



## Conscious Life presents

### An Autobiography of Trauma

**Guest: Dr Peter Levine**

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#### **[00:00:10] Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone to this interview, which is a real treat. It's a conversation with Peter Levine about his upcoming book, *An Autobiography of Trauma*. It is a fascinating introduction to some of Peter's own life story, which he goes into in a lot more detail in the book, but also the evolution of his body of work, his mentors, the experiences that have really shaped his work, which is really one of the most significant contributions to the body of work of trauma.

To give you a little bit of Peter's background, for those of you that aren't aware, Peter Levine is the developer of Somatic Experiencing, a naturalistic and neurobiological approach to healing trauma. He holds doctorates in both biophysics and psychology. He is the founder and president of the Ergos Institute for Somatic Education and the founder and advisor for Somatic Experiencing International.

Dr Levine is the author of several best-selling books on trauma, including *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*, which is published in over 29 languages. He has received lifetime achievement awards from Psychotherapy Networker and the US association for Body Oriented Psychotherapy and he continues to teach trauma healing workshops internationally. So, firstly, Peter, welcome. I'm really happy to have another dialog with you.

#### **Dr Peter Levine**

Right, great. Yeah, me too. Thanks.

#### **Alex Howard**

Well, I'm really interested on this one because as someone that's followed your work for many, many years, and I know, as I'm sure everyone watching knows, the impact that you've had on the body of work in trauma, we've never really got to know you in the way that we're about to. It feels like a very brave thing that you're doing. And I'm curious as to the impetus, what drove the motivation for you of this book?

**[00:02:10] Dr Peter Levine**

Okay, well, the title of the book is *An Autobiography of Trauma, a Healing Journey*, and about three years ago, as I come into a different epoch in my age, I wanted to just kind of review through my life and kind of use this as a way to excavate my life, my experiences, who had an impact on me and so forth. And so I wrote that and then somebody, a close friend of mine, looked at it and said, are you going to publish this as a book? And I said, no way. It's too personal, it's too revealing.

And then another person, a publisher, got a hold of it and he said, let's talk about this. And I think what happened is he said, if you do this, it can really help a lot of people who can identify with some of what you went through and to gain some of the tools that you developed and that you talk about in the book. Even as I just talk about it, I get a little twinge in my gut, a little squeezing here on my chest. I thought I couldn't do this. It's too revealing. It's too vulnerable. I mean, people would know me in a way that they've never known me before.

And anyhow, one thing led to another, and I said, take it to your reviewers and if they really think it can help more people, then I'm willing to do it. And that's how the book was born. As I said, it was really to be a personal excavation, but then it became very revealing, I mean, even as I talk to you about it, Alex, I still feel, you know, I'm kind of catching my breath. But at the time when I couldn't decide if I was going to really publish it, I had the following dream. And dreams have been important for me throughout my life, especially certain dreams that have happened at different times.

And so in the dream, I'm standing in front of a big field, and I have in my hands a number of pages, typewritten pages. And I'm looking to the left, to the right, left to the right. And I'm not paralyzed, but I guess I am paralyzed. I don't know what to do. Then a wind comes from behind me and takes all of these pages and blows them into the meadow to land where they may. And that dream led to the decision, yes, I'm going to publish these pages, and it will go out, and people can read it. Some people probably will object to it. I think some people will get to know me on a deeper level. But anyhow, it's out, and I can't put it back in my hands.

**Alex Howard**

It's a bit late.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Exactly.

**Alex Howard**

And if we go back, Peter, to when you made the decision to write for yourself and that reflective process, I'm interested in what you took from that. You use the word excavate. I'm interested in that kind of process of replaying and revisiting events and how that was helpful.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Yeah, well, you know, when I first started to write it, it began with a violent trauma that happened to me, a violent assault and rape. And when I read it, again, it just gave me a twisting in my gut, and I realized that in Somatic Experiencing, one of the things we don't do is go right into the

trauma. So I came across two important memories from my childhood, very positive memories, memories that I could really feel in my body.

**[00:06:50]**

And I remember I must have been about four or five years old, and in the middle of the night, I guess it was my birthday, my parents snuck into the room, and they laid some tracks for a model train that went underneath my bed, out into the room, and then back underneath the bed. So it was like an oval. And oval is important because that was also the area where I was assaulted.

But anyhow, this was a very positive memory. I was excited. I jumped out of bed. I went to the transformer, I controlled the speed, I made the horn go beep, beep, and I felt cared for. I felt loved. And I think that's another thing that's so important in our lives that somebody, at one time, even, if it was one person at one time, that really cared about us, that loved us, then that will be a foundation to build on, regardless of what kinds of things happen to us in our lives.

So, again, that was another kind of principle that I wanted to illustrate, but with my own experience. And then during this time, my family was in jeopardy from the mafia. It's a long story. I describe it in the book. The way I pieced it together is they wanted to let my parents know how severe retribution would be if he testified, if he testified against Johnny Dioguardi or Johnny Dio, he was really the Al Capone of New York. He was featured in the movie The Goodfellows. He was a violent murderer.

And so, anyhow, I would climb over the fence across the street and go down, there were bushes, and then below there was a running track. And so I would go there and I would run and feel the power in my legs and the exhilaration of this run, which then was important, because on one day, again, I climbed over the fence from our tenement, climbed over the fence and started going down. But I felt something was wrong, and I didn't know what it was, but the hair on my back stood up.

And then I saw there were these groups of people, I don't know, I can't really tell because I was, like, twelve, so I think they was probably, they're probably from a gang called the Fordham Daggers. And as I went down into the underbrush, they grabbed me and threw me to the ground and violently raped me. Again, I think it was, so I would tell that to my parents and they would know how serious they are. But I kept it for a secret. I didn't tell them. Really, in a way, I kept it as a secret for myself.

And it was only after I was experiencing some troubling symptoms and sensations that I asked one of my trainees to be with me, to sit with me and to guide me. And so we went through this step by step, starting in the power of my legs on the running track. Because this, again, was important. Because after in the rape, I was completely helpless. I was pushed down. My head was pushed against the rock.

My head was pushed into the dirt, and then my clothes were ripped off. And again, I have to say that in the book, it is my vision that my healing can help other people, maybe, who haven't had a similar trauma. But one of the things I've learned working with traumatized people for really half a century is that there is no bigger trauma or lesser trauma. It's our trauma. It's our story. It's our potentiality to heal from that.

**[00:11:52] Alex Howard**

I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I'm wondering how the process of recalling this to write it and then the constructing of narrative about how this sort of fed into your life's work, did you find in that process that there were pieces of this that were still presenting themselves for more work and for more healing? I'm interested because I think people will be fascinated to understand your experience of this.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Right. Well, I mean, this was just one snapshot of a brutal one, but one snapshot of my life. So there are many, many other things. And one of the things I think that, I hope that, will be valuable for the reader is as part of this, of course, this was a trauma that went into my sexuality, but it was more than just the sexuality. It was really about my whole capacity to relate to people, particularly for me to relate to women in an erotic way, in a feeling way, in a connecting way. So this also went through the trajectory of my life.

And I honored the women who were important to me in my life and what they gifted me to help me and my healing, and probably me and their healing as well. And so, again, these arcs just run through the whole book. There's one part that also, I thought, this was one thing I said, I cannot talk about this. And then I realized that in writing this, I would tell my truth no matter where it went. Even if people like the papers out in the meadow, even if they said, this man is really crazy, because I know I'm not.

And that some of the things that I experienced were rather unordinary or missordinary. So I give, again, homage to some of the women who were my mentors in the body and men in my life also. But there was one person who came as rather as a surprise to me and was one of the most important resources. And that is, well, when I was working on my doctoral dissertation and developing Somatic Experiencing in the 70s, there was a restaurant that I really loved, and I would go there at least once a week. It's called the Beggar's Banquet, and it was on San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley.

And the waitresses there knew me, and they would greet me by name, and then they would serve me. Usually I started with a soup and these wonderful french breads, crispy on the outside, soft on the inside. And even telling this again, I noticed my mouth is salivating.

**Alex Howard**

It's my supper time after this, you're making me feel hungry.

**Dr Peter Levine**

However, one very interesting thing happened. I saw a shadow move towards me, and I looked up, and there was an old man with completely ruffled hair and wearing a jacket which was, like, three sizes too big for him and crumpled. And it took my breath away. I'm not used to hallucinating, and I realized that it wasn't really a hallucination, but what sometimes is called a, oh, gosh, an imagery that comes, really, a deep imagery, a lifelike imagery. Carl Jung wrote about this, and I was gifted with that in a way. In a big way, I was gifted by that.

**[00:16:27]**

So anyhow, I recognized the man, of course, as, well, not of course, but as Albert Einstein. And so for the next year or so, I carried on conversations with him. Like, sometimes I would come in and I would order two soups, and the waitress says, well, shall I just serve you one and then order another one later so it'll be warm? And I said, no, I actually want them both. And I didn't want to tell her why. So anyhow, these conversations went on, and I would ask him questions, and he would ask me questions about my questions, really, it's kind of like the socratic dialog.

And again, because I was really working on developing Somatic Experiencing and also doing my doctoral dissertation in medical biophysics and medical and biological physics at Berkeley. And so he was greatly valuable to me personally. And it's like he really took me underneath his wings, and it was such a blessing. But again, I let it go. Afterwards, it was still in my mind, but I didn't really do anything with it. But then, oh, gosh, must have been at least 35 years ago, 30, 35 years ago, I was visiting my parents who live in the Bronx in New York.

And I walked into the apartment, and they were sitting on the couch, and above them was a bookshelf. And I noticed one of the books was by Einstein. What was it called? *The Special Theory of Relativity* or *The Theory of Relativity*, something like that. And so that prompted me to tell my parents, particularly my mother, about my encounter with Einstein. And my mother, her eyes opened wide and she just stiffened, and she could barely get the words out. And the words were, Peter, I know why this happened. I was really, really... My breath was taken away.

What was she talking about? What was she referring to? And she said, you know, when we were pregnant with you, I think it was eight months pregnant, your father and I were canoeing on this lake. And then a wind squall came up and tipped the canoe over, and we couldn't ride it, and we couldn't get onto the canoe, and we would certainly have perished. And, of course, then I wouldn't have been alive. Said, but just at that time, a small sailboat came by with an old man with crazy hair and a young woman. And they pulled my parents to safety and to me to safety. And they announced themselves to my parents as Albert Einstein and as his stepdaughter.

**Alex Howard**

Wow.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Exactly. And where are you going to put something like that? And again, that's kind of in a non ordinary reality. And again, those were some of the things that I thought maybe... And actually, some people said, you shouldn't put that in because people will think you're crazy.

**Alex Howard**

No, it's a great story. It's beautiful.

**Dr Peter Levine**

But it is. It's a beautiful part of my life, a very important part of my life. So again, in my commitment to myself and to the readers, I would tell my story, I would tell my truth, and I would follow it wherever it would go.

**[00:20:39] Alex Howard**

Yeah, it's beautiful. I think what touches me about it is that you've been a mentor to so many people, either directly or indirectly, for many, many years. And I think there's something that's very touching about hearing about the people that have indirectly and directly mentored you, the people that have shown up at important points in your own inner development, but also points in the evolution of your professional ideas as well. I think that's very beautiful.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Yeah. I think I have been blessed in many, many different ways, but to have the privilege to develop something that could help people all over the world. When I published my first book, *Waking The Tiger*, again, no publisher wanted to touch it. And one publisher said, well, we published the book on stress a year ago. This was in 1992 when I, you know... And so Richard Grossinger, who also is the one who encouraged me to write this book, somebody gave him the manuscript because I made copies of it for my students.

So in those days in Berkeley, Kinkos, it was a penny a page, so I could make a bunch of stuff for my students. And so one of the students handed it to him, to Richard. And Richard came to me and said, look, this book is too technical for self help, and it doesn't have enough jargon for a psychologist and psychotherapist. So if you write it for one population or the other, I'll be glad to publish it. And I thought about it, and then I said, I'm sorry, I'm done with the book.

And I realized that my ability to talk to different audiences, which, again, supported me in writing *The Autobiography Of Trauma* and autobiography, and that was a gift that I had, an ability to not talk down to anybody, but not to talk up to anybody. So again, it's like so many of these things linked together over the years and really have taken me to where I am right now. And even talking to you about this, again, at first I was terrified to talk to anybody about it, and now I still get my twinge, but I realize that I've done what I was supposed to do.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, it really feels that way. And as you're talking, the thing that's really up for me is in a way that the balance in life of the wisdom of life's guidance and how we find ourselves meeting the right teachers in the right moments, there's the guidance that's there, but there's also the courage in how we show up to that. And I'm really curious, this reflection in your life of what's helped you sort of stay kind of attuned to that guidance but also take those brave steps?

**Dr Peter Levine**

Yeah. Well, I really believe that we all have guides, guides throughout our lives. Sometimes these guides begin in our early childhood, and if we're open to that possibility, I think they will show up. Again, I'm talking to not just to me, but to all of us. And it does take courage to pen this, to write this. It takes a great deal of courage. I also believe that we all can muster that courage and know that we're doing something that makes a difference in our own healing, but also can move other people.

So I would say guidance and courage were two important aspects of my life. Extremely important aspects of my life. And it does take courage. It does take courage, and it takes persistence. And

quite frankly, it takes a lot of work. But for me, and I think for you, this work is worth it. It really is, because we have this potentiality to open to ourselves in a way that we hadn't known was even possible.

**[00:25:44] Alex Howard**

But it's a really important point because one of the things that worries me with, it sounds stereotypical, I don't mean it that way, but worries me with a younger generation that are coming to inner work is the expectation of things happening very quickly. Everything's condensed down to a 1 minute video on TikTok. I put videos out on TikTok and people will say, oh, but you've missed this. I'm like, it's a 1 minute video. Of course it's missing so many things and I'd love to hear you speak to how sometimes, you're reflecting on this work many decades later and still discovering pieces and the importance of that patience and that diligence, that discipline to the work.

**Dr Peter Levine**

You made a really good point, Alex, because I'm like three generations or almost three generations before this current generation, and so I'm having to learn something about how they think and so forth, and I'm not so sure how successful I've been in that but I believe that in writing this autobiography, I thought about this and I really believe that, I'm hoping, but I think I'm able to in some way reach different generations, even generations that are used to two minute things on YouTube and so forth.

And oh my gosh, I have a lot to learn from that generation. I have some friends who are maybe not from that generation, but closer to that generation. And they give me hints of what to say and what not to say. Of course I do what I want to do anyhow. But no, seriously, I think that this generation as being self starters is something I can identify with. I mean, at the time, well, when I developed Somatic Experiencing, that wasn't the case. You couldn't really start your own thing.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, it's an interesting point, isn't it? Because I don't think many people perhaps realize how revolutionary you were at the time. Both that point in terms of people didn't just start new things, but also that you were talking about trauma before anyone else was necessarily knowing what trauma was.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Right.

**Alex Howard**

I guess I'm really interested in what that was like. In a way, it sounds like you were compelled by your own curiosity and your own inner work, but it can't have been an easy pathway. These days everyone's inventing new things and that's kind of like... But how was that?

**Dr Peter Levine**

It's interesting that you bring that up, by the way, curiosity was a key in my healing and I think is also a key for all of us to really be curious to reflect on things. Yeah. When I wrote *Waking The*

*Tiger*, there was only one, as I recall, only one other book on trauma, and that was a really important book by Judith Herman called *Trauma and Recovery*. So you're right, there really wasn't anything in the literature so much, especially that people could read like books.

**[00:28:56]**

And so also in *Waking The Tiger*, and that's part of where the title came from, I was really looking also at animal behavior and why animals in the wild, even though they're preyed upon on a routine basis, maybe many times in a day, and if they escape, if they're not eaten, and this is wild animals in their natural environments, they don't develop the kinds of symptoms, trauma symptoms, that we do, the human animal does. So learning a lot from animals and how that applies to us was also an important part in *Waking The Tiger*.

And again, that was really, I think, revolutionary at the time. I don't mean to pat myself on the shoulder, but it's true. There really was nobody really talking about that. The closest was some writers in the late 1800s, early 1900s, particularly a man named Pierre Janet. And actually, when I was in Paris, I went to track down his writings because he's not a very known person. And so I went to the Collège de France, and I told them that I would like to go through the stacks and look for any writings from this man.

So they let me do it, and I took pictures there, and it was very exciting. And of course, my French is rather limited, but still, I could get the general idea. And he was clearly an important brethren, a progenitor. And I didn't really mention him in the autobiography. And when I next do the revised edition, I will. But anyhow, he was around the same time as Freud, and Freud was really a promoter. Janet isn't. And so when I saw his writings, he would write on napkins and pieces of paper.

And there was one, he went to visit, this is, I think, the car at the time was the Stanley steamer around the early century. And so he went to look at a car. So the man sent him a letter back. Professor Janet, I'm just wondering if you're still interested in looking at the car and buying a car. So what he does is he turns it over on the back, he writes more about his theories. My kind of man, really. That's the kind of thing that I would be doing.

**Alex Howard**

And they have all of that in the library? That's incredible.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Oh, yeah. And they gave me a lifetime membership in the Sorbonne and the Collège de France that I carry with me, so if I'm ever in Paris, I can visit those universities. So, again, I mean, thank you for bringing it up, because I realized this really has to come into the book. Absolutely has to come into the book. And it will when I revise it.

**Alex Howard**

As *Waking The Tiger* was published, I'm sure many people would be aware, is I think now has sold over a million copies, I think I saw when I was doing a bit of prep for the interview, I think published in 33 languages, but when you first published it, I'm assuming you had no way of knowing that that was the life of this book. I'm interested in how it was initially received and how you felt with that and that initial birthing of Somatic Experiencing and the building of engagement in it.



**[00:33:46] Dr Peter Levine**

Well, that's a good question. And I think one of the... It was received differently in different... When I gave around this time in the lectures and so forth, people were interested, but many people really were vehemently against what I was saying because it wasn't, at that time, the whole idea really is that trauma is more like a brain disorder or even a brain disease, and that it can only be managed with medication and helping people to change their thoughts.

And so I was taking a completely different track than that. And so I received some hostility. Sometimes I would give a lecture and people would walk out, and you could tell they were really dissatisfied with me because they just went out. But, you know, these days, if I'm giving a lecture to 1000 people, maybe one or two people walk out, maybe they're going to a different lecture.

**Alex Howard**

Maybe they're going to the restroom.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Exactly. So, you know, I think bringing the body into the mainstream has been something that really is something that I was an important contributor. So was one of my students, a neurologist named Bob Scaer and Bessel Van Der Kolk, in his book *The Body Keeps The Score*. And so it's, now, I don't want to say it's completely mainstream, but it really, and I think that people are tremendously interested in it. And again, I think, you know, who would be interested in somebody's autobiography?

And I think part of that is because it does give the body its doom, its capacity to heal. So I think in a way, before I was trying to swim upstream, paddle upstream, but now I'm kind of just in the stream. And people are tremendously interested and doing trainings. I think we have like 50,000 people who are trained in Somatic Experiencing worldwide or something like that. One of the things also about Somatic Experiencing and people, if they're interested in the trainings, they can go to [somaticexperiencing.com](http://somaticexperiencing.com) or [traumahealing.org](http://traumahealing.org).

How do I want to say this? When I started to teach Somatic Experiencing, and what was the progenitor in the early mid 70s, a number of my students said we should only do this for psychologists and psychotherapists. And that didn't feel right to me. And I don't say I argued with them, but I talked back and forth about why they thought it and why I thought it should be a different way. And now I think I know that I've been proven right because Somatic Experiencing, it's not a therapy per se, but it's an approach which helps people do what they do, how they do, how they do, what they do, and even cognitive therapy and so forth can also benefit from Somatic Experiencing.

So in a way, I had a big weight on my shoulders, but now I have like 45 international teachers who are training all over the world. And, I mean, I still teach some postgraduate classes in the program, but the burden is not on my shoulders anymore. It's shared by these many wonderful, wonderful teachers. I mean, really wonderful teachers.

**[00:38:06] Alex Howard**

Yeah. Peter, I'm interested, as you've been writing this book and you've been reflecting, we haven't talked so much in this interview about the details of your life events, because I think the best place to get those is in the book. But I'm interested in how you now reflect on those experiences. To me, as I hear you talk, what I really feel is the divine guidance in the experiences and the people and the journey which was necessary to build the wisdom for this body of work. And I'm really curious, as you wrote and as you reflected, how that's left you feeling about those abusive, traumatic events. And, yeah, I guess the heart of my question here is the meanings that you give to those events as you sit here now.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Right. I mean, these are things that happened to me, but they don't define me. Well, I guess maybe in some of the positive ones they do define me in different ways. You know, Carl Jung wrote a book. I was very influenced by the book. It was called *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. And these are my dreams and my reflections.

**Alex Howard**

Beautiful. Yeah.

**Dr Peter Levine**

And again, I'm on his shoulders. I mean, I do mention him several times in the autobiography, but towards the end of the book, I really return to my child, my baby child, and I've taken his hand and gone through this whole arc of my life, of our life. And the last chapter in the book is called *Living My Dying Through The Eye Of The Needle*. And I look at how all of these events have helped prepare me for this next transition, this bigger mystery, which I certainly don't know what it's going to be about. I'm not even sure I will ever know what it's going to be about.

But I'm open to the possibility that... and that again, is experiencing what death feels like and how I can open to death. And I do talk also a couple of different places in the book about some use of psychedelics. And at the time, well, now there's a lot of interest in psychedelics, which is kind of interesting to me because when I wrote about it, it was really clear that the psychedelics by themselves can be problematic.

They have to really be integrated into the person's experience and into their, embodied in their bodily experience, and so I make some suggestions about what I feel, what I think, would be the best way to use psychedelics in therapy, so, I mean, like I said, I just went one place and the other and the other and the other. And I'm definitely going to honor Pierre Janet.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, that's beautiful. This is maybe the final question. I'm mindful that we're running out of time, but this is, as an aside, I published an autobiographical book in my early 20s on the years I had Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. And I wrote a book about it. And it was quite a reckless, slightly kind of, I don't care, I'm just going to say my truth and say what I want to say. As you're talking, I'm very touched by the level of courage it takes to do something at the later stages of one's career because I had nothing, it was a kind of reckless abandonment, nothing to lose in a way.

**[00:42:24]**

But my experience was, and I'm really interested in how this is for you, that the fear that I had was I'm putting myself out in this very vulnerable way, like at points, I'm on my knees in life, completely desperate, but the power of speaking truth. And it was just unapologetically this is my truth. And so in a way, it didn't matter to me what anyone thought because it was just the truth. And there's something that is very empowering and holding about speaking the truth. And I guess I'm interested, recognizing how brave what you're doing is, but also that place of really being in your truth and putting that into the world.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Well, I mean, you also wrote truth to power. And I suppose in some way I wrote truth to power, but in a different way. In a different way. Again, that's not like fighting to go upstream, it's just speaking one's truth. And it sounds like you did that. Like you said, you were young and kind of impulsive, but you did it. And that takes courage. It took courage. And I really believe that given our commitment to courage, that we all have important stories to tell. And again... Did you ever publish it, by the way?

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, I did.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Okay. Yeah, send me the title to it. But anyhow, what motivated you to write that book?

**Alex Howard**

Well, I think not dissimilar to, and I don't want to hijack your interview, but not dissimilar to what you shared. Firstly, I was processing. I needed to make sense of the experiences. I wanted to help people. And it felt that creatively it needed to have its life. It had been created. And like art, it needed to be witnessed. That's why, in a way, why I started the interview where I did, because I was really interested in that transition. And I just want to say, as someone that's been very impacted by your work, I'm very excited to read the book.

But also I think it's going to help a lot of people because I think one of the big challenges I see people have is they look at someone like yourself and go, oh, but Peter's the founder of Somatic Experiencing. He can't possibly understand the pain and the suffering that I've got, and I don't have his wisdom. And I think there's something about people realizing that Hollywood films make sense with Hollywood endings. But the truth is that most of us walking the path in the moments of suffering, suffering is suffering, and it's hard. And I think people humanizing your work, I think is a real gift, and I just want to honor you.

**Dr Peter Levine**

Yeah, I mean, pain is pain, whatever the source. I think that's, in a way, what binds us all together as humanity. Actually, again, one of the chapters in the book is *Many Cultures, One Race, The Human Race*. And I think that at this time in history, people are starting to open up to what brings

us together. I mean, we have plenty of examples of what causes us to fall apart and go into war and kill each other and things like that.

**[00:46:30]**

But at the same time, and maybe I'm just fooling myself, but I am partially optimistic that we're also moving towards a trajectory where peace will be the only sensible alternative. And again, if people will read my book, they might say, well, I had worse pain than him, and that's fine. That's fine with me. Because, again, I truly believe that pain is pain and that we have our pain, and nobody's pain is worse or better than somebody else's pain.

And the question is, do we take an opportunity to address our own woundings? For me it's Chiron. Chiron, in Greek mythology, is the wounded healer. And again, that book is, in a way, about the wounded healer. It's about Chiron, about my own healing. As I mentioned with one of my students, when these symptoms started to occur and when I was able to renegotiate, not relive, but renegotiate my horrific experiences, that when I was able to do that, I really did come to a deeper peace. And I think that's what we're all striving for, is peace.

And many years ago, before all of this craziness, this horrible craziness, I was teaching a class in Jerusalem, and as I proposed, invited also psychologists from Gaza, and I worked with this one man, an Israeli man, name was Chaim. And afterwards, sometimes, especially if I can see the group is deeply moved, I'll ask if anybody wants to share what they were experiencing. And so this one woman stood up and she said, Chaim, when you came to work with Dr Levine, I was hoping that something horrible would happen, that you would be retraumatized because you, your people, have traumatized my people, have humiliated my people, have jailed and killed my people.

But something happened and I can't explain it. All of a sudden, I really felt deep compassion for you and for us and for our struggles. And I realized, until we find peace within ourselves, we'll never find peace with each other. Now again, obviously, things have gone way past this, but I still hold to that as a possibility, that we have to make peace, not war.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. Beautiful, Peter, thank you so much. Tell people you mentioned already [somaticexperiencing.com](http://somaticexperiencing.com), I think, [traumahealing.org](http://traumahealing.org).

**Dr Peter Levine**

That's right.

**Alex Howard**

*Autobiography Of Trauma: A Healing Journey*. So this is, at the point of this airing, available for pre-order.

**Dr Peter Levine**

It'll be out in Spring. Early Spring. Yeah.

**[00:50:17] Alex Howard**

Wonderful. Anything else you want to say about things that are coming up?

**Dr Peter Levine**

Well, I do. I want to say I really enjoyed the contact with you. It didn't feel like, just like, we were doing an interview, it felt like we were connecting. And I think that's sort of what I'm looking for in my life more and more is connection, connection to others, to connection to people who have different ideas than myself. I've learned from, again, talked about how much it's been important for me to learn from different cultures and how they heal in community. When we kind of have this model of a client going to a therapist, a patient going to a therapist, and I think we miss something that's vitally important, which is the role of community in healing.

**Alex Howard**

Beautiful, beautiful. Peter, thank you so much. I'm so looking forward to this book and I'm so excited for people to order it. Thank you for your time today.

**Dr Peter Levine**

You bet. And good talking to you, Alex, and I bid you goodnight.

**Alex Howard**

Thank you.