



Conscious Life presents

# TRAUMA SUPER CONFERENCE

## Embodied trauma healing

Guest: Mark Walsh

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### **[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson**

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

Today I'm speaking with Mark Walsh, the founder of the Embodied Facilitator course, Embodied Yoga Principles, the embodiment Podcast, and Sane Ukraine, Trauma Education Project, as well as the embodiment Conference. With an honors degree in psychology and 20 plus years of yoga experience, as well as an Aikido black belt and 25 years of experience doing other martial arts, it's clear he has a dedicated life to embodied learning. Mark Walsh, thank you so much for being with us today.

### **Mark Walsh**

Pleasure. Nice to meet you, Meagen.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Nice to meet you as well. It's about time. So I know that your work in trauma is kind of focused around embodiment, obviously, as we just heard from your intro. So what does that mean to someone who's new to their trauma healing journey?

### **Mark Walsh**

You won't think your way out of it. So trauma really brought the body back to therapy. So talk therapy is a good thing. I've had talk therapy myself. But what people discovered when they started working with trauma is it was a really physiological thing. It's fashionable to talk about nervous systems, but actually our whole physiology. So when people started looking at trauma, they said, hey, we need to get people back in the body.

Now there's a dissociation often associated with trauma. That's part of what defines trauma is this overwhelm so people leave their bodies, or flight or flight, kind of being stuck in a body that's not very pleasant to be in, that's agitated. They say in twelve step programs: irritable, restless and discontent. And the idea of embodiment is about coming home to the body. Poetically, we could define it as a skill set. I've kind of very much mapped it, I train a lot of coaches and I've very much mapped it as a skill set.

**[00:02:00]**

In terms of trauma healing, it's part of the problem, the disassociation, and it's also part of the solution. And it's not the only part. I think we can look at trauma holistically, psychologically, spiritually, in terms of communities and social systems, but I think if we ignore the body, we ignore a really critical piece. And that is what some of the great names, the Bessel van der Kolks and the Peter Levines and the Gabor Matés, that's what they found.

So for me, as someone who trains embodiment coaches, it's absolutely essential to make sure they're trauma aware. And the embodiment piece helps a lot of people working with trauma.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. And it's funny, too, because so far in, purely talking about accessibility, what we have readily accessible to us, to those who are privileged enough to have the means to find therapy or help, has been very cognitive, very top down, very thinking your way through whatever your problems are and whatever you're trying to heal. So it's no wonder the system itself has kind of been built for us to just keep dissociating and keep separating our bodies from the process.

And so what are you hoping for for the future as far as integrating embodiment into the thought process and mainstream therapy and healing work? What are you hoping for for the future, for accessibility?

### **Mark Walsh**

Well, we live in a disembodied culture and that is a conspiracy. We live in a culture that keeps people separate from their bodies because that's where our health is. That's where our well-being is. That's how we become empathic and connected, which is the basis of our sanity. That's where our values are so we can't be controlled if we're in touch with that.

So the society we're in is pretty disembodied as a result of trauma but also a result of technology, also a result of social systems, the speed of modern living, there're various factors, non-connection with nature, non-movement. There's various factors that are involved in that, trauma being one. However, the body is making a comeback, like a 70s rock band, it is making an Aerosmith on tour again. It's making a comeback in that people are going crazy and getting addicted.

And we see this across the world. The stats of drug addiction, suicide, mental health problem, you know, just walking down the street in most cities in England is pretty bloody obvious, I think, in the States too. So therefore people are going, okay, what about yoga? What about mindfulness? And there's some problems with those things, how they're being presented, how they're done.

However, generally, I think the body is coming back in a big way because it has to. So we do see sort of forces for disembodiment, postmodernism being another one, and we do see forces for embodiment and that natural tendency to want to return to the body, to sort of come home to the safety and sanity and enjoyment of the body. Let's talk about enjoyment. On trauma conferences, it's easy to talk about everything that's bad and see things through that lens. But I'm not sure if that answers your question.

**[00:05:04] Meagen Gibson**

It does. Yeah. And it leads me down the right road for sure, which is that, I guess, what I hear you saying is that it makes sense that we've been so separated. All of capitalistic society is engineered to keep us separate from our bodies and just keep us producing...

**Mark Walsh**

Separate from ourselves. Separate from each other, separate from our values and spirit and separate from ecology. So the four disconnections, we could call these. So, therefore, what do we need? We need self connection, self regulation. We need connection, community co-regulation, eco connection. So eco psychology. There's a whole eco embodiment movement. And some form of spirituality, meaning higher purpose, some form of coming back to that which is significant to us.

**Meagen Gibson**

And what's been your experience personally? And I know you also certify coaches and teach coaches in embodiment practice. What is your experience on assessing what the first step in helping somebody get guided back safely into being embodied is with somebody with trauma history?

**Mark Walsh**

Yeah. Should I talk about my personal story a little bit?

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, please do.

**Mark Walsh**

And then we'll kind of come back to that. I think it is relevant in that I was sort of hypercognitive as a child. Really good, reading books, reading the whole school library, high IQ, all that, but I was miserable and I also grew up in an alcoholic household. And I was like, on some level, unconsciously, I was like screw this, I'm out of here. Meaning, I'm out of my body. This is unbearable, this is too much.

And that led me into, first of all, to try and sort of find the escape in the mind. But I found that just wasn't viable. I found myself unhealthy mentally, physically. I found myself unable to do human relationships which are based on empathy, and connection, embodiment. I found myself with all sorts of issues and my own alcoholism, for example, by a fairly young age. And I had some sort of inclination the body might help because I wasn't educated in that.

School didn't really... It was just physical fitness. And I wanted to learn to fight because I was involved in some illegal activity and I thought martial arts might be a good idea for that. And I went to a martial arts dojo and it was calm and ordered and there was power being expressed without brutality and on some level my whole being, my whole soma went, yes, this is what you need.

So for me the first step was discipline. It was self regulation, co-regulation as well in that same, for me that was the first step because that was the body. But it was like, okay, it fit with my current

values at the time, okay, this is masculine, combative, it's allowed. I wasn't ready to learn dance yet. I later found dance and yoga and other things, but I certainly wasn't well regulated enough to sit down and meditate. I was too traumatized.

**[00:07:52]**

So martial arts was my in because it had the movement, it had the cultural fit, it had the mystique of the East, which can become a barrier later but was good at the time. Most of all, it had that sort of order and self regulation to help a chaotic, dysregulated human feel at ease and safe. What could make you feel more safe than learning to be a badass? I can kick people's asses now. People are like, I want to feel safe. It's like, no, I want to *be* safe. Fuck feeling.

So, for me, it was martial arts. For someone else that might be too much. Yoga might be a better in. For someone else it might be a dog. Like humans are complex, Meagen, they're complicated. Dogs are easy, they're nice, aren't they, dogs? They just love you. They're great. My wife likes cats. It might be an animal, it might be nature. I mean, I've chosen to live in the countryside because I find it soothing, I find it relaxing compared to the big city.

For some people, they need a spiritual way in, so I think, because we talk about spiritual bypassing is a bad thing, but that might be all someone can cope with at first before they descend into the emotional life. So I think there's different ways in for different people. If one size fits all, you wouldn't need 50 speakers at the conference, right? We would have found the best one and sold the shit out of it by now. Yeah, 80. Wow. Good job, Alex. Second biggest trauma event ever.

### **Meagen Gibson**

I knew you were going to get that in there.

### **Mark Walsh**

Alex and I have a brotherly competition a little bit going on. We were very good friends, though, actually, should be seeing him next week. So where was I? Yes. So, different ways in for different people. No one way.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I would say also probably at different times, too, like, if you're working with somebody over the course of ten years, the way into a stage of healing when you first meet them might be completely different than when they encounter another plateau of difficulty and approach you and you're like, all right, it's time for us to pivot. There's another way into this.

### **Mark Walsh**

Yeah. I needed that rigid Japanese martial arts when I began. Now that would just make me anal and uptight. After a while, I started doing conscious dance and free dance and letting it all hang out, like doing different practices. And then I could sit and meditate and that was beautiful, over time, I found different things work, over time. I love, for example, EMDR. There was a time when that was just what I needed, very targeted.

**[00:10:19]**

Or I love TRE, David Bercei, my older brother in the humanitarian field, which is my own background. And then there's other times TRE just doesn't touch what I need. Working in Ukraine, we taught tapping. We taught a shaking modality, very like TRE, we taught various other modalities, various other things. And some people would say, oh, tapping, I just did tapping with a room full of kids and they loved it, it was brilliant, all the kids, much more relaxed now, much happier.

Other people would come back in and say, hey, did the tapping. Did nothing, had zero impact, total waste of time. And I'd say, cool. Try the shaking. So you need a few things.

I think it's difficult now because there's actually quite a lot of money in the trauma world now. The trauma big stars have become rock stars, which is totally hilarious to me. And I started studying with a guy called Paul Linden, let's see how long, about 20 years ago now, who was my mentor in this field. He works with martial arts and trauma. That's how I sort of got into trauma, through the martial arts. Great guy.

And the idea that there could be trauma rock stars was hilarious. That was just a completely ridiculous idea at that point. And there's a lot of money in it now. So everyone's got their brand and their trademark and they want to say their modality is the best and we should be a little suspicious of that, a little cautious of that.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Well, we were talking before we hit record. I was saying you call it Embodiment, Cathy Malchiodi might call it Expressive Arts Therapy and Peter Levine calls it Somatosensory. And to me, I'm not the expert, but to me it's all versions of the same thing where we're trying to get people back in their bodies, right?

### **Mark Walsh**

Yeah, I think there's certainly commonalities and they have more in common than they maybe do different. I'd say it's dangerous to say they're all the same. I don't do arts therapy, for example, we might get the crayons out occasionally on a course, but it's not my particular modality. And different things do have... It's not just a matter of saying different things work for different people. That's one level. But I think we can also say for these people at these times, certain things may be more appropriate.

So, for example, I've worked all over the world and certain things go down better in different places culturally. For example, I've worked in the slums of Brazil and I've worked in Ethiopia. I've worked in Russia and Ukraine a lot, Afghanistan, and different places are going to respond to things differently. It's one of the dangers, actually, so much is coming out of Northern California, if I'm going to be honest, is it doesn't always match culturally with a lot of the places where people might need help.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Well, it's interesting that you say that, because a lot of what I've been hearing, thinking about, and seeing lately is a lot of work around boundaries, which are great, but some of the work around

boundaries and kind of family legacies and family systems, and for some white Americans, if you will, like, setting boundaries with their parents can be easier than it would be for first generation Americans whose parents were immigrants from all over the world. They have different cultural backgrounds where saying, I don't want you to talk to me like that or your expectations are too high...

**[00:13:29]**

Setting all these boundaries are not only anathema to what they have had in their history but culturally unacceptable. And so taking people's cultures into the way that you're going to work...

**Mark Walsh**

It's huge. Looking at some cultures that are much more collective, America is highly individualistic. British people, we have a sense of humor, which is important.

**Meagen Gibson**

A different one than Californians.

**Mark Walsh**

I know. We have one. We have one. That was a joke. I use a lot of jokes and I'm trained by Jewish teachers and that Jewish humor is actually a part of Jewish culture. You'll hear Paul Linden make all kinds of jokes that you'd be face palming and hitting this stop the live transmission button if you heard. You think I'm bad.

So there are different cultures. I'm from an Irish background. Irish have a certain way of doing things, a certain way of handling trauma. Has some things in common with the Ukrainians. My Irish family got on pretty well with my wife's family at our wedding. The English family, less so, actually, it was interesting. The Irish had some nice trauma bonding and some nice trauma coping strategies in common, but slightly different, actually. Some countries are using alcohol more. That's relevant. The sense of humor, I mentioned. Hyperarousal, well, who says? Israeli level. Italian level. What counts?

**Meagen Gibson**

Exactly, well, for assessing arousal? Whose cultural arousal are we talking about?

**Mark Walsh**

Yeah, and also just like, diversity. What kind of diversity? Yeah, we need to take that into account. Often I'll see a conference, and I'll be like, it's really diverse because there's different colors of Americans. And I'll be like, okay, so I have Hungarian staff. They have a whole different trauma history. And you just go, well, why, they're Hungarian. Their country has been trodden on by everyone. So where do they get included in this?

If we're going to take an American model that says, well, what matters is gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, according to the United States way of looking at this, I think we do need to have a slightly less provincial, more kind of global way of looking at this. I worked lots, for example, in the

gay community in Moscow. If I'd have turned up there and done British style, let alone American style, I would have been eaten alive. I would have been lesbian lunch, just would not have gone down well. So it's like we do have to accommodate some of these cultural differences and understand that there is huge bias in where we're coming from.

**[00:15:51] Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. Could not agree more. I want to come back because I don't want to skip over what you started to talk about about the Ukraine project. And so your wife is Ukrainian, am I understanding that correctly?

**Mark Walsh**

Yes. I met my wife, she was my interpreter in the war currently existing is the sort of second part of a longer war. So I actually went out there to do some coaching work, and then the war broke out. There was the invasion, Russian backed invasion, and they said, hey, can you do a trauma workshop? And I said yes, sure. But there wasn't really much money, so I said, yeah, I'll do it, but this might be the last time I come here, because I didn't have any particular connection at that time.

So the person hosting me made sure that all my interpreters were beautiful, wise, single women, and one of them I fell in love with, and that was Daria, my wife. And then I got very deeply involved in Ukraine and training coaches, soldiers, therapists, and obviously when the war broke out, the new version of the war, I was quite impacted by that and I was actually going to go fight. I felt so strongly about it.

And then I phoned a couple of people, including Alex. I said, Alex, I'm going to go fight. He said, Mark, that's a terrible idea. You'll get shot, you'll be a terrible soldier. He said, but you are a very good trauma trainer. I said, ah. So, Alex is probably the reason I'm alive right now. I said, good idea, Alex. I'll do a trauma project. So in, I think, probably the second or third week of the invasion, we raised a bunch of money, delivered some medical supplies to a children's hospital that was sort of cut off because Kyiv was surrounded at that point and that's where their supplies had come from.

So we delivered the medical supplies and then we trained a bunch of trainers in trauma education. So I spoke to local therapists and they said, look, we're overwhelmed, we can do the therapy, but we need people to do basic trauma education and what's called trauma first aid. And that can be trained relatively quickly. So just a completely crazy project, it shouldn't ever have worked. I ended up out there. I went to a local university, I said, give me your psychology PhD students as my assistants, went to the local convent, said, give me your nuns as assistants. I got a bunch of nuns involved.

And then we did the training, which was a very intense training, as you can imagine, particularly as it kept getting interrupted by rocket fire. We end up doing half the training at a bomb shelter. And we did the training, that went well, went back, did another one, and now, eventually, I sort of gave the project over to local women who are running it, they're running it, they get Red Cross funding and they've trained many thousands of people now.

All the doctors and nurses in Lviv, all the school teachers in Lviv, many of the soldiers in the country, a bunch of kids as well. And their vision is to make Ukraine the world's most trauma informed country, which is a beautiful, positive vision.

**[00:18:40] Meagen Gibson**

I just got goosebumps. That makes my heart swell. I wish it wasn't necessary. And you said such a great thing that I also want to bring back, because it's such a universal concept, which is that you can't heal and integrate people's trauma when they're still being hurt. So the idea of the trauma first aid, we are literally still in crisis, they are still fighting, and so we're not going to be integrating and necessarily healing because they're still under attack.

**Mark Walsh**

Yeah. My mother in law was covered in dust from a bomb a few weeks ago.

**Meagen Gibson**

And I think it really, sorry, I don't mean to interrupt you, Zoom can be difficult sometimes, right, but I think it just universally applies. And so many people can relate to that because often we're trying to heal. And obviously we're not literally at war, but our bodies feel like we are because we're still in the situations in which we're being activated or hurt or we're in a relationship with a narcissist or something where it feels to our body like we're in a battle.

Obviously, it's different in Ukraine, but the idea of having to have actual physical, mental, emotional safety before you can heal, but that there's also work that can be done on the way there.

**Mark Walsh**

Yeah, it kind of amuses me slightly when I hear this word safety being used. When I did the project, I'm very lucky, like Alex, I'm in contact with a lot of people in this field and, with the exception of David Berceci, most of them have never really been kind of front line anywhere. They've got practices in very pleasant places, and the idea of safety has become extended. That being said, I always say the first time I worked in a war zone, it felt like home to me because before I healed my own nervous system, I felt like I grew up in a war zone.

And the joke with my Israeli friends is the more trauma healing I get, the harder work I find Israel, because I'm not in that... Because when you're in Israel, there's obviously from the Holocaust, from all the wars that have been there, there's a cultural trauma that's just there. It's in the air. Tel Aviv is a wonderful city, but it's not a relaxed city. And the same in Moscow. More numbing than hyperarousal there.

And I've done a lot of healing work since those days. And it was very interesting being in Ukraine, having done a lot of that healing work. But it was also a resource. I sort of said to these guys... When the first kind of rocket sirens sounded, and I said, okay, everyone jumped up and started running for the bomb shelter. I said, look, just take a breath, okay, let's walk. A lot of people get hurt by running to bomb shelters.

So I said, just take a breath. We still got three minutes. Let's go. And you could see people trust me. And they said, oh, you know, how come, you know? I said, this is not my first rodeo. And I think the gift of post traumatic growth for many of us is significant, and there is a natural urge to want to pass that on. And I think the trauma world maybe should get a grip a little bit in what counts as trauma now.



**[00:21:58]**

There's a spread of that term, and of course, there's a subjective element of it. Overwhelm can be caused by many things so what's to say. And it feels to me like the trauma world almost needs a reset of the language so that we could include scales of different experiences, some of which are simply annoying, everybody's hashtag triggered now. It's like, come on, guys, get over yourself. Being offended on Twitter is not the same as being bombed in Kyiv. It's not the same.

**Meagen Gibson**

Well, I've given a lot of thought to this lately of the levels of development for an individual person in trauma awareness and growth and healing. And so, I've found, and this is an informal study based on the feedback we get from the Trauma Super Conference...

**Mark Walsh**

Yeah, go on. I'm interested.

**Meagen Gibson**

I'll get more emails now. But it feels like when you first find out that trauma exists and you might have it, that is the lens you have glued to your face, everything is trauma, everyone is trauma to you. Right?

**Mark Walsh**

Let me jump in. Let's play a game. Let's play a game. Tell me anything about your life, and I'll tell you how it's a trauma symptom. Anything. Hit me. Anything at all. Just tell me any random fact.

**Meagen Gibson**

I'm really annoyed by the truck, I did not know the utility truck that's outside, chopping down a tree right now.

**Mark Walsh**

Okay, well, clearly the tree represents your own vulnerability. The truck represents your own disembodied empowerment and obviously, your irritability is hyperarousal. One more. Tell me anything. Tell me, what food do you like? Anything.

**Meagen Gibson**

What food do I like? Eggs. I had eggs this morning.

**Mark Walsh**

Well, eggs clearly represent the potential that you have, which has been squashed by trauma, therefore, your obsession with eating eggs. Do you see what I mean? Like, we can just turn

everything, and it is a useful lens, but it's also kind of a dark lens. Do we want to just see the world through that lens?

**[00:23:57] Meagen Gibson**

But I feel like it's a stop. It's a stop. It's like, rarely do people get around that stop on that train line in growth. And nobody can tell how long somebody's going to need to stay at that stop, right?

**Mark Walsh**

And there's denial before that. Like I remember being with a therapist and going, yeah, I mean, I've been in some war zones, and my dad was an alcoholic and I've done this, this and this, and I've been beaten up and so on, but I don't think I've got trauma. There's denial, and then there's that stage, and then there's also a stage of denial of one's own responsibility. It's like people have to own a victim narrative, I've been hurt. Someone abused me. That's not okay. And then they have to let go of that or else they hang on to that and weaponize it. And that's what we're seeing. The weaponized victim is what we're seeing across the world now.

**Meagen Gibson**

Where we want everyone else to change, to make us feel safe, right?

**Mark Walsh**

Right. So you could either wear shoes or you can coat the world in leather.

**Meagen Gibson**

And it makes sense to me that that's what people want, right?

**Mark Walsh**

They want a safe world.

**Meagen Gibson**

It makes sense, of course we do. But guess what? Spoiler alert, that's not going to happen. So the next step is, in my experience anyway, to blame everybody. You blame everybody else. Everybody else is the villain. Like we just said.

**Mark Walsh**

You're innocent and the victim is holy in our culture. Victim blaming is one of the worst crimes on the Internet. So we've made the victim a holy institution in the absence of any real values. And as you say, people can really get stuck there, and that's not great for their healing. And at a certain point, I tell people, you are victimized. That's really not okay. And another point we need to move on from that.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah.

**[00:25:40] Mark Walsh**

And interestingly, as a society, I think we're going through kind of big picture versions of the same kind of individual process.

**Meagen Gibson**

And I don't think either of us is denying that people are victims of hate, abuse, neither of us is denying that. Those things are objectively true. You were mistreated, you deserved better. You were hurt. The other person was wrong. Those things are not debatable.

**Mark Walsh**

We're in a language creep, though, sorry to jump in again, but, for example, someone would say there was harm done. We used to use harm, words of violence. It's like, well, if words of violence, then self defense involves cutting down freedom of speech. So if we allow this language of trauma to go into the general culture, we're actually allowing a certain kind of control to happen because it's like you have to control the world to feel safe if you can't control yourself.

And I think that's deeply dangerous for the world and allowing the sort of language creep into other areas. It's not naive to call words violence and say harm was done. Therefore, what are we talking about here? We're talking about upset feelings, or are we talking about real trauma? We're adults here. It's also to do with the fact that trauma comes from therapy. So if someone walks into a therapy office, they're a vulnerable person. There's a certain kind of relationship, and we can assume vulnerability.

But I don't want to assume that. I want to assume basic adult robustness. Like, if you come to my training, I'm going to swear, I'm going to make jokes, we're going to talk about sex. It's not going to be trigger warning. We're just grown up space. It's not your college campus in Berkeley. This is a grown up place. This is an educational space. And I think the psychologization of normal life, everyone's ex boyfriend is now a narcissist, or everyone's ex girlfriend is a sociopath. You know what I mean? It's like you just don't like them.

**Meagen Gibson**

And I got to be honest, the psychologists I talk to are the worst about this. Everybody that's their ex has a personality disorder.

**Mark Walsh**

Who picked those people? Number one, okay, number one, if someone picked those people, maybe they've got the problem. But it's the power. See, the Soviets did this. If I can say that you're mad, I can lock you up forever. I mean, that's even more powerful than saying you're bad. Anyone who disagrees with us is either bad or mad, it's very childish, actually. You smell. But to say you're mad is a huge power move, because as soon as we say someone's mad, they no longer have any human rights. We can do what we want with them. It's either evil or mad. And both of those are dehumanizing in a way.

**[00:28:08] Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely.

**Mark Walsh**

Soapbox! And this is the lead edge. The lead edge is actually integrating conservative principles into trauma theory. So I did a poster that was very popular about Gabor Maté versus Jordan Peterson. I like Gabor Maté a lot. He was a big part of our first conference. I think his work is just a work of genius and I highly recommend it to everyone, a thoroughly nice man too. And he's got half the picture. Gabor Maté's mom, the traditional cultures would say mom, sexism, traditional cultures, not now.

He says, it's not your fault. Of course you're doing your best. It's not your fault. That's the liberal side of things, which is great, and it's true. And he says, social conditions matter, which is a definition of sort of liberality. Social conditions do matter. It does matter about your ethnicity. And your level of... Poverty is always the one that's ignored in America, right? Money matters a whole lot more than everything else. I'm sorry, but it does.

And he's right about that stuff. But then Jordan Peterson says, come along, clean your room, take responsibility, stand up straight, do your best. Life is hard. Do your best. He's dad, strict dad. Could be in your family, it might have been a strict mom. And they're both right. I like them both, but I'm not going to choose sides. But they don't like each other. But I think they're both right. From the trauma world, it's all come from mom.

**Meagen Gibson**

Now it's my turn to be on a soapbox. Yeah. Mom's to blame for... It doesn't matter what happens, at the end of the day, mom is to blame.

**Mark Walsh**

That view of it's not your fault, which is right, but it is your responsibility.

**Meagen Gibson**

There was a man who I actually just Googled the other day, because I was like, I wonder what he's up to. But his name was Fred Kofman and I met him 20 years ago and he used to say response-able, right?

**Mark Walsh**

Oh, yeah, great. Yeah, I liked him a lot. Yeah, I know who you mean. The integral business guy. Fred Kofman's great, response-able.

**Meagen Gibson**

We just say you are response-able. I mean, 20 years later, I just quoted it to you. And that's what I always think of when I think of trauma healing and trauma growth. It's like, you're not absolved of responsibility just because you got hurt or because you experienced something horrible, you're still

responsive. And to me, that's what all trauma work boils down to is being able to respond instead of react.

### **[00:30:34] Mark Walsh**

When I'm in Ukraine, they are response-able, the people that are in the team, and mostly women, because most of the men are fighting. And kick ass women, badass, strong women, but super feminine. And they like men, they will say things like, our men are so noble and so brave and we love them so much fighting to protect us. And I go, oh my God, it's nice to hear that as a man, you know, not, it's the patriarchy, right?

You hear that and you're just like, oh, thank you. I'd love to hear more of that in Berlin and California and all the other places that have forgotten that. But they don't lose any kick assess. I mean, these are strong, capable women and they're certainly not claiming victimhood. Even though they're literally being bombed on a daily basis, they're getting on with it. The amount of 'can do' I see in Ukraine is huge.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, absolutely. The inconvenience alone would disable the entire.

### **Mark Walsh**

Once I was having sushi in Lviv and the sushi was just coming and then a rocket attack happened and the waiter tried not to deliver the sushi. We got really upset and insisted that you give us the sushi so we could take it to the bomb shelter. We almost didn't get sushi. It's pretty bad. I'm joking, of course. There are people who are suffering horribly, including friends of mine. But it's very surreal, actually, being in a place where you can eat sushi and be bombed at the same time.

But yeah, the power outages are not great there right now. The winter, their suffering is pretty great. And also it just winds people down. The beginning of the war, there was adrenaline, there was a kind of surge and then, what are we, nine months later, it does wind people down. And what the Russian military is doing is absolutely atrocious. I've got very little time for conspiracy theories about this because I hear first hand accounts and the things that are being done out there...

I'm not going to say it here because of the context, but really atrocious, worse than people can imagine. And I hear the first hand accounts, so I know it's true. Do you support those people who are doing that? It's not my charity anymore, given it away, Sane Ukraine, and there's lots of other great groups out there as well.

But yeah, also hope in every other war in human history, literally, was trauma unaware. And usually what would happen is they'd learn about trauma after the war and then forget it. So we had shell shock and then we had combat fatigue and then we had PTSD, but it was always afterwards and never during because the Ukrainians see this as Western and they see Western as good, and are you not Russian? The Russians aren't trauma aware, I don't give a shit.

But because they see it in a positive Western light, it's there currently, which, I mean, my ideal world would be one without war. My second ideal world would be one where it's trauma aware, and that can end the cycles of war. So if we see so many atrocities the Russians are doing, it's not an excuse, but they've also been brutalized themselves. So we have these cycles of hurt people,

hurting people. We have these cycles of numbness and trauma repeating, and you can interrupt those cycles. In the Bible it says the sins of the father will be visited onto the sun for five generations. And I say, not with good trauma therapy. We can fix that. There is hope.

### **[00:33:58] Meagen Gibson**

And we won't know the effects of, well maybe we will, maybe I shouldn't speak like that, but we won't know the effects of creating a trauma aware culture in the midst of war for probably five to ten years to come. Like, we'll see how impactful that was, and my guess is incredibly impactful.

### **Mark Walsh**

Yeah. I mean, the fact that school teachers are with the kids and the nurses are with people in the hospital, the doctors, and I already see it. I've been around a few wars, and you see the hooks of hate getting to people and to see that not happening, people are still defending themselves, doesn't mean being a pushover, is already obvious to me as someone who's talked to people in Afghanistan and places like that.

This actually brings me to my last question that I wanted to ask you, and everything's lined up beautifully for it, thank you, which is that people have this perception of embodiment and nervous system regulation as being this person that's unshakable and undeterred and calm regardless of what they're facing. And so for you and, I expect, I don't know the answer to this, but from your experience and from the little I know about you, I'd love it if you could address that kind of assumption and misnomer about this kind of idealized sense of calm that we assume.

Why don't I answer that question in the yoga voice? No, I mean, I'm feeling it now, talking about Ukraine. I can feel my emotional response to that. There's a certain welling up there. There's all sorts of emotions present right now. I think pretending to be calm is one sort of spiritual image. You'd see different versions that you see in the martial arts, the fake martial arts, yoga teacher, the different versions of it, thinking that niceness is the same as... I'm fierce. My Ukrainian team is fierce. That, I think, can come with it.

We shouldn't sort of culturally associate pleasant niceness with trauma healing. I'd like to see more passion in trauma, more cheekiness, more play, more sexiness. I think trauma healing often just looks bland. It's like, where's the pepper? Where's the color? So I think those things come in with real trauma healing as opposed to trying to make everything safe, which is impossible and just ends up neurotic and controlling. So, yeah, the affectation of calm is popular and a shame.

### **Meagen Gibson**

I like that answer. Yeah. And I think it really does pay to have a variety of different approaches, as we've said, full circle, because a lot of people will completely respond to what you said. They do want the play and the fun and the spiciness and the pepper in their trauma healing and growth...

### **Mark Walsh**

And some people are in Portland and have blue hair. Listen, if you're watching this, you're in Portland, you have blue hair. Just email Alex Howard at don't give a shit .com and then we'll use it for toilet paper. We'll print your email out.

**[00:37:12] Meagen Gibson**

We read them all.

**Mark Walsh**

There's cups of tea for different people. Some people love a bit of Gabor. Some people love a bit of... I know Steve Hoskinson is someone I really appreciate in this space. Laurence Heller, I really appreciate in this space. Irene Lyon. There's so many different people. We need someone making rude jokes and flirting with Slavic women and talking about sushi. We need that. That's important. We need this full spectrum, not just clones of Northern Californians.

**Meagen Gibson**

Agreed. Mark Walsh, how can people find out more about you, obviously your Ukraine organization that you've surrendered over to other people now, how can people support your work and find out more about you?

**Mark Walsh**

If you put the word embodiment into the internet, I will come up. So the embodiment book on Amazon, the embodiment podcast, the main one is Embodiment Unlimited. Embodiment Unlimited. It's an app, and a website, so you can get the app. And that's got loads of free resources, including loads of free trauma resources, including some of the big names on this conference. So [embodimentunlimited.com](https://embodimentunlimited.com) or the app. Or they can find me on podcasts, on Amazon, on the Internet, on Tinder, everywhere. Everywhere. You missed that joke.

**Meagen Gibson**

No, I just didn't think it was funny, Mark.

**Mark Walsh**

It's been really nice to meet you. It's been a real pleasure.

**Meagen Gibson**

Wonderful to meet you, too.

**Mark Walsh**

You're better than Alex. Tell Alex next time, I don't want to speak to him. I'll speak to you again.

**Meagen Gibson**

I don't have to tell him.

**Mark Walsh**

Tell him. He knows that.

**[00:38:37] Meagen Gibson**

He's going to feel it in the universe. Thank you so much, Mark Walsh.

**Mark Walsh**

Pleasure.