



Conscious Life presents

## Modeling Nervous System Regulation

Guest: Dr Lori Desautels

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

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

Today I'm speaking with Dr Lori Desautels, assistant professor in the College of Education at Butler University, author of five books, and co teacher in the classroom two days a week.

She teaches applied educational neuroscience around the world, which is a tier one trauma accommodating framework.

Dr Desautels is working on a new manual for educators entitled *Body Brain Brilliance*.

Dr Lori Desautels, thank you so much for being with us today.

### **Dr Lori Desautels**

I'm very happy to join you. Thank you for having me.

### **Meagen Gibson**

So first I want to set some context, because although your experience and focus deals with education environments, I know that this session is going to greatly benefit anyone, period.

So that said, why are trauma accommodating nervous system informed learning environments important? What's at stake?

### **Dr Lori Desautels**

So when we think about accommodations, accommodations are really those practices or resources that support our students and staff where they are. And they help to scaffold learning, and so when we think about trauma accommodating resources and supports, it's really creating more touch points for a child.

It might be creating opportunities for staff and colleagues to join up together and not be so siloed. Also, accommodations can be co regulatory practices, so when we think about how our nervous system is a social organism and that we can't survive without each other, so it's not enough just to give somebody an ice pack or to, say, chew on ice or to hold a hand warmer. We need others to sit beside us and to listen deeply.

**[00:02:05]**

I love what my professor, Dr Albert Wong, says. He says we need to be heard and seen and felt as if our entire body was a set of eyes. So those are the accommodations that we're speaking of.

**Meagen Gibson**

I'm going to write that down, entire body a set of eyes. What a wonderful... Yeah, that really says it all, right? And you speak of co regulation and...

I want to take a step back because I came out with a big question, but I also want to just kind of set the stage for people who aren't familiar with you and your work. How did you get interested in incorporating trauma work into education?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

So I am a former teacher, special education teacher in the 90s, late 80s and early 90s and I taught children with the classification of emotionally disturbed.

Sometimes we label or classify those children as behavior disordered, emotionally impaired, and even as a young new teacher, that label felt horrible to me because they were not disturbed and they did not carry a disorder.

I didn't understand trauma. I didn't know about trauma at that point, but I did know that they were carrying in some pretty heavy oppressed and marginalized experiences. And I didn't understand then how those experiences literally change every system in our body. So that is how the work began.

**Meagen Gibson**

Fantastic. Yeah. And I was born and raised in Indiana, in school systems in Indiana, where I know that you teach and have a lot of teaching experience. And yeah, it was a very different learning environment as far as categorizing kids who needed extra help in learning environments. Very, very different than it is now.

I've heard you describe your classroom as your lab. And it's fascinating because we don't encounter people very often who study and understand trauma and nervous system work and work in an environment where they get to apply their theory repeatedly every day in a new set of circumstances.

And I imagine people might be envisioning experiments on students, but that's not what we're talking about. So can you set the scene for me on what your classroom lab is like and how it might differ from a typical classroom?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Well, that's my term, my lab is my classroom. And so I want to clarify that I, for the past nine years, have been in a course release from the university. And so in that course release, I have asked intentionally to go back into the K through 12 classrooms and to co teach.

And the reason for that is, I think in higher ed, we are so out of touch oftentimes with what's happening in our K through pre-K through 12 schools. I really wanted to be in touch with not only just the students, but also the staff.

So two afternoons, a morning and an afternoon, or a couple of mornings, whatever my schedule is, but twice a week I'm back in the classroom co teaching with the classroom teacher.

**[00:05:30]**

I'm taking with me the practices that I'm sharing with the world right now. And so my lab is, when I make mistakes or when something doesn't go well, we all experience it together. And that's the beauty of it.

I love that I'm developing relationship with the adults in the classroom and then we're also asking for feedback from the kids. So when the work that I'm taking in is really what we call bell work, some people would call it morning meeting, it's transitional work.

It's how we start class, it's how we end class, it's how we transition throughout the day. And it's really meeting our students in their nervous systems. So we give them an opportunity, and staff too, this year I'm going to be working with adults, but we're giving them an opportunity to check in.

And so that has a lot of different faces, but that is the work that that describes hopefully a little bit better, the lab, that is a part of this work.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And it brings up something interesting because I remember I saw you speak in person a couple of months ago, and it brings up that you were talking about who's harder to convince that nervous system work is more important, adults or kids?

And since you're working with adults this year, I think that you can probably tell us pretty easily who's more difficult to convince right?

### **Dr Lori Desautels**

Absolutely. And any time there's change, in any of our environments, we resist that change. And I'm speaking generally, not everybody. But when we are being asked to hold a mindset that is very different than how we've been prepared or trained as educators, as social workers, as counselors, even as parents, this is parent work.

I said in my presentation, I think you heard me, I would have been a different mom than today, than I was when my three children were younger. And I'm walking beside my daughter, who is now a new mom, and as a new grandma, it's really fascinating to see how powerful these practices are for our children and youth.

So the resistance is coming from the adults. It doesn't feel good to our nervous systems. And I want to explain what resistance does. I don't want to blame and shame teachers or parents for not shifting or therapists.

But resistance is when we're asked to be or to do or to activate, initiate something different, and to the nervous system that feels so unfamiliar that it throws us into survival states. And so in survival states, we're fighting or we are running or we are shutting down or retreating from the stressor.

So I understand that resistance. It's a part of also the negative bias that we all hold because of our survival instincts. So the children and the adolescents are a little more malleable in their understanding because they may not have those hardwired habits that we carry in to an experience.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, it's so interesting. It's fascinating. I have two young middle school age boys, and it reminds me that I've noticed over the last couple of months that they're in a stage of development now

where about two minutes before we arrive to wherever we're going in the car, all of a sudden they get very dysregulated. And I don't mean bad, I just mean dysregulated.

**[00:09:31]**

They're all of a sudden amped up and all of a sudden they're like wrestling in the car and doing all these things that we were having a peaceful ride. It could have been 10 hours, it could have been 20 minutes. But the last two minutes, when they know we're getting close, all of a sudden all of these...

And it also reminds me of I used to teach at a university level as well, and I noticed that anytime change was put upon me, I would get really upset. But if it was my idea for something to change, if I was initiating the change myself and had agency over the change, whether it was a system or a teaching method or whatever, I was fine with it. It was great.

But if it was change being thrust upon me, and so I just think about kids and how many transitions they're asked to do in a day from the moment they wake up until the moment they go to bed that are out of their control.

And obviously a lot of that is kids like schedules and regularity, and everyone knows this developmentally, but at the same time that point between kind of giving your kids an outline of what their day is going to be like and what to expect and also not letting them have any control or autonomy over what they do and say, right?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

No, it's so true. And what you just described with your middle school, your own children, is what we now understand as a hybrid or a blended state where they're mobilizing energy, but they are still...

In what Dr Stephen Porges would call the social engagement system where we're still focused, we're still alert and we still can do what we need to do, but we're mobilizing energy as we're doing that.

**Meagen Gibson**

I find myself trying to find methodologies for helping them regulate it and also helping myself regulate how irritated I get when they start doing it.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yeah, and you're right. I mean, when it's our ideas... And it's really important to notice our own patterns. And on this podcast today, or not podcast, I don't know what word is.

**Meagen Gibson**

Conference interview. That's all right. Yeah, you got distracted by your canine visitor.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

But I do feel the awareness of our own nervous system states is really the most significant piece of anything we talk about today. The awareness really cultivates change. And so when I'm aware that you and I just talked, I just had a meeting with my university, it was very intense, and I could feel myself... Here comes Nellie.

**[00:12:14]**

I could feel myself getting fast, and I could feel myself getting louder, and I could feel my heart beat fast, and I even had to change clothes because I got hot.

So I don't know if I would have been aware of those things, even though that they happen to me, now I'm understanding, okay, these are patterns for me when I start to feel when my energy starts to ramp up.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, and you make such a good point, too, especially in a classroom that when the adults are the ones that are resistant, they can't model that sort of self awareness. Right?

So it takes somebody like you coming in and not only learning about it, but being able to just announce to the kids, like, hey, wow, I noticed I got really hot when I gave you guys instructions and you didn't get into action. I felt my body get really hot.

My head got hot, and my hands started to sweat. Or naming whatever it is and then naming what you're going to do to calm down or reregulate or I hate always associating calm with regulation because that's not necessarily true or beneficial in a lot of situations, right, but that's what we often associate with regulated is calm. And you don't want to be calm when there's a bear in front of you.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

And it also feels sometimes it feels very unrealistic when we use that word calm. I've been using it a lot. In fact, a lot of the templates and protocols I've developed have the word calm, but I'm really rethinking it because it's not necessarily calm.

And I think I shared this at the conference. I think of the word steady. Or I think of the word grounded, or I think of... Or, this is really interesting, or maybe calm enough, or steady enough, or organized enough, or ready enough.

That word enough is very key when we think about our work as educators, as parents, anytime we're sitting beside our children and youth.

**Meagen Gibson**

That's a really good point. Enough is a great point, and I think that's a lot, my friend of mine, Britt Frank, who we've had on our conferences a lot, wrote the book *Science of Stuck*, and she talks about getting stuck a lot.

And I think we've become so patterned in trying to seek calm or seek groundedness, as if it's this thing that we finish in a state that we achieve like a red velvet rope or like I have achieved calm, right?

When you're just going for calm enough, you're just going for, like, I'm back in my executive function, back where I can actually think and act appropriately and not put myself or anybody else in danger.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Absolutely. Yeah. There she goes!

**[00:15:06] - Meagen Gibson**

I know who the boss in that house is. And you've often expressed this concept of being a thermostat, not a thermometer. So could you tell me what that means?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Well, I want to give credit where credit is due. That is coined by Dr Nicholas Long from Life Space Crisis Intervention, and I was introduced to his work by my colleague Michael McKnight several years ago now, it's probably been maybe ten years ago.

Dr Nick Long talked about being a thermostat rather than a thermometer. And so for me, that is staying the course. It is really... And that's what we say in our house, just stay the course. You know I said that that was one of the things I did well as a younger mom.

I just remember saying, you know what? We just want to just be present and not just go to an experience or a situation when it hasn't happened yet. So for us in a classroom holding that temperature and just really being that thermostat versus just rising and falling with every conflict, is that thermometer.

That happens. We get caught up in conflict cycles. We get caught up in power struggles. But again, it's the awareness of where we're feeling like we just jumped in and we're not able to share our safe, emotionally available space with the child who needs it.

**Meagen Gibson**

And then, especially if we're not self aware, we don't have it. We don't have it to share or to give. Right.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yes. There's nothing there to give. You're exactly right. You said that perfectly.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. And you said something else that stuck out to me so much, which was and I can apply it to parenting 500 times a day, which was that students will choose bad behavior over looking stupid.

And how does that fit into trauma accommodating, and then how do you account for the administrators and the parents that would say, but what about consequences?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yeah. I just created a brand new graphic on co regulating through academics because oftentimes what we see when we peel back the layers of behavior, what's underneath the behavior are a variety of variables. A lot of V words there.

But there might be a sensation that doesn't feel right, there might be a person that doesn't feel safe to us, or there may be a space that doesn't feel safe to us.

One of the other variables are tasks. It's in a template that I've created called RECAST, and the T is for tasks. So we know that peers are extremely important. They become more important in a child's life as they die to their childhood and are being born into adolescence.

**[00:18:22]**

And that's because of our evolutionary biology. We have to cultivate our groups. So when we think about derailing, our behaviors will always go awry if we're going to look stupid because then there's a chance that we're not going to fit in or to be a part of that group.

So in this new template, I'm really helping educators to understand how to co regulate through assignments that feel overwhelming to students. And this is K through 12.

So some of the ideas in there are chunking assignments, sitting beside our children and highlighting the work with them. Being the recorder of their thoughts and working for and with each other.

So I hope that's helpful, but those are the reasons behind why sometimes we will see kids behavior, if I have to go to gym class and I've got to do this drill, then I'd much rather be sitting in the office, in the dean's office, rather than looking horrible in front of my peers.

**Meagen Gibson**

And acting out in a way that would get me sent there as a way to avoid looking bad...

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yes exactly.

**Meagen Gibson**

In whatever way that might be, by refusing to participate, by being defiant, being disrespectful, like all kinds of things. Shutting down, whatever it is. It could look like a lot of different behaviors. But the result is that I protect my social safety.

And I think a lot of parents and educators can often overlook, just because they're not informed, just how incredibly important that social safety net is and that you'll do anything to protect it.

And as you said, it is our biological imperative to belong and to stay safe in groups. It was absolutely vital to our survival. And that part of our brain isn't gone, is it?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

No, it hasn't changed. In fact, an eye roll today, someone rolling their eyes at you is the same as a predator coming after you to eat you. And we just don't think about how significant sometimes those nonverbal cues are that can derail us or oftentimes just the tone in someone's voice.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. Yeah. I don't know if anybody that's watching this has been in a classroom lately, but I've been on lots of middle school and elementary school field trips, and I used to teach at a college level, and classrooms can kind of feel a little chaotic sometimes.

But what I want to say is, how do we create trauma accommodating spaces not only in our classrooms, but in our communities?

### **[00:21:16] - Dr Lori Desautels**

That's a really great question, and I don't know if I have that answer, but in the classroom, in our homes and in our classrooms, it's really built around our procedures, and we really want the adults to understand that we're not asking anyone to do anything more.

That felt safety in a culture needs to be a part of that space. And it's organic. It's how we start the morning. For a parent it's like, what do bedtime rituals look like? Everyone's going to go to bed. How do we all wake up in the morning? How do we create felt safety around that?

When children come into a classroom, what's the lighting like? Have I checked in with myself? How am I greeting students? Am I starting the day or a class period with bringing in something salient or novel?

Like, lots of times in middle school we will start advisory or we'll start social studies covering an object with a towel. And I mean, I would have done this at home.

So, number one, we check in with each other's nervous system, and then everybody has a sheet of paper, or they can pull up their chromebooks and open their tab, and they can write out three guesses to the two clues that we give them of what's under the towel.

That is something that we've related to something we've talked about this week. So what I'm doing is in bellwork in do nows or morning meeting we're really helping them to become present in the moment by engaging their nervous system and meeting them where they are.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And it's so interesting because while you were speaking, what I kept thinking about was the thing that you get access to in a trauma accommodating environment is curiosity.

And that's what we're trying to teach, right? All of education is trying to teach curiosity and trying to cultivate curiosity. But if you aren't fundamentally safe, it's the first thing to go.

I cannot be curious if I don't feel safe. And so the little things of covering something with a blanket, engaging somebody's curiosity, even if they don't feel safe coming into the classroom, it's like a co-regulation between safety and curiosity of like if I've engaged your curiosity, it can actually facilitate some safety because I'm distracted and I'm focused on something else other than what my morning drop off with my parent was like, or my caregiver, or my adult or what my shirt feels like or what somebody bumped me with their backpack on the hallway or whatever it is.

It's like, now I've got this other shiny object that I can focus on and engage my curiosity.

### **Dr Lori Desautels**

Yeah, and what you just described so well, and those are those activators that you just described is really helping our kids to access the cortex. So when we are starting a two minute video and stopping it after 40 seconds and having them predict the ending.

Or again, covering, like, I remember during COVID in my district, we were virtual a lot of the time, we were hybrid, we were virtual. But our morning meeting was it was called Peak and Breathe.

And so I would literally have an object, like a hair tie, and I would squish it, and then I would hold it up to the camera and they could just see like one tiny piece.

And then they would have to take two deep breaths and guess, if they did not, they would have to breathe again and I'd reveal a little bit more and a little bit more.



**[00:25:07]**

And that was our favorite nervous system aligned bellwork when we were trying to navigate virtual learning so quickly.

**Meagen Gibson**

And I mean, as someone who taught virtual learning and was facilitating an ADHD second grader during virtual learning, there was a lot of regulating going on, wasn't there?

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Absolutely.

**Meagen Gibson**

And it's such a great example, because I think when we think about teaching regulation in classrooms, I think you even mentioned this in your talk that it's not this, like, this segment that we do, like, okay, now let's spend 30 minutes learning...

It's an engaged, integrated process into everything, where you're not announcing to the kids, like, all right, now it's time to learn how to regulate our nervous systems. It's just integrated into the very fabric of how you conduct a classroom.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Absolutely. Like I said, social and emotional learning isn't from ten to 10:30. It's so much more. I would much rather it be called the psychoeducation of our nervous system or the neuroeducation of our nervous system.

Because empowering our children and helping them to really embrace their identity and to really understand what's happening in their own nervous system is psycho education.

And it's teaching them the language of their nervous system. And that's a huge part of the work we do in our procedures. My students, my 7th graders know, my third graders, my second graders knew the vagus nerve.

When I was at Harrison Hill, our second grade students they knew how to put the brake on the vagus nerve. They knew about their amygdala, you know, these are things that many adults are not aware of.

And the beauty is that we learn best by teaching what we need to learn. And so our kids would go home, and they would teach their parents. They would teach younger students. They would go to older students.

And the most wonderful part of this framework is that staff and students learn together. They learn about what's underneath the behavior so that they can get out in front of the behavior.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. And also because it's not here's the technique to regulate your vagus nerve when you're dysregulated, because you need a giant menu of options, just like you don't want to eat the same thing every day.

Different stimulus is going to require different responses depending on a whole host of factors that

you can't possibly predict. But it's like, I know I've been in situations of extreme dysregulation, and the thing that normally would bring me back down... I'm like, no, absolutely not.

**[00:28:03]**

I had an incident last summer, and I thought for sure, and even my husband was very sweet, he was like, do you want a weighted blanket? And I was like, no, I need to go swim laps in the pool.

And it surprised heck out of me. I was like, I didn't see that coming. But it worked like a charm, right? Yeah. We need all of these different, we need to repeatedly practice a variety of things so that when the time comes, we know what our options are.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

And you can access them.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, exactly. Because you've practiced them when you weren't completely dysregulated.

So I've been interviewing or learning about trauma for about seven years, just on my own and then interviewing all these experts for the last two years. But it wasn't until I was sitting in the audience at your presentation when I finally understood that sensations and feelings are different.

And I'm sure other people have said it to me, but you know how you can hear something like ten times and then somebody else says it and just clicks?

And so I would love if you could explain for our audience the difference between sensations, feelings and actions and then kind of how they're related.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

So I always have become confused between emotion and feelings, and there are a lot of definitions out there. But one of the things that is very clear and we're understanding this through the research and through the research Dr Peter Levine and just so many... Bessel van der Kolk...

Is that sensations are how I describe them are physical feelings. They are body experiences. So when you think about it, if I'm rubbing my hands together really, really fast and I keep doing that, I start to feel heat and tingling. Those are sensations.

If I have a headache, there's a throbbing sensation in my head. When I'm hungry, there is growling and there is a hollow, empty sensation. When I start to get sad, instead of saying I'm sad, I can say I'm teary or my eyes are burning or there is a lump that's stuck in my throat.

So there are ways that we are, and this is what my new manual coming out in 2024, is about. It's taking the two books, *Connections Over Compliance* and *Intentional Neuroplasticity* and saying, okay, this is a manual now. And this is as much for adults as it is for students.

So we identify our sensations. And when you identify your sensations, you're actually dampening down your stress response system by recognizing them and normalizing them.

I just read recently or saw that crying, the act of crying actually is a parasympathetic reliever. That it activates the parasympathetic nervous system and that we can feel less intense and it lowers our respiration and our heart rate and our blood pressure.

**[00:31:27]**

So sensations are connected to feelings, but sensations are the language of the nervous system. It's how I'm feeling in my chest, it's how I'm feeling in my belly. It's how I'm feeling in my head. Because we have this belly brain, heart brain, and skull brain, and they're in constant communication through the vagus nerve.

**Meagen Gibson**

I'm so glad you explained it because I think... I'm going to make a broad generalization, but every adult who's landed in a therapist's office and has therapists say, and where do you feel that in your body?

And you just look at them like a deer in headlights and you're like, I have a body? We weren't taught how to name sensations or even notice them. And they're like the little flares that go up before you have a feeling.

It happens all mostly before you have a feeling. But we get to the feeling and then completely ignore that and try to compartmentalize it and then wonder why we're struggling or dysregulated when there were signposts way back that we were about to get a flat tire or whatever.

And I love the way that you described and just the variety of words that you gave as possibilities for your kids to describe sensations. Like it could be crinkly or crunchy or electrified or there is no proper or right set of words.

It's whatever is meaningful for you to describe the sensations that you're having in your body. And my kids and I did this and we had a lot of fun just coming up with the different sensation words that we each have.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Just make them up.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, because we're all different. So we all have different sensations and experiences based on our own bodies and minds and the way that we show up in our environment with each other and out in the world, so that was a great gift. Thank you.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Of course.

**Meagen Gibson**

And so we've talked about focused attention practices a little bit. And so I'm wondering if you could give us an example of the different types depending on what kind of nervous system regulation an adult might need or that they might need to provide for a child.

Because I know you kind of separate it into energizing versus grounding versus settling. And so if you could kind of talk us through the different types and then an example of each.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

So focused attention practices I coined about eleven or twelve years ago, we were very intentional with the naming of that because they are practices that have kind of two different pathways.

**[00:34:15]**

So when I want to find some steadiness, when I want to feel some groundedness, to feel calm enough, then we use practices, focused attention practices that focus on breath, on movement, on taste, on a visualization, on a sound, so that I am slowing down a little bit and I'm becoming more present so that I can get to my executive functions.

And if we can't get here and we're spinning in those survival states, then we're not learning. So one of those, I'll just show you one, the kids love this one.

It's where we put our hands together and so we take a deep breath in and we slide as we inhale, and then exhale and squeeze, and slide, and squeeze, and slide and squeeze. So you can go faster, you can go slower. A squeeze can be longer because we want to extend the outbreath longer.

So that is a simple one just to start the day, maybe three deep breaths, four deep breaths.

And then we need to wake up sometimes the brain stem. So you have this area in the brain stem, and Dr Bruce Perry talks about core regulatory networks that live down here and so down in this brain stem, sometimes we need to wake up the other regions of the brain because we're sluggish, we're sleepy, we're tired, we're full.

And then when we're having those sensations, we can't get here. So we need a practice that awakens us. So these are called energizing focused attention practices. And there are so many that I have on my website, and there are so many that I've written about in *Ed Utopia*.

But one is called the pen drop. So you take your pen and you really have to watch, you make it harder each time. And I'm really focusing right now. And we try to make it a little bit bigger. Or the pen revolution.

We also do physical movement, so we might just take a deep breath in and then out with our arms in, out, so that we're really moving and breathing at the same time. So there are so many.

But those are really what they are, are executive function practices so that we can be creative, we can problem solve, we can anticipate well, we can make predictions.

Actually, the energizing focused attention practices, we say that we want to spritz a little norepinephrine throughout the brain just to wake us up a little bit.

**Meagen Gibson**

Little misting.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yeah, a little misting.

**Meagen Gibson**

And it's good to have such a variety as well, because I can remember each year of my kids elementary education, like the lunchtime and its association with either recess or ELA or hard brain work, more challenging brain work for them would be different every single year.

So you might have kids that have lunch at 10:30 in the morning one year, and then they've got to do really hard stuff and they're sluggish. So having all kinds of different energizing and grounding

and settling all different types of regulatory... That makes it sound bureaucratic, but you know what I mean.

**[00:38:11]**

So I wanted to touch really quickly before I let you go on the reactivity loop. I don't know if this was yours or if you just showed a graphic that you got from somebody else.

But it just illustrated it so quickly to me that this importance between the child brain and the adult brain in the room and this kind of six second loop of reactivity that we can just be feeding off of each other if we're not self aware enough to know how each of our nervous system is and responding.

Because you can co regulate to bring someone regulation and calm, but you can also just be co regulating in this kind of figure eight of infinite irritation as well.

### **Dr Lori Desautels**

Yeah, absolutely. And so it's entitled the infinity loop. And so my professor, Dr Albert Wong, shared it with us and it's actually from a marriage and family therapy protocol.

I don't know how long ago it was, but it was used in therapy. So for couples partners to really begin to look at how their feelings and thoughts created behaviors and then those behaviors sometimes intensified the feeling and thoughts of their partner.

And so you got caught up in this sideways kind of figure eight loop. Again, we kept repeating these same perceptions, them producing the same feelings and then the same behaviors.

I shared this with Dr Albert Wong, so we looked at the infinity loop from a teacher student perspective and then we looked at not only feelings and behaviors, but we looked at sensations for the adult and the student to recognize.

So we've got the sensations like when you start to feel hot in your body, when you start to talk fast, when your mouth feels dry, then you're starting to feel some annoyance, some irritation.

And when you do that, your behavior may be to call a student out or it may be a very sharp tone. You may become more critical. And so in turn, that student feels defensive, protective, and they feel hot and they feel sweaty.

So we took that infinity loop and really began to look at the layers of sensations, feelings and behaviors. And then inside of that loop is the window of tolerance.

And so the window of tolerance is kind of that place where we are functioning from the cortex. But if we're outside of our window of tolerance, we're escalating each other, we're elevating each other's behavior.

So it's with awareness that we can begin to break that cycle. And actually the best part of the infinity loop was to give it a name, both persons, both people that were struggling to objectify it.

So that we call it our tornado, we call it our thunderstorm. So that we're not personalizing, but this is something we are sharing. If my sister and I have a conflict, instead of blaming or shaming each other we can say, let's address the thunderstorm that's occurring between us.

I don't know if I talked about that at the conference, but it's really powerful to name it because then it begins to bring awareness to a cycle and not to personalize that and to dive into it even deeper.

### **[00:42:10] - Meagen Gibson**

Right. Yeah. Anybody who's been to family therapy or marriage therapy knows that sometimes you go in thinking the other person... If just they would... And that's never the case. There's always two people interacting.

And this also brings up something that recently happened to me, actually as a result of hearing you talk about this, was that I realized that there was a disconnect with one of my kids because if you would come to me and say something or do something that I wasn't expecting, my face would do one thing, right?

Like my autonomic nervous system would react in one way and then my words in the next second were a totally different thing. And what it created was distrust because he was... and distance and disconnection because his nervous system would then respond to my nervous system's response.

And essentially what he boiled it, he never verbalized this, but he was like, you're a liar. You're like, you're telling me it's okay, but your face definitely said what I did or said or whatever, it wasn't okay.

And so I started naming I would react and I'd be like, my face had a thought, but here's what else I'm also thinking. And it created this environment of trust where he could then not respond to my response, right?

And he's now able to say, like, if I say, I need you to finish up what you're doing and come set the table, he has an initial response and he's like, well, my body didn't like that, but my brain has decided I'm going to come do it.

And so it allows for both the automatic response and the higher thinking and doesn't shame or take away either of those reactions as valid and important.

### **Dr Lori Desautels**

It's so interesting that you just brought that up because I am preparing to teach my next cohort, and I was working on the manual this morning. And what you're describing also is what Dr Forges calls neuroception.

And when our neuroception, which is our autonomic intuition, it is not conscious thinking. It's always on. It's our gut feeling. If someone wants to describe like it's my gut feeling.

And all of us are always scanning the environment in every moment to see what feels safe, what feels a little bit unfamiliar or threatening. And children and adolescents, our own and those that we sit beside in schools and therapy, whatever, they read our neuroception accurately.

So there is a felt distrust or disconnect when our bodies are presenting one answer to their question or response and our words are saying something else. So that's why the awareness of our nervous system state that's behavior management I mean, it's about us.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. And I think most people can get away with not having a lot of self awareness if they've never dealt with a lot of people with trauma. But the minute you start dealing with people with trauma, that neuroception lens is hyper focused and on the lookout and never rests.

You're exacerbating it when you're saying, like, I'm not upset, and yet your face and your neck and your body posture is all saying, I'm upset, and all you're thinking is like your higher thinking is like, no, I'm calm. I can deal with this.

**[00:45:34]**

My executive function is online, but the other person is saying, I've seen people react like that before, and if I'm wrong and then it turns into shame because apparently there's something wrong with me that I feel unsafe in this situation, et cetera, et cetera.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

And what you mentioned, too, is, this is a nice way to end this, but the brain is always predicting experiences based on past experiences. So when we have a perceptual filter that says when someone rolls their eyes and yet they're smiling at me, that doesn't feel safe to me.

More often than not, the way that we read each other is accurate, even with the disconnect. And our children are so in tune with their nervous systems that they read us well, and they've not been so conditioned out of the language of their nervous system.

**Meagen Gibson**

Absolutely. They learn it.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yes.

**Meagen Gibson**

Well, thank you very, very much for being with me. And I know you mentioned you've got several of your books and you've got a new one coming out, this one is well worn from this summer. I was back and forth in it. I loved it.

And you've got a new one coming out and you've got a ton of resources on your website, so tell everybody where they can find out more about you and those resources.

**Dr Lori Desautels**

Yes, so everything is on my website, and it's [revelationsineducation.com](http://revelationsineducation.com), so revelations, plural, ineucation.com and yes, lots of resources. That's where you can order all the books. Thank you so much.

**Meagen Gibson**

Thank you very much.