



## Conscious Life presents

### Release Stored Trauma in The Body

Guest - Irene Lyon

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

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super-excited to be talking with my good friend, Irene Lyon. And we're talking about how trauma becomes stored in the body. Some of the pieces that are important in helping release that, but also some of the pitfalls that can happen along that journey, and how to do trauma... Releasing trauma stored in the body in a safe and effective way.

To give a bit of Irene's background... Irene Lyon, MSC and nervous system expert, teaches people around the world how to work with the nervous system to transform trauma, heal body and mind and live full creative lives.

To date, her online programs and classes have reached over nine and a half thousand people in over 90 countries. Irene has a Master's degree in Biomedical and Health Science and also has a knack for making complex information easy for all of us to understand and apply in our lives.

She has extensively studied and practices the works of Dr Feldenkrais, Peter Levine, Kathy Kain and Irene spends her free time eating delicious food, hiking in the mountains or walking along the Pacific Ocean in her hometown of Vancouver, British Columbia.

So firstly, Irene, welcome and thank you for spending some time with me again.

#### **Irene Lyon**

Thank you, Alex. As we said just before we hit record, this is the fun part of our job. So I'm glad to be here and talking about all this stuff today.

#### **Alex Howard**

Me too. Why don't we start off with a bit of a frame around trauma and how it becomes... Why and how it becomes stored in the body.

**[00:02:00] Irene Lyon**

Sure. So if I define one thing first, and I know you know this definition from me and other predecessors of mine talking with you. We would define... And this is the Peter Levines, the Gabor Matés, the Bessel van der Kolks, Kathy Kains. Trauma is not something that's in the event. It's in the nervous system.

And so when a bad scary thing occurs to us, we'll just label that as something that we would call trauma. If we don't have the resources or the maturity or the age, the capacity, the self-regulation. All those fancy words to process that outside insult, that threat, it gets stuck in our nervous system.

And the best example I can give as an analogy. Clearly you've flown on a plane. I've flown on a plane. When you have a water bottle on the plane and you are on that plane. And it's not glass, it's plastic. What happens as you fly, it shrinks. It pressurizes, right?

And then you land and you open it and it's like it's been carbonated. So when you're on that plane, it isn't just the water bottle that's being pressurized. You are being pressurized. The shampoo bottle in your luggage, that you didn't put a cap on and put a plastic bag around, is being pressurized and that's why it explodes.

And so I use that example to say when there's been a survival impact to you. A survival stress. Something that puts you into what we would call fight, flight and/or freeze. Or further to that, shutdown and collapse. Or even functional freeze, if we go that far. Everything in the system is being impacted. It isn't just the elbow that you banged, right? It is the heart, the lungs, the fascia, the digestion, the brain, the skin, everything.

So trauma gets stuck in the body. Or I would say, the stress of something that we would call traumatic gets stuck in the body because it doesn't know any other way to go. As humans who tend to not let go of that stuff after it happens. Now, not everyone is like that. Some people know how to release their trauma naturally and that kind of thing. But many people do not, right?

So when we have these events that occur that impact our survival responses. Fight-flight-freeze and all the things I just mentioned, and we don't know that that's happening. Or we don't know that it's important, this might be the key, to work on this after the fact. Intentionally, consciously, with self-awareness, with time.

If we don't do that, and let's be honest, I certainly didn't grow up knowing how to do that. My sense is you didn't either, and that's why we're here doing this work.

**Alex Howard**

I don't think society knows how to do that. Right?

**Irene Lyon**

I'm being generous. I don't think the world knows, at least in the Western world. We know certain tribes that have more shamanic, be with the earth, that kind of medicine. They know that, but we don't. As Westerners, if we call us Westerners and industrialized societies.

**[00:05:32]**

And so this stuff gets stuck in the body. How it gets stuck, it really depends on the types of traumas, which eventually we could do some examples. So that isn't just this abstract idea. But a lot of the reason it gets stuck is our conditioning to not know how to release this stuff naturally, the way animals in the wild tend to.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. And so, let's give a few examples. And then let's look at what we can do to start to become aware of those in our own experience. Because I think you're right, we want it to go from being abstract to these are some of the things that can happen. And then this is how you may notice that for yourself.

**Irene Lyon**

So I'm going to use a real current example. I just had some general surgery last week. I had a staple taken out of my tibia under general anesthesia. It was something that had to happen. It's been bothering me. It's been there for 25 years. Surgery went totally smoothly. I liked the doctor. I liked the anesthesiologist.

And now that I'm no longer stuck in my own functional freeze because of all the other things that I grew up with, I'm feeling things a bit more. I can't ignore the fact that I'm just a little more tired. I can't ignore the fact that why am I still a little dizzy? These sorts of things.

And so I'm blessed to live with a somatic practitioner. My husband is also a colleague and does all the stuff I do. And he said, I think we might need to do some work on your kidneys and adrenals. And this is a very specific kind of work that Kathy Kain has taught the world to work with these organs. But not just the kidneys. Maybe the gut, maybe the brain stem, maybe the fascia. But you work with these specific organs, usually with touch.

But the key, Alex, is intention. Because you can do it over Zoom, this works. I do it over audio. So I had the fortune. He was able to put his hands under my kidneys. And I won't go through all the details, but there was a moment where I had this feeling where I just wanted to do, and I'm going to do the movement, this much faster.

And I then landed on the fact that... Oh, my gosh! I know this consciously, but I had people touching me and prodding me while I was under. And of course, the surgeon's going in. The anesthesiologist is doing their thing. I came out with two very big bruises at the crease of my big toe and second toe because they're probably testing the reflexes during the surgery, which is what they do. Or that's where the oxygen monitor was.

And even though I'm very lucky to have never been violated, say, physically or sexually in my life, I have had so many people poke and prod me because I've had eight general anesthetics, throughout my lifetime. And there was this instant desire to push them away and swear a lot of big words and tell them to get off of me.

**[00:08:51]**

And so there was this wiggle. There was this shake. And then my kidneys settled. So it's like they were holding, like, little punching bags, wanting to punch these people that were prodding me. Because unconsciously, my survival mechanism is like, even though you're under, it's like, "Get off".

And this is actually a true story. Peter Levine has really popularized.. Might be the word... But put it on the map, working with anesthesia. Surgical and near-death experience states. I've had the fortune of learning from him multiple times around this. And this is actually an important one because a lot of people have general surgery and they don't think anything of it because they're not conscious of what's happening to them.

But then they wonder, "Why am I just feeling a little on edge?". After this, we hear about people that have hip replacements and they're just never the same. Is it the hip replacement or is it that they're being touched and prodded so close to their pelvis, to their sexual organs? If you believe in chakras, the root chakra. All these energetic lines are being messed with but we tend to only think of we got to do physical rehab. Keep the wound clean. Don't get an infection. Keep the pain down.

But what about the survival stress that might be stored in the system? So I share that as one way that this trauma, this survival stress can get stored that is often not thought about. And it's important to work with these things, say in a post-surgical way.

### **Alex Howard**

And it's interesting that the example you give is in a way the best scenario of that experience. You like the doctor. You like the anesthetist. The surgery was successful. And you were able then to recognize what was happening in your body and to allow that process to complete and to move through.

### **Irene Lyon**

Yes.

### **Alex Howard**

But even then there's still an impact that happens. So we track this back to childhood, for example, where there's repeated many, many times, potentially experiences over many, many years and we have to find a way to normalize to that. But just because we've frozen it or we've frozen our nervous system, the point you're making is that all lives within us.

### **Irene Lyon**

Exactly. And one other example I'll give that dovetails beautifully in what you just mentioned about a situation that is not maybe surgical but is chronic everyday stress. We would call this adversity. Those adverse childhood experiences, events. That classic study with Vincent Felitti and his team and just this little person... If we take a little baby... and you know, and it doesn't have to be physical or sexual abuse.

**[00:11:51]**

It can be that mom is just not quite there. She's in her own world because of her own stuff. Maybe she's got an illness. Maybe she doesn't really like her partner. Maybe she doesn't like the job. But she has to work because you have to put food on the table. So there's this stress.

And so the little person is just slightly misattuned, misattuned, misattuned to. And in that there is a bit of a fight that's like "Hey, where are you? You're not there. I'm here. I'm crying or I'm trying to reach out to you and you're ignoring me".

And what occurs? One of two things usually occurs. One, the child slowly learns that asking and crying or trying to get attention doesn't work. So they shut down.

They become the good kid. They become the introvert. Or they become the nuisance. They become the trouble child. The problem child. Oddly, those children that tend to be a bit more of the chaos creators... I've worked with siblings who follow both those paths. They either freeze and shut down. And they're the good kid that keeps the place in check down to paying bills and making sure the house is clean and food's on the table. I know so many of those stories.

Or they're the kid out being a mischief, doing drugs. Usually the kid that's doing mischief is the one not sick with chronic illness. Later in life because they're getting their fight out. They're listening to the loud headbanger music and going to the concerts and they're in the mosh-pit.

But the kid that's the bookworm, that's being perfect is suppressing so much. So one thing that we see later in life... To answer your question, how is trauma stored in the body? Is this an element of chronic illness? I know you have talked about your worlds and living with fibromyalgia in the past. So that's one concept. But one that's more simple, which I've been talking about a bit more, is restless leg syndrome. Syndrome. I say that with air quotes.

That essentially, other than if maybe there's a deficiency in minerals. We know that. But most of the time people have that covered and they still get that restless leg. That's that fight. That's that flight. And it tends to come up more so at night when we're going into more sleep.

As the body starts to rest, the system is like, "No, no, no. You didn't run from that tiger today. You wanted to run out of that room when someone was verbally abusing you and you stuck it. You stuck with it and you listened and you didn't do anything afterwards to get that energy out".

Just like most people wouldn't think to do some kidney adrenal work after a surgery, for example. And Alex, I didn't even think about it. It was my husband who had to bring it. So even us who are aware of this, we fall prey to some of this unconsciousness too when we're in it. That's the other important thing to note.

### **Alex Howard**

Yeah, it's interesting. Just as a side comment about kids getting out to the mosh-pit. One of my saviors in childhood, and still great loves in adulthood, is angry loud guitar music. And much to my wife's frustration because sometimes we swap cars. She gets in my car and turns on the engine. This really loud music comes bursting out. But we recently went and saw Iron Maiden in London.

But what was really interesting was just how nice everyone was. I went by myself and I sat down because I wanted to watch the support band. I went early.

**[00:15:43] Irene Lyon**

Good for you. You went by yourself to a concert.

**Alex Howard**

I do it all the time. But I was just like, everyone was just chatting. I was chatting to a guy next to me who'd telling me about how he'd had a kidney transplant. And we chatted. He was probably 20 years older than me. Guy to my right who's like 20 years younger than me. But there was something about the allowing of rage and anger which just... People might think everyone's aggressive. It's the opposite. No, the kind of sweetness, softness that was there.

**Irene Lyon**

Yeah, and I agree. And I grew up in the era of the Seattle Sound. So Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden.

**Alex Howard**

That was my childhood.

**Irene Lyon**

I could listen to Rusty Cage so loud on the CD, just driving. So the interesting thing you say there is true. That's helping our survival fight, flight that might be stored because of society. I think this is why we people create this kind of music. It's like sound healing. It's helping us match the survival energy inside. Then we can stomp. Our fists are up in the air. It's like, how healing is that to go to a rock concert?

And compared to... I've gone to the symphony many times because in addition to what my husband does, he's also a trained composer. And so when we were in the city and our favorite conductor was there. We would go to the symphony and while we loved the symphony, you didn't talk to the people next to you at the symphony.

I would watch Beethoven's 9th, like huge... Or I can't remember the other one that made people go crazy when it was released back in the day. But everyone's just so still. How can you not be moving with this? So you go to the symphony. Different genre of people. Different affect. And everyone's so repressed. But I totally know what you mean about the Iron Maiden concert. Social engagement. So good.

**Alex Howard**

We'll move on in a second. But one more point I'll say is if people want to see *Waking the Tiger* in action, they should Google mosh-pit or circular-pit on YouTube and look at some of the current heavy bands. And just see these massive... People, often men, but also women running around in a circle, running into it... All this activation and the releasing. And of course, there are places where it

can be dangerous. But the point I think we're both making is that that energy needs to be allowed to move.

**[00:18:34] Irene Lyon**

It does. And I'm just going to mention this, I think the composer that made people go crazy... Was it Stravinsky?

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, it could be.

**Irene Lyon**

I forget the name, but when they played it, people went mad in the streets afterwards. And that, to me... I should know the era, but of course I don't. That to me is like... That shows how much repressed stuff was in that time and they hear this jarring music and it brought something up.

So that was like sound healing before there was any foundation building to know what to do with the activation that came out. But if you listen to something like that with awareness and embodiment, which we'll probably keep talking about, you can actually engage with that intensity and move out stuff. But you can't just listen and expect it to make a change. You have to know how to be with what is coming up and out.

**Alex Howard**

Which I think is a great segue to where I want to go next, which is that we recognize that we have this trauma that's held in our body. What are the conditions that need to be there to allow that to start to move in a healthy way? Because as you and I were saying before we started recording that in many ways there's lots of good things that come from the popularization of the understanding of trauma and stored trauma.

But I was saying to you that it worries me sometimes. It's a bit like the popularization of yoga and meditation that happened 20 years ago where suddenly there's lots of people that aren't very well-qualified doing things that also can not always go the way we want them to go. Maybe to start with, what are the conditions that need to be created internally and externally that can allow us to start to work with this stored trauma?

**Irene Lyon**

So if I just go off the top of my head, because there's many. If we talk of a society of people who live in homes that have electricity, we have jobs, we have stresses of everyday life, which I think is most of the people listening to this, as an example.

The one thing at the beginning is this desire to really become a scholar. This has been my favorite word the last couple of months. A scholar of your system. And not just your nervous system, but your mind, your body, obviously your biology. If you believe in a soul, if you believe in any spiritual work, but then also the environment.

**[00:21:23]**

So it's like I see this Venn diagram where you've got... You know, people often talk about body-mind. But we need the environment but we also need the deeper purpose, the macro, the micro. And the reason why it's important for us to understand, to have the knowledge, is because if we don't have education, theory, understanding of how our body works, something might come up like that restless leg, and we might think that it's just a nuisance and we're just going to try to ignore it or take some deep breaths.

Where really what might have to happen is you might need to get up and scream or stomp your feet. Because you didn't get to do that earlier that day. For myself in that example last night when I was dealing with this fatigue and dizziness, I could have been like "Oh, I wonder if there's something neurologically wrong with me". I know that that wasn't the case. I'm lucky to have a support person that can pick up on these things. And it was that, right, it was that.

So I guess the overarching macro piece first, Alex, is education and learning about this stuff. Because the path that your body takes as you start to work with your physiology, your nervous system, your traumas, your somatic stressors that are held. There's actually no "Okay, this is going to happen and then this is going to happen, and then this is going to happen. And then on day 75, then you're going to get a spontaneous release".

It doesn't work that way. But we've tried to in some ways. I've seen people try to teach in a very specific way. This is how you're going to rewire your brain. It's like saying this is exactly how you're going to raise a baby so that it can do all these things by age ten.

Now of course we know love, connection, food, shelter, attunement, co-regulation, those are givens. But as you know, you've had your own biological children. They're different. They're different. Even though they came out of the same mother and it's the same father. They're different for so many reasons and I think that's where the soul and the spirit screws with us a bit because we can't be robots but that's where I think it's really important to understand the complexities.

But then after that, or alongside because you use the yoga example a second ago, we would classify that as say somatic movement. A lot of people do movement that you would say is classified as somatic, but they're not embodied in it. And I have a background in fitness, so I was a fitness trainer, exercise rehab. You can train your aerobic capacity and your muscles and be totally out to lunch. You will improve. Now of course you're going to improve a lot more if you're aware of your body and listening, but you'll still improve.

You will not build embodiment and somatic capacity if you go into those myriad of somatic practices, no matter how glamorized and beautiful they look and how flowing your shirt is and all the things. If you aren't able to track your survival stress while you are in those practices, I'm going to say... I'm going to be generous.

Seven times out of ten a person will not know that they're starting to feel a survival stress bubble up or a shutdown response starts to repress them. They'll override it. They'll keep doing the practices and they will miss a window to dive into this stored trauma that we talked about at the top of the hour. And that's what I'm seeing the most right now.



**[00:25:34]**

When I follow say influencers, I use that term very deliberately, who are helping people heal their trauma, quote unquote. And I'm like, there's no way you can have a room of 100 people or 20 people and you're all doing the exact same thing and you're all going to start crying and hyperventilating at the same time. It's scripted. So I'll stop there.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, I was going to say, I think one of the things that I was reflecting on as you were talking. And I think in a way, it's a conundrum for all of us running online programs and in-person events and so on, is that I recognize that in the really delicate places of my own inner work, the exquisite guidance of a practitioner to help understand and to guide through that.

It's like going on a really difficult journey in the night without someone to be your wing person and go "Right, slow down...". And of course the challenge is that as healings happen, more people are engaged in these things. That's great. And not everyone can afford or have the access to that one-on-one.

But I think what's not talked about enough and I think it's part of what you're signposting here. There are risks as well. Yes. It's not just, have a crack and see what happens. There needs to be a certain amount of caution and holding that goes with it.

**Irene Lyon**

And when we have caution and holding, also not treating the system as totally fragile. So a system may have low capacity, low regulation, be dysregulated. And there are instances where, yes, X person should not be going to a group retreat. It will blow them up. It's too much. There's too much attachment trauma, that kind of thing.

But let's just say someone, like I said, is able to pay their bills, go to work. They have those faculties. When you were mentioning that about going in the dark, it made me think of back in the day I used to fly paragliders. And when you were in the air...

**Alex Howard**

You did? Wow!

**Irene Lyon**

When I was functionally frozen. Yeah, I'd be up at 10,000ft in this wing with nothing but me and this wing. So you're there and there's dozens of people around you, if it's a good day.

You have to be aware of your own piloting. You have to be aware of the weather. You have to be aware of how far you are from the landing zones so that you don't miss the opportunity to get it. Especially when you're crossing a river, which is where I learned how to fly, was you had to cross a river. And if you didn't cross, you were in dense forest. Not good.

**[00:28:40]**

And you also had to be aware of the people around you. But there was always a rule. If someone was below you, they have the right of way. So if you have a group, and I've taught group a lot. I've taught in some ways more group than I have online, if I really were to add it up. And so when you're in that group environment working with elements of the nervous system and movement... In my case it was Feldenkrais I'd be teaching alongside the SE principles.

You have to have that vision of your sea of 30 people or 20 people and you have to gauge where people are at. And you have to shift the teaching... This is going to sound terrible but it's the way it is, to the lowest common denominator. But you also don't want to treat them like the person that you're just teaching because then the other people feel that.

So you kind of have this dance between okay, I need to understand that so-and-so might not do well with this kind of movement. And I want to teach this movement. So we need to do a few more things before so that they have an out if it gets too intense.

These are things that you don't learn quickly in a weekend teaching workshop. This is what you learn with time and practice, is how to manage that. And you might have a script, Alex, of what you're going to teach and you throw it out the window by the time it's lunchtime. Because you realize the dynamic is so different from how you've taught before or it's a different country, different culture. It makes a huge difference.

So when a person is working with themselves, they have to also consider... To go back to your question, what are all the things that you need to work with? You have to understand, "Where am I this week? Do I have energy? Am I a little more tired? Maybe this time I don't do the full class and I just do 30 minutes and then I sit and watch for the rest".

Or maybe I say to the teacher, if it's an in-person class, "Hey, I'm feeling a little off today. Just so you know, if I stop and just sit. Nothing personal, I'm just really needing to take care of myself. And oddly, these are the pieces I think, if we think of a group class setting at least, that are so missing.

We talk about after-care a lot. But it's like, what about the pre-care to ensure the foundations are set so that even if something blows up, everyone is on the same page and understanding what might happen. And we know what to do when that does happen, if it should happen.

### **Alex Howard**

It also comes to my mind, Irene, as you're talking. So one of the lenses through which... One of the ways that I position the work we do with chronic illnesses is that you have to become the captain of the ship of your own recovery.

And so you may be working with many different professionals that know more than you do about this thing. But ultimately you know your body better than anyone else does. And so I was reflecting as you're thinking about attending online programs or workshops or so on. Obviously one needs to choose their teachers very carefully and to work with people that have clearly demonstrated the skill and the competence to be effective.

But it's also the place that the individual comes from, of knowing one's edges and having the capacity to use one's no to also play an important role in that relationship.

**[00:32:25] Irene Lyon**

What you said there, I'm going to challenge a little bit...

**Alex Howard**

Please.

**Irene Lyon**

If I may... Because you're right, we need to know our own edges and we need to be the orchestrator of our healing posse, right? True. And I've seen many people who don't have that knowledge at the beginning. They don't know their edges. They don't know... I mean, these are true stories.

Just recently a colleague started working with someone and they couldn't find a practitioner to work with. I won't get into all those stories. But they started working with this colleague of mine and they did a full session.

And it was the first time this person's system let... Kind of came down. Kidneys dropped. Tummy started to gurgle. Parasympathetic came on board. And they thought, "This is great". And it was great. But then two days later, the system revolted and kind of said, "FU, that was way too much".

Probably through more tension, more grasping, the digestion probably went off. And these are things that happen. This isn't rocket science. Even the high level masters will overshoot and do too much. I've witnessed it and experienced it myself. So this isn't just something that an inexperienced person will have happen. This happens to all of us. So too much work in that hour.

So the next session, even though the person had to drive an hour and a half to get to this practitioner's house, they did ten minutes. That's it. Tiny bit. Go in. Let's say hello. That's enough.

Not many people and I learned this actually... Thank you, Kathy Kain... from this, is when she was still doing private practice, her way of working changed dramatically in that classic, "You pay for an hour, you get an hour"? Out the window!

It's like, come in for five minutes today. Come in between my other clients. Let's just do a tiny bit of work. Pay me \$10. Out the... you know. You're done.

That model, I think, needs to be adopted more. But because of our way of doing business in the healing world... It's so funny to say it that way. It's like it's either a 30-minute session or an hour session, and it doesn't make sense for someone to book someone in for five minutes.

But if you've ever worked with rescue dogs, bringing my analogies. Dogs that have been abused, you can't force them to hug you more. The most you might do is put your hand up at their nose. They sniff it. You don't pat them on the head the first time. You take it away.

**[00:35:10] Alex Howard**

Yeah. I had a friend who adopted a cat, and it took two years for the cat to sit on his lap. Two years of getting a bit closer and backing off. But by not pushing it, then that eventually happened.

**Irene Lyon**

And that's just it. And so to go back to the challenge of knowing your own body. That is exactly what we want. I would say that myself and you were in that boat. We know these things. But for someone who's new, don't get frustrated if you go somewhere and your system revolts.

And don't assume that it's because of the practice. And don't assume it's your fault. It's just that you're new to something that is actually quite potent and powerful. And the amount that you might need when you've been that high level executive, or you were that athlete, or you were so good at managing so much....

It can be humbling to be like, "Wow, all I can do is ten minutes of breathwork or yoga, or even five minutes or even a minute". And as soon as I get to that 75 seconds, I feel my panic coming up. That panic is fight-flight. That is the old survival stress coming up.

That is your cue to stop the breathwork, in my opinion. Feel your feet on the ground, maybe orient, do some self-soothing. But be with it. Sense it and see what it needs as opposed to imposing a practice on it.

And I think that's where we're at right now is, I do think, Alex. It'd be interesting to get your opinion. I think people are starting to realize that a lot of the coping and management strategies are good for a certain period of time. But then if we want to go to this next exponential level of healing, we have to be better at being with the discomfort, but not disconnecting from that discomfort.

**Alex Howard**

I think that's right. I also think that often the place that we try to heal from is the place which is the problem. We learn, for example, to push through and to... sorry, dogs kicking off in the background. We learn to push through and to try and control things. And then we do the same thing to our healing. And so we discover this healing method and so we go hell for leather trying to make it happen and wonder why our system revolts.

**Irene Lyon**

So last night, to go back to that story of myself. Worked with my kidney adrenals. I don't know what time it was because when I wake up in the middle of the night, I don't look at a clock. I don't look at a clock. It was probably 03:00am, because it was still pitch black. I woke up, went to the bathroom, and then I couldn't get back to sleep because my heart was racing.

And I know what it is now, but it's just a nuisance in the moment. But I'm like, "Just sit up and feel it. Just sit up and feel it". And I did. And I did some touch work, which I know how to do because I've learned. And so to have those tools is good. But that was the underlying survival stress that was coming out, that was frozen from the anesthesia.

**[00:38:25]**

So I say that because a person may think, "Okay, good. I just did some touch work with this great practitioner for my surgical stuff or my restless leg stuff. All done". And I see some high level folk. Not colleagues so much, but friends, who think they've gotten like, "When is this ever going to be over?".

And I'm like, "Let's talk in heaven or hell". I don't know when this is going to be over because we're not immune to having these things. But the key, Alex... This is so important, is when you know what they are... This goes back to the first thing I said about education.

You can be with them and not spin a story about what is now wrong. What is wrong now? What is wrong now? It's like, oh, my heart is speaking to me because it's been a little repressed since last week's surgery and now it's having a little dance. And clearly I'm fine. I can talk to you. I think I'm sounding pretty coherent. And my bowels were still moving this morning. I was hungry.

All these things that seem quite basic. But it's like, okay, all the other systems are in check, but there's this other level of somatic fight-flight-freeze coming out. And it wouldn't have helped if I had just tried to meditate it away. I had to feel the heart beating and just like, "Okay, let's just wait". And eventually I did fall back to sleep.

### **Alex Howard**

Well, there's what happens. And then there's the way that we meet, the way that we respond to what happens, right? So what happened to you and your body in surgery can happen to anyone in surgery. But what you're doing is responding in a relational way to it. And in a way that's permissive, like allowing that experience to do what it needs to do. And in a way that's modeling that trauma healing work.

It's just like you said earlier. It's not the event in a way, it's the environment within which the event happens. It's the same is true here. It's not just the healing, but it's how we approach that healing.

### **Irene Lyon**

And to give context for a broader picture... Because again, I've seen this happen. If a person goes to a healing retreat or something like that and they come back and they feel unsettled. They feel a little off, don't ignore that. Because it might be... And there's no shame in going a bit too far and doing too much...

But if you feel a little unsettled, a little off, a little, we could say dysregulated. A bit more survival stress or deep fatigue. Like the deep fatigue that I was feeling was the freeze of the anesthesia. It's pretty simple. But this can also happen if we go to a conference or a wedding or gosh, Christmas dinner, where you don't want to be with your family members.

**[00:41:37] Alex Howard**

God forbid. Christmas dinner, that's the worst one for me.

**Irene Lyon**

As an example. It doesn't have to be a big traumatic event. Just to be really mindful of... And it seems almost luxurious to consider this, but can you have some time after that thing to get yourself back to at least your baseline?

To have some practices, to maybe book a session with a body worker or acupuncture or something? Or a therapist or book a date with a friend that you can laugh with? Watch a funny movie to help bring the system back into more what we would call the ventral vagal of the parasympathetic and also more rest-digest.

And I think a lot of people, at least in our culture and our parents and our generation, Alex. It was too extravagant to take time off until you were dead and sick, right? Or you only had your two weeks off.

But in the world that we're in now, as I age, as I see things, we need way more time to repair and recover than we realize. Especially because many of us are catching up from a lifetime of never repairing and recovering. And so that would be another little slice of input there is, don't feel bad.

And people will. You'll feel bad if you're used to pushing, pushing, pushing, and you don't feel sick, but you take a day off and you feel a bit bad. It's like, it's okay. It's better to rest when you're well than have to rest when you're unwell. That was a bit of a tangent, but hopefully that makes sense.

**Alex Howard**

It's great. It's funny. I felt this morning I was going down with it a bit of a bug, and one of my team missed a meeting at 2:00pm. I was so happy to go and have a half hour nap.

**Irene Lyon**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

And years ago, I would have been like, "No, no, I must work. I've got things to do". And it's just that going, "What does my body need right now?". And it can't always have it. But when it can, to give it.

**Irene Lyon**

It's a very important thing. And if we think of... I don't have a huge understanding of native culture, but what I do know in the bits that I do know is, they have a lot of time resting. They have a lot of time together, being quiet, being in community, but it isn't chatty. It's like being together. Being very intentional at downtime.

**[00:44:20]**

And this doesn't mean that you don't still get productive in other elements of your life. And so there's this back and forth between yeah, be very productive, but then be very intentional about being very productive at your rest...

**Alex Howard**

Also it's being sustainably productive. It's being able to continue rather than going full-on and then crashing and not being able to sustain.

**Irene Lyon**

That's a good point, actually. I remember Jordan B Peterson, whom some people don't love, but I enjoy him from time to time. And his way of talking about work and your life is if you can't sustain, then you're doing too much. In other words, if you always need to crash at the end of the week, then your week is too intense.

If you always get sick on a holiday, then your work is too... So there needs to be this constant sustainability, as if you were out in the plains as a wild animal. Wild animals are like, "God, I'm just so tired today. Just don't think I'm going to go hunt. I'm not going to protect my young right now because I need to go to the spa". They're not in that mindset. They're in sustainability with, obviously the earth, and themselves and their basic needs.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, because if they burn out, they get eaten.

**Irene Lyon**

Exactly.

**Alex Howard**

Pretty clear motivation.

**Irene Lyon**

Exactly. Well, we do too. That's the odd thing is if we don't take care of ourselves, we'll get eaten in a different way.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. On that note... Irene, for people that would like to find out more about you and your work, where's the best place to go and what's some of what they can find?

**[00:46:09] Irene Lyon**

Always my website. Just my name [irenelyon.com](http://irenelyon.com). No S with a Y. Everything is there, from my YouTube videos to my ebooks to my resources, where there's audio samplers. If a person wants to experience a bit of my practical teaching, which blends in the Feldenkrais world, the Somatic Experiencing world and the early trauma somatic practice world. It's all there.

And then I've got two courses that we... One is always running and one runs twice a year called Smart Body, Smart Mind. And that one has pretty much as much as I can put into a course. So that's the big enchilada, so to speak.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. Awesome. Irene, thank you so much. I always enjoy our conversations. I really appreciate it.

**Irene Lyon**

Myself as well. Thank you, Alex.