I also felt like I knew you before we had our talk because I have both copies. I usually buy the print and I have the audiobook. Normally most audio book players you can also make notes in there, because that's what I'm always afraid of with a virtual audio only, how am I going to take all my notes? I can't highlight an audio book. But you can. There's many ways to do that if you're a note taker like I am.

I highly recommend the audiobook as well. You read it lovely. Okay. Thank you so much. Kelly McDaniel, always a pleasure to be with you.

Kelly McDaniel

Thank you so much for having me.