



Conscious Life presents

Connecting to Wholeness

Guest: Alsu Kashapova

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[00:00:09] Jaï Bristow

Hello and welcome back to this conference. My name is Jaï Bristow and I'm one of your hosts. Today I am very pleased to be welcoming the wonderful Alsu Kashapova. Welcome Alsu.

Alsu Kashapova

Hi Jaï, thank you so much for inviting me.

Jaï Bristow

Thank you so much for joining us today. You are a Holistic Transformational Coach, certified in compassionate inquiry, breath work, hypnotherapy, and numerous other modalities.

Do you want to start by telling us a bit, what that means, and about your journey, and your work, and how it supports trauma healing?

Alsu Kashapova

Yes, definitely. I love what I do because I help people to come back to their essence, authenticity, and live from that state, using various modalities, as you said. The work of Gabor Maté, and breathwork, various methods, hypnotherapy of Marisa Peer, and more.

I actually turned my career from tech executive. I was leading technology teams before, and then I finally shifted my path and transferred my career as well.

I think the topic of trauma is very much close to me because for the longest time I didn't think that I personally had trauma. I come from a very, what to say, a normal family. So I thought that my parents were great, they were taking care of me, so I don't need any therapy, I don't need healing. I also had a belief that I should do everything on my own, and I try to rely on rather positive thinking, and overcoming, and achieving.

That's why I achieved a really great career, and I realized that a lot of times it would take me one step forward, but it would take so much energy within, that I almost felt like two steps back. It was

exhausting and overwhelming, go through life like that. Although I had an amazing relationship, career and lifestyle, inside I felt that emptiness, and I felt disconnected from my truth, for who I really am.

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So I started my path, first of all for myself, of healing, and I worked with coaches and therapists, and attended lots of retreats. Actually I have worked with people since I was a teenager. I was an NGO, and when I was a student I was part of a leadership student organization. I think one of the hardest parts for me, was also to accept that I just want to work with people directly, rather than impacting millions of users through tech and things like that. That's my background, and the story of how I went into this world of healing and trauma.

Jai Bristow

Well, thank you for sharing that. I think it's really interesting how you talk about, you didn't have an obvious typical trauma background. You were like, I had a quote-unquote normal family, a good career, relationship, things seemed to be going well, why..? And then feeling like something was missing, feeling like there was a certain emptiness that you didn't feel whole.

I'm curious about this theme of wholeness, which I know runs through your work, and you talk in your work about unbecoming as opposed to becoming. Do you want to say some more about that?

Alsu Kashapova

Yeah, as I said, I was relying a lot on positive thinking and personal growth, and lots of messages. There is, be the next best version of yourself, and achieve that next step. I was very good at that, but I realized that it's never bringing me that fulfillment that I am looking for, of that sense of inner peace, that sense of coming back home, arrival and presence.

That I'm always busy worrying about the future, or thinking how I can do things better, what could be done? I always felt this state of, maybe not strong anxiety, but rather worry. I even felt that it's normal to feel this way, that it's part of a corporate job because everyone around feels a little bit like that. Therefore, I didn't consider that I needed any special treatment.

I think it's important to talk about these traumas that I probably sometimes call, wounding or childhood wounding, because they are not big t trauma. Usually, only people who went through some big traumatic experiences, they allow themselves to go through that healing journey. For me it was unobvious that I can also dedicate time, invest money into that.

I really feel that it's the best, and the most important that I did. Healing is originated from the same word as wholeness. I think that we are all on a constant journey to wholeness. What I felt that is, about this part of becoming and unbecoming. It's about that, we were told to be so many things, starting from our culture, families, from how we're supposed to be in relationships, and career, with all the identities. I think it's just so many expectations.

For me, I experienced it myself even. I had a moment in my corporate career that I built exactly what I was supposed to do and I realized, okay, so now what? I needed to rediscover who I am, it was not about again, figuring out who I need to become? It was rather what do I don't want in life, what I don't want to be, what is not my true self, what is not my authentic dreams and goals.

[00:06:23] Jaï Bristow

Brilliant. I think it's really interesting the way you're describing that. So often we see all these inspirational quotes, and these things about becoming the best version, but it's adding to the shoulds. There's this term in the spiritual school that I'm a part of called Spiritual Superego. Superego is another word for that inner critic, that voice that's constantly judging us, and judging others a lot of the time as well.

Then as we start this healing process, or as we try to become the best version of ourselves, or something like that. Sometimes the voice can switch tones a little bit, but it's still those expectations, and the impact of the developmental and cultural conditioning, and that wounding, I think is really important.

Some people have experienced big traumatic events that they can pinpoint, but for the vast majority of us, and of people, there are often lots of little paper cuts almost, or from the expectations and from the telling of how things, quote-unquote should be. I really appreciate the way you bring that in, and the way that you talk about, it's more about freeing ourselves of that, and unbecoming rather than becoming something very specific.

Alsu Kashapova

I just want to add that, if some people never thought about their journey, and how to identify whether they would like to look into it, one of the identifiers could be, either you don't remember part of your childhood. For me it was like foggy memories that I don't remember, because our mind tends to repress those memories that are painful.

Also, if in your childhood, maybe it's not only about that you had too much of something, too much of abuse, or let's say critique, but also not enough care and emotional attunement, not enough touch and attention of parents. For me it was surprising that it's also trauma, and I think it's important to speak about that. And even abuse, it could be emotional, it could be verbal.

A lot of these conditions, where we grew up for so many years, lots of time, it is originated in childhood, also could be with parents, of course, and caregivers, but also in school, and how we are going through our adolescence period. I think it all impacts, what do we think about ourselves. Of who we are, our identity.

I think unpacking that a little bit gives a little understanding that maybe there is something for me to look, especially if you feel that you are disconnected, you don't feel fully alive. I want to remind everyone that everyone deserves to be, to feel that aliveness, wholeness, joy of life, that we are given this life, and the beauty of it. But a lot of times we just experience something that got us disconnected from that sense of wholeness. We all deserve it. So that's why for me, everyone deserves to go through this healing journey.

Jaï Bristow

100%. I interviewed Katherine Ripley on this conference, talking about emotional neglect as trauma as well. I recommend people check out that talk if they want to know more about that path. Alsu, I'm wondering, you talk about this wholeness, and this essence, and how so often we're disconnected from our authentic true selves. What are some of the ways that you work with your

clients to support people coming back into their essence, coming back into their true selves, and their authenticity, and into a wholeness?

[00:10:26] Alsu Kashapova

Firstly, if you forgot how it feels to be just present, just normal, just being happy with who you are, in a moment. It's good to see what's in the way, a lot of times that's where I start working with clients. It's let's see what are behaviors? And symptomatic behaviors, that I call them, maybe it's anxiety, maybe it's controlling, maybe finding it hard to fall asleep, or maybe emotional overeating, or addictions. All of these are symptoms.

I think it's good news because it's not who you really are. In that context I help my clients to understand how these patterns, they've been created in childhood. It's a system of beliefs, emotional reactions, and even somatic responses. A lot of times we start believing that's the way I am. For example, I was worried constantly and I even was called an anxious child. I thought that this is who I am, and it's normal for me to be this way.

For example, even an achiever could be that coping strategy, and in our society it's even recognized more. But if you are continuing to achieve without that sense of fulfillment, that probably could be a call that, aha maybe it's more of the behavioral coping mechanism rather than my sense of wholeness. A lot of times it's understanding how certain behaviors that they feel, that is not real you.

You know that they are not bringing you into this present moment. Most of the people know these emotional reactions, when you react unproportionately to the current situations. That's where I usually recommend starting. It could be a fun journey.

First I thought that we need to shift, let's say beliefs or shift ourselves, but the good part is that when you start working this way, with some parts of you, that become these patterns, and coping mechanisms, you can also find the beauty there. The moment you unburden and release some stuck emotions that are connected to that initial wounding. You can also find aha, actually achieving it's something that I enjoy, but how can I achieve from that space and sense of wholeness?

Or maybe worrying could have the good side, of planning, thinking about details, and it can be useful in a certain situation, but it's not that it's really your identity and who you are. That's the starting point.

Jai Bristow

I really hear that, how the importance of disidentifying from certain behaviors. If you have anxious behaviors, or you have stress, that doesn't mean that that's who you are. That is not your essence, that is not the core of your identity, and your authenticity. That's just a behavior, or feeling, or an emotion, or something. It might be caused by patterns, and history, and trauma, or external, internal factors.

There's different things that can contribute to that, it's not about rejecting that either, but it's about not becoming so caught up in that being the sense of who you are, because there's so much else going on there.

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I think that that's really important as a first step, bringing in that awareness and disidentifying from that. Then what are some of the other ways that you then support? And once you've got to that point, what are some of the modalities that you can bring in and support people with?

Alsu Kashapova

The next step would be to connect to that essence. The question would usually be of my clients, okay, if I'm not all of that that I'm used to perceiving myself, then who am I? Actually for many people, I work with people of the age of 70, 50, 20, it doesn't matter, it's relevant at any point of life, and it's never too late to answer that. It could be a combination of many things.

Then I start working with clients of identifying values. What really drives you in life? What gives you joy? What are your passions? I like this exercise from the book, *The Artist's Way*, by Julia Cameron, hundred lives. If you had a hundred lives, how would you live, who would you be? It's a very playful way to rediscover yourself. I believe that it's very experimental phase to just try doing something for yourself for the joy of it. Because a lot of times in society we're so used to being productive.

I remember that I got used to learning only skills that are useful. And then to do something just for myself, for my joy, for passion, it was something that even I had to relearn. Lots of my clients find this as well.

At the same time there are modalities that can bring you to the expanded state, or the state of non-ordinary state of consciousness. And right now there are many modalities like that, like breathwork, or even shamanic drums, or dancing, singing, hypnotherapy. Or even deep connection with yourself in a therapeutic context, in a group, through connection with your loved ones.

I think everyone is familiar with some moments in life when you felt that your heart is just a little more expanded, that you can connect to another person, or nature, or maybe the whole world, from that sense of connection. That's when you feel, aha I feel arrived, I feel that that's who I am, that's my life.

I really enjoy when people can connect to that sense of themselves, of their truth, of their wholeness and essence. I believe that right now there is more and more awareness and accessibility to these modalities. It's really amazing to see that.

Jaï Bristow

Beautiful absolutely, I think like you say, there's more and more awareness and integration of these different modalities into the mainstream, that can help our consciousness go into these non-ordinary states that you were speaking of. For those unfamiliar, could you say a little bit more about what you mean by non-ordinary states, and how again they're supportive to trauma healing?

Alsu Kashapova

Yes, it's also called altered state of consciousness, or expanded states. I like this definition of Stanislav Grof, who came up with this term non-ordinary states when he was experimenting with LSD for the first time. They discovered that healing could be completely from a different perspective, and they started calling it non-ordinary states.

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That's where our brain waves are going to a deeper level. It's not in a normal consciousness state, but our prefrontal cortex is actually less active, and more amygdala, and other parts of the brain, that are connected to emotional and long term memory, they are more activated.

I think on the sense of how it feels, we can feel it from being connected. A lot of times the description that you are being connected to yourself, somehow you feel the connection to your body. Or maybe, as I explained, like nature, there is a sense of oneness that comes with it.

If you think of it, this expansion could happen in daily life as well, if you are really present and you're walking by the seaside, or just being present in the moment, and suddenly you feel that separation is dissolving. Or maybe when you are driving a car, and suddenly your consciousness is present with driving but you're not thinking actively, so you can be somehow more relaxed. That's what I am referring to when I talk about non-ordinary states.

Jai Bristow

Fantastic, I appreciate that explanation. And so how do these non-ordinary states actually help heal trauma?

Alsu Kashapova

A lot of times we can't access implicit memory easily. Most of the time we can't access and remember events, especially traumatic events or woundings. Our subconscious mind, and our perception started, is being built, starting from when we're in our mother's womb. When we are being born, through the birth process, lots of first beliefs like, am I good enough? Am I welcomed here? Am I safe here? Is it an abundant world, or is it that it's always not enough for me here?

All of these primary core beliefs are being formed during these very early stages of our human development. And first of all, non-ordinary states, they help us access those implicit memories, stuff that we cannot recall, but they are so important.

So through breathwork suddenly a person can reconnect physically? Probably just somatically, the body could release certain emotions that were stuck in some sense in that moment. Maybe when you were two years old, or just through the birth process, and now the body is releasing.

Or in hypnotherapy maybe you can go back to some memories that were traumatic, and you can reframe and heal them in a more safe environment, in a more positive way. Using plant medicine or psychedelics, it's also very accessible.

Our human psyche goes so beyond our biographical aspect into cross generational, because we carry so much of the history of our ancestors, of our previous generations. We are all connected to certain archetypes. And lots of times through these experiences people can connect to that sense of unity. Or maybe through certain god figures, or maybe even confronting some darker energies, like demons, in a certain way, and all of this becomes accessible through these states.

[00:22:00] Jaï Bristow

That makes a lot of sense. Like you say that connecting to the unconscious. Like, I guess, dream states are similar to non-ordinary states perhaps, psychedelics, breathwork, drumming, there's all these different ways of going into these states. By being in the unconscious realms, it actually supports trauma healing because we can get to, I forgot the terminology you used, but we can get to other implicit memories, I think is what you said. So that makes a lot of sense.

What are some practices then that people can use on a daily basis to either help get into those states, or to help with their healing journey, and their healing process?

Alsu Kashapova

I love this question because it doesn't matter where you are in your journey, daily practice it's so important, and that's why I am such a big promoter of a holistic way. It's important to have some intensives with non-ordinary states, but there is also some integration that is necessary.

Maybe working with your therapist, or coach, or just reflection and journaling, and then there are some daily habits. I always use this example that, you can't just clean your body for your whole life taking shower one time, it's constant process, every day or so you are taking a shower, and every moment a few times a day you wash your hands, and maybe once in a while you go to proper sauna.

That's the same with healing, that there are certain practices that we do on a daily basis, and this can be... It's good to see in a holistic way, approaching the mind with a certain question in the morning, or maybe connecting to your intention, or just thinking about your values. What is it that the value that you want to live today? It sets the tone for some people.

Some higher consciousness books really help, like reading Krishnamurti, or Almas, or something. These books give us a different perspective on life. They set the tone, how we then deal with daily situations.

Then there is also I think physical aspect, and on a daily basis I definitely recommend some breathing practices. If you are just starting, geometrical figure breathing I think it's the easiest one, like box breathing. The square, when you just inhale, hold your breath, exhale, hold your breath. This is the easiest to remember. Like usually when people come for the first time, they can at least remember this practice.

Or for instance, connected breath, like 20 connected breaths that you can do, it creates that expansion, and you will be already experiencing some level of expanded state. And any movement, even taking a walk, swim, dance, jump, whatever that suits you, I think this combination for me is important, and I think every person can decide for themselves. I think it's really joyful experimentation.

I like to practice and be my own center, research center. So usually if I like something, if I resonate, and I know that people will go through so many speakers, but if you resonate with one thing, just take it and practice for the next week or ten days. Just keep repeating the same thing over and over. That's how you create habits.

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It's also really good to add to your existing ritual already. Maybe you are washing your hands and you do one breath as a cleansing breath, so it's already integrated into your practice.

Then maybe weekly. I recommend taking time for yourself on a weekly basis, that is more like could be a date with yourself. Maybe some ritual, whether it's spiritual, whether it's a session with your therapist, or maybe you just have a journal and reflect. It's just some sense of reconnecting to yourself, because we live in a busy world, the speed of life is just increasing. So sometimes take a moment to slow down, remember who you are, what's important, and come back to your essence. That's so important.

Jai Bristow

Yeah, amazing, I really appreciate everything you just brought in. There's a few things that really stuck out for me. I love that allegory of healing and self-care, a bit like the way we wash ourselves, you need to do it on a regular basis. There's some things that you'll do, or even the way we clean our houses, for example, or just the cleaning in general, feels like a good one in terms of cleaning out our psyche, cleaning out our mental health, and our well-being.

The way that there's daily needs, there's things we do multiple times a day, and then there's things we do maybe weekly, and then there's things we do once every month, there's things we do a couple of times a year. That's really important.

I also really appreciated what you were saying around these conferences can be really overwhelming for some people, because there's so much material. It's like, oh my God, I need to do it all, where do I start? So what you were saying about, no one needs to do it all, and no one needs to do it all at once. But if there's something that you particularly connect with, try that, and do it for a few weeks, see how it works, and then maybe bring in something else, maybe swap it out for something, depending.

But again, that tuning in and seeing what works for each individual, as opposed to a template of everyone must do all these things in order to heal, which can feel impossible.

Most of our speakers are speaking about modalities that have supported them in their journey. You're talking about these combined modalities that you've found really helpful, and I really appreciate you sharing them, and I really appreciate everyone who contributes to these events, and can bring in different elements. But then for the listeners and viewers, people need to find what works for them.

I also really appreciated the piece about integration because I think that that's something that can get overlooked very easily. And when we're doing these new practices, and we're on this journey, especially when we're doing spiritual work, or work that takes us into these states of non-ordinary states, as you're calling them, coming back into an ordinary state requires some integration.

And sometimes we can have an overload. And so in the practices you gave, and the examples you gave, most of them didn't sound like... They sounded like just daily examples for life, for better connecting one to oneself, for getting more into a state of wholeness, and authenticity, and finding more ease and capacity in life to function. To get through so that we're not operating from a state

of stress, like you were describing your life used to look like. I think that that's wonderful to bring in all these tools.

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I'm also curious then, with the connection with what you were saying earlier about how these non-ordinary states can support trauma healing, and then the practices were more about integrating that, it sounded like, so I'm wondering if you can say a bit about combining going into those states, and then the integration, and the need for ordinary states as well, maybe we'll call them.

Alsu Kashapova

Yeah. Thank you, I love how you summarize everything, and care so much about listeners, such a great choice of host, I would say. Coming back to your question is about integration. Yes, I think when we are experiencing non-ordinary states, it's when we go to retreat, for example, or we go to this one time session and wow, the world is amazing, I'm unity, I'm love, all of that.

Or maybe you discovered something so profound, but how then you come back and you meet your husband, and you need to wash dishes, and in the morning there is work to do. Most of the spiritual teachers, they also teach spirituality that it's shown in relationships with others, with things, with yourself. That relational aspect, it's really what could give you clues.

First of all, what is it that need to be integrated? Where do you feel that you are disconnected? Maybe if you feel disconnected with yourself, just ask yourself in that moment, what do I need right now? How can I support myself right now? And be that compassionate adult and self-parent in that moment and just practice it daily a moment, aha what do I need right now? I think that could be a gentle integration of all these discoveries.

For example, daily practice could also include a little bit of these non-ordinary states. For example, breathwork could be divided into different formats. It could be small format, medium, and a long format, as my teacher actually created the system. And small format is just one breath at a time, as I was showing a breath of relief, like a cleansing breath, and you're already resetting your nervous system with just one single breath.

There is a medium format, which is like all pranayamas, five to ten minutes of practicing box breathing, Wim Hof style practice, or whatever that you resonated with. Just having it as a daily routine, I think would create that remembrance of coming back. I could feel right now present, I could feel whole in this moment. And it will create that resilience, and more of emotional balance, so you can be less emotionally triggered if something happens.

And of course, if you can work with someone, I think for me is like one of the most profound experiences, working one on one. That's why I think I chose it as primarily a practice, although I do workshops and retreats.

But when you work with someone one on one, I think there is an element of consistency. There is an element of keeping your own questions, and how you can inquire into them. So this consistent inquiry, I think could be really good for integration. And if you experience something profound during, whether it's plant medicine, retreat, breathwork, or hypnotherapy, or something else. Or even during this conference, you have realization, you can write down these questions, or just a

little bit of these memories, let it settle. You don't need to integrate all of it, but maybe there is something that awakened in you, or maybe something bothered you.

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So just allow yourself to inquire, aha, what is there for me to explore? What part of me resonated with that? Or maybe felt resistance? What is that resistance? Or what is that curiosity? And just following that curiosity or resistance, I think would give a lot of answers. I hope that it answers a little bit of your question.

Jaï Bristow

Absolutely, I really appreciate the emphasis on self-inquiry, on asking oneself, yeah, I had that realization, and bringing in that element of curiosity, asking oneself questions, writing them down, writing down insights, and again, following one's own path and thread.

And then ideally also having someone who can guide that inquiry, like a practitioner, a teacher, a guide, whoever it is. I really appreciate everything you brought in today Alsu. Is there anything else that you wanted to add before we end here for today?

Alsu Kashapova

I just want to emphasize also what you said about this, many teachers bring so much information and practices and modalities. I think the moment you start choosing one thing that suits you, there is also that element of trust in yourself.

I believe that this skill that we all, or most of us, forgot or were not taught. We were taught to follow someone, to follow authority, like a parent, teacher, guru. So right now, if you even trust yourself to choose the practice that you want to start with, I think that would be a great journey towards wholeness, towards your authenticity, because trust is one of the elements of that.

Jaï Bristow

Yeah, I really appreciate how you bring in that piece about that inner guidance and learning to trust oneself, and how that capacity can grow as well over time, I think is so important. So, Alsu, thank you for bringing all these beautiful and important elements. How can people find out more about you and your work?

Alsu Kashapova

Thank you for this question. I have my website, alsukashapova.com, and I have a free-call link. I usually give lots of free sessions for people to experience it first, or if you have a specific question. And there are lots of materials that you can find on my website, or on [Instagram](#).

Jaï Bristow

Fantastic. And are you taking on clients at the moment?

[00:36:30] Alsu Kashapova

Yes, I am.

Jaï Bristow

Brilliant. Thank you so much for your time today.

Alsu Kashapova

Thank you, Jaï.