



Conscious Life presents

# TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

## Finding safety in difference

**Guest: Kimberly Weeks**

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

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

Today I'm speaking with Kimberly Weeks, a certified trauma recovery coach and director of leadership for the International Association of Trauma Recovery Coaching. She works with survivors of childhood trauma and narcissistic abuse in their families of origin and intimate partnership relationships. She resides in Atlanta, Georgia and helps clients recover and discover who they are apart from their trauma. Kimberly Weeks, thank you so much for being with us today.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

I am so excited to be here with you. We're going to have a great conversation. Yeah.

### **Meagen Gibson**

So we live today in what often feels like a very divisive atmosphere and culture worldwide. And so for people with trauma, this can lead to the world feeling incredibly unsafe. So I'd like to start by asking, what does it mean to find safety in difference?

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Oh goodness, that's a great question. And the succinct-est way I can say it is for you to be able to stay at the table of difference and hold onto yourself. To stay with other thoughts, beliefs, feelings, views, framework systems and still hold onto your authentic self and what you think, feel and believe. And that is a very difficult thing for trauma survivors to do. It is. It really is.

### **Meagen Gibson**

It can't be understated, can it? I mean, I felt that when you said that. I felt that viscerally.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

I felt it. I felt it because so much of what trauma survivors learn in their childhoods or their families of origin is that when there is a difference, if they don't assimilate, if they don't go with the family rule or the family vow that there's going to be consequences. It could be abuse, it could be

humiliation, it could be shaming. It could be not being able to eat that night. It could be not being able to have interaction with other people and being isolated.

**[00:02:15]**

And so your body develops from your childhood this memory track that differences are cues. A difference becomes a cue of danger. It becomes a cue of some kind of threat. There's something on the other side of you having your own authentic thoughts and beliefs, desires. And so overcoming that is a very daunting challenge because the first thing it requires is for us to be aware of where all that stuff originally came from.

Most of my clients that find their way to me are noticing in their adult lives these patterns of response or retreat or reaction and they're trying to figure out, okay, I can't function. How do I do life when there's differences? Especially when there's so much of it happening globally, but also happening in every interaction we have every day? How do I get to a place where I'm able to sit with people's differences and not feel like I'm going to be in trouble because I don't see it the same way? Yeah.

### **Meagen Gibson**

A thousand things come to mind and I think when people think about it, obviously there's big 'T' trauma and then there's small 't' trauma. And often, we're talking about kind of family relationship dynamics right now, but we could take this into work in a minute. But in family relationships, it can be as subtle as I imagine, maybe you're from Texas and your whole family is oriented around football. What you really want to do is play tabletop fantasy games. You just do not fit in.

And therefore you don't know how to be yourself in a family of origin that orients their entire self-concept and culture around a game you don't understand or care about, and therefore you don't know how to relate. And you feel like you're the one that's I mean, I'm trying to think of some things where it's not gross neglect or abuse, or you can have an incredible mismatch just in culture that makes you feel that way, right?

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah. You just said something really important. You said, because I think differently or I have different interests, then all of a sudden I don't feel like I belong. I don't feel like I fit in. And whether that is in your family of origin or your friends circle when you're growing up or your environment around the water cooler at work. You're in these spaces where that desire for connection, we as human beings are wired for both safety and connection, and sometimes those things compete with each other.

And so whether it's one of those spaces, all that is at the root of it is I want to be able to show up and be myself, and I want to feel like I belong. And I think that the safety part starts with a self-acceptance of all of the parts of you. Dick Schwartz talks about no bad parts, all the parts of you that are present, which requires a discovery. It requires you to go through a discovery process for yourself as you're growing up.

And if you didn't get to do that in your childhood, if you were not given permission to explore, oh, I like painting. Oh, I like this. If you were in the Texas house where everything was about football and

everything was geared towards a particular team and you didn't even get an opportunity to do that self-discovery.

**[00:05:51]**

It's really difficult as an adult to step into being able to show up at the table of difference and do it from an authentic place because you don't know yourself. You don't know yourself to offer yourself, if that makes sense. So belonging is rooted in that, really. It truly is. It's rooted in that for real.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And maybe you do know yourself, but you're not secure enough in your relationship with yourself to hold that ground in a way that doesn't get activated in the face of difference.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah, that's the other big part of this. It's learning the pattern of activation that happens when you begin the process of stepping into new environments. It's kind of like the new girl on campus, or the new guy on campus, learning how to deal with whatever comes up in your nervous system. Our nervous systems, through our social engagement system, are wired to scan every new environment that we're in to determine whether it's safe to connect, whether it's dangerous and I need to fight, flight or freeze or whether or not this is a life-threatening situation.

And for trauma survivors, that arousal, that hyper-attunement is on a different level. It's on a ten. And so when we go into different spaces, and you're talking about finding safety in difference, when we go into different spaces, immediately this unconscious, primal body response, somatic response, is having all kinds of alarms go off.

And when that takes place, if we don't know how to resource ourselves back into a place where we're regulated and our brain is all the way online and we have all of the access to what we call our executive functioning, so we think logically. If we can't do that, it's going to be really hard to do anything but survive, which is what we learned how to do in our childhoods, for many of us.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. And I also want to validate for people, I think often culture minimizes the importance of social safety. And you said the word primal and it reminded me that we are wired evolutionarily to fit in socially because for millions and millions of years if we didn't fit in socially, we died. We didn't get food, we didn't get shared resources, we didn't get protection.

All of these things that we are as humans wired to make sure we socially fit in and make sure that we're part of a group. And so that leftover part of us is not to be minimized. Your reactions to social estrangement or not fitting in, are not imagined. They're real, right?

### **Kimberly Weeks**

They're real. Yeah, absolutely. And that belonging is, as you said, it wasn't just kind of like Maslow's hierarchy, just this self-actualization and being able to socially connect. It's a base need to be able to have your needs for connection, your needs for survival as it relates to eating, drinking. All of

those needs are attached to being able to go into situations and be able to connect, even though they're vastly different ways of thinking, believing or whatever.

**[00:09:09]**

And so one of the things I found when I'm talking to clients is how often this particular topic comes up. How much of their ruptures, their conflict, are simply rooted in them not feeling adequate to be able to articulate what they think and feel, or feeling threatened because someone else is very dominant in their way of communicating.

And so finding the way to safety in the middle of these environments where there may be conflict or there may be activation on somebody's part in their nervous system. Finding your way to safety is a life skill that we cannot underestimate. It creates the opportunity for that belonging to actually happen without losing yourself, which most of us do. Most of us have practiced doing and we're learning how to unlearn, we're learning how to unlearn losing ourselves.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I want to get into that a little bit too because I'm imagining somebody listening to this at home, and trying to figure out what that practically looks and feels like for an individual, right? Because a lot of us understand how to keep the peace, right? And that's not what we're talking about.

What does it mean to stay securely in yourself and be able to manage your own reactions, notice them, notice your activations and stay in relationship when there's difference?

### **Kimberly Weeks**

One of the biggest things that I work with clients on is learning the cues that happen within their body so that they can respond to them and resource themselves. Meaning? So if your heart flutters or if you stop breathing or you have the gurgles in your stomach or you have that activation with the knots. Being able to be attuned, self-attuned so that you understand what's happening in your body. And then you can also learn how to calm it, how to relax it, how to activate your vagus nerve, which is the longest nerve in the body that basically tells you that you can rest, it's safe, I can connect.

That's the first thing to do, is to learn your own noticing, naming what it is that's going on and then resourcing. Noticing, naming and resourcing. And so if you notice what's taking place and you can pause, which is a lot of what we have to do to slow down the process so that our bodies can get back into regulation. Notice it and then you name it. Oh my gosh, I'm anxious, I'm scared, I'm frustrated, I'm angry.

### **Meagen Gibson**

It could be all those things at once.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

It could be all of those things. It could be sadness, it could be grief, it could be all of those things. You learn how to name those things and then do things that are beneficial for you. Every resource doesn't work for every person. And so I may need to go outside in the sunshine. The next person

might need to put on a weighted blanket. I may need to have a conversation and verbally vent for a little while. The next person may need to go do something that is a gentle movement, coloring, drawing, journaling. It just depends on what works for your nervous system.

**[00:12:27]**

The practicality is not a cookie cutter. It requires, again, that discovery of what works for you. And as trauma recovery coaches, this is some of the discovery process that we do with our clients all the time trying to figure out how to get back into their regulation. Or we call it your window of tolerance, your window of capacity, so that you can think because you go offline in your brain and if you can't logically think through what's taking place, there's no way for you to stay connected to another person when you're in survival mode. It's no way. You're going to be fighting, fighting or freezing or fawning

### **Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. And I think a lot of trauma survivors, they get to the stage where they acknowledge they have trauma and they start noticing. They do the first step and then unfortunately they're like notice, avoid, right? And I just want to speak from personal experience that it's not easy work, but it's well worth doing to notice, name and then resource. And that I don't want anyone to get the idea that we're saying all of this is going to happen neatly in 15 minutes.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Yes. And as a matter of fact, you'll be learning how to do this for the rest of your life in increments and through spirals of oh yeah, I got it, I figured out how to do it. And then all of a sudden you have to learn a new way to do it in a different season. This is absolutely a process of discovery over time and we go through seasons of life. So what works for us in our twenties or our thirties, may be totally different than what works for us in our fifties and sixties and seventies.

And so it's being able, but I use the term staying at the table, staying in the tension, staying in the discomfort and trusting that other part of learning how to find safety and difference is trusting and learning how to resource yourself, so that you can stay at the table and grow. The whole point of being able to stay at the table, which means stay in that discomfort and that tension and trust that you're going to be able to settle from the activation.

Most trauma survivors experience ruptures, conflict and the stuff just kept escalating and it just never got resolved. We never experienced completing the stress cycle. We didn't experience what it felt like to go from feeling disconnected to reconnected again with a person in that environment where there was difference. And so that experience over time teaches you that you can trust your body and you can trust the tools that you've learned to use for yourself, to be able to stay at that table of difference.

And when you do that, you learn, you expand, you grow, you develop new curiosities, you develop new ways of things you like to do. For many trauma survivors, that part of our child got missed. We didn't get to experiment. We didn't get to purely have curiosity about different things and develop what we enjoy, so that we can move into a place of purpose for the things they say, you know, if you find something that you love, then you'll never work another day in your life.

**[00:15:48]**

Most trauma survivors survive. They didn't learn what they love, they didn't discover what lights them up and when you start getting into that environment. And what does that require, Meagen? It requires you trying a whole bunch of different things and sitting with a whole bunch of different thoughts and learning I like this, but I don't like that. That makes sense to me, and I can take this from that. But this other part, I can't do.

All of that experimentation is a part of the healing and recovery process for trauma survivors. And whether that's politics, which is a big thing. Politics or people's fates or what people in the HOA think needs to happen with the money that needs to go for particular items. Whatever it is, if we're able to stay at the table of difference and learn that difference does not mean danger. It can, but it doesn't automatically mean danger. It could mean expansion, it could mean growth, it could mean opportunity, it could mean all kinds of things. If we learn to do that over time, what ends up happening for most trauma survivors is we start developing ways of being that actually supports who we're supposed to be on Earth. That's my belief.

### **Meagen Gibson**

That's beautiful. I'm glad you touched on it just a second ago, but I also wanted to name that what was coming up for me, as we're talking, is that I want to make sure to be explicit that when we say to stay at the table in the face of difference, we are not talking about to stay at the table in the face of danger or unsafety, right? Like fundamental unsafety. Like, you don't have to stay in the face of physical, emotional, financial abuse because you're different. That's not difference. That's abuse, right? I just want to be really explicit that that's not what we are implying.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

We do need to be explicit about that, because as someone who experienced narcissistic abuse, I used to think staying at the table was staying at the table even if there was a lack of safety. And there's a couple of things that you really can't stay at the table for. You can't stay at the table if there's no respect, no respect for self or no respect for the other party. You can't stay at the table if there's not a mutual desire to understand.

If the other person just wants you to assimilate and adopt their view and they're trying to force it down or coerce it, that's not an environment that you can stay at the table at. You can't stay at the table if there is violent communication. There's all kinds of books now about nonviolent communication, violent communication, or physical violence or even emotional, mental violence, psychological violence.

All of my clients come to me primarily because they're experiencing psychological violence in their marriages or their partnerships. Those are not environments where you stay at the table. Staying at the table is about that cue of discomfort because of something that's happened in your past, and you learning how to sit with that discomfort and not bail.

You're learning how to sit with that discomfort and not agree or fawn. You learn how to resource yourself so that you're able to communicate from your authentic agency what your desires, thoughts and beliefs are and stand on them, and hold at the same time that other person's thoughts, beliefs and desires with the same level of value and esteem, without making an enemy. Most trauma survivors learn a very kind of right or wrong, black or white thinking from that

perspective of if this person doesn't agree with me, then they're a danger to me. If this person doesn't assent to what I'm asking for them to do, then they're an enemy.

**[00:19:47]**

We know in society how to make enemies. Whether it's political beliefs or cultural backgrounds or racial backgrounds, we know how to make enemies. And so just because someone thinks differently, doesn't mean they're your enemy. And I think that's one of the things that childhood trauma can produce, that danger. And it's something that we can overcome. We really can. We can overcome that thought that if you don't agree with me or you think differently or you do it differently, then you're a bad person or you're my enemy.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I can really see that playing out in misunderstandings between couples around parenting, right? I don't think there can ever be as many examples of people doing things differently and one party seeing that as a threat or I mean, I'm speaking for a friend, it's me, right? If you do this differently than me, then that's a threat because I need to control the way that this is done so that I feel safe.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Absolutely. And you just said something brilliant. So often people want others to adopt their way because it creates a sense of safety for themselves. So if you raise your kids differently and keep your house, the neatness of your house, or if you don't send your kids to a certain school, all of those things are not about the thing. All of those things are about what you're feeling inside your body and whether it feels like it's safe or it's dangerous. And so that's why the first thing to do is notice, name and resource because without that you'll try to control and negotiate everything in life to try to keep yourself safe.

And it becomes this environment of doing things outside of your locus of control and not respecting other people or yourself for that matter. So that's a really good point. It's like people paying attention to, am I doing this because I really believe it or am I doing this because something's happening in my body and I don't feel safe. And if I put that out, if I change that or if I get that person to do what I want, I'll feel safe again. That's so good. That's a really good point.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Thank you. And it's also, I call it control, just like a false currency. You might win that particular thing, so you get this endorphin rush of like, I've controlled something and you feel like you get a reserve of energy back and life force back, because that's a battle you don't have to fight anymore. But you're just going to be scanning and looking for yet another thing to control, because that job, and talking about IFS and parts work, that part could use a different job assignment.

I interviewed Dick Schwartz for this year's trauma conference, so if anybody's confused what we're talking about, go watch Dick Schwartz and my interview. He's fantastic and wonderful and I love parts work, but let's relieve that part of some of its duties and reassign it to a job where it can drink Mai Tais on the beach or something, right?

**[00:23:04] Kimberly Weeks**

Absolutely. Yeah. Because when that part takes over, going into IFS, you're literally in a conversation in the boardroom and it's a five-year-old having a conversation with a group of adults, or a teenager having a conversation. I don't know if many of the listeners can identify with the fact that there are times when they're in conversation and there's differences that come up, and something happens and they're no longer talking to a grown up. They're talking to a very young part of the person sitting on the other side of them, or a younger part of them is having that conversation.

So noticing and naming what's going on inside yourself, and then learning how to resource so that you can get back into that window of tolerance or capacity is necessary so that we don't allow those younger parts and we don't allow what trauma responses we have always relied on to be what leads those conversations. And you can stay at the table so that you can learn and so that you can grow as a person. There are some things that you have to overcome in order to stay at the table.

One of those things is what other people think about you. Another thing is perfectionism or trying to get it right, say the right thing. We learned that for many of us in our childhoods. I have to package it a certain way in order for me not to get in trouble or for me to not be rejected or abandoned. But overcoming that is going to help you to be able to be more authentic.

And then any known patterns of trauma or dysregulation as we've been discussing in our bodies, those are things that in order for you to find safety and difference, you gotta let go of what somebody else thinks about it. And that is a lifelong journey. That is not easy to do at all. I'm glad that you said, I don't want you to think that this is just, oh, we can just do this step one, two, three. No, not at all. This is a process of learning. Again, if finding safety and difference is about learning to trust and resource yourself, so that you can stay at the table of difference and grow. This is going to be literally scaffolding.

You're going to be constantly scaffolding, in terms of learning how to do that in different situations. And what worked for the last situation or the last conversation or the last interaction may not work in this one. So it's like constantly learning who that authentic self is and what those core qualities are, how they can show up in this particular interaction.

**Meagen Gibson**

I found that it kind of goes in stages also, for me, the beginning stage was I had to notice a lot, right? Start collecting information and not slip into notice and avoid, but just noticing. Like, wow, I noticed in this interaction I felt like this and this felt like this. And then trying to put some words to it, naming it, because anger can be a lot of things or you can feel like you just get quiet. Those were my two baseline reactions. I was exploding or I was disappearing. All right, so what's underneath those?

Am I feeling disrespected or resentful, like, trying to get all those words underneath those two emotional reactions, and then go to the resourcing? Okay. Sometimes, if you're into IFS work, how old did I feel in that moment? And what would have been comforting to someone that age, or me at that age? Britt Frank actually also talks about making a little menu for yourself, because you won't always know what you actually need. You feel like you should, but you don't.



**[00:26:58]**

I was in a situation probably about two months ago in public, where my nervous system got really activated, and it involved some minors, and I got really protective of these minors. And then when I came home, minors meaning children, not like hard hats and lights. And when I got home, I knew that I needed to disperse all of the nervous system energy that had come up and all of the reactivity that had come up, that was there for a purpose. But I didn't know what I needed.

And my partner, very sweetly, he was like, do you want me to go get your weighted blanket? And immediately I was like, no, I definitely don't want that. My activation required movement and action, but I didn't know it until I was offered sedation and rest. And I was like, that's not it, right? So I had to go through my menu of resources and then your body will tell you what it wants. Does it want a cold shower? Does it need to take a really brisk walk? Does it need to yell into a pillow? Once you go through that kind of menu of resources and options as to how to re-regulate. We were talking before we started recording about singing and humming like that, right? That will kind of activate.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Or rocking.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, rocking. Dancing.

### **Kimberly Weeks**

Rocking is a really good one. And dancing. We call it a toolkit. We call it our regulation toolkit. And it's like, what may work in that situation on that day, may be completely different than what you need on another one. But having that at your disposal, cultivating that, is what helps when you get activated, because you're not logically going to be able to figure your way through it. So you have to have some things that you're accustomed to.

I'm a stones person, and I don't know why. I like holding onto stones. I like finding them. I like going to different places. And so I've created all these stones. And there'll be stones that I use, and I'll have words on them that I will literally, if I'm feeling something, I'll go hold the stone that means what I'm needing in the moment.

That's one of my particular resources that helps me to be able to just calm down. And if it's stones that I found at a specific place, a river, a mountain, at my kid's school and I hold onto it, it transforms me back into that kind of place of joy, peace and regulation. It just does.

So everybody who is in these environments, as we are traveling as trauma survivors, as we're recovering, gets to, I'm not going to say has to, gets to develop ways to support them being able to trust that when they get into that space of activation, that they can resource themselves and get back into a place of settling. So that as they're having these conversations that the world presents us daily, they're able to do so in a way where they can learn more about themselves, learn more about a particular topic, learn more about an interaction and also learn to trust that their bodies, you said it beautifully, tell you what you need to do.

**[00:30:04]**

Trust that and do what our bodies tell us to do. Whether it's rest, whether it's too much happening right now and I need to go take some time for myself, whether it's I can stay in this conversation because this person respects me. And I can see that they're trying to get to a place of understanding. If we start paying attention to our bodies and befriending them, Deb Dana calls it befriending the nervous system, then we're able to stay at that table of difference and we're able to become everything that we were made to become. Yeah.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. I'm thinking about my in-law's family, my husband included in this, whole line of attorneys. And so it took me a long time to understand that I was not being attacked during family dinners. These are just people who litigate.

**Kimberly Weeks**

So my father is an attorney. I understand what you're saying. It's the way that they ask the question. Immediately, you're like, oh my gosh, they're going through a line.

**Meagen Gibson**

Why am I being attacked? They're like, I'm not attacking you, this is just the way I talk.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Yes, exactly. But you said something, you said that it's a process, this process of noticing and naming over time. I think it's really important for anyone who is stepping into getting more comfortable with differences with other people. And it's going to show up anywhere in your life, if you can give yourself the grace to just be curious for a little while. Just be curious about what's happening in your body, where it's happening in your body, where you remember that feeling from before, what thoughts are coming up attached to it. Just be curious. No judgment.

One of the things that happens for trauma recovery coaches with our clients is we are able to have a healthy, non-judgmental, compassionate relationship that is safe. And it may be the first safe relationship over time that someone has actually had in their lives, coming out of whatever level of trauma that they have or whatever their ACE score is.

But if you're able to do that same thing with yourself, if you're able to not judge the reaction, the thought, the sensation, or push it down, which we know how to do very well for most of us. Ignore, dismiss, numb, push down. If we're able to just notice it for a long time and give ourselves that data of understanding, what ends up happening is we're able to then do the second part of resourcing, naming it and attaching an emotion to it, but then resource that.

And I think that's a lifetime process. And my hope is that people will give themselves the grace for it to be a lifetime process because without that margin, we put ourselves in another type of danger, of performance or trying to get it right. And often that creates more dissonance.

**[00:33:17] Meagen Gibson**

You bring up such a good point about the importance of support, right? And because you're absolutely right. For a lot of trauma survivors, the relationship that they have with a coach or a therapist or a counselor is the first person who's ever looked at them and said, wow, it really makes sense that your body and mind reacted the way it did in this situation. Like the first person in their lives to say, wow, what happened really makes sense. And of course that's how you reacted and that's what you were feeling. And now let's go from here.

And that borrowed safety, I'm stealing that from Dr Darryl Tonemah, but he talks about borrowing safety. And then once you've felt what that feels like, and you've been loaned a little bit of safety from somebody who's in their secure self, you then over time, learn how to do it for yourself through what we've been talking about, and how you've so beautifully outlined it today of just kind of noticing, naming, responding and resourcing.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Yes and I love that you're saying this, because what happens is in that healthy relationship dynamic, the borrowed safety happens. The client gets a felt sense and they get tools and then they start taking that into what they do for themselves on their own. They're able to start resourcing for themselves. And then once they do that, they can sit at the table with others and in the world, in a different way. And that's really the process for getting support and creating a community of care. It's starting to have that one connection.

Stephen Porges says it this way, he says safety is the treatment for trauma survivors. If I've gotten my pad and I'm writing a script, I'm writing that script for safety. And so we get that borrowed from individuals, who have a regulated nervous system and are safe and are skilled to be able to do that, or trusted friends and family members. We get that. And then we can adopt it, take it in and absorb it.

And then that will expand into the relationships that we have with other people, in the world at large. So yeah, that's the whole process. And if you get that in short order, someone may have been in therapy a long time and not experience that. They may have experienced it with a therapist, but they may not have experienced it. When you actually get that treatment, that safety, in a year the person's whole way of being can be different

**Meagen Gibson**

100%. I cannot possibly cosign that more because I think developmentally I found to be true. And I don't know how many people shared this experience, but you discover you had trauma, you're a trauma survivor, or you've had somebody name it, right? So that you understand what's going on. And then you kind of understand. You notice and you understand what your triggers and reactivity might be around. And then you want the whole world to change for you. You want the whole world to make it safe for you to be, right?

And that just is never going to happen. It's an inside job and the world will keep worlding, despite all of your hurts and all of your need for safety. And so yeah, internalizing that process and making it one where you can be compassionate with yourself, and then extend that to others is beautiful and the whole goal, right?

**[00:36:38] Kimberly Weeks**

It is. And regulating our stress responses makes it possible for us to stay at that table, and it makes it possible for us to learn something new when we're there. It's almost like I say in the association, that we may have not got certain parts of our brain development in childhood, but we can still get it due to neuroplasticity. We can still develop those things that we didn't get to develop in our childhood.

We can appreciate the survival, it got us here. Wonderful. But now, there may be some different things that we can go back and get that we didn't get as children, so that we are able to grow and develop in as full a way as we possibly can. So yeah.

**Meagen Gibson**

One other point I want to make before I let you go is just that neither of us are implying that staying at the table in the face of difference implies any sort of agreement.

**Kimberly Weeks**

That's good. Yes.

**Meagen Gibson**

Agreement is not necessary.

**Kimberly Weeks**

That's right. And that is what, it's literally trust. It's being able to sit with your own thoughts, feelings and beliefs and still respect that other people have their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs and hold it with the same level of value. Hold it with the same level of esteem, even when you don't agree. It doesn't, you know, we talk about in the association, there's four things. If you want to be able to repair something or repair a rupture or conflict or stay in a space of difference, there's four things that are required.

The first thing is mutual respect. The second is a mutual desire to understand purely from a curious place, the other person. The third thing is a willingness to accept that the difference may not be reconcilable. It may just be that we see it differently. And I can respect that you see it differently and I can respect that my way of being is different. And then the last one is personal accountability. If you have all four of those things, then you are able to stay at the table, learn, grow and say, 'I agree with this part, but I don't agree with that part'.

And over time, what that does is it creates that loop of stress cycle being completed and you have more confidence in your ability to communicate what's coming from the inside of you, and still respect the other person. People who are successful in spaces, where you're talking about systems, global systems and political systems, can do that. They can marry those two things and look for that shared understanding or that shared experience of connection. They can do that.

And so if we start that in our homes, Meagen, if we start that with parents and kids and in-laws and in-laws. We can start that there, then that trickles out to just every other place where we have influence.

**[00:39:37] Meagen Gibson**

It's really interesting. I love those four elements because just establishing kind of the baseline of when you're sitting in difference and what makes that safe. Because what we're talking about is kind of pushing the envelope of if you feel unsafe and then taking in the data of like, but am I actually unsafe? And you don't have to even explicitly go through these four items with the person that you're talking to. Their actions and behaviors tell you pretty quickly, whether or not you are able to be in safe conversation around a difference with them.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Yes.

**Meagen Gibson**

But when those four elements are true and you're both on the same page, sitting in difference will still be uncomfortable and will still bring up all those cues of danger. But you are in an environment where you'll be able to handle it. And you can resource and probably not come to an agreement, but at least be able to have more compassionate understanding about the other person and they you.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Yes, and I find this to be very apropos for couples. Can we stay in a space of being mutually respectful of each other? Do I really want to understand your point of view? Do I really want to understand how you arrived at that, where it came from? Am I willing to say we're going to have to part ways on this particular part of it? We're not going to agree or I'm willing to compromise here, without compromising myself. And can I take accountability for how I'm showing up with you?

If we can do that in parenting and with kids, in relationships that are interpersonal, in environments where we're creating laws and deciding how funds are dispersed in different parts of the world. My God, we would be on a good track for sure.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. And that relationship element too, when you start to resource your own safety, what I found in relationship too is that a lot of times the reactivity and the triggers that come up in a relationship aren't present. They're not about what's happening in the now. They're about what's happened to you personally, as one half of the relationship historically, right? And when you have this kind of baseline of safety, you can say to the other person, wow, I'm not here right now and we need to pause. And I promise you we will come back to this, and promise a time or date or whatever and we will revisit this. But I have been transported in time to a time when I was not safe. So let me do some work to re-establish some safety in myself.

And I found personally that really increases intimacy, it increases trust. Otherwise the other person is confused and doesn't know where you've gone mentally and emotionally, or why you're fighting so hard or what's going on because they don't have all the information. And sometimes you don't either. You don't have to say in the moment, like, well, ten years ago this one guy, you don't have to

go into the whole story right then. You can just say like I am not here. I want to be present with you. This is really important to me. I need some time.

**[00:42:43] Kimberly Weeks**

Yeah. And the language I use with my partner is gosh, the story I'm telling myself right now is that you are upset because. The story I'm telling myself right now is I'm really messing up because and that reminds me of. And we start having these conversations about what's happening on the inside that may have absolutely nothing to do with what's happening in the present.

And so that ability to name that is what allows for that other person to hear it, understand it, and be able to go, oh, I totally get that. I understand where it's coming from, and I don't feel that way at all or I don't think that way at all. And it is very bonding, it is very strengthening, and it is completing that activation and settling process so that you can stay in it and get to the other side and go, oh, okay, now I understand myself and you better. And let's continue. Let's proceed.

I don't know. I'm learning as a trauma survivor how important this piece of it is for me, for my clients, because without it, they just keep rupturing. They keep retreating.

**Meagen Gibson**

As one of my favorite Zen Buddhist priests who kept marrying the same woman said, 'wherever I go, there I am'.

**Kimberly Weeks**

That's right. And then after a while, people leave your life, you get all these conflicts and you don't grow. And so my goal is to support clients with their, not just dealing with the recovery piece, but the discovery piece of trauma recovery, so that they're able to function in a different way than they grew up in. For sure.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. Yeah. We have to break those cycles. And that's what it takes, isn't it?

**Kimberly Weeks**

It does. Staying at the table safely, is what can break the cycle. For sure.

**Meagen Gibson**

Fantastic. Kimberly Weeks, thank you very much for being with us. How can people find out more about you and your work?

**Kimberly Weeks**

They can find out about me on my website at [thenarcissisticabusecoach.com](https://thenarcissisticabusecoach.com). I'm also going to be doing some work to start training people to become certified trauma specialists, and that is [www.kwfreedomacademy.com/ctscourse](https://www.kwfreedomacademy.com/ctscourse).

**[00:45:08] Meagen Gibson**

Fantastic. Thank you again so much for being with us.

**Kimberly Weeks**

Awesome, thanks.