



Conscious Life presents

Healing From Childhood Abuse Trauma

Guest - Kimberly Shannon Murphy

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[00:00:09] Meagen Gibson

Welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, your conference co-host. Today I'm speaking with Kimberly Shannon Murphy, a leading Hollywood stuntwoman who served as a double for numerous A-list actresses performing in 133 feature films and television shows. You've definitely seen her work. But as the glamor of her professional career grew, her traumatic past was rising up inside her, demanding to be addressed.

In her memoir, *Glimmer: A Story of Survival, Hope and Healing*, Kimberly writes about the impact of childhood sexual abuse and the ways the physical nature of dance and stuntwork forced her to face her hurt head on. Kimberly Shannon Murphy, thank you so much for being with us today.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Thank you for having me.

Meagen Gibson

So one of the hardest things of healing abuse we suffer as children is judging it from an adult brain and all of the shame and blame that comes with it. And you do such a good job in the book of validating those experiences from the perspective of the child brain and experience. So why was that important to you when writing this book?

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Because when I started writing is really when I realized how disconnected I had become from my inner child and how much anger and shame I was actually putting on her and not even myself. I really saw us as two people, and I was putting so much blame on her for not fighting back or not being loud enough or telling people or all of the things.

And what I realized through the journey of writing was that, and through my healing was that she, in fact, was the one who went through it all and went through the worst and survived it. And that in order for me to truly heal, I needed to reconnect with her.

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And I think that that's such a big part of healing that a lot of people don't realize, because when you're healing from something so traumatic, there's so many things on your checklist, right?

I need to be more patient or I need to stop being in fight or flight. And it's all of these things that we are learning, I think, especially now, more about trauma and how it affects the body and the nervous system, that the inner child bit gets a bit lost. And I think it's actually one of the most important parts of the healing journey.

Meagen Gibson

Thank you for paying attention to that in the book, because I think it really helps emphasize exactly what you said. So given that, who did you write this book for? Who are you hoping finds it, and what are you hoping it will do for them?

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

I wrote this book for my 15 year old self. I know that if I had this book when I was 15, that it would have completely changed my life. And so I wrote it for every person that is me at 15 or 16 or whenever they pick up this book, to give them hope that you can overcome these things. And it's not easy.

And I also think it's so important to recognize that our journeys are very different and they're not linear and that we all have our own way of healing and that it never ends either. It gets better and then some days get worse. And so it's this up and down thing, rollercoaster.

And for a long time I thought, okay, so I'm going to get to this place and I'm going to be okay, and I'm going to be able to be in the world and not have these flashbacks or the memories or the pain or the triggers. And it isn't realistic. I think that they get less and less the more work you do.

But I do know now that this is something I'll be dealing with for the rest of my life. And the best thing that I can do with that is exactly what I'm doing is trying to help people navigate their own healing journey when they've suffered something like this.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah. And I know that people listening at home, it's a mixed response that you can have to hearing something like that. On one hand, I want to be healed. So if you're telling me I can't heal, then why should I even bother to start? But at the same time, the difference between unhealed and healing is also astronomical. Does that resonate for you?

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Oh, absolutely, yes. And for me, having my daughter was a huge catalyst in all of this because raising her and really being able to see through her lens of what being a child should look like and

how much of that I didn't have, any of it, really pushed me to do this book as well and also really start doing the work because I want to show up for her in the best version of myself.

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And I can never live a life where this is not my past. This is what happened to me. This is part of my story. I can't pretend... I could pretend it didn't happen, but it's going to bleed out onto her and onto my partner and in my life. And so I've chosen to actively be really conscious of how I can change that and shift that to make sure that I raise her, in every sense of the word, nothing like I was raised.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And one of the things that you said that struck me so much was you were talking about how you can be a monster marked on the outside, and that's one way to stay safe. And I think that's a statement a lot of trauma survivors can relate to. And some of us, we put on a costume or a mask every day in order to weed out people that we can't trust. Or maybe it's tattoos or maybe it's your weight, or maybe it's the way you dress.

And so I'm thinking about that and also the responsibility that you take not only in putting yourself out there as a specific thing, as a protective measure, but also the responsibility that you take inside, in legacy-breaking, in change-making. In making sure that you don't carry on the wounds that you incurred.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Yes, absolutely. Breaking generational cycles is something that I've learned through the process of writing the book and with all the amazing doctors I've been so lucky to connect with and work with. I have learned that this is something that's been going on in my family for generations and has been passed on and passed on and passed on.

And the way that I have chosen to deal with it is that it stops with me. And my daughter is not going to be another casualty in my family of abuse that's been going on forever.

Meagen Gibson

One of the things that you don't sugarcoat at all in the book is the way that your family members responded to your attempts to talk about what happened to you and heal it. And I think that's something a lot of people can relate to, too. And what occurred to me is that the reminder that people can only meet you to the point of their own discomfort and that your trauma caused them too much pain to really be with you in your healing.

And you talk about trauma survivors' brains doing amazing things. And then what occurred to me also reading your book was the gymnastics that your family's brains had to go through to protect them from the realities of what happened to you. And so my question is, what helped you make peace with their inability to hold your heart because of their own discomfort?

[00:08:12] Kimberly Shannon Murphy

I think it's an ongoing battle for me. I no longer speak to anybody in my family. That's something that had started when I got my book deal. Then slowly, as the book came out and then the more interviews I did, it became really difficult for my family members to hear me speaking about it. I think it's also really important for people to understand that being angry about that is okay, that our anger is part of our healing process.

And I remember in the beginning when I was doing podcasts, I would watch back some things and I was like, "Oh, gosh, Kim, you're so angry. The way you answered that came from such an angry space".

That was actually really good for me because it made me reflect on what I needed to work on. What I've come to terms with now with my family is I do believe that they are doing what they need to do to survive this. And what I need to do to survive this is quite different than what they need to do to survive this. And I've stopped putting judgment on for a long time.

I was like, "No, guys, it's this way. We can do this. If you do it this way, we're all going to heal and be okay". And I realized that the only person I could take with me on this journey was me. Trying to drag them along with me was only really hurting them and hurting me. They have to process it in their own way. So that's where I'm at with being as at peace as I can with it all.

Meagen Gibson

I totally resonate with that and hear that. And the concept of releasing both of you from the expectation of, this is the way that we're going to, the way that we can heal is this particular way. You've released them of your expectations.

And you mentioned anger. I imagine there's also a lot of grief. Grief for what you deserved, grief for the relationships you should have had. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but speak to the grief as well.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

There's so much grief. In the book, I write about one sister, a fictitious sister. I actually have three sisters. So it's been a tremendous amount of grief. You're grieving family members that are still alive, but you don't have a relationship with them. So there's so much sadness around that.

And then anger around that because there's moments where I feel I was born into this world and these horrific things happened to me that I never asked for. And now I'm trying to do something positive with it and I'm getting the response of, "No, we don't accept that, so we're not going to talk to you or we're not going to have a relationship with you.

So there's a lot of pain around that. And I think all of the feelings are valid and all of the feelings are things that we need to give ourselves permission to feel, and that it's okay. It's all part of the healing.

[00:11:27] Meagen Gibson

One of the things I've heard a lot of trauma survivors say, and even experts say, when they're considering writing about their experiences and considering publishing or writing it for their own sake, is that they were sick of protecting the people that should have protected them.

And instead they're interested in advocating for and helping heal the people that needed protecting. That spoke to me as what I feel you're trying to do and that we don't diminish the risks even though you might not have any regrets. There are still repercussions to those actions.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Yes. And also there's this other side. When you do have children of your own, if you do that, there's this protection that you want them to have from your family. And as sad as that is to say, and I'm not saying that there is sexual abuse going on in my family, because there is not, but it bleeds out in other ways.

And how we deal with day to day situations and how we interact with people when we don't deal with our trauma, it's living in our bodies and manifesting in a million different ways. And then I do believe eventually illness.

So it wasn't something that was worth it for me to stick around for anymore, and it wasn't something that I wanted my daughter to see. And that became really important to me more than anything else.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, to model all of this stuff. We're not going to let it slide. And the parallels between the stuntwork and the healing narrative you weaved is really beautiful as well. You write about the checks and balances to ensure safety in stuntwork and how they aren't guaranteed, which is a great parallel to life in general.

But you also talk about practicing a stunt routine dozens of times to gain a sense of safety while doing something that looks and feels dangerous. And when I read that, it sounded so much like my experience of trauma healing and how that can look and feel because you're practicing something absolutely terrifying that feels like it might kill you until you feel safe doing it. So I'm wondering if that process of trauma healing resonates with you as well.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Yes, I think there were a lot of parallels in my stuntwork with my trauma, and I speak about that in the beginning of the book when I got injured. And that was something that I seeked out in my life in general. I was bulimic. I was a cutter. There were things that I was doing to alleviate the pain that I was feeling inside.

Dr Maté said something so interesting to me. When I was really starting to embark on another level of my healing, and I said to him "I'm really scared. I'm just really scared".

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And he said, "you've already been through the worst, Kim". He said, "everything else is going to be easy in comparison to what you've been through".

And it sounds so simple, like you should know that. But I really never thought of it that way. And he was exactly right. Yes, you are going through the pain of the healing because you have to feel it all in order to heal it all. And so that's painful.

But if you are doing the healing journey, chances are you're in a safe space, and you put yourself in a safe space to even get to that place to decide to start working on yourself.

So you're not where you were and you're not that little girl anymore or a little boy anymore, and you have control over it all, which is a beautiful sense of power.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, absolutely. And you mentioned Dr Maté. I came to see your work because I follow all the, what I call trauma rockstars, and have interviewed many of them. And so I was seeing your work through them. And so what are some of the trauma healing tools and methodologies and people that you've worked with that you've used and I'm assuming still use to heal yourself through this experience?

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Yes. I got so lucky. So when I met Gabor, he had asked me if I ever did psychedelics, and that was something that was very terrifying to me at the time. And I said, "No, I'm not going to do it".

And then I called him back a few days later and I said, "I think I want to do it". So he set me up with somebody and I started doing that work. And for me, I've probably done five, they call them journeys. And I'm with a doctor, and it's all very medically done. It's not like I'm going in the woods.

And that, for me, has completely rewired my brain in so many ways. I really do believe that it is something that is slowly becoming legal. Certain things are. I do think that it is vital for people that have had trauma like mine. I do believe it's changed my life.

That, coupled with Internal Family Systems, IFS with Dr Schwartz, who I was lucky enough to work with one on one for a long time. Those two things together took my healing to a completely different level.

Meagen Gibson

I know you mentioned the psychedelics in the book, and I was going to ask you about it after our interview was over, but I'm glad you brought it up because it's fascinating to me. We're actually going to do a Psychedelics Conference in May because it's so incredible the way that it can impact healing work.

But I'm curious also where that fits in, in the process of writing the book. Had you gone on those five journeys before you started? Or was it during the writing process, or I'm curious how they all weave together.

[00:17:30] Kimberly Shannon Murphy

It was during the writing process, so I did two. The book wasn't even finished yet, so that's why we got to put it into the book. I did it while I was writing. For me, it made me look at my situation for exactly what it was.

For a long time, I protected the adults in my life - my parents, my aunts and uncles who were around when my abuse was happening. I mean, in the home. I would make excuses for them. And that was holding me back from being able to look at the full situation for what it was, and it wasn't allowing me to take my next step in healing.

When I started doing psychedelics, it opens your brain in a totally different way, and it made me see things for what they really were, which was that I wasn't protected. I had these parents that completely failed me and I was completely neglected.

And that was a huge section that I wasn't looking at because I had this trauma over here that was so horrific. So that was a secondary thing. It wasn't something I gave a lot of thought to.

When it comes to having to look at your parents and say, "My parents failed me". That's probably one of the most difficult things that I had to come to terms with because they were my attachment. They were my mom and my dad. With that said, if I didn't do that, I don't think I would have been able to keep moving through my journey and through my healing because it would have stunted me where I was.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I've heard you mention this before, that is the way that our brains... And that's the appeal of psychedelics, is not that you have this fantastical experience, but that it shuts off that fight or flight section, the amygdala of your brain. It's going to shut that down so that not only you can be with your difficult experiences.

But as you're talking about it in this way, I'm also considering that it shuts off the part of your brain that's trying to protect other relationships that are deeply meaningful to you. You're protecting yourself. Shuts that off. It also is shutting off your protection of other people in the ways that it's blocking. Getting to the grit of the work and being able to be "with it" instead of "in it", as I actually heard Dr Frank Anderson say from IFS, "With it, not in it".

But, that's fascinating. And obviously, we're talking about this all very matter of fact, but it's your life, and these are your relationships, and these are your family.

And you talked about attachment. We don't evolve to be happy. We evolve to stay alive. And part of staying alive in most situations is being securely attached to your family system. And so breaking those bonds and confronting your parents is a huge thing. It's not a small part of a person's being, is it?

[00:20:49] Kimberly Shannon Murphy

No, it's not. And that attachment versus authenticity, which is something Gabor speaks about so much, I really struggled with when I first met him. And he, as incredible as he is, he let me find my own way. And I remember saying to him, "Gabor, can I have both things? I'm trying to figure out, I don't understand". He has such a beautiful way of letting you connect your own dots. And what I realized is I couldn't have it both ways.

For me, being authentic and showing up as my true self all the time to everybody in my life, was way more important to me than what I felt like I was doing, is showing up as one person to my dad, one person to my mom, one person to my sister.

Because I knew, okay, if I interact with them this way, they're going to receive it well. They're going to give me love, they're going to give me everything that I thought I needed. But in reality, what I actually needed was to just be myself and not have to conform or be somebody else for everybody.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah to be with people who could be with you in whatever state you were in, whether it was hurt or sad or lonely. But that was too much for them.

I wanted to thank you for mentioning your Aunt Pat in the book, because Dan Siegel and the Attachment pioneers, Bowlby and Ainsworth, talk about the idea of one safe, secure adult in your life and how it can give you an anchor for survival and resilience.

And to me, my interpretation of your book and how you wrote about your Aunt Pat was that that was that person in your life, that she showed up and saw you and accepted you wholly as yourself, even though she had had her own horrible experiences. And so I'd love it if you could tell us a little bit about your Aunt Pat and her role in your life and what it meant to you.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

She saved my life 100%. She also had her own demons because she was abused and spoke... She was the first one to speak out. And I dedicate the book to her. When she was nine, and it wasn't believed and it was shut down.

And so she lived this life of... she never really spoke about how that felt for her because she was so worried about making sure everybody else was okay. And it was so important for her to keep our family together and make sure that this one wasn't mad at this one. And we all sat down and talked about it and we worked through it, which was so important for me at that time in my life.

Then I do believe that part of why she got Alzheimer's was because she couldn't, her body and her brain could no longer handle all of the baggage and all of the burden and the pain of our family. She was literally our pain carrier. And I think she just shut off one day. But she gave me space to speak my truth. She never questioned me.

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She always believed me. She always listened to me. And she was such a loving spirit. I call her Mother Nature because she was one of those people that, when you were speaking to her, you felt like you were the only person in the room.

For a kid that's going through the things I was going through, that was my lifeline. She made every difference for me. And that's why this is also so important to me, because, like you're saying, even if a stranger connects with me and my words and the things that I'm saying, and I can be that for them, it matters. It makes a difference.

When we grow up in families that are suffering from generational trauma and it's sexual abuse and it's going on and it's the most lonely thing in the world, and you don't have anyone to turn to because it's the entire family system.

We've been conditioned for so long to have these sayings that drive me crazy, which is, "It's your family. But you only get one mother". And it's so detrimental to people that have been through things like this that I think it adds on to the shame that they don't deserve to carry in the first place.

Then they feel like they owe it to their mom and they owe it to their dad. And all along, their whole life, they're just losing themselves. And then if they continue to live that way, they've never actually lived.

That is such an important message for me. It's that, and the whole forgiveness thing for me is such a huge thing as well, because for so many years, I heard, "Well, you need to forgive your grandfather if you truly want to move on". Which to me takes all of the attention off the survivor and the story they're telling, and it puts it on the abuser.

Now all of a sudden, we're talking about what I need to do for him in order to make myself feel better when I never did anything in the first place. So I think it's that dialogue that really needs to change and shift, and it seems to come from people that have never had these experiences, which makes perfect sense. Because if you've had this experience, you really don't, I believe feel that way.

Meagen Gibson

You're not thinking every day like "Wow, today's the day I work hard to forgive. It's more like.. Heal.

Forgiveness is something that may or may not come. And also, I think sometimes the emphasis on forgiveness is also because people believe that through forgiveness, you will release your need to talk about it or work it through. And so they're like, get to forgiveness so that we can stop hearing about it.

[00:27:21] Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Right? Totally. Yeah. Just forgive and move on. And that was a lot of the dialogue in my family for so many years, not with my Aunt Pat, but with other family members. "Yeah, we get it. This is who he was. This is what he did. And I don't want to think about it anymore and I just want to move on".

And it would be really great if that was realistic and if we didn't store all of this trauma in our nervous system and it wasn't something that is going to come out in a million different ways.

But that's not the reality. And as we learn more and more about the science behind it all and what the brain does and the body and all those things, we learn that that's actually not possible.

Meagen Gibson

Kimberly, your book *Glimmer* is absolutely fantastic. Where can people find out more about your book and you?

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

I do mostly Instagram, so my Instagram handler is the longest on the planet. It's [@kimberlyshannonmurphystunts](#). And you can see a lot of the interviews I've done with a lot of the trauma doctors. And also there's a link right underneath there to get my book *Glimmer*. You can get it on [Amazon](#) and also through my [website](#), which if you go on Instagram, it's all on there. It's super simple.

Meagen Gibson

Kimberly, thank you so much for being with us today.

Kimberly Shannon Murphy

Thank you so much.

Meagen Gibson

Thanks again.